

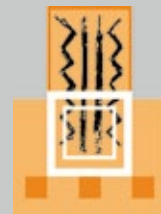
Magnifying Perspectives

Contributions to History, A Festschrift for Robert Ross

Iva Peša & Jan-Bart Gewald (eds.)



Universiteit
Leiden



African
Studies
Centre
Leiden

Magnifying Perspectives

African Studies Centre Leiden

Magnifying Perspectives

Contributions to History:

A Festschrift for Robert Ross

Iva Peša and Jan-Bart Gewald (editors)

ASCL Occasional Publication 26

Published by:
African Studies Centre Leiden
Postbus 9555
2300 RB Leiden
asc@ascleiden.nl
www.ascleiden.nl

Cover photo: "Aldus verthoont hem de Tafel Bay geleegeen aende Cabo de Bona Esperanza"
Gezicht op de Tafelbaai, Zuid Afrika. By Johannes Vingboons 1665. Collection Nationaal
Archief, The Hague

Maps: Nel de Vink (DeVink Mapdesign)

Printed by Ipskamp Printing, Enschede

ISBN: 978-90-5448-159-1

© Iva Peša and Jan-Bart Gewald, 2017

Contents

- 1 Introduction: Contributions to History 1
Jan-Bart Gewald and Iva Peša
- 2 A Respectable Age 5
Robert Ross
- 3 “My Favourite Source Is the Landscape”: An Interview with Robert Ross 18
Jan-Bart Gewald and Alicia Schrikker
- 4 Does Gender Matter? Wihelmine Stompjes, the Moravian Missionaries and Gendered Power Relations on the North Eastern Cape Frontier 32
Anne Kelk Mager
- 5 Blackening my White Friends to Make my Black Friends Look White: William Shaw, John Philip, and the Mercurial Political Landscape of Missionary Work in the Eastern Cape 50
Fiona Vernal
- 6 Slavery, Race and Citizenship: The Ambiguous Status of Freed Slaves at the Cape in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries 66
Susan Newton-King
- 7 Insult and Identity in the late Eighteenth-Century Cape Colony 112
Nigel Worden
- 8 Resembling “The More Racy Type of Comic Opera”: Scandal and the Cultural History of Imperial Politics 131
Kirsten McKenzie
- 9 Awad el Djouh: A Story of Slave Trade in the Mid Twentieth Century 149
Baz Lecocq
- 10 Colonial Courts, Mosquitoes and other Nuisances in the Gold Coast (1888-1934) 166
Dmitri van den Bersselaar

- 11 Domesticating the Imperial Railroads: Perception and Appropriation of the Railroads in Early Colonial Northern Nigeria 188
Shehu Tijjani Yusuf
 - 12 Unrelenting Scholars: Ulama Engagement with Western Education in Ilorin 203
Sakariyau Alabi Aliyu
 - 13 Settlers, Semaphores and Speculators: The Remnants of War in Contemporary South Africa 220
Jan-Bart Gewald
 - 14 Porters in the Angolan Nationalist War (1961-1974) 232
Inge Brinkman
 - 15 The Enchantment of Weber's Iron Cage: Financialisation and Insurance in South Africa 254
Erik Bähre
 - 16 Subverting the Standard View of the Cape Economy: Robert Ross's Cliometric Contribution and the Work it Inspired 273
Johan Fourie
 - 17 Between Success and Failure: The Mwinilunga Pineapple Canning Factory in the 1960s and 1970s 285
Iva Peša
 - 18 Livingstone in Northern Rhodesia (now Zambia): Historical Sketch of a British Colonial Town, 1897-1924 308
Bernard K. Mbenga
 - 19 Defiant Protest or Pure Exhibitionism? Nudity as Dress in Yoruba Culture 332
Bukola Adeyemi Oyeniyi
- List of Contributors 346

Introduction: Contributions to History

Jan-Bart Gewald and Iva Peša

On 19 September 2014, Professor Robert Ross delivered his valedictory lecture. In his lectures, seminars, many books and countless articles, Robert has always had the uncanny ability to make people stop, think and then reconsider their ideas and understanding of the world and the way in which it functions and functioned. Often with a small anecdote, Robert has drawn attention to the wider whole and magnified our perspective on history. With article topics as diverse as the *Handshake* or the *Top-Hat* in South Africa's social history,¹ Robert has consistently introduced the strange and quirky into Southern African history, and shown how the seemingly small and unimportant issues of everyday life have a central role to play in society, and thus in history. Primarily a social historian of The Cape in South Africa, Robert also branched out geographically and thematically to include aspects of Zambian history and a history of clothing.

Central to all of Robert's work is a compassion and appreciation for the individual, be it the highly literate, if somewhat eccentric, missionary, Johannes van der Kemp, or the Kat River combatant Hermanus Matroos. In all instances, Robert has never lost sight of the frailty of individual human ambition and condition, and sought to develop an understanding for the individual. Robert once famously declared that the only true historical method was eclecticism; historians should seek to use whatever topics, theories and source materials

¹ R. Ross, "The top-hat in South African History: The changing significance of an article of material culture", *Social Dynamics*, 16(1), 90-100, 1990 & R. Ross, *Status and respectability in the Cape Colony, 1750-1870: A tragedy of manners* (Cambridge, 1999), 175-176.

they could find in their drive to attempt to explain, argue and understand the past. In this light, the choice of a history of handshakes and top-hats, which had been used to define and barricade ethnic identities within a society that is fraught with division, becomes apparent. It is this passion for the quirky, his compassion for people, and his ability to draw from all manner of strange and unexpected sources that characterizes Robert's work. It is a passion that he has passed on to generations of students.

Students who visited his office in the P. van Eyckhof building would sit opposite Robert, literally with their backs to the wall, whilst in front of them loomed bookcases filled with an enormous collection of books that covered a fraction of Robert's formal curricula. On the wall behind them, Robert would pin a variety of quotes, sketches found in archives (Engels to Marx of a buxom lady if we remember correctly), prints of rare birds and, above all, topographical maps; initially of South Africa as a whole, and then, in later years, a highly detailed map of the Kat River Valley proper. Through the years, as we sat in awe of Robert and his books, Robert would gaze dreamily at the maps of his other world, a world and a time that he flitted back to: he studied, described and analysed the South Africa of the 1830s, 1840s and 1850s, a period in which the ground rules for contemporary South Africa were forged and laid down in the context of many wars and disturbed peace of the region. Central to Robert's work has always been his attempt to place the material in the social. For Robert, the history of South Africa only gained meaning and became understandable when the nuts and bolts, the issues of land, water, agriculture and labour were placed in a social context. To his credit, Robert has never been one for the high politics of university life, or for the soulless regurgitation of names, dates and decrees of high political history. Robert is interested in the nitty gritty of life and what people made of it as they chewed their *beskuit* and drank their tea or *dop* from chipped china mugs. Robert was consciously concerned, not so much with resurrecting the dead, but with allowing the silenced to speak; with resuscitating and rehabilitating the thoughts and ideas of people branded as delinquents, traitors or rebels. During his long stint in Leiden, Robert revived the social history of millions of largely forgotten South Africans, bringing them out of obscurity and shame and bestowing upon them the respectability and rationality they so desperately deserved and desired in the face of racial prejudice and British imperial power.

Colleagues and students of Robert have consistently fallen into one of two categories, those who understand what he is talking about and those who are too stubborn, not to mention ignorant, to realize that what he has to say is valuable beyond measure. As Africanists and historians, Robert's students are unique and immediately recognizable. They may not be very good with dates

and decrees, but they do have a unique and eclectic way of looking at the way the world works. Heavily influenced by the social sciences, Robert's students conduct histories that never lose sight of people, covering topics as diverse as religious movements in Zimbabwe, West African alcohol production and consumption, Sahelian armed movements, agricultural developments in Zambia and issues of chieftaincy in Malawi. To his students and colleagues, Robert has been consistently loyal and kind to a fault. With characteristic disregard for convention, Robert has taught far in excess of the bureaucratic norm and his students have benefitted immeasurably from this. The student and what the student thinks has always been of central importance to Robert. The trick is to get the student to express and argue their ideas in a coherent and convincing manner. Those students and colleagues who took the time, and invested the effort, could not have wanted for a better tutor and mentor.

Robert's long relationship with Africa began when he started working as a teacher at Moeding College at Otse in southern Botswana; a school that was founded in direct opposition to the apartheid regime's closure of *Tygerkloof* school and the infamous curriculum of *Bantu Education*. At Moeding, Robert interacted with fellow teachers and students, an experience that made a mockery of the tenets of racism. Upon returning to England, Robert completed a history degree at Cambridge and went on to graduate with a DPhil on Adam Kok and the Griquas. Symptomatic of the time, whilst conducting research in South Africa and travelling between Kokstad and Phillipolis, Robert and his assistants were consistently shadowed by security police in large black Chevrolets. Robert moved to the Netherlands in the mid-1970s and took up a position in the history faculty in Leiden, where he liaised closely with the African Studies Centre (ASC) and the department of African Languages. In the late 1980s, Robert initiated the first degree courses in African Studies at Leiden University, in much the same way that he was instrumental in establishing the Research Master's in African Studies at the ASC. From the very inception of his career in Leiden, Robert took it upon himself to supervise and examine PhD candidates.

Throughout the three decades that Robert taught in Leiden, he has remained unashamedly a Cambridge man; a don with a passion for the quirky and an insatiable appetite for academic discussion. In his teaching, Robert consistently allowed his students to do whatever they wanted to do, as long as they were able to present coherent academic arguments substantiated with verifiable source material. A writers' workshop was held in Leiden in honour of Robert, during which his many students and colleagues presented papers that were explicitly informed by Robert's insights into history. A number of these papers

4

have been selected for inclusion in this *festschrift* that resulted from the workshop.

A Respectable Age

Speech by Prof.dr. R.J. Ross¹

“In my beginning is my end.” So, famously, begins East Coker, the second of T.S. Eliot’s Four Quartets. It seems a good text for a valedictory lecture. For me, today, the beginning which matters came when I first arrived in Africa. This was in early February 1967, thus close on 48 years ago, by ship at the Victoria and Alfred Docks in Cape Town. There I was met by the then head of the Bolus Herbarium of the University of Cape Town - it was neither the first nor the last time that I benefited from the wide reach of the Botanical network to which my father belonged. After a couple of days in the city, I was put on a train which, two days later, disgorged me in Lobatse, in south-east Botswana. I was then to spend the next eight months teaching - a slight euphemism, I fear - at Moeding College, some twenty-five kilometres north of Lobatse. My engagement with the African continent, and especially its southern tier, has since then never faltered.

I could say much more about the journey, and about the school and its pupils, a high proportion of whom were older than I was, as a callow seventeen-year old. But those who I would like to remember here were my fellow members of staff. Moeding College had been founded about six years earlier to replace the Tiger Kloof Institution, the main school of the Congregationalist London Missionary Society, the LMS, in South Africa.² This had had to close as a result of

¹ *A Respectable Age*: A speech by Prof R.J. Ross, on the occasion of his retirement as professor of the History of Africa at the University of Leiden on Friday, 19 September 2014.

² J. Rutherford: *Little Giant of Bechuanaland: A biography of William Charles Willoughby, Missionary and Scholar* (Gaborone, 2009).

the imposition of Bantu education by the apartheid government, which made the provision of a liberal and progressive schooling for Africans impossible. Through this mission school I came into the world of the Congregational missionaries, and in some ways I have never left it. Through much of the last half-century, I have worked on Southern African societies which have been profoundly influenced by the ethos of the LMS. Beside the missionaries at the school, the staff consisted of black South Africans, all of them graduates of Fort Hare University, the profoundly Christian college in the Eastern Cape, from whence the great majority of black South African graduates at that time emerged. From these people, from Leonard and Ndiki Ngcongco, from Phophi and Doreen Nteta, from George Kgoroba, from Miriam Manqalaza, from Seth Lekoape and the others I learnt much, above all on the double meaning of respectability.

Respectability is one of the key concepts by which the history of Southern Africa can be comprehended.³ I would like to spend this, my final lecture as professor of African History, exploring some of its intricacies. In this way I can show the interrelations of a large number of the themes with which I have been concerned over the years. What I will be arguing, in short is, first, that from the early nineteenth century onwards, some Black South Africans claimed respect, in the full sense, from colonialists, and, secondly, that the fact that they did not receive it played a significant role in their political opposition to successive South African governments. Respectability entails, on the one hand, showing respect to those who have power, by behaving in such ways as were prescribed by such individuals - missionaries in the first instance, but also increasingly the agents of the colonial government. On the other hand respectability was at least equally about the claim by respectable people that they be granted respect by the society in which they found themselves. More than anything else it was this that my friends at Moeding had not received in South Africa. This rejection led them to choose an exile that was not formal. Most of them, as far as I remember, were at that time able to enter the Republic as it suited them, although Leonard Ngcongco had been prohibited from teaching history in South Africa.⁴

Nonetheless their exile was a protest against their exclusion from the sorts of positions that they were to enjoy in Botswana. Here, at least, their qualities and equality were recognised.

³ Robert Ross, *Status and Respectability in the Cape Colony, 1750-1870: a tragedy of manners* (Cambridge, 1999); J. Iliffe, *Honour in African History* (Cambridge, 2005).

⁴ Kofi Darkwah, "Interview with Prof. Leonard Diniso Ng-congco at the University of Botswana, June 19th 1996", *Pula*, 11: 1 (1997), 11.

If I had first come across respectable Africans during my time at Moeding, I encountered them in the archives for the first time during the research for my Ph.D. dissertation some four years later. I was inducted into the historical profession, not just by my supervisors at Cambridge, Ronald Robinson and John Iliffe, but also by Miss Irene Fletcher, archivist extraordinary and custodian of the papers of the London Missionary Society, now the Congregational Council for World Missions. As a fellow native of Sidcup, she was also what the South Africans would call a homegirl of mine. From her, and from the LMS archive, I learnt how in the mid-nineteenth century a small group of people, living in the dry lands to the north of the Gariep - Orange - river, came to build statelets for themselves in a testy collaboration with the missionaries of the LMS. The Griquas, for such they were, were rich in stock and in land, and used that wealth to live a life which resembled as closely as possible the lifestyle followed by the leaders of the Colony which they had left. In this they had varied success, just as their political and economic life was complicated and by no means always successful. It was an ideal subject for a dissertation, and I have benefitted from it ever since.⁵

The Griquas of Philippolis were part of a much wider movement of men and women of Khoekhoe descent. The Khoekhoe societies of the Cape and its surrounding areas were probably the most harshly colonised of all the peoples of Southern Africa. In the course of the eighteenth century, they lost their herds, their lands and their political organisation. In the nineteenth century they would also lose their language and their very names. The reaction to the far-going deracination was, naturally enough, varied. Many found a temporary solace in drink and dagga (marijuana). These men and women formed the basis for the stereotypes which whites had of the drunken Khoekhoe. Others came to accept the rules imposed on them by the mission churches and rebuilt their lives on the precepts of sobriety, monogamy and order. In exchange they hoped to acquire their Civil Rights in the colony.⁶ Among the men and women who followed this message, many came to settle in the upper Kat River valley in the Eastern Cape, where they built a temporarily flourishing community. I have indeed spent much of the last dozen years researching and writing about this settlement.

These people were proud of what they had achieved. Three short examples: Andries Stoffels, a leader of the settlement, went to England in 1836 as a prime

⁵ R. Ross, "The Griquas of Philippolis and Kokstad, 1826-1879", Ph.D. thesis, University of Cambridge, 1974; *idem*, *Adam Kok's Griquas: a study in the development of stratification in South Africa* (Cambridge, 1976).

⁶ E. Elbourne, *Blood Ground: Colonialism, missions, and the contest for Christianity in the Cape Colony and Britain, 1799-1853* (Montreal, 2002), esp Ch. 4.

exhibit of the London Missionary Society. Famously, he informed the Evangelical public of London that:

“the word of God has brought my nation so far that if a Hottentot young lady and an English young lady were walking with their faces from me, I would take them both to be English ladies ... We are coming on, we are improving, we will soon all be one. The Bible makes all nations one”.⁷

Or there was the short obituary written for Thys Jurie by his friend, the missionary James Read:

He was the best of husbands, an affectionate father, the best of neighbours, a good agriculturalist, his lands, garden, house and person were all in unison with his mind. Altho’ a man of colour he was in his dress and address the Gentleman. He had once to call at a house in Graham’s Town, the servant opening the door and not taking notice of the face ran and said there was a gentleman at the door - he was ordered to the Parlour, but when the Lady came she was surprised to find that it was a gentleman with a brown face.⁸

Even those of the Kat River settlers who in 1851 went into rebellion against the British and a few years later were high in the mountains of the Transkei -- it’s a long story, read my latest book - explained their reluctance to return to the colony because:

“... many of them were respectable men before the rebellion, and had their own establishments; but now if they return to the colony, they see no other way open to them of obtaining a living than that of monthly service or day-labour, at which mode of life they do not hesitate to express very plainly their repugnance”.⁹

In the aftermath of the Kat River rebellion, strident and political claims for the benefits of respectability were no longer an option for the Khoekhoe, now becoming “coloureds”, though the men who had retained some property had won the right to vote under the Cape’s non-racial constitution of 1853. It is, incidentally, easy to forget that the Cape Colony had one of the world’s most liberal and all-inclusive constitutions from the 1850s till 1910. However, mission schools and the accompanying ideologies of respectability were beginning to gain more acceptance among the amaXhosa – “Ama”, of course is the prefix which denotes “people” – the African group which had taken the main thrust of colonial expansion through the middle of the nineteenth century. They incurred several heavy defeats in war, and finally succumbed following the National Suicide of the Cattle Killing, when most of the amaXhosa listened to the prophets and destroyed their crops and their cattle in a last desperate attempt

⁷ *Evangelical Magazine and Missionary Chronicle*, June 1836, 71; Elizabeth Elbourne commented, surely correctly, that Stoffels here had Saartje Baartman in mind.

⁸ Read to Tidman, 2.10.1844, Archives of the Congregational Council for World Missions, School of Oriental and African Studies, London, Incoming Papers, South Africa, 20/3/A.

⁹ Walker to Southey, 27.12.1856, Cape Archives Depot, Cape Town, LG 593; see also, R. Ross, *The Borders of Race in Colonial South Africa: The Kat River Settlement, 1829-1856* (Cambridge, 2014).

to recreate, through the resuscitation of the ancestors, the world they had lost in the wars.¹⁰ Thereafter, many of the amaXhosa were beginning to see the advantages of abandoning the armed struggle and firing, as Isaac Wauchope said, with a loaded pen.¹¹

The conversion of South Africans to Christianity was initially slow, except among those of Khoekhoe descent whose social structures had collapsed under colonial pressure during the eighteenth century. In general, for a long time, only those men and women who were in some sense outcasts from the society in which they had grown up came to accept the messages of the missionaries. There were a number of notable Southern African rulers for whom the presence of the missionaries provided an opportunity for intellectual discussions, as they attempted to discover the roots of European power. Sechele of the Bakwena in modern Botswana in his discussions with David Livingstone,¹² King Moshoeshoe of Lesotho with Eugène Casalis,¹³ a French missionary of Huguenot descent even Maqoma of the amaXhosa with Henry Calderwood, a Scottish minister,¹⁴ were amongst these. But they did not convert, or significantly change their lifestyle. Before large numbers of Africans made that change, colonial pressure had to have broken the mainsprings of society. In the Eastern Cape, it was after the Cattle Killing that churches and schools began to be filled. In the North of the country, it was primarily the ex-slaves, brought up in Trekker households, who came to fill the congregations of the various, mainly German, mission churches of the Transvaal.

Converts had a choice. Among the amaXhosa, they were known as the *amagqob'oka* - the people with a hole in the heart. This term might be interpreted as those who had had their hearts pierced by the light of the Lord, but equally might be those who had no heart for their fellow men and women, the hard people - *amagogotwa* - who were too selfish to participate in the Cattle Killing. And until deep in the twentieth century, there were those in Xhosaland who shunned the acceptance of Western ways, in clothing, education or religion. They were described as the Reds, from the Ochre they smeared into

¹⁰ J.B. Peires, *The Dead Will Arise : Nongqawuse and the great Xhosa cattle-killing movement of 1856-7* (Johannesburg, 1989).

¹¹ Isaac Wauchope, writing as I. W. W. Citashe, as cited in A.C. Jordan, *Towards an African Literature: The Emergence of Literary Form in Xhosa* (University of California Press, 1973).

¹² A. Sillery, *Sechele : the story of an African chief*, Oxford, Ronald, 1954; Janet Wagner Parsons, *The Livingstones at Kolobeng 1847-1852* (Gaborone, 1997); B. Stanley, "The Missionary and the Rainmaker; David Livingstone, the Bakwena, and the Nature of Medicine", *Social Sciences and Missions*, 27 (2014).

¹³ P. Sanders, *Moshoeshoe, Chief of the Sotho*, (London, 1975); E. Casalis, *My Life in Basutoland*, Reprinted (Cape Town, 1971).

¹⁴ T. Stapleton, *Maqoma, Xhosa resistance to colonial advance 1798-1873* (Johannesburg, 1994).

their blankets.¹⁵ The alternative was to go to school, to accept the rules of the churches and to earn money in the economy of the whites. These were the people who became known, in a glorious mixture of isiXhosa and English, as the *amaRespectables*.

Respectability entailed the adoption of a range of the attributes of the European colonisers of Southern Africa, notably their religion, their specific moral codes, their schooling and much of their material culture. The religion was that of mainstream Christianity, initially above all Protestantism in its manifold varieties, but also, later and to a lesser degree, Catholicism. In general, African initiated churches, when they emerged, were seen as less reputable. The missionary churches could have ambivalent attitudes towards the material improvement of their congregations. They feared that their converts would get above themselves, and suffer from the sin of pride. This can best be symbolised by the bonfire which the Lutheran missionaries in Pretoria made of the crinolines flaunted, as they would have said, by the young ladies of their congregations.¹⁶ But the growth of prosperity was not to be held back, as the Weberian relationship between religious ethics and worldly success kicked in once again.

As much as the churches, it was the schools which the missions had founded that defined the respectable. Beginning with Lovedale and Healdtown in the Eastern Cape, and progressing through Adams College in Natal and Tiger Kloof in the Northern Cape - the predecessor of the school where my own African experience began - the great mission schools turned out a stream of alumni who formed one of the most potent of networks. These were the places where the modernising elite of South Africa was formed.

It was not an exclusively male elite. In both the Eastern Cape and Natal, missionaries made major efforts to educate the daughters of their converts, and other young women who came to them, in order to provide the possibility of Christian marriage and families for their mail adherents. The girls' department at Lovedale, or Inanda Seminary outside of Durban, were places where the family life of the *amaRespectables* was being created. It was of course, a thoroughly gendered and, in modern eyes sexist, form of education, although, as is the way with most educational systems, individuals could learn much more than was taught. There were numerous girls who were to use their education to achieve a degree of independence which neither their teachers nor their male

¹⁵ Philip Mayer, "The origin and decline of two rural resistance ideologies", in P. Mayer, ed., *Black villagers in an industrial society; anthropological perspectives on labour migration in South Africa* (Cape Town, 1980); building on Mayer, *Townsmen or tribesmen : conservatism and the process of urbanization in a South African city* (Cape Town, 1961).

¹⁶ K. Ruether, "Heated debates over crinolines: European clothing on nineteenth-century Lutheran mission stations in Transvaal", *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 28 (2002).

kin really appreciated. Nevertheless, in the first instance, respectability did little to threaten male hegemony in South Africa, and much to maintain it.¹⁷

The gendered hegemony of the amaRespectables worked itself out in the households they created. They came to live in increasing numbers in the cities, particularly those that grew up around the diamond and gold mines, notably Kimberley and along the Witwatersrand, the line of towns centred on Johannesburg. These men and women signalled their position first by their clothing. The dark suits and long, body-concealing dresses which appear on the photographs of black South Africans from the 1870s onwards are saying, non-verbally but quite explicitly, that the wearers expected to be treated with respect. Further, the houses that they built were rectangular. They were filled with the goods which signalled the acceptance of Western norms. Tables, chairs, cutlery and crockery, beds and blankets, bookcases and wardrobes, these were what the respectable needed to establish and maintain their status. This is what was advertised in the newspapers and magazines which were aimed at the African consumers, above all the women. Throughout the 1930s, for example, the magazine *Bantu World* propagated the ideal of the cosy nuclear family, with the husband going out to work, and bringing in enough to keep his wife and children, without the lady of the house having to earn money herself. In fact of course, hardly any African households in the towns could survive on a single income, so that most women had to have remunerative employment, in addition to keeping their household running. Many of the women had invested so much in their own education and qualifications, as nurses and teachers, above all, that it would have been crazy for them to forego the opportunities which they had. But *Bantu World* did not admit this. Each issue had a “woman’s home page” and a “page of interest to women of the race”, featuring recipes, household hints, religious and moral exhortations and adverts for baby food and sewing machines. These pages were compiled by the “editress”, seemingly a woman editor, who was in fact Rolfes Robert Reginald Dhlomo, one of the leading male writers of the time.¹⁸

How widespread was the take up of the material ideals of Christian respectability? In the early 1930s the Native Economic Commission sent out questionnaires to the District magistrates around the country, asking, among other things, “Is there a growing tendency on the part of Natives in your district to adopt European dress, homes, furniture, recreation, amenities, reading,

¹⁷ M. Healey-Clancy, *A World of their own: A history of South African Women's education* (Scottsville, 2013).

¹⁸ L. M. Thomas, “The modern girl and racial respectability in 1930s South Africa”, *Journal of African History*, 47, 3, (2006).

education, customs in marriage and in the employment of servants?”¹⁹ The answers varied, but in all cases the Christians were using European goods. To give two examples of what was said, the magistrate of Richmond in southern Natal commented: “Except in the mission reserves, there is very little tendency to adopt European clothes and furniture”.²⁰ In contrast, his counterpart in the coal-mining town of Dundee, further north in Natal, wrote that the Africans:

... live in a different world to that of 25 years ago. Then the storekeeper sold beads and cotton sheets to cover their nakedness, and grease and red ochre to anoint their bodies. Today they sell silks, expensive dress material and sewing machines. The huts now contain tables, chairs, chests of drawers, beds and stoves. In fact one farmer stated to me that the huts are better furnished than his own house. They all adopt European dress, houses and furniture. They all play tennis, or football and most of the Town natives even read a daily paper. They have their own concerts. They adopt the European form of marriage and the servant has the same food as Europeans.²¹

The trend in the direction of a globalised material culture, based on European models, was already evident.

With the spectacular and counter-conjunctural growth of the South African industrial economy in the 1930s and 1940s, the size of the black middle class increased very substantially, particularly around Johannesburg. In the process, perhaps some to the moral dignity which had pervaded the lives of the amaRespectables began to dissipate. The iconic figures of 1950s black Johannesburg, the journalists of *Drum Magazine*, were anything but staid.²² On the contrary they lived their lives to the full. Nelson Mandela, who was to emerge as his generation’s great leader, and among many honours was to be awarded an honorary doctorate by this University, was considered too much of a playboy to be a serious politician. For this reason he was omitted from the discussion which the editor of *Drum*, Anthony Sampson, wrote of the ANC’s most prominent figures.²³ For all that, the ethnographies of the Black Middle Class of the 1950s, show that the level of concern for the outward signs of respectability was as high as ever. It is reported that one of the main points of debate among the group was between those who advocated built-in clothes closets and those for whom a stand-alone wardrobe, as part of a matching

¹⁹ Native Economic Commission, Written evidence, Vol. VII, p. 105; online at <http://uir.unisa.ac.za/handle/10500/4736>.

²⁰ Native Economic Commission, Answers to Questionnaire, National Archives Repository, Pretoria, NTS, 1771, B.

²¹ Native Economic Commission, Answers to Questionnaire, National Archives Repository, Pretoria, NTS, 1771, B.

²² M. Nicol, *A Good Looking Corpse* (London, 1991); A. Sampson, *Drum: a venture into the New Africa* (London, 1956).

²³ A. Sampson, *The treason cage : the opposition on trial in South Africa* (London, 1958); those who were discussed in detail were Prof. Z.K. Matthews and his son Joe, Peter Nthite, Lilian Ngoyi and Walter Sisulu.

bedroom suite, was ideal.²⁴ This may seem totally trivial, in the apartheid society that was developing, but it was not. These were people who were working to create the sort of world in which to live as they hoped, and for whom the details of furnishing mattered. It is my contention that the material aspirations of the black middle classes provide a vital key to the mainsprings of their political activities. There is no academic treatment of the development of black material culture and consumption patterns in South Africa - I intend to write one soon - but this much is clear. The men and women who went through the mission schools had been shown the model of a life which was both comfortable and moral, and they had accepted it as a goal for which to strive. This was to become a political goal, if it had not always been one. The relationship between the world of the everyday and that of high politics is generally tighter than historians are wont to consider. It does not run only through the impact of household consumption on the macro-economy, though this is one of the main conduits of such influence. It also determines what it is that politics is ultimately about, what is behind the claim, made first by Harold Macmillan and repeated, in different wording, by politicians ever since, that "You've never had it so good."

There are of course arguments that can be made about this appropriation of the conquerors' life-style. In some ways, the most apposite are those made by Tacitus, nearly two millennia ago, in his description of the colonial conquest of Britain by the Romans. He describes how the governor, Agricola, encouraged the Britons in their acceptance of the Roman way of life, in language, dress, food and the comforts of living. Then, with typical acerbity, Tacitus wrote: "All this in their ignorance, they called civilization, when it was but a part of their servitude."²⁵ Similar, if less elegant, comments could be found among a host of post-colonial intellectuals in the recent past. Why then do I argue that the acquisition of the material culture of the colonisers was a part of the Black South Africans' liberation, not of their servitude?

In South Africa, from the early nineteenth century onwards, the personal was political, if perhaps not quite in the way in which second-wave feminists would have had it in the days of my youth. This has been the case at least back to the early nineteenth century. It began with the implicit agreement which Dr. John Philip, superintendent of the London Missionary Society, made with the Khoekhoe of the Eastern Cape mission stations. In effect this was that, if the Khoekhoe could behave as civilised men and women, living in good houses,

²⁴ M. Brandel-Syrier, *Reeftown elite : a study of social mobility in a modern African community on the Reef* (London, 1971).

²⁵ Agricola, 21. The Latin of the crucial sentence is *Idque apud imperitos humanitas vocabatur, cum pars servitutis esse.*

wearing decent clothes and not getting drunk in public, then he would ensure that they received recognition from colonial society, and a fair degree of equality.²⁶ In the eventuality, Philip did not have the power to deliver in full on his promises, certainly not in the face of British settler racism. All the same, all legal discrimination on the basis of race was ended by Ordinance 50 of 1828. In 1853 the Cape Parliament was established with a non-racial, very broad franchise. Thus more was won than might later be remembered after it was lost again. Behaving respectably did, in the end, have its political rewards.²⁷

The problem was that the successes came at the price of incurring the racist wrath of the British settlers. As I have argued in more detail in a number of places, well-clothed, sober and respectful Khoekhoe formed a threat to the order which the British in particular thought gave them the right to lord it over the Cape. It is no use claiming rights on the basis of your civilisation if those from whom one wishes to take the land are just as civilised as you are.²⁸ Existentially, armed insurgents were a much smaller threat, because their behaviour confirmed what the Europeans expected of them. A generation or two later, the lives of the African amaRespectables were to be blighted by much the same sort of prejudices.

Part of the problem for these men and women was that colonial South Africa saw the political and economic relations between whites and Africans in terms of a zero-sum game. In 1908, John X. Merriman, then Prime Minister of the Cape Colony, wrote that the extension of black landownership, which was seen as a danger to the whites:

“from the [African] point of view represents an effort to raise themselves to a higher plane than that of mere communal tenure, and marks a distinct advance in civilisation”²⁹

There were thus no forms of cooperation possible, only competition in which the whites could all too easily skew the rules to their own advantage.

This I would argue, explains the contrast between my arguments and those of Tacitus. Agricola encouraged the civilisation of the Britons as a way to enfeeble

²⁶ E. Elbourne & R. Ross, “Combatting Spiritual and Social Bondage: early missions in the Cape Colony”, in R. Elphick & R. Davenport (eds), *Christianity in South Africa: a political, social and cultural history* (Cape Town, etc., 1997).

²⁷ See, still, S. Trapido, “The Origins of the Cape Franchise Qualifications of 1853”, *Journal of African History*, 5 (1964); also Ross, *The Borders of Race*.

²⁸ Notably in Ross, *The Borders of Race*; the argument goes back to John Locke, and there is an enormous literature on the matter, especially with relation to *terra nullius* claims, dealing primarily with America (Locke’s original case) and Australia. For an indication, see e.g. .B. Aneil, *John Locke and America: the defense of English Colonialism* (Oxford, 1996), or L. Benton and B. Straumann, “Acquiring Empire by Law: Roman Doctrine to Early Modern European Practice”, *Law and History Review*, 28 (2010).

²⁹ Cited in A. Odendaal *The Founders : the origins of the ANC and the struggle for democracy in South Africa* (Johannesburg, 2013), 229.

them. White South Africa was most grudging in its acceptance of black advancement, because it recognised that this would be a threat to its own power. Naturally enough, the early political movements in the idiom of the west were led by members of the new Christian and literate elite. The photos, for instance, of the early leaders of the South African Native Congress, and the other precursors of the ANC, show them dressed in immaculate suits, shirts, ties, shoes and hats.³⁰ This dress signalled a status that they had acquired, often with great difficulty, and which they were not prepared to relinquish. Their lives were not easy, and they could despair of achieving the way of life by -which they had been tantalised. In 1930 Philemon Ntuli provided the Native Economic Commission with an anguished commentary on the benefits of education. While he appreciated that education was good for personal development, in economic terms:

Education is an affliction to us presently; if I am educated, I want to be decently dressed; I want to keep my body clean; I want to have better food - or more varied diet generally than the people who are not educated will accept, and generally my tastes are more difficult to please than the tastes of the uneducated [African]. It is the natural ambition of an educated [African] to build himself a decent, comfortable home, to bring up his children respectably, to clothe and feed them as an educated person should.³¹

But for such behaviour, which was increasingly becoming a social necessity, he did not have the income. Both during the era of Segregation, roughly from the creation of the Union of South Africa in 1910 to 1948, and during the apartheid period, thereafter, government policy was, at the very least, not designed with the promotion of black disposable income in mind. The state was making black respectability economically very difficult. At no time did it make any significant attempt to conciliate, or to build up a political alliance with, the black Christian and urban elite, at least not until it was far too late. Despite the hindrances put in their path, this group did begin to grow in significance and spending power, in the 1950s. Market researchers were stressing the rise in both the numbers and the income of the urban blacks. This conclusion was not a politically neutral statement, except in the sense that it was welcomed neither by the Government and the white establishment nor by either the ANC and the other main parties in the opposition, whether black or white. Nevertheless, the programmes of the apartheid state were often aimed specifically at the stratum of the black population which was prospering from the development of the economy. The smashing of the mission schools, which had been essential for the development of the respectable elite, and the clearing of areas where many of

³⁰ See the photos in e.g., Odendaal, *Founders*; S. Mofokeng and J.T. Campbell, *The Black Photo Album/Look at Me: 1890-1950*, (Göttingen, 2012).

³¹ Native Economic Commission, Oral Evidence, Volume III, p. 2060.

them lived, most notably Sophiatown, on the edge of central Johannesburg, are the most obvious examples of this.³²

It would be ridiculous to explain the resistance to apartheid entirely in terms of the exclusion of the nascent black middle class from political power, let alone from the pleasures of consumption, even if the behaviour of these sorts of individuals since the establishment of a fully democratic South Africa in 1994 might suggest otherwise. On some rare occasions, these sorts of people were themselves the targets of the activists' actions, during the violent and unpredictable period of the 1980s township revolt.³³ More often, probably, it was precisely the respected elite who managed to maintain a degree of control and to prevent the worst excesses of the struggle.³⁴ The diversity of South African society, and the consequent variation in communities' reactions to changing political developments is of course one of the fundamental tenets of research into the country's recent history, though it is sometimes overstressed.

In the end, of course, the old rulers of South Africa gave in to the pressure of the opposition, both within and without the country. The question is then, why did this happen in 1990, and not earlier or later. Alongside geopolitical events, such as the fall of the Berlin Wall, the realisation that the prosperity of the white middle class could no longer be guaranteed was of crucial importance. The productivity of the work force was way below the level of South Africa's main competitors. The internal market was unnecessarily restricted. It was here that the ostracism of the respectable elite, and more generally of the black labour force could be seen for what it was. Worse than a crime (which it was too), it was a mistake, one from which South Africa has been attempting to recover for the past twenty years, with some success. The black middle class is growing fast, and is now estimated at approximately 4.2 million, or about eight *per cent* of the country's population. Around forty percent of those earning over 30,000 Rand, just about 2,000 Euro a month, are black.³⁵ These are the people who are the spiritual descendants of the men and women who, close on two centuries ago, began to demand recognition for their achievements in acquiring a respectable life style. It is on their labour, and consumption, that the South

³² T. Lodge, *Black politics in South Africa since 1945* (London & New York, 1983), Chapter 4; P. Kallaway (ed.), *The history of education under apartheid 1948-1994 : the doors of learning and culture shall be opened* (New York, 2002); J. Hyslop, *The Classroom Struggle : policy and resistance in South Africa 1940-1990* (Pietermaritzburg, 1999).

³³ I. Van Kessel, *"Beyond our wildest dreams" : the United Democratic Front and the transformation of South Africa* (Charlottesville, 2000).

³⁴ T.C. Moloi, *Black politics in Kroonstad: political mobilisation, protests, local government, and generational struggles, 1976-1995*, Ph.D. thesis, University of the Witwatersrand, 2012.

³⁵ This information derives from the surveys of the South African Audience Research Foundation, notably the All Media Products Survey and the Lifestyle Measures.

African economy has been growing over the last decades. As yet the growth of the economy has not been sufficient to alleviate the poverty, disease and associated violence which still disfigure the country. Whether economic growth will have the effects which are desired of it, and over what sort of period, are questions which dominate public debate in South Africa, and are not ones which a mere historian should attempt to answer. As one of my teachers, Ivor Wilks, remarked when discussing the politics of West Africa over forty years ago, if he really knew the answer to such questions, he would not be teaching undergraduates, but rather acting as advisor to those who really have the power to make things change. It is a lesson in academic humility that I hope I have never forgotten. For years, indeed, I had another quotation from East Coker on my office wall: "And what you do not know is the only thing you know".

Perhaps the admission of ignorance is a good place to stop, and to end the formal part of an academic career. There is however, one final higher level comment on what I have just said. I hope that I have, over the last forty-five minutes and indeed over the last forty-five years, made some parts of the history of Africa comprehensible. In this I have tried to follow the examples of many fine historians, above all John Iliffe, my old supervisor, one of the finest of them all. They have achieved their understanding by being able to translate what they discover into language and concepts which are applicable outside of the continent. African history has been a constant project of combatting exoticisation and must remain so.

Finally, I want to thank you all for being here today. Ik dank U allen van harte voor uw aanwezigheid. More specifically, I want to thank the faculty for making this possible, and also the Institute of History and the *Opleidingen, Talen en Culturen van Afrika* and African studies, for their support over many years. I am honoured and flattered that so many of my colleagues from across the globe and so many ex-students have arranged to be here. Het ga jullie goed. May things go well with you! Equally I am so glad that my family, both in its Dutch and British sections, has managed to be here in such numbers. Finally, above all, I want to thank Janneke. She knows why.

Pula!

I have spoken.

“My Favourite Source Is the Landscape”: An Interview with Robert Ross

Jan-Bart Gewald and Alicia Schrikker³⁷

Emeritus professor Robert Ross is one of the leading historians of African history. Friends and colleagues know him as an amiable person, a fervent birdwatcher and Morris dancer. It is a year after his retirement when we meet Robert Ross in a homely setting in Leiden and ask him to look back at his career and ahead to South Africa's future.

When preparing this interview, we thought, we could go one of two ways. One would be: “Robert, tell us about your life.” The other one would be to take a look at your books and follow through from there. We did not really decide which approach we were going to take. But one of the things we think is extremely important, is your experience as a seventeen-year-old in Botswana in the 1960s. And one of the things that surprises us now is why you did not take on board the racist sentiments which were prevalent at that time in Great Britain and in South Africa?

Why did I not do that? Well I suppose, in the first instance, I was the son of a biologist which helps not to be racist in some senses. Secondly, I was the nephew of a missionary, who worked in Nigeria, which probably also helps to some extent. And, when I arrived in Botswana, I was dumped in an environment in which the most interesting people around were black South Africans, which

³⁷ This interview was first published in *Itinerario* 39:3 (2015), 405-417. We thank the *Itinerario* editors and in particular Alicia Schrikker for allowing us to reproduce this interview. The editing of the current version has caused some changes, compared to the original.

made it perfectly obvious [that racism was not an option]. The students at Moeding College (Otse, Botswana) who were mainly older than me and who I attempted to teach something - teaching is a slight euphemism - made it impossible to take it on board. In addition, it was not only a black South African group, but also a LMS [London Missionary Society] missionary school and so racism just was not one of the possibilities.³⁸ And also growing up in London, I was not growing up in the parts of London in which racism was highly prevalent, I grew up a long way from Notting Hill, or Brixton or such places-there was certainly no black ghetto in Sidcup.³⁹ So in that sense that sort of racism did not arise.

When you travelled to Botswana did you already have an idea about what you were going to study?

I knew I was going to study history. I do not know why; I have always been fascinated by history. I seem to remember winning a school prize for history when I was nine. That should not mean very much, I also won a school prize for scripture at the same time. They are both history, I suppose. So in that sense, I knew I was going to study history when I got back from Botswana. My choice for African history was made essentially in my third year as an undergraduate [at Cambridge University]. I had had a relatively unsuccessful career up till then doing European and English history, slightly more doing the Expansion of Europe paper, slightly less doing the history of political thought. And so in my third year, when I had to take two papers and a special subject, there was one paper of African history and one of Indian history. And so it was quite obvious that I would do African history. It was at the time one of the larger papers, it had about sixty people doing it. It was taught by Ivor Wilks, John Lonsdale and Sydney Kanya-Forstner. I was supervised by Sydney who was Canadian and had written a book on the Western Sudan, he was at that time research fellow, in his mid to late twenties.⁴⁰

And the others all had a colonial background?

Wilks had just come back from Ghana and taught in Cambridge for three or four years till he got a job at Northwestern University. And Lonsdale had come back from Dar es Salaam. And so they and Kanya-Forstner gave the lectures and you would not have been able to find a better team anywhere. I started a Ph.D. after

³⁸ Moeding College was established in Botswana by South African exiles after the Bantu Education Act of the apartheid government effectively scuttled academic teaching for black students.

³⁹ Sidcup is a suburban district of south-east London, England, in the London Borough of Bexley.

⁴⁰ S. Kanya-Forstner, *The conquest of the Western Sudan: A study in French military imperialism* (Cambridge, 1969).

that year on the basis of a research proposal that I still know of by heart: “The social economic history of an African tribe” full stop. I convinced them over the telephone. The faculty in those days had a number of Ph.D. places to distribute and I got one of them. It was 850 pounds a year, that was 1970. It was not a lot, but enough to survive and I began my Ph.D. under Ronald Robinson who had been away on leave in the year that I did my undergraduate in African history. So I worked under him for a year, and in the beginning of my second year, just before I went to Africa, Robbie went to Oxford, Ivor Wilks went to Northwestern and John Iliffe came back from Tanzania to take over and I was moved to work under him. And so I met him briefly before I went to Africa for nine months and I only really got to know him when I got back to write the thesis.

I went to South Africa largely at the suggestion of Ronald Robinson. When I was still thinking about which African tribe I was going to write that socio-economic history of, he said “why don’t you take a look at the Griquas, they look interesting and come back in two weeks’ time and tell me everything there is to know about the Griquas.” So I really did that and I went down to Sussex where Martin Legassick was teaching. He had written a thick thesis on the Griquas.⁴¹ I talked with him for a while and thought they were indeed rather interesting and decided I would work on them. Initially I thought it would be something on the Tswana, but the Griquas seemed more interesting, and I wouldn’t have to learn a language. Well I had to learn some amount of Dutch and Afrikaans, but that wasn’t so difficult. And so I first spent two or three months in the archives of the London Missionary Society in London, commuting up to central London. I spent nearly a year in South Africa, mainly in the archives, and having one beautiful field trip from Cape Town to Kimberley and then through Philippolis to and through Lesotho via Ongeluks Nek down to Kokstad.

That is interesting: in contrast to many Ph.D.’s at the time, you actually went to look at the various places that you were writing about?

Well I certainly went to look at them, but I am not sure whether that is in contrast to many Ph.D. theses - I mean Shula’s [Marks, who taught at SOAS, University of London] students like William Beinart, Pat Harries, Phil Bonner, Peter Delius, Jeff Guy, all that lot went to see places they were writing about and did quite a lot of oral history, which I never did or hardly any.

⁴¹ The thesis was completed in 1969 and published in 2010. It is accompanied with a Preface by Ciraj Rassoool, and an Introduction by Robert Ross: ‘Martin Legassick, the Griqua and South Africa’s Historiographical Revival: An Appreciation.’ M. Legassick, *The politics of a South African frontier: The Griqua, the Sotho-Tswana, and the missionaries, 1780-1840* (Basel, 2010).

Why didn't you?

I could have spent more time in Kokstad and I might have learned something, but part of it was skepticism and part being chased by the South African Special Branch. Which was our own fault. I was travelling with a man called Jeff Lewenberg, an anthropologist who worked on the Le Fleur Griquas and we arrived in Kokstad when the Kokstad advertiser was asking for suggestions as to how to celebrate the 100th anniversary of the foundation of the town and we wrote a letter to the Kokstad advertiser, which went more or less like this: "Dear madam, when, on the occasion of the 50th anniversary of the foundation of Kokstad, the son of the first missionary, a man called Dower, gave a sermon in the Griqua church with the text: 'The wells that were delved by your fathers have been filled in by the philistines.' In view of the recent expulsion of the Griquas in the centre of Kokstad under the Group Areas Act, might we suggest that a similar service is held and might we suggest the text: 'and has this place, which was built in my name become a den of robbers.'" The South African police did not actually appreciate this and followed us around East Griqualand for two or three days. This was 1972, at the end of high apartheid.

You refer to various historians who you consider to be your contemporaries: Beinart, Harries, Guy... You are the only one who is not South African.

Phil Bonner was brought up in Kenya, Kevin Shillington is not South African - but, yes Colin Bundy, Charles van Onselen, slightly later Saul Dubow, Deborah Posel, Susie Newton King and Bill Nasson are all South Africans. Indeed, very few of us were not South Africans, and most of the ones who were not went to live there. I reckon that in 1994 I was one of about two or three serious South African historians who weren't eligible to vote, one way or the other.

So going back in time you completed your Ph.D. in 1974?

Yes, just before my 25th birthday.

How did you end up in Leiden?

When I got my Ph.D., probably because I was not very efficient at those sort of things, I did not manage to organise myself a research fellowship in Cambridge or in Oxford. There were not that many postdocs around anyway. I was in that stage keeping myself in beer money by working in the Harrods perfume and cosmetics department (moving boxes around, I did not sell the stuff). I decided that this was not a good thing to do in the long term, and thought I might as well do the same in Holland and learn Dutch in the meantime. So I did. I moved around flowers in the Aalsmeer flower auction when I needed money and said hello to the people in Leiden and after a while got some sort of job translating

into English and slowly worked my way in, I think it took me 19 years to get a *vaste aanstelling* [permanent position], something like that anyway.

So, in 1975 you got your first job at the history department?

Yes, by the end of 1975 I started editing and translating. The Series - Comparative Studies in Overseas History - were publications of the *werkgroep* [seminar group] History of European Expansion and Reactions, later called IGEER.⁴² The 'reactions' were included in the title but not taken too seriously.

That means that you were present at the birth of Itinerario.

Yes! And I edited for two or three years, mainly with George Winius, and I did some of these interviews. I did Mathieu Schoffeleers, Dharma Kumar, Clifford Geertz, among others. There is little to say about it. We sat in a room in the history department and chatted for one and a half hours as one does with interviews.

Geertz interests us, because we wanted to work out what, or why you take the approaches you do take to history. We think of you as an eclecticist, but others might say other things. And you have just spoken about Clifford Geertz, who has an interesting approach to history. Looking at your own career, would you say there is a constant and what would that constant be?

The virtual constant is that I have been trying to understand colonial Cape Colony and people who left it and were in connection with it - take the Griqua book, the thesis, is just outside the Cape Colony, but it was completely dominated by the Cape Colony - the problem with the book is that it had a whole set of hypotheses, which depended on knowing about the Cape Colony, which I didn't, so I decided I needed to find out more about it.⁴³ Then within that, I have looked at the Cape in a whole variety of different ways - economic, demographic, religious, various forms of social, but not a lot of politics. That is the constant - eclecticism - I don't know—most of what I have been doing up till the 1990s, after the thesis, was based on very short visits to South Africa, very short archival bursts in the Cape archives. *Status and Respectability*⁴⁴ was written, if you look carefully, on hardly any archival basis at all, and a lot of the mission stuff was based on published material, because many of the French and

⁴² IGEER stands for: *Instituut voor de Geschiedenis Europese expansie en reacties daarop* (Center for the history of European Expansion and reaction).

⁴³ R. Ross, *Adam Kok's Griquas: A study in the development of stratification in South Africa* (Cambridge, 1976).

⁴⁴ R. Ross, *Status and respectability 1750–1870: A tragedy of manners* (Cambridge, 1999).

German mission journals were at that stage available in Oegstgeest⁴⁵ - and thus even closer to home than the Archives in The Hague - and the archives in The Hague formed the basis for the slavery book, *Cape of Torments*,⁴⁶ and also the economic history with Pieter van Duin.⁴⁷

Indeed, I have gone off on a whole variety of different directions, but within a geographical and temporal unity - I do not know why, it is just what seemed to make sense. And a lot of it, certainly *Status and Respectability* has a lot of anthropology, but not Geertz. Also not Adam Kuper,⁴⁸ though I was close to him when he was here. I would say that a lot of the stuff I have done has been about finding individual stories which fit to illustrate a particular pattern. Certainly the slave book is full of individual stories. *Status and Respectability* is, to some extent. Adam Kok⁴⁹ is at the beginning and certainly the *Kat River* book.⁵⁰ On the other hand, I can add up and so I am quite happy with numbers and am very happy with maps. It is the relationship between individual stories and the world of social events, which very often interests me. And then the more general books, the *Concise History of South Africa* and the *History of Clothing* came basically because people asked me to do them.⁵¹

So your excursion into global history was on assignment?

Yes, I got this letter from Polity [press] saying: "Dear Dr. Ross, we have this series with books about various things and we would very much like you to write a history of clothing." I am not quite sure why they asked me, it was fairly soon after *Status and Respectability*, and once I stopped laughing - those who remember how I was dressed in the 1990s and 1980s will understand - I began to think yes, one can do something really quite interesting about that. So I did.

⁴⁵ The archives of the Dutch protestant mission were then located in Oegstgeest, they have since moved to the Utrecht provincial and town archives (Het Utrechts archief).

⁴⁶ R. Ross, *Cape of Torments: Slavery and resistance in South Africa* (London, 1983).

⁴⁷ P. van Duin and R. Ross, *The economy of the Cape colony in the eighteenth century*, Intercontinenta, no. 7. Leiden: Center for the history of European expansion (1987).

⁴⁸ Adam Kuper was professor in Anthropology in Leiden between 1976-1985, after which he moved to Brunel University. He has worked mainly on Southern Africa.

⁴⁹ Ross, *Adam Kok's Griquas*.

⁵⁰ R. Ross, *The borders of race in colonial South Africa: The Kat River Settlement, 1829-1856* (Cambridge, 2014).

⁵¹ R. Ross, *Clothing: A Global History; or the Imperialists' New Clothes* (Cambridge, 2008); R. Ross, *A concise history of South Africa* (Cambridge, 1999).

When I [Jan-Bart Gewald] was an undergraduate I remember you once talking about clothing in class and sort of saying "clothing is a conscious choice and signals who you are."

It does not signal who you are, as much as it signals who you want other people to think you are.

One of the things that strikes us - when you read Cape of Torments, there is an incredible anger in the writing, an anger, which is right there on the surface, at the top, and which disappears from your later work.

Kat River was not quite as angry? I don't know, if it is how you read it, it is how it is.

Kat River is subtle.

Yes, Cape of Torments is not subtle. I am just trying to remember the details as to when Cape of Torments got written - how much of that is a personal thing, how much of that is from spending several months reading court cases with people getting put to death for whatever they did, which is not likely to make one happy about the thing, and how much is my experience of living for short periods of time in South Africa. Though I never lived there for more than nine months at a time. But then, it is probably a consequence of maturation, Cape of Torments was published when I was thirty-three.

A totally different question: How did you manage to steer clear of the back biting and incredible feuding that existed among South African historians in the 1980s and 1990s?

Well that is because I was not a South African historian, it makes a lot of difference.

And yet you are the most respected of the historians of South Africa.

Maybe... Well, as I said I did not have to refight the rugby matches between Bishops [Bishops Diocesan College] and SACS [South African College Schools]. These are two major secondary schools in Cape Town, to which a number of my colleagues went and that competition is still there. It is that we know who went to Bishops and who went to SACS. But I did not have the fight going back to my youth and the colonial Cape work that I was doing was somewhat away from others. Also, I am not a particularly combative sort of type, and I mean those debates were a lot about politics by some other name, continuation of politics by other means, the Cambridge History of South Africa describes its history - I

know because I wrote it - and in that sense I did not participate. I did not need, in the same way, to demonstrate that clearly who I was and where I came from.

But that doesn't mean that the type of history that you wrote was apolitical.

You can't get a more political book than Cape of Torments. No, I was not apolitical, but I was not part of any given sect and that was the sort of way I worked. I was not a theoretician either, which made life easier, in the sense of the way some of them were theoreticians. I did not enter into the massive Marxist debates, mainly because I could not understand them, but I am not sure if all participants could...

Whereas your work is very much informed by theory, anthropological theory mostly.

Yes, I suppose so, such as symbolism. But that anthropological theory varies and that gets absorbed by osmosis. I got slightly more theoretical as I got older.

You are undoubtedly the most productive historian of South Africa of your generation, why is that?

I think I have three things which mean that I work very efficiently as historian. First, I read at the speed of light - I once found one of these books saying "read better read faster" and I did the test at the end and discovered I read twice as fast as the best possible result they suggested. Secondly, I have a very good memory. Thirdly, I somehow learned to write in a draft and a half, most of the time. I don't know how that happened, but I think a lot of that had to do with being brought up listening to good English prose at least once a week. Anyone who has been brought up in the old days of the Anglican Church recalls saying general confession once a week, with the classic sentences "we have done those things which we ought not to have done and we have left undone those things which we ought to have done." It does not matter about the message, it is a wonderful sentence with one word of more than one syllable - "and there is no health in us"—it goes on. You cannot be a postmodernist if you have done that, or a theoretical Marxist. Well, you probably can but then you were not listening.

So you are basically saying it is because of your background, because of your parents, you are a Bildungsbürger.

I was brought up with my sisters in an academic family and that was as good an academic education as you can get. I went to a high-class academic English public school and then to Cambridge. That made it a lot easier and as I said, learning what an English sentence sounds like helps.

Since the 1970s you have been returning to South Africa regularly in a turbulent period. How did you experience that and how is that reflected in your work?

How one experiences such changes? It is obviously a much less tense place than it was when I first arrived. The first weekend I arrived in Cape Town, on a Sunday morning all the lefties of Cape Town were woken up at five in the morning and house searched, nothing more than that, I don't think. These were academics, Ph.D.'s and researchers, basically UCT [University of Cape Town] left.

So, I mean South Africa is a much easier place to live in than it used to be. You still have a reasonable chance of getting murdered or being wiped out in a car crash. I must admit that I have never experienced violence in South Africa ever, you must know where not to go, and possibly I have been naïve. And the amount of change at the top, the political top, is considerable to some extent, but if you are not racist the change is very little, because the society has not changed very much. It has just got a lot of Black faces at the top, which were not there, if you don't notice it. Well of course you have to notice, but if you ignore that, you wonder what has changed: Bishops and SACS still exist, there are still people who make money from tenders for the telephone books as Verwoerd's cousins did. That the National Party got subsumed in the ANC shows that there is absolutely no difference ... which it really did.⁵²

*We looked at your thesis and thought of your latest book, *The Borders of Race* and noticed parallels between the books. But, the circumstances under which you could do research there were different, you weren't chased by the police this time.*

I wasn't chased by the police around Kat River, but we were certainly involved in political competition. It is a very, very tense place still, I mean we never quite worked out whether it was the mayor who dropped his main opponent of the Seymour Dam or whether it was the mayor who got dropped, but there was an enormous amount of communal tension in the valley between the Xhosa and the descendants of the settlers. That is what we were pulled into. The place is tense and highly politicised because there is a competition for scarce fertile irrigable land and that still goes on. Obviously the relationship between Adam Kok's Griquas and *The Borders of Race* is considerable. In some ways it is practiced and the theme is very much the same and a number of characters appear in both, so even at that level the connection is there.

⁵² National Party, founded in 1915, in power from 1948 to 1994, and the party that implemented apartheid in South Africa. ANC (African National Congress), founded in 1912, in power following the holding of the first non-racial democratic elections in South Africa in 1994.

Historians are not supposed to predict the future, but they always do.

Probably better than others. What is going to happen in Southern Africa - probably more of the same in the coming ten years and I cannot see any serious shift in the political dispensation in the relatively near future. Part of that means that the current political dispensation backs up, and profits from the current economic dispensation even though people who run the economy are not the people who run the politics. Some of them may be, there are clearly people who form the bridges, Ramaphosa and Sexwale, but the people who run the politics are sufficiently dependent on the people who run the economy, not to cock up the economy in the way it has happened in Zimbabwe. At least that is my probably unduly optimistic view.

Would you attribute that to the rapid growth of the African middle class?

Yes. The black middle class has an enormous stake in its future. The black middle class is at least two times as large as the white middle class. Those are the people for whom the ANC in government works, which is what pisses off people who vote for the Economic Freedom Front of Julius Malema. But I think that they want their own part of the pie, they are not going to let the pie disappear. And there is this incredibly complicated relationship between the black middle class and the ANC top, as I see it, basically because the ANC cannot say they are supporting the middle class, and have to keep their relationship with the unions and the communist party running. But nevertheless it is good for the ANC to have people like Malema around. When they were still in the ANC it was a lot easier for them, because he could shoot his mouth off and pretend, and everyone thought that the ANC was being radical whilst it was just getting on with its business.

Yet it has delivered over the past twenty years rather more than could be expected of it: quite a lot, in terms of electrification, social grants have been enormous and boomed many poor communities. There has been a form of redistribution towards the bottom of society, which perhaps does not show up in income or inequality measures, but there are other things like health care and education. These are unquantifiable forms of income which probably have improved the lot of South Africans substantially. There are obviously many very poor South Africans still and there will continue to be so in the foreseeable future. But I do not think it will explode - famous last words.

One of the other extremely important things is the end of formal racial discrimination.

That makes an enormous difference. I think there is a lot more social mobility than people realise.

In the introduction to Beyond the Pale⁵³ you reflect on questions of continuity and change as you did just now. In the same text you passionately declare your love for South Africa - so what is it that you love about South Africa?

I love the countryside, I love the country - I love landscapes anyway, the South African landscape has always gotten me and I love trying to work out how society works. There is also the sense in which South Africa is a place of incredible social complications, and as I said nothing has changed. Obviously that is not really true, but there is an enormous amount of social complications and fascinating people around them. Understand them and make sense of them, that is what I love.

You retired last year, but you did not stop working of course. We know you are working on three projects at the moment, can you elaborate?

One of them is a spin off to the Kat River book. It is an anthology of Khoi political thought, which is to see what there is when putting it together. I have collected 85000 words of text so it will get cut down - Not that I have written it myself, these are various texts, which together give a running commentary on how the lower class saw colonial South African racists from about the 1820s to the 1870s, and I will have to contextualise it and write little essays on why it is that they were objecting Cape separatism and such. And the second one, which I should have finished long ago, is not a Cape book. It is on black material culture: it is about tables and chairs, knives and forks and those sorts of things and how they have been adopted in black homes, which is not easy to find literature on. A lot is going to be based on market research from the 1970s onwards and before that just picking things up in various places. The third, which I haven't done much on yet, apart from collecting a certain amount of information, is an ecological history of a single valley in the Eastern Cape, the Gamtoos. This is about the work of the developmental state and about solving ecological problems, but also it is about missions and such like ... I shall have to go and do some interviews and find someone to work for me in the deeds office in Cape Town. It is about an area, which since the 1970s has become a very flourishing agricultural district. Before that, for a number of reasons, it was rather run down, poor white. Since the 1970s it became very rich on the basis of Afrikaner economic empowerment. After 1994 it benefitted enormously from 1994, the end of sanctions. These are citrus producers, and it is an island of high productivity and a certain amount of wealth and prosperity certainly at the farms and substantial employment.

⁵³ R. Ross, *Beyond the Pale. Essays on the history of colonial South Africa* (Hanover etc., 1993).

Moving from South Africa to the Netherlands, to Leiden where you spent quite a large part of your life. You entered academia there through the history department. But you managed to put African Studies on the agenda in Leiden.

I have lived in Leiden longer than anywhere else. Yes, I set up an African studies degree course - in fact I think I set up five degree courses in my life at various levels. I have never quite worked out why African studies as a degree course never attracted many students. There are difficulties about area studies, which count for African studies, Southeast Asian studies and South Asian studies alike, slightly less for China and Japan now, slightly less for Latin America as well. Somehow they do not attract very many students, at the top end in the research masters we get ten students a year which is not enough. But over the last years Africa has been given a larger place within the history department, which is a good development. Most of my career, the history department did not look for cooperation. When I was working for African studies, they had to make use of me from time to time, but they tried to discourage that because of the way finances worked. It is cynical, but that is how it was. The credits of students who came to me, were not counted towards the history department; that changed about five years ago. But it is still ridiculous that Africa is now within history and China is not, but that also has to do with how the Sinologists think about these things. They do not see themselves in the first place as historians, but as Sinologists.

Do you feel that academia has changed much over time? You have revealed yourself as someone who emphasises continuities over change but ...

Leiden has changed since I arrived in 1975, it has got better. It got much more professional, which in general is a good thing. I suspect that the power of what a friend of mine calls the crows - because they walk about in black gowns - has decreased somewhat. This is a good thing. There were a few people who, when I first arrived, were too powerful. I benefitted from one of them enormously but that is another matter, not that I approved of it. There are those who I hated and those who I enormously appreciated, though I did not get anything out of them. Overall Leiden has become much more professional and much more productive. In part because there are some brownie points to be gained by being productive in terms of writing, which in the past there were not. And now slowly Leiden is beginning to realise that the university has the broadest selection of historians probably outside North America and they bloody well ought to make use of it, but they do not, not enough. The only places which probably have a wider geographical range of historians is UCLA and Wisconsin, and that's about it and this is not exploited enough.

Is it policy that creates institutional boundaries?

It is not so much policy; the boundaries are internal too. But on the other hand, if you look objectively what the potential strength is of Leiden, or of our institutions, it is in the breadth that could and should be exploited. The linguists managed to do so in a way that the historians never did. The original IGEER [Institute for the History of European Expansion and Reaction] idea might have worked, but in the end it was too Eurocentric to get everyone on board. Henk Wesseling had the right idea, but in the end there were some historians within the history department who rubbed some who were outside the department up the wrong way. Which meant that the symbiosis which was possible never happened. Part of it was personality, part of it was the institutional question. But whatever the linguists or the sinologists thought they were doing, they did not realise that what they were doing was so close to what was being done at the history department. That has to some extent changed, but probably not enough. There was a potential there that was not exploited.

In relation to your last remark on Eurocentrism among historians we have one more question. Looking at your work, you have experimented with a great range of sources, through a variety of approaches. We already spoke about your eclecticism. Now African history, and of course this counts for other regions too, is a difficult history to write. Often one has to depend, maybe not exclusively, but to a large extent, on European primary sources. Do you feel that you have developed a way to tackle this problem? And, on a lighter note, what then is your favourite source?

No I have not. I have worked almost entirely on a colonial society and you have then to think about how collections of written sources, which are filtered, which came into existence through the colonial society, through the colonial government, can tell you things about what is going on among non-colonial people, basically Africans and slaves and that is essentially what 19th and 20th century African history is about, in a technical sense. And the idea that you can't actually say something about the subaltern classes of colonial society, because the sources are colonial is of course a mistake. It is one-sided, but I have not found any better way out of it than anyone else. And I have always been a historian of colonial societies rather than of Africa, rather than someone who deals with Africa as before colonial times.

My favourite source is the landscape. The most enjoyable bits of being a historian I have had are walking and driving about various bits of southern Africa and working out how they came to be, to look the way they do. Trying to reconstruct irrigation systems and such like. The W. G. Hoskins type of history is

wonderful as such.⁵⁴ I don't manage to do enough of it now, I spent more time reading archives and books and newspapers than I do walking around the countryside, but that does not mean to say I prefer doing it.

⁵⁴ W.G. Hoskins, *The making of the English landscape* (London, 1955).

Does Gender Matter? Wilhelmine Stompjes, the Moravian Missionaries and Gendered Power Relations on the North Eastern Cape Frontier

Anne Kelk Mager

From 1828 Wilhelmine Stompjes worked as interpreter, cook and missionary assistant for the Moravians at Shiloh on the north eastern frontier. Today, few people at Shiloh know of this remarkable woman. Interviewed in July 2015, the pastor was shocked to learn that the tombstone in the 'German era' cemetery adorned the grave of an African woman. Born to Umgenqa and Notono Mvulani in about 1790, Wilhelmine's first name changed at baptism and her second, at marriage. In her *lebenslauf*, a memoir which was read at her funeral and published after her death, Wilhelmine Stompjes records how she switched languages and registers in confrontation with angry African chiefs or racist male colleagues.¹ She makes it very clear that her identity as an African woman was important to her and that it informed her work as interlocutor on the frontier.²

¹ For more on leading African women on this frontier see J. Hodgson, *Princess Emma* (Craighall, 1983); S. Marks, ed., *Not Either an Experimental Doll, the Separate Worlds of three South African Women: Correspondence of Lily Moya, Mabel Palmer, Sibusisiwe Makhanya* (Pietmaritzburg, 1987); Moravian Mission Archives, Herrnhut, Germany 'Biography (Lebenslauf) of Wilhelmine Stompjes, Kaffer-

Robert Ross introduced me to Wilhelmine. This tribute to him tells her story. There is not much that will be new to him but I hope that in this telling I am able to animate something of Wilhelmine's character, open up possibilities for interpretation of her past and demonstrate that gender mattered in an intensely conscious way to her.

Wilhelmine's *lebenslauf* may be seen as an edited auto-obituary that followed the contours of a Moravian template. As a genre, Moravian memoir writing has been extensively analysed by Katherine Faull and Gisella Mettele drawing on eighteenth century memoirs at the Moravian settlement of Bethlehem in Pennsylvania.³ Moravian memoirs were constructed narratives, 'a conglomerate of selected memories', never univocal and often heavily edited by others.⁴ Writing a memoir was both a secular and spiritual act; it was to tell a tale of everyday experience that was at the same time a tale of personal spirituality, a spirituality of the 'heart'.⁵ Emotion and personal experience were important for the interpretation of religion in a Moravian sense. The Moravians believed that religion was a matter of feeling and will rather than reason; in the words of Katherine Faull, 'it is the heart and soul that act as the organs that distinguish what the human being needs and does not need'.⁶ Religion was not a doctrine but a 'spirit, an attitude, a way of life rather than a specific doctrine'.⁷

Writing a *lebenslauf* usually involved multiple authorial interventions. In Wilhelmine's memoir, Brother Bonatz' controlling hand dominates much of the discourse; through the composite of their writing Wilhelmine's *lebenslauf* becomes a Moravian story. As interlocutor and editor, Bonatz ensured that her memoir addressed an appropriate Moravian spirituality. Gisela Mettele explains

Interpreter and National Helper, passed away in Shilo on 9 July 1863'. Translated by Annette Behrensmeyer (Hereafter Stompjes, *Lebenslauf*).

² For discussion on the role of interlocutors in colonial Africa, see B.N. Lawrance, E.L. Osborn, and R.L. Roberts, eds, *Intermediaries, Interpreters, and Clerks: African employers in the Making of Colonial Africa* (Madison, 2006); Levine, *A Living Man from Africa*, 49-73; Sekibakiba Peter Lekgoathi, Local Interlocutors, Informants and the Making of an Archive on the "Transvaal Ndebele", 1930-1989', *Journal of African History* 50,1 (2009), 61-80; V.C. Malherbe, *Krotoa, called "Eva": A Woman Between* (Rondebosch, 1990); J.C. Wells, "Eva's Men: Gender and Power in the establishment of nthe Cape of Good Hope 1652-74", *Journal of African History*, 39 (1998), 417-437; P. Scully and C. Crais, *Sara Baartman and the Hottentot Venus: A Ghost story and a Biography* (Princeton, 2009); P. Scully, 'Malintzin, Pocahontas, and Krotoa: Indigenous Women and Myth Models of the Atlantic World', *Journal of Colonialism and Colonial History* 6, 3 (2005), 1-28.

³ K.M. Faull, *Moravian Women's Memoirs: Their Related Lives 1750-1820* (Syracuse: Syracuse University press, 1997); K.M. Faull, 'Relating Sisters' Lives: Moravian Women's Writings from 18th Century America', *Transactions of the Moravian Historical Society*, 31 (2000), 11-27.

⁴ Mettele, 'Constructions of the Religious Self', *Moravian Conversion and transatlantic Communication*, *Journal of Moravian History*, 2 (Spring 2007), 19.

⁵ Mettele, 'Constructions of the Religious Self', 11.

⁶ Faull, *Moravian Women's Memoirs*, xxviii.

⁷ Mettele, 'Constructions of the Religious Self', 19.

that this was to be expressed as ‘consciousness of individual sinfulness and unworthiness and the desire for redemption’ rather than as religiosity.⁸ But Bonatz would not allow this spiritual narrative to overshadow the richness of Wilhelmine’s story of experiences in the mission field of the eastern Cape, for such experiences Mettele confirms, were highly valued for publication.⁹

Bonatz was far more than editor; his interventions were informed by a lifelong personal relationship with Wilhelmine. As a young woman, Wilhelmine had been employed as his nanny at the Moravian mission at Genadendal in the western Cape and accompanied him to the north eastern frontier when he became a missionary. In these years she served as his Xhosa language instructor and interpreter. Bonatz’ life was intertwined with Wilhelmine’s; her experiences became the substance of the reports he published on behalf of Shiloh. He took it upon himself to elaborate on her version of events in her memoir.

From the perspective of the social historian, Wilhelmine’s memoir can be read as a personal response to events and as historical narrative since writing a Moravian memoir meant positioning one’s authorial voice at the intersection of history and autobiography.¹⁰ For Wilhelmine, both history and life were bound up with gender, particularly the ways in which men’s attitudes and behaviour hurt women and circumscribed their worth. While this is also evident in the accounts of Princess Emma and Lily Moya written by Janet Hodgson and Shula Marks respectively, Wilhelmine’s emancipation is presented as enabled by Moravian teachings and as informing her identification with Moravianism.¹¹ Her memoir follows a path of unfolding gender consciousness, revealing an awareness and commitment that in many ways surpasses the narrative of growing spirituality in her life.

From her late teens or early twenties when she moved to the Genadendal mission, Wilhelmine lived consciously outside the indigenous gender order in which she had spent her youth. Much of her memoir is taken up with her

⁸ Faul, *Moravian Women’s Memoirs*, p.xxxii; Mettele, ‘Constructions of the Religious Self’, 22; Elizabeth Zorb, ‘Reflections on Moravian Pietism’, *Pennsylvania History: A Journal of Mid-Atlantic Studies*, 25:2 (April 1958), 116; for more on Moravian worldview, see Barnet Richling, “‘Very serious Reflections’”: Inuit Dreams of Salvation and Loss in Eighteenth Century Labrador’, *Ethnohistory*, 36:2 (1989), 148-169; T. Keegan, ed., and F.R. Baudert (transl), *Moravians in the Eastern Cape 1828-1928: Four Accounts of Moravian Mission Work on the Eastern Cape Frontier* (Cape Town, 2004), xv-xviii.

⁹ Mettele, ‘Constructions of the Religious Self’, 19.

¹⁰ K. Faul, ‘Writing a Moravian Memoir: the intersection of History and Autobiography’, [https://katiefaull.files.wordpress.com/Seminar paper given on Monday May 11 2015](https://katiefaull.files.wordpress.com/Seminar%20paper%20given%20on%20Monday%20May%2011%202015).

¹¹ J. Hodgson, *Princess Emma* (Craighall, 1983); Shula Marks, ed., *Not Either an Experimental Doll: The Separate Worlds of Three South African Women: Correspondence of Lily Moya, Mabel Palmer and Sibusisiwe Makhanya* (Pietermaritzburg, KillieCampbell Library Publications No 2, 1987). For a critique of white biographical writing on black women see Desiree Lewis, ‘Black South African Women and Biography under Apartheid’, Paper presented to Conference on Discourses on Difference and Oppression, 19-22 July 2000.

journey away from this gender order. Her narrative suggests that she embraced Moravianism and mission life in large part for the opportunity to escape the oppression she had endured as an African woman. As a mission helper she was also able to enter the public arena in ways that only African chiefs could.¹² While Wilhelmine constantly confronted the chiefs demanding that they put an end to polygamy and violence, her efforts were both limited by and caught up in the restlessness that characterised the north eastern frontier.¹³ She may have been aware that alternative ways of ordering gender were changing in the vicinity of other mission stations, but it is likely that Wilhelmine's views were confined to what she learned from the rules and routine of the Moravians. Wilhelmine does not write about educating other women on gender matters; there is no indication of the 'sisterhood' that Faull finds in North American mission work. Wilhelmine stands very much alone as an African missionary woman on the eastern Cape frontier where African views on gender were controlled by the chiefs. This precluded the making of a 'gender frontier' as described by historians of Moravianism in Pennsylvania.¹⁴

In common with other missionaries on the north eastern Cape frontier, the Moravians held the view that African society set women up as male 'property' with no rights to their children, vulnerable to beating by fathers or husbands, exploited as producers of food and objects of male sexual desire. Informed by the missionaries, the British outlawed practices relating to initiation and sexual exploitation. However, these restrictions did not put a stop to the predatory advances of men, whether individual or collective in action.¹⁵ Defiance of the prohibition against *izeko* (rounding up girls at the behest of the chief for use by

¹² For more on elites women in colonial Africa see Kristin Mann, *Marrying well, Marriage, Status and Social Change among the Educated Elite in Colonial Lagos* (Cambridge, 1985); N.R. Hunt, 'Domesticity and Colonialism in Belgian Africa: Usumburu's Foyer Social, 1946-1960,' *Signs* (1990), 447-474; D. Bethel, 'Womens' Educational Experience under Colonialism: Toward a Diachronic Model', *Signs*, 11:1 (1985), 137-154; I. Amadiume, *Reinventing Africa: Matriarchy, Religion and Culture* (London, 1997 Reprinted 2001); A. L. Stoler, 'Rethinking colonial Categories: European communities and the Boundaries of Rule', *Comparative studies in Society and History*, 31:1 (1989), 134-161.

¹³ For contrasting views on the concept of frontier, see Martin Legassick, *The struggle for the Eastern Cape 1800-1854: subjugation and the roots of South African democracy* (Johannesburg: KMM Review, 2010), whose concept frontier zone is used here rather than the notion of borderlands used by Paul S. Landau, *Popular Politics in the History of South Africa, 1400-1948* (Cambridge, 2010), 3. Borderlands suggests that one form of power is dominant over another.

¹⁴ For elaboration of the notion 'gender frontiers' see Kathleen Brown, 'Brave New Worlds: Women's and Gender History', *William and Mary Quarterly*, 3:50 (April 1993), 316-321; J.T. Merritt, 'Cultural Encounters along a Gender Frontier: Mahican, Delaware, and German Women in Eighteenth Century Pennsylvania', *Pennsylvania History: A journal of Mid-Atlantic Studies*, 67:4 (Autumn 2000), 502.

¹⁵ For a discussion of the *izeko* custom in the run-up to the Kat river rebellion see Ross, p.179. I have wondered if the objective of the defiant revival of the custom was not also an attempt to curtail the confidence young women might have gained through the missionaries..

men) emerged in the build up to the Kat River rebellion.¹⁶ Robert Ross has argued that this defiance served to forge relations between the Kat River rebels and the local chiefs. But it may also be seen as a reassertion of male control over women, a 'taking back' of gendered authority from the missionaries and colonial rulers, a backlash against the increased of women.

Wilhelmine's memoir is strident in its criticism of this gender system, and repeatedly attacks African men's attitudes and behaviour.

The north eastern Cape frontier came into historical view as colonial advance gathered momentum in the first half of the nineteenth century which had earlier been populated by settlements of boers at Cradock, Tarka and in the Stormberg who had moved into the territories of various San, Thembu and Sotho groups. The British identified Bawana, chief of the amaTshatshu whose great place was on the Swart Kei river as the most senior of these chiefs. It was in Bawana's territory that the Moravian mission of Shiloh was established at the behest of the governor. In a bid to stabilise the area and make it attractive for white settlement, the British drew prominent chiefs into a system of treaties making them responsible for handing over all stolen cattle and suspected thieves to the resident British agent. Both the treaty system and British policy were far from stable. In 1836, the British annexed part of the north eastern Cape frontier territory only to rescind the annexation a year later. In 1847, part of the territory was incorporated into the colony and at the end of the war in 1852, a large swathe was seized for the establishment of Queenstown and the settlement of a cordon of whites who had fought in the war.¹⁷ At each of these moments, the Moravian mission at Shiloh and its occupants were rendered vulnerable.

¹⁶ Ross, *Borders of Race*, 177-178.

¹⁷ For more on this frontier, see E.J.C. Wagenaar, *A Forgotten Frontier Zone ; Settlements and Reactions in the Stormberg Area between 1820-1860*. Cape Town: Archives Year Book for South African History 45th year, vol 2, 1982 (Pretoria, 1984)

Shiloh Moravian Mission in relation to Maphasa's Kraal



Map John Hall

Wilhelmine's narrative moves across this space, from colony to frontier to mission station. Prior to her arrival on the north eastern frontier, Wilhelmine spent her life until the age of about twenty in British Kaffraria tracking between the Chumie river near Fort Beaufort where she was born and Graaf Reinett where she worked on successive boer farms. Magistrates were located at the towns but her life was lived for the most part beyond their purview. For the next twenty years, Wilhelmine lived on the Moravian mission at Genadendal in the western Cape. In 1818, she helped to establish the mission at Enon near Uitenhage and in 1828 trekked further north to found Shiloh, a mission station close to the Swart Kei river. In the 1850 frontier war the missionaries were forced to flee Shiloh but returned in 1852. Wilhelmine remained there until her death in 1865.

Wilhelmine's memoir describes a restless childhood. As a small child, she wandered about the colony with her mother's brother to whom she had been

given by her parents. It was common practice for a child to be raised by relatives particularly if they had no children of their own.. Constant movement dominated her life as a girl as she accompanied her uncle (and later, other relatives) who moved about in search of grazing for his cattle. Illness, tiredness and death recur as themes of Wilhelmine's childhood. She wrote that many of her itinerant family members 'fell ill and died' on the road and that she 'fell ill, too'. She was often exhausted in the evenings as they sat by the fire and on one occasion she 'became very tired and the man had to stop and set up a kraal'. Her memoir describes meeting with her mother shortly before she died casting Wilhelmine into such sadness and depression that her guardian at the time 'was worried [she] would die from sadness'.

Her state of mind was not improved by her experience of working on boer farms where she and her relatives were maltreated. In one instance, she said that 'the son of the boer' gave her so much intoxicating liquor that she fell into a ditch. She also described how a 'boer's wife' who was 'always very mean to us, hurried us to work and us children had to beg for butter every so many days'. When they wanted to leave this place, the boer assaulted her uncle. Carrying two younger children in her arms, Wilhelmine ran away so that he could not 'shoot at us'. She became adept at fleeing, escaping during meal times, at night or 'while they were milking the cows'.¹⁸

The flow of Wilhelmine's narrative conforms to the Moravian view that religious conversion was a lifelong journey on hostile terrain, and that childhood was an important time in the growth of individual spirituality. Her *lebenslauf* suggests that her first religious experience occurred after her mother's death, when she lay in the grass tearfully watching the clouds. 'What else was this than the moving of my heavenly father?' she asked.¹⁹ 'Learning the language of conversion was in itself part of the conversion process' according to Gisela Mettele. With the editorial help of Brother Bonatz, Wilhelmine's memoir became peppered with this language.

Pairing her consciousness of sin with her awareness of female oppression, Wilhelmine described the indigenous gender system of the world she was born into as 'sinful'. Her exploration of these interlinked themes begins when she articulates a realization that female sexuality is dangerous. As a young woman she intervened to protect a friend with whom she had escaped from a boer's farm. Her friend, Wilhelmine wrote, rendered herself vulnerable when she entered into a 'private conversation' with an African man. Wilhelmine confronted her and warned her about 'what African men do to single women' and on her insistence, the two young women ran away stopping only when they

¹⁸ Stompjes, *Lebenslauf*, 55.

¹⁹ Stompjes, *Lebenslauf*, 51-52.

felt safe – at the camp fire of a disabled man and his Khoi wife deep in the mountains.

In Wilhelmine's narrative, sexuality was not an awakening in herself, but a condition that rendered young women vulnerable to predatory men. Wilhelmine's account of the first time she was approached by a man is not a tale of carnal knowledge and sin but of righteous rejection of the idea of being traded as a chattel. Approached by a Khoi man, her boer employer agreed that he could marry her in exchange for three 'war orphans' which her memoir notes were plentiful at this time. Incensed, Wilhelmine retorted: 'I said to him that I was not his slave, that he could simply sell, and that I would not stay with him any longer, but go to stay at a mission or at my aunts.'²⁰ Soon after this, she ran away at night and met up with her relatives on the farm of Coenrad Buys (Coenraad de Buys), a former boer outlaw who was given amnesty and had become a born again Christian.

Wilhelmine saw Buys as a good man. While he lived with a large number of African wives, he seemed to treat them well and she commented that he 'did everything in his power to awaken a Christian lifestyle on his farm. He held assemblies and often confessed his sins under tears, often saying, "We Boers are called Christians but what are we doing for God? Only our skin is Christian because it is white!"' He also tried to educate his large household and held 'school classes' in winter. On Buys' farm, Wilhelmine settled down for a while, learned to read Dutch and studied the bible. She did not berate her employer for selling brandy but rather condemned the Khoi for drinking it, confessing that she 'developed a great dislike against' those who drank and felt threatened by them. 'Whose hand was it that held me those days?' she asks, 'Oh, it was the hand of my God; if this hand did not hold me, I would have turned into a beast like Nebukadnezar! How great is God's mercy! They wanted to see me in hell, but you, oh God, heard my prayers and saved me.'

Wilhelmine remained on Buys' farm for three years and married one of his 'coloured sons'.²¹ The couple moved to the Moravian mission at Genadendal where their only child died in infancy. When Buys wanted to return to his father's farm, Wilhelmine refused to accompany him. Her justification for her defiance is presented as another milestone in her journey to spiritual consciousness, individual emancipation and gender awareness. 'It is written that a woman will leave mother and father to go with her husband, but it does not say that she must leave god to follow her husband' she declared, adding

²⁰ Stompjes, *Lebenslauf*, 56.

²¹ Wilhelmine also learned Dutch while living on Coenraad de Buys' farm in the Langkloof and was baptised after moving to the Moravian missionary at Genadendal. See B. Krüger, *The Pear Tree Blossoms* (Genadendal, 1966).

that although her husband came back for her, she had heard that he had married another woman and refused to follow him. 'I am staying here. God will take care of me and I also do not want to make your other wife unhappy' she told him.

While Wilhelmine broke with Moravian marriage rules by not obeying her husband, commitment to God before obedience in marriage seems to have been acceptable to the missionaries. Indeed, marriage to Christ had a place in Moravian pietism and the German missionaries at Genadendal who had spent time at Herrnhut where the founding Moravian brotherhood (Brüdergemeine) were likely to have debated the meaning of marriage, sexuality and spirituality. Count Nikolaus Zinzendorf, religious (rather than theological) leader of the Moravians believed that marriage was a duty in the service of God and of the community.²² Women had a special role to play since they were more 'receptive vessels for the feeling that constituted religion' than were men; they were also more faithful, responsive and watchful. In these terms, Wilhelmine was a good Moravian despite having refused to follow her husband.

Living at Genadendal as a single woman (she refers to herself as a widow), Wilhelmine took care of Adolf Kuster and his sibling Adolf Bonatz. She was baptized, given the name Wilhelmine and had a house built for herself. Wilhelmine was happy and secure for the first time in her life but said little about this time in her memoir. Rather, Brother Bonatz intervened to comment on her spiritual progress and her contribution to his own life. This was a 'blessed' time, writes Bonatz, when 'the Lord uncovered all her sins and showed Himself to her as her Saviour'.²³ He and his brother were very 'attached to her as children' and he remembered that her favourite topic of conversation was 'God's love for sinners'.²⁴ Wilhelmine repeated this idea of God's love for sinners and often described her 'own people' as sinners much in need of missionary help.

Wilhelmine's life at Genadendal came to an end when Brother La Trobe asked her to accompany a pioneering group to start a new mission near Uitenhage, not far from her own people. Wilhelmine did not immediately jump at the opportunity. If she was reluctant to leave the security and comfort of her own home at Genadendal, she did not write this in her memoir. It was not acceptable for Moravians to submit to 'selfish desires'. Wilhelmine expressed her anxiety in gender terms. 'I was worried to come along as a widow because I

²² C.D. Atwood, 'Sleeping in the Arms of Christ: Sanctifying Sexuality in the Eighteenth Century Moravian Church', *Journal of the History of Sexuality*, 8, 1 (July 1997), 25-51.

²³ Stompjes, *Lebenslauf*, 60.

²⁴ Stompjes, *Lebenslauf*, 61.

knew the amaXhosa and their habits'.²⁵ In the end, she relented, agreeing to help the missionaries 'to work on the African's souls'.²⁶ Her anticipated difficulties as a single woman were forestalled by a marriage proposal from Carl Stompjes a gardener at Genadendal. Carl Stompjes, a Khoi man, had been a soldier in the Dutch army during their second occupation of the colony and when the British took over the Cape, he moved to Genadendal. Wilhelmine accepted his proposal and Carl moved to Enon, a twenty eight day journey from Genadendal.

At Enon Wilhelmine felt surrounded by racial intolerance. Relations between whites (boers and missionaries) and blacks (amaXhosa and some Khoi) in the Uitenhage district were fraught with tension; stock raids turned violent and anticolonial resistance erupted into war soon after the missionaries arrived in the area. Wilhelmine struggled to persuade the Brethren and their boer allies to restrain themselves. Her memoir reconstructs a conversation with Brother Schmidt:

Brother Schmidt turned to me with the remark: 'Did you hear that the Xhosa are killing again?' I replied: 'Yes, the Xhosa are killing and the Whites are shooting people dead! Is that not killing too?' Brother Schmidt did not like this answer'.²⁷

A few months later, the men of Enon set out to pursue stock thieves. Wilhelmine wrote that

'Brother Schmidt, too, reached for a long stick to go with the men and follow the Xhosa. When I saw that, I asked him to stay, because the Xhosa were no dogs, so one could not beat them with a stick'.²⁸

Wilhelmine's narrative elaborates on white peoples' impatience with the sinfulness of black people. When boer Bernard who had come to help the missionaries bragged that he was on his way to kill her people Wilhelmine reprimanded him. 'The Xhosa are God's creation too' she said. To his contemptuous complaint that the Xhosa preachers 'joined in everything, drinking, playing, and dancing', she responded that since the whites had had God's word 'for much longer' they should understand the nature of sinfulness and how to overcome it. Did he, Bernard, not know the prayer of baptism, 'May you not live but may Christ live in you'?²⁹ These conversations demonstrate Wilhelmine's frustration with the racial arrogance of the missionaries and the extent to which they relied on the protection of the boers.

²⁵ Stompjes, *Lebenslauf*, 63.

²⁶ Stompjes, *Lebenslauf*, 63.

²⁷ Stompjes, *Lebenslauf*, 63-64.

²⁸ Stompjes, *Lebenslauf*, 64-66.

²⁹ Stompjes, *Lebenslauf*, 66.

In 1827, following an approach from the governor to establish a new mission station in the north eastern Cape frontier, Brother Hallbeck left Genadendal on a reconnaissance trip. En route he stopped at Enon and asked Wilhelmine and Carl if they would join the pioneering party that would establish the mission to the 'Tamboekies'.³⁰ Again, Wilhelmine was hesitant but urged by her husband and the missionaries, she agreed.

Wilhelmine was to play a critically important role on the pioneering mission both for her fluency in isiXhosa, Dutch and German and also for her ability to interpret social and cultural behaviour for the Moravians. Wilhelmine was accorded special status. She was described not simply as helper in the usual way but as 'national helper'; she was not confined to domestic duties like the other women but worked alongside the white teachers, teaching them isiXhosa and interpreting conversations and cultures for them. As cook, teacher and missionary, she traversed the gender division of labour.³¹

From the start of this pioneering mission, Wilhelmine's memoir tends to focus more intensely on the details of the encounter between the Moravians and Bawana's people, highlighting moments of gendered significance. Wilhelmine and her party arrived on the north eastern frontier in the latter part of 1828. After travelling with their wagons for two months, they camped at the Zwart Kei river that formed the boundary of the colony. Here they awaited the chief's reception. The open plains surrounding the Klipplaat were teeming with game, but there was no sign of people. 'The whole landscape was covered in high grass and bushes and it seemed to be a desert empty of people, inhabited only by wild animals,' she wrote.³² This was a bleak moment for Wilhelmine. 'Where are the Tambookies?' she asked. 'We did not come here for the beautiful landscape, to grow crops and harvest here and have a good time!'³³ After a month of waiting, Bawana turned up. Having requested the British to provide a military post to support him in curbing stock theft in terms of their treaty for which he had signed a treaty, he was not particularly pleased to receive missionaries in their place.

Bawana and the Moravians got off to a bad start and it was not long before Wilhelmine confronted him about his polygamous ways. In a letter to the international Moravian journal, Brother Lemmertz tells this story:

³⁰ The expression Tamboekie was a boer corruption of the San term for abaThembu.

³¹ Stompjes, *Lebenslauf*, 82. For a discussion of the openness of gender boundaries for Moravian women engaged in missionary in Pennsylvania, see J.T. Merritt, 'Cultural Encounters along a Gender Frontier: Mahican, Delaware, and German Women in Eighteenth Century Pennsylvania', *Pennsylvania History: A Journal of Mid-Atlantic Studies*, 67:4 (Autumn 2000).

³² Stompjes, *Lebenslauf*, 71.

³³ Stompjes, *Lebenslauf*, 72.

'Bawana, who has seven wives, offered to sell one of his concubines to our Wilhelmine for a cow. She gave him a very proper answer, and told him that all his proceedings were contrary to the law of God. He answered that if God Almighty forbade such things, he might as well forbid us to eat.'³⁴

One may read Wilhelmine's 'proper response' as a Moravian missionary narrative, but deconstructing the scenario provides insight into Wilhelmine's perspective on gender relations. Bawana would have been aware that Wilhelmine knew that men did not negotiate the exchange of women (or of cattle) with a woman. Was he implying that she was inappropriately assuming the role of a man? Was he simply engaging in the established custom of taunting his adversary and distancing himself from her? What did he make of this articulate, confident African woman who talked back to a chief? Wilhelmine and her Moravian colleagues at the new Shiloh mission conveyed a disregard for the social system in which African women were expected to seek their security, and a lack of empathy for the imperatives of the political and material survival of the Xhosa way of life. This was not what Bawana wanted to hear from his missionaries and the chief would keep his distance. Polygamy made possible a gender division of labour that assigned women to grain cultivation and food preparation, enabling men to concentrate on accumulating cattle.³⁵ Bawana's role as chief was to ensure that this system was reproduced and he wanted the missionaries to respect this imperative.

To Wilhelmine's dismay, even the missionaries' use of technology was seen as a means of augmenting women's labour rather than changing the division of labour. Intrigued at the efficiency of the watermill at Shiloh, she wrote that Bawana's men 'exclaimed: "What a diligent woman is this mill, she works day and night, never gets hungry and drinks only water ... How the Whites do manage to subjugate everything; not only human beings are to be their servants but even water is made to serve their needs."³⁶ Only a handful of elderly folk who were redundant in the Thembu political economy made their way to the mission station. Among them were Bawana's brother Lande who did not have chiefly responsibilities, and the chief's older wives who had become a burden to their co-wives.³⁷

³⁴ Extracts from Letters of Brother John Lemmertz, Klipplaats River, 8th July 1829, 225-220.

³⁵ Women produced sorghum and maize and men accumulated cattle through social exchanges, raiding and rearing.

³⁶ E. van Calker, *A Century of Moravian Mission Work in the Eastern Cape Colony and Transkei, 1828-1928*, T. Keegan, ed., and F.R. Baudert (transl.), *Moravians in the Eastern Cape 1828-1928* (Cape Town, 2004), 29-30.

³⁷ Extracts from Letters of Brother John Lemmertz, 23rd June 1829, p.177; 10th February, 1830, 443; also Br Adolph Bonatz Nov 6th 1832, 178.

In 1833, Bawana was murdered while he was tending his cattle in the veld.³⁸ It was accepted that the murder had been committed by one of the amaGcina living on the frontier, perhaps at the behest of Mtyalela, chief of a group of amaNdgungwana with whom Bawana had a long standing feud. Following common practice, his son, Maphasa engaged a diviner to identify who amongst them had brought this evil upon them. Two women in the extended royal household were accused of witchcraft, tortured and burnt alive.³⁹ Maphasa also threatened Mtyalela that he would seek revenge and pleaded with the Moravians to move closer to his great place to protect him. The missionaries declined. According to Wilhelmine (or Bonatz for Wilhelmine), they wished to distance themselves from 'the heathen law of vendetta'.⁴⁰ This refusal to budge was powerfully symbolic; neither was willing to accommodate the other.

From this moment, much of Wilhelmine's memoir is taken up with tales of her encounters with Maphasa whom she described as 'wild and belligerent'.⁴¹ These stories were retold by her colleagues and published. In some versions, Wilhelmine's heroic behaviour is foregrounded, but in Wilhelmine's account it is her competitive relationship with another interpreter that is central. The interpreter, Daniel, was brought to Shiloh from the mission at Enon perhaps in the belief that a male might make more progress with the difficult young chief Maphasa. Daniel's talents were put to the test when Maphasa demanded to know the contents of two letters delivered from the colony. Wilhelmine's memoir sets out what happened: Maphasa arrived with his own interpreter and a cohort of armed men in war costume sporting the wings of the *indwe* (blue crane) on their heads. As Daniel was translating, Maphasa's interpreter interrupted, insisting that his version was not correct. Tension mounted. Wilhelmine came in from the garden, 'edged her way through the men' and began 'shivering with fear when she saw the missionaries surrounded by these angry heathens who were all holding spears in their hands and giving signs that showed that they were ready to kill as soon as their chief told them to.' But she took charge, sent Daniel and the missionaries from the room and declared that the conversation 'must be concluded at once because it was entirely useless'. Left alone with the chief and his warriors, she berated them for visiting a

³⁸ J. Lemmertz and J.F. Hoffman, 'Extract of the Diary of the Missionaries of the brethren among the Tambookies on the Klipplaats River for the first months of the year 1829', *Periodical Accounts* Vol 11(1829), 436. Extract from letter of P. Hallbeck, 8 December 1831, *Periodical Accounts* Vol 11 (1829), 519; Stompjes, *Lebenslauf*, 77. For background to Bawana's conflict with Mtyelela see Peires, *House of Phalo*, 86-89. See also C. Crais, *The Making of the Colonial Order: White Supremacy and Black Resistance in the Eastern Cape, 1770-1865* (Johannesburg, 1992), 113.

³⁹ Extract of letter from Brother Adam Halter, 23 February 1831, *Periodical Accounts* Vol 12 (1831), 86.

⁴⁰ Stompjes, *Lebenslauf*, 77.

⁴¹ Stompjes, *Lebenslauf*, 77.

peaceful place in wargear and told them to leave.⁴² What did Wilhelmine really say to send the chief packing? It is not possible to get beyond this carefully constructed narrative to delve a little deeper into the secrets of Wilhelmine's ability to challenge powerful African men.

Bonatz intervened in Wilhelmine's memoir to relate a story about her routing Maphasa's rival, chief Mtyalela. One Sunday, the communion service was disrupted by a fight between the supporters of these rival chiefs. 'The mutual animosity of the warriors and their screams were horrendous, a true image from hell' he wrote. Wilhelmine grabbed the hand of the chief, insisted that he admit that he was afraid of the 'almighty God' of the Moravians and persuaded him to restrain his people.⁴³ Wilhelmine's ability to read the situation, interpret culture and act on her own judgment silenced both chiefs and saved the day for Shiloh. Wilhelmine was more missionary than compliant interlocutor, more negotiator than interpreter on this and many other occasions.⁴⁴ In Bonatz's words:

'Usually, she had more to say than the missionaries, so she did not interpret literally, but rather believed in explaining arguments and statements, which was surely a good idea most of the time, because she knew the habits and ways of thinking of her people better. Because of her good judgment, she could give advice in negotiations with chiefs and their people.'⁴⁵

Bonatz acknowledged that her exceptional courage was 'even more impressive when considering that under Kafir law, women are not allowed to enter such meetings' but he quickly slipped back into the Moravian narrative; agency belonged to God and courage was His preserve. Wilhelmine was merely a conduit. 'Through her,' Bonatz wrote, 'the Lord commanded the angry heathens to withdraw their murderous plans.'⁴⁶

For his part, Daniel became increasingly disaffected. With a hint of worldly competitiveness in her telling, Wilhelmine wrote: 'Unfortunately he turned to his old heathen habits after a while. He preferred hunting to doing his work, and finally he turned to black magic, or at least socialized with these magicians and believed them. So they had to relieve him from his work and he moved to the Katriver district with his family.'⁴⁷ Wilhelmine's memoir makes no further mention of Daniel. It is not known whether he was welcomed by the 'respectable people' at Kat River or whether he found himself on the fringes of

⁴² Stompjes, *Lebenslauf*, 78.

⁴³ Stompjes, *Lebenslauf*, 85-86.

⁴⁴ See Edward W. Said, 'Representing the Colonised: Anthropology's interlocutors', *Critical Inquiry*, 15:2 (Winter, 1989), 209-210.

⁴⁵ Stompjes, *Lebenslauf*, 80.

⁴⁶ Stompjes, *Lebenslauf*, 79.

⁴⁷ Stompjes, *Lebenslauf*, 79.

James Read's settlement.⁴⁸ It is also not clear whether he took up arms in the rebellion that occurred at the Kat river in 1850.

Bonatz was careful to ensure that Wilhelmine's memoir identified her flaws; a proper memoir highlighted, even exaggerated, guilt and sinfulness. Bonatz identified stubbornness as Wilhelmine's most serious flaw. 'Because she was aware of her advantage' as linguist and interlocutor, he declared, 'she did not like to change her opinion, even when she was wrong.' There was remedy, however. Her 'stubbornness' and anger could be controlled, if not overcome, through repentance and Wilhelmine often 'had to repent elaborately before Holy Communion.'⁴⁹ Gisela Mettele claims that gender differences were 'fairly negligible' in Moravian memoirs since 'modesty and humility, as well as suffering and weakness' applied to both men's and women's experience.⁵⁰ But they may have been more pronounced in everyday life and one cannot help wonder in what ways Bonatz' account of Wilhelmine's stubbornness was informed by her gender or racial profile.

Bonatz was acutely aware of his own dependence on Wilhelmine, the woman who had raised him and who continued to be his teacher. Perhaps this is why he offset his comment on her flaws with praise for her dutifulness. 'Because there were no teaching aids at the time, Wilhelmine had to help me. She did this with pleasure, not only because she knew me from Genadendal, but also because I was getting to know her people better through their language, so that I, as the Xhosa saying goes, would become a "human being"'.⁵¹ Wilhelmine's generosity and graciousness made it easier for Bonatz to cope with her greater knowledge and the authority and power it gave her. He also conceded his respect for her role as advisor on how to handle disputes 'about black magic, swindle, theft etc.' admitting that he found it 'difficult to get along with such a dishonest and deceitful people'.⁵²

Belief in witchcraft and superstition hampered progress for the Moravians and interfered a great deal in the daily life of the Shiloh mission. Wilhelmine mentions but does not elaborate on this problem nor do any of the incidents involving witchcraft appear in published missionary reports. However, colonial officials logs several instances. In March 1845, Bother Bonatz turned to Colonel Stretch, the British Agent in the area for help in a case of witchcraft. An eighteen year old Thembu youth who resided at Shiloh claimed to be bewitched. One of his peers allegedly kept a snake which he sent to take

⁴⁸ See R. Ross, *The Borders of Race in Colonial South Africa: The Kat River Settlement, 1829-1856* (Cambridge, 2014), 190.

⁴⁹ Stompjes, *Lebenslauf*, 81.

⁵⁰ Mettele, 'Constructions of the religious Self', 33.

⁵¹ Stompjes, *Lebenslauf*, 82.

⁵² Stompjes, *Lebenslauf*, 84.

possession of him. Pursuing him wherever he went, it even crept under his kaross at the circumcision lodge. The only way Stretch could rid the mission of the superstition was to expel all 'the Tamboekies' reducing the mission settlement to its Khoi residents.⁵³ Wilhelmine's silence on witchcraft may be in line with Moravian policy; it also enables her to avoid distraction in the construction of a discourse in which sinfulness is coterminous with men's behaviour towards women.

Belief in the powers of Mlanjeni, the river spirit, played a big part in the destruction of Shiloh in 1850. Shiloh was caught up in the rebellion at the Khoi settlement run by the London Missionary Society at the Kat River. Rebels from Kat river and Shiloh made common cause with Chief Maphasa and others against the British and infiltrated the mission. British troops stationed at nearby Whittlesea invaded Shiloh.⁵⁴ Believing that Mlanjeni had foretold that Shiloh would be destroyed, the Thembu residents feared that if they remained they would go down when it fell. This opened the way for the Khoi rebels to take over.⁵⁵ Shiloh was besieged by the very people the Moravians expected would defend them. On the instruction of the British troops, the missionaries left. Wilhelmine did not want to leave. 'I did not fully agree with our flight, although I saw no alternative either, and knew of the uproar amongst many Hottentots.' A bedraggled group of 'about a hundred souls' made their 'way through deserted landscapes towards the Orange River.' Wilhelmine was hurt that no-one seemed to care. 'Saddest of all was that Nobody came to say farewell to the teachers either when we left Shiloh.'⁵⁶

Both the Khoi rebels and the Xhosa who had taken up arms were defeated. Towards the end of 1852, the missionaries returned to Shiloh only to find that British soldiers occupying the station would not make way for them. Treating Wilhelmine with contempt, the trooper residing in her house forced her to sleep in the chicken run and made her buy back her own kettle. Wilhelmine did not hide her contempt for the British.

As if too tired to continue, Wilhelmine allowed her memoir to peter out after her return to Shiloh but sad though she seemed, she did not question the value of the missionary project. Bonatz' added a note implying that Wilhelmine picked up where she left off and continued to send messages to the chiefs 'reprimanding them not to withstand the word of the lord any longer'. But there

⁵³ GH 14/3 GH 14/1 pp10-13. Papers received from Native Tribes, Diplomatic Agents and Government Officials Border Tribes and Diplomatic Agents. Proceedings at Tamboekie Residency 24th February to March 10th 1845, 4.

⁵⁴ CA GH 22/6 21.01. 1853; Statement of Wilhelm Peter taken at Shiloh the 21st day of January 1853.

⁵⁵ B. Kruger, *The Pear Tree Blossoms: A History of the Moravian Mission Stations in South Africa 1737-1869* (Genadendal, 1966), 239.

⁵⁶ Stompjes, *Lebenslauf*, 92.

are other indications that Wilhelmine must have experienced despondency in her later years. Shiloh was still experiencing the disruptive effects of the rebellion a decade after its formal end. Some of the rebels had been jailed, but the women and children who remained were unsettled, hostile and resentful. Many of these children would have grown up under Wilhelmine's tutelage and were the 'first fruits' of the mission. Andries Jacobs said as much in his statement at the end of the war:

'I belong to Shiloh where I have lived since my childhood. I went to the missionaries school. I went to the mountain because all my relations and other Hottentots did so. I don't know the reason why they joined in the war. I was young. I know nothing about the Xhosa chiefs. I was considered a boy and therefore was told nothing by my companions. I surrendered myself because I was tired, and could not live any longer with the Tamboekie.'⁵⁷

Wilhelmine's health deteriorated in the early 1860s. She died in 1865 at the age of about seventy five and was buried in the graveyard at Shiloh where her husband joined her a decade or so later. The wattle and daub house where they lived stands opposite the church, its grass roof replaced by zinc and the walls painted pink. Bullet holes in the wooden door which has remained on its hinges since the 1830s, is testimony to the Whittlesea soldiers' attack on Shiloh in the frontier war of 1850.

Conclusion

Wilhelmine's life story is a Moravian tale that reveals the extent to which Moravianism introduced her to a far wider world than the one she was born into; her memoir is that of a Moravian woman. Wilhelmine was happy to be known as the Moravian's mouthpiece.⁵⁸ But this is not the end of the story. Gender mattered to Wilhelmine. The Moravians afforded her a life free from male predations, provided a vantage point from which to view the place of women in African society and inspired her to badger the chiefs to change their attitudes to women. One might go so far as to conclude that her passion for Moravianism was very much fed by what it offered her as a woman. But this was not a selfish pursuit. Like her fellow missionaries, Wilhelmine believed in the power of ideas to effect social change. Like many of them, she suffered for her beliefs.

Wilhelmine's memoir demonstrates unequivocally that she did not turn away from her people or lose empathy for them. Nor did she serve her teachers uncritically. She censures the brethren for their treatment of black people, and describes how racial prejudice and intolerance led to inconsistency and

⁵⁷ CA GH 22/6 21.01. 1853; Statement of Andries Jacobs taken at Shiloh the 21st day of January 1853.

⁵⁸ Stompjes, *Lebenslauf*, 86.

hypocrisy among the missionaries. But she believed that the Moravians could help her people and used every opportunity she could to ask for more missionary support for them. However, it is difficult to gauge the extent of her influence beyond the mission station. If she was a pioneer, it is not clear what trails she blazed or what impact she had on the generations that came after her. Wilhelmine's ability to exercise authority was ambivalent, both dependent on and threatened by her status as interlocutor. She could chase a chief away but she was unable to persuade him to embrace her religion, give up his polygamous ways or abandon the river spirit. Chiefs were not readily persuaded and gender power relations were not easily dislodged.

Blackening my White Friends to Make my Black Friends Look White: William Shaw, John Philip, and the Mercurial Political Landscape of Missionary Work in the Eastern Cape

Fiona Vernal

Few missionaries figure more prominently in the legacy of Methodism in South Africa than William Shaw (1798-1872), settler, missionary and Superintendent of Wesleyan missions. His life as a missionary is indelibly bound to the creation, growth, and longevity of a Methodist sphere of influence in the Eastern Cape, among a white settler elite as well as Africans. Summing up his legacy, one magnanimous and reverential assessment declared him, “the most highly esteemed man on the frontier and beloved by Europeans and Natives alike.”¹ The rest of the statement contrasted Shaw to the “influential negrophilist faction amongst his fellow-minded missionaries,” in his ability to “set a standard of sound and sane missionary conduct which was followed faithfully by the settler-missionaries who came after him.” Although several missionaries could be cast into this “negrophilist” clique, the primary figure who served as a model of the wrong kind of political missionary was John Philip (1775-1851), who, like Shaw, assumed the mantle of Director of his missionary society in South Africa,

¹ H.E. Hockly, *The Story of the British Settlers in South Africa* (Cape Town, 1948), 190.

the London Missionary Society. Philip's brand of humanitarian advocacy and his promotion of indigenous civil liberties immediately made him a firebrand among local white settlers and he remained a polarizing, controversial personality throughout his missionary career. Shaw maintained his reputation as a venerable figure, whose legacy as a judicious, staid missionary survived the maelstrom of Cape frontier politics.

In the 1790s, the Moravians (United Brethren) resumed their efforts and the London Missionary Society (LMS) initiated missionary work in the Cape Colony, under British control since 1795, except for a brief Batavian interregnum between 1803 and 1806. In the 1820s, the Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society (WMMS) and the (Scottish) Glasgow Missionary Society (GMS) commenced their pioneer work.² Despite the ardour and commitment that heralded missionary work at the turn of the nineteenth century, the Cape Colony was a challenging field. By the 1820s, the Colony had developed into a racially stratified society where whiteness came to be firmly associated with Christianity and moral and spiritual superiority over Africans. Missionaries from all denominations found themselves in the midst of a protracted and increasingly aggressive colonial encounter that had devastated the Khoekhoe and was now engaging other Africans on the borders of the Cape Colony. By the time missionary societies began work at the Cape, therefore, the general outlines of the conflict over land alienation, access to, and mobility of labour had already been set. A new settlement of 4000-5000 British settlers in the Eastern Cape added to the thorny, long-standing conflicts that had incensed slave, Khoekhoe, missionary, and settler relations in the colony proper. War on this frontier reached the threshold of becoming the most contentious political issue in the Cape Colony.

In the territories that would eventually become South Africa, missionaries attempted to conform to each society's variation on the rule of remaining apolitical. Proselytizing in slave and indigenous societies experiencing the throes of dispossession and subjugation embroiled missionaries in conflict whether personal conviction or Christian duty compelled them to or not.³ One would have to be a sort of political prodigy to avoid being drawn into the raging debates about slavery and colonialism. Colonies with vocal white settler elites raised the political stakes for missionaries— neophytes and experienced alike. The universalism and humanism inherent in Christianity made it a potentially

² The Glasgow Missionary Society (GMS) eventually split and became the Glasgow African Missionary Society (GAMS).

³ A. Lester and D. Lambert, "Missionary Politics and the Captive Audience: William Shrewsbury in the Caribbean and the Cape Colony," in D. Lambert and A. Lester, eds., *Colonial Lives Across the British Empire: Imperial Careering in the Long Nineteenth Century*, (Cambridge, 2006), 94.

revolutionary spiritual and ideological force before any particular missionary figure clothed it in a distinct theological garb and espoused it to their potential converts. For Philip and Shaw, experience, personal conviction, and vocation dictated completely different stances on contemporary politics at the Cape. For Shaw, navigating a black and white constituency as well as the local and metropolitan demands of the WMMS drew him inexorably into the contentious political landscape that characterized African missionary work. Amid other tendentious debates about the relationship between African cultures, Christian evangelism and the complicity of missionaries in furthering colonial subjugation, Shaw sought a middle ground between colonial evangelism and settler politics. It was a vision forged in a real commitment to the cause of African missions, as well as a belief in the legitimacy of a nascent Eastern Cape settler cause. For Shaw, the settler-missionary was not an inherently problematic figure. In the 1820s, this was as much a matter of policy as it was a personal, self-reflective posture. His optimism evolved in an era of pioneer evangelism and nascent settlement. In many ways, this vantage point gave local settler-missionaries an insight that metropolitan governments and audiences desired; the evangelical man-on-the-spot had a vested interest, a true stake in the region.

This particular intersection of colonialism and evangelism in the Eastern Cape drew Shaw reluctantly into the political sphere, where he attempted to remain non-partisan.⁴ Unlike Philip, however, Shaw considered it injudicious for missionaries to intervene on any particular political side, “to set themselves at the head of one class of the community, in opposition to another.”⁵ He also considered it a “specious rule that Missionaries should ‘defend the weak against the strong.’” Furthermore, it was “a bad Missionary rule” and, in the context of the recent war, he believed that taking sides would “increase the irritation and lengthen the controversy.”⁶ Yet, Cape politics by the 1830s exacted a high price from missions for this quiescence. Africans razed pioneer Methodist missions that Shaw and his colleagues had established. He declared that on the Eastern Cape frontier he was connected with British settlers “whose watch-words have ever been—JUSTICE TO THE KAFFERS, SECURITY TO THE COLONY.”⁷ As long as justice augured land alienation and subjugation for the Xhosa, to whom this banner referred, the Methodists position would be read as sympathetic to white settlers. Advocacy for African land rights was diametrically opposed to the material interests of white settlers. The outbreak of war again in the subsequent

⁴ N.K. Hurt, “Wesleyan Missionaries on the Eastern Frontier of the Cape Colony, 1820-1840 with special reference to the Kaffir War of 1834-1835,” (MA thesis, University of London, 1957), 38.

⁵ William Shaw, *A Defence of Wesleyan Missionaries in Southern Africa comprising Copies of a Correspondence with the Reverend John Philip D.D.* (London, 1839), xvii.

⁶ Shaw, *A Defence of Wesleyan Missionaries*, xviii.

⁷ Shaw, *A Defence of Wesleyan Missionaries*, xvii.

decades of the 1840s and 1850s brought destruction to the Methodist missions. Africans clearly did not get the non-partisan message and, by the 1850s, the optimism of pioneer evangelism had waned.

No one doubted Shaw's commitment to African missions, though everyone knew him as the settler's missionary; no one would mistake Philip as such. He became the ultimate symbol of "negrophilism" but his predecessor's Johannes Van der Kemp and James Read Sr. had done much to wax this association. In the early phase of LMS work at the Cape, a few missionaries went beyond the call for spiritual egalitarianism by flouting the local racial and social hierarchy. For example, Johannes Van der Kemp, the first superintendent of LMS missions in South Africa who established the Bethelsdorp mission, married a young slave girl; that she was fourteen years old and forty years his junior caused some alarm, but it was her slave status that drew condemnation. His colleague and successor, James Read Sr., followed suit and married a sixteen year old Khoikhoi girl in 1803. In local circles, Van der Kemp and Read's marriages caused some consternation about inter-racial marriages. Yet, interracial sexual encounters were certainly not odd in a colony where sexual unions between colonists, Khoekhoe and slaves had occurred for over a century by the time the missionaries had arrived on the scene in the 1790s. Legitimizing the mixed-race progeny from these unions proved particularly insulting to the social hierarchy of local settlers, although most of these individuals were incorporated into the group with a lower status or formed an intermediary group.

The establishment of circuit courts to hear Khoekhoe complaints against the farmers through Van der Kemp and Read's initiative compounded an existing tense situation between the LMS missionaries and the local whites enraged by their actions. Even though few convictions were obtained, the mere existence of these courts increased animosity towards the LMS missionaries. Although these developments cemented the missionaries' reputation as "negrophiles," the era of marriages across the colour line was a relatively short-lived process that was no longer common by the 1820s. When James Read had an extra-marital affair and impregnated a young woman in his congregation, historian Julia Wells argued in an excellent overview of the scandal that his imbroglio provided the exact pretext for LMS redirection of the course of local missionary work.⁸ Although advocacy for the rights of Africans continued, the LMS capitalized on Read's behaviour to reassert clearer boundaries between white missionaries

⁸ J. Wells, "The Scandal of Rev James Read and the Taming of the London Missionary Society by 1820," *SAHJ* 42 (May 2000), 136-160; for an early account of these hearings, see D. Stuart, "'The Wicked Christians' and the 'Children of the Mist': Missionary and Khoi Interactions at the Cape in the Early Nineteenth Century," University of London, Institute of Commonwealth Studies, *Societies of Southern Africa in the 19th and 20th Centuries: Collected Seminar Papers* 18 (1992).

and African congregants. Hearings, reprimands, demotions, and a general overhaul of LMS mission work followed on the heels of the sexual scandals. What remained of the earlier phase of LMS work was a strong tradition of advocacy for civil liberties that gained strength in the 1820s and coincided with the broader anti-slavery sentiments in Britain. LMS missionaries investigated, wrote about, and tried to effect legal redress for the ill-treatment of the indigenous population at the Cape. Cape residents displeased with the importation of humanitarian sentiments via imperial edicts could vent their dissatisfaction on the local missionaries who promoted these liberal views.

When John Philip assumed the helm of the LMS as the new superintendent in 1819, Cape settlers were introduced to yet another prominent missionary personality whose political advocacy riled them. Philip, a Scottish minister, worked diligently to remove the legal barriers that prevented Khoekhoe from maintaining control over their mobility and selling their labour on the market as free agents. Philip's advocacy was one that emphasized the importance of the civilizing mission in addition to the evangelical imperative. The Khoekhoe, the quintessential victims of white domination, had the same opportunity for personal salvation as their masters, Philip and other missionaries believed. They also argued that more than a century of contact with the Dutch had done little to civilize the Khoekhoe, much less Christianize them. Even though he represented a new era of LMS missionary policy, he came to be reviled as much, if not more than his predecessors.

Finding themselves in such a complicated racial and political milieu, Methodist missionaries at the Cape sought a balance between LMS-style political advocacy and evangelism. In his role as architect of local Methodist strategies, William Shaw was front and centre of the decision making. One tactic was to avoid duplicating LMS work and explore more sparsely evangelized areas beyond colonial borders. Shaw had tremendous respect for the accomplishments of his predecessors and his contemporaries and, even amid denominational competition, the belief that South Africa held unbounded evangelical possibilities made it easy to be magnanimous. The WMMS, with its cadre of missionaries and through the guidance of William Shaw, sanctioned a chain of missions in southeastern Africa between 1823 and 1833 to chart their own legacy in South Africa and to use their mission as a base for the African interior. The chain of missions established a crucial Methodist sphere of influence among independent African chiefdoms. The important Methodist personalities who lent their names (Wesleyville, Mount Coke, Morley, Clarkebury, Butterworth, Buntingville) to these mission settlements had their names emblazoned on maps from that era, and recorded in travellers' and

missionaries' journals. These maps masked the arduous process of establishing these pioneer missions and the nature of African resistance to these efforts.

The chain of stations was successful as an intentional strategy to make important contributions to Methodism among Africans, who had had little to no lasting exposure to Christianity. Rather than sparing the Methodists involvement in politics, however, this strategy brought them into the colonial cauldron. The very lands from which Africans had been removed, and which now formed the centre of British settlerdom, were now, according to Shaw, the "key to Caffreland, a country abounding with "heathen" inhabitants."⁹ Shaw and his colleagues established six missions stretching approximately 200 miles along the eastern frontier region beyond the Cape Colony, only to have them become physical symbols of cultural imperialism. The chain of stations presented a cartographic victory over "heathenism," but bred African resistance. During each outbreak of war, Africans attacked these missions as symbols of colonial collusion and cultural imperialism. No apolitical, non-partisan, or sober pronouncements spared these missions. William Shaw had had almost a decade of peaceful relations in which to hone his ideas about the settler-missionary figure; that figure remained a staunch settler, as well as a missionary who arrogated more power to himself than his potential converts and chiefly benefactors had intended to confer.

For the Africans who witnessed and experienced the planting of these missions, the stations represented the missionary's power to claim, name, and carve out a niche in their society. The mission station was a particular space that elevated European ways of being, European personhood, family relations, farming practices, and gender relations. In doing so, these stations attempted to foreclose alternate ways of being, other ways of ordering the world without a robust debate. The boundaries between sacred and secular that made the issue of the political missionary contentious was thus a moot point for the African societies who had the six pioneer missions established in their midst. Had missionaries taken a moment to turn the ethnographic lens on themselves they would have realized that cultural questions were necessarily political questions. They bore their culture *inter alia* in their clothing, marriage practices, the homes they built and the farming practices they employed. They need not look much farther than the birth of Protestantism and the fight for religious liberty within Europe, and especially in England, to understand how the civil society they envisioned and freedoms they had secured were both sacred and secular matters. By denigrating African cultural practices such as circumcision, bridewealth, and polygyny, missionaries alienated the vast majority of the

⁹ W. Shaw, *The Story of My Mission in South-eastern Africa* (London, 1860), 315.

Xhosa chiefs. Missionaries challenged everything from Xhosa sexuality and notions of respect to the sexual division of labour, and they supported policies which led to dispossession, yet made the argument that they were apolitical. The cultural chauvinism that held out European cultural and religious frameworks as the model of reform that missionaries wanted to catalyze in African societies implicated missionaries in colonialism in far more complicated ways than just their views on who should be blamed as the aggressor in a particular war.

Although Africans, especially chiefs, remained circumspect about the missionaries' political stance they acknowledged the secular benefits that accrued from having a resident missionary and feared the outcome of rejecting them overtly. They could use missionaries as intermediaries, translators, scribes, informants, as advocates; these roles mattered politically in a colonial context and this was part of the argument that would emerge in Philip's correspondence with William Shaw.¹⁰ Politics within African chiefdoms impacted the expansion of Christianity because most African chiefs viewed conversion as tantamount to political suicide and were unwilling to forego the prerogatives of chiefly power to become Christians. So, while missionaries and their parent societies could claim to be apolitical, African chiefs could not afford this pretense. African chiefs grew concerned that mission stations served as alternate residences for their subjects and that white missionaries acted as rival authority figures. It was patently obvious that no matter how deferentially missionaries approached the African leaders on whose sufferance they remained in the area, they slowly usurped the power and authority of the chiefs. Cape officials had constantly warned missionaries that they were not allowed "territorial supremacy or imperium in imperio within the chiefs' allocated land."¹¹ Yet as late as the 1880s, the missionary Alan Gibson noted that the persistence of the mission station as a system of evangelization still encouraged the missionary to rival the local chief by acting like a "headman [by] granting permission to settlers [...] giving out gardens [and] settling disputes[.]"¹² In this space, with European names most Africans had not heard of, alternate discourses, alternate sources of sacred power, alternate farming methods and marriage patterns - in short, alternate ways of ordering their lives - gave missionaries insidious weapons in their attempts to convert heathen populations.

All of these characteristics of nineteenth-century missions among the Xhosa, for the Methodist as well as other mission societies, created a particular trend:

¹⁰ Shaw, *A Defence of Wesleyan Missionaries*, 14.

¹¹ CAR, BK 90, "John Maclean to Edward Clay, 4 October 1850," emphasis mine.

¹² A.G.S. Gibson, *Eight Years in Kaffraria, 1882-1890* (London, 1891), 168.

the vast majority of people who attended church did so without becoming registered church members and the number of Christians at the mission was usually far out of proportion to the total population of the mission station. This created a public relations problem for most missionary societies as they wanted to write home about the growing number of converts, rather than inveterate heathens whom they could not reach. But the metrics do not tell the whole story of the power missionaries wielded and again suggest the importance of the strategy of civilizing simultaneously with evangelizing. The Xhosa communities among whom the Methodists evangelized proved far more malleable and open to Christianity after they had lost their independence. Literacy and the networks of patronage missionaries offered, became even more important when the lifestyles and opportunities for which young people were preparing in the 1840s and 1850s disappeared in the wake of war and dispossession. Despite the relatively small number of converts and the many challenges missionaries faced, therefore, their long-term impact on Xhosa society was significant. As John and Jean Comaroff and Hildegard Fast have noted in their assessments of missionary endeavours in South Africa, the small number of converts did not detract from the overall importance of the mission enterprise. As Fast asserted, missionaries were the

harbingers of the future order which [...] was to transform the surrounding communities. Economically, the stations modeled the capitalistic relations which were to profoundly affect the pastoral societies of the Xhosa and politically the authority of the white missionaries over black Christians became the paradigm of white-Xhosa relations, and the missionary-colonial tie was to play an important role in depriving the Xhosa of their independence.¹³

As emissaries of European culture and its concomitant colonial and capitalist ideologies missionaries effected far reaching economic, linguistic, and cultural changes in the African societies they encountered. This impact was cumulative and insidious, however, and the juggernaut itself was not that Xhosa society changed or incorporated Christianity and European cultural norms into their worldviews, but that the cultural and spiritual assault missionaries made was paired with persistent colonial political violence and economic dispossession. By the time Methodist missionaries could claim evangelical success, Xhosa political and economic independence was shattered and these political and economic debilities were not a coincidental part of the increased interest in Christianity and missions.

¹³ H.H. Fast, "Introduction," *Journal and Selected Letters of Rev William Shrewsbury, 1826-1835*, (Johannesburg, 1994), 17-18.

Neither Philip's, nor Shaw's position predicted completely how their contemporaries, successors, or scholars would assess them.¹⁴ After his death, Philip's missionary colleagues and scholars, for example, have attempted to come to terms with the meaning and legacy of his strain of liberal paternalism and his brand of humanitarian advocacy in nuanced and meaningful ways that show how the Scottish Enlightenment and experiences at the Cape shaped his views. Shaw's accommodationist stance netted praise and laudatory assessments that are animated mostly in settler lore and in the Methodist archives, rather than the historiography. Robert Ross's work on Cape and mission history has prompted me to reconsider the figure of William Shaw as a political missionary and has led me to the conclusion that a scholarly biography of him is long overdue. This chapter represents an initial foray into and assessment of William Shaw and his legacy. I have found it useful to examine him in relation to his ideological and denominational counterpoint, John Philip of the LMS. A longer project explores the intersection of race, religion and politics by placing William Shaw in a wider milieu alongside William Shaw Kama, namesake of both his father, chief Kama, and William Shaw. Although scholars have legitimately critiqued the figure of the missionary colossus in the historiography of Christian missions in South Africa, there is no denying the influence of Philip and Shaw in settler politics. They need not be elevated to the status of colossus to understand their cachet in evangelical and colonial circles.

Shaw and Philip shared the fundamental belief at the heart of the missionary enterprise: that anyone could become a Christian. Converting the heathen was the *raison d'être* of both of their careers; without this singular, foundational belief, all of their efforts on behalf of the missionary enterprise would have been rendered futile. Evangelizing and civilizing Africans were the ultimate goals. At the Cape and elsewhere, challenges to this central mission came from several different directions. First, even with a Christian universalist impulse propelling the Protestant missionary enterprise, fundamental doubt still remained in many circles about the doctrine that anyone could be and should be converted. White settlers and slave holders featured prominently among those who frequently expressed their misgivings about this doctrine. Missionaries could hardly subscribe to this view since they would literally be unemployed, but they also relied tremendously on local and metropolitan audiences for financial and moral support. They could ill-afford to ignore this

¹⁴ See, W.M. Macmillan, *Bantu, Boers and Briton: The Making of the South African Native Problem* (Oxford, 1963); A. Ross, *John Philip (1775-1851), Missions, Race and Politics in South Africa* (Aberdeen, 1985); A. Bank, "Liberals and their Enemies Racial Ideology at the Cape of Good Hope, 1820-1850" (Ph. D. , Cambridge, 1995); T. Keegan, *Colonial South Africa and the Origins of the Racial Order*, (Charlottesville, 1996); E. Elbourne, *Blood Ground: Colonialism, Missions and the Contest for Christianity in the Cape Colony and Britain, 1799-1853* (Montreal, 2008).

sentiment among the public, no matter how personally committed to their providential calling. Second, some audiences interpreted the commitment to evangelize the heathen, not as a clarion call to head to every corner of the globe in an international outreach to slaves and indigenous peoples, but to address the spiritual needs of the local European populations.

Missionaries encountered additional obstacles once deployed in the field. A third challenge was the issue of strategy. Many missionary societies disagreed among and between themselves on whether Christianity should proceed in tandem with a civilizing mission? Could one succeed without the other? Was there a difference between the civilizing mission offered in the context of British humanitarian imperialism and the model bound to a relentless local white settler colonialism? Fourth, how would evangelism adjust in a colonial context when social and economic rights were bound up with questions of racial status? All of these questions and the multifarious attempts to answer, balance, or deflect them, cultivated a mercurial political and evangelical landscape for the WMMS and the LMS. No missionary, therefore, could entirely predict how he would fare personally and politically in a given mission field. Across the evangelical spectrum, there were many reversals, chafing, disenchantment, miscalculations, capitulations, and recantations.

The Cape colonial milieu in which Philip and Shaw led their societies and conducted their missions placed these two men squarely in the middle of these controversies. They disagreed on strategies for critiquing and ameliorating the deleterious impact of colonialism on Africans. For Philip, Christian humanism and universalism were intricately bound to the secular question of civil liberties and his faith his Britain as the guarantor of these liberties. Philip firmly believed a Christian was duty-bound to “defend the weak against oppression to the utmost of his power.”¹⁵ Philip was unequivocal in his view that Africans needed the protection of the British and that white settlers were culpable in the deterioration of frontier relations, sealing his reputation as a “negrophile.” Shaw, on the other hand, pinned his model of South African race relations and evangelism on fidelity to both the white settlers he relied on for support and the Africans whose Christian allegiance he sought. War, violence and dispossession, with Africans perpetually on the losing side, made Shaw’s rhetoric of a balanced, apolitical, non-partisan position an untenable one. The middle position he attempted to chart was illusory and many Africans interpreted his stance as a call for political quiescence they could ill afford to sustain.

¹⁵ Rev. Dr. Philip to Rev. W. Shaw, 1 August 1838, in W. Shaw, *A Defence of Wesleyan Missionaries in Southern Africa comprising Copies of a Correspondence with the Reverend John Philip D.D.* (London, 1839), 14.

The sixth outbreak of war between 1834 and 1835 drew Philip and Shaw into a personal conflict that underscores their public postures on colonial policies. Philip's critics accused him and the LMS of engaging in a "campaign of calumny and vituperation."¹⁶ Scholars have mined the war and the maelstrom over Eastern Cape frontier politics to explore liberal humanitarianism, racial conflict, and settler capitalism among other themes. What interests me here is how the broader conflicts and debates shed light on William Shaw and John Philip's political and evangelical posturing with each other. The conflict degenerated into private and public condemnations through the local press, the international evangelical media, and spawned scathing testimony before a British government commission. Shaw declared firmly that he would not succumb, as Philip had, to "blackening my white friends to make my black friends look white." This altercation occurred in the context of a powerful, but temporarily embattled Methodism and an influential humanitarian impetus associated with the LMS. Scholars continue to engage Philip - the possibilities and limits of his vision, the changing political context, which constrained his actions even as he tried to influence many colonial and metropolitan actors. William Shaw's legacy, however, is more piecemeal - almost hagiographical in the Methodist-produced material, though more fragmentary in the historiography.

In the estimation of many of his contemporaries, William Shaw's engagement with questions of politics on the frontier was astute and sound. His reputation has survived these assessments intact, and in some instances has been burnished as hindsight has declared a folly and a travesty the attempts to blend human rights advocacy with evangelism. Philip, both in his lifetime and his legacy has not had such an easy road. He and his organization took a moral and political shellacking from the 1790s and this only grew worse in the 1820s. The personal brouhaha between the two unfolded when Philip stated in a private letter to the incoming Governor D'urban that Wesleyan missionaries had commended Governor Somerset's policies including the notorious military commandos. Shaw took offence on behalf of his society. Philip redacted this paragraph before a commission of inquiry, raising the Methodists' suspicion and ire that he had "misrepresented public men in private confidential communication," attempted to influence colonial policies by "the most unfair and dishonorable means," and sullied the "good name and influence of his fellow missionaries."¹⁷

Shaw referred to Philip's actions as, "The calumny which they felt themselves called upon to rebut," especially because it insinuated that the Methodists "adopted opinions injurious to the rights and claims of the tribes amongst

¹⁶ Hockly, *The Story of the British Settlers*, 162.

¹⁷ Shaw, *A Defence of Wesleyan Missionaries*, vii, 59.

whom they are sent to propagate the religion of Christ.” Philip redacted the documents, Shaw asserted, to frame the discourse in a particular direction to show disfavour to the Methodists. This was tantamount to adopting a policy of “let us do evil that good may come.”¹⁸ Both men kept up the verbal mud-slinging with the Methodists accused of being interested in “winning the smiles of colonial Governors, or the Eulogies of Tory statesmen.” To suggest that the Methodists were “servile instruments of an odious government,” was unconscionable, according to Shaw. Philip had not just made a specious claim; he had used obsequious language and flattery in his correspondence with D’urban in an attempt to influence his views.¹⁹

In a letter dated 6 April 1838, Shaw asked Philip to apologize or explain the redaction and stated that if neither of these occurred, “the Wesleyan missionaries cannot consent to greet you with the right hand of fellowship; neither can they invite you to take part in any public meeting connected with the Wesleyan mission, or accept an invitation to attend any public meeting connected with the London Society’s Missions, at which they have reason to expect you will be present.”²⁰ Philip acknowledged the letter in a tardy manner on 1 August, asserting that scurrilous and malicious material had become so commonplace that he no longer thought them “worthy of notice.” Rather than ignoring Shaw’s letter through “contempt or indifference,” Philip instead wrote that “any words I could use, might be misunderstood and perverted in the same manner.”²¹ Philip gave a spirited defence that he was simply stating facts that were in the public record. Shaw responded on the 11 January 1839, complaining about the length of Philip’s letter, which seemed unwarranted since he had asked Philip for an explanation. He found none of Philip’s explanation about the redaction plausible and was thoroughly unconvinced about Philip having any compunction about the letter getting out during the controversy over the war. He was rather nonplussed that Philip had allowed other copies of the letter to be circulated in England if he were indeed concerned about the Methodists’ reputation.

There is more to parse in this particular correspondence between these two powerful figures. For now, it suffices to say that Philip’s actions appeared from the correspondence to be calculating and his explanations about the redaction before the committee evasive. Philip carried favour with those who shared his commitment to humanitarianism, and it was no secret that he provided information to interested parties who needed data to support their policies.

¹⁸ Shaw, *A Defence of Wesleyan Missionaries*, x.

¹⁹ Shaw, *A Defence of Wesleyan Missionaries in Southern Africa*, x, xi, xv.

²⁰ Shaw, *A Defence of Wesleyan Missionaries in Southern Africa*, 3.

²¹ Shaw, *A Defence of Wesleyan Missionaries in Southern Africa*, 5.

Vilifying Philip's conduct and shedding light on redactions and omissions and his attempts to influence Eastern Cape frontier policy gained little for the Methodists. The reputation of one of their key figures in the controversy, William Shrewsbury, suffered major collateral damage. Shrewsbury called for harsh frontier policies and as a result of this self-inflicted wound became known as a "Shrill kaffir hating Methodist missionary." The WMMS and Shaw had to launch a public relations offensive, demonstrating just how illusory non-partisanship had become.²² Alan Lester and David Lambert assert that William Shrewsbury's missionary life "tells us much about the contingent deployment, reception and appropriation of the universalizing missionary project in different places."²³ William Shaw's attempt to carve out an independent space for settler politics and colonial evangelism based on this exact universalizing missionary project failed, even as Methodism cast a long shadow in the Eastern Cape. William Shaw's reputation fared well compared to the colleague he tried to defend, Shrewsbury. It had not taken much to be considered a radical abolitionist and Shrewsbury was mistaken for such in Caribbean slave society only to be pilloried for his anti-African views in South Africa. Shrewsbury, to his detriment, found that in a broader imperial milieu, all politics are local.

Conclusions

The different eras in which these two men died - Philip in 1851 and Shaw in 1872 - represented a particular phase in the evangelical enterprise. Shaw and Philip's shrill exchange captured the volatile political climate of the Cape and its ability to taint long-term evangelical goals. The overall Christian evangelical enterprise faced profound challenges on its own merits. In 1842, John Mitford Bowker, a former diplomatic agent of the colonial government and descendant of the 1820 settlers, pronounced Christian missionary work a colossal failure and a misguided use of financial resources:

The present enormous expenditure of money, talent, and zeal, wasted on mission stations in Kafirland, I pronounce to be a perfect failure. A savage is not to be made a Christian of, and civilization [...] must make great advances among them before they can ever understand or appreciate the doctrines of Christianity [...] it is a hopeless case, and a thankless office to endeavor to instill genuine Christianity into the mind of a thorough savage, such as the Kafir.²⁴

²² Lester and Lambert, "Missionary Politics," 96.

²³ Lester and Lambert, "Missionary Politics," 91.

²⁴ J. Mitford Bowker, *Speeches, Letters and Selections from Important Papers* (Grahamstown, 1864 reprint Cape Town, 1962), "Extract of a letter" 1842, 109, 110.

Although extreme, Bowker's opinion reflected many of the settlers' perspective. Methodism relied greatly on cultivating a particular relationship with settlers in the Eastern Cape and Shaw could not have been pleased at this assessment. These views could perhaps be expected of a colonial agent. What proved more troubling was that by the mid to late nineteenth century even missionaries had begun to express their disillusionment about the progress of Christian evangelism and their disenchantment with what they assessed as the nominal and piecemeal ways in which Africans adopted Christianity and civilization. Could Africans be Christianized on the same model as Europeans? Did they need to be broken politically and economically before they could be reshaped in the Christian image? Was imperial conquest a necessary precursor? What was the relationship between Christian ethics and questions of colonial subjugation and should missionaries play the role of arbiters of social justice? What role should missionaries play in addressing the political, economic, and social crises?

The extreme distrust of missionaries that had punctuated the work of individuals like Van Der Kemp, Read, and Philip, and the LMS legacy of political advocacy for Africans still sullied the missionary reputation in the 1880s. For those missionary societies that tried to distance themselves from the LMS legacy (the Wesleyans, for example), or entered the missionary field long after the controversy of the early nineteenth-century (the Anglicans for example), the loathed figure of the "political missionary" continued to inform general opinions about Christian evangelism. Long after the controversies of the 1820s and 1830s, missionaries still found themselves on the defensive. Yet, by the 1880s, missionary defensiveness had long given way to pessimistic and dispiriting sentiments in liberal humanitarian and evangelical circles as missionary societies with deep historical roots in South Africa reassessed their priorities.

For some missionaries, South Africa was one posting among several in their evangelical portfolios; others were martyred here. The careers of some reached an apogee, while for others it was a nadir. Despite victories across the evangelical spectrum, setbacks, disillusionment, missteps, and retreats also abounded. In these local assignments many missionaries found new vocations in political and humanitarian advocacy or were thrust headlong because the questions of oppression and subjugation could not be separated from their evangelical work. No single model of missionary activity, therefore, captures the complexity and ambiguities of evangelical work in colonial settings. Some missionaries remained accidental tourists, attempting to reproduce England or other European models in miniature. Others found their own faith severely tested or left Africa as pessimists; still others developed idiosyncratic interests in indigenous systems of thought, beliefs, performance, language, and medical knowledge. Whether it was advocacy for African political and economic rights,

the promotion of African agency in the administration of the church or the flouting of racial boundaries in marriage and sexual relations, the behaviour of individual missionaries reinforced common racial stereotypes, but at times also subverted colonial policies, local social mores, and challenged the sedate stance of their parent missionary societies.

I have attempted to show in this snapshot of Shaw and Philips's dispute that instead of the caricatured figure of the colossus, the aggregate picture that emerges is one of missionary personalities who derived their status from the power of their ideas, the radical implications of their convictions in a colonial context and the far-reaching or limiting visions for Africa and Africans that emerged from the combination of their faith, ideology, and their work. Ideas about settler nationalism, African sovereignty, liberalism, paternalism, and humanitarianism jostled for ascendancy alongside evangelicalism in political and cultural debates. These ideas mattered tremendously and so did the reputation of their purveyors. But a quandary remains. How did the two different missionary traditions and missionary personalities and their respective politics of engagement and quiescence coalesce into similar outcomes for the Africans they encountered? Did colonialism negate these starkly different vantage points into distinctions without an ultimate difference for Africans?

In 2012, South African historian Richard Elphick published what will quickly become the standard study of Protestant missions and racial politics in South Africa. Elphick took the broad theme of religion and probed its impact on the history of racial discourse, racism, and race relations in South Africa. While scholars have long decried the complicity of missions in colonialism, Elphick's study provides a far more nuanced critique of missions in the nineteenth century colonial context as well as in the segregation and apartheid eras. Elphick's verdict is a resounding indictment of liberals who failed to come up with a robust vision for multi-racial South Africa, or at least one that could adequately refute the "strenuous" intellectual work of apartheid ideologues who blended history, neo-Calvinism, biblical exegesis, and fear to win over their supporters.²⁵ The twentieth century and apartheid need not delay us further in this analysis, but there is a core argument about the failure of liberalism and paternalism in that contemporary period that makes it instructive to revisit the roots and limits of liberalism, paternalism, and Christian universalism in South Africa's evangelical past. However disenchanted even Philip became, the 1820s and 1830s witnessed the power of a strand of humanitarian discourse in which he was an important interlocutor and the historiography has offered insightful accounts of his role, vision, flaws, and legacy. Missing in these analyses is

²⁵ R. Elphick, *The Equality of Believers: Protestant Missionaries and the Racial Politics of South Africa* (Charlottesville and London, 2012), 256, 264, 272.

William Shaw. Philip offered a relatively radical humanitarian stance that eventually waned; Shaw offered a non-partisan, quiescent, accomodationist stance that pleased the settler elite, produced a strong Methodist patina in the Eastern Cape and left little room for African political sovereignty. What, then, do we, as scholars, do with the legacy of William Shaw, and how can we reframe the lens on Shaw and Philip, yet again without overlooking the meaning of these competing visions of missionary engagement for the generations of Africans like Kama and William Shaw Khama who had to live with the echoes of Eastern Cape frontier politics and Christian missions in South Africa?

Slavery, Race and Citizenship: The Ambiguous Status of Freed Slaves at the Cape in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries¹

Susan Newton-King

The social and legal status of freed slaves at the Cape of Good Hope in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries has been the subject of discussion and debate among historians of Dutch South Africa for quite some time. Although it is primarily of interest to them, the subject has a wider relevance for all students of South African history because of its link to larger questions concerning the origins of racial segregation in South Africa.

My own interest in the life histories and social status of freed slaves was stimulated by Robert Ross, who, in his book *Status and respectability in the Cape Colony 1750-1850: A tragedy of manners*, explored the complex relationships between race, status and respectability in early colonial South Africa.² My interest was further awakened by my research into the family background of Gerrit Coetzee, the first freeburgher to be executed for the crime

¹ I wish to thank Gerald Groenewald, Natasha Erlank, Stephen Sparks and Nafisa Essop-Sheik for their careful comments on an earlier draft of this paper presented at the University of Johannesburg in July 2012.

² Published by Cambridge University Press in 1999.

of sodomy at the Cape.³ Coetzee was the child of an extra-marital union (later legitimised) between a freed slave and the eldest son of a prominent freeburgher family in Stellenbosch. His story reveals the extent to which the lives of manumitted slaves and their descendants were entangled with those of freeburghers at the Cape. Further research into the letters of a freed slave named Arnoldus Koevoet, which I undertook at the request of Nigel Worden, convinced me that the putative boundaries between freed slaves (known as Free Blacks in the academic literature) and freeburghers were perhaps more porous than had been hitherto recognised. I therefore resolved to look deeper into the matter.

The first well-grounded opinion about the status of freed slaves at the Cape was expressed in 1970, when Anna Böeseken, who pioneered the study of slavery in South Africa, published an article entitled '*Die verhouding tussen blank en nie-blank in Suid-Afrika aan die hand van die vroegste dokumente*' (The relationship between white and non-white in South Africa according to the earliest documents).⁴ Already in 1964 Böeseken had declared, in her meticulous biography of Simon van der Stel, that 'These people [freed slaves] had precisely the same rights and duties as the freeburghers.'⁵ Now, basing her conclusions on the careful study of documents in the Deeds Office, the Western Cape Archives and the archives of the Dutch Reformed Church, she asserted that, in the seventeenth century, 'the free black [freed slave] was in every respect the equal of the freeburgher.'⁶ 'They received land on the same terms as the freeburghers', she wrote in her English summary, 'and enjoyed the same privileges in both church and society.' By 1977 she had become more cautious,

³ S. Newton-King, 'Sodomy, race and respectability in Stellenbosch and Drakenstein, 1689-1762: The story of a family, loosely defined', *Kronos* 33 (2007), 6-44.

⁴ A.J. Böeseken, 'Die verhouding tussen blank en nie-blank in Suid-Afrika aan die hand van die vroegste dokumente [the relationship between white and non-white in South Africa according to the earliest documents]', *South African historical journal* 2 (1970), 3-18.

⁵ A. Böeseken, *Simon van der Stel en sy kinders* (Cape Town, 1964), 118.

⁶ Böeseken, 'Die verhouding', 15. 'Free black' or '*vrijswart*' was the term used by the authorities at the Cape to denote persons who had been born in slavery and later freed, either by their owners, themselves, or a third party. Dr Böeseken maintained that 'the term had a spontaneous origin at the Cape,' but this is unlikely. According to H.E. Niemeijer, the term '*vrijswart*' derived from Dutch usage in Batavia, where many of the first freed slaves were dark-skinned persons of south Indian origin. (H.E. Niemeijer, 'Slavery, ethnicity and the economic independence of women in seventeenth-century Batavia', in B. Andaya, ed., *Other pasts: women, gender and history in early modern Southeast Asia* (Leiden, 1992), 181 note 23.)

but reached essentially the same conclusion: 'The Free Blacks in the 17th century were not treated as a separate group,' she wrote,

hence it is difficult to determine their number. There could not have been more than a hundred. They came from all parts of the East and from the West Coast of Africa [...] No investigation has yet been made to ascertain how this small group of Free Blacks who were the ancestors of today's Coloured population lived and developed in the 18th century, nor do we know when and how they lost certain of the rights which were theirs when they were subjects of the Dutch East India Company.⁷

Böeseke's conclusions were significant, especially given that she arrived at them in the 1970s, by which time the existence of a racial hierarchy had long been taken for granted in South African life. Although she herself used anachronistic categories, such as 'white' and 'non-white', to identify social groups in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, her empirical findings suggested that the origins of the latter-day South African insistence upon the correlation between skin colour and social status did not lie in the Dutch period at the Cape, at least not in the seventeenth century. The Dutch East India Company controlled the Cape from 1652 to 1795 and during this time slaves were brought there from all over the Indian Ocean - from the Philippines, the Moluccas and Papua New Guinea in the east to Madagascar and Mozambique in the west. Most of these slaves were dark-skinned, especially those from southern India, from whose dark skin colour the term '*vrijswart*' allegedly derived.⁸ Slaves born at the Cape were more likely than imported slaves to be light-skinned '*mestizos*' (*mixties* or *halfslag* in Dutch) of part-European descent. Nevertheless, if Böeseke was right, it follows that, at least in the seventeenth century, non-European origins and dark skin were not impediments to the achievement of *burgerschap*, or citizenship (in the attenuated form available in the colonies) in Dutch South Africa.

Böeseke's finding, that 'the free blacks formed part of the free population at the Cape and enjoyed the same rights as the free folk [*vryliede*],' was echoed in 1981 by Coen de Wet, then principal archivist at the Cape Archives.⁹ However, the impact of De Wet's conclusion was muted by his decision to describe and analyse free blacks as a group apart, on the grounds that 'in the V.O.C. documents they are referred to throughout as free blacks, not as free folk ('*vryliede*') [...] and because they played a small role in the community.' He devoted the first twenty chapters of his book to a detailed study of the first freeburghers (whom he identified as 'preponderantly Whites') and dealt separately with freed slaves in his final chapter.

⁷ A.J. Böeseke, *Slaves and Free Blacks at the Cape 1658-1700* (Cape Town, 1977), 97.

⁸ See footnote 6 above.

⁹ G.C. de Wet, *Die vryliede en vryswartes in die Kaapse nedersetting, 1657-1707* (Kaapstad, 1981), 2, my translation.

In the same year, Leon Hattingh, also writing in Afrikaans, produced a detailed study of freed slaves in the district of Stellenbosch.¹⁰ He concluded cautiously that, like the more urbanised Cape district, the district of Stellenbosch and Drakenstein before 1720 ‘could still be described as an open society.’¹¹ While it might be true that ‘the later pattern of South African society was already discernable in 1714 [...] the Cape community was still in its infancy and [...] could develop in different directions [...]’ Hattingh provided evidence in support of his claim that the small group of freed slaves in Stellenbosch was assimilated into the freeburgher community ‘without visible resistance.’¹² He showed that they participated in the exercises of the burgher militia and the life of the Dutch Reformed Church and had access to credit on the same terms as other free people. Though most were poor, he wrote, some made a good living as carters and carriers. Hattingh also drew attention to the fact that individual descendants of free blacks, such as Willem Basson, eldest son of Arnoldus Willem Basson and the freed slave Angela of Bengal, were among the fortunate few who managed to secure lucrative commercial concessions from the Company.¹³ Most freed slaves (‘free blacks’) were not landowners, he conceded. But, he concluded, their children and grandchildren, especially those born of mixed relationships, were absorbed into the farming community through marriage. ‘*Hierin lê die ware bydrae van die vroeë vryswartes van Stellenbosch.*’¹⁴

At the time of writing, Hattingh was aware that his view of early Cape society as relatively ‘open’, with permeable social boundaries and many possibilities for the assimilation of free people of colour, was coming under attack. Inspired perhaps by Martin Legassick’s seminal critique of ‘the Cape frontier tradition’, in which Legassick sought to show that the Cape frontier was not, after all, the likely source of later patterns of racial domination (‘The stereotype of the non-white as enemy, therefore, does not seem to be explicitly a frontier product [...]’) a new generation of English-speaking ‘revisionist’ historians was taking another look at Dutch South Africa. Legassick suggested that the racial ordering of contemporary South Africa was more likely to have taken shape in the nineteenth century than the eighteenth but, insofar as its origins could be traced to the Dutch period, researchers should pay more attention to the

¹⁰ J.L. Hattingh, *Die eerste vryswartes van Stellenbosch – 1679-1720* (Bellville, 1981).

¹¹ *Ibid.* 67.

¹² *Ibid.* 72.

¹³ *Ibid.* 70.

¹⁴ *Ibid.* 75, 21.

settled slave-holding regions of the south west Cape - the 'parent society' to which the frontier was attached.¹⁵

Already in 1979, the editors of *The shaping of South African society, 1652 - 1820* (a substantial collection of new essays dealing with the economy and society of Dutch South Africa) had concluded that, despite countervailing tendencies derived from the more racially integrated Dutch territories in south and south east Asia, Europeans at the Cape rapidly developed a strong and exclusive sense of group identity and were reluctant to admit non-Europeans to their ranks.¹⁶ In their opinion, miscegenation and manumission, which might have served to blur the boundaries between social groups (as it did in Brazil), did not have this effect at the Cape. Manumission was too infrequent, they believed, and miscegenation, though frequent, seldom led to marriage. In their careful and nuanced chapter on 'intergroup relations', Richard Elphick and Robert Shell conceded that 'intermarriage between European men and black women [...] took place steadily throughout the period,' but contended that, after 1700, it was confined mainly to the Cape district and involved men who were 'very poor'.¹⁷ In Stellenbosch, they contended, there were 'no obviously interracial marriages at all' in the eighteenth century.¹⁸ As for free blacks (manumitted slaves), 'they formed a significant and visible part of the population' in the Cape district but, after 1700, were only a tiny minority in Stellenbosch and Drakenstein. In the Cape district, they 'had a substantial hold on the artisanry' and were well established in fishing and retail, but they failed to break into the lucrative wholesale trades, and 'did not succeed in agriculture, despite their promising start in Stellenbosch [in the 1680s and 90s].'¹⁹ Moreover, since they had 'a very low fertility rate,' by comparison with the free population of European origin, 'their natural increase was too small for them to survive as a community.'²⁰ In sum, they were 'left behind in a society which came to be dominated by agriculture and intercontinental commerce, where Europeans normally ruled over a black labouring force and where European settlers soon owned virtually all the land and possessed most of the great fortunes.'²¹

¹⁵ M. Legassick, 'The frontier tradition in South African historiography' in S. Marks and A. Atmore, eds, *Economy and society in pre-industrial South Africa* (Longman, 1980), 44-79. This article was first presented as a seminar paper in the early 1970s and circulated in unpublished form.

¹⁶ R. Elphick and H. Giliomee, eds, *The shaping of South African society, 1652-1820* (Cape Town, 1979), 360.

¹⁷ R. Elphick and R. Shell, 'Intergroup relations: Khoikhoi, settlers, slaves and free blacks, 1652-1795', in *Ibid.* 129-30.

¹⁸ *Ibid.* 131. (Depending what one understands by 'obviously', this statement is quite incorrect.)

¹⁹ *Ibid.* 152-4.

²⁰ *Ibid.* 149.

²¹ *Ibid.* 155.

Elphick and Shell found no evidence of legal discrimination against freed slaves before 1765, when Governor Rijk Tulbagh interdicted freed slave women from wearing clothes which made them stand out above 'other respectable burgher women.'²² But they imply that there may have been unofficial discrimination before this date: 'For instance,' they write,

the authorities infrequently applied the term 'burgher' (or freeburgher) to the free blacks after the turn of the eighteenth century, and in the requesten from 1715 to 1795 there are no petitions from free blacks asking for burgher papers; Europeans, however, appear on every other page [...] it would seem that the Dutch at the Cape followed the Roman precedent and developed a distinction between freeborn citizens and freedmen.

The 1989 edition of *Shaping* endorsed the conclusions reached a decade earlier: miscegenation and manumission failed to undermine an emerging social pattern that was characterised from early on by a high degree of correlation between class and race, and buttressed by 'a congealing ideology' of European supremacy.²³

There was no profound alteration of Cape society under the VOC. Despite widespread miscegenation - mostly outside wedlock - the Europeans maintained a clear group identity, admitting only a few black women to the group and regarding themselves as distinct even from those who, though not pure Europeans, were partially European in ancestry and Christian in religion [...] prosperous people other than Europeans were few and widely scattered, and their long-term impact on Cape social structure was slight [...].²⁴

These views were largely endorsed by Nigel Worden in 1985, in his groundbreaking study of *Slavery in Dutch South Africa*. Contrary to expectation, he wrote, colonial society at the Cape did not develop along similar lines to the Dutch East Indies, where 'half-castes or *mestizos* could be assimilated into the ruling group [...].'²⁵ He ascribes this to the limited opportunities open to freed slaves in the arable sector of the economy. This, in turn, was largely due to their lack of access to capital and family support. In Cape Town freed slaves fared better, but remained poorer on average than other colonists.²⁵ They were also increasingly subject to some degree of legal discrimination:

Despite their freedom from slavery, Free Blacks were not granted burgher status. Whilst there may have been little distinction of legal status between Free Blacks and whites during the seventeenth century, clear differentiation emerged during the course of the

²² *Ibid*, 146. See also S.D. Naude and P. J. Venter, eds, *Kaapse Argiefstukke: Kaapse Plakkaatboek*, Deel III (Cape Town, 1949), 62.

²³ R. Elphick and H. Giliomee, eds, *The shaping of South African society, 1652-1820* (Cape Town, second edition, 1989), 560. See also my discussion of the differences of opinion between Hattingh and the editors of *Shaping* in Newton-King, 'Sodomy, race and respectability', 20-21.

²⁴ Elphick and Giliomee, *Shaping*, 559-60.

²⁵ N. Worden, *Slavery in Dutch South Africa* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 146.

eighteenth. [...] Often deeds of manumission specified that the freed slave would be obliged to be respectful and obedient to his former owner and his family. Free Blacks were also excluded from the burgher militia. As early as 1722 it was declared that Free Blacks and Chinese living in Cape Town should be formed into a separate militia, "so that they might not remain idle and have the opportunity for disorderly behaviour".²⁶

During the 1980s, then, historians writing in English seem to have reached a consensus regarding the longevity of twentieth century patterns of racial discrimination. These patterns, they said, dated back at least to the early 1700s. In this, ironically, these historians (among whom I should probably count myself) were almost at one with the Afrikaner nationalist ideologue Andries Treurnicht (himself descended via his *stammoeder*, Dorothea van der Schyff, from the freed slave Maria Hansen van de Kaap)²⁷ who famously said in 1975: 'At no time since the founding of the nation in 1652 have coloured population groups been accepted as part of the Afrikaner nation, nor as part of the white community.'²⁸

It was an Afrikaans-speaking historian, Hans Heese, who demonstrated that things had, in fact, been otherwise. In *Groep sonder grense*, published in 1984, Heese made a detailed analysis of the nature and frequency of 'mixed unions' among residents of the Cape colony in the Dutch period.²⁹ He was especially interested in the fate of the children of such unions and set out to discover to what extent they were 'admitted to white society.' At the time, as he explains in the introduction to the English translation of *Groep sonder grense*, he 'had a purely local, mainly Afrikaans speaking readership in mind.'³⁰ He courteously acknowledged the recently published *Shaping of South African Society* as a valuable source, rather than the bearer of contrary views. He agreed with its authors that 'a far more "open" society existed at the Cape [in the Cape district] than in the interior.'³¹ And, in his conclusion, he went so far as to agree that 'by 1795 the association of white with dominant, as opposed to coloured with subservient, was already entrenched.'³²

But in the body of his work he demonstrated that 'white' society was, in fact, not white at all. For one thing, Elphick and Shell had underestimated the number of marriages between freeburghers of European origin and women of

²⁶ *Ibid.* 147.

²⁷ C.C. de Villiers and C. Pama, eds, *Geslagsregisters van die ou Kaapse families, vols. II and III* (Cape Town, 1996), 738, 865-6, 995; H.F. Heese, *Groep sonder grense (die rol en status van die gemengde bevolking aan die Kaap, 1652-1795)* (Cape Town, 1984), 63.

²⁸ A.P. Treurnicht, *Credo van 'n Afrikaner* (Cape Town, 1975), 18, cited in H.F. Heese, *Groep sonder grense*, 2.

²⁹ Heese, *Ibid.*

³⁰ H.F. Heese, *Cape melting pot: The role and status of the mixed population at the Cape 1652-1795*, translated by Delia Robertson (copyright Delia Robertson, 2012), 7.

³¹ *Ibid.* 37.

³² *Ibid.* 76.

Asian and African descent. 'According to my own calculations there were more than 1,200 marriages and unions between whites and coloureds up to 1800,' he wrote.³³ He did not attempt to estimate what proportion of all marriages at the Cape were mixed in any given decade. It seems unlikely that, even in the first decades of Dutch settlement, they exceeded 50 per cent of all marriages, as had been the case in the 'young Batavia' in the 1620s and 1630s.³⁴ Nevertheless, it was clear that

Contrary to what Shell and Elphick seem to suggest, marriage was a tried and tested means for a female slave to escape slavery. If she married a white man, their children would be automatically accepted into white society and only in highly exceptional cases would this not be the case.³⁵

Elphick and Shell had also underestimated the extent to which the children of extra-marital unions were legitimised and absorbed into the 'white' community ('freeburgher community' might be a more appropriate term). Before 1700, for example, 'children conceived extramaritally by whites with slaves, and whose fathers acknowledged paternity, were all assimilated into the white group.'³⁶

It seems likely that one reason why many historians have under-estimated the number of mixed marriages at the Cape is that Cape-born slaves often took European surnames immediately after they were freed. By way of example, Heese lists 16 marriages between European men and freed slave women whose surnames (Bakker, Schetlerin, Kluysman, De Jager, Du Val, etc.) belied their slave origins.³⁷ Elphick and Shell were aware of this phenomenon.³⁸ Still, it is very easy for the researcher to mistake freed slaves with European surnames for freeborn persons of European descent. In my view, this is also the reason why researchers have underestimated the number of 'free blacks' resident in the rural districts of Stellenbosch and Drakenstein in the early 1700s.³⁹

Heese's findings also indicate that Elphick and Shell may have underestimated the total number of manumissions at the Cape between 1656 (when Catharina Anthonis of Bengal became the first liberated slave in Cape Town)⁴⁰ and 1795, when the Dutch East India Company lost control of the Cape. Elphick and Shell drew their figures from the written requests made to the Council of Policy between 1715 and 1791 by individuals who wished to manumit their own

³³ *Ibid.* 24 note 5 and 68 note 49.

³⁴ H.E. Niemeijer, *Batavia: een koloniale samenleving in de 17de eeuw* (Amersfoort, 2005), 45.

³⁵ Heese, *Cape melting pot*, 68.

³⁶ *Ibid.* 33, emphasis in original. See also 68, note 49.

³⁷ *Ibid.* 29.

³⁸ Elphick and Shell, 'Intergroup relations' in Elphick and Giliomee, eds, *Shaping*, second edition, 219.

³⁹ Newton-King, 'Sodomy, race and respectability', 21-2.

⁴⁰ Böeseken, *Slaves and free blacks*, 78.

slaves or (in a few cases) slaves belonging to the Company to whom they were related by blood. They made the assumption that ‘the total number of requests roughly equals the total number of manumissions’ over this period.⁴¹ However they may have been mistaken. Company slaves who wished to free themselves by providing the Company with ‘a sturdy male slave’ in their own place did not always submit a written request to the Council of Policy. For example, the minutes of the Council record that, on 23 September 1727, two Company slaves, Anna van Dapoer and Jan van Christijn Pietersz van de Caab, were released from slavery at their own ‘insistent’ and ‘earnest’ request, but there is no evidence that they had submitted requests in writing before the meeting. The same is true of the Company slave Maria van Helena Titus van de Caab, who was freed in 1729, and of her brother, Pieter van Helena Titus, who was freed on 17 May 1731.⁴² Arnoldus van Christijn Pietersz, older brother of Jan, was also freed by the Council without a written request.⁴³ On the other hand, their sister, Anna van Christijn Pietersz, who was freed in 1715, had indeed submitted a prior request in writing.⁴⁴

Elphick and Shell counted ‘a total of 1075 manumission requests (from 1715 to 1791). Of these,’ they wrote, ‘only 81 involved Company slaves while privately-owned slaves comprised the remainder.’⁴⁵ According to them (and assuming that the requests were granted), these figures yielded an average rate of manumission per annum of 0.165 of the total slave labour force. They noted that this was much lower than the annual average rate of manumissions in colonial Brazil, which could, in contrast to the Cape, be described as a relatively ‘open’ society.⁴⁶

Heese drew on a much wider range of sources to construct a data base of ‘just more than 2000 free-blacks who were emancipated during the 17th and 18th centuries.’⁴⁷ Besides the published requests to the Council of Policy,⁴⁸ he consulted lists compiled by Böeseken and Hattingh (using documents in the Cape Deeds Office and the archives of the Council of Justice) for the period before 1720, ‘baptism and marriage records, *opgaafrolle*, court records, estates, wills, inventories [...]’ His research covers a longer period than that dealt with by

⁴¹ Elphick and Shell, ‘Intergroup relations’ in Elphick and Giliomee, eds, *Shaping*, first edition, 136.

⁴² C 77, Resolutions of the Council of Policy, 23 September 1727; C 84, Resolutions, 27 December 1729; C 88, Resolutions, 17 May 1731.

⁴³ C 88, Resolutions, 17 May 1731; H.C.V Leibbrandt, *Precis of the archives of the Cape of Good Hope: Requesten, (Memorials), 1715-1806*, vol. I (Cape Town, 1905), 3.

⁴⁴ Leibbrandt, *Requesten*, vol. I, 1.

⁴⁵ Elphick and Shell, ‘Intergroup relations’ in Elphick and Giliomee, eds, *Shaping*, first edition, 136.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.* 136.

⁴⁷ Heese, *Cape melting pot*, 67.

⁴⁸ Leibbrandt, *Requesten*.

Elphick and Shell and his data does indeed suggest that they may have underestimated the total number of manumissions in the colony.

Heese also found, again contrary to the conclusions of Elphick and Shell, that more than half the slaves freed at the Cape in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries were baptised, many of them as adults.⁴⁹ Baptism may not have been an 'escape hatch' to freedom;⁵⁰ indeed, as Elphick and Shell correctly observe, many baptised Company slaves were never freed. But the role of baptism, especially adult baptism, as an instrument of acculturation and assimilation should not be underestimated. In Batavia, the Christianisation of slaves and *mardijkers* (free Asian Christians, mostly former slaves and their descendants) was actively promoted by the authorities, who believed that it would contribute to the creation of a stable colonial community.⁵¹ The *Hoge Regering* (High Government) took the view that the profession of Christianity, along with the acquisition of 'a reasonable knowledge' of Dutch, constituted 'a stamp of political allegiance.'⁵² Encouraged by the authorities, the Dutch Reformed Church in Batavia adopted a policy of intensive Christianisation, aimed especially (though not exclusively) at freed slaves and their descendants. The baptism of adults (*bejaarde personen*) was taken particularly seriously. The *Kerkraad* of Batavia stressed the need for true conversion as opposed to a merely superficial recitation of the Lord's Prayer, 'the twelve articles of faith and a few catechism questions.' 'It was not intended to create Christians in name alone' it declared in 1646.⁵³ 'Among adults, baptism should be preceded by faith.'⁵⁴ This entailed a process of intensive catechisation prior to baptism, which was often immediately followed by confirmation.⁵⁵

Since adult candidates for baptism were usually destined for full membership of the congregation, their moral conduct both before and after the ceremony was closely monitored. The Batavian Church employed a large corps of *inlandse leermeesters* (native catechists) to teach 'the first principles of Christendom' to slaves and *mardijkers* and to guide and supervise their conduct in everyday life.⁵⁶ These men acted as interpreters and intermediaries between the Dutch church elite and their largely Asian or Eurasian congregations. They were a familiar presence in the urban wards to which they were assigned, visiting each

⁴⁹ Heese, *Cape melting pot*, 67-8 and note 46. Cf. Elphick and Shell, 'Intergroup relations', 120-22.

⁵⁰ Elphick and Shell, 'Intergroup relations', 122; Heese, *Cape melting pot*, 68.

⁵¹ Niemeijer, *Batavia*, 39 and 270.

⁵² J. Gelman Taylor, *The social world of Batavia: European and Eurasian in Dutch Asia* (Madison, Wisconsin, 1983), 27.

⁵³ Niemeijer, *Batavia*, 268.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.* 269.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.* chapter 18.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.* chapters 18, 19 and 20.

catechumen twice a week, monitoring behaviour, offering advice and reporting moral deviations to their superiors. The Dutch historian Hendrik Niemeijer writes that the *leermeesters* had to maintain a delicate balance between the 'buurtsvolk' (people of the neighbourhood) and the Church Council which paid their salaries. 'If a *leermeester* aligned himself too closely with the *Kerkraad* and acted too blatantly, he became all too quickly the neighbourhood informer and his role as an intermediary became problematic.'⁵⁷ But despite the difficulties of their position, the *inlandse leermeesters* and the *inlandse ziekenbezoekers* (sick comforters), who were their immediate superiors at ward level, played a key role in a process of acculturation through Christianisation which Niemeijer has aptly termed '*inburgering*', the Dutch word appropriately suggesting the acquisition of citizenship. This process was actively encouraged by the VOC authorities in Batavia and apparently supported by many slave-owners, who believed that it would make their slaves more obedient.⁵⁸

South African historians have long argued that things were different at the Cape. Both Nigel Worden and Robert Shell have portrayed the Cape church and Cape slaveholders as largely uninterested in the conversion of slaves (with the possible exception of slaves belonging to the Company) and they have implied that most freeburghers were themselves lacking in religious zeal and were certainly reluctant to Christianise their slaves.⁵⁹ 'Not only were slaves at the Cape unable to develop a strong unified cultural tradition or family life of their own, but they were also largely excluded from the cultural system of their masters,' wrote Worden in 1985.⁶⁰ This may not be correct, at least with respect to Cape Town and Stellenbosch in the early 1700s. There is evidence that the Cape Town church did indeed follow the Batavian practice of preparing adult baptismal candidates for confirmation as well as for baptism, thereby admitting quite a number of slaves and freed slaves to full membership of the congregation.⁶¹ There is also evidence that certain well-to-do private slave-owners, including the retired governor Simon van der Stel, set great store by the Christianisation of their household slaves. Many of Simon van der Stel's slaves were baptised and several became confirmed members of the Cape Town church.⁶²

⁵⁷ *Ibid.* 287.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.* 205-6.

⁵⁹ Worden, *Slavery in Dutch South Africa*, 97; Elphick and Shell, 'Intergroup relations' in Elphick and Giliomee, eds, *Shaping*, second edition, 190-1. See also Richard Elphick and Hermann Giliomee, 'The structure of European domination at the Cape' in *Shaping*, first edition, 374.

⁶⁰ Worden, *Slavery in Dutch South Africa*, 97. Worden's views on the subject of slave culture and family life have changed substantially since 1985. See, for example, Nigel Worden, ed., *Cape Town between East and West: Social identities in a Dutch colonial town* (Hilversum and Cape Town, 2012).

⁶¹ See VC 603 and 604, Doopregisters, Kaapstad, passim; VC 621, Lidmaatregister, Kaapstad.

⁶² *Ibid.*

Be that as it may, with or without encouragement from above, many freed slaves at the Cape did choose to join the church. 'Of a total of just more than two thousand free-blacks who were emancipated during the 17th and 18th centuries,' wrote Heese, 'at least one thousand joined the Christian church.'⁶³ In so doing, they publicly asserted their right to belong to the local Christian community and their right to adopt 'the cultural system of their masters'. 'Church-going was an important public display of status and respect,' remarks Niemeijer, 'just like in other VOC towns and territories, as at the Cape.'⁶⁴ 'In the overseas colonial towns of the VOC,' he continued, 'church-going was an important expression of civic self-consciousness (*burgerlijk zelfbewustzijn*), a display moreover, of status differentiation and cultural identity.'⁶⁵ Certainly one cannot but notice that, in the early eighteenth century, most property-owning freed slaves in the Cape district were active members of the Cape Town church.⁶⁶

In sum, Heese's findings seem to indicate that Anna Böeseken was right: freed slaves at the Cape in the seventeenth century were not treated as a separate group. On the contrary, they and their Eurasian and Eurafrican descendants were assimilated, along with a steady trickle of immigrants from Europe (whose numbers were boosted by the arrival of approximately 180 French Huguenots in the 1680s), into a single community of the free. 'The extent to which free-blacks were accepted into social and economic life during the first decades at the Cape is surprising,' wrote Heese. 'The status of a free-black before 1700 depended largely on the individual and not necessarily on his race or ethnic group.'⁶⁷

After 1700

With respect to the period after 1700, however, both Heese and Karel Schoeman, whose knowledge of the published primary sources is unrivalled, believe that an insidious and subterranean prejudice against people of colour began to make itself felt. 'With the increase in the number of free-blacks after 1700,' wrote Heese, 'a tendency developed to notice the "black" (colour) more than the "free" about free-blacks.'⁶⁸ In *Armosyn van die Kaap* Schoeman writes

⁶³ *Ibid.* 67.

⁶⁴ Niemeijer, *Batavia*, 262, my translation.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶⁶ S. Newton-King, 'Family, friendship and survival among freed slaves' in Worden, ed., *Cape Town between East and West*, 169-171.

⁶⁷ Heese, *Cape melting pot*, 58.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.* 59.

of ‘a process of “sifting” or stratification in the Cape community which became noticeable around 1700’ and was associated with ‘more and more signs of direct and indirect colour discrimination.’⁶⁹ He believes that these signs were discernible in a number of incidents, which he has explored in *Armosyn* and in a more recent book, *Early slavery at the Cape of Good Hope*.⁷⁰ I think it would be useful to take a closer look at these incidents, in order to explore the forces at play in each and to assess the relative weight of colour prejudice in relation to other determinants of social status in the wider world of the Dutch East Indies, to which the Cape indubitably belonged.

Schoeman first draws our attention to an altercation which occurred at the Castle in December 1698 between two schoolmasters, Johannes Kleijn of Freiwalde in Silesia and Daniel Rodrigo of Batavia, a *mardijker* who had been sent to the Cape as a convict in the late 1680s.⁷¹ The altercation, which occurred on the steps of the Kat balcony, led to a brutal attack on Rodrigo, facilitated by no less a person than the Company’s bookkeeper, Johannes Balthasar Swellengrebel, who had recently been appointed to the Council of Policy.⁷²

The attack was witnessed by a Company soldier named Abraham Plavier of Haarlem. Plavier described how, at half past two in the afternoon of 26 December 1698 (*tweede Kersdag*), he had been on sentry duty below the Kat balcony, when the two schoolmasters appeared, each with their own pupils in tow. Kleijn appeared first, followed by Swellengrebel. Rodrigo arrived soon after, with his class (presumably the children of Company slaves, since Rodrigo was the Lodge schoolmaster).⁷³ Kleijn and Rodrigo had words. Plavier could not understand what they said, except that ‘mons:r kleijn called to some girls and Daniel Rodrigo told him “this is no place to chatter”.’⁷⁴ As Rodrigo descended the steps, Kleijn followed and beat Rodrigo with his cane about the ears. Rodrigo turned, grasped Kleijn by the head and pushed him against the railing. Thereupon Swellengrebel grabbed Rodrigo by the hair with his left hand and hit him on the mouth with his right, throwing him to the ground, ‘saying “jouw

⁶⁹ Schoeman, *Armosyn van die Kaap: die wêreld van ‘n slavin, 1652-1733* (Cape Town, 2001), 670.

⁷⁰ Published by Protea Book House, Pretoria, 2007.

⁷¹ Hoge, *Personalia*, 204. In September 1690 Daniel Rodrigo signed a power of attorney in Cape Town in favour of his mother, *Juffrouw* Catharina Rodrigo of Batavia, widow of Valentijn Rodrigo, also of Batavia. (CJ 3023 Transport, Obligatie en Procuratie boek van de jaren 1686 ex:te 1687 en voorts tot den 19n October 1700, no. 22, 22 September 1690.)

⁷² This incident was first noted by Wayne Dooling in ‘The Castle: its place in the history of Cape Town in the VOC period’ in E. van Heyningen, ed., *Studies in the history of Cape Town*, 7 (1994), 23.

⁷³ Schoeman surmises that they had come to attend the Boxing Day church service in the hall of the Governor’s residence, though, from the statement of Plavier, it seems more likely that they were leaving the service: Schoeman, *Early slavery*, 370; CJ 301, Documents in criminal cases, Statement of Abraham Plavier, 1698.

⁷⁴ CJ 301, Documents in criminal cases, Statement of Abraham Plavier, 1698, 459. The word Rodrigo used was ‘*kakelen*’ – to babble, cackle, gossip, or chatter.

swarten hond: sult jij uw handen aan een christen mensch slaan? (you black dog: do you dare to hit a Christian?)” and allowing Daniel to be soundly beaten by mons:r kleijn.’ Rodrigo twice managed to struggle to his feet but each time Swellengrebel grabbed him by his hair and threw him down, so that Kleijn could beat him again. The beating continued until Rodrigo lay bent forwards without moving.⁷⁵

This shocking incident could be accounted for in more than one way, as Schoeman is aware. Daniel Rodrigo was a former convict. He had been banished to the Cape by the judicial authorities in Batavia in 1689 or 1690. He was a Christian (in 1691 he was confirmed as a member of the church in Cape Town)⁷⁶ and he was literate. In Batavia he had been the senior clerk of the notary Pieter Mathias Tessemaker, earning eight rix dollars per month.⁷⁷ We do not know why he was banished, but, according to the *dominee* E.F. Le Boucq, formerly of Batavia, he had been whipped and branded on the scaffold.⁷⁸ It is tempting to interpret Swellengrebel’s abusive behaviour in the light of this fact. Perhaps Swellengrebel was reacting to Rodrigo’s dishonourable reputation, rather than to the colour of his skin. ‘It was not fitting,’ wrote Le Boucq of Rodrigo in 1707, ‘that one punished on the scaffold should teach the children of honourable people. Although he had served the term of his banishment, and satisfied the demands of the court, that infamy remained upon him.’⁷⁹ This may indeed be so. But an exclusive focus on Rodrigo’s convict status would not sufficiently account for what Swellengrebel had actually said: ‘You black dog: do you dare to hit a Christian?’

Before his arrival at the Cape in 1697, Johannes Swellengrebel had served the Dutch East India Company for five years in Southeast Asia.⁸⁰ Niemeijer’s observations about colour prejudice in Dutch colonial Batavia may therefore be relevant, especially as it concerned the *mardijkers* - the group to which Rodrigo almost certainly belonged. ‘In the multi-ethnic society of Batavia,’ wrote Niemeijer,

skin colour was important. Asiatic women avoided a dark complexion by using a payung or quitasol [parasol] against the rays of the sun. That they still do [...] the conservation or

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*

⁷⁶ VC 603, Cape Town Church, Baptism, Marriage and Membership register, 1665-95: List of communicants, 1691.

⁷⁷ CJ 3023, Transport, Obligatie en Procuratie boek van de jaren 1686 ex:te 1687 en voorts tot den 19n October 1700, no. 22, 22 September 1690.

⁷⁸ C 25, Resolutions, 12 July 1707.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.* For Le Boucq’s controversial behaviour, see Niemeijer, *Batavia*, 278.

⁸⁰ W.J. de Kock and D.W. Krüger, eds, *Dictionary of South African Biography*, vol. II (HSRC, Pretoria, 1972), 726-7. Swellengrebel arrived at the Cape on 6 May 1697 as adelborst and bookkeeper aboard the ship Zion, which belonged to the Delft Chamber (C 23, Resolutions, 22 April 1698, note 10).

pursuit of a pale skin colour was and is a cultural phenomenon in Southeast-Asia, where hitam (black) was equivalent to ugly, and where people with a dark complexion all too easily ran the risk of being singled out as orang pantai (beach folk) or “keling”.⁸¹

‘*Orang keling*’ or ‘*klingen*’ referred to dark-skinned people of Indian origin, especially those from the east coast of India, who were apparently associated by Southeast Asians with the ancient Indian kingdom of Kalinga. Slaves from India, many of whom spoke creole Portuguese and were baptised Christians, were the ancestors of the Batavian *mardijkers*. According to Niemeijer, ‘when the Portuguese-speaking Asians in Batavia wished to insult one another, the men would call one another ‘*tayolos*’ or ‘*negros*’ on the street, while the women were content with ‘*negrose hoer*’ (black whore).’⁸² The Dutch, added Niemeijer, became enthusiastic participants in this exchange of racial insults. ‘The sources tell us clearly that the Dutch were unusually coarse in their interaction with people of a darker skin colour, and that the disparagement of that other colour encouraged this coarseness.’⁸³

This last observation resonates with the record of the altercation between Kleijn and Rodrigo. However like Schoeman, Niemeijer acknowledged that other variables, besides skin colour, could also be at play in incidents of this nature. Religious identity and social status mattered too. Thus, Niemeijer noted that the *mardijkers* of Batavia were particularly vulnerable to insults directed at their purported slave origins: ‘Their slave origins could never be entirely erased.’⁸⁴

It is surprising for a modern reader, raised in a post-abolitionist world, to discover that, in the Dutch East Indies, slaves were despised, denigrated, abused and mistrusted because of the very characteristics that derived from their enslavement: their inability to form legitimate families, their radical powerlessness and their animosity towards their masters and mistresses. Schoeman has drawn attention to the casual manner in which slaves were described as ‘vile’ and ‘contemptible’ in Company documents emanating from Cape Town.⁸⁵ For example, a *Generaal Plakkaat* issued by Simon van der Stel in January 1687 and reissued in 1715 by Maurits Pasques de Chavonnes, declared that ‘Anyone found to have gambled [with cards or dice] with a male or female slave or any despised [dishonourable] person,’ would have their cards and prize money confiscated and be imprisoned for eight days on bread and water.’⁸⁶ Batavian officials used similar language: ‘The youth of these lands do not have a

⁸¹ Niemeijer, *Batavia*, 40. My translation.

⁸² *Ibid.*

⁸³ *Ibid.* 41, my translation.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.* 284.

⁸⁵ Schoeman, *Early slavery*, 381-2.

⁸⁶ M.K. Jeffreys, ed., *Kaapse Argiefstukke: Kaapse Plakkaatboek*, vol. I (Cape Town, 1944), 227 and vol. II (Cape Town 1948), 41. The phrase used was ‘*eenig veragt persoon*’.

decent upbringing [...],’ wrote Governor General Joan Maetsuyker from Batavia in 1654, ‘because of their intercourse with men and women slaves who have vile, abject natures.’⁸⁷ ‘All slaves were considered to have “a dangerous disposition”,’ writes the Dutch historian Remco Raben, ‘a qualification that did not take a turn for the better after manumission, as even the *Mardijkers* (who were Christians) were called “black riff-raff [...] being by nature disposed to utter idleness, being evil in morals and upbringing”.’⁸⁸ In Batavia ‘it was normal to beat slaves in the street,’ writes Niemeijer, and they were routinely referred to as ‘*honden*’ (dogs) or ‘*hoerenkinderen*’ (the children of whores).⁸⁹ Visitors to the Indies enthusiastically deployed similar language: thus, the Dutch ship’s surgeon Nicolaus de Graaff, author of the *Oost-Indise Spiegel*, described the ‘black females’ who took up with Dutch sailors and soldiers in Batavia as ‘*altemaal meest slavinne, hoere kinderen, [...] selfs doorgaans ook so hoeragtig als beesten* (mostly slaves, the children of whores, [...] themselves usually as whorish as beasts).’⁹⁰

The link between slavery and dishonour was skillfully explored three decades ago by the historical sociologist Orlando Patterson.⁹¹ Honour is linked to power, he explained: the radical powerlessness of slaves rendered them impotent in the face of verbal and physical insult and abuse; they were obliged to suffer in silence the many indignities heaped upon them. Slaves were also unable to make good on their own promises. This latter aspect of honour - the ability to deliver upon one’s word, to be dependable and creditworthy - was an essential attribute of commercial transactions in the seventeenth century Netherlands and its absence could cripple an individual, both economically and socially.⁹² No wonder, then, that the right to earn an ‘honourable living’, as specified in the *vrijbrief*, was so highly prized by manumitted slaves at the Cape.

Prejudice against dark-skinned persons of slave descent was evident in the arrogant manner in which the *inlandse leermeesters* were treated by Europeans

⁸⁷ Cited in Jean Gelman Taylor, *The social world of Batavia: European and Eurasian in Dutch Asia* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1983), 25.

⁸⁸ Remco Raben, ‘Facing the crowd: the urban ethnic policy of the Dutch East India Company 1600-1800’ in K. Matthew, ed., *Mariners, merchants and oceans: studies in maritime history* (New Delhi: 1995), 218. The internal quotation is from the *Generale missiven van gouverneurs-generaal en raden aan Heren XVII der Verenigde Oostindische Compagnie*, 9 vols (The Hague, 1960-88), vol. IV, 749, 30 November 1684.

⁸⁹ Niemeijer, *Batavia*, 193-4.

⁹⁰ Nicolaus de Graaff, *Oost-Indise spiegel* (Hoorn, 1703), 16.

⁹¹ Orlando Patterson, *Slavery and social death: a comparative study* (Cambridge, Mass., 1982), 11-13.

⁹² Harold J. Cook, *Matters of exchange: Commerce, medicine and science in the Dutch Golden Age* (New Haven, 2007), 52-7; Gerald Groenewald, ‘A Cape bourgeoisie? Alcohol, entrepreneurs and the evolution of an urban free-burgher society in VOC Cape Town’ in Nigel Worden, ed., *Contingent lives: Social identity and material culture in the VOC world* (Cape Town, 2007), 289-95.

in Batavia. These men were usually well respected in the *mardijker* community and, as we have seen, their services were indispensable to the church, yet Niemeijer reports that they were often subjected to capricious insults and humiliating abuse:

Dutch burghers and soldiers were in the habit of discriminating against the leermeesters and would beat them with their canes if they deemed it necessary. In their eyes they were still 'hoerenkinderen', slave boys who should still now and then be kept in check with a blow or a slap. That the leermeester was the 'sinjeur' and 'dominee' among his own people made no difference.⁹³

As we can see in the case of Johannes Swellengrebel and Daniel Rodrigo, attitudes such as these were also present at the Cape, where they 'smouldered beneath the surface,' to borrow Schoeman's evocative phrase.⁹⁴ However, it is not clear that they emerged with greater force after 1700. They may have always been present, but simply less visible to historians before this date.

Schoeman has also drawn our attention to the way in which these attitudes revealed themselves during the agitation against the unpopular Governor Willem Adriaan van der Stel in the early 1700s. In February 1706, in an attempt to pre-empt his freeburgher critics, who had drafted a petition complaining against him to the Company's directors in the Netherlands, and were planning to smuggle it out of the Colony with the homeward bound fleet, Van der Stel orchestrated the production of two counter-testimonials in his own favour. The first was signed by 240 'free burghers', among whom were prominent and wealthy men, but also 'many lesser members of the community, as well as 15 identifiable free blacks and other persons of colour.'⁹⁵ Among the latter were Daniel Rodrigo, Joost Ventura, Claas Cornelisz,⁹⁶ Louis of Bengal, Mira Moor, Reba of Macassar and Abraham de Vijf.⁹⁷ The second testimonial concerned fishing rights at the Cape and had only 23 signatories, 'all free burghers and inhabitants here.'⁹⁸ The first 12 of these, including Domingo van Bengalen and Abraham de Vijf, described themselves as 'Europeans and Christians,' and verified their testimony with the 'solemn words *Soo waerlick helpe my God Almagtigh.*' The last 11 (including Joost Ventura, Coridon van Nagapattnam,

⁹³ Niemeijer, *Batavia*, 285, my translation.

⁹⁴ Schoeman, *Armosyn*, 671.

⁹⁵ Schoeman, *Early slavery*, 376.

⁹⁶ Claas Cornelisz (brother or half-brother of Armosijn Classz) was a former schoolmaster in the Company's slave lodge. He became a confirmed member of the Cape Town church and by 1701 was a freeholder in Table Valley (*ibid.* 366).

⁹⁷ H.C.V. Leibbrandt, ed., *Precis of the Archives of the Cape of Good Hope: The Defence of Willem Adriaan van der Stel* (Cape Town, 1897), Annexure C, 68-72. The signatories also included many Europeans who were either living with or married to freed slaves, such as Otto Ernst van Graan, Gerrit Gerrits van Oldenburg, Guiliam Frisnet, Bastiaan Colijn and Jan Herbst.

⁹⁸ Leibbrandt, ed., *Defence of Willem Adriaan van der Stel*, 180-81.

Claas Claasz van Bengalen, Emanuel van Macassar, Abraham van Macassar, Reba van Macassar and Mira Moor), '*alle Vryburgeren*,' merely signed their names or made their mark.

The opposing faction ridiculed the Governor's efforts to defend his reputation and muster support for himself and his network of colleagues, friends and relations.⁹⁹ 'Even blacks' had been summoned to the Castle to sign the testimonial, wrote Adam Tas in his diary on 20 February 1706. 'They are rogues that do this thing,' he declared, 'unless it be these folk did find the Governor's lost honour.'¹⁰⁰ The next day he wrote: 'Mr van der Heijden told me many droll things about what happened at the Cape concerning the declaration of the Governor as honourable, that several blacks who had been banished and whipped had signed, now the governor is certainly honourable, but a sorrier potentate I never saw who must recover his lost honour from rogues (*schelmen*).'¹⁰¹

Tas's diary was, of course, a private document, but in 1712 the victorious burgher faction went public with their contempt for the Asian signatories of the former Governor's testimonial. 'A number of these [signatories],' they wrote in their *Contra-deductie*, published in Amsterdam in 1712 in response to the publication of Willem Adriaan van der Stel's *Korte Deductie* in 1707:

(apart from the honest people who had been misled) being of the lowest and most contemptible kind of people resident here, who were to polish up his dirty and stinking affairs; among whom there were not only those who [Van der Stel] rejects in his Deduction as emigrant French and Walloons who cannot read or understand the Dutch language, but fellows ['knapen'] who are ninety-nine percent worse, and have been scourged and branded in Macassar, Ternate, Bengal, Ceylon, Amboina, Banda, Batavia (besides Europeans who have been punished in public) because of their offences; for which Robben Island, the place assigned to them according to their sentences, would have been more suitable than for them to bear the name of freeburghers among honest Hollanders.¹⁰²

⁹⁹ For an analysis of the '*Van der Stel affair*' in terms of patrimonial rule and opposing factions, see Teunis Baartman, 'Fighting for the spoils: Cape burgerschap and faction disputes in Cape Town in the 1770s', PhD, University of Cape Town, 2011, 86-8.

¹⁰⁰ Leo Fouché, ed., *The diary of Adam Tas (1705-1706)* (London, 1914), 144-6.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.* 148, my translation. 'In a seventeenth century context of honour and dishonour,' writes Schoeman, 'the word "rogue" (*'schelm'*) was a much stronger term than today and regarded as defamatory.' (*Early slavery*, 378.)

¹⁰² *Contra-deductie, ofte Grondige demonstratie van de valsheit der uitgegevene Deductie*, by den Ed. Heer Willem Adriaan van der Stel [...] (Amsterdam,, 1712), 'Voorreden', [8], quoted and translated by Schoeman, *Early slavery*, 378-9. Schoeman suggests that this lengthy document was in fact the work of J.G. de Grevenbroek, a former secretary of the Council of Policy, who retired to Stellenbosch in 1694 and settled on the farm of Jacobus van der Heijden, a close collaborator of Adam Tas.

There were indeed a number of former convicts among the signatories of Willem Adriaan van der Stel's two testimonials. Besides Daniel Rodrigo, there was Mira Moor, banished from Ceylon in 1669,¹⁰³ Reba of Macassar, banished from Batavia in 1681 with his master, Daeng Mangale, prince of Makassar,¹⁰⁴ and Abraham de Vijf. Abraham de Vijf, 'also known as Tuko de Chinees,' had been sent to the Cape in 1675. 'His crime was theft,' writes James Armstrong, 'and he was sentenced to 16 years in chains.'¹⁰⁵ He was baptised in 1702, after his sentence had expired and he married the freed slave Maria Jacobs of Batavia, with whom he had three children. Willem Adriaan van der Stel granted him an *erf* in Cape Town, in block OO, on the corner of Long Street and Church Street.¹⁰⁶ Here, it seems, he built a house. Thereafter, he entered into a complicated commercial relationship with the Governor's father, the former Governor, Simon van der Stel, who had retired in 1699 to devote himself to the upkeep of his farm, Constantia, at the foot of the Steenberg. De Vijf undertook to market the fresh produce of Constantia, as well as the vast quantities of fish which the two men caught together in the sea behind the Steenberg (present day Kalk Bay). De Vijf could take half the catch for himself, provided that he shared the costs of the fishery and supplied 52 half-aams of fish per year for the slaves of Constantia.¹⁰⁷ He also agreed to market the trade goods which the retired Governor received from ship's captains in exchange for Constantia wine.¹⁰⁸ For the five years that the contract was in force, De Vijf was not to market produce on behalf of anyone else. The contract soon broke down, however, partly because Simon van der Stel began to distribute his fruit and fish through other channels.¹⁰⁹ The two men fell out and in 1708 Simon van der Stel sued De Vijf for monies owing. De Vijf submitted in papers before the court that the arrangement with the ex-Governor had brought him to the brink of ruin. If he had not entered into it, he wrote, he would still have been living in peace

¹⁰³ Schoeman, *Early slavery*, 319.

¹⁰⁴ C 27, Resolutions, 20 February 1710; Kerry Ward, *Networks of empire: forced migration in the Dutch East India Company* (Cambridge, 2009), 196-9.

¹⁰⁵ James Armstrong, 'The Chinese at the Cape in the Dutch East India Company period, 1652-1795', unpublished draft chapter, 21-2; See also 'The Chinese exiles' in Nigel Worden, ed., *Cape Town between east and west*, 112-13.

¹⁰⁶ Antonia Malan, 'Chattels or colonists? 'Freeblack' women and their households', *Kronos* 25 (1998), 60.

¹⁰⁷ Cape Archives library, *Investigations into the Complaints against W.A. van der Stel*, anonymous (probably annexures to the *Contra-deductie*), 189-91. An *aam* measured about 150 litres.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.* For Simon van der Stel's dealings with ships' captains, see Anna Böeseken, *Simon van der Stel en sy kinders* (Cape Town, 1964), 218.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.* 212.

with his wife and family. Now his own house in town stood empty, while he had been obliged to build a house on 'Constantie' at his own expense.¹¹⁰

Despite the allegations made in the *Contra-deductie*, and with the exceptions discussed above, most of the Asian signatories of the Governor's testimonials were not ex-convicts. Many were Christians; all of them paid taxes and proudly claimed their identity as freeburghers. Indeed, it seems to have been precisely this claim to equal status with free-born Europeans (or 'honest Hollanders') that so annoyed Adam Tas and his associates. In 1707 they composed another petition, in which they gave free reign to their vitriol. The document (signed by Adam Tas and 14 others, apparently mostly from the districts of the Cape and Drakenstein)¹¹¹ is apparently undated, but Schoeman has concluded that it was written in the late stages of the agitation against Willem Adriaan van der Stel, 'immediately after the news of [his] recall was received at the Cape on 16 April 1707, and before the departure of the return fleet to the Netherlands on the 29th, while the feelings of the colonists were still extremely excited.'¹¹² The petitioners wrote of their fears concerning the indigenous Khoekhoe, who would, 'if given the opportunity, "fall upon all Christians, both good and bad, without distinction, and exterminate us".' Concerning the slaves, they then went on to state that

not much better was to be expected; and far less from the Caffers, mulattos, mestizos, castizos and all that black brood living amongst us, and related to European and African Christians by marriages and other connections, who have to our utter amazement increased in property, number and pride, and have been allowed to share in the handling of arms and all manner of military exercises, [who] make it clear to us in no indistinct manner by their haughty behaviour that they would, given the opportunity, be willing and able to place their foot on our necks, for that blood of Ham is not to be trusted (want dat Chams bloed is niet te betrouwen).¹¹³

Karel Schoeman and Hans Heese have both been careful to point out that this petition of 1707 was signed by a small minority of freeburghers and may not have represented majority opinion.¹¹⁴ Heese also notes drily that at least two of the signatories (Willem Menssink and Jacob de Savoye) had close family connexions with people of colour.¹¹⁵ But Schoeman has suggested that the

¹¹⁰ CJ 3635: *Diverse Processtukken*, 18-43. Simon van der Stel disputed Van der Vijf's claims and said that the house had been built by his own slaves.

¹¹¹ Heese, Cape melting pot, 59.

¹¹² Karel Schoeman, *Early slavery*, 383.

¹¹³ Nationaal Archief, The Hague, VOC 4057, pp. 1030-1050, quoted and translated by Karel Schoeman, *Early slavery*, 383-4. I have not seen the original document.

¹¹⁴ Heese, *Groep sonder grense*, 28; Schoeman, *Early slavery*, 384.

¹¹⁵ Christoffel Snyman, son of Anthony of Bengal, was married to De Savoye's daughter, Marguerite and Menssink, who already had a child by his mother's slave, Susanna, was later to fall passionately in love with his wife's slave, Trijntje of Madagascar. (See Nigel Penn, 'The fatal passion of Brewer

prejudices that surfaced during the agitation against Willem Adriaan van der Stel may indeed be indicative of a shift in attitude towards freed slaves and their descendants. It seems, he suggests, that the multiple criteria according to which an individual could be absorbed into the burgher community - freedom from slavery, profession of Christianity, an honourable reputation and a pale skin or European origins - had now coalesced, so that to be black (even though Christian) was now also to be dishonourable:

It would seem that about the time under discussion here - and this observation too is meant to be tentative only - these various criteria became blurred, and the fact of 'black' origin in itself came gradually to be regarded as 'dishonourable' or at least unacceptable to the core of the white community, which consisted of people who were nominally Christians and mostly more or less 'honourable' according to the standards of the time.¹¹⁶

'This was a slow process,' he observes, 'which was to continue throughout the eighteenth century and beyond, but the first signs of this reaction, fed by personal feelings such as envy, resentment or insecurity, were already to be observed in a section of the white community [...].'

Envy was very probably a factor underlying Adam Tas's diatribe against free people of colour; envy, mixed with resentment and animosity towards the Governor and his family who had done much to promote the welfare of individual freed men and women of colour, while at the same time advancing their own commercial interests at the expense of the free farmers. In 1692, for example, Willem Adriaan's father, Simon, had confirmed several grants of land made to freed slaves in the new district of Stellenbosch. The grantees included Louis of Bengal, Manuel and Anthonij of Angola and Jan and Marquart of Ceylon.¹¹⁷ A handful of slave-born women, like Maria Everts (also known as *Zwarte Maria*) and Angela of Bengal (described by some as a '*zwartinne*'), also added to their landholdings during the tenure of the Van der Stel family.¹¹⁸ Other freed slaves, including Isak van Bengale, Maria Hans-dogter, Domingo van Bengale, Claas Cornelisz, Armosijn van de Caab and Jacob [Hendriksz] van de Cust Coromandel, were granted vacant plots in the growing town.

Simon van der Stel was also generous to his personal servants, initially at Company expense. In 1686, for example, he made an eloquent plea for the manumission of three Company slaves who had served his household since his

Menssink: Sex, beer and politics in a Cape family, 1694-1722' in Nigel Penn, *Rogues, rebels and runaways: Eighteenth-century Cape characters* (Cape Town, 1999).

¹¹⁶ Schoeman, *Early slavery*, 386.

¹¹⁷ Böeseken, *Simon van der Stel*, 119; Hattingh, *Die eerste vryswartes van Stellenbosch*; Elphick and Shell, 'Intergroup relations', 220-21.

¹¹⁸ Schoeman, *Early slavery*, 353-361. By the time she died in 1713, Maria Everts owned 60 morgen in present-day Camps Bay, a loan farm in the Groene Kloof and a well-irrigated market garden in the town (MOOC 7/1/2 no 26, will of Maria Evers; Leon Hattingh, 'Grondbesit in die Tafelvallei', *Kronos* 10, 1985).

arrival from the Netherlands in 1679. Maria Schalk, Armosijn van de Kaap (Groot Armosijn) and Jannetje Bort all had Dutch fathers, he said, and had received the holy sacrament of baptism.¹¹⁹ One was already a member of the Reformed Church. He was reducing the size of his household (his eldest son, Willem Adriaan, had recently returned to the Netherlands and his second son, Adriaan, was soon to take up a Company post in Bengal) and the women would be 'in the utmost danger' if they were returned to the Company's slave lodge 'among the rough and heathen nations.'¹²⁰ Moreover, he argued, freeing the women would serve as 'a powerful example to those in servitude that there was a path to priceless freedom through faithful and virtuous service, and the hope that they might obtain this at any time would encourage others [suffering] under the yoke of a heavy slavery.'¹²¹ The Council of Policy concurred and the women were freed and granted permission to engage in 'all authorised trades alongside other free persons.'

Simon van der Stel also obtained the freedom of his steward, Jan Figredo and his cook, Pintura van Ceylon. Figredo bought a plot in Table Valley in 1687.¹²² In retirement the former Governor continued the practice of granting freedom as a reward for faithful service. In October 1706 he freed Lena Felix and Hendrik Constant and expressed the wish that they should marry one another. And days before his death in July 1712 he freed a further 14 slaves who had been members of his household at Constantia.¹²³

In Batavia, where Simon van der Stel and his sister, Maria, had lived throughout their adolescence (possibly in the care of their grandmother, the *mardijker* Monica da Costa),¹²⁴ the manumission of favourite slaves was accepted practice among the well-to-do. It was motivated partly by compassion and partly by the wish to preserve family secrets from strangers after one had died or emigrated. It was also, as Niemeijer explains, an act of patronage that enhanced the standing of the patron. Manumission was a clear demonstration that one could afford to be generous.¹²⁵ Only the wealthy could afford such magnanimity. Simon van der Stel had very likely imbibed these Batavian values during his youth. But at the Cape, it seems, his generosity was deeply resented,

¹¹⁹ Maria Schalk's father was Willem Schalk van de Merwe and her mother was a Company slave (Schoeman, *Early slavery*, 78 and 325). Van der Merwe subsequently married Elsje Cloete, European-born daughter of Jacob Cloete of Cologne.

¹²⁰ C 18, Resolutions, 8 May 1686.

¹²¹ *Ibid.*

¹²² Böeseke, *Simon van der Stel*, 112; Hattingh, 'Grondbesit', 47.

¹²³ Böeseke, *Simon van der Stel*, 220; CJ 3024 Obligatien van den jaare 1702 tot 1706, no. 22, 24 October 1706.

¹²⁴ Böeseke, *Simon van der Stel*, 12-13.

¹²⁵ Niemeijer, *Batavia*, 43.

especially perhaps by recent immigrants from Europe, such as Adam Tas and his close associate, Jacobus van der Heijden, both born in Holland, who were strangers to the *Indische* milieu in which Simon van der Stel had been raised.¹²⁶

Karel Schoeman records several further incidents of discrimination against freed slaves, most of which occurred in the 1720s. In his opinion, while 'no single incident was particularly striking,' together 'they were indicative of a clear new contour and showed how the ground was beginning to shift.'¹²⁷ Cape society could still be described as open, he later wrote, quoting Leon Hattingh, but 'the subsequent [racially stratified] pattern of South African society was already discernible.' Taken together with the earlier incidents already mentioned, these suggested to him that, while Cape society could still be described as 'open' at this time, 'the ground was busy shifting.'¹²⁸

If Schoeman is right, then the Cape was moving in the opposite direction to other Dutch settlements in the Indian Ocean. In Batavia, for example, marriages between European men and Asian or *mestizo* women were more frequent in the eighteenth century than they had been in the seventeenth. Men of the Company elite still sought out European-born brides, but these were in scarce supply. In 1763, therefore, 'of the 60 Batavian notables' present at the inauguration of Governor-General Petrus Albertus van der Parra, 'only nine married (sooner or later) a Dutch woman, while eight remained unmarried. The remaining 43 had wives who were born in Asia. In this sense, the East Indies was far more *Indische* in the 18th century than in the previous century.'¹²⁹

It was the same in Colombo, Malacca and Semarang. In Colombo 'most burghers married Mestizo or Asian women,' write Dutch historians Remco Raben and Ulbe Bosma. 'In Malacca, records tell us that even the most prosperous Burghers married 'free black' women or Mestizos.'¹³⁰ In Semarang in north Java and in the central Javanese principalities of Surakarta and Yogyakarta, Dutch and German male immigrants also formed ties with local women - often debt slaves whom they purchased from Javanese nobles - but here (where the influence of the Dutch Reformed Church was weaker) concubinage seems to have been preferred to marriage. Children born to Asian concubines in central Java were quite often legitimated and adopted, not always by their biological fathers.¹³¹ The result was a community of mixed Eurasian origin, which defined itself as both European and Christian. 'Where a

¹²⁶ For an in depth discussion of the concept of *Indische* identity, see Remco Raben and Ulbe Bosma, *Being Dutch in the Indies: A history of creolisation and empire, 1500-1920* (Athens, Ohio, 2008).

¹²⁷ Schoeman, *Armosyn van die Kaap*, 671.

¹²⁸ Schoeman, *Early slavery*, 387.

¹²⁹ Raben and Bosma, *Being Dutch in the Indies*, 38.

¹³⁰ *Ibid.* 41.

¹³¹ *Ibid.* 44.

firm marriage regime was absent, legitimisation and adoption were crucial in the formation of a European identity and community, which was primarily based not on skin colour, but on Christian baptism and naming.¹³²

It should not surprise us, then, that Abraham de Vijf and Domingo van Bengalen could describe themselves at the Cape in 1706 as 'Europeans and Christians.' European identity in the Indies was a contested matter. For many inhabitants of Dutch settlements it was defined not by skin colour, but by cultural markers such as language, religion and surname. However for a minority, especially those in the upper echelons of Company service, to be European was also to be white.

Raben and Bosma have expressed these complexities as follows:

Although racial thinking clearly affected the structure of colonial society, a concept such as "race" does not exist in isolation. It is part of a wider perspective on the non-European world. It would seem that in the world of the East Indies, race - or, rather, skin colour - was the dominant criterion in determining one's status. In reality, and certainly in everyday reality, other criteria were equally important - such as the economic structure, the balance of various religious groups and the number of European newcomers entering the community. Class, profession, geographic origin, religion, education as well as skin colour contributed to the placing of an individual within the social hierarchy. Many high-ranking Dutch civil servants were prejudiced against people with a different skin colour, an alternative way of dress, or other modes of behaviour. But if we examine the world of the East Indies [...] we discover how far the colonial rhetoric was removed from the reality. The prejudices harboured by the colonial elite failed to lessen the urge to mix and intermarry. Indeed, there were extensive regions in the world of the East Indies where racial demarcations counted for far less than they did on the sun-bleached verandas of the Dutch colonial administrators.¹³³

If, in the 1720s, the Cape was beginning to diverge from the Dutch Indian Ocean norm, it was because of two of the factors identified by Raben and Bosma: 'the economic structure [...] and the number of European newcomers entering the community.' The Cape differed markedly from most other Dutch settlements in Asia in that it was able to support a large and steadily growing freeburgher population. Freeburghers did not thrive in Java or Ceylon, where the most lucrative branches of long-distance trade were monopolised by the Company and local trade and agriculture were largely in the hands of Asians. In Batavia, moreover, malaria was endemic and it exacted a very heavy toll among new immigrants.¹³⁴ By the 1640s, the VOC had abandoned its initial plans to create a Dutch settler colony in Batavia and had instead authorised the emergence of a

¹³² *Ibid.* 46.

¹³³ *Ibid.* 24-5.

¹³⁴ P. van der Brug, 'Unhealthy Batavia and the decline of the VOC in the eighteenth century' in Kees Grijns and Peter J.M. Nas, eds, *Jakarta-Batavia: Socio-cultural essays* (Leiden, 2000), 43-74.

Mestizo society, populated largely by the descendants of European men and Asian women. The Chinese and *Mardijker* communities in Batavia also grew apace. 'Batavia became a predominantly Asian city.'¹³⁵ Although there was a steady trickle of Company employees who applied each year for freeburgher status, it seems that there were seldom more than 300 freeburghers in Batavia at any one time. Most of these were shopkeepers or artisans; only the very wealthiest were land owners.¹³⁶

In Colombo, likewise, an initial enthusiasm for European colonisation gave way to disappointment as would-be burghers lost out to Asian competitors and 'returned to their jobs with the Dutch East India Company.'¹³⁷ 'For Burghers in places like Galle and Colombo,' write Raben and Bosma, 'opportunities for economic advancement were even more limited than in Batavia. A few tradesmen were Burghers, but most of the Europeans born in Ceylon entered the service of the Dutch East India Company at an early age.'¹³⁸ 'By 1694, only twenty-eight male freeburghers were registered in the census [in Colombo]'.¹³⁹

At the Cape, by contrast, the freeburgher population expanded rapidly. The climate was temperate; land was plentiful and the indigenous population, who were hunter-gatherers and pastoralists, were unable to prevent an expanding settler population from overrunning their territories and occupying their springs and water holes.¹⁴⁰ The Cape Colony may have lacked lucrative opportunities to engage in private trade, but it did offer a healthy climate, cheap land, cheap livestock and an open frontier. The freeburgher population grew year by year, at first through immigration and later through natural increase.¹⁴¹ Most immigrants were male Company employees, returning from the East or finishing a period of service with the Cape garrison and choosing 'to try to make a living at the Cape rather than to be poor once again in Europe.'¹⁴² But there were also female immigrants (though not many) who arrived as members of the few

¹³⁵ Raben, 'Facing the crowd', 217; Raben and Bosma, *Being 'Dutch' in the Indies*, 36-7.

¹³⁶ *Ibid.* 36-7. It seems that *Mardijkers* (also called *inlandse burghers*) were counted separately from 'European' burghers in the Batavian census. Raben and Bosma write that there were around 7500 *Mardijkers* in Batavia at the end of the seventeenth century (*ibid.* 50).

¹³⁷ *Ibid.* 39-41.

¹³⁸ *Ibid.* 40.

¹³⁹ Raben, 'Facing the crowd', 223.

¹⁴⁰ Khoekhoe chiefdoms mounted a valiant defence against the encroachment of the Colony and the depredations of free burghers, but were ultimately defeated. The hunters were able to hold out for much longer. See Richard Elphick, *Kraal and castle: Khoikhoi and the founding of white South Africa* (New Haven, 1977); Susan Newton-King, *Masters and servants on the Cape eastern frontier* (Cambridge, 1999 and 2009); Nigel Penn, *Forgotten frontier*.

¹⁴¹ A.W. Biewenga, 'De Kaap de Goede Hoop: Een Nederlandse vestigingskolonie, 1680-1730', PhD, Vrije Universiteit, 1999, 23; L. Guelke, 'Freehold farmers and frontier settlers, 1657-1780' in Elphick and Giliomee, eds, *The shaping of South African society*, second edition, 67.

¹⁴² Biewenga, 'De Kaap de Goede Hoop', 23.

families who took advantage of the Company's offer of assisted passages from Europe to the Cape, which closed in 1706, or came out from Europe to join male relatives who had applied for burgher rights upon leaving Company service. The largest number of female immigrants arrived as members of Huguenot families, who had received assisted passages to the Cape between 1671 and 1692. The freeburgher population at the Cape also grew by natural increase. The birth rate was high, as was average life expectancy.¹⁴³ A graph drawn by the Dutch historian Arend Biewenga shows how the proportion of children in the freeburgher population increased markedly after 1700, until by the 1730s children comprised more than half the population.

The result of continuous, albeit small-scale (and largely male) immigration, combined with natural increase, was a rapid rise in freeburgher numbers. In 1679 there had been only 259 'free people' (presumably including freed slaves) at the Cape;¹⁴⁴ by 1724 there were more than 2000. By 1750, according to Biewenga's figures, there were nearly 5000 free men, women and children (excluding the Khoesan) and by 1760 this number had risen to 6000.¹⁴⁵ Throughout this period, men outnumbered women by about 3 to 2.¹⁴⁶

One may surmise that, despite the presence of an open frontier, this rapid increase in the settler population led to growing competition for employment, trade and marriage partners, especially in the Cape district, where most artisans and shopkeepers were concentrated and where irrigable farm land was already scarce by 1700. In 1716 the Governor, Maurits Pasques de Chavonnes, was asked by the Directors in the Netherlands whether it was desirable to encourage further emigration from Europe to the Cape. His answer was a resounding no: 'more people are not needed, especially as it is feared that poverty may increase, - traces of which can already be discerned [...].' There were enough artisans at the Cape already and accommodation was scarce. 'In short, we have workmen of all trades here both among the Company's employees and the burghers, so that, in my opinion, no more need be sent out, as we are amply provided with drunkards who keep our hands full.'¹⁴⁷

In this context, freed slaves and their descendants may have become a focal point for the envy and discontent of certain immigrants who found life at the Cape an uphill struggle. Many freed people possessed special qualities or

¹⁴³ Gerrit Schutte, 'Company and colonists at the Cape, 1652-1795' in Elphick and Giliomee, eds, *The shaping of South African society*, second edition, 298.

¹⁴⁴ Guelke, 'Freehold farmers and frontier settlers', 66.

¹⁴⁵ Biewenga, 'De Kaap de Goede Hoop', 24.

¹⁴⁶ Guelke, 'Freehold farmers and frontier settlers', 66.

¹⁴⁷ *The Reports of Chavonnes and his Council, and of Van Imhoff, on the Cape* (Cape Town: Van Riebeeck Society, 1918), 87-8.

valuable connections, which had marked them out for manumission; some had influential patrons who lent them money and helped them find their feet as freeburghers.¹⁴⁸ Contests over what it meant to be European may also have intensified as immigrant European men found European-born brides among the Huguenot settlers or the female relatives of their compatriots. Johannes Oberholtzer may not have been the only male settler to have abandoned his mestizo concubine in favour of a Huguenot bride.¹⁴⁹ It is also possible that locally born children of freeburghers, including those who were themselves descended from slaves, may have wished to bolster their own sense of identity by distancing themselves from the stigma of slavery.¹⁵⁰ But then again, it could be that the final two incidents of discrimination identified by Karel Schoeman as indicative of shifting ground had more to do with 'the prejudices harboured by the colonial elite' than with actual social relations in the growing town.

The penultimate incident concerned the Governor, Maurits Pasques de Chavonnes of Bergen-op-Zoom in the Netherlands, who, in June 1721, shared with his fellow Councillors the 'regret' he felt at finding that 'slaves or children procreated in known whoredom were brought to be christened together with the Europeans,' that slaves were allowed to stand at the font as godparents to their own children and those of other slaves and that 'the children of the free blacks and slaves were usually adorned with more finery when they were christened than those of our nation, all of which tends to the great annoyance and also belittlement and disrespect of the European nation.'¹⁵¹ De Chavonnes proposed that a weekday be set aside for the baptism of slaves and those of their children who were known to have Christian parents, presumably so that their presence at the font on Sundays would no longer give offence to members of '*de Europeaanse natie*.'

De Chavonnes' objections were at odds with local practice. Recent research by Gerald Groenewald has shown that, for much of the eighteenth century, the Cape Church took a lenient approach to illegitimacy (procreation in 'whoredom') and did not turn the children of unmarried mothers (not all of whom were slaves or freed slaves) away from the font.¹⁵² As to slaves acting as sponsors or godparents, this was not the norm in the case of Company slaves, because Company officials fulfilled this role, but it did occasionally occur among

¹⁴⁸ Newton-King, '*Family, friendship and survival*'. We should note, though, that some Dutch immigrants befriended freed slaves and offered material and emotional support.

¹⁴⁹ Newton-King, '*Sodomy, race and respectability*', 35-6.

¹⁵⁰ Gerald Groenewald suggested this possibility to me.

¹⁵¹ C 56, Resolutions, 17 June 1721. See also Schoeman, *Armosyn van die Kaap*, 671. Maurits Pasques de Chavonnes, from Bergen op Zoom in North Brabant, was descended from a Huguenot aristocrat who had fled France after the massacre of St Bartholomew's Day. *Dictionary of South African Biography*, vol. 2 (Cape Town, 1972), 178-9.)

¹⁵² Groenewald, 'Een spoorloos vrouwspersoon'.

slaves belonging to devout or benevolent freeburghers. In 1693, for example, a child named Lena was baptised in the Cape Church '*waervan vader is Arendt van Mallebaar, de moeder Helena van Macassar, tot getuijgen stonden Job van macasser, ende Lijsbeth van Macasser sijnde lijfeigen van den Ed: I Heer Gouverneur [Simon van der Stel] [...]*'¹⁵³

The other members of the Council of Policy only half-heartedly endorsed the Governor's proposals. They ignored his suggestion that slaves should be baptised on weekdays instead of Sundays, but they did rule that male slaves should henceforth not step up to the font 'whether as father or as witness' and 'also that the aforementioned slave children should be baptised without such adornments as they usually wore.'¹⁵⁴ They were silent on the question of the finery worn by the children of free blacks, delaying judgement on this and all other church matters raised by De Chavonnes until they had consulted the ministers of Cape Town, Stellenbosch and Drakenstein.¹⁵⁵

The final act of discrimination against freed slaves identified by Schoeman as indicative of 'a clear new contour' was also introduced on the watch of Maurits Pasques de Chavonnes. This was the creation of a separate civic militia company for 'free blacks and free Chinese' resident in Table Valley. The creation of the *Compagnie der Vrijzwarten* in September 1722 has understandably been seen as a decisive turning point in relations between freed slaves and the rest of the free community. In the towns of the Netherlands the *burgerwagt* or civic guard (also known simply as *de schutterij*) was 'an expression of civic solidarity' and community spirit.¹⁵⁶ Its members served as an auxiliary police force, patrolling the streets at night, in conjunction with the municipal police. In Cape Town, the *burgerwagt* likewise conducted nightly patrols, co-ordinating its rounds with soldiers from the Castle garrison. On ceremonial occasions, such as the funeral of a Governor or the visit of a high official from the East Indies, the members of the *burgerwagt* would assemble under arms, each man falling in beneath the banner (*vaandel*) of his own company.¹⁵⁷ The officers of the *burgerwagt* were viewed by the authorities as civic representatives; on the occasion of the annual *optrek*, or general muster, they were invited to dine with the Governor and his senior officials. They were treated to a lavish feast with wine, beer and

¹⁵³ VC 603, Doopregister, Cape Church, p. 49, 2 August 1693. The Governor in question was Simon van der Stel.

¹⁵⁴ According to Ross, it was customary that the child's father would step up to the rail of the pulpit, together with at least one sponsor or godparent (Ross, *Status and respectability*, 29).

¹⁵⁵ C 56, Resolutions, 17 June 1721.

¹⁵⁶ M. Prak, *The Dutch Republic in the seventeenth century: The Golden Age* (Cambridge, 2005), 157.

¹⁵⁷ BKR 1, Minutes of the Burger Krijgsraad, extraordinary meeting, 3 January 1725; C 102, Resolutions, 14 January 1737. In 1722 the *burgerwagt* comprised one cavalry company and two infantry companies.

tobacco.¹⁵⁸ According to Mentzel, 'all persons whose names were on the register of burghers' were obliged to join the *burgerwagt*.¹⁵⁹ In contemporary documents, the members of the three militia companies in the Cape district were often referred to collectively as '*de burgerij*'.¹⁶⁰ It would seem, then, that exclusion or, worse, expulsion from the *burgerwagt* and incorporation into a separate, inferior body (for the ordinary members of the *Compagnie der Vrijzwarten* did not bear arms) must have signified a loss of burgher status for those thus segregated. As we have seen, this was the conclusion reached by Nigel Worden and Robert Shell in the 1980s. This position was endorsed by Robert Ross in 1999, when he described 'free blacks' and 'baptised bastards' as 'taxonomically anomalous, neither slave nor free, neither burgher nor Khoi.'¹⁶¹ Even Hans Heese seems to have felt that, after 1722, freed slaves occupied 'a grey world' or 'in-between stage' between freeburghers and slaves.¹⁶²

But was it really so? Were men born in slavery excluded from the burgher militia after 1722 and, if the answer is yes, did this signify a loss of burgher status or confinement to a 'grey' zone between slave and free? The muster rolls of the Cape Town *burgerwagt* are unfortunately missing; but the *opgaafrollen* (tax rolls) of the Cape district, transcribed by Hans Heese from the originals in the Hague, do provide circumstantial evidence that several freed slaves had been members of the *burgerwagt* before 1722. As in seventeenth century Amsterdam, where 'compulsory military service was introduced for all men between the ages of eighteen and sixty' (even those who did not have burgher rights), militiamen were required to buy their own weapons and equipment.¹⁶³ In 1687, the Cape authorities had similarly ordained that 'All those who are already free, or who in future stood to gain their freedom must, within three months, provide themselves with a proper gun.'¹⁶⁴ (Swords seem also to have been mandatory, whereas a set of pistols was optional.) This being the case, only those who could afford to buy a gun could in practice join the *burgerwagt*. As in Amsterdam, the '*grauw*' - those without steady work or fixed address - were excluded.¹⁶⁵ Nonetheless, the *opgaafrollen* reveal that several

¹⁵⁸ O.F. Mentzel, *A geographical-topographical description of the Cape of Good Hope*, Part I (Cape Town: Van Riebeeck Society, 1921), 151.

¹⁵⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁶⁰ See, for example, C 23, Resolutions, 5 November 1699; BKR 1, Minutes of the Burgerkrijgsraad, 2 October 1724; BKR 5, *Inkomende stukke*, Request of the officers of the *Caabse Burgerij*, Exhibitum 11 October 1712.

¹⁶¹ Ross, *Status and respectability*, 32.

¹⁶² Heese, *Cape melting pot*, 74.

¹⁶³ Prak, *The Dutch Republic*, 156.

¹⁶⁴ M.K. Jeffreys, ed., *Kaapse Argiefstukke: Kaapse Plakkaatboek*, Part I (Cape Town: Cape Times Ltd, 1944), 237.

¹⁶⁵ Prak, *The Dutch Republic*, 156; Schoeman, *Armosyn van die Kaap*, 672.

free blacks did acquire the necessary weapons and were, presumably, members of the *burgerwagt*.

In 1695, at least 14 freed slaves or ex-convicts owned guns and swords. Among them were Simon van der Stel's valet, Octavio of Macassar and his former cook, Ventura (or Pintura) of Ceylon.¹⁶⁶ Octavio also owned a pair of pistols, which he still had in his possession five years later.¹⁶⁷ The *opgaafrollen* for 1709 indicate that Claas Jonasz and Jacob Hendriksz were also members of the *burgerwagt*,¹⁶⁸ as were the free black fishermen Domingo van Bengale and Reba van Macassar and the former convict (and target of Swellengrebel's wrath) Daniel Rodrigo.¹⁶⁹ Certain freed slaves, or their offspring, also did duty as drummers for the Cape Town burgher watch. For example, in June 1719 and again in September 1720, the drummer Daniel de Vijf (son of Abraham de Vijf and the freed slave Maria Jacobs) asked to be excused from the watch. On the latter occasion he was replaced by another drummer, 'den *vrijswart* Cornelis Hector.'¹⁷⁰

Freed slaves also belonged to the burgher militia in Stellenbosch district, both before and after 1722. 'They were mainly dragoons, as were the majority of white burghers, and thus they had muskets and swords at their disposal. Often these were the only possessions of which an individual gave details in the *opgaafrolle*.'¹⁷¹ No freed slave achieved an officer's rank in Stellenbosch, but the transport-rider Pieter Willemsz Tamboer, also known as Pieter Willemsz Africano, served as drummer for the Stellenbosch burgher cavalry for 28 years.¹⁷²

After 1722 free blacks remained members of the burgher militia in Stellenbosch and Drakenstein,¹⁷³ but in Cape Town there seems to have been an immediate change. The entries in the *opgaafrollen* suggest either that most freed slaves no longer owned muskets and swords, or that, if they did, the clerks no longer deemed this worthy of record. Whereas in 1709 more than 24 freed

¹⁶⁶ *Opgaafrollen*, Cape district, transcribed in the Nationaal Archief by Hans Heese, Den Haag, 1979.

¹⁶⁷ C 303, Documents in criminal cases, statement of Jurrien Nijse van Anklam and Sebastiaan Sigismund van Heijdelberg, 25 September 1700. Octavio identified himself as a freeburgher, not a free black. He said he had never been a slave, but had come to the Cape in 1681, with his exiled brother-in-law, Daeng Majampa, Prince of Maccasser.

¹⁶⁸ Claas Jonasz (baptized in 1688) was the son of Armosijn Claasz (Klein Armosyn), school-mistress in the Company's slave lodge (Schoeman, Armosyn, 572-5). Jacob Hendriksz was known in 1709 as Jacob van de Kust Coromandel (compare CJ 2658, Wills 1746-49, no. 36, will of Jacob Hendriksz and Christina van de Kust).

¹⁶⁹ *Opgaafrollen*, Cape district, transcribed in the Nationaal Archief by Hans Heese, Den Haag, 1979.

¹⁷⁰ BKR 1, Burger Krijgsraad, Minutes, 4 June 1719 and 2 September 1720.

¹⁷¹ Hattingh, *Eerste vryswartes*, 74.

¹⁷² *Ibid.* See also Newton-King, 'Sodomy, race and respectability', 29, note 137.

¹⁷³ J 184, *Opgaafrollen*, Stellenbosch, 1724 and 1725.

slaves were listed as owning swords and muskets, by 1725 there were only four. Moreover, in 1724 and 1725, free blacks are listed separately from other freeburghers at the very end of the tax roll. There were exceptions: for example, in 1724 Christiaan Wijnandsz (Christiaan van de Cust Coromandel) was listed at number 162 on the roll, among other freeborn inhabitants of the Cape district, and in 1725 Christiaan Wijnandsz, Jacobus Hendriksz, Johannes Claassen (son of Claas Mallebaar and Helena van Timor)¹⁷⁴ and Christiaan Victor (see below) are all listed among the free-born.¹⁷⁵ But by 1731 even Jacobus Hendriksz (appointed captain of the *Compagnie der Vrijzwaren* in 1722) had been relegated to the bottom of the list, among all the other tax-payers who had been born in slavery.

It seems, then, that the consequences of the establishment of the new *Compagnie der Vrijzwaren* were indeed discriminatory. Men who, until October 1722, had taken their turn to keep the night watch with their fellow burghers were now apparently excluded from the nightly patrols and allocated instead to unspecified duties under the command of officers 'from amongst themselves,' who were not fully armed. The precise nature of the duties expected of the new *Compagnie* is very unclear. As we shall see below, it was formed in the aftermath of a terrible storm and the proclamation by which it was called into being was concerned with the prevention of 'theft of goods washed ashore and the fighting of fires.'¹⁷⁶ Two weeks after the issue of this proclamation the Secretary of the Council of Policy reported that, in obedience to the Governor and Council, he had appointed 'the following persons as officers over the free blacks and Chinese living in this Table Valley, being Jacob Hendriksz as captain, Abraham van Maccasser as lieutenant, Claas Jonasz and Hercules Valenteijn as sergeants, Carel Jansz van Bengale and Willem Thomasz as corporals.' He added that when the new Company was mustered with the others (*bij den anderen sullen moeten koomen*) the captain and lieutenant would each be armed with swords, the sergeants with half pikes and the corporals with canes.¹⁷⁷ There could be few clearer marks of its inferior status.

Despite this unhappy outcome, and despite the known prejudices of Maurits Pasques de Chavonnes, I think it can be argued that the intention behind the establishment of the new company was not entirely discriminatory. The *Plakkaat* of 29 September 1722 was issued under a very specific set of

¹⁷⁴ Mansell Upham, 'Keeping the gate of hell: Subliminal racism and early Cape carnal conversations between black men and white women', *Capensis* (2001), 7.

¹⁷⁵ *Opgaafrollen*, Cape district, transcribed in the Nationaal Archief by Hans Heese, Den Haag, 1979.

¹⁷⁶ M.K. Jeffreys, ed., *Kaapse Argiefstukke: Kaapse Plakkaatboek*, Part II (Cape Town, 1948), 90.

¹⁷⁷ C 60, Resolutions, 13 October 1722. This decision is recorded in the draft minutes (C 254) for Tuesday 13 October 1722 as: 'over de swarte officieren.'

circumstances.¹⁷⁸ It came in the wake of a terrible storm, which raged in Table Bay from Monday 15 June to the morning of Wednesday, 17 June. The sea in the roadstead seemed to be on fire, wrote the Governor's diarist, and 'the seawater pounded the shores with unbelievable force, so much so that one could not pass the Castle on the sea side without danger and the fishing boats moored at the jetty and some heavy masts in Rogge Bhaaij lay stranded on the beach [...].' The big ships in the bay pitched and tossed 'horribly' so that their keels were sometimes visible.¹⁷⁹ During the night of 16 June ten ships were torn from their moorings and dashed against the rocky shore. When the sun rose on Wednesday morning the horrified inhabitants of the Castle discovered that seven Company ships and three English ships had been wrecked and some 600 crew and passengers drowned, among them some who had tried to reach the shore at low tide.¹⁸⁰ The shores of Table Bay were littered with stranded goods: barrels of beer, wine and oil, bales of cloth and the extremely valuable money chests carried by outward bound VOC ships. The entries of the Governor's diarist and the minutes of the Council of Policy make it clear that, whatever concerns there may have been for the many lives lost, the overriding objective of the most senior officials was to prevent the theft and looting of these valuable salvaged goods. The Council of Policy issued two proclamations in June and July 1722, the first threatening those in possession of salvaged goods with corporal punishment, the second extending an offer of leniency.¹⁸¹ Neither proclamation had any effect. Company servants, soldiers, sailors, burghers, slaves and free blacks all helped themselves to the goods that washed ashore. Some even set sail in boats to see what they could salvage. The Council of Justice began to prosecute offenders in June and was still doing so in August 1722.¹⁸²

It is in this context that the *Plakkaat* of 29 September 1722 was formulated. If clause 9, which established the *Compagnie der Vrijzwaren*, is read together with the preceding eight clauses, it becomes clear that the overall intention was to ensure that, in the event of another such disaster, every single male inhabitant of the town would be accounted for. When the signal was given, all Company servants who lived outside the Castle walls were to gather within; the sailors of the *equipagiewerf* would muster under the command of the *Equipagiemeester*; Company slaves would gather inside the lodge under the command of the *mandoors*; male freeburghers would assemble 'without

¹⁷⁸ I wish to thank James Armstrong for pointing this out to me.

¹⁷⁹ C 1950, Dagregister, Tuesday 16 June 1722.

¹⁸⁰ C 60, Resolutions, 20 June 1722, note 1.

¹⁸¹ Jeffreys, ed., *Kaapse Argiefstukke: Kaapse Plakkaatboek, part II*, 88-90.

¹⁸² CJ 8, Minutes in criminal cases, 1722.

weapons' under the command of their respective officers and all other residents of the town were to remain within its confines and keep away from the beaches.¹⁸³ I think it can be argued that, in this context, clause 9, which referred specifically to 'free blacks and free Chinese,' was designed to ensure that all free men not already accounted for under the previous headings, perhaps because they were too poor to buy their own weapons and equipment, would now come under supervision in the event of a shipwreck. Clause 9 read as follows:

[...] in order that the free blacks and free Chinese who reside in this Table Valley, should also not be left idle in such cases [of shipwreck or fire] and thereby be given occasion [to commit] improprieties, it is agreed to bring them together in one company and to appoint officers from among them, with express orders, in the event of [shipwreck or fire] to gather immediately before the door of their captain and then to do as is mentioned above.¹⁸⁴

As we have seen, however, the new arrangement did become a vehicle for discrimination. Not only were existing free black members of the *burgerwagt* apparently deprived of the right to bear arms in defence of their town, but the *burgerkrijgsraad* also began to exclude new applicants if it was known that they had been born in slavery.

This is clear from at least one entry in the minute books of the *burgerkrijgsraad*. On 3 July 1724 Magdalena Wendels of Zutphen, widow of the burgher Jacobus Victor and wife of the burgher blacksmith, Jan Gerritsz van Hamburg, appeared before the *krijgsraad* to request that her 'stepson', the child of her first husband, be enrolled in the '*burgerije*'. The *krijgsraad* refused, on the grounds that the young man was not free-born (*vemis d'selve geen vrij gebooren is*), and it was decided that he would be placed on the roll of free blacks (*op de vrijswarte rol*).¹⁸⁵

Magdalena Wendels did not accept this decision. She must have approached the Burgher Council, because on 1 August 1724 the three burgher councillors wrote to the Governor on her behalf. They explained that Christiaan, the young man in question, was the child of Jacobus Victor by one of his female slaves. He had long been a ward of the Orphan Chamber, but had now reached his majority.¹⁸⁶ Jan Gerritsz and his wife had adopted Christiaan as their stepson and had taught him the smith's trade, in which he had excelled. Since the beginning of the year he had helped maintain the Colony's two mills, and 'since

¹⁸³ M.K Jeffreys, ed., *Kaapse Argiefstukke: Kaapse Plakkaatboek, part II*, 90-93.

¹⁸⁴ *Ibid.* 93.

¹⁸⁵ BKR 1, Burgerkrijgsraad minutes, 3 July 1724. Hans Heese discusses this case but fails to link Christiaan Victor with the wife of Jan Gerrits (*Cape melting pot*, 61).

¹⁸⁶ Christiaan Victor was born in 1699, just before his father married Magdalena Wendels. In 1714 the Orphan Chamber had formally placed him in the care of Wendels and her second husband, Johannes Gerritz, so that he could learn the blacksmith's trade. (MOOC 1/ 3 Resolutions of the Orphan Chamber 1724.)

all such tradesmen were very useful to this Colony' (*nademaal alsulken ambachtsman voor dese Colonie seer dienstig is*), they, the burgher councillors, humbly requested that the smith Christiaan should be enrolled in the *burgerij*. The response of the Governor-in-Council was read at the next meeting of the *krijgsraad*. 'It is understood,' wrote the Governor's clerk, Rijk Tulbagh, 'that the aforementioned Christiaan will be enrolled in the *burgerij* here, so as thereby all the more to encourage such persons in the future to learn good trades for the benefit of this jurisdiction.' The meeting then resolved to admit Christiaan Victor to the *burgerij*.¹⁸⁷ For many years thereafter, Christiaan Victor appears in the account books of the *Burgerraad* as '*den burger smit Christiaan Victor*.'¹⁸⁸

The case of Christiaan Victor was not the only anomaly in the new situation. In March 1736, following a raging fire, which threatened the whole town and destroyed five houses, the *Burgerraad* and *burgerkrijgsraad* jointly asked the Governor and Council for permission to place 'the burgher Philip Constant' at the head of a commando which would search the mountains roundabout for 'deserters and other vagabonds, whether Europeans or blacks [...] and run them down dead or alive, so as to purge this place of that riffraff, because it is not beyond possibility that the aforementioned fire may have been deliberately started by them [...].'¹⁸⁹

Like Christiaan Victor, Philip Constant had been born a slave. His mother, Catrina van Bengalen, had belonged to Simon van der Stel and he had been raised on the latter's farm, Constantia.¹⁹⁰ At the time of the fire, he had been free for more than two decades. He had recently moved to Cape Town from the village of Stellenbosch, where he had owned a garden with two cottages and stables attached.¹⁹¹ He was an experienced hunter and he knew the mountains of the southern Cape Peninsula well. But at least one young member of the Cape Town *burgerwagt* objected to the *Krijgsraad's* choice. Evert Colijn, grandson of the free black Maria Everts and great grandson of the freed slaves Evert and Marie of Guinea, refused to serve under Philip Constant. When summoned to explain himself, he told the *krijgsraad* that he 'knew no Constant who had command (*hij geen Constant en kent die komande heeft*)' and he was also not inclined (*niet van sins*) to submit to Constant's command, because

¹⁸⁷ BKR 1, 4 September 1724.

¹⁸⁸ BRD 19, Cassa Rekening van den ontfangst en uijtgaaf, wegens de burgerij aan Cabo de Goede Hoop gehouden door den burgerraad Hendrik Oostwald Eksteen, voor den jaare 1729; Cassa Reecq: van den ontfangst en uijtgaaf, weegens de burgerij aan Cabo de Goede Hoop gehouden door den burgerrade Jan de Wit voor den jaare A:o 1731, etc.

¹⁸⁹ C 100, Resolutions of the Council of Policy, 20 March 1736.

¹⁹⁰ S. Newton-King, 'Philip Constant and Evert Colijn', unpublished conference paper, December 2012.

¹⁹¹ *Ibid.*

Constant was a freed slave (*'om dat het een vrijgegevene slaaff is'*). To its credit, the *krijgsraad* rebuked Colijn for his impudence and threatened to report him to the Governor.¹⁹²

This last example does tend to confirm Gerald Groenewald's suspicion that the pressure to discriminate arose from the ranks of younger Cape-born freeburghers, even, or perhaps especially those who were themselves descended from slaves.¹⁹³ As Teunis Baartman has recently demonstrated with respect to the mid-1700s, exclusion from the burgher militia was not based on race or ethnicity, but only upon status at birth.¹⁹⁴ The sons and grandsons of freed slaves took the burgher oath and joined the *burgerwagt* when they turned 16, appearing before the Governor and Council during the annual *optrek* alongside other free-born youths. They swore loyalty to the States General of the United Netherlands, the Directors of the Dutch East India Company and the Governor and Council of the Cape, as well as the 'magistrates and authorities of this place.' They promised to obey the officers of the '*burgerlijcke wagt*,' and to obey all the rules of the watch. Finally, they swore to give their lives should it be necessary (*'ons goed en Bloed Lijf ende Leven is 't noot'*), for the United Netherlands and 'this town' (*deese steede*).¹⁹⁵

Baartman gives the example of Abram Ventura and his brother Adriaan. 'They were the sons of Abraham van Ventura [a free black] and the grandsons of the slaves Ventura and Helena.' They took the burgher oath and joined the burgher infantry in 1770.¹⁹⁶ Baartman also names Moses Davids, 'born in 1742 as the son of Martha of the Cape,' who took the burgher oath in Cape Town in October 1758 and subsequently married the illegitimate daughter of Elizabeth Knoetzen and Joachim Prinsloo. 'In 1794 he was nominated to become a teacher in the District of Stellenbosch and named a "Cape burgher and member of the Dutch Reformed Church".'¹⁹⁷ The grandsons of freed slaves and political exiles also appear on a tax list (*Quotisatie Rolle*) drawn up by the *Burgerraad* for 1783. Abram and Adriaan Ventura are on this list, as is Abraham Adehaan, 'grandson of Abulbas, the Rajah of Tambora, who was banished to the Cape in the seventeenth century.' Abraham Adehaan took the burgher oath in October 1750.¹⁹⁸

¹⁹² BRK 1, Minutes of the Burgerkrijgsraad, 9 April 1736.

¹⁹³ See above, note 147.

¹⁹⁴ Teun Baartman, 'Protest and Dutch burgher identity' in Worden, ed., *Cape Town between east and west*, 75-6; Teunis Baartman, 'Fighting for the spoils: Cape burgerschap and faction disputes in Cape Town in the 1770s', PhD, University of Cape Town, 2011, 71-5.

¹⁹⁵ C 2661 Politieke Raad, Eedboek, 1692-1748.

¹⁹⁶ Baartman, 'Fighting for the spoils', 72-3.

¹⁹⁷ *Ibid.* 73.

¹⁹⁸ *Ibid.* 73.

The oldest surviving Oath Book (*Eedboek*) of the Council of Policy confirms that the sons as well as the grandsons of freed slaves were eligible to join the *burgerwagt*. Thus, Claas and Willem Jonasz, whose father Claas Jonasz *d'oude* had apparently been ousted from the *burgerwagt* in 1722, took the burgher oath on 18 October 1729 and 16 October 1732 respectively. On 17 October 1740, Robbert Hendrik Schot, son of Robbert Schot van Bengalen and Job Jacobsz, son of Jacob van Ambon, likewise swore to defend their town with '*goed en Bloed Lijf ende Leven,*' should the need arise. They were followed on 17 October 1744 by Arent Robbert Schot, younger brother of Robbert Hendrik.¹⁹⁹

In sum, as Teun Baartman writes:

The examples from the Cape illustrate that burgher identity was based more on status than race in the Dutch empire overseas. Thus burghers should not be seen strictly as Europeans or white but rather defined as people who were not employed by the VOC or were slaves. There was no stipulation that burghers had to be purely of European descent.²⁰⁰

In this context, it is not unreasonable to surmise, with Groenewald, that the rapidly growing population of young Cape-born freeburghers sought to forge an identity partly through exclusion, not of those with darker skins but, as in the case of Evert Colijn and Philip Constant, those who were born in slavery and still carried the stigma from which their descendants fervently wished to distance themselves. Race or ethnicity would not serve as useful tools with which to discriminate, since the new generation of freeburghers were themselves of diverse ethnic origin and varied physical appearance. Legal status at birth would serve the purpose better.

However, while I agree with Baartman that legal status, rather than skin colour, did become grounds for discrimination within the freeburgher community, I do not agree that this discrimination went so far as to deny all freed slaves eligibility for burgher status. Baartman states categorically that 'there was a difference between burghers and free blacks [...] free black was not primarily a race classification, but free blacks were just as much a status group as were the burghers or Company employees or women.'²⁰¹ 'Despite the similarities [between the status of burghers and that of free blacks],' he writes, echoing Worden and Shell, 'free blacks were not regarded as burghers.'²⁰²

It is here that I part company with him. I have two reasons. First, one can find many examples in the records where free blacks are identified as burghers after

¹⁹⁹ C 2661 Politieke Raad, *Eedboek*, 1692-1748.

²⁰⁰ Baartman, 'Fighting for the spoils', 75.

²⁰¹ *Ibid.* 71-2.

²⁰² Baartman, 'Protest and Dutch burgher identity', 74.

1722. In the records of the *Krijgsraad* itself, for example, one finds the following entries:

'Den burger Christiaan Wijnantsz: vermits de 60 jaere daar toe staande berijkt heeft door den E krijgsraad ontslage van burger dienste.-' (Since the burgher Christiaan Wijnantsz has reached the age of 60 years, the Honourable Krijgsraad has relieved him of burgher duties.)²⁰³

And

'Den Burger Christiaan Victor versoekt aan den E Crijgsraad dat den burger Jan Claase van de Caab mogte ontslaage werde van burger dienste, segt dat hij out in arm is, dat hij bij hem dient voor cost en kleere, soo is dat den E. Crijgsraad zijn versoek accordeere.-' (The burgher Christiaan Victor requests the Honourable Krijgsraad to relieve the burgher Jan Claase van de Caab of burgher duties, he says that he is old and poor [and] that he serves him in exchange for food and clothing, so it is that the Honourable Krijgsraad accedes to the request.)²⁰⁴

Christiaan Wijnandsz (van de Cust Coromandel), Christiaan Victor (see above) and Johannes Claase (son of Claas Mallebaar) were all born in slavery. The surviving records of the *Burgerraad* contain similar references. The minutes of the *Burgerraad* no longer exist, but its account books illustrate the complexities of the situation which prevailed after 1722. Jacobus Hendriksz, who was made captain of the *Compagnie der Vrijzwarten* in October 1722, appears in the account books as '*den burger Jacobus hendriks,*' and is paid for delivering lime to the Burgher Watch House on the Groenemarkt. Pieter van Bengalen, a slave manumitted in 1724 by the estate of the late Stijntje Christoffelsz de Bruijn,²⁰⁵ appears in the accounts as '*den burger Pieter van bengaelen*' and '*de paade maker Pieter van Bengale*' (the road-maker Pieter van Bengale) and, as noted already, the freed slave Christiaan Victor is acknowledged as '*den burger smit Christiaan Victor.*'²⁰⁶

There are other entries in the records that support the view that free blacks were not uniformly denied burgher status. For example, in June 1725 the clerk of the Orphan Chamber recorded that '*den Burger Robbert Schot*' had agreed to stand surety for '*den mede burger Philip Bouton*' in respect of money which the latter had borrowed from the Orphan Chamber in 1722.²⁰⁷

²⁰³ BRK 1, Minutes of the Burgerkrijgsraad, Monday 9 April 1736.

²⁰⁴ BKR 1, Minutes of the Burgerkrijgsraad, Monday 7 December 1739.

²⁰⁵ CJ 3076, Obligatien, transporten van slaven en schuldbrieven, 25 maart 1723 tot 21 August 1724, no. 216, 14 August 1724.

²⁰⁶ BRD 19, Cassa Reecq: van den ontfangst en uijtgaaf, weegens de burgerij aan Cabo de Goede Hoop gehouden door den burgerrade Jan de Wit voor den jaere A:o 1731; Cassa Reecq: van den ontfangst en uijtgaaff, weegens de burgerrij aan Cabo de Goede Hoop gehouden door den Burgerraad frederik Russouw, voor den jaar 1734.-

²⁰⁷ MOOC 10/2/2, Obligatien 1705-1736. Robbert Schot was illiterate and made his mark on the document. Philip van Bouton was freed in 1700 following the death of his owner.

The minutes of the *Burgerkrijgsraad* also contain entries which suggest that freed slaves in the Cape district were required to register with the *burgerraad* as taxpayers in exactly the same manner as former Company employees who acquired burgher rights. It seems that anyone who practised a 'burgher trade (*burger nering*)' was required to register with the *burgerraad* and have his or her name entered in the '*burgerboeken*'.²⁰⁸ Thus, for example, on 3 February 1721 Daniel Hugo was summoned to explain to the *Krijgsraad* why he had not come to declare himself and have his name inscribed in the *burgerboeken*, seeing that he was practising a burgher trade.²⁰⁹ Those registering for the first time were apparently also required to show their *vrijbrief* (letter of freedom) to the *Raad*. Those who failed to do so were called to explain themselves. Thus, in January 1726 Christiaan Lievenberg, a German immigrant who was granted burgher rights in 1725,²¹⁰ was summoned to explain 'why he had not shown his *vrijbrief* at the proper time'. In October 1726, and again in February 1727, Lacas van Macasser, presumably a freed slave, was summoned for the same reason ('*om dat sijn vrijbrief niet ter behoorlijke tijd heeft vertoond*').²¹¹ In July 1728, Maria van de Caab was charged with having neglected to declare her income ('*weegens versuijm van de laaste opgeeving*') but was excused because 'she was not positively free.' Two years later, Wenza of Batavia faced the same charge and he was fined with costs.²¹² And in 1740, Catie van de Caap was ordered by the *Krijgsraad* to pay the 8 guilders she owed in '*agterstallige quotisatie penn: de anno 36.37.38 en 1739.*'²¹³

The allusion above to the presentation of *vrijbrieven* (letters of freedom) brings me to the second and perhaps more weighty reason for my disagreement with Baartman's conclusions about the inferior status of free blacks. This concerns the meaning and content of *burgerschap* (citizenship) in the Cape context. Baartman himself has done more than anyone in the community of Cape-based VOC scholars to explain and clarify the meaning of *burgerschap*, first in the Dutch context and then at the Cape. Indeed, my understanding of the term is based on his own work and on sources to which he led me. It is my reading of these sources, alongside Baartman's own work, which has led me to

²⁰⁸ BKR 1, Minutes of the Burger Krijgsraad, 3 February 1721. See also M.K. Jeffreys, S.D. Naudé and P.J. Venter, eds, *Kaapse Argiefstukke: Kaapse Plakkaatboek*, Deel II (Cape Town, 1944), 51.

²⁰⁹ BKR 1, Minutes of the Burger Krijgsraad, 3 February 1721.

²¹⁰ C.C. de Villiers and C. Pama, eds, *Geslagsregisters van die ou Kaapse families*, Part 2 (Cape Town: Balkema, 1966), 471.

²¹¹ BKR 1, Minutes of the Burgerkrijgsraad, 2 Oct 1726 and 3 February 1727.

²¹² *Ibid.* 5 July 1728 and 5 June 1730.

²¹³ *Ibid.* Monday 1 February 1740.

conclude that the most essential privileges conferred by the acquisition of burgher rights were indeed shared by many free blacks.

In his doctoral dissertation, Baartman explains that, in the Netherlands, the rights and duties of burghers varied from one town or city to another. The institution of *burgerschap* predated the Union of Utrecht in 1579 and the great variety of customs, rights and privileges which had existed in the towns of the seven provinces before Union were brought into the new order. The term '*burger*' meant 'resident of a *burcht* (castle or stronghold) or city,' explains Baartman. 'There was no such thing as a national Dutch *burgerschap* or citizenship; on the contrary, *burgerschap* was a local phenomenon.'²¹⁴

However, there were several privileges attaching to burgher status that seem to have been enjoyed by burghers in most Dutch cities. These included the right to be judged by one's fellow citizens; exclusive access to the Civic Orphanage (*Burgerweeshuis*) and preferential access to poor relief; exemption from certain tolls and, most importantly, the right to enrol in one or more of the city's guilds. In Amsterdam, writes Maarten Prak, 'only citizens could enrol in the guilds. Anyone intending to set himself up in a craft or trade governed by a guild had no choice but to acquire citizenship.' This was true of other Dutch cities as well: 'everywhere the guilds were open only to those who had "obtained" the rights of citizenship.' Those excluded from citizenship (Jews in some cases, Catholics in others) were unable to set up as independent craftsmen or shopkeepers.²¹⁵ Anyone contemplating a career in local government would also want to acquire burgher status since 'the better positions were open only to citizens.'²¹⁶

In the Netherlands, burgher rights could be acquired by birth, marriage (to a burgher daughter), purchase or grant. In some cities, such as Amsterdam, only the legitimate children of burghers were granted burgher rights; in others, 'all people born or even just baptised within the town automatically received *burgerschap* and could never lose it.'²¹⁷ Burgher rights could also be bought, at a price which varied according to demand. In the seventeenth century, '*burgerschap* of Amsterdam was hugely desirable [...] and the city fathers could therefore ask the hefty sum of fifty guilders, part of which went to the city orphanage and care for the poor.' Other cities asked less. It seems that few cities denied burgher rights to those who could pay, with the exception of a number of staunchly Reformed cities, like Deventer and Nijmegen, where only members of the Reformed Church were allowed to acquire citizenship by

²¹⁴ Baartman, 'Fighting for the spoils', 45.

²¹⁵ Prak, *The Dutch Republic*, 159-60.

²¹⁶ *Ibid.* 159.

²¹⁷ Baartman, 'Fighting for the spoils', 58.

purchase.²¹⁸ *Burgerschap* acquired by birth, marriage or inheritance was confirmed by a process of registration and the swearing of a burgher oath, in which the new burgher promised to obey the States-General, the Stadholder and the local authorities, and to protect the city and its inhabitants.

The oath was a contract between the city and the burgher - the burgher became part of an exclusive and privileged community in exchange for financial, political and social support till "death us do part" as the burghers of 's Hertogenbosch promised. The burgher oath furthermore stressed the importance of local allegiance as opposed to national identity.²¹⁹

Besides burghers (also known as *poorters*), who enjoyed 'an exclusive and first-rate status' in Dutch towns and cities, there was a second category of registered permanent resident - usually called *inwoners* or *ingezetenen* (inhabitants). *Ingezetenen* could own property in the town and 'had access to basic juridical procedures,' but they could not be elected to public office and they could not practice any craft or trade regulated by one of the city guilds. This latter impediment was the most onerous. When the burgomasters of Amsterdam confirmed in 1683 that those who possessed only '*het kleyne burgerschap*' could not join a guild, there was an immediate drop in the number of *ingezetenen* and an increase in the number of those who became burghers by right of purchase.²²⁰ As Baartman writes: 'the major advantage of *burgerschap* therefore seemed to have been the economic one of membership of the guilds and related to that the possibility of building up a relatively independent economic existence [...].'²²¹

Baartman contends that free blacks at the Cape enjoyed a status similar to that of *ingezetenen* in Dutch towns. 'They could not be elected to public office,' he writes, 'and they did not have representation on the Council of Justice as did the burghers. Apart from the economic aspect, the free blacks in Cape Town therefore showed a remarkable resemblance to the *ingezetenen* in Dutch cities.'²²²

But, in my opinion, it is the 'economic aspect' that is the most significant. There is no evidence that freed slaves were actually barred from holding public office at the Cape. Municipal government in Cape Town was oligarchic, as it was in the Netherlands. Only the wealthiest and most prominent citizens were

²¹⁸ *Ibid.* 60.

²¹⁹ *Ibid.* 65.

²²⁰ E. Kuijpers and M. Prak, 'Burger, ingezetene, vreemdeling: burgerschap in Amsterdam in de 17e en 18e eeuw' in J. Kloek and K. Tilmans, eds, *Burger: een geschiedenis van het begrip 'burger' in de Nederlanden van de middeleeuwen tot de 21ste eeuw* (Amsterdam, 2002), 127. I am indebted to Teun Baartman who lent me a copy of this text.

²²¹ Baartman, 'Fighting for the spoils', 70.

²²² *Ibid.* 71.

nominated for positions on the Burgher Council (*Burgerraad*), the Board of the Orphan Chamber (*Weeskamer*),²²³ the Court of Petty Cases (*Hof voor kleine zaken*) and the Matrimonial Court. The responsibility of representing the freeburghers on the Council of Justice was fulfilled by the three *Burgerraden*. To the best of my knowledge, free blacks were not excluded from any of these positions by law; they simply lacked the financial, social and reputational capital required.²²⁴

On the other hand, I think a case can be made that the rights conferred upon freed slaves by the all-important *vrijbrief*, which they received when their manumission was formalised, were very similar to those conferred by the *vrijbrieven* given to Company servants when they were granted burgher rights.

When a Company employee wished to acquire burgher rights, he would make a request to the Governor-in-Council in which he stated when, in what capacity and on what ship he had arrived at the Cape. He would then state how he intended to make a living in the colony. Many applicants identified themselves as artisans. Those who had no trade often declared that they knew enough to set themselves up as agriculturalists; some said they had learnt to farm while in the service of a local farmer.²²⁵ Yet others declared that they had married at the Cape and now asked for burgher papers. Among these latter were several men who had recently married daughters or widows of wealthy alcohol concessionaires (*pachters*).²²⁶ But the cornerstone of each application was the assertion that the applicant could make 'an honest living as a burgher' at the Cape. For example, in 1721 Frederik Carbag stated that he had arrived as a soldier in 1715 on the ship *Sandenhoeft*. He now wished to carry on his trade as a baker and asked for burgher papers.²²⁷ In 1724, Marten Cramer of Auerbach stated that he had arrived at the Cape as a soldier in 1715, on the ship *Arentsduijn*. He now 'considered himself, god willing, in a position to earn his living decently as a burgher in his trade as a mason and [...] he was also needed

²²³ C. Cornell and A. Malan, *Household inventories at the Cape: a guidebook for beginner researchers* (Cape Town, 2005), 28; G.G. Visagie, *Regspleging en reg aan die Kaap van 1652 tot 1806* (Cape Town, 1969), 56-7.

²²⁴ Some burgher councillors had ties to freed slaves. For example, Hendrik Oostwald Eksteen, who became Commissioner of Marriage and Civil Affairs in 1719 and Orphan Master and Burgher Councillor in 1722, was first married to Sara Heijns, the *voorkind* of Paul Heijns and the freed slave Maria Schalk, illegitimate daughter of Willem Schalk van der Merwe. (Gerald Groenewald, 'An early modern entrepreneur: Hendrik Oostwald Eksteen and the creation of wealth in Dutch colonial Cape Town, 1702-1741', *Kronos* 35 (2009), 17.)

²²⁵ See, for example, Leibbrandt, *Requesten*, vol. I, pp. 2, 47, 51 and 52.

²²⁶ G. Groenewald, 'A Cape bourgeoisie? Alcohol, entrepreneurs and the evolution of an urban free-burgher society in VOC Cape Town' in N. Worden, ed., *Contingent lives: social identity and material culture in the VOC world* (Department of Historical Studies, University of Cape Town, 2007), 283; Leibbrandt, *Requesten*, vol. I, 52.

²²⁷ Leibbrandt, *Requesten*, vol. I, 237.

as a mason at the mill by the burgher councillors of this colony [...].'²²⁸ He therefore requested to be discharged from the Company's service and appointed as a burgher. In 1726, Jan Blignaut of Amsterdam wrote that he had recently married and, 'by his marriage here he has come into the possession of some lands, on which he thinks he can support himself as a free man.' He too asked for burgher papers.²²⁹ There are many other similar examples.

Requests such as these were considered by the Governor-in-Council at the weekly meetings of the Council of Policy. If the request was granted (and such requests were seldom refused),²³⁰ the successful applicant would receive an official letter of freedom, or *vrijbrief*, stamped with the seal of the VOC. Few if any such *vrijbrieven* survive for the first half of the eighteenth century, but there are several surviving examples of *vrijbrieven* issued in the late 1600s. Here is one example:²³¹

Simon van der Stel Commendeur en Raad van 't fort de Goede hoop an Cabo de bonne Esperance, doen te weten.

Also Jan van den berg van Amsterdam, voor soldat met 't thans ter Rhede leggende Schip de Lek hier angeland, an ons seer instantelijk heeft versogt, uijt S Comp :s dienst ontslagen en in vrijdom gesteld te mogen werden, hebbende d'e Comp:ie in behoorlijke getrouwigheid gediend en nu genegen zijnde met alle gepermitteerde trafficquen en den Landbouw sig t'erneeren [from generen – to gain one's livelihood], So is 't dat wij hem sijn versoek gunstiglijk toestaan, onder sodanige submissie van alsulke placaten en ordonnantien als bereids op 't stuk der vrijluiden so bij onse Heeren en meesteren in 't vaderland als ons hier ter plaatse beraamd zijn, ofte hier namaals ten dienste der E nederlandse g'octrojeerde oostIndische Comp: mogten beraamd werden.

Actum in 't Casteel de goede hoop den 26 September 1687.

[signed] S V Stel

Although the wording may vary slightly from one *vrijbrief* to the next, each makes it clear that the authorities have acceded to the applicant's request for permission to earn his living 'in all permitted trades,' including farming (*met alle gepermitteerde trafficquen en den landbouw sig te erneren*).²³² In a few cases, where an applicant had asked permission to practise a specific trade, such as

²²⁸ C 1089 Requesten en nominatie, 1724 ([...] hoe hij suppl:t onder godes seegen vermeijnd in staat te zijn omme met sijn ambagt van metselen sig behoorlijk als burger te sullen kunnen erneren en dat hij ook door burgerraden deser colonie als metselaar aan de moolen is benodigt [...]).

²²⁹ Leibbrandt, *Requesten*, vol. I, 60.

²³⁰ Baartman, 'Fighting for the spoils', 63.

²³¹ The source is CJ 2748, Diverse burger vrijbrieven en billetten. I am very grateful to Gerald Groenewald for alerting me to the existence of this volume.

²³² *Ibid.* Emphasis added.

masonry or carpentry, the *vrijbrief* might specify this, but the gist was clear: the applicant had been granted the right to earn an honest living in a burgher trade.²³³ This focus is in keeping with the understanding of burgher rights in the Netherlands at that time (except, of course, that there were no guilds at the Cape).

Having received his *vrijbrief*, the new burgher was required to register with the *Burgerraad*, presumably by having his name inscribed in the *burgerboeken*. As noted above, the *burgerkrijgsraad* in Cape Town frequently summoned unregistered burghers to explain why they had not had their names inscribed in the *burgerboeken*, since they were practising a burgher trade (*aangesien burger nering pleegt*).

We should now take a closer look at the *vrijbrieven* issued to slaves at the time of manumission. According to a *Plakkaat* concerning slaves, first issued in Batavia in 1642, anyone wishing to free a slave should do so before a secretary and two witnesses.²³⁴ This practice was scrupulously followed at the Cape and many deeds of manumission can now be found in the Western Cape Deeds Office and in the archive of the Council of Justice. These deeds were usually executed in the presence of the Secretary of the Council of Justice or the 'first sworn clerk' of the Council of Policy. They could vary considerably in the details they recorded, but they all stated the name of the owner (or his agent or executor), the name of the slave or slaves, the reason for manumission (for example, 'faithful services rendered') and, after 1708, the names of two reputable men who had agreed to stand surety against any claims the freed slave might make upon the Church Poor Fund. The owner also stated that he (or she) had set the slave free and now formally renounced all claims to him or her. He (or she) then declared that he/she gave his/her former slave permission 'to earn his livelihood in all permitted trades and undertakings/crafts (*handteeringe*) and to earn his bread in an honest manner.'²³⁵

There are many examples of such *vrijbrieven* in the archives and I can select only two or three at random here: On 23 February 1700 the freeburgher Jacob van de Voorde, 'repatriating from Batavia with the ship *handboog*, presently in the roadstead,' declared that he had freed his slave Joseph van Batavia 'aged about 10 years, for reasons of charity, singular considerations and services performed'. Joseph was to serve the former burgher councillor Guillaum Heems as a slave for a further ten years, in return for 'food and further maintenance.' Thereafter, he would gain his freedom and be empowered to earn his living 'as

²³³ Cf. Baartman, 'Fighting for the spoils', 63.

²³⁴ J.A. van der Chijs, *Nederlandsch-Indisch Plakkatboek, 1602-1811* (Batavia: 1885), Deel I, 575.

²³⁵ Emphasis added.

a freedman or freeman (*als een vrijgevevene of vrijman*) in all honourable and permissible trades (*bij alle eerlijcke ende gepermitteerde handteeringe*) [...].²³⁶

On 14 August 1724 (to pick at random a deed of manumission dating from after the establishment of the *Compagnie der Vrijzwaren*), the executors of Stijntje Christoffelsz de Bruijn, the Widow Botma, appeared before the First Sworn Clerk Rijk Tulbagh to announce that, in accordance with the Widow Botma's will, they wished to emancipate a male slave named Willem Stolts van de Caab. They therefore renounced all claims which the heirs of the Widow Botma may have had upon him, and permitted him 'to work out his own salvation and earn his living in the world with god and with honour in all permissible occupations and trades (*omme hem selven met alle geoorloofde handteeringe en traficque met god en met eere door de weereld te redden en te mogen erneeren* -).'²³⁷

Again, in May 1729, the executors of the estate of the late Maria van Madagascar appeared before the First Sworn Clerk Nicolaas Leij to declare that, in terms of Maria's will, they wished to emancipate Isabella of Madagascar, allowing her to earn her living in all permissible trades and work out her salvation in the world 'with god and with honour.'²³⁸ In 1731, Sara van de Caab, freed by the bookkeeper Johan Raeck, was likewise authorised by her deed of manumission to earn her living in the world 'with god and honour.'²³⁹

In my opinion, the rights granted here to manumitted slaves are essentially the same as those granted to former Company servants. In both instances the crux of the matter was that the freed person was authorised to engage in 'all permitted trades.' That these were burgher trades was sometimes made explicit in the *vrijbrieven*, but also suggested by the frequent references to earning a living 'with honour.' Both these terms ('burgher' and 'honour') appear in the *vrijbrief* granted to Cupido van Bengalen in 1714 by his owner, Jacob Sedel:

Appears before the first sworn clerk of the political secretariat here, Jacobus Sedel, repatriating as a passenger on the homeward bound ship Samson; who declares that he hereby emancipates, frees and releases from slavish servitude [...] his slave named cupido van bengalen aged about 20 years ... and declares him free and unencumbered, permitting

²³⁶ Deeds Office, vol. 13, T 1699-1700, 23 February 1700.

²³⁷ CJ 3076, Obligatien, transporten van slaven en schuldbrieven, 25 maart 1723 tot 21 August 1724, no. 217, 14 August 1724. Three slaves were emancipated by the will of Stijntje Christoffelsz de Bruijn: Willem Stolts, Pieter van Bengalen (see above) and Christina Pietersz van de Caab. She left them jointly a wagon, eight trek oxen and two fish nets with which to earn a living. By 1726 Willem Stolts had done well enough to buy the farm Wolvedans, near Klipheuwel, from the burgher Jan Valk. (S. Newton-King, 'Sodomy, race and respectability', 14, note 34.)

²³⁸ CJ 3079, Obligatien, transporten van slaaven en schultbrieven beginnende met den 7 Jann 1729 en eijndigende met den 30 decemb: desselfde jaar, no 29, 4 May 1729.

²³⁹ CJ 3081, Obligatien, transporten van slaven en schuldbrieven beginnende met den 4 Januarij 1731 en eijndigende met den 12 Dec desselven jars, no. 81, 20 November 1731.

him to work out his own salvation in the world with god and with honour through all lawful means and burgher occupations (*burgerlijke handeligh*); provided that the aforesaid freed slave, in recognition of this generosity, is obliged always to honour and respect the friends and family of his former master.²⁴⁰

The final clause inserted in Cupido's *vrijbrief* reminds us that, while the rights granted to freed slaves may have been the same as those granted to freed Company employees, their paths to freedom were very different. Company servants who requested permission to live as free men (*vrijlieden*) when their contracts expired were seldom refused. By contrast, the emancipation of a slave was entirely at the whim of the owner. Slavery, as Orlando Patterson reminds us, was an 'individualized condition.' Manumission was, paradoxically, an expression of the sovereign power of the master over his slave, because freedom was his to give or withhold.²⁴¹ Mindful of this, neither master, nor slave took the act of manumission for granted. Masters (and mistresses) desired something in return. This could merely be the enhanced social status derived from such a display of magnanimity. But most masters and mistresses would also expect continuing gratitude, loyalty and deference from their former slave. This was in fact enjoined by the Batavian *Plakkaat* of 1642 (see above), but it was rarely invoked at the Cape.²⁴²

In 1985, Nigel Worden referred to this injunction (to respect a former owner and his or her friends and family) in support of his contention that free blacks did not enjoy burgher status at the Cape.²⁴³ Certainly it can be seen as evidence that the stigma of slavery lingered after manumission. But it can also be argued that the act of manumission served to bind the freedman or woman to his or her former owner and his (or her) circle of relatives, friends and acquaintances in ways which might well benefit both parties. In such a case, it could be argued (as I have suggested above with regard to the freed slaves of Simon van der Stel) that some freed slaves were better off than some freed Company servants, with respect to their access to credit, patronage and social support.²⁴⁴

To conclude, I think it can be argued that, despite the 'smouldering' presence of colour prejudice and the several incidents of discrimination identified by Karel Schoeman and discussed at some length above, freed slaves at the Cape in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries did enjoy substantially the same rights and privileges as freeburghers.

²⁴⁰ Deeds Office, T 1714, p. 245, 4 April 1714, my translation.

²⁴¹ Patterson, *Slavery and social death, 4 and Freedom in the making of western culture* (New York, 1991), 3-4.

²⁴² Van der Chijs, *Nederlandsch-Indisch Plakkatboek*, Deel I, 575. The *Plakkaat* prescribed corporal punishment for a freed slave who injured his or her former master or mistress 'in word or deed.'

²⁴³ Worden, *Slavery in Dutch South Africa*, 147.

²⁴⁴ Newton-King, 'Family friendship and survival'. See also Irma Thoen, *Strategic affection? Gift exchange in seventeenth-century Holland* (Amsterdam, 2007).

Perhaps I should give the last word to Johannes Morgh, a former Company slave born in the Slave Lodge in Cape Town, who wrote from Batavia in 1732 to his newly freed brother Arnoldus Koevoet, who still lived in Cape Town:

I wish that God will bless you in the freedom or citizenship (burgerschap) that you have obtained, and endow you with satisfaction, together with other citizens (burgeren).²⁴⁵

²⁴⁵ MOOC 14/8, part 1, Annexures to the liquidation account of Arnoldus Koevoet, 1738, Johannes Morgh to Arnoldus Koevoet and Anna Rebecca of Bengal, 10 February 1732.

Insult and Identity in the late Eighteenth-Century Cape Colony

Nigel Worden

Robert Ross has exerted a major influence on the research of Cape historians over many decades. His monograph *Cape of Torments*, published in 1983, opened the way for a rich spate of work on Cape slavery and his later research on the demography, legal order and social hierarchies of the early Cape Colony strongly influenced many of us working in that field in the 1980s and 1990s. Then, in 1999, his publication of *Status and Respectability in the Cape Colony, 1750-1870* opened the way for new ways of thinking about the cultural and social history of the early Cape.¹ By stressing the struggles across class and ethnicity to assert colonially defined concepts of respectability, Ross drew attention to the significance of markers of social status. Inspired by Ross, I have more recently demonstrated that concepts of honour and shame were central to the identity of a wide range of the inhabitants of the early Cape colony (including civil and military officials, burghers, artisans, soldiers, sailors, slaves and convicts) and explored how such concepts were experienced and manifested by them.²

¹ R. Ross, *Cape of Torments: Slavery and Resistance in South Africa* (London, 1983) and R. Ross, *Status and Respectability in the Cape Colony, 1750-1870: A Tragedy of Manners* (Cambridge, 1999).

² Examples of this are included in N. Worden, ed., *Cape Town between East and West: Social Identity in a Dutch Colonial Town* (Hilversum and Johannesburg, 2012). See also N. Worden, 'Forging a Reputation: Artisan Honour and the Cape Town Blacksmith Strike of 1752', *Kronos: Journal of Cape History* 28 (2002), 36-54, 'Demanding Satisfaction: Violence, Masculinity and Honour in Late Eighteenth-Century Cape Town', *Kronos* 35 (2009), 32-47 and "'Unbridled Passions": Honour and

As part of a project comparing the operation of honour in the Cape and Australian colonies between 1750 and 1850, I have been working with the civil records of the Cape Council of Justice.³ Since plaintiffs brought the cases to the Council themselves, rather than being subject to the VOC's official view of what constituted a valid injury (as in the criminal cases), these records reveal the ways in which Cape inhabitants constructed and defended their own sense of self-worth and what they considered to be challenges to it. In other words, they enable us to explore how men and women in Ross's status-conscious society experienced and asserted that status.⁴

One of the reasons many Cape plaintiffs brought their grievances to court was the legal recognition under Dutch law, as applied in the colony, of the offence of *verbaale injurien* (sometimes described as *atrocce verbaale injurien*), or verbal insult. This could be committed by the accused in the form of direct confrontation through word and sometimes also gesture, or by the spreading of rumours. Insult could also include physical assault or written defamation but verbal insult was the most common cause of civil action. Physical attack was usually dealt with through criminal procedures since a violent disruption to the peace, especially if carried out in the public streets, was as much a matter of concern to the authorities as to the individuals concerned. Mouting an insult was not. A few examples of written insult occur, but verbal forms were much more frequent in a society where, as Lecharny has observed in an insightful analysis of insult in eighteenth-century Paris, 'sociability was essentially oral.'⁵ In the period between 1770 and 1803 over 200 such cases were brought before the Cape civil courts.⁶ These reveal the existence at the Cape of a *schaamtecultuur* (culture of shame) in which honour and shame formed a key part of social identity in ways not dissimilar to that identified by Roodenburg in seventeenth- and eighteenth-century Amsterdam.⁷ There was little sign of the decline of public insult as a weapon of dishonouring, in contrast to the trend

Status in Late 18th Century Cape Town' in C. Strange, R. Cribb and C. Forth (eds.), *Honour, Violence and Emotion: Historical Perspectives* (London, 2014), 89-106.

³ See P. Russell and N. Worden (eds.), *Honourable Intentions? Violence and Virtue in Australian and Cape Colonies, c 1750 to 1850* (London, 2016).

⁴ On the nature of the Council of Justice civil records, see T. Baartman, "'The Most Precious Possession": Honour, Reputation and the Council of Justice', unpublished paper, Violence and Honour in Settler Societies conference, University of Cape Town, December 2012.

⁵ H. Lecharny, 'L'injure à Paris au XVIII^e siècle: Un aspect de la violence au quotidien', *Revue d'Histoire Modern et Contemporaine* 36 (1989), 566.

⁶ This paper is based on cases identified from a database of Cape civil cases constructed for the honour project by Teun Baartman.

⁷ H. Roodenburg, *Onder Censuur: De Kerkelijke Tucht in de Gereformeerde Gemeente van Amsterdam, 1578-1800* (Hilversum, 1990), 244.

identified in Shoemaker's studies of eighteenth-century London.⁸ The way one was perceived by others, the external façade, mattered more at the Cape than 'the internal psychology of the self' that came to constitute the importance of individual self-worth in late eighteenth-century England.⁹ Insult by another therefore profoundly challenged status and identity.

Insults followed certain norms and conventions but they could also be highly creative and innovative. They thus give us an entry point into the cultural values of a society and as historians we need to interpret their meaning not only in a literal sense (sometimes in itself a linguistic challenge) but also in the context of the *mentalité* of both speaker and receiver of the insult. Since the insults led to civil action, they clearly signified something that could not be lightly brushed off or ignored. Why were certain words or insinuations particularly offensive? How did the social relationship or connections between insulter and insulted affect the seriousness of the matter? And how was this affected by the place in which the incident took place or by who was present? In this way, the verbal insult cases lend themselves to micro-historical analysis of the kind frequently written by early colonial Cape historians from criminal sources.¹⁰ There is a danger of over-generalisation and the missing of social nuance that thick description alone can provide. Nonetheless, as a preliminary undertaking, I shall attempt here to suggest some wider patterns.¹¹

The civil cases of the VOC period were normally brought to the Council by men, sometimes acting as 'guardians' on behalf of their wives, daughters or minors.¹² Women usually only brought cases themselves if they were widows or, in rare examples, wives separated from their husbands or widows representing minor children. Similarly, men were the defendants, occasionally on behalf of their wives or daughters, although there is one case of a widow

⁸ R. Shoemaker, 'The Decline of Public Insult in London, 1660-1800', *Past and Present* 169 (2000), 97-131.

⁹ D. Wahrman, *The Making of the Modern Self: Identity and Culture in Eighteenth-Century England* (New Haven and London, 2006).

¹⁰ See N. Penn, 'History from Crime: Criminal Records, Microhistory and Early Cape Society', unpublished inaugural lecture, University of Cape Town, September 2013.

¹¹ On the need for micro-analysis of insult cases see the critique of Burke in W. de Blécourt, "'Schelm, Hoer en Kenaille": Beledigingen in Achttiende-eeuws Kolderveen', *Volkkundig Bulletin* 18:3 (1992), 389-414.

¹² Interestingly, some married women and unmarried daughters brought cases on their own behalf in the final years of the century after the end of VOC rule, which suggests some change in their legal standing. For example, Wilhelmina Laubscher, Western Cape Archives Repository, Roeland Street, Cape Town, Council of Justice (CJ) 2177 (entire volume), 19 April 1798; Cornelia Catharina Muller, CJ 1274, 514-21, 30 May 1799; Johanna Dorothea Matthijssen, CJ 1331, 137-334, 21 January 1802; Sophia Elizabeth van der Poel, CJ 1348, 389-519, 24 June, 1802; Cecilia Geesje Elsabe Bauermeester, CJ 1344, 381-419, 20 January 1803.

defending her minor son.¹³ The weaker legal position of women is thus underscored, but the gendered focus of the cases also emphasizes the fact that husbands and fathers were directly affected by insults uttered or received by their female kin. This was particularly true of sexual accusations. As the Stellenbosch burgher Johannes Engel complained in 1773, when his wife was called a whore in public, such words could lead to the total ruin of himself and his whole family, not least because her accuser claimed that she had mothered her children with different fathers and their legitimacy was thus in question.¹⁴ But other insults to women, such as accusations of theft, also affected the reputation of their whole families and therefore needed to be cleared by their husbands or fathers.¹⁵

The plaintiffs were also overwhelmingly free burghers or other men of status within the ranks of the VOC, such as senior administrators or ship captains, the latter bringing cases to the Council which had taken place on board their vessels before arriving at the Cape. The claim to be treated with respect because one was a burgher was frequently given as grounds for civil action and this was clearly the reasoning followed by the Council. Men (and women) of lower social status certainly were insulted and resented such insults as unjust and dishonouring, but few such cases were brought to the Council, being dealt with in other ways that included direct confrontation and possible assault.¹⁶ Resort to the Council was a claim to status. People of lower rank were not considered by the authorities, or by the burghers, to be able to demand the right to honour and respectability and so could not claim that their reputations had been damaged by verbal insult.¹⁷ There are a few exceptions: for example, in 1782, Gerrit Catenbrink, a blacksmith working 'for my bread' on farms in the interior complained that he had been insulted by a soldier *knegt* (a Company soldier hired out to farmers as overseer). Artisan sensitivity to attacks on reputation was common, given their vulnerable social status below the burgher and official

¹³ For an example of a widow representing her son, see Helena Catharina Malan, CJ 1166, 413-38, 25 June 1789.

¹⁴ CJ 1103, 112-13, *eijsch* of Johannes Engel, 22 April 1773.

¹⁵ For example, CJ 1325, 1-19, *Johan George Stadler vs. Hendrik Weeber*, 29 April 1802.

¹⁶ For examples of such episodes amongst soldiers, sailors and slaves, see N. Worden, 'Demanding Satisfaction' and 'Strangers Ashore: Sailor Identity and Social Conflict in Mid-18th Century Cape Town', *Kronos* 33 (2007), 72-83.

¹⁷ This is paralleled by the situation in eighteenth-century New France, where the lower classes were not considered to have any honour to lose, although social inferiors were given some more respect than in France itself, P. Moogk, "'Thieving Buggers" and "Stupid Sluts": Insults and Popular Culture in New France', *The William and Mary Quarterly* 36:4 (1979), esp.530-3.

elite but above the rank and file of soldiers and low-ranking Company employees.¹⁸

The defendants also usually came from the higher ranks of Cape society. The majority were burghers, military or naval officers and Company officials, although some were head artisans in the employ of the VOC, and a few were rank and file soldiers and *knegts*. Either lower ranks did not insult their social betters to their face or, as is perhaps more likely, such actions did not warrant civil action since insult by a social inferior could be ignored as impudence. It was horizontal respect by one's equals that counted and that needed to be restored if threatened. In contrast to the situation in Amsterdam, where servants and bystanders of low rank could act as witnesses in insult cases, at the Cape the evidence of slaves were usually not considered sufficiently trustworthy and certainly not to provide support for claims of respectability by burghers or their social superiors.¹⁹ The participation of slaves in the origins or spreading of a rumour was sufficient cause for countering it. In 1787, Jan Jurgen Cotzee, a Stellenbosch district farmer, defended himself from the rumours spread by a fellow burgher that he had bought stolen cattle from '*swarte jongens*' (black slaves) on the grounds that the story originated from a slave and so was not proof of anything.²⁰ And in 1791, Cape Town burgher Izaak de Villiers countered the claim that he had doctored wine barrels with water on the grounds that his accuser was going on the report of his slave who would say anything his master wanted and was therefore inherently unreliable.²¹

The importance of burgher status is exemplified by the complaint of Johannes Cleenwerk in 1794. He was a cabinetmaker who had worked for the Governor and had acquired burgher rank four years previously. At the annual exercise of the burgher militia in Cape Town he was accosted by Louis Girardijn, a French cook at the Castle, who angrily demanded the repayment of a small debt that Cleenwerk had owed him for eight years and went so far as to threaten him with his sjambok whip. Cleenwerk replied that he was 'an honourable burgher who does not deserve to be treated in such a disrespectful way,' to which Girardijn replied, 'I shit on your *burgherschap*, I am a Frenchman and an honest man and you are a *schurk en kromme moerneucker* (villain and crooked motherfucker).' Some dispute occurred in the subsequent hearing as to whether Girardijn had also said, 'I shit on your *burgherschap* and the entire

¹⁸ CJ 1124, 34-44, eijisch of Gerrit Hendrick Catenbrink, 17 January 1782. On artisan honour at the Cape, see Worden, 'Forging a Reputation'.

¹⁹ H. Roodenburg, 'De Notaris en de Erehandel: Beledigingen voor het Amsterdamse Notariaat, 1700-1710', *Volkskundig Bulletin* 18:3 (1992), 367-88.

²⁰ CJ 1151, esp. 105-6, eijisch of Jan Jurgen Kotzee, 14 June 1787.

²¹ CJ 1191, 1-274, Izaak Stephanus de Villiers vs. Jan de Villiers Jacobzoon, 20 January 1791.

burgherij' as Cleenwerk claimed but Girardijn denied.²² The shame to Cleenwerk was the public exposure of his debt by a cook, doubtless a previous acquaintance from his pre-burgher days of working at the Castle and a particularly painful reminder when he was attending the burgher militia parade that was a marker of rank in Cape society.²³ Girardijn's foul-mouthed insult to his burgher position and possibly also to the whole of the burgher community was thus particularly wounding. However, Cleenwerk's case was not helped by the fact that he had retaliated by calling Girardijn '*een fransche blixem of fransche donderslag*', a play on words, since *bliksem* meant either a flash of lightening or a curse hence a 'French *bliksem* or (worse) a thunderclap.'²⁴ After failing to persuade the two parties to reconcile, the Council decided to be unsympathetic, denied Cleenwerk's claim and ordered both parties to pay their own costs.²⁵

In most cases, however, plaintiff and defendant were of roughly equal social ranking and were known to each other. This reflected a closer sense of a burgher community, both in urban and rural settings, than was the case for the more fluid and transient population of lower-ranking Company employees, slaves and passers-by whose conflicts filled the criminal record books. In some cases, resorting to the Council came after a history of disagreement or conflict in which the insulting episode was only a part.²⁶ This was especially true of kin: an uncle who offended his two nephews by calling them 'rascals' after a succession of arguments, or relatives whose quibbled over the inheritance of goods, money or slaves.²⁷ It could also apply to socially defined groupings of acquaintances, such as the members of Cape Town's elite men's club the Societeit Concordia, one of whose members accused Jan Hoffman, a government attorney, of being a *verdomde schurk* (damned rascal) while both were eating lunch in the company of fellow members.²⁸ At a less prestigious level, a dispute between a group of artisan friends playing bowls for money in

²² '*Ik schijt wat in jou burgerschap, ik ben een Fransman, een braaf man, en jij bent een schurk en een kromme moerneucker*', CJ 1233, 172, recollection of Johannes Cleenwerk, 10 June 1795.

²³ On the significance of the militia to burgher identity, see T. Baartman, 'Fighting for the Spoils: Cape Burgerschap and Faction Disputes in Late Eighteenth Century Cape Town' (unpublished PhD thesis, University of Cape Town, 2011), 134-49.

²⁴ CJ 1233, 185-6, statement of Louis Girardijn, 2 February 1795.

²⁵ CJ 897, 199-200, Rolls and Minutes (Civil), 2 February 1796.

²⁶ For a parallel to this, see the discussion in J. Sharpe, *Defamation and Sexual Slander in Early Modern England: The Church Courts at York* (York, 1980), 22.

²⁷ CJ 1125, 214-28, Johannes Roos vs. Gijsbertus Roos, 3 July 1783; CJ 1209, 392-420, Johannes Ras vs. Hermanus Engelbrecht, 16 February 1792.

²⁸ CJ 1275, 264-93, Jan Bernhard Hoffman vs. Mauritz Bartels, 25 July 1799.

1798 when one tried to leave with his winnings also produced a civil action for assault and verbal injury.²⁹

A frequent relationship between plaintiff and defendant in Cape Town was that of neighbours. David Garrioch's classic study of neighbourhood communities in eighteenth-century Paris has drawn attention to the central role that neighbours played in sanctioning community values and exposing deviations from them.³⁰ There is less sign of such closely-knit networks in the smaller and more transient population of Cape Town at the time, where properties changed hands frequently, neighbours were less stable and there were fewer distinctly demarcated residential areas.³¹ However, neighbourhood values did play a role as the young adult woman Maria Strikker found in 1799, when she believed that her neighbour, Johanna Kleijnsmit, was behind the pressure for her to move out of the neighbourhood (the reasons for which are unclear). Her response, to loudly shout at Johanna when she was on the *stoep* (front step) of her house that she was an *infaame hoer* (notorious whore), did little to endear her to her fellow residents.³² As in early modern London, it was often women who participated in such community pressures and public shamings, especially in accusations of sexual immorality.³³

An important element in the shaming effect of insults was where they took place, and in whose presence. As in Garrioch's Paris, insults intended to force conformity to community norms were planned: 'each move is open, theatrical, carefully timed.'³⁴ Thus, the Stellenbosch Heemraad councillor Jan de Villiers lay in wait for Strand Street burgher Jacobus van de Berg by hiding behind a pillar of the street-level cellar until van de Berg emerged from his house after lunch and then chased him down the street shouting insults at him, so that all the neighbours who were at home taking their afternoon naps could hear.³⁵ Insults hurled in the street or in other public places were especially harmful. As in Amsterdam, this was exacerbated if the victim was in a place of particularly important prestige, such as at (or even on the way to) church, in front of the

²⁹ CJ 1260, 342-68, George Scheinlijn vs. Johan Pietersen, 12 July 1798.

³⁰ D. Garrioch, *Neighbourhood and Community in Paris, 1740-1780* (Cambridge, 1986), esp ch.2.

³¹ A. Malan, 'The Cultural Landscape' in N. Worden, ed., *Cape Town Between East and West*, esp.7-10, N. Worden, 'Space and Identity in VOC Cape Town', *Kronos* 25 (1998/9), 72-87.

³² CJ 1271, 456-74, Lucas Gertenbach vs. Maria Strikker, 4 April, 1799.

³³ L. Gowing, 'Gender and the Language of Insult in Early Modern London', *History Workshop Journal* 35 (1993), 1-21.

³⁴ Garrioch, *Neighbourhood*, 42.

³⁵ CJ 1135, 139-53, Jacobus Johannes van den Berg vs. Jan de Villiers Abrahamszoon, 16 December 1784. For analysis of the spatial implications of this case see N. Worden, 'Experiencing Space in Eighteenth-Century Cape Town', unpublished paper, Gender and Colonial Cities workshop, University of Sydney, December 2013.

Governor's residence or in the antechamber of the Council of Justice itself.³⁶ There were two further locales at the Cape where insults were particularly acutely felt. One was at auctions, often well-attended public occasions when, as one observer commented, 'the man who possesses a natural bent for business can always make a living.'³⁷ Sometimes the insult related to the sale itself, such as accusations of concealing the sickness of an auctioned slave or stepping on someone's foot in the crowd.³⁸ Usually, however, the insult concerned other matters, such as family disputes, accusations of sexual impropriety or business malpractice. It was the uttering of such words in the presence of a public gathering at which any member of the burgher community could be present, which made the accusations particularly shameful.

The other place where Cape burghers were particularly sensitive to public insult was at gatherings of the burgher militia. As Gerald Groenewald and Teun Baartman have both argued, these were more public and symbolic displays of the rights of burgher status than serving any meaningful military function.³⁹ Awareness of social rank and the need to protect it were thus particularly acutely felt at such gatherings. We have already seen that it was at a burgher militia exercise in 1794 that cabinetmaker Cleenwerk and cook Girardijn exchanged insults about the meaning of *burgherschap*. Three years earlier, Gerrit Lotter was outraged when marching at a burgher militia parade because the captain, Servaas van Breda, seized him by the shoulder and told him that he was out of step, which Lotter claimed was 'the greatest affront as a burgher to be treated thus' and particularly so when done in front of all his fellow burghers. The insult was worsened by the fact that Van Breda was not the overall commander, a breach of etiquette that, according to Lotter, was a threat to 'the good order, peace and tranquillity of the colony and its inhabitants.'⁴⁰ In

³⁶ For such examples, see CJ 1132, 109-22, Joseph Elsen vs. Harmen Aarts, 8 April 1784; CJ 1121, eijsch of Jeremias Auret, 26 October 1780, f.440-445; CJ 1233, 350-60, statement of sergeant Schiffman, 14 January 1796. For Amsterdam, see Roodenburg, 'De Notaris en de Erehandel', 378-80, Roodenburg, *Onder censuur*, 350-1. For another example of the significance of particular public locales of urban insult, see R. Shoemaker, *The London Mob: Violence and Disorder in Eighteenth-Century England* (London and New York, 2004), 51.

³⁷ O. Mentzel, *A Geographical-Topographical Description of the Cape of Good Hope, Part II*, Van Riebeeck Society, First Series no.6, (Cape Town, 1925), 99.

³⁸ CJ 1124, 12-33, Carel Starrenberg vs. Willem Stedele, 17 January 1782; CJ 911, 125, 175, 206, 229 and 317, Rolls and Minutes (Civil), 1803, Hendrik Vos vs. Jacob Alexander Francke, 17 February 1803.

³⁹ G. Groenewald, 'Entrepreneurs and the Making of a Free Burgher Society' in N. Worden, ed., *Cape Town Between East and West*, 56-8 and T. Baartman, 'Fighting for the Spoils', 135. On the symbolic links between burgher status and militia duty in German towns of the early modern period, see B. Tlusty, *The Martial Ethic in Early Modern Germany* (Basingstoke, 2011).

⁴⁰ 'goeder ordre, rus en tranquilliteit dezer colonie en denselve ingestenen', CJ 1187, eijsch en conclusie of Gerrit Lotter, 395, 8 December 1791.

1780, burgher Pieter van der Heijde was deeply shamed by the statement of fellow burgher Johan Elser at a break in the general militia exercise and in front of all the officers present, that had he known who he was he would not have shaken his hand, since he knew him to be a *schobbejak* (rogue). The matter was made worse by the fact that both men were about to be presented to the Governor.⁴¹

At such public occasions, the presence of numerous other people, both of burgher rank and below it, added to the shame of the insult. However, sometimes plaintiffs were incensed to be insulted in their own homes since, as Christiaan Esselbrugge, *opperchirurgijn* (Chief Surgeon) of the Company put it, 'one's own house should be the safest refuge of all places.'⁴² As in early modern Europe, 'cultural agreement about the sanctity of household space' in a period when unlocked doors and windows were the norm, meant that insults uttered in or at the boundaries of a house were viewed with particular seriousness.⁴³ Esselbrugge was at home after a long illness when he was accosted by his two brothers-in-law who demanded payment of their share of a legacy. They chased him out of his room and into the *voorhuijs* (porch), threatening him with their fists and shouting abuse at him. But this family dispute was made worse by the fact that a large crowd of people had gathered on the street and some peered through the half open door to see what was going on. Similarly, in 1788, Cape Town burgher Hermanus Keeve complained that burgher Joachim Hiebner had insulted him from the street in front of his own *stoep* in the presence of friends that he was entertaining, an episode which attracted the attention of all his neighbours.⁴⁴ To be insulted in front of others in one's own house was more shaming than words uttered in private.

Although to be insulted by someone of lower rank might be ignored or discounted, an insult made by an equal could be more damaging if delivered in front of social inferiors. Thus, in an unusual recognition of the presence of slaves, Thomas Maxwell, an English clerk working for the new government in 1797, complained that his landlord had asked him to leave when he came home drunk and ordered the house slaves to take off his boots. The insult was made worse, he claimed, since the two slaves witnessed the scene and indeed attempted to throw him out on their owner's order. It may be significant that Maxwell was an English newcomer to the colony working in a lowly official

⁴¹ CJ 1120, 24-140, Pieter Jurriaan van der Heijde vs. Johan Michiel Elser, 7 December 1780.

⁴² '*zijn eigen woonhuijs, 't welk tot de vijlisch schuijplaats voor een ieder stricken moet*', CJ 1127, 4, eijsch of Christiaan Esselbrugge, 10 October 1782.

⁴³ Tlusty, *Martial Ethic*, 58.

⁴⁴ CJ 1161, 180-369, Hermanus Keeve vs. Joachim Hiebner, 18 September 1788.

capacity, who was perhaps particularly sensitive to his superiority over slaves and the insult of being manhandled by them.⁴⁵

Let us now turn to the insults themselves. These were not significant because of the truth or falsity of the words used: insults were (and are) usually hyperbolic or formulaic. Moreover, in the Roman-Dutch law of defamation as applied at the Cape, the truth of an allegation was not the issue. What mattered to the Council was the degree of insult intended (it was assumed to be malicious in intent unless the defendant could prove otherwise) and the damage such insults could cause to the reputation and honour of the person insulted.⁴⁶

Many of the insults used the same terms of abuse, and ones that are familiar from studies of insult in early modern Europe. They were also similarly gendered. Men were usually called (both by other men and by women) *slegte karel*, *schelm*, *schuijm der schelmen* or *dief*, terms that denigrated their honesty and moral integrity and violated 'the early modern code of manhood.'⁴⁷ Often, this was a general term of abuse, but sometimes it was linked to specific allegations about business or professional malpractice, such as short-changing on a purchase,⁴⁸ not being 'a man of your word' by failing to fulfil the terms of a contract,⁴⁹ performing shoddy work⁵⁰ or being a *slegte betaaler* (bad payer) and not repaying debts.⁵¹

Such allegations were highly damaging to economic prospects in a society where, in the absence of banking and financial institutions, personal trustworthiness and reputation were the only security that potential business partners could rely on. In this, the Cape followed the pattern of other early colonial societies, such as New France.⁵² In one case in 1802 a duel was almost fought when a burgher warned a widow who wanted to lend out money on interest that the person with whom she was negotiating was not someone he knew and lacked credentials, adding that '*t is bij veele alles geen metal dat er blinkt,*' meaning that there were many people around who lacked the substance that they claimed.⁵³ Such allegations were highly damaging in a fluid colonial

⁴⁵ CJ 1296, 251-471, Thomas Maxwell vs. Dirk Aspeling, 16 November 1797.

⁴⁶ Lalith W. Athulathmudali, 'The Law of Defamation in Ceylon: A Study in the Inter-action of English and Roman-Dutch law' *International and Comparative Law Quarterly*, 13: 4 (Oct. 1964), esp. 1373, 1388, 1390 and 1400-2.

⁴⁷ Tlusty, *Martial Ethic*, 103.

⁴⁸ For example, CJ 1119, 88-93, Dirk Beukes vs. Johanna Mosterd, 7 December 1780.

⁴⁹ For example, CJ 1186, 333-487, Martinus Bijleveldt vs. Nicolaas Desch, 2 September 1790; CJ 1275, 330-1 and CJ 1277, 37-91, Johan Philip Wagner vs. Johan Frederik Herwich, 8 August 1799.

⁵⁰ For example, CJ 1190, 115-19, Hendrik Johannes Grijling vs. Harmanus Pieterse, 18 January 1792.

⁵¹ For example, CJ 1294, 196-212, Frans Hilgers vs. Isaac von Biehl, 7 August 1800.

⁵² Moogk, 'Thieving Buggers', 536.

⁵³ CJ 1336, 374, eijsch of Cornelis van der Poel, 25 November 1802.

society where personal background and financial stability were often unknown. They were especially so for a newcomer or someone starting up in business, as the wine merchant Matthijs Pieter Taute made clear in his appeal to the Council in 1779, 'as a beginner it is even more necessary than usual to maintain good credit and reputation and to be acknowledged as an honourable person throughout the world.'⁵⁴ He was incensed by the rumours spread around the countryside that he lacked capital and that farmers should beware of dealing with him. At another level, one burgher took action when word was spread that he was about to leave the colony and so abandon his creditors.⁵⁵

Men of certain occupations were prone to specific attacks on their reputation. Lawyers, clerks and other VOC officials were regularly accused of abusing their position for personal advantage and corruption was a well-recognised problem.⁵⁶ A doctor was insulted by the accusation that he had failed to identify sickness in a slave up for sale⁵⁷ and a ship captain returning to Europe was shamed by suggestions that he was smuggling spices.⁵⁸

Some terms of abuse were reserved for men of lower rank, and their use was therefore particularly insulting. The soldier *knegt* Jan Scholtz was especially offended to be called an *infame gaauwdief* (notorious pickpocket) by the farmer for whom he was working, since he 'was descended from honourable parents and to his knowledge had never strayed from the path of honour.'⁵⁹ Association with the gallows, or the hangman was another lowly insult that evoked heinous images in German and (to a lesser extent) Dutch minds.⁶⁰ VOC soldier Johann Cleijs was deeply shocked to be impudently told by Andries Smit, the young son of a Cape Town burgher that 'you can't sit with us [...] you come from and must (go to) the gallows' even though Smit claimed that he had only been joking,⁶¹

⁵⁴ 'als een beginner, vind zich zoo meer daar toe genootsaakt, als hem daaraan geleegeen is, zijn goed crediet, en aansien te conserveeren, om zich eerlijk door de weereld te brengen,' CJ 1115, 364r.-365v., eijtsch of Matthijs Pieter Taute, 2 December 1799.

⁵⁵ CJ 1180 (complete volume), Jan Morel vs. Jacobus Johannes van den Bergh, 15 April 1790.

⁵⁶ Examples include CJ 1138, 408-73, Jacobus Verceuil (Company attorney) vs. Jan Smit van Dilburg, 28 July 1785; CJ 1151, 10-13 and 16-17, CJ 1153, 205-15, Jacobus Verceuil vs. Johannes Pieterze, 15 November 1787 and Cornelis van Aerssen (secretary of the Council of Justice) vs. Jacobus Verceuil, 5 April 1787 (an example of getting one's own back?); CJ 1163, 306ff, Willem Kolver (clerk of the Company political secretariat) vs. Johan Volmer, 14 May 1789; CJ 1197, 215-46; CJ 1194, 201-36, Godfried Watermijer (Company lawyer) vs. Jacques Tredoux, 14 May 1792.

⁵⁷ CJ 1188, 101-75, Jacobus Johannes van den Berg vs. Willem van Rees, 18 August 1791.

⁵⁸ CJ 1185,303-50, Nicolaas Acker vs. Jan Valkenburgh, 29 September 1791.

⁵⁹ 'zoo van eerlijke ouders gesprooten en sijnes weetens nooit buiten het pad van eere gedwaald is', CJ 1103, eijtsch of Jan Casper Scholtz, 19 November 1772, 138r.

⁶⁰ K. Stuart, *Defiled Trades and Social Outcasts: Honor and Ritual Pollution in Early Modern Germany* (Cambridge, 1999), esp. ch.3. For the shame of association with the scaffold at the Cape see Ross, *Status and Respectability*, 18.

⁶¹ 'gij [...] moet bij ons niet sitten. gij komt en moet aan de galg', CJ 1107, 284v., eijtsch of Johannes Cleijs, 29 August 1776.

while burgher Hendrik de Waal Corneliszoon similarly complained vehemently when he was accused of ‘helping the hangman in his work.’⁶² Jacob Franke, a VOC wagon driver demanded redress for the extreme insult he suffered when Izabella van der Schijff called him ‘a scoundrel marked with branding on his back.’⁶³ In early modern Europe, branding was only second to hanging in its humiliation, since it permanently marked the body as dishonoured.⁶⁴ Izabella van der Schijff made matters even worse when she added that Frank was a *gebrandmerkte Jood* (branded Jew).

To be called a Jew was a common term of abuse in Europe, associated not only with religious deviance but also with social inferiority. In late 1795, burgher Hermanus Godschalk was accosted by a sergeant of the former VOC troops who demanded revenge for an (unspecified) letter he had sent him. While hitting him in the face with a sjambok he shouted the, ‘wounding and shaming words, “You are just a Jew, a smous and an scoundrel, there is revenge”’.⁶⁵ Of equal insult in Calvinist Cape Town, as in the Netherlands, was to be called a *Roomsche blixem* (a Roman (Catholic) rascal), as Anthon Keijter, a VOC sailor complained when accosted thus by burgher Petrus Joubert in 1792.⁶⁶

Soldier Johann Cleijs (see case above) was not only offended to be told to go to the gallows, but also because the jesting youth Smit had called him a *landverraader* (traitor to his country).⁶⁷ Such accusations were particularly insulting to military men. As the Captain of the Swellendam burgher militia, Jacobus Steijn stated to the Council in 1786 after his Lieutenant had called him a *landverraader* (traitor), ‘treason [...] is the greatest offence that anyone can commit and is usually punished by death.’⁶⁸

Claims of military untrustworthiness increased at times of political tension. For example, in 1781, when rival factions of the Cape burgher population were at loggerheads over access to VOC patronage, the burgher militia Lieutenant Pieter van Breda accused Captain Petrus Moller of being a coward and a

⁶² ‘soekt je mij ook soot e doen als Pirman die je onder de galg geholpen hebt’, CJ 1124, 290, eijsch of Hendrik de Waal Corenliszoon, 18 July 1782.

⁶³ ‘jij bent een schelm die een brandmerk op zijn rug heeft’, eijsch en conclusie of Jacob Alexander Franke, CJ 1232, 244, 10 September 1795.

⁶⁴ R. van Dülmen, *Theatre of Horror: Crime and Punishment in Early Modern Germany* (Cambridge, 1990), 49. To call someone branded was a common verbal insult in eighteenth-century Paris, D. Garrioch, ‘Verbal Insults in 18th Century Paris’ in P. Burke and R. Porter, *The Social History of Language* (Cambridge, 1987), 108.

⁶⁵ ‘grievende en hoonende woorden “Je bent tog maar een Jood, een Smous en een schelm, daar is revenge”’, testimony of Hermanus Godschalk, CJ 1233, 328-9, 17 December 1795.

⁶⁶ CJ 1199, 312-44, Petrus Gerhardus Joubert vs. Anthon Keijter, 15 March 1792.

⁶⁷ CJ 1107,286, eijsch of Johannes Cleijs, 29 August 1776.

⁶⁸ ‘de landverraderij [...] de grootste misdaad te zijn die iemand began kan en ordinair met de dood gestraft word’, CJ 1146, 28, eijsch of Jacobus Steijn, 21 September 1786.

deserter, doubtless because Moller had refused to sign a petition against the Governor. The Council consequently found in Moller's favour, but Van Breda then took the case to appeal in Batavia.⁶⁹ After the fall of the Cape to the British at the battle of Muizenberg in 1795, accusations of desertion found particularly vulnerable targets. In 1796, Rasmus Paas, an ex-VOC naval officer was accused of desertion by a former colleague, although he claimed to the Council that he had been taken prisoner of war and granted permission by the authorities to man a private trading vessel.⁷⁰ In 1802, a Cape Town couple who had disputes with their neighbour over the building of a boundary wall accused him of being 'a deserter from Muizenberg [...] [who] ran away and sought refuge in the hospital' and they assured him that they would 'get even when the Cape is again Dutch.'⁷¹

Accusations of cowardice were also insults to manhood. Masculine pride was a common cause of physical retaliation for an insult in the form of duelling or brawling, but it could also surface in civil cases. For example, in 1789, burgher Bartolomeus Bruijswaard boasted that he could ride from Cape Town to Franschoek in four hours and became angered when one of the company said that the journey took at least eight hours and called him a liar.⁷² Such pride may also account for the fact that I have found no cases where men were insulted on sexual grounds, such as adultery or sexual debauchery.

This was in marked contrast to the situation for women. Insults to men tended to focus on dishonesty, incompetence or untrustworthiness, but such terms were only rarely used about women.⁷³ Insults to females were instead mainly sexual in content, usually variants on the word *hoer* (whore), a pattern also evident in the 'Golden Age' Netherlands.⁷⁴ Sometimes this was meant literally, as happened at a Stellenbosch auction sale in 1773, when burgher Gerrit Hertog pointed his finger at Johannes Engel and said 'your wife that cow,

⁶⁹ CJ 1131 (whole volume), Petrus Moller vs. Pieter van Breda, 13 September 1781. The two parties were on opposite sides in the disputes between burghers and the VOC of the late 1770s and early 1780s, Teun Baartman, pers. comm.

⁷⁰ CJ 898, Rolls and Minutes (Civil), 1796, 1 December 1796, Rasmus Jurgen Paas vs. Martin de Vries.

⁷¹ '[...] onbequaam van 't bataillon heb weggejaagd en hij heeft immers op 't hospital geloopt [...] maar wagt over een paar maanden als de Caab Hollandsch word zullen wij jou met de heele rest krijgen', CJ 1327, 55-8, eijsch of Carel Matthijs de Lille, 24 June 1802.

⁷² CJ 1165, 619-83, Josias Rijnke vs. Bartholomeus Bruijnswaard, 3 September 1789.

⁷³ Exceptional cases in which women were insulted by accusations of theft came to the Council between 1797 and 1802 and it is tempting to speculate that this may reflect an increasing emphasis on financial trustworthiness in commerce by women as well as men in the early British period. For examples see, CJ 1252, 4-35, Anna Margaretha Heining vs. Helena Maria Geertruijda Karnspe, 19 October 1797 and CJ 1348, 389-519, Sophia Elizabeth van der Poel vs. Catharina Ulrich, 24 June 1802.

⁷⁴ Roodenburg, 'De Notaris en de Erehandel', 376, M-T Leuker, 'Schelmen, Hoeren, Eerdieven en Lastertongen: Smaad en Belediging in de Zevetiende-Eeuwse Kluchten en Blijspelen', *Volkskundig Bulletin* 18:3 (1992), 318.

made advances to me but I didn't want to use her [...] she is a whore, anyone can have her for a quarter'; thus, as Engel stated to the Council, in effect declaring his wife to be a public whore to the whole of Stellenbosch and thereby destroying both her and also his own honour and reputation.⁷⁵ In cases reminiscent of the gendered power relations amongst the bourgeoisie of European societies at this period, accusations by burgher men that other men's wives or daughters had had sexual intercourse with them did not reflect badly on the man involved but were taken as insults to the father or husband, as well as ruining the reputation of the woman concerned. Thus, in 1780, Hans Hendrik Jalas, a Cape Town burgher, complained that Gerrit Wolmerans, the teenage son of a fellow burgher, had falsely accused his daughter Anna Christina of *oneer* (dishonour) because she had had intercourse with him. The young Gerrit refused to withdraw his remarks, stating in court that Anna had, in fact, seduced him. It was only after considerable cajoling by the Council that he agreed to recognize her as a *brave burgher vrouw* (upstanding burgher woman). Gerrit's reputation was never in doubt.⁷⁶

In many cases, however, terms such as *hoer* were used indiscriminately against women and bore no connection to actual sexual conduct. Thus, in the course of an argument between two Cape Town neighbours about a missing fence between their houses, one lost his temper and accused the other of being a *dief* (thief) and a *schelm* (rogue) and his wife a *verdoemde loeder hoer en beest* (damned wanton whore and cow).⁷⁷ The wife of a couple accused of short-changing on an oxen purchase was told 'you lie *like* a whore.'⁷⁸ A Cape Town burgher tenant whose landlady demanded payment of a full month's rent when he wanted to vacate his lodgings early called her a *hoere pakkagie* (strumpet) who also sold out her daughter for sex.⁷⁹ Nor were such terms of abuse made only by men. In 1784, the wife of the burgher Harmen Aarts, one Rosetta van Bengal, was incensed that she and her husband had been accused of drunkenness by burgher Joseph Elsen and also beaten by his wife. She accosted the Elsen's daughter as she was walking home from church with the scandalous words 'you damned animal, who are you opening your cunt for, are

⁷⁵ 'dat wijf, dat beest heeft voor mij bloot gelegen maar ik het niet willen gebruiken [...] het is een hoer [...] gij kunt voor een quartje klaar maaken', CJ 1103, 112 and 115, eijsch of Johannes Engel, 22 April 1773.

⁷⁶ CJ 874, 140-1 and 173-5, Rolls and Minutes (Civil), 1780, 11 May 1780.

⁷⁷ eijsch en conclusie of Jacob Hendrickse, CJ 1247, Art. 42 and 49, 322-3, 6 March 1797.

⁷⁸ 'dan liegt jij als een hoer', CJ 1119, testimony of Jan Christoffel Lies, 404-8, 5 December 1780.

⁷⁹ CJ 1106, 247-50, Elisabeth Catharina Esterhuijsen vs. Hendrik Stoute, 21 December 1775.

you opening it for the dyer or the hangman?’⁸⁰ Sexual insults came freely to the mouths of both men and women seeking to demean females.

Rosetta’s name suggests that she was of slave origin and her maltreatment by the Elsen family and foul-mouthed response indicates a social disparity that may well have been racially underpinned. Other cases that occur in the Cape records are still more suggestive of the ethnic and status hierarchies of a colonial society.

Some cases reflected a growing sense of local identity in contrast to outsiders. As Moogk has pointed out for New France, immigrants in a colonial situation were especially vulnerable to accusations about their background.⁸¹ We have seen above how a French cook at the Castle was castigated as ‘*een franse blixem of franse donderslag*.’ In 1784, Christoph Lijste, a German surveyor employed by the Company had an altercation with Hendrik Oostwald Eksteen Pieterszoon, a burgher lieutenant and a farmer. Pieterszoon objected to the way Lijste was measuring out his farm and chased him off his land saying, ‘do you think you are in *moffenland* [a derogatory Dutch term used about Germany],⁸² no you are here in Africa and on my land and you must do what I say and do what you are paid for.’⁸³ Pieterszoon later told the Council that there were a number of people who came to the Cape from ‘*moffenland*’ in the employ of the Company and seeking personal preferment, ‘who here present themselves with an overbearing image of themselves as if local inhabitants must submit to them.’⁸⁴ Antagonism towards Germans at the Cape exacerbated conflicts in other cases: for example, in 1797, a Cape widow called Jan Mokke a *domme duijscher* (stupid German) for allowing his daughter to be engaged to a man who was already married.⁸⁵

Even more pertinent in the colonial context of the Cape were insults that referred to slave ancestry. In a dispute in 1789, after Hercules Morkel’s dogs chased the ducks from neighbour Marthinus van Koppen’s farm dam, Van Koopen accused Morkel of not being a *braaf man* (upstanding man). Morkel

⁸⁰ CA, CJ 1132, Testimony of Hermanus van der Schijf, 5 April 1784, 117. For further details of this and the previous case, see Worden, “Unbridled Passions”, 98-9.

⁸¹ Moogk, ‘Thieving Buggers’, 534-6.

⁸² This Dutch term referred to Westphalia or more generally the northern parts of German-speaking territories and acquired a pejorative meaning in certain contexts, J. Holtrop, *Dutch and English Dictionary* (revised by H. Stevenson, Dordrecht, 1823-4), vol. I, 500. I am grateful to Leontine Hulzink for the information that it is still used in this way in the border regions of the Netherlands with Germany, especially by the generation that experienced the Second World War.

⁸³ ‘denkt gij dat gij in uw moffenland bent, neen hier bent ghij in Afrika en op ‘t land van mij, alwaar ghij doen moet ‘t geen ik jouw ordonneren en gij moet het doen daarvoor werd gij betaald’ CJ 1135, eijtsch of Christoph Lijste, 15 January 1784, 4v.

⁸⁴ ‘dan hier op steunende zig een buitenmaatige overheerschinge verbeelden, als of een ijgelyk particulier ingeseeten onder heen moet submitteeren’, *ibid*, 23r.

⁸⁵ CJ 1244, Jan Godfried Mokke vs. Barbera Renard, 12 January 1797.

replied that, on the contrary, 'I am descended from upstanding parents and, furthermore, my great grandparents, because of their belief in the reformed religion, were driven out of France and were taken up by our high commanding lords and masters (the VOC) and were given leave to choose a safe shelter in this place, for which reason they settled down here.'⁸⁶ Morkel then contrasted this proud claim to respectable Huguenot ancestry with the accusation that Van Koppen's grandmother was a slave of Adrian van der Stel and that he therefore *van swarte afkomst was* (was of black descent), an allegation that Van Koppen declared to the Council was shaming to his family and that he had 'never heard that his grandmother was sold at an auction.'⁸⁷

In another case in 1792, an argument between Cape Town burghers Johannes Ziedel and Frederick Simon de Jager, over their differing political allegiance to the Orange and Patriot causes included the barb by De Jager that Ziedel was the 'product of a damned black whore,' doubtless a reference to the fact that his mother was a free black.⁸⁸ Added to the insult was the allegation that Ziedel 'took up with Hottentot whores.'⁸⁹ The wife of another Castle cook, Johanna Hendrikse, insulted one of his colleagues in 1797 by claiming that he was married to a *javaanster* (person from Java, hence a slave).⁹⁰ Widow Catherina Basson complained in 1800 that she had been 'ranked as part of the family and blood kinship of a slave' by the allegation that one of her male slaves was the illegitimate product of a member of her own family, so that her 'honour good name and reputation were violated, defamed and shamed.'⁹¹ As Ross has pointed out in *Status and Respectability*, many Cape families of high status did, in fact, have slave ancestry. But the need to assert rank and claim honour necessitated a distancing from such connections and a defence against potentially damaging allegations of them.⁹² This was particularly true of the

⁸⁶ *'ik ben van braave ouders herkomstig, nademaal mijn over groot ouders alleen om de belijdenisse van de hervormde religie, uijt vrangkrijk zijn verdreeven en door onzen hooggebiedende heeren en meesters zijn op en aangenoomen die hun in dit geweest, een veiliger schuijplaats hebben gelieven te vergunnen om welke reedenen zij zich alhier hebben ter neder gezet'*, CJ 1166, 422-3, art. 71-75, eijsch en conclusie of Jacobus van Leeuwen on behalf of Helena Catherina Malan, 25 June 1789.

⁸⁷ *'nooit weet dat zijne grootmoeder op 't vendutie verkogt geworden'*, CJ 1166, testimony of Marthinus van Koppen, 8 April 1789, 437-8.

⁸⁸ *'verdoemde zwarte hoeremaaksel'*, CJ 1197, eijsch en conclusie of Johannes Ziedel, 2 August 1792, 229.

⁸⁹ *'met Hottentots hoeren opnam'*, *ibid.*, 224.

⁹⁰ CJ 1247, eijsch en conclusie of Jacob Hendrickse, 6 March 1797, art. 76, 326.

⁹¹ *'haar dus in de fasmieellie en bloedverwandschap van een slaaf rangschikt [...] door de gedaagde op eene verregaande wijze in haar eer, geode naam en faam te zijn geschonden gelasterd en gehoond'* CJ 1287, eijsch en conclusie of Catharina Basson, Art 45-50, 43, 17 April 1800.

⁹² Ross, *Status and Respectability*, 33.

later eighteenth century, by which time earlier mixed ancestry could hopefully be forgotten or at least concealed.

Not only were slave family connections or ancestry an insulting allegation to make to a person of status: any association with slaves could be used as a slur. Accusations that burgher men had affairs with slave women were cause for civil action, whereas male adultery with non-slaves rarely appeared before the Council. This was particularly true for burghers of high rank, such as *heemraden* (local administrators)⁹³ but links with slaves could also be damaging at a lesser social level. In 1798, a woman who had been replaced as a laundress accused her rival of being a *hoer en zelfs een zwarte jongens hoer* (a whore and even a black slaves' whore).⁹⁴ Allegations that a burgher tenant was carrying out a soap-making business with the aid of a slave was sufficient cause for him being denied lodgings in 1786, although it is not clear in this case whether it was the smell and mess of soap-making, the illegality of running a private business or the involvement of the slave that caused most concern.⁹⁵ In 1801, Johannes Joosten accused his neighbour Francois Agron of being 'a violator and rover of the streets and [who] intrigued with black slaves.'⁹⁶ And in 1784, burgher Jan Dreijer refused to sleep in the same room as burgher Jan Michielse when both were guests at a drunken party on a Stellenbosch farm on the grounds that he was a *mamelock* (a term used for slave soldiers).⁹⁷

All of the allegations about slaves in the cases cited above also refer to racial features such as blackness. To these may be added other examples of racial sensitivity. A sergeant in charge of the burgher night patrol in 1783 insulted them by saying that 'I'd rather do service with the [...] Caffers than be with burgers such as you,' which led to their complaint to the Council that 'we plaintiffs do not know what kind of creature there is in the world who has less honour due to him than a Caffer.'⁹⁸ The *Caffers* were not slaves, but were convict exiles used as police assistants in the town and therefore men of no honour.

In a more direct example, in 1789, burgher Daniel Bosman complained to the captain of the Stellenbosch militia that he refused to serve under corporal Jan

⁹³ For example, CJ 1183, 226-53, Jacob Eksteen Pieterszoon, heemraad of Stellenbosch and Drakenstein vs. Michiel Casparus Eksteen Hendrikszoon, 12 May 1791 and CJ 1193, 378-99, Frederik Godhold Holtzapfel, former elder of the Lutheran Church vs. Christiaan Lodewijk Kendler, 12 April 1792.

⁹⁴ CJ 901, 208, Regina Adams vs. Johanna Stal, 5 March 1798.

⁹⁵ CJ 1144, 211-25, Hendrik Lodewijk Sies vs. Pieter Magnus, 21 September 1786.

⁹⁶ '*straatschender en straatroover en konkeld met de zwarte jongens*', CJ 1312, eijsch en conclusie of Francois Agron, 12 November 1801, art. 23-4, 15.

⁹⁷ CJ 1137, 305-458, Jan Adam Michielse vs. Jan Frederik Dreijer, 26 February 1784.

⁹⁸ '*ik wil ja liever met de [...] Caffers dienste doen also met sulke burgers also gij lieden bend*' and '*weeten wij eijchers niet, wat voor een creatuur hier op deeze wereld minder eere soude besitten dan een Caffer*', CJ 1125, eijsch of Jacobus Stoudt and others, 27 February 1783, 140r.-v.

Hartog who was *bruinachtig van couleur* (somewhat brown in colour). It was, he stressed, Hartog's command over him that he resented, since he had no problem working with him as a common soldier. Hartog's response in bringing a case of *atroce verbale injurie* to the Council is a telling indication of the role of race in VOC Cape burgher society. He pointed out that he always performed his duties in the Stellenbosch militia to the best of his abilities, and so had been promoted two years previously to the rank of corporal. If being 'somewhat brown' disqualified him from such a position, then the Cape would have to be completely reconstructed since many such men served in the militia as well as in government posts and offices. Colour, he claimed, was not a qualification for membership of the burgher community, but honesty and peaceful living were.⁹⁹ The Council agreed and ordered a reconciliation between the two men, which was achieved. However, the case indicates that rank and status did not override racial characteristics without some resentment.

A final case is a telling indication of the sensitivity of burgher status and the threats that the racial and ethnic complexities of colonial society posed to it. In 1793, Cape Town burgher Johannes Kok and his wife Johanna Catherina Hugo reported that rumours were being spread that they were not the kind of people with whom members of honourable families should be associated. This had surfaced when they were visiting neighbours and one commented that they should not even be offered a place to sit. Further accusations included the fact that they were *slegt en lag vee van volk* (bad and low cattle-like people) who were 'living with the Chinese.'¹⁰⁰

Kok's protest at this *verbale injurie* is revealing. He was, of course, resentful at being described as lowly and thereby excluded from 'all honourable company'; but, in particular, he protested at his association with the Chinese of the town. To be called Chinese was to be associated with a racially defined underclass, since most Capetonian Chinese were ex-convicts who were grouped together with manumitted slaves as 'free blacks' in VOC nomenclature.¹⁰¹ But Kok went further in his resentment at such a connection. He argued that it implied that he and his wife had 'abandoned Christendom itself' and adopted 'devilish Chinese superstitions.' Such apostasy meant a renunciation of their baptismal vows and permanent exclusion not only from burgher society but also

⁹⁹ CJ 1163, 249-96, eijsch of Jan Hartog de jonge, 5 March 1789.

¹⁰⁰ CJ 1218, eijsch en conclusie of Johannes Kok, 10 October 1793, 300-2.

¹⁰¹ Ross, *Status and Respectability*, 33; J. Armstrong, 'The Chinese Exiles' in N. Worden, ed., *Cape Town Between East and West*, 101-27.

from eternal salvation, a fact he emphasized with copious reference to Biblical and Latin texts.¹⁰²

As Robert Ross has pointed out, the main distinctions made by Cape colonists were not between 'black' and 'white' but between slave and non-slave, 'Christian' and 'heathen'.¹⁰³ In the VOC Cape, 'Christian' meant more than religious affiliation and was a marker of membership of respectable colonial society, from which slaves and other 'heathens' were excluded. The undermining of such a position by mere association with the Chinese outsiders to Christian society was particularly threatening to Kok and his wife. He was a German immigrant, and she was of mixed racial descent. They had only acquired burgher status three years earlier, a position that, as Kok pointed out, included admission to *nagmaal* (communion) as well as all other 'burgher rights and prerogatives.' A couple in such a position within colonial society were especially vulnerable to gossip of association with the 'heathen' Chinese.

A study of the insults in Cape civil cases thus reveals some close similarities to the social and cultural forces at work within Dutch and north European metropolitan societies. These include the gendered nature of insult accusations, the significance of where insults were uttered and in front of whom, and the forceful impact of shaming on individual and family reputation. However, there are also features that were more specific to the colonial Cape. Particularly prominent was a heightened sensitivity to the status that *burgerschap* afforded, especially amongst those of vulnerable social position. The taint of association with slaves or slave ancestry was also frequently evident. This was usually accompanied by racial taunts or sleights, and connections with the 'heathen' Chinese were also grounds for social ostracism. The study of insult in civil cases thus strongly confirms Ross's identification of the significance of rank and status in eighteenth-century Cape Town and fleshes out its characteristics across a wide spectrum of the settlement's population.

¹⁰² 'dat zij selve het Christendom abandonnerende tot op dat men niet zeggen duijvelsche Chinese superstitionen toegetreeden tegen ligt en beter weeten, 'sNoode apostate geworden zijn die het Christelijke gemeente behoorden te worden gesteld', CJ 1218, eijsch en conclusie of Johannes Kok, 10 October 1793, 304-5.

¹⁰³ R. Ross, 'Khoesan and Immigrants: The Emergence of Colonial Society at the Cape, 1500-1800' in C. Hamilton, B. Mbenga and R. Ross, eds, *The Cambridge History of South Africa*, Vol. I (Cambridge, 2010), 196.

Resembling “the more Racy Type of Comic Opera”: Scandal and the Cultural History of Imperial Politics¹

Kirsten McKenzie

In *Status and Respectability*, his path-breaking “semiotic history of the Cape”, Robert Ross provides us with a wonderfully apt thumbnail sketch of the administration of Cape governor, Lord Charles Somerset (1814-26).² Somerset’s administration played host to a Commission of Inquiry that would utterly transform the structures of governance in the colony. Yet, it is also commonly remembered for scandals of such richness that any account of the relevant episodes risks sliding into absurdity. They include shady horse dealing at the highest levels of government, daring escapes from official custody (one accomplished in drag), and an almost bewildering number of residents adopting fake identities. To this potent mix we can add the notorious English *agent provocateur* ‘Oliver the Spy’ (then masquerading as a government builder), local riff-raff like ‘Shee the noseless tailor’ (it was bitten off in a neighbourhood

¹ This paper has drawn upon material within Kirsten McKenzie, *Imperial Underworld: An escaped convict and the transformation of the British colonial order* (Cambridge, 2016), reproduced with permission. I would like to thank Cambridge University Press for allowing its inclusion in this volume, and organisers Iva Pesa and Jan-Bart Gewald for their invitation to participate in the conference.

² R. Ross, *Status and Respectability in the Cape Colony 1750-1870: A Tragedy of Manners* (Cambridge, 1999), 3.

brawl), and an anonymous placard accusing Governor Somerset of “buggering Doctor Barry,” the brilliant but controversial military surgeon whose sex remains an unsolved mystery. As Ross rightly points out, the final years of Somerset’s administration “at times resembles the more racy type of comic opera.”³

How are we to deal with this congruence of administrative reform and high farce? Are the two simply coincidental to one another, should they be connected, and what might be the advantages of doing so? Reading Iva Pesa and Jan-Bart Gewald’s call for papers for this workshop in the midst of wrestling with these questions underscored how fundamental Robert’s work has been to my own trajectory as a historian. The reminder was both pleasurable and somewhat disconcerting: pleasurable in calling up all the richness of Robert’s scholarship; disconcerting because it showed the extent to which approaches that now seem uncontroversial were pioneered by Robert’s vision. Was there really a time when we did not do history like this? It is worth remembering, and recording here, how these ideas once went off like a rocket in our minds, or at least in mine. As a wet-behind-the-ears doctoral student, I was fortunate to get to know Robert when he was in the throes of writing the book that became *Status and Respectability*. The rich diversity of the presentations in this workshop reflect Robert’s eclectic range of expertise, but it is on inspiration from this particular work, the attention paid within it to notions of status and reputation, and particularly the relationship that is drawn there between ‘deep’ and ‘high’ politics, that I want to focus this paper.⁴

In a recently completed book, I take as my subject the Cape Town notary William Edwards, and the unexpected part he played in the restructuring of imperial governance in colonial Australia and South Africa between the end of the Napoleonic Wars and the Reform Act of 1832.⁵ Edwards was born Alexander Kaye in 1791, the wastrel son of a socially-marginal family in the West of England.⁶ He was transported to New South Wales for horse theft in 1819. Two years later, he escaped from the Australian colonies and made his way via Batavia and Mauritius to the Cape where he arrived in 1823. At the Cape, he set himself up as a notary under the name William Edwards. He made so much trouble during his year at the Cape that he ended up being transported once again under his new identity - this time for libelling the governor, Lord Charles

³ Ross, *Status and Respectability*, 46.

⁴ Ross, *Status and Respectability*, 165.

⁵ K. McKenzie, *Imperial Underworld: An escaped convict and the transformation of the British colonial order* (Cambridge, 2016).

⁶ ‘Edwards’ was baptised Alexander Loe Kaye in honour of his mother’s aunt, the wealthy Margaret Loe. He habitually used his middle name, leading to more than two centuries of confusion. In convict records, newspaper accounts, and later in the writings of historians, he usually appears under the name Alexander Lockaye: The National Archives, Kew (TNA), PL 14/84 Records of the Chancery Court, Palatinate of Lancaster: Chancery Court: Pleadings, Miscellaneous, Kaye v. Folds

Somerset. Edwards arrived back in Sydney in 1824 and was immediately identified as Kaye. He continued to protest against authority, denying he was Kaye and disputing the legality of his sentence from the Cape.

The scandals that Edwards instigated at the Cape must be understood within a volatile context. As Robert's assessment suggests, this period of Cape administration was more than usually vexatious. In part this was unavoidable, for frontier conflict, debates over unfree labour and tension between British and Dutch settlers were a troublesome mix. Britain had seized the Cape from the Dutch in 1795 and again in 1806. While the second occupation eventually proved permanent, the conquerors relied heavily on the legal and administrative structures of the former Dutch regime at the Cape for the next two decades. The Commission of Eastern Inquiry arrived in the colony in 1823 (and would proceed to the other conquered colonies of Mauritius and Ceylon) in order to resolve these ongoing contradictions and to conduct a thorough overhaul of all aspects of the colonial administration.⁷ The ante on these discussions was upped by the recent arrival of a significant number of assisted British migrants at the Cape. Landing at the Cape across the first half of 1820, around 4,000 assisted migrants were to be established on an eastern frontier that was in the midst of heightened tension and episodic full-scale warfare with the amaXhosa. The new arrivals proved rapidly and volubly disenchanted with their circumstances. They were far outnumbered by the existing Cape Dutch inhabitants. But they could punch above their weight in the settler population, not only through their connections to high-status individuals in Britain itself but also through the influence of British public opinion on parliamentary decisions. Several key players were aligned with reformist Whig circles in Britain, setting the stage for conflict with both the Colonial Office and the High Tory Cape governor.

These circumstances would undoubtedly have proved a challenge to any colonial administration. In this instance, however, interpersonal frictions further hampered the government's ability to deal with the situation facing it. Following his return to the colony in November 1821 on a period of home leave, Somerset and the Acting Governor, Sir Rufane Donkin, embarked upon a bitter and longstanding feud in which the Colonial Secretary, Colonel Christopher Bird, became embroiled. Somerset was convinced that Bird had gathered around him a set of men who were devoted to undermining the governor at every point.

⁷ See Z. Laidlaw, 'Investigating empire: Humanitarians, reform and the Commission of Eastern Inquiry', *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, 40:5 (2012), 749-8.

The inability of the Governor and his Colonial Secretary to work together seriously compromised both the unity and effectiveness of the administration.⁸

The specific allegations made against the administration, and Somerset personally, were protean in nature, encompassing both structural problems and interpersonal disputes. The foreign legal system and the manner in which the Cape Dutch continued to dominate the exercise of routine administrative power were bitterly resented by British settlers. There was extensive criticism of the administration's handling of the frontier situation and the problems of the assisted British emigrations, which brought settlers to the eastern border of the colony in 1820. The governor's son, Colonel Henry Somerset, was a particular cause of complaint in this regard. The scandals reached their climax in 1824 with a series of events involving the notary William Edwards: accusations of corruption in distributing liberated African slaves, attacks on the liberty of the press, and instances of deportation without trial. These disputes were cast in the mould of Somerset's persecution of Whig and Radical-aligned critics.

The Commission of Eastern Inquiry at the Cape was part of a sustained set of investigations that saw a vast imperial stocktaking and a major overhaul of policy through sequential investigations.⁹ While prompted by public opinion and parliamentary criticism, the Commissions were an attempt to keep the direction of reform as far as possible under the control of the Colonial Office, for it was the Secretary of State who appointed the commissioners and to whom they directly reported. Designed to acquire the necessary information on which to base widespread changes, the investigations of the Cape and the Australian colonies would recast the boundaries of colonial administration and direct policy in the region for decades to come. They resulted in major transformations in both the constitutions and the governance of Britain's antipodean colonies as they established new supreme courts, legislative councils and councils of advice that increasingly curbed executive power. These reform initiatives, however, were accompanied by sustained efforts to control the diverse groups and interests that challenged state authority, from diverse settler populations to slaves, convicts and indigenous peoples.

William Edwards reluctantly stepped onto this imperial stage in 1819 when he was convicted of stealing a chestnut horse worth £30. Kaye's transportation for life to New South Wales proved the first in an uncanny series of temporal and geographic connections between his travels and the series of imperial Commissions of Inquiry led by former Chief Justice of Trinidad John Thomas

⁸ This problem was flagged to the Colonial Office by the Commissioners of Eastern Inquiry almost as soon as the latter arrived at the Cape: Derbyshire Record Office, Catton Collection, Wilmot Horton Papers, D3155/WH2751, John Thomas Bigge to Robert Wilmot Horton, 25 September 1823.

⁹ Laidlaw, 'Investigating empire', 752.

Bigge. Bigge's investigations led him firstly into New South Wales and Van Diemen's Land (from 1819) and later to the Cape, Mauritius and Ceylon (from 1823). So closely did their colonial itineraries seem to coincide, that the man known variously as Kaye and Edwards would be accused by the Sydney press of acting as a covert agent for Bigge. Kaye escaped from Sydney in 1821 and made his way via Batavia and Mauritius to the Cape Colony, where he landed in 1823 under the name of William Edwards. His arrival occurred within days of Bigge, together with co-commissioner William Colebrooke, beginning his second set of colonial investigations.

Kaye (now calling himself Edwards) possessed sufficient legal training to set himself up as a notary in Cape Town. In 1823 he was employed to draw up a memorial protesting official corruption in the assignment of 'Prize Negroes'. His exposé of the treatment of these former slaves, 'liberated' by the Royal Navy following the banning of the slave trade, threatened to undermine the moral high ground of British abolition. It would unexpectedly catapult him into imperial notoriety. Edwards now joined a loose alliance of disaffected British emigrants at the Cape who had been galvanised by the presence of the Commissioners of Inquiry. More mainstream campaigners from the humanitarian lobby, however, regarded men like Edwards as 'desperadoes', and many commentators (with a degree of justification) judged him to be insane. His was very much the lunatic fringe of liberal reform.

Edwards's continued protests against the Cape administration ended with him sentenced to transportation to New South Wales under his new identity for seditious libel of the governor, Lord Charles Somerset. Widely recognised as escaped convict Kaye upon his return to New South Wales in 1824, he nonetheless continued to assert that he was Edwards, to protest against the illegality of his transportation from the Cape, and to lambast the injustices of the convict system in Australia, where he found powerful allies amongst the 'emancipist' lobby seeking to extend the rights of former convicts. He remained a thorn in the flesh of the imperial system until he was charged with absconding and re-transported to Norfolk Island in 1828. It was on this declared destination for the worst convict offenders, a remote speck of land in the vastness of the Pacific Ocean between Australia and New Zealand, that Edwards killed himself in 1828. His death coincided with significant transformations in the imperial structures of both New South Wales and the Cape, reforms that I would argue he had played a role (part deliberate, part inadvertent) in bringing to fruition. After his death he continued to stir controversy as lurid reports of his dissection by military authorities appeared in the Sydney press. In an apparent attempt to lay the question of his disputed identity to rest, bones known to have been

broken during the life of Alexander Kaye were now sought within the corpse of the man who had claimed he was William Edwards. It was the last act in a personal and political drama that had set the claims of individual liberty and reform against the demands of state surveillance and security for the best part of the previous decade.

Some of the events in this life and career are well known, at least for South African historians. Edwards has secured his fifteen minutes of fame in accounts of the struggle to establish freedom of the press at the Cape.¹⁰ Despite his actions being the original catalyst of these events, his standing in the story has still been cast as peripheral, a process that began almost as soon as he was discredited by exposure as an escaped convict.¹¹ More importantly for the purposes of this paper, scandals orchestrated by figures like Edwards are usually sidelined by academic histories in their explanatory frameworks of a key moment of transition in British imperial politics and administration.¹² Instead, such tales have largely been consigned to the domain of anecdote rather than analysis, in the case of Edwards drawing the attention of popular histories in the 1950s and 1960s: Alan Hattersley in South Africa and Frank Clune in Australia.¹³

Placing a maverick outsider like William Edwards at the centre of a study of colonial governance is perhaps a curious decision. Given the more colourful aspects of his story it might seem equally perverse to turn so obvious a 'ripping yarn' into a book about transformations in administration and constitutional law. In choosing to do so, I want to take a fresh look at how these changes were brought about. But if I am arguing that the view from the margins is the route into a new understanding of the cultural history of imperial politics, then it is worth remembering that this approach is also faithful to the events of the time. Far from being separate from the real issues at hand, these seemingly frivolous local disputes were considered central to the Commissioners of Inquiry's

¹⁰ A. M. L. Robinson, *None Daring to Make Us Afraid: A Study of English Periodical Literature in the Cape Colony from its Beginnings in 1824 to 1835* (Cape Town, 1962); H.C. Botha, *John Fairbairn in South Africa* (Cape Town, 1984); L. Meltzer, 'Emancipat, eds, commerce and the rise of John Fairbairn's Advertiser' in N. Worden and C. Crais (eds.), *Breaking the Chains: Slavery and its Legacy in the Nineteenth-Century Cape Colony* (Johannesburg, 1994); K. McKenzie, 'The Franklins of the Cape: The South African Commercial Advertiser and the creation of a colonial public sphere 1824-1854', *Kronos: Journal of Cape History*, 25 (1998/1999), 88-102; and J.M. MacKenzie, "'To enlighten South Africa": The creation of a free press at the Cape in the early nineteenth century' in C. Kaul, ed., *Media and the British Empire* (Basingstoke, 2006).

¹¹ Thomas Pringle, *Narrative of a Residence in South Africa* (London, 1835), 198.

¹² On the tension between 'overseas despotisms' and liberal reform in imperial administration in this period see C.A. Bayly, *Imperial Meridian: The British Empire and the World 1780-1830* (London, 1989).

¹³ A.F. Hattersley, *Oliver the Spy and Others: A Little Gallery of South African Portraits* (Cape Town, 1959); F. Clune, *Sallywags of Sydney Cove* (orig. Sydney, 1968; repub. as *Rascals, Ruffians and Rebels of Early Australia*, 1987).

investigations. They absorbed significant quantities of time and energy, spawning large and numerous volumes of evidence (one devoted to what is only a partial coverage of Edwards's activities at the Cape runs to more than 800 double-sided manuscript pages) and significantly delaying the tabling of their final reports. This would spark criticism at the time, but it is abundantly clear that not only the commissioners but also their superiors in the Colonial Office felt it necessary to investigate these ostensibly frivolous matters. Smoothing away the more salacious elements in the controversies over colonial administrations, I would argue, significantly distorts our understanding of them. These scandals were not regarded by contemporaries merely as distractions from the real business of enquiring into colonial governance, and we need to take them equally seriously. J. M. Bennett argues that the Bigge reports on New South Wales abounded with accusations of petty factionalism and a preoccupation with "personalities," and that various investigations were simply irrelevant and "satisfying the parliamentary taste for gossip."¹⁴ Yet, this is to fundamentally misread both the very real power and the proper place that such 'gossip' occupied in the workings of imperial politics and the elaboration of reform initiatives.

In 1989, Jeff Peires's astute account of 'The British and the Cape' argued in relation to Bigge and Colebrooke's Commission of Eastern Inquiry that the "personality-minded historians of South Africa" had failed to recognise the significance of "one of the biggest upheavals which Cape society ever experienced." Scholars had been "misled," he claimed, by the Commissioners themselves, men who "consciously de-emphasised their own personalities, and deliberately presented themselves as faceless and impartial servants of the British Crown."¹⁵ To make a slightly different point, the (entirely justified) turn away from a metropolitan-centred imperial historiography has left some gaps in our current understanding of the forces operating on colonial societies. The cultural and social history perspectives of the last decades have given us a far richer historiography on, and a far clearer understanding of, those who inhabited Cape Town's underclass "canteen culture," for example, than the daily lives of imperial bureaucrats.¹⁶ In the next part of the paper, I want to take up

¹⁴ J.M. Bennett, 'The day of retribution: Commissioner Bigge's iniquities in colonial New South Wales', *American Journal of Legal History*, 85 (1971), 93, 97.

¹⁵ J.B. Peires, 'The British and the Cape' in R. Elphick and H. Giliomee, eds, *The Shaping of South African Society 1652-1840*, 2nd edn. (Cape Town, 1989), 495.

¹⁶ Ross, *Status and Respectability*, ch. 6; A. Bank, *The Decline of Urban Slavery at the Cape 1806-43* (Cape Town, 1991). Zoë Laidlaw's work has been instrumental in shifting our perceptions of the workings of imperial bureaucracy, and imperial bureaucrats, and aficionados will recognise the debt that my paper owes to her scholarship: Laidlaw, *Colonial Connections 1815-45: Patronage, the Information Revolution and Colonial Government* (Manchester, 2005).

Robert's insistence on the importance of the individual, his nose for the strange and quirky and his demonstration of the fundamental role that the small and seemingly trivial signs of dress, language and demeanour have in explaining the past. I want to take these questions inside the walls of the Colonial Office, and I want to do so in order to interrogate the relationship between administration, politics and scandal.

~~~~~

At No. 14 Downing Street, the Colonial Office was conveniently close to the Houses of Parliament. Despite its imposing position in the heart of Whitehall, it was a distinctly underwhelming locale. The basement was damp (to the point that it had to be periodically pumped out), the building was in ill repair and space was at a premium. By 1822, circumstances had become so cramped that the mounds of paper created by the occupants' responsibilities threatened to overwhelm them. With only one waiting room, complained parliamentary undersecretary Robert Wilmot Horton, visitors were herded promiscuously together: "every person, whatever his Rank or Station may be, from a Governor General down to a Lascar," was not only forced to wait there, but also to overflow into the passages when the room became too crowded. The officials themselves were so much on top of one another, continued an exasperated Wilmot Horton, that any confidential conversation with a visitor frequently had to take place upon the staircase.<sup>17</sup>

A designated Colonial Office was established in 1795, consisting of a Secretary of State, his private secretary, one under-secretary, six clerks, a housekeeper and two office-keepers. Two porters were hired from the start and additional clerks were added to the household in time.<sup>18</sup> For decades this would remain a small group of people working closely together in claustrophobic conditions. Even by 1830 those carrying real responsibility for decision-making across the vastness of the British empire only numbered around ten individuals.<sup>19</sup>

Thinking about the spaces in which administration actually happens, and about the people who inhabit this space, is invariably instructive. It helps us to understand the transition going on within the Colonial Office from eighteenth- to nineteenth-century cultures of bureaucracy. It reminds us that politics in this period was still overwhelmingly individual rather than institutional, bound

---

<sup>17</sup> TNA, CO 324/146, Letters from Secretary of State (domestic), Robert Wilmot-Horton to J.C. Herries (Treasury), 15 December 1826.

<sup>18</sup> D.M. Young, *The Colonial Office in the Early Nineteenth Century* (London, 1961), 14.

<sup>19</sup> Laidlaw, *Colonial Connections*, 41.

together by interpersonal connection, patronage and mutual obligation.<sup>20</sup> A nineteenth-century professional bureaucracy was emerging from an organisation that was still effectively run like an eighteenth-century gentleman's club. Understanding the relationship between these two cultures is the key to understanding not only how the office worked but also how the dramas in which Edwards played a central role unfolded.

While the Commissions of Inquiry were a harbinger of more formalised and empirical methods in information gathering, colonial governance continued to place a high value on insider knowledge, which being intrinsically personal also entailed a great deal of rumour and gossip. The system had distinct advantages in the way it allowed the Secretary of State to manage hostile opinion in Britain's parliament by techniques we would now call political spin. Tracking how and why he did so helps us to understand why the activities of a seemingly obscure colonial misfit like Edwards were taken so seriously.

Although established almost twenty years earlier, the Colonial Office that would emerge into the nineteenth century was above all the creation of one man: Henry Bathurst, third Earl Bathurst, Secretary of State from 1812 to 1827. It was said of Bathurst that he was the last man in London to wear a pigtail. He supposedly cut it off and sent it round in an official box to ministerial colleagues after losing office. It is a fitting image of changing times, but the story probably says more about Bathurst's public image than it does about the man himself.<sup>21</sup> It is certainly belied by portraits from at least a decade earlier in which Bathurst was painted by Thomas Lawrence sporting a suitably modish crop. In fact, the Secretary of State was far more complex than this anecdote of his coiffure suggests. Bathurst's personal views may indeed have turned towards the conservative, but he was a skilful pragmatist. He had no patience with those who behaved like throw-backs to an earlier era. Understandably, Somerset frequently exasperated him. Entertaining the Cape Governor at his country house, he reported: "Lord Charles was much less boring & unreasonable than I expected. Indeed I did not give him time to be the first, and I suppose he thought it better policy not to appear the other."<sup>22</sup> Above all, Bathurst sought to protect his office from the hostile attention of critics in parliament. He was no rousing orator. He sent his subordinates into public battle in the House against the likes of Henry Brougham and Joseph 'Economy' Hume ("a post-box for

---

<sup>20</sup> J.M. Bourne, *Patronage and Society in Nineteenth-Century England* (London, 1986).

<sup>21</sup> E. Cokayne et al., eds, *The Complete Peerage of England, Scotland, Ireland, Great Britain and the United Kingdom, Extant, Extinct or Dormant*, new edn, 6 vols. (Gloucester, 2000), vol. 2, 30 The source is the author and memoirist Lady Louisa Stuart.

<sup>22</sup> British Library (BL), Bathurst Papers, Loan 57, 57/58, Bathurst to Hay, 13 September 1826.

colonial complaints,” in the words of historian J.J. Eddy).<sup>23</sup> But he had a keen eye for political spin, and a genius for managing people.

Bathurst spent significant amounts of time running matters away from Downing Street, particularly at Cirencester Park, his country estate in Gloucester, eighty-eight miles to the west of London. Official business followed him around the country, not always successfully. As Bathurst explained to permanent undersecretary Robert Hay: “Ten hours after I sent off the express, the Box was found in the Butler’s Pantry. I did not send another express after the first, as I thought it would be too late to rectify the mistake.”<sup>24</sup> It was by no means an isolated case of misplaced paperwork. Correspondence from the Commissioners about Somerset’s troubles “has been found in looking for some other papers, in a drawer of Lady Bathurst’s table, having given it her nearly two years ago to show to the D[uche]ss of Beaufort.”<sup>25</sup> When in London, however, No. 14 Downing Street doubled as the Secretary of State’s official residence. In both its domestic organisation and its business operations, in many ways the Colonial Office was like a private house. The same housekeeper, Maria Caldwell (later Pillochody), was in residence between 1795 and 1837, on a salary of £100 a year. Female servants were kept for housekeeping duties, male servants doubled as porters and messengers and could thus supplement their income.<sup>26</sup> Additional clerks were added to the household in times of extra copying.

The organisation was moving out of *ancient regime* patronage and into modern bureaucratic efficiency, but the process was slow and marked by idiosyncrasies. Deadlines and the demands of professionalism jostled uneasily with a culture that assumed that social status was based upon the possession of leisure. The lives of Colonial Office clerks exemplified this contradiction. It was they who kept the wheels of bureaucracy turning. While printing and lithography were available, they were uneconomic for daily business. The paperwork was immense, and clerks went through quills at a tremendous rate, witness the six thousand pens ordered between April 1795 and January 1796 when there was a staff of only nine.<sup>27</sup> Every overseas dispatch, for example, needed to be hand-copied three times. An original was sent immediately, a second by a later mail to guard against accidents such as shipwreck or piracy, with the third duplicate kept as a record. Yet, Colonial Office clerks during this period kept leisurely hours (eleven to four, when necessary extending into the evening but never in the early morning). The arrival and departure of suitable

---

<sup>23</sup> J.J. Eddy, *Britain and the Australian Colonies 1818-1831: The Technique of Government* (Oxford, 1969), 59.

<sup>24</sup> BL, 57/58, Bathurst to Hay, 31 March 1826.

<sup>25</sup> BL, 57/58, Bathurst to Hay, 14 Aug. 1826.

<sup>26</sup> Young, *Colonial Office*, 131.

<sup>27</sup> Young, *Colonial Office*, 135.

vessels nevertheless prompted an abrupt change of pace. Clerks descended into a vortex of overtime copying, with huge bursts of activity required to make the eight o'clock mail coach for Falmouth. There was much quarrelling and an endless blame game played out between different government departments over clerks and messengers who took their deadlines down to the wire. Holding up the mail was a dire administrative sin. If correspondence was late, or delivered late to the mail coach, it could miss the sailing of the required vessel. Being late by even a few minutes could mean a delay in communication of weeks or even months. The assumption that clerks needed time outside the office to pursue the social lives of gentlemen was nonetheless slow to erode. The demands of gentility meant that extra costs were incurred for heating and lighting in winter. Even in the midst of a mania for economy, it was more important that clerks follow the daily rhythm of men of social status than that they be tied to natural daylight hours

Bathurst's man in the House of Commons during the Edwards scandals was Robert Wilmot Horton. Born Robert Wilmot, he added his wife's surname to his own in 1823. The change was a condition of his father-in-law's will, whereby the couple inherited the family estate of Catton Hall in Derbyshire. Anne Beatrix Horton's financial assets were more than matched by her appearance. Lord Byron immortalised her in the poem 'She walks in Beauty, like the night'. The poet was less enamoured of her bureaucrat husband, who also happened to be his own cousin. Byron famously penned an acid thumbnail sketch of "Wilmot the small wit" in a rhyming letter to his publisher in 1818.<sup>28</sup> For all Byron's jaundiced views, Wilmot Horton would prove invaluable to the Colonial Office as their designated defence-dog on the floor of the House of Commons.

James Stephen Jun., legal advisor to the Colonial Office (later permanent under-secretary) was an equally important asset and would play a similarly prominent part on the events associated with William Edwards's career in the colonies. Quite unlike the Secretary of State himself, Stephen found it so impossible to delegate that he was prone to periodic collapse. Initially employed on a contract basis, he kept up his private work as a barrister, but the demands of the Colonial Office on top of trying to sustain his practice proved so much that he suffered a breakdown in 1822. From 1823, Stephen moved permanently to the Colonial Office, inspired in part by his belief that he could gain some influence there over the great question of slavery. His arrival on a full-time basis, together with the appointment in 1825 of a second under-secretary, Robert William Hay, eased the burden of work somewhat. James Stephen's son Leslie would later claim that his father, an ardent evangelical, had enjoyed his

---

<sup>28</sup> Young, *Colonial Office*, 49-50.

first cigar so much that he vowed never to smoke another one. The gashes that periodically marred his face came from an insistence on being clean-shaven coupled with a refusal to pander to vanity by looking into a mirror.<sup>29</sup> Stephen complained that the insistence that clerks be gentlemen made for too much informality and undermined office discipline. As a chronic workaholic, he found it unacceptable to employ men who needed to sandwich their official business into a window between morning rides and afternoon dinners. By the 1830s, Stephen's view had prevailed and he was presiding over a far greater degree of professionalization, with clerks required to work until 6pm and copyists hired on a piecework basis.<sup>30</sup> During the time of William Edwards, however, this lay in the future.

Why should enriching our understanding of life at no. 14 Downing street help us to explain the relationship between colonial scandal and political change? The Colonial Office's amalgam of gentleman's club and official civil service was at that period perhaps most clearly manifested in the way in which all correspondence (and therefore all administration) took place simultaneously on two levels: one public, the other private. This was absolutely fundamental to how Bathurst operated. Under-secretaries Wilmot Horton and Robert Hay were both willing participants and Hay would become particularly associated with the practice. Stephen, on the other hand, deplored it and his was the view that would ultimately prevail as Stephen eased out, and eventually replaced Hay as permanent under-secretary in 1836.<sup>31</sup> N. D. McLachlin goes to the heart of the matter when he describes the "dual system of administration" developed by Bathurst: "despatches announced official decisions and ostensible reasons for them, private letters went to the heart of the matter."<sup>32</sup> The practice has been much criticised by reformers and historians alike. The historian J. J. Eddy judged it an "invidious and subversive" system that "encouraged the reporting of gossip which was often unfounded."<sup>33</sup> McLachlin called it "the most serious flaw in Bathurst's whole administration," even as he recognised it for what it was – the political *habitus* of the eighteenth century.<sup>34</sup> It rode roughshod over public accountability and would not outlast the transition to a modern bureaucracy, but as a management tool it did possess particular (if self-interested) advantages. Nothing, indeed, proves its effectiveness more than the way in

---

<sup>29</sup> E.T. Williams, 'The Colonial Office in the thirties', *Historical Studies, Australia and New Zealand*, 2:7 (May 1943), 154.

<sup>30</sup> Young, *Colonial Office*, 254-5.

<sup>31</sup> Laidlaw, *Colonial Connections*, 52-3.

<sup>32</sup> N. D. McLachlin, 'Bathurst at the Colonial Office 1812-27: A reconnaissance', *Historical Studies: Australia and New Zealand*, vol. 13 (1967-9), 501.

<sup>33</sup> Eddy, *Britain and the Australian Colonies*, 33.

<sup>34</sup> McLachlin, 'Bathurst', 502.

which the Colonial Office was able to successfully weather the storms in public opinion in which Edwards played so prominent a part. That it was marshalled against these controversies also underlines the importance of such scandals in understanding the relationship between the workings of the Colonial Office and the operation of parliamentary politics and the British public sphere.

Amongst Bathurst's key concerns were to keep the workings of his office outside the scrutiny of the House of Commons, where debate was hard to control and outcomes were unpredictable. The publication of parliamentary proceedings from the early nineteenth century and the growing influence of newspapers and periodicals had shifted and widened the domain of debate in Britain even before the parliamentary reforms of the 1830s. Bathurst recognised the fact that the Colonial Office was subject to public opinion, and was impatient with Somerset's very different political sensibilities. In September 1826 he saw fit to reprimand the Cape governor (in a letter carefully marked 'Private and Confidential') on this issue. In dealing with the Commission of Eastern Inquiry's investigations, it had come to the Secretary of State's attention that Somerset (whose father was the fifth duke of Beaufort) evidently considered it "degrading" to his "rank and station" to summon witnesses in his own defence. Bathurst pointed out that this rested on a fundamental misreading of the current political climate: "we do not consider in this country that rank & station make any man less amenable to public opinion [...] Pretensions of this kind are rarely urged with a good grace by public men."<sup>35</sup>

Bathurst's reprimand speaks to the very heart of how ideas regarding the conduct and accountability of administrators were transforming in this period, a process shifting the proper notions of 'public men'. For all he has been regarded as a conservative, Bathurst saw the nature of his changing times far more clearly than did Somerset. Bathurst's letter was part of a carefully orchestrated campaign to manage this most troublesome of colonial governors, who, along with his aristocratic family, could not conceive of a new political world in which "Individuals of infamous Character" (here referring to Edwards and the scandals he had unleashed) could have weight.<sup>36</sup> That they could do so was in large part due to strategic connections made between colonial reformers and Whig and Radical opposition parliamentarians. At the Cape, Thomas Pringle (1820 settler and evangelical reformer) was well aware that he needed to work on the party political self-interest of his allies in order to drum up their support for local

---

<sup>35</sup> BL, 57/65, Bathurst to Somerset, 4 September 1826 ('Private and Confidential').

<sup>36</sup> Catton Collection: Wilmot Horton Papers, Derbyshire Record Office, D3155/WH 2876. Granville Somerset to Wilmot Horton, 13 November 1825, 'Most private and confidential'.

matters.<sup>37</sup> The key thrust of his correspondence with MP Henry Brougham was therefore to provide colonial ammunition for the opposition in the House of Commons. Pringle's view of Edwards was dim, but he was aware that the case might prove useful ("though the man himself may be a vagabond [the case] is one of flagrant cruelty and injustice").<sup>38</sup> In this regard, the cases of mavericks like Edwards were potentially powerful leverage, even as such "Radicals and Desperadoes" also offered the danger of Cape reformers being tainted by association.<sup>39</sup> Exactly the same course of events unfolded in New South Wales where the Edwards case was taken up by anti-government critics including the newspaper editors Edward Smith Hall and William Charles Wentworth in their attempts to impeach governor Ralph Darling. There too, colonial officials in London made it abundantly clear that the key importance of the allegations of mistreatment made by the convict Alexander Kaye (now claiming to be William Edwards), and the reason for meticulously investigating them, resided in the traction that the case had provided for the political opposition.<sup>40</sup>

Thus, seemingly obscure and local scandals on imperial peripheries had real implications for power relations at home and provided tactical advantage on questions and relationships that were much closer to the power plays of metropolitan politics than the original offence might suggest. Questions about the 'Beaufort influence' backing Lord Charles Somerset, and the broader issue of attention to colonial matters in metropolitan public debate should be sought not in crunching the numbers of how people were likely to vote publicly in the House of Commons, nor merely in considering published debate or the press, but also by looking into private correspondence.<sup>41</sup> It was through this interplay between private and public methods of governance and sources of information that we can get a more accurate sense of the situation on the ground at the Colonial Office. It is here that we find Bathurst circumventing the obstacles presented by the new political landscape in which he was forced to operate.

---

<sup>37</sup> Thomas Pringle to John Fairbairn, 20 May 1825 in R. Vigne, ed., *The South African Letters of Thomas Pringle* (Cape Town, 2011), 184.

<sup>38</sup> Pringle to Henry Brougham, 20 December 1824 in *Letters*, 152.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>40</sup> TNA, CO 201/203: Despatches, Report by Robert Hay, 14 October 1830 (re. despatch from Darling, 23 November 1829).

<sup>41</sup> M. Roberts, 'Lord Charles Somerset and the "Beaufort Influence"', *Archives Year Book for South African History*, 1951, no. 2. His key target was Isobel Edwards's *The 1820 Settlers in South Africa: A Study in British Colonial Policy* (London, 1934). This now long-obscure debate has a more contemporary historiographical iteration in the question of how far empire impacted on society and culture within Britain itself. Bernard Porter and John MacKenzie are amongst the key protagonists. See J. MacKenzie, *Propaganda and Empire: The Manipulation of British Public Opinion 1880-1960* (Manchester, 1984); J. MacKenzie, ed., *Imperialism and Popular Culture* (Manchester, 1986); and B. Porter, *The Absent-Minded Imperialists: Empire, Society and Culture in Britain* (Oxford, 2004).



For all that Bathurst reprimanded Somerset for standing on his “rank and station,” concern about gubernatorial reputation and status pervaded the Secretary of State’s private correspondence. A private letter to Governor Thomas Brisbane of New South Wales in 1824, outlining a long series of criticisms of the New South Wales administration, invokes the concept:

I cannot close this private letter without bringing before you the representations which more or less officially are perpetually coming before me. [...] You will I trust attribute to its true motive whatever may be unpleasant in this long letter, - I have always considered and as long as I continue in this office, I shall always consider that the honor of an absent Governor is in my custody, and when I see perpetual attempts made to impeach it, I am bound to apprise him of it, and enable him to put me in possession of his vindication.

I feel myself more particularly called upon to do so now, as I foresee that there will be an attack upon both you and Major Goulburn [Colonial Secretary] in the course of the next session, and you will believe that my apprehensions are not without a foundation, when you see that the opposition papers have begun upon the subject.<sup>42</sup>

Three key elements of how Bathurst managed the interpersonal relations of colonial governance are laid clearly before us here: his judicious combination of circuits of information designated ‘private’ and ‘official’, the manner in which he justified personal criticisms by the duty to protect his correspondent’s reputation, and the constant need to pre-empt the hostile attentions of parliament and the opposition press.

Bathurst felt exasperation about how Somerset was dealing with the unfolding situation at the Cape. In private notes to his undersecretaries, with whom he habitually enjoyed jesting, the Secretary of State could be devastatingly candid.<sup>43</sup> Yet, even in his most critical correspondence with Somerset, Bathurst was careful to pay him due deference. A governor, as Zoë Laidlaw’s work has emphasised, was in an inherently paradoxical position: “at once an independent colonial autocrat and the metropolitan government’s puppet.”<sup>44</sup> This contradiction was heightened both by Somerset’s personality and elite family background, and by the context of a profound administrative transition going on within the British empire more broadly. The series of Commissions of Enquiry through the 1820s and 1830s were substantially reducing executive power through the introduction of councils of advice and supreme courts. Indeed, Bathurst’s private correspondence reveals that the decision to fast-track the provision of the former came directly out of the Cape scandals centred around Edwards, and (as Bathurst put it) Somerset’s failings in

---

<sup>42</sup> BL, 57/64, Bathurst to Brisbane, 23 August 1824.

<sup>43</sup> BL, 57/58, Bathurst to Hay, 12 September 1826; Bathurst to Hay, 13 September 1826.

<sup>44</sup> Laidlaw, *Colonial Connections*, 62.

“command of temper.”<sup>45</sup> Highly-connected aristocrats like Somerset were gradually replaced by men with less elite social status.<sup>46</sup> For all this curb on ‘pro-consular despotism’ and move away from aristocratic appointments, the Governor remained the monarch’s embodiment in the colonial realm. As arguments in prosecuting William Edwards for libel against Somerset showed, such prestige, and its corollary of “wounded majesty” was considered central to concrete questions of state security.<sup>47</sup> As the prosecution put the case against Edwards: “his crime has therefore almost reached the pinnacle, one step more and the prisoner will contend with the Sovereignty and dare to attack the King on the Throne.”<sup>48</sup> By highlighting the implications of both attacks on gubernatorial authority and the remedies sought against this, the Cape libel trials would lay bare the question of delegated legal authority within imperial sovereignty.<sup>49</sup>

Bathurst had to make sure his governors obeyed the instructions of the Colonial Office, but he could not issue these instructions, especially in public, in a way that would undermine any sense that their authority or position was not backed up in London. Criticism within the House of Commons, and a relentless stream of complaints from interested individuals and lobby groups on the periphery, was only increased by the investigations of Commissions of Inquiry. Whatever his own personal views on his governors’ mismanagement, Bathurst saw the importance of a united front: “as you will be attacked upon party principles,” he wrote to Somerset about the Edwards scandals, “you are entitled to party support.”<sup>50</sup>

Bathurst’s correspondence with his colonial Governors was thus a carefully choreographed dance between issuing strict orders (often unpalatable) to an administrative inferior, and showing due deference to a social equal. Analysing Bathurst’s correspondence with Somerset over the scandals instigated by William Edwards highlights that this need to keep governors under control without compromising their status necessitated a whole series of discursive strategies. The aim was to mitigate the frequently unpalatable tone and content required to get the job done. Bathurst excused his reproaches with repeated reference to the claim that he was motivated solely by the need to protect the interests of the person on the receiving end of them. Courteous fictions about errors and miscommunications were deliberately inserted even when both

---

<sup>45</sup> BL, 57/65, Bathurst to Somerset, 19 October 1824.

<sup>46</sup> Laidlaw, *Colonial Connections*, 47-9.

<sup>47</sup> G. Theal, ed., *Records of the Cape Colony*, vol. 17, 401.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid*, 409.

<sup>49</sup> L. Benton, *A Search for Sovereignty: Law and Geography in European Empires 1400-1900* (Cambridge, 2010), 31.

<sup>50</sup> BL, 57/65, Bathurst to Somerset, 19 October 1824.

parties clearly knew that the recipient had acted contrary to the Secretary of State's wishes and needed to be reprimanded accordingly: "I cannot believe but there must have been some inaccuracy [...], I cannot imagine that you would have [...], I still flatter myself that you did not [...]." <sup>51</sup> We should not see these as mere politeness however; or rather, we should not see this politeness as separate from the operation of politics.

To maintain the façade, even his private correspondence becomes pervaded by a minutely shaded and subtle form of double-speak. Bathurst, for example, would demonstrate in carefully ambiguous terms that he was aware that one (potentially dangerous) course of action had been taken by Somerset. He would then point out that he planned to put a less politically-sensitive interpretation on events when writing about them "in my public letter."<sup>52</sup> These strategies were not merely ways to smooth relations with a delegated authority, important though that was. Bathurst also used them to signal to a correspondent that he intended to hold to certain fictions in the public domain in order to deflect parliamentary criticism.

What we might be tempted to see simply as tact, then, was in fact integral to Bathurst's system of dual administration:

You will receive two public letters from me on the subject of Mr Edward's business [...] From all these you will collect that I apprehend that the two cases, as they at present stand, are not satisfactorily explained: and that something more must be known, before either will be in a defensible state. I have reserved for a private letter dealing more openly, lest those doubts which I cannot but entertain of the merits of each case, might, if found expressed in a public dispatch which Parliament might call for, become prejudicial to you, unless they were more entirely removed than I am afraid will turn out to be the Case.<sup>53</sup>

As Bathurst outlined here to Somerset, private and public correspondence were designed to act together: to deal with colonial crises, to protect individual administrators, and to deflect the negative attention of public opinion from the actions of the Colonial Office. Managing reputation was key to this process.

❧ ❧ ❧ ❧

As their sometimes exasperated correspondence testifies, officials both in London and on the periphery were constantly bombarded by individual complainants seeking redress against the perceived injustices of colonial administrations. While Edwards was by no means alone in this regard, his case touches on an unusually impressive array of vexed issues. These were questions

---

<sup>51</sup> BL, 57/65, Bathurst to Somerset, 19 October 1824; 10 November 1825.

<sup>52</sup> BL, 57/65, Bathurst to Somerset, 19 October 1824.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*

on which many were seeking resolution in the early nineteenth-century British empire: the relationship between imperial information gathering and party politics, the political liabilities of espionage, the consequences of slave trade abolition and the treatment of bonded labour, the limits of press freedom, the position of British emigrants in conquered colonies with alien legal systems, and the operation of the rule of law in penal colonies. That these important and far-reaching debates can, and should, be connected with ostensibly marginal, interpersonal disputes is the central proposition of my investigation into Edwards and his world.

The endless personal controversies of which this is one can all too easily be dismissed as tempests in the colonial teapot. But individuals like Edwards matter because of the role they played in the functioning of an oppositional parliamentary system that was bound together by networks of influence that extended far beyond the corridors of Whitehall. While their immediate motives were undoubtedly self-interested, Edwards and his ilk were astute enough to link their personal ambitions and vendettas to highly charged contemporary debates about imperial liberty and despotism. As a result, they set in train a series of events that would have an important impact on the changes already under way. Contemporary circumstances secured them a wide-ranging audience for what might look at first glance like trivial and localised personal disputes, for the Commissions of Inquiry were operating in a highly volatile political context that tied British domestic politics and colonial tensions together. Colonial discontent proved useful for the opposition press in Britain and for Whig and Radical politicians criticising the Colonial Office in the House of Commons as part of their wider agenda of parliamentary reform and fiscal responsibility. Tracking the extensive investigations made into Kaye/Edwards' case, and the various types of political capital to be made from it, helps us to understand how party politics and reform initiatives interacted through this period.

# Awad el Djouh

## A Story of Slave Trade in the Mid Twentieth Century

*Baz Lecocq*

### Introduction

In the mid 1950s the world came to believe in the continued existence of a large-scale slave trade from Africa to Arabia. The issue gripped not only the international media - from Africa, via Europe to the US - but also such international bodies as the United Nations, as well as the parliamentary bodies of the (then slowly dismantling) French and British empires. The media informing these international bodies and debating the issue spoke of well-organised networks involving veteran Nazis and other characters usually only conjured up in thrillers and white screen fantasies. These networks presumably exported thousands of slaves per year via roads across the Sahara that even the most experienced travellers viewed as impossible to travel. Formal proof of the existence of such networks and continued slave trade remained absent until 1954, when one man returned to French West Africa from Saudi Arabia and claimed to have been sold there. That man was called Awad El Djouh. His story became the centrepiece in the international belief in large-scale slave trade that gripped international media and political bodies from 1954, when Awad's story gripped local media, to 1956, when the Office of the United Nations Office High Commissioner for Human Rights signed the Supplementary Convention on the

## Abolition of Slavery, the Slave Trade, and Institutions and Practices Similar to Slavery.

In this paper I will present and discuss the belief in the continued slave trade from West Africa to Saudi Arabia in the mid-twentieth century. I will try to show how the testimony of one man, combined with a number of dubitable publications were enough for some to argue that, as many newspaper articles of the day put it, 'thousands of Africans were sold into slavery on a yearly basis,' a belief that directly influenced international law, as I hope to make clear as well. However, a close reading of the available sources renders the idea that the slave trade to Saudi Arabia continued in the 1950s, even on a modest scale, an uncertain one. Although there is a body of archival evidence that the trade continued to exist, none of the material furnishes definite proof in any way. As it turns out, the majority of both the archive sources of the institutions that had to deal with Awad El Djouh's statement and the publications on the slave trade that seemed to back up the veracity of his claim, repeat each other in the form of 'frame narratives'. All the sources seem to rely on either the claim made by Awad that he had been sold, or on one or two original texts in which do not substantiate in any way the claims made about the existence of a slave trade. In the end, it will remain unclear whether Awad El Djouh, or any other person from West Africa, was sold into slavery on the Arabian Peninsula in the 1950s, as was claimed, or whether international networks of slavers existed at that time, as was alleged.

Despite the fact that the questions whether or not Awad El Djouh had been sold and to what extent this sale can be proven might seem to be outdated in these post post-modern constructivist days of history writing, still need to be asked. Questions about the nature of a historical event lie at the basis of the sort of history one can write and, more importantly, at the basis of the historical discipline itself, despite the many discursive and deconstructivist turns we have taken in recent decades (however beneficial I might hold these to be in many respects). Historians still claim to explore a form of truth based in non-fictional human experience. The events under study can range anywhere between wholly discursive events to discursive presentations of more physical events. The first have been constructed in known forms of text, whereas the second could be derived from various sorts of data, first put in discursive form by the historian studying them. The inherent tensions between these two forms of history have been exposed by Michel-Rolph Trouillot, whose work can be read as a successful attempt to reconcile positivist source-based history production as 'historical truth' with the post-modern stance that no such truth can exist

and that all is narrative.<sup>1</sup> Similar tensions have characterised my education under Robert Ross's guidance. In the story below I will try to engage in a daring balancing act between a positivistic narrative of factual event description, a critique on the veracity of the very same narrative I write, and a constructivist approach to the possibility that the whole story is true in the first place. In this balancing act, I hope to do justice to Robert's education in the importance of source-based narratives, detailed micro histories, social analysis, common sense, and a deep love of footnotes.

### Mohamed Ali's Hajj and Awad's flight

In 1948, Mohamed Ali ag Attaher Insar left for the hajj.<sup>2</sup> Mohamed Ali was the chief of the Kel Intessar, a Tuareg tribe living in the environs of Timbuktu, and a councillor for the *Parti Progressiste Soudanais* (PSP) in the Territorial Assembly of French Sudan, as the current Republic of Mali was then called. In these functions he had become a powerful politician who personally knew the French President, the King of Morocco, and the King of Saudi Arabia. Mohamed Ali did not travel alone. Along with his wife and three sons, he travelled with a number of servants or so-called *bellah* (Tuareg of slave origins). The servants were two married couples with their children, and one single man called Awatan ag Aliou. Awatan was born around 1925, a son of Aliou ag Ouyié and Masto wellet Nushbighair, who were *bellah* to a master named Akounkoun. In his childhood years Awatan befriended Mohamed Ali's son Muphtah, who affectionately called him Awad El Djouh, a name under which Awatan would become known to the whole world. Mohamed Ali took his son's friend into his household, but this was on a voluntary basis as there were no formal ties between Mohamed Ali and Akounkoun, the master to Awad's parents. It is unclear to me if, how and when Awatan was manumitted, but it is clear that he was a free man by 1942, when he was working as a salaried *boy cuisinier* for a Frenchman. By then, he had formally changed his name to Awad Yattara; a family name of Fulani origins taken by many manumitted Tuareg slaves in the Timbuktu area. Hence, in 1948, when Awad travelled to Mecca along with Mohamed Ali, he did so as a free man and a friend and companion to Mohamed Ali's son.

---

<sup>1</sup> M.-R. Trouillot, *Silencing the Past: Power and the Production of History* (Boston, 1995).

<sup>2</sup> The overwhelming majority of material on which I base this paper is found in the Centre des Archives Diplomatiques in Nantes (CADN), in the Series AOF, in one singularly coded *carton*: AOF Dakar 323 - Trafic esclaves. Unless indicated otherwise, material indicated as CADN comes from this carton with this repertorial code.

Upon arrival in Mecca, Mohamed Ali bought a house, where he settled with his family and servants. After the hajj of 1950, Awad entered the service of Prince Abdullah bin Faisal, via the mediations of Mohamed Ali. Abdullah was not only the oldest son to Faisal bin Abdelaziz, the future King of Saudi Arabia, he was also the Saudi Minister of Health and was soon to become the Kingdom's Minister of the Interior.<sup>3</sup> Awad joined the Prince's uniformed honour guard. Soon after, he married Farrah, a woman working in the Prince's household.<sup>4</sup>

Two years later, in October 1952', Awad presented himself to the French Consul in Jeddah, where he claimed that Mohamed Ali had sold him to Abdullah bin Faisal while his fellow *bellah* servants had been sold to other Saudi dignitaries in Jeddah and Mecca.<sup>5</sup> Awad asked the Ambassador to help him leave Saudi Arabia but, as the Consul wrote in a letter to his superiors about this remarkable visit:

As Aval [sic] YATTARA has fled and now seeks refuge at the French embassy, I studied with him the possibilities of getting himself out of his dire situation. As this embassy does not have the right to manumission, and as the aforementioned fears being killed when it is discovered that he sought French protection, he has returned to his place on my advice.<sup>6</sup>

In October 1953, Awad managed to leave Saudi Arabia of his own accord. Profiting from the absence of Prince Abdullah bin Faisal who had travelled to Paris, Awad went to the port of Jeddah. He managed to stow away on a steamer bound for Suakin, where he bribed the customs officials with his remaining money to let him through. In Port Sudan Awad sold part of his honour guard uniform to pay for the train ticket to Khartoum. There, he presented himself at the French Embassy, where he obtained travel documents.<sup>7</sup> By the end of April 1954 Awad arrived in Niamey where he did something extraordinary: he filed a formal complaint with the Niamey Chief of Police against his host on the hajj, Mohamed Ali, for having sold him to Prince Abdullah bin Faisal in Saudi Arabia.

---

<sup>3</sup> Despite some confusion in the French source material, it becomes clear from Awad's various descriptions that he intended to indicate Prince Abdullah bin Faisal as his 'owner'. Abdullah, oldest son to Faisal bin Abdulaziz, occupied various ministerial posts under the rules of King Abdulaziz and King Saud between 1949 and 1959. Mahmoud Ahmad (2007, May), 'Abdullah al-Faisal passes away', *Arab News*, [www.arabnews.com/node/298147](http://www.arabnews.com/node/298147).

<sup>4</sup> CADN Parquet de Bamako. Procès Verbal de la déclaration faite par Hawad El Joud, 26 April 1954.

<sup>5</sup> A discussion of the legal developments surrounding the slave trade and slave ownership in Saudi Arabia falls outside the scope of this paper, but for good order: the overseas importation of slaves was formally abrogated by Royal Decree in 1936. Slave holding and the sales of slaves within the realm remained legal until 1962. Hence, the sales and purchase of Awad would have been illegal in Saudi Arabia at the time.

<sup>6</sup> CADN Ambassade de France à Djeddah, lettre no 1263 à Gouverneur Général de l'AOF (GGAOF), 1 Dec. 1953. European consular policy in the 1950s towards questions of enslaved Africans was to not interfere when it concerned slaves belonging to the royal family and Awad claimed to have been sold to a Saudi prince and minister. See S. Miers, *Slavery in the Twentieth Century. The Evolution of a Global Problem* (Walnut Creek, 2003), 317-332.

<sup>7</sup> CADN Parquet de Bamako. Procès Verbal de la déclaration faite par Hawad El Joud. 26 April 1954.



The complaint was filed by the Niamey chief of police as 'Alienation of freedom of a minor under 18 years old, against payment'.<sup>8</sup> His accusations now had to be dealt with formally in one way or another. The Governor of French Sudan, the French colony from which Awad originated, sent him to Bamako, where he arrived on 26 April 1954. Immediately upon arrival he was brought to the courthouse of the *Tribunal de Première Instance* to deposit his accusation against Mohamed Ali with the Public Prosecutor.<sup>9</sup>

### Factual fiction on the slave trade to Arabia

Awad's appearance at the French Consulate in Jeddah in October 1952 coincided with the publication in France of a remarkable investigative report titled '*Trafic d'esclaves en plein XXe siècle*'.<sup>10</sup> The report was written by Jacques Alain, a Belgian journalist who claimed that a well-organised network of slave traders existed, extending from the Spanish Sahara, via Chad, Uganda, and Central Africa, to the Red Sea, which exported Africans to the Arabian Peninsula. The slaves were first brought to the Tibesti Mountains in Chad by various dealers, where they were sold to a network of slavers selling on to Saudi Arabia. According to Alain, the network had been active since early 1948. It was run from Cairo by three veterans of the German Afrika Korps, who bought their merchandise against payment of old stocks of Wehrmacht armaments from the North African battlefields, and who then transported their merchandise on to the Red Sea coast, where the slaves passed as pilgrims to Medina and Mecca. There they were sold to actual pilgrims with the express purpose of setting them free again, as setting a slave free is a deed of merit according to Islam. The released slaves were then left to their own devices, with many, according to Alain, dying a slow death as beggars in the streets of Mecca. This fate was avoided by younger and more attractive female slaves who ended up in a sort of boudoir run by an Armenian woman posing as the representative of a cosmetics company, but who used this cover to prepare young African women for a life in the harems of Saudi Arabia. Alain stated that he had gathered these facts himself in the Spanish West Sahara, in Cairo, and in Mecca and Medina, where he had visited the backyards where the discarded slaves gathered. He had also

---

<sup>8</sup> CADN Commissariat de Police de Niamey, Procès verbal no223/pj. 23 April 1954.

<sup>9</sup> CADN G Soudan lettre no181 à GGAOF. 30 April 1954. The court cases that form part of Awad El Djouh's story and their relevance for labour issues and the relations between former slaves and masters in French West Africa will be described in B. Lecocq, 'Awad El Djouh and the Dynamics of Post-Slavery', *International Journal of African Historical Studies*, 48:2 (2015).

<sup>10</sup> Jacques Alain, 'Trafic d'Esclaves en plein XXe siècle', *La Marche du Monde* no. 8 (Paris, June 1953), 19-31.

interviewed a retired officer of the British Navy, who had spent some years patrolling the Red Sea in search of vessels smuggling slaves, and a Saudi dissident called Ahmed Pharaon.<sup>11</sup> Although we cannot immediately rule out Alain's visit to Mecca, it is not very likely that he spent any time there, given that access to these cities was restricted to Muslims only at this time and Alain was not a Muslim. How a totally unknown journalist like Alain financed the rest of his extensive travels and how he managed to gain access to his interlocutors, also remains a mystery (although we will examine this presently). Nevertheless, the report was published in *France Soir*, then one of the most widely read French newspapers, in December 1952. More importantly, Alain had his report sent to ECOSOC, the Social and Economic Council of the United Nations, which paid some attention to his story. From there, Alain's story reached the UN Magazine *United Nations World*, and soon it spread to newspapers over the globe.<sup>12</sup>

A few other publications furthered the growing global public attention to slavery. In March 1953, René Cassin, the former secretary of the commission drafting the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, published an article on slavery in French West Africa. In May 1953, the question of the slave trade was brought before the United Nations Human Rights Committee. The debate centred around a report on slavery written by Father Tisserant, an influential French Missionary who had worked in French Central Africa in the 1920s and 1930s, who was an active member of the French Anti Slavery Society, and a brother to the influential Cardinal Eugène Tisserant. In his report to the United Nations, Father Tisserant explicitly referred to Jacques Alain's report, published a few months earlier, as a document of importance, giving further credibility to this story.<sup>13</sup> Father Tisserant's report to the UN was published for a larger audience in 1955. The report mixes reminiscence of past events with suppositions that similar situations might not be excluded in the present:

Are there still such unfortunates, captured by surprise, taken far away to become slaves? It is difficult to say. Would it be possible close to the administrative posts where control is lax? I would not dare to affirm that such cases would never happen.<sup>14</sup>

Tisserant's writing style evokes an urgent actuality that nevertheless is not substantiated. Nowhere in his report does he present concrete evidence of a continued slave trade or slavery in Central Africa or evidence that he had

---

<sup>11</sup> Pharaon is a common family name in Lebanon, but not in Saudi Arabia. The identity of this man is thus unclear.

<sup>12</sup> CADN Résumé d'un rapport adressé le 1er décembre 1952 au Secrétariat Général de L'O.N.U. Aff. Pol. du GG AOF à Aff. Pol. du Min. FoM a/s rapport Jacques Alain, 19 February 1953.

<sup>13</sup> CADN Conseiller diplomatique AOF au GG AOF a/s rapports esclavage à ONU, 5 May 1953.

<sup>14</sup> Charles Tisserant, *Ce que j'ai connu de l'esclavage en Oubangi-Chari*, Société anti-esclavagiste de France (Paris, 1955), 61.

witnessed, or even heard of, such a trade. His description of the slave trade remains a reminiscence of the still visible traces of a slave trade that went on in Central Africa prior to French conquest, but which was largely - if not entirely - a thing of the past when Tisserant arrived in Central Africa in the 1920s. Tisserant presents his experiences of (the local witnesses to a past) slave trade from the 1920s and 1930s, and not of events in the 1950s or even late 1940s. But Tisserant's clerical authority led people to believe his insinuating style was depicting a form of the present. In fact, this 'present' was already a past in the 1950s. But his report and his references to Alain's publications gave further lease of life to both Alain's allegations and the general idea of a widespread slave trade. Both Alain's story and Father Tisserant's memories would, in turn, breathe new life into the media attention that erupted around Awad El Djouh. Indeed, they formed the basis of further allegations of a widespread slave trade, made by an author with even less credibility but who was nevertheless believed.

The rumour about Awad's return to Bamako, the rumour of a man who had been sold as a slave in Saudi Arabia, quickly spread and reached the desks of the local press. The weekly *Afrique Nouvelle*, a Catholic newspaper run by the White Fathers from Dakar, was the first to publish Awad's story with a lead article '*La route d'esclaves noirs commence à Villa Cisneros et aboutit à La Mecque*', which centres around an interview with Awad who briefly explains his perils. The editors of *Afrique Nouvelle* 'led' Awad's story with how they had been previously contacted by an American journalist who had asked for verification of the existence of a slavery network run from the Spanish Saharan city of Villa Cisneros, a 'lead' we can safely presume to have come from Alain's report published in *France Soir* and in the *United Nations World*. *Afrique Nouvelle* subsequently started investigations into the matter, but with no result. Until Awad's story reached them.

But see, there is a rumour going around: "In Bamako, there is an African, Awad El Djoud. He has recently escaped from Saudi Arabia where another Soudanais had sold him as a slave!."<sup>15</sup>

Soon after the release of Awad's story *Afrique Nouvelle* printed a series of articles on the subject of the slave trade from West Africa, based on their previous dead-end research.<sup>16</sup> The newspaper based its follow up articles to Awad's story almost entirely on a small Dutch booklet, *Er zijn nog slaven!* (*There*

---

<sup>15</sup> Robert Rummelhardt & David Traoré, 'La route des esclaves noirs commence à Villa Cisneros et aboutit à la Mecque I', *Afrique Nouvelle*, 4 August 1954.

<sup>16</sup> Robert Rummelhardt, 'La route des esclaves noirs commence à Villa Cisneros et aboutit à la Mecque II', *Afrique Nouvelle*, 11 August 1954 ; Robert Rummelhardt, 'La route des esclaves noirs commence à Villa Cisneros et aboutit à la Mecque (fin)', *Afrique Nouvelle*, 18 August 1954.

*still are slaves!*), written by Doctoranda Greta Schenk in 1953.<sup>17</sup> The booklet was part of the IVIO series: small cheap booklets on various subjects, which were intended to be collected in special collector folders as an encyclopaedia for the common man. There was much confusion on the qualifications of this author in the publications and debates in which this booklet played a prominent part. Greta Schenk was the editor-in-chief of the Dutch women's magazine *De Vrouw en Haar Huis* (*The Woman and her Home*), which reported on the latest in fashion, cuisine and interior decoration, but not on social or political issues of any kind. Having studied Dutch literature and history at Utrecht University in the 1930s, then still a rare accomplishment for a woman in the conservative Netherlands, she proudly sported her academic degree of *Doctoranda*, shortened to *Dra.* in Dutch, which is roughly the equivalent of a Master's degree. But many took *Dra.* to stand for *Dr.* and took her, or him, as some thought Greta Schenk to be a man, to be a professional academic researcher on the subject of slavery, something she never denied or affirmed being, but which she certainly was not.

Doctoranda Schenk based her writing largely on Jacques Alain's report. The similarities between the two stories are so remarkable that one could safely speak of the same text, or at least the exact same tropes, reproduced in another language. When later asked about her sources, Schenk stated that she had complemented Alain's writing with a number of Dutch newspaper articles based, in turn, on both Alain's and Father Tisserant's reports; a report on slavery written by Sir Harry Greenidge, the secretary of the British Anti Slavery Society; and one article published in the German magazine *Der Spiegel* in 1949. This last article asserted that World War Two Afrika Korps veterans, who had spent some time as British Prisoners of War in Egypt, had remained in that country and engaged in the slave trade from the Anglo-Egyptian Sudan to the Arabian Peninsula, a story we also encounter in Alain's report.<sup>18</sup> Like Alain, Schenk presented a slave trading network across Africa, where Africans from all over the continent were brought to 'concentration camps' in the Chadian Tibesti mountains, to be sold for guns and ammunition to a network of former Nazis who, after the slaves had been 'trained' in household duties by an Armenian woman, sold these slaves to Arabian traders on the Red Sea Coast. Thus, we see a form of frame tale reappearing, with Greta Schenk simply believing and repeating the story as Alain had told it. These, at times, outright fictional texts, which Alain had written and that *Dra.* Greta Schenk had largely copied, were believed to contain pure facts, especially since the international confusion

---

<sup>17</sup> Dra. G.M. Schenk, *Er zijn nog slaven!* (Amsterdam, 1953).

<sup>18</sup> 'Baumwolle mit Beinen', *Der Spiegel* 26, 23 June 1949. It is very likely that Jacques Alain made use of this article too, although he does not refer to it.

surrounding the meaning of her academic title and her occupation lent the story even greater credibility.<sup>19</sup> Together with Awad's accusations, these stories formed the basis of a firm belief in the continued mass sales of African slaves to the Arabian Peninsula.

### Pastor La Graviere, the media, and the anti-slavery campaigns

In November 1954, Emmanuel La Gravière, a pastor of the French Reformed Church and a member of the Assembly of the French Union - as France and its Colonial Empire were then called - proposed conducting an inquiry into the slave trade from French West Africa. La Gravière based the necessity of this enquiry on both the articles in *Afrique Nouvelle* and on Doctoranda Schenk's booklet.<sup>20</sup> His proposition was passed and in January 1955 - La Gravière would travel himself to AOF and Cameroon to inquire into the slave trade. In Bamako, La Gravière met with Awad - who recounted his story, with slightly different details. In his subsequent travels in Africa to investigate the slave trade, La Gravière did not find further evidence of continued slave trade beyond Awad's personal statement, except for one document. He had (coincidentally and illegally) managed to get hold of a copy of a letter by the French Consul in Jeddah of November 1953, in which he described a network of slavers from AOF in Saudi Arabia. This letter, however, was largely based on information Awad himself had given to the Consul during his stay at the Consulate in October 1952.<sup>21</sup> Thus, the only 'living proof' for the existence of slave trade from French West Africa seemed to be one man: Awad El Djouh.

Nevertheless, the story of continued slave trade was widely published in the international media. La Gravière had been the president of the media committee of the French Assembly in the late 1940s. He knew the importance of media attention to any subject. Hence, upon his return from Africa in March 1955 - La Gravière made sure his travels and his report received media attention. In the following years a number of smaller and bigger newspapers and magazines would pay attention to La Gravière and his report on the continued existence of the slave trade, including *The New York Times*, *Der Spiegel*, *The Daily Telegraph*, *The Morning Post*, *Orizzonti*, *France Soir*, *L'Express*,

---

<sup>19</sup> Schenk, *Er zijn nog slaven!*, 15.

<sup>20</sup> I do not know if La Gravière could read Dutch, which is a possibility given the prominence of Dutch theologians in the reformed church, or whether he had the booklet translated for him. Excerpts of the French translation, quoted in La Gravière's final report show deviations from the Dutch original.

<sup>21</sup> CADN, lettre de l'Ambassadeur de France à Djeddah au Ministre des Affaires Etrangères, Direction Afrique Levant a/s Trafic d'esclaves entre l'Arabie Saoudienne et l'Afrique Noire Française. 7 November 1953.

*Combat*, and *Le Monde*. In June 1955, the weekly magazine *Paris Match* sent its celebrated star reporter Georges de Caunes to Bamako to interview Awad again.<sup>22</sup> *JET*, 'The Weekly Negro News Magazine', as the African-American publication called itself then, also reported the story in its essence:

An estimated 1,000 to 10,000 African men, women and children are being sold into slavery annually by Arabians, a French government official charged in Paris. Recently returned from French West Africa, the Reverend Emmanuel La Gravière, a French Assembly counsellor, charged that Africans were being transported as 'servants' in so-called 'pilgrimages' of Moslems to Mecca and then sold for prices ranging from \$1,200 for a pretty 15-year old girl to 10\$ for an old woman. Reverend La Gravière urged the French body to demand a United Nations probe of the Slave Trade.<sup>23</sup>

In the media campaigns surrounding his report, La Gravière also gave lavish citations from a report by the British and Foreign Anti-Slavery Society on the continued existence of slavery delivered to the United Nations Social Economic Council in 1954. To prove the continued existence of a slave trade, the report of the British and Foreign Anti-Slavery Society in turn cited past publications on the slave trade, especially those of the adventurer journalists and novelists Eldon Rutter (*The Holy Cities of Arabia*, 1933) and Joseph Kessel (*Marchés d'Esclaves*, 1930), as well as Father Tisserant's 1953 report to the UN. Hence, in a series of citations - from Tisserant, via the British Anti-Slavery Society, to La Gravière, ultimately leading to travelogues from the 1930s - a particular form of telescopic post-fact frame narrative of slavery became proof for slave trade in the present. In fact, La Gravière had to admit that there was no proof and therefore simply pleaded that his audience would believe the authority of those who knew:

I have not been able to verify all that I have been told, but I do not think I can reject as imaginary what trustworthy men, whose lives have since long been set in Africa, have asserted.<sup>24</sup>

But the doubts get stronger still. La Gravière's talks with Awad, recorded in some detail in his report to the Assembly, give decisive proof that Awad himself was not sure about the factual claims he made about his sale.

- You told me, Awad, that you are sure you were sold as a slave by Mohamed Ali to Prince Abdallah Fayçal.
- That, I cannot prove. What I am sure of, is that the Prince himself did well and truly consider me a slave, as he wanted to sell me.<sup>25</sup>

---

<sup>22</sup> Georges de Caunes, 'Il y a encore des marchands d'esclaves', *Paris Match* 326, 25 June-2 July. Paris 1955, p. 94-97.

<sup>23</sup> *JET*, 16 June 1955, 10.

<sup>24</sup> CADN No 75, Assemblée de l'Union Française, session 1955-1956: Rapport fait par M. La Gravière. 17 November 1955.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*

In fact, Awad's statements to the press or to the authorities give no proof that Mohamed Ali had sold him in Mecca. He only believed he had been sold by Mohamed Ali to Abdullah bin Faisal. As for Mohamed Ali: after his hajj he spent most of his time in the Middle East and North Africa, or in Paris. He had a short sojourn in French Sudan in 1953, but he left again shortly before Awad's return. Whether it was because of Awad's formal accusations against him or for other reasons (or both), Mohamed Ali never returned to French West Africa, but remained in the Middle East, from where he wrote letters in which he vehemently denied the accusations against him.<sup>26</sup>

How could I have forced Awaten to leave Bamako or Goundam without him filing a complaint? How can one think that I could have sold him here a long time ago without him filing complaint here with the French Consul? How can one believe that I sold him here while on the road he was often at least a month behind me?<sup>27</sup>

According to Mohamed Ali, Awad had followed him to Mecca on Mohamed Ali's expenses, after which he worked for the 'Saudi Minister of Defence' (Prince Abdullah bin Faisal was indeed Minister of the Interior) to pay back his travel debts to Mohamed Ali. According to Mohamed Ali, Awad had to flee Mecca because he had started an affair with one of Abdullah bin Faisal's concubines. And here is exactly what, in essence, the story of Awad was: his word against that of Mohamed Ali.

Whether Awad's story was true or false, La Gravière brought his report to the Assembly of the French Union where, reluctantly, it was debated in February 1956. In the heated debates most African Councillors rejected La Gravière's claims outright. Many knew Awad's alleged seller, Mohamed Ali ag Attaher Insar, personally and favoured his word over that of an unknown 'madman and freeloader' as one Councillor openly called Awad.<sup>28</sup> In the end, the Assembly passed a motion stating it was not adequately informed on the continuation of social practices that hamper individual freedom (not a word on a slave trade)

---

<sup>26</sup> A series of letters written in Arabic in Mecca by Mohamed Ali to his relatives in Goundam, and which he had given to a pilgrim from Goundam on his way back home, were confiscated by Marcel Cardaire who functioned as a French Hajj agent during the 1956 pilgrimage. Cardaire had them translated and sent to Bamako and Goundam. Found in the Cercle Archives of Goundam, courtesy of Dr. Bruce Hall, and in CADN.

<sup>27</sup> Letter from Mohamed Ali ag Attaher Insar to Mohamed Elmehdi ag Attaher Insar, Mecca 10 October 1955. Goundam Cercle Archives. Courtesy of Dr. Bruce Hall. Other sources confirm that Awad had not even travelled the whole road to Mecca in Mohamed Ali's company, but had sometimes stopped on the way to work, which makes it doubtful that Awad had even arrived with Mohamed Ali in Saudi Arabia, but which would not necessarily stop Mohamed Ali from placing (selling) Awad in (to) Abdallah bin Faysal's household upon Awad's arrival.

<sup>28</sup> CADN Journal Officiel de la République Française - Débats de l'Union Française, Année 1956, nrs. 5&6, 15 & 17 February 1956.

inviting the government to provide more information on this subject.<sup>29</sup> This meagre result only led La Gravière to double his media efforts, with more journals and magazines such as *The Economist* writing on Awad's story and La Gravière's report throughout 1956.

The adventures of Awad el-Joud are by now quite well known in United Nations circles, and they will again be called to mind when the UN conference on slavery meets in Geneva on August 13<sup>th</sup>.<sup>30</sup>

La Gravière also brought his report to the attention of the United Nations where he had met more belief in his story than among the African Representatives of the French Empire. On 9 September 1956, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights signed the Supplementary Convention on the Abolition of Slavery, the Slave Trade, and Institutions and Practices Similar to Slavery.<sup>31</sup> Most media observed that this Supplementary Convention seemed totally useless, and possibly only affected Saudi Arabia, which had not signed the original 1926 convention. The relation between Awad's statements and its presentation in the international media had focused entirely on the slave trade to the Arabian Peninsula, in detriment of other issues, and it had involved the names of the Royal Household. Although this still needs to be explored further, it is likely that the years-long media campaign on the continued slave trade to the Kingdom had been quite instrumental in pressuring the Kingdom into finally signing the Convention.<sup>32</sup>

By then, it seemed, the statement of one man, repeated by public authorities, had firmly established itself as factual 'truth', and had managed to influence international legislation. But the case of Awad el Djouh and his accusations of being sold by Mohamed Ali are less straightforward than they seemed in the press and in the minds of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights.

### Circumstantial doubt

The colonial administration, heavily embarrassed and feeling its precious prestige under threat from continued allegations that its subjects were sold into slavery from right under its nose, was bent on dismissing both Awad's claims in court, and La Gravière's accusations of an organised slave trade. But in order to

---

<sup>29</sup> CADN Journal Officiel de la République Française - Débats de l'Union Française, Année 1956, nrs. 5&6, 15 & 17 February 1956.

<sup>30</sup> 'Slaves for Sale in Mecca', *The Economist*, London 4 August 1956.

<sup>31</sup> Full text on the UN website under:  
[www.ohchr.org/EN/ProfessionalInterest/Pages/SupplementaryConventionAbolitionOfSlavery.aspx](http://www.ohchr.org/EN/ProfessionalInterest/Pages/SupplementaryConventionAbolitionOfSlavery.aspx)  
 (last accessed 31 July 2013).

<sup>32</sup> 'High Words on Slavery', *The Economist*, London 25/08/1956.



do so sound proof was needed to avoid further embarrassments. Therefore, the Governor General in Dakar ordered thorough inquiries among returned pilgrims about the existence of the slave trade, which was subsequently denied by all those questioned, from the territorial Governors, down to the local commanders, and even by most Africans questioned.<sup>33</sup> These witnesses in denial included a prominent local member of the then still oppositional political party US-RDA from the town of Diré, close to Mohamed Ali's Goundam and Mohamed Ali's direct political opponent; hence, a man who had no political reason to protect him, quite the contrary.<sup>34</sup> And yet, to make matters more complicated, the inquiries did come up with one 'neutral' source: Djeddouould Bouh, a Mauritanian Arab who had lived in Mecca for seven years in the period described. Djeddou affirmed Awad's statement to some extent, in that he stated that Mohamed Ali had sold one of the female *bellah* who had also come along to Mecca (but he did not confirm the sale of Awad himself or of the other *bellah* in Mohamed Ali's company).<sup>35</sup> This witness also gave the names of a further five men, all Mauritanian Arabs, who had apparently sold slaves in Saudi Arabia.

In the end, Awad's formal accusations against Mohamed Ali led to naught. With the support of the trade union CGT, Awad managed to start a second legal procedure, apart from the criminal procedure launched by his statement with the Public Prosecutor in April 1954. In this civil lawsuit he claimed to have been sold by Mohamed Ali, and to have been in his service for thirteen years without pay. Hence, Awad claimed thirteen years of back pay plus a million Francs in damages for the hardships resulting from his sale in Saudi Arabia. A criminal investigation into the slave trade on the basis of his accusations would have caused great embarrassment to the colonial administration. A ruling in favour of his claims in the civil lawsuit would have wreaked havoc in the labour relations of French West Africa, a subject outside the scope of this paper.<sup>36</sup> It is not surprising, therefore, that the criminal investigation the legal system was required to start after Awad's stated accusations never got off the ground. As for the civil case: the colonial authorities managed to stall it for years. In the

---

<sup>33</sup> Lettre 14INT APA2 G.G. Dakar to G's Territoires de l'AOF A/S traffic d'esclaves 21 February 1953, and replies from G's Territoires Soudan Français, Senegal, Mauritanie, Benin, Niger.

<sup>34</sup> Cdt. Cercle Goundam à Gov. Soudan Français, Enquête judiciaire sur les faits de traite, 27 November 1955. Confidentiel 109/C. ACG.

<sup>35</sup> CADN Déclarations faites, par Djeddouould Bouh, ex-chef des Laghla, rentrant d'un séjour de 7 ans en Arabie Séoudite, à M. Mangin le 19 Mai 1954.

<sup>36</sup> See Baz Lecocq, 'Awad el Djouh and the Dynamics of Post-Slavery', *International Journal of African Historical Studies*, 48-2 (2015).

final ruling in May 1956, the judge declared all Awad's claims null and void, freeing Mohamed Ali of the accusations.

In final, he does not deliver proof of being sold as a slave abroad and the events he related, as well as the accompanying media and other campaigns surrounding them, do not justify this jurisdiction to attribute them the coherence necessary for a sound ruling.<sup>37</sup>

In despair, Awad wrote to the French President directly to ask what had happened to the criminal investigation, upon which it was suggested he be given a small job somewhere as a compensation for his misery, and in return for not pursuing the investigation.<sup>38</sup> Thus, at least according to the legal system, Awad had not been sold as a slave. But as I hope to have described above it is unclear whether he was or not, and this will always remain opaque. Following the governor's offer of a small job somewhere for his inconveniences (and no doubt to finally silence him) Awad disappeared from history.

### Circumstantial evidence

It must be said that Awad's case, described here in such detail, was surrounded by other cases on accusations of slave trade in the same period, for which I have found far less source material. Primary among those was the suspicion among colonial administrators in neighbouring Niger that the Tuareg Izawiten tribe, living around the village of Tahoua, were also practicing slave trade. There were also a few Mauritanian cases where individuals were suspected of selling people of slave origins in Mecca. Such was the case of Aicha mint Loufreda, a woman of slave origins who travelled with her Arab master to French Sudan, and who was abducted on the way by another Mauritanian Arab, who allegedly sold her in Mecca. The case became public when the master's son made formal accusations against the alleged abductor and seller. But the case remained unsolved.<sup>39</sup> However, proof was lacking and, as one colonial administrator observed, the difference between pilgrimage and migration by Tuareg of both freeborn and servile origins was very hard to discern. Many left, either in groups or as individuals in search of work and a better life elsewhere. What happened in

---

<sup>37</sup> Extrait des minutes du Tribunal du Travail de Gao, audience publique du 23 Mai 1956. Cercle Archives Goundam. See also: Hall, Bruce. *A History of Race in Muslim West Africa 1600-1960* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 296.

<sup>38</sup> CADN Letter no6867 Ministre de la France d'Outre Mer au Haut Commissaire de la République en AOF, 08 September 1957.

<sup>39</sup> CADN Commissaire de la ville de Gao à Commandant de Cercle Gao et Chef de Police du Soudan, Bamako, a/s trafic de femmes maures. 7 May 1955.

Saudi Arabia - where labour conditions could well be close to slavery without actual sales taking place - was hard to prove.<sup>40</sup>

These less well documented cases, which never made the headlines as Awad's case did, remain, like Awad's, unproven. But taken together they form cumulative evidence of a slave trade, underpinning Awad's accusations. Indeed, taken together, these documents seem to give solid proof of continued slave trade throughout the 1940s and 1950s. But taken individually and read carefully, I remain empty handed. Too many documents refer to other documents, and all return to one source: Awad. Only the aforementioned statement by Jeddou ould Bouh provides any corroborative independent evidence of slave trade from French Sudan to Saudi Arabia, but this source too is not beyond doubt. What makes things even more frustrating is that a number of people in northern Mali that I have spoken to over the years mentioned the slave trade to Mecca inter alia and alleged that it was true. According to one person I spoke to, Mohamed Ali had never even denied that he had sold *bellah* in Mecca, but that he had done so to give them a better life. Of another Tuareg chief mentioned in the archive sources as a possible slave trafficker, Marouchett ag Mossa, it was said in northern Mali that he had sold hundreds of *bellah* in Mecca. But in how far does the present-day circulation of stories, possibly based on the rumours circling in northern Mali in the 1950s (where many had access to the media telling Awad's story, and where many would have known Awad and all knew Mohamed Ali, as well as Marouchett) form conclusive evidence?

Can we conclude anything at all?

Sketching the story of Awad El Djouh, the icon of the continued existence of the slave trade in the mid-twentieth century, I have made one question central: can we conclude with certainty that a slave trade from French West Africa to Saudi Arabia existed in the 1950s as it was then so widely believed? I have presented the story through a detailed set of archive sources. It is no exaggeration to say that the Supplementary Convention on the Abolition of Slavery, the Slave Trade, and Institutions and Practices Similar to Slavery, signed by the United Nations in September 1956 was a reaction to Awad's words. Thus, here is the voice of one powerless subaltern, which, amplified by the hegemonic voices of press and politics, spoke much louder than the voice of those who were supposed to hold power locally.

---

<sup>40</sup> CADN Services de police du Niger à Directeur des Services de Sécurité de l'AOF Dakar, 29 October 1955.

The echoes of Awad's voice were not only amplified in the media, but also distorted and that is where we come to the second set of doubts. Awad's story, doubtful as it already was, was the sole 'proof' underscoring both a media story and a set of formal reports by La Gravière and by the British and Foreign Anti-Slavery Society, which claimed that Awad's case was not unique, but that 'in fact' (and here the term implies the implications these reports liked it to have) thousands of African were enslaved on a yearly basis in the middle of the twentieth century. These statements, made by men representing organisations with a serious voice in the international world, were then further corroborated by such publications as Doctoranda Greta Schenk's booklet and Jacques Alain's report described above. I hope I have already made clear that these publications were dubious.

Neither Pastor La Gravière's report of 1955, nor that of the British and Foreign Anti-Slavery Society of 1954, nor that of Father Tisserant in 1953 for that matter, let alone Jacques Alain's and Greta Schenk's doubtful writings, provide any evidence or proof of a continued slave trade. The accounts of continued slavery in the 1930s by Rutter and Kessel, which these reports used as sources, were themselves based on hearsay and historical accounts. Hence, events from the early 1900s were given a new lease of life every other decade. The colonial creation of an Africa without history, only an eternal present until the arrival of the Europeans, in a way backfired on the colonial endeavour. By denying any change in Africa, nineteenth-century practices of slave trade continued into the twentieth century in the minds of many, whether they actually did or not.

Awad el Djouh, photographed in Bamako at the house of his host family. Published in the Catholic Weekly *Afrique Nouvelle* 01 September 1954

## UN RESCAPÉ DE LA "ROUTE DES ESCLAVES NOIRS"



Voici (ci-contre) la photographie d'Awad El Djouh qui s'est évadé d'Arabie où il avait été vendu comme esclave et dont nous avons publié l'interview dans notre numéro 365. Il se repose actuellement de ses fatigues et de ses souffrances dans une famille de Bamako qui a bien voulu l'accueillir (ci-dessous). A la suite des articles parus dans « Afrique Nouvelle » sur « La route des Esclaves noirs », nous avons reçu plusieurs lettres :

— DE LA REGION DE MOPTI (Soudan), dont la population est musulmane : « Je suis heureux de vous dire combien vos articles sur « La route des esclaves noirs » ont eu un grand succès. Certains disent connaître des cas similaires... »

— DE MAURITANIE : « Vous semblez considérer l'exportation d'esclaves noirs comme un fait surprenant. Ici, en Mauritanie, l'esclavage persiste dans toute sa rigueur. L'Administration, sous couleur de respect des coutumes, maintient ce fléau. Les Elus, les Administrateurs, tous sont complices... »

— DE KAOLACK (Sénégal) : « Mes félicitations pour vos articles sur la « traite des Noirs » ; ils ont semé l'inquiétude, non seulement chez les chrétiens, mais aussi chez les musulmans. »



## Colonial Courts, Mosquitoes and other Nuisances in the Gold Coast (1888-1934)

*Dmitri van den Bersselaar*<sup>1</sup>

In November 1933, in Yao's compound near the port town of Keta in the southeast of what was then the British Gold Coast (current Ghana), an earthenware vessel filled with water was left outside without a cover. We do not know who in Yao's household failed to cover the pot, but we do know that it came to the attention of a police constable that the lid was missing. Soon thereafter, Yao found himself in the Keta District Commissioner's Court, faced with the charge that he 'did allow the presence on the aforesaid premises of reasonably preventable conditions favourable to the breeding of mosquito larvae.' He was found guilty and fined £1, which was a lot of money at the time, but not unusually high for the offence that he had been charged with. Yao was unable or unwilling to pay the fine, and soon found himself back in the District Commissioner's Court, where he was sentenced to one month imprisonment with hard labour in lieu of the fine.<sup>2</sup> Yao's experience was not unique: the Keta District Commissioner personally sentenced hundreds of people to fines or imprisonment with hard labour for what appeared to be minor offences such as

---

<sup>1</sup> I would like to thank Robert Ross for the many years of encouragement and inspiration without which none of my books or articles would have been written. I also thank Anne Beutter, Geert Castryck, Adam Jones, Richard Huzzey and Katja Werthmann, as well as the participants and organisers of the Robert Ross Valedictory Workshop on 17 and 18 September 2014 for their feedback on an earlier version of this chapter.

<sup>2</sup> Public Records and Archives Administration Department, Accra (PRAAD/A) ADM 41/4/55 Criminal Record Book Keta District 11 September 1933-27 December 1933.

quarrelling in a public space, drunkenness, urinating on the beach, or resisting smallpox vaccination. Moreover, this direct interference with the intimate lives of colonial subjects was not a quirk unique to this individual District Commissioner: thousands of such instances were recorded in the Keta District Criminal and Civil Record Books from the early 1880s until the late 1940s. Why did the Keta District Commissioners get involved in apparently minor matters and what does this reveal about the functioning of the Colonial State more generally?

Recent discussions of the everyday functioning of African colonial states have focused on the mediation of colonial rule by African clerks and chiefs, as well as on the local African meanings given to colonial objects and practices. This has greatly contributed to our understanding of how colonial societies were shaped through the interplay between colonisers and colonised, and between colonial discourse and practice. Many colonised subjects nevertheless experienced the colonial state as direct, intrusive, and harsh.<sup>3</sup> During the interwar years, European colonial officers throughout the continent still considered floggings an appropriate punishment for minor offences. Indeed, as late as 1943, 80 per cent of the juveniles and children brought before magistrates courts in Nigeria were caned before being either released or jailed.<sup>4</sup>

This chapter explores instances in the coastal town of Keta in the Gold Coast, where the state got involved in seemingly unimportant details of the everyday lives of its colonised subjects through the instruments of the local constabulary and the local District Commissioner's court. The main source set used is that of the local-level Keta District Court Records, available in the Ghana National Archive (PRAAD) in Accra.

My decision to look at the goings-on in the Keta District Commissioner's Court as a way to better understand the local Colonial State, follows from Robert Ross's insistence that conflicts are not exceptional, but the rule, and that if you want to understand a society in the past, looking at conflicts and tensions is a good place to start. Not only were local-level courts places where disputes were brought - perhaps not to be resolved, but at least in order to achieve some outcome - in the case of the Keta District (and in colonial Africa more generally), they were themselves disputed. The boundaries of competence between colonial courts and so-called 'native courts' were unclear in practice, and the rights of chiefs or colonial officers to judge certain categories of cases, or

---

<sup>3</sup> D. Killingray, 'The "Rod of Empire": The Debate over Corporal Punishment in the British African Colonial Forces, 1888-1946', *Journal of African History*, 35:2 (1994), 201-16.

<sup>4</sup> L. Fourchard, 'The Limits of Penal Reform: Punishing Children and Young Offenders in South Africa and Nigeria (1930s to 1960)', *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 37:3 (2011), 523.

specific disputes, were frequently challenged. Colonial officials insisted that they aimed to support African 'native' authorities, and allowed local African communities to develop along their own lines. In practice, however, District Officers interfered in the minutiae of the lives of their colonial subjects as a matter of course. What this tension reveals about the nature of the local Colonial State is the subject of this contribution. So while my research has covered rather different places and questions than that of Robert Ross, my approach has certainly been influenced by his perspective.

In the remainder of this chapter I will first locate my question in the broader debate about the nature of the Colonial State in Africa. Next, I will introduce the Keta District and the functioning of the District Officer's Court in relation to the other courts in the area. Following this, I will explore the various categories of seemingly minor offences that exercised the Keta District Officers. It turns out these fall into three categories: revenue, public order, and public health. Adopting Peter Baldwin's conceptualisation of states as 'lumpy', I conclude that, rather than that the Colonial State was *generally* oppressive, or *generally* weak, there were particular matters that the State regarded as important, and these were rigorously pursued.<sup>5</sup> Other areas - that might seem much more important to historians today to explain the societies and power structures that emerged following the colonial period - were of much less interest to the representatives of the Colonial State at the time, and there the State might have appeared relatively 'weak' or porous.

### The local state between African agency and colonial intrusion

The Keta District Commissioners operated in the context of a colonial ideology that claimed to leave the local administration and judiciary in the hands of traditional rulers: chiefs and elders who had been recognised by the colonial administration and who could count on the support of the state apparatus, as long as the authority and dignity of colonial administrators was upheld and taxes were paid regularly. Armed force backed up the traditional rulers.<sup>6</sup> In this way, actual colonial violence had been contracted out to African 'traditional' rulers and their agents, and thereby rendered largely invisible in the official record.<sup>7</sup> The recognised chiefs were allowed to hold 'Native Courts' where they dispensed justice according to traditional law, an activity that enhanced their

---

<sup>5</sup> P. Baldwin, 'Beyond Weak and Strong: Rethinking the State in Comparative Policy History', *The Journal of Policy History*, 17:1 (2005), 19.

<sup>6</sup> D. Killingray, 'The Maintenance of Law and Order in British Colonial Africa', *African Affairs*, 85:340 (1986), 414.

<sup>7</sup> M. Mamdani, *Citizen and Subject: Contemporary Africa and the Legacy of Late Colonialism* (Princeton, 1996), 107.



power and which was very profitable because of the court fees that they were allowed to charge. Meanwhile, the District Commissioners held their own courts, which - in theory - dealt with serious offences such as murders, matters involving Europeans, and cases that came to the District Commissioner as appeal cases from the native courts. It therefore appears to go against the logic of the colonial system for the Keta District Commissioners to have become involved in so many very minor cases.

An attempt to understand the logic of the Keta District Commissioners' actions can contribute to the ongoing scholarly debate about the nature and extent of the colonial system. After a period during which the Colonial State was seen as 'an omnipotent, all-conquering genius of exploitation,' more recent studies have emphasised the limitations of colonial power and the role of African agency.<sup>8</sup> Reflecting on his Ghanaian experience, Kwame Anthony Appiah observed that 'most of us who were raised during and for some time after the colonial era are sharply aware of the ways in which the colonizers were never as fully in control as our elders allowed them to appear.'<sup>9</sup> According to Paul Nugent, the Colonial State was aware of its limited coercive potential and lack of hegemonic power, and therefore acted pragmatically to create a semblance of power: 'the British authorities behaved more like the Great Oz than the custodians of some colonial pan-opticon.'<sup>10</sup>

Recent discussions of the everyday functioning of African colonial states have focused on the mediation of colonial rule by African clerks and chiefs, as well as on the local African meanings given to colonial objects and practices. Many studies have noted the manipulation by chiefs and elders of the processes through which colonial administrators collected the ethnographic knowledge on which they based their local-level administration. Thus, Peter Pels has shown how Chief Kingalu Mwanarubela stage-managed Provincial Commissioner Bagshawe's December 1929 ethnographic tour of Uluguru in Tanganyika. Kingalu cleverly manipulated the Luguru code of behaviour that discouraged disagreement in the presence of superiors, thus ensuring that the colonial representative only heard the interpretation of local custom that supported Kingalu's claim to power, while at the same time keeping his own political struggles hidden from the colonial government.<sup>11</sup> It was not only the existing African elites who shaped the colonial experience. In an example from French

<sup>8</sup> M. E. Ochonu, *Colonial Meltdown. Northern Nigeria in the Great Depression* (Athens, 2009), 1.

<sup>9</sup> K. A. Appiah, *In My Father's House: Africa in the Philosophy of Culture* (Oxford, 1993), 7.

<sup>10</sup> P. Nugent, *Smugglers, Secessionists and Loyal Citizens on the Ghana-Togo Frontier. The Lie of the Borderlands Since 1914* (Oxford, 2002), 78.

<sup>11</sup> P. Pels, 'The pidginization of Luguru Politics: Administrative Ethnography and the Paradoxes of Rule', *American Ethnologist*, 23:4 (1996), 738-61.

Guinea, Emily Lynn Osborn has shown how Boubou Penda, an interpreter of low social status, could orchestrate the installation and removal of powerful African rulers, while amassing considerable personal wealth. Osborn's quote of a high-ranking French colonial official, who wrote that administrators found themselves 'at the mercy' of their interpreters, suggests that Penda's case was not exceptional.<sup>12</sup> African agency is also essential in Nancy Rose Hunt's analysis of objects relating to the colonial-era process of medicalisation in Belgian Congo. Hunt shows how imported objects such as clysters and bicycles acquired new meanings that had not been intended by the colonial government or European medical practitioners. Many of these colonial objects were initially regarded and adopted by Congolese middle classes as luxuries, and subsequently acquired more ambivalent meanings relating to power, sexuality, and abjection.<sup>13</sup> Studies such as these have greatly contributed to our understanding of how colonial (and postcolonial) societies were shaped through the interplay between colonisers and colonised, and between colonial discourse and practice. The subsequent sections on the specific forms of colonial intrusion in the lives of colonised subjects in Ghana's Keta District largely confirm this interpretation. However, they also show that in certain policy areas there was much more space for ambivalence and negotiation than in others.

### The local state in the Keta District

The Keta District in colonial times was a largely rural district, close to the border with Togo. It had been named after the coastal town of Keta, which functioned as its main commercial centre. The District included the 300km<sup>2</sup> Keta Lagoon, used for fishing and transport; the port town of Keta, located between the lagoon and the sea; and the communities surrounding the lagoon, including Klikor (Agbosome), Anyako, Srogboe and - most importantly - the Anlo (Awuna) polity. It was different from most colonial districts because its administrative and commercial centre was a port town with a long history of contact with European traders. The town had a long, if patchy, history of colonial presence. Keta was first colonised by the Danes in the eighteenth century, but their presence declined over the first half of the nineteenth century. Keta was eventually transferred to the British in 1850. The British administration then withdrew from Keta in 1859, and returned in 1874 to claim jurisdiction over the

---

<sup>12</sup> E.L. Osborn, 'Interpreting Colonial Power in French Guinea. The Boubou Penda-Ernest Noirot Affair of 1905' in B.N. Lawrence, E.L. Osborn and R.L. Roberts, eds, *Intermediaries, Interpreters, and Clerks. African Employees in the Making of Colonial Africa* (Madison, 2006), 56.

<sup>13</sup> N.R. Hunt, 'Bicycles, Birth Certificates, and Clysters: Colonial Objects as Reproductive Debris in Mobutu's Zaire' in W.M.J. van Binsbergen and P.L. Geschiere, eds, *Commodification. Things, Agency, and Identities (The Social Life of Things Revisited)* (Münster, 2005), 124-41.

town and over the Anlo and Klikor/Some areas adjoining it.<sup>14</sup> The area was located at what became the border with German Togoland (later French Togo), and the difference in import duties between the colonies encouraged a great deal of smuggling in the District.<sup>15</sup>

The town of Keta had a diverse population, mainly made up of people who had settled there for the trading opportunities it offered, including Hausa traders from the north, people from the Accra and Cape Coast areas, and merchants and their employees from Sierra Leone and Europe. There were also many people who had come from the surrounding area. While many of the migrants were freeborn, there were also slaves and former slaves among them. Although there were chiefs in Keta, the most prominent of whom were allowed to hold a Native Court, the colonial administration did not really expect there to be a deeply embedded and generally accepted system of customary law in such a cosmopolitan place. Indeed, the position of the Keta chiefs themselves was unclear throughout the colonial period, and in 1904 the Acting District Commissioner observed that ‘they appear to regard each other as imposters as perhaps many of them are.’<sup>16</sup> One of the causes of conflict was the question of which chiefs were allowed to hear court cases, and which were not.<sup>17</sup>

The situation in the Anlo and Klikor/Some areas of the District appeared much more obviously ‘traditional’ to colonial observers, and the Fia of Anloga in particular headed a well-established polity. Yet here, too, there were lots of recent changes and tensions that challenged the legitimacy of many of the chiefs who held native courts.<sup>18</sup> By 1912 the British administration became so confused with the situation in the Keta District that they appointed a Commission of Inquiry to establish once and for all what were the various groups in the District, who were the legitimate chiefs, and what were the hierarchies between the various communities and their rulers. The Commission interviewed many chiefs and elders and others, and it is clear from the Notes of Evidence that, while the Commission was hoping to arrive at an understanding

---

<sup>14</sup> G. Nørregård, *Danish Settlements in West Africa 1658-1850* (Boston, 1966), 95; D.E.K. Amenumey, ‘The Extension of British Rule to Anlo (South-East Ghana), 1850-1890’, *Journal of African History* 9:1 (1968), 101-5.

<sup>15</sup> D. van den Bersselaar, ‘“Somebody Must Necessarily go to Bring this Drink”: Gin Smugglers, Chiefs and the State in Colonial Ghana’, *Cultural and Social History*, 11:2 (2014), 243-61.

<sup>16</sup> PRAAD/A ADM 11/1/1113 Keta Native Affairs: Report by W.F. Boger, Acting D.C. Kwitta, 31 March 1904.

<sup>17</sup> PRAAD/A ADM 11/1/597 Awuna Tribe – Report on Annual Meeting of (1915); ADM 11/1/1726 Record of Chiefs 1888-1924; ADM 41/4/33 Criminal Record Book Keta District 3 October 1907-8 November 1909; Rex vs. Ocloo, Kudolo, Kwamin, Ankue, Adjavo, Kabutu, Sapada, Doh, 19 June 1908.

<sup>18</sup> S.E. Greene, *Sacred Sites and the Colonial Encounter. A History of Meaning and Memory in Ghana* (Bloomington, 2002), 109-27.

of the *status quo*, those interviewed were at pains to discuss instead all the recent changes relating to internal conflicts and the establishment of colonial rule, often offering radically diverging and contradictory interpretations. When chiefs were asked about the nature of their traditional office, they frequently emphasised that they were the first persons with that role in their respective communities. For instance, Chief Gbenyo of Mlefi explained, 'first I was a Tronwa [shrine priest] but the Government made me a chief.'<sup>19</sup>

How the people in the District used the Native Courts was also frustratingly inconsistent and ignored colonial hierarchies, with chiefs hearing cases without the Government's permission to do so, or hearing cases relating to the subjects of other chiefs. Meanwhile, litigants frequently sought justice at chiefs' courts outside the Keta District or even across the colonial border, rather than to avail themselves of the courts of higher-ranked chiefs within the District. The Notes of Evidence also contain many references to the direct, hands-on and frequently violent nature of the District Commissioner's engagement with the affairs in the District: 'When the D.C. and the Soldiers came to kill they fired no gun. They simply set the town on fire.'<sup>20</sup>

### The Keta District Commissioner's Court

Martin Klein has observed that, 'Colonial Administrators could exert nearly absolute power, but only in very limited spaces.'<sup>21</sup> It appears that the Keta District Commissioner's Court was such a space. It dealt with a broad range of cases: criminal cases from across the District; civil cases between inhabitants of Keta and beyond, as well as between Europeans and Africans from across the District; and appeal cases from the Native Courts in the District. The District Commissioner's role as magistrate of his court was, of course, only one of the many roles he would perform, and one that was arguably in conflict with also being in charge of the local police force.<sup>22</sup> Furthermore, he would in all likelihood not have had any specialised legal training. This lack of professionalism is worth noting, considering the centrality to the colonial

---

<sup>19</sup> PRAAD/A ADM 11/1/1661 Notes of Evidence taken before a Commission of Inquiry held in the Quittah District by Francis Crowther Esquire, Secretary of Native Affairs & Commissioner appointed ... to inquire into the constitutions of the Division or Divisions included in the District of Quittah (1912), 103.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.* 46.

<sup>21</sup> M. Klein, 'African Participation in Colonial Rule. The Role of Clerks, Interpreters, and other Intermediaries' in B.N. Lawrence, E.L. Osborn and R.L. Roberts, eds, *Intermediaries, Interpreters, and Clerks. African Employees in the Making of Colonial Africa* (Madison, 2006), 274.

<sup>22</sup> Klein, 'African Participation', 275; Killingray, 'The Maintenance of Law and Order', 422.

project of the concept of the law.<sup>23</sup> The tension between the colonisers' self-image as bringers of law and justice to their colonised subjects on the one hand, and the limitations of colonial law in practice on the other, is noted by Maurice Amutabi, who characterised the court system in colonial Kenya as follows: 'the entire judicial department had an executive approach to its duties. It was guided more by the concern for the maintenance of order than for the administration of justice.'<sup>24</sup> The Keta District Commissioners took a similar approach. For instance, when in August 1908 Nelson Tamakloe, a Western educated inhabitant of Keta who had been advising many of the local chiefs, came to the District Commissioner's office and asked to see the Native Prisons Ordinance this was regarded as very suspicious behaviour, and Tamakloe immediately found himself under increased scrutiny. Chiefs who used his services were warned against him, and were accused of 'empowering Tamakloe to be doing things unlawfully.' The District Officer then decided that Tamakloe was not allowed to call himself 'Secretary for the Awuna Chiefs' as it was 'an insolent assumption of a title calculated and intended to mislead the Government.' In July the following year, Nelson Tamakloe was accused of attempted rape, and sentenced to three months imprisonment with hard labour.<sup>25</sup> Generalising from his experience in Ghana, Kwame Anthony Appiah observed: 'the colonial state established a legal system whose patent lack of correspondence with the value of the colonized threatened not those values but the colonial legal system.'<sup>26</sup> People in Keta certainly suspected that the outcomes of the proceedings in the District Commissioner's Court were determined more by knowing how to perform in court, than by an abstract notion of justice. Indeed, when John Doe Williams during a 1921 case was confronted with an earlier conviction, he responded: 'because I was inexperienced in the court proceedings I lost the case.'<sup>27</sup> However, this does not imply a clash between authentic local practice and a foreign colonial legal system, or a criticism of the colonial Court, but rather an awareness of the importance of what Derek Peterson has called 'the

---

<sup>23</sup> R.L. Robert and K. Mann, 'Law in Colonial Africa' in K. Mann and R.L. Roberts, eds, *Law in Colonial Africa* (Portsmouth, 1991), 3; B. Ibhawoh, 'Stronger than the Maxim Gun: Law, Human Rights and British Colonial Hegemony in Nigeria', *Africa*, 72:1 (2002), 55-83.

<sup>24</sup> M.N. Amutabi, 'Power and Influence of African Court Clerks and Translators in Colonial Kenya. The Case of Khwisero Native (African) Court, 1946-1956' in B.N. Lawrence, E.L. Osborn and R.L. Roberts, eds, *Intermediaries, Interpreters, and Clerks. African Employees in the Making of Colonial Africa* (Madison, 2006), 207.

<sup>25</sup> PRAAD/A ADM 41/1/1113 Keta Native Affairs 1886-1910 Letters 27 August 1908, 8 September 1908, 21 November 1908, 5 July 1909; ADM 11/1/597 Awuna Tribe - Report on Annual Meeting of (1915).

<sup>26</sup> Appiah, *In My Father's House*, 8.

<sup>27</sup> PRAAD/A ADM 41/4/11 Civil Record Book Keta District 15 July 1916-12 December 1924: John Doe Williams vs. Revd R.E. Peters, 24 June 1921.

theatrical work of agency': how colonial subjects imaginatively worked with the stereotypes defined in government bureaucracy to pursue their own objectives.<sup>28</sup>

People flocked to the District Commissioner's Court with their cases, whereby it should be noted that the Court was not only held at the District Office in Keta, but that it would travel around the District when the District Commissioner made his tours. Market women sued each other for defamation of character for being called a witch, a thief, a slave, or a harlot. In a 1917 court case, for instance, the District Officer established that one petty trader had called another petty trader a black 'daughter of slaves' with a black vagina, and so poor that 'when she wanted to come out to buy nuts she had no cloth to put on but had to borrow somebody else's'.<sup>29</sup> Other claimants sued for adultery, or demanded damages for being reported to the District Commissioner for smuggling. Many were the claims for damages for assault or for destruction of property. In 1894, a small group of Africans were awarded £5 damages from one of the Europeans working with the Bremen Mission, because the latter had pelted them with excrement when they passed the Bremen Mission's compound late one evening.<sup>30</sup> Other cases involved outstanding debts on loans, breach of contract, and failure to pay for services rendered. For example, in April 1920 Freshwater Jonah Teacup sued his employer for money owing for services rendered. The judgement went against him, as the defendant convinced the District Commissioner that Freshwater, who had been employed as a night watchman, had actually been fired for sleeping on the job.<sup>31</sup> In the same month the District Commissioner's court found against Fia Sri II, the most powerful chief of Anloga, as he had not paid for the musical instruments that he had ordered from Bruce Brothers (an African merchant);<sup>32</sup> and on 28 October 1931, T.K. Ntem claimed the sum of £50 from F.G. Aku as damages for having impregnated his daughter Charlotte but refusing to either marry her or pay for her subsistence, a matter that was eventually settled out of Court.<sup>33</sup> Clearly, in spite of the often oppressive uses to which the District Officer's Court was

---

<sup>28</sup> D. R. Peterson, 'Morality plays: marriage, Church courts, and colonial agency in Central Tanganyika, ca. 1876-1928', *American Historical Review*, 111:4 (2006), 984.

<sup>29</sup> PRAAD/A ADM 41/4/11 Civil Record Book Keta District 15 July 1916-12 December 1924: Apekewo vs. Armah, 20 March 1917.

<sup>30</sup> PRAAD/A ADM 41/4/4 Civil Record Book Keta District 2 August 1893-20 January 1896: J. C. Augustt and others vs. L. Lagaman, 2 January 1894.

<sup>31</sup> PRAAD/A ADM 41/4/11 Civil Record Book Keta District 15 July 1916-12 December 1924: Freshwater Jonah Teacup vs. Wm. Latham, 12 April 1920.

<sup>32</sup> PRAAD/A ADM 41/4/11 Civil Record Book Keta District 15 July 1916-12 December 1924: Bruce Brothers vs Hon. Fia Sri II of Awunaga, 15 April 1920.

<sup>33</sup> PRAAD/A ADM 41/4/14 Civil Record Book Keta District 30 July 1930-16 March 1932: T.K. Ntem vs. F.G. Aku, 28 October 1931.

put - as will be explored below - it did also provide an opportunity for people to either resolve their issues, or to continue their existing conflicts through another means.<sup>34</sup> One reason for the popularity of the Court might have been financial, as the chiefs' Native Courts charged considerable fees. Another may have been the possibility of manipulating the District Commissioner's understanding, as he was not as aware of the details of cases or of the relationships between individuals as the chiefs and elders were. Throughout the existence of the District Commissioner's Court, these civil cases continued to constitute a significant proportion of the Court's business.

These examples from the Keta District Commissioner's Court thus far largely support the literature on the importance of African agency, as chiefs manipulated the local administrative set-up, and many of the litigants in the District Commissioner's Court tried to use the colonial legal system to their advantage. However, the vast majority of cases in the District Commissioner's Court were criminal cases, and even a good number of the civil cases involved representatives of the Colonial State, such as the Comptroller of Customs in smuggling cases. While the criminal cases did include crimes such as stealing, slave dealing, rape, assault and murder, the vast majority of cases concerned what appear to be very minor infringements of the regulations of the Colonial State - crimes such as: not having a licence to sell alcohol or some other good; keeping smuggled goods; leaving a pot of water without a cover; or urinating on the beach. Of course here, as well, we will see that how this actually affected individuals was to some extent determined by African agency - by the actions or liberties taken by African agents of the Colonial State. It nevertheless does constitute a very direct involvement of the Colonial State in seemingly unimportant details of the everyday lives of its colonised subjects through the instruments of the local constabulary and the local District Commissioner's Court.

## Revenue

Three colonial projects were particularly intrusive: revenue (taxation), public order, and public health. That taxation is intrusive is not a unique feature of the Colonial State. In fact, in some ways taxation in the colonial Keta District was less intrusive than in other modern states, as the colonial administration understood that it would be impossible to implement a system of direct

---

<sup>34</sup> K. Mann, 'Interpreting Cases, Disentangling Disputes: Court Cases as a Source for Understanding Patron-Client Relationships in early Colonial Lagos' in T. Falola and C. Jennings, eds, *Sources and Methods in African History: Spoken, Written, Unearthed* (Rochester, 2003), 195-218.

taxation that charged a specific percentage of an individual's earnings. Attempts to raise direct taxes through the chiefs, while in line with the ideology of Indirect Rule and the policy of outsourcing colonial repression to the chiefs and elders, were also largely unsuccessful. An income tax did not come into effect until 1944, although its introduction had first been proposed in 1930.<sup>35</sup> Until the 1940s, therefore, colonial revenue depended on fixed charges, on taxes for specific activities, on fees for licences, and custom duties. The payment of some of these turned out to be hard to enforce. When in 1943 the administration was faced with a refusal to pay market tolls in a number of towns in the Keta District, the District Commissioner 'admitted with reluctance that he cannot see that any effective action can be taken.'<sup>36</sup>

Most of the government revenue was generated from the taxation of the import and export trade. Of particular importance was the duty on imported liquor: at the beginning of the twentieth century between 30 and 40 per cent of total government revenue derived from the taxation of liquor imports. This percentage declined following the First World War, but duties on imported liquor remained significant until well into the 1930s.<sup>37</sup> Keta was not only a port town, it was also close to the border with Togo. As a result, the town was a target for the collecting of such duties, as well as the centre of a well-established smuggling trade.<sup>38</sup> The collecting of the duties itself directly affected only the merchant firms involved in the import and export trade (and indirectly all those who purchased imported goods at prices that included the duty). The attempts to stop smuggling affected the population in the area more directly. The Customs Preventive Service patrolled the border to try and catch smugglers, with occasional success.<sup>39</sup> Even more intrusive was the system of 'coasting passes' which had been introduced to identify whether or not customs had been paid on goods. It was a requirement to carry a coasting pass that matched the goods being transported, not just on the border, but throughout the Keta District. A coasting pass showed the name, location and logo of the store from which goods had been purchased; it also stated the name of the buyer, a description of the goods and the date of purchase, and often the intended destination of the goods.<sup>40</sup> Before a bottle of gin or bag of tobacco could be

---

<sup>35</sup> S. Shaloff, 'The Income Tax, Indirect Rule, and the Depression: The Gold Coast Riots of 1931', *Cahiers d'Études Africaines*, 14:54 (1974), 359-75.

<sup>36</sup> PRAAD/A ADM39/1/550 Keta District Native Affairs: Confidential Memo D.C. Keta to C.E.P., 5 April 1943.

<sup>37</sup> E. Akyeampong, *Drink, Power, and Cultural Change. A Social History of Alcohol in Ghana, c. 1800 to Recent Times* (Portsmouth, 1996), 82.

<sup>38</sup> Van den Bersselaar, "'Somebody Must Necessarily go to Bring this Drink'", 243-61.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.* 252-4.

<sup>40</sup> Public Records and Archives Administration Department, Ho Branch (PRAAD/H) KE/C19 Frontier Incidents, examples of Coasting Passes, c. 1910.



carried out of the town where it had been purchased, the coasting pass had to be stamped by the District Commissioner. This requirement affected many people, as the majority of the inhabitants of the District were farmers or fishermen, living in villages and coming to the towns to sell and buy. An additional complication was that most people - including many officers of the Customs Preventive Service - were illiterate and thus unable to read what the passes stated. The absence of coasting passes for confiscated goods, or the apparent forgery of passes, proved to be important evidence in court cases against suspected smugglers and sellers of smuggled goods.<sup>41</sup> Even in cases where the District Commissioner was satisfied that an illiterate person had purchased uncustomed goods in good faith at the full price, unable to read what the piece of paper stated that was called a 'coasting pass', they were not allowed to keep the goods.<sup>42</sup> Coasting passes constituted a very direct bureaucratic interference by the Colonial State in the economic life of the population, an intrusion which was hard to avoid, even though coasting passes were frequently forged, manipulated or passed on to others to use.

The search for smuggled goods led to other intrusions in individuals' lives as well: when someone was suspected of owning smuggled goods, state officers would enter their homes -often in the middle of the night - and look in the bedrooms, inside the thatched roofs, and check the yards for any recently disturbed earth as a place where smuggled goods might have been buried. The Customs Preventive Service relied mainly on tip-offs, which were not always reliable, and thus many innocent persons were harassed. For the local population, to accuse a rival of having smuggled goods was an effective way to get that person arrested, especially when care was taken to hide some smuggled goods in the compound of the person before denouncing him or her to the Preventive Service. Other false tip-offs were extracted by Customs Preventive Service officers. At times, people held in custody and pressed for names of smugglers would end up mentioning an innocent person's name, just to be released. This gave rise to a number of further cases in the District Commissioner's Court in which alleged smugglers claimed damages for defamation of character from those who had reported them to the police.<sup>43</sup> Another intrusion was the licensing of canoes, which was an attempt to reduce

---

<sup>41</sup> PRAAD/A ADM 41/4/15 Civil Record Book 30 March 1932 - 30 December 1932: Comptroller of Customs vs. A. Beckley of Whute, 4 August 1932.

<sup>42</sup> PRAAD/A ADM 41/4/17 Civil Record Book Keta District 23 May 1934-29 December 1936: Comptroller of Customs vs. Lucy Gblenomade, 29 June 1934.

<sup>43</sup> PRAAD/A ADM 41/4/3 Civil Record Book Keta District 14 June 1890-26 July 1893: Magaley vs. Tettey, 5 January 1891.

their use by smugglers, yet affected the many fishermen in the Keta District.<sup>44</sup> A licence was also required to sell alcoholic spirits. A spirit licence would cost as much as £60 per year, though this was of course a requirement that only affected those selling legally imported spirits.<sup>45</sup>

Licences were not limited to liquor: they were required for a long list of things, including the keeping of a dog. On 8 October 1909 the District Commissioner tried 18 cases regarding people not having a licence for their dog - all were fined between 5/- and £1.<sup>46</sup> A licence was also required for the writing of letters for a reward, for the playing of the accordion, and for drumming. Of course, licensing was about more than simply revenue generation: licensing letter writers was an attempt to control the intermediaries that facilitated the communication between illiterate subjects and the state, as well as the spread of information among colonised subjects. Licensed letter writers not only prepared legal briefs to gain access to courts, and formal documents such as applications and financial forms, but also wrote personal correspondence, wills and testaments.<sup>47</sup> The British colonial authorities, moreover, were deeply suspicious of Western-educated Africans as potential troublemakers, and they often regarded letter writers, in particular, as profiteers of personal misfortune, charlatans and busybodies, whose activities needed to be closely scrutinised.<sup>48</sup> Similarly, the requirement of a licence for drumming was primarily a way to control the gathering of people - a measure of public order, therefore - rather than a revenue tool.

## Public order

For an administration that ostensibly was committed to leaving people to develop along their own traditional lines, the Colonial State was remarkably concerned about the public behaviour of its colonised subjects. A large number of criminal cases dealt with in the District Commissioner's Court concerned people accused of being drunk in a public place. The many cases of drunken behaviour show peculiar patterns: the accused are often claimed to have been found lying drunk in the road, or singing in the street, or being a public

---

<sup>44</sup> PRAAD/H KE/C27 Report from Collector of Customs Beckley (damaged, no date [1920s]).

<sup>45</sup> PRAAD/A CSO 21/18/19 Liquor Policy Questionnaire and Memo (n.d. [17 May 1933]).

<sup>46</sup> PRAAD/A ADM 41/4/33 Criminal Record Book Keta District 3 October 1907-8 November 1909.

<sup>47</sup> B.N. Lawrence, 'Petitioners, "Bush Lawyers" and Letter Writers. Court Access in British-Occupied Lomé, 1914-1920' in B.N. Lawrence, E.L. Osborn and R.L. Roberts, eds, *Intermediaries, Interpreters, and Clerks. African Employees in the Making of Colonial Africa* (Madison, 2006), 104.

<sup>48</sup> K.O. Akurang-Parry, "'A Smattering of Education" and Petitions as Sources: A Study of African Slaveholders' Responses to Abolition in the Gold Coast Colony, 1874-1875', *History in Africa*, 27 (2000), 56; Lawrence, 'Petitioners, "Bush Lawyers" and Letter Writers', 95.

nuisance. Yet, a very large percentage of these cases end up being dismissed. It seems that rather than there being many cases of people being drunk in a public place, it was a convenient accusation to make. In some cases, the tables were turned when the accused stated that it was actually the police who had been drunk while arresting them for alleged drunken behaviour. For instance, when one Cobla was in Court, accused of public drunkenness, he explained:

Yesterday I was returning from market and was carrying a calabash of okro in my hand. My waist cloth was coming loose so I went to the side of the road and placing the calabash in the ground I began to do it up, but the police arrested me. They were drunk at the time. I was not committing a nuisance.<sup>49</sup>

The District Commissioner dismissed the case, accepting that it had been the police officer who was drunk. When a person was convicted for drunkenness the fine was £1 or one month imprisonment, as was the case with Emmanuel Amanoo, who had been seen by two witnesses in an agitated and intoxicated state in a store in Keta.<sup>50</sup> Another evil that the local Colonial State acted against, was quarrelling: mainly women traders ended up in the District Commissioner's Court having been accused of quarrelling in a public place.

Each year up to the 1930s, a number of people were sentenced to ten days imprisonment for refusing to do work on the road when ordered by their chief to do so.<sup>51</sup> In separate cases the chiefs were also being fined up to £10 for failing to keep a stretch of road assigned to them in good condition; what they are being fined for here, of course, is their failure to coerce their subjects to do the work. Other chiefs and elders were fined for holding a Native Court while 'not being authorised by native law' to do so.<sup>52</sup> Meanwhile, V. De Souza and K. Peter were each sentenced to six strokes of whipping because they had thrown stones in a public place 'to wit: - cinematographic premises.'<sup>53</sup> Kwaku Acolatse was ordered to pay 4/- because he 'did propel furiously a certain vehicle to wit: - bicycle' in a public place.<sup>54</sup> Others were fined for riding a bicycle 'without a lighted lamp sufficient to warn persons.'<sup>55</sup> From the 1920s onwards there is an

---

<sup>49</sup> PRAAD/A ADM 41/4/23 Criminal Record Book Keta District 1890-1891: Reg. vs. Cobla, 19 February 1891.

<sup>50</sup> PRAAD/A ADM 41/4/33 Criminal Record Book Keta District 3 October 1907-8 November 1909: Reg. vs. Emmanuel Amanoo, 13 September 1909.

<sup>51</sup> PRAAD/A ADM 41/4/44 Criminal Record Book Keta District 11 February 1926-20 September 1927: I.G.P. vs. Kwashi Awudjo, Kwaku, Doe Tunn, and Dovi, 19 March 1926.

<sup>52</sup> PRAAD/A ADM 41/4/33 Criminal Record Book Keta District 3 October 1907-8 November 1909.

<sup>53</sup> PRAAD/A ADM 41/4/44 Criminal Record Book Keta District 11 February 1926-20 September 1927: I.G.P. vs. V. De Souza and K. Peter, 1 May 1926.

<sup>54</sup> PRAAD/A ADM 41/4/56 Criminal Record Book Keta District 3 March 1934-25 June 1934: I.G.P. vs. Kwaku Acolatse, 11 June 1934.

<sup>55</sup> PRAAD/A ADM 41/4/44 Criminal Record Book Keta District 11 February 1926-20 September 1927.

increasing number of motorised transport-related cases, including several instances of not stopping for a police officer, some of driving without a valid driver's licence, and many cases of overloading lorries with goods or passengers.<sup>56</sup>

## Nuisances

Public health was a key area of very direct intervention by the Colonial State. Cases that related to matters of public health were among the most intrusive and - to the population - most baffling in the District Commissioner's Court. There were many such cases. The comparatively least-intrusive set of public health cases was the broad category of 'nuisances'. This included offences such as: defecating on the beach (excrement nuisance); urinating on open space; failing 'to sweep and clean away all rubbish from the space used by you thereby leaving your space in an insanitary condition' (market nuisance); selling unwholesome meat; and literally hundreds and hundreds of cases of littering (to 'place or permit to be placed certain offensive matters to wit: - accumulation of rubbish, tins, bottles, broken pots and old lantern in yards, on land, and in front of premises such places not being set apart by the D.C. or H.O. for that purpose').<sup>57</sup> Such nuisances were a concern for the local administration from the very beginning of colonial rule. Nuisance cases are already well represented in Keta District's first Criminal Record Book, started in 1882, and continue to be so right up until the last available Criminal Record Book covering 1947. The cases would be brought by police officers or by the District's dedicated Inspector of Nuisances.<sup>58</sup> Fines would range from 2/- to £1, and although these fines seem relatively low, they were quite high in terms of the local economy, and many of those fined were unable to pay them and ended up imprisoned.

It may be worth speculating why nuisances were so predominant in the colonial record. Part of the explanation must be that these were such straightforward cases, involving only one side: those who broke the law. The actual actions were straightforward too: urinating on the beach and littering, to name some obvious examples, were not very elaborate or secretive. As the acts must have been witnessed, they were fairly easy to prove in the District Commissioner's Court. From the perspective of the coloniser nuisances were an obvious tool for illustrating local colonial power because of their straightforward nature and the relatively low fines attached to them. The same features also made them attractive to the local officers of the Colonial State: the

---

<sup>56</sup> PRAAD/A ADM 41/4/56 Criminal Record Book Keta District 3 March 1934-25 June 1934.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid.

<sup>58</sup> PRAAD/A ADM 11/1/1113 Keta Native Affairs, D.C. Keta to Colonial Secretary, 27 January 1900.

African constables (often recruited from outside the local area). It turned out that nuisance accusations - both ones actually witnessed and ones merely claimed to have taken place - were a good source of bribes. As the fines were relatively low, accepting a little less to keep the case out of the District Commissioner's Court was an acceptable deal for both parties involved. And if the accused refused to cooperate, then it could always become a Court case, where the word of the Constable could be expected to carry more weight than that of the accused. As the District Commissioner observed in one such case when the accused claimed not guilty: 'It is a question of one man's word not on oath and unsupported against the evidence of three witnesses on oath. I prefer to believe the latter.'<sup>59</sup> That bribes for such cases were very common can also be seen from the following example of a nuisance case, in which the police officer gave evidence as follows:

Yesterday I was on duty in the market & I saw the female prisoner commit a nuisance. I went after her and when I caught her she offered me this sixpence to release her. I took the sixpence but at the same time I refused to release her. She did not actually speak anything, but by her expression I understood her to be offering a bribe.<sup>60</sup>

This case was dismissed. The remaining impression of the situation in the District is one of low-ranking officers in the Colonial State roaming the roads, beaches and markets on the look-out for people committing nuisances to apprehend and perhaps extract bribes from.

## Mosquitoes

Nuisance cases were a nuisance for colonised subjects, but mosquitoes brought a whole other set of possibilities for ending up in the District Commissioner's Court: in the less than four months between 3 March and 25 June 1934, 106 people were fined or imprisoned for 'breeding mosquitoes.'<sup>61</sup> The colonial administration's obsession with mosquitoes was of course linked to malaria. The disease was widespread in coastal West Africa and particularly in the nineteenth century contributed to the very bad reputation of the area among European colonialists. In the 1880s and 1890s it was responsible for a very high annual death rate among European officials of 75.8 per thousand, as well as for high infant mortality rates among the African population. The prevalence of malaria

---

<sup>59</sup> PRAAD/A ADM 41/4/55 Criminal Record Book Keta District 11 September 1933 - 27 December 1933: I.G.P. vs. Ahiasugba, 1 December 1933.

<sup>60</sup> PRAAD/A ADM 41/4/24 Criminal Record Book Keta District 1891-92: Reg. vs. B. Djappasoo and Hudzeukor, 8 April 1891.

<sup>61</sup> PRAAD/A ADM 41/4/56 Criminal Record Book Keta District 3 March 1934-25 June 1934.

threatened the efficacy and continuation of colonial rule, but the treatment and prevention were hampered by ignorance of what caused malaria until 1898.<sup>62</sup>

That the disease was transmitted by mosquitoes was discovered during 1897-98 by Ronald Ross, then a young surgeon in the Indian Medical Service but soon thereafter a lecturer at the Liverpool School of Tropical Medicine, which opened in 1899. Within months of his appointment to the faculty at Liverpool, Ross was advocating field expeditions to West Africa to study the breeding habits of the malaria mosquito and to develop practical methods to destroy mosquito breeding grounds.<sup>63</sup> Already in 1902 the Gold Coast government adopted the first measures aimed at the eradication of malaria mosquitoes, and in 1905 circulars were sent to District Commissioners and Sanitary Officers, which specified that: all loose bottles, tins, shells, or other household receptacles were to be collected and destroyed as they were mosquito breeding places; all water storage tanks were to be screened; bush was to be cleared where stagnant water was likely to be concealed; and District Commissioners were to recruit teams for spreading larvacides.<sup>64</sup> These measures were well implemented in the Keta District. Especially in the town of Keta itself, police and sanitary officers were on the look-out for receptacles in which mosquito larvae could breed, that had been left outside by the local population. By 1908, the District Commissioner's Court fined large numbers of people for this offence, and continued to do so throughout the period until 1947 (the final year for which a District Criminal Record Book is available) and probably longer, without resulting in a noticeable success in malaria eradication in the area.

The reason for the enthusiastic focus on this aspect of malaria eradication had probably less to do with the local officers of the Colonial State's concern for public health, but rather - as with the nuisances mentioned above - with the relatively straightforward detection of offenders, and the opportunities for extracting bribes from those accused. The typical fines for 'leaving pots filled with water outside that allowed mosquito larvae to breed' were between 5/- and £1.<sup>65</sup> The lack of success and the extent of the prosecution of ordinary individuals undermined the credibility of the mosquito eradication measures. What was the point of people being fined - and when they were unable to pay, sending them to prison - for leaving a pot or drum without a cover, when the prevalence of malaria remained at the same level? It did not help, of course that the natural environment in the area offered exactly the right conditions for

---

<sup>62</sup> R.E. Dumett, 'The Campaign against Malaria and the Expansion of Scientific Medical and Sanitary Services in British West Africa, 1898-1910', *African Historical Studies*, 1:2 (1968), 155-7.

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.* 164.

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.* 169.

<sup>65</sup> PRAAD/A ADM 41/4/44 Criminal Record Book Keta District 11 February 1926-20 September 1927.

mosquito larvae to breed in abundance. A large scale filling-in and altering of the water management of lagoons and streams would theoretically have been possible, but the Gold Coast Government could not afford such expense.<sup>66</sup> In view of this, in 1933, some of the chiefs wrote to highlight the unreasonableness of the colonial anti-malaria policies:

I beg to add that the Chiefs of the Ga State should write to the Government to stop troubling us about the mosquito [sic] larva and the exorbitant [sic] fines the statutory authorities impose on us. We are credited by God to bring forth as well as birds, flies and all moving creatures; and therefore I see no reasons why we should be troubled when they are doing what the Almighty bids them to do. If there is any prevention to be made then I refer the Government to the Volta River District. I beg to remind the Government that the rivers and lagoons are there still, and the rain is still falling and therefore I beg that this punishment should be put away.<sup>67</sup>

The point of their complaint was not that they did not believe that mosquitoes transmitted diseases. In fact, the use of mosquito nets had started to become fairly common among the African population by the 1930s.<sup>68</sup> It was rather the disproportionate hassle caused by a clearly ineffective policy, that the population objected to.

## Vaccinations

Unlike the policies to combat malaria, the measures against smallpox were eventually successful, but this was not yet visible during the colonial period as the highly effective WHO Smallpox Eradication Programme only started in 1959, after independence.<sup>69</sup> The colonial administration had started smallpox vaccinations in 1900, in response to a particularly severe epidemic. These attempts were largely unsuccessful due to a lack of vaccinators, reluctance among the population, and poor quality vaccines that were 'largely inert'. Although the 1920s vaccination campaign in Accra was said to have been reasonably successful, infection levels remained high elsewhere in the Gold Coast, including the Keta District.<sup>70</sup> Nevertheless, the measures against smallpox that were taken during the colonial period were even more intrusive than those

---

<sup>66</sup> Compare: J. Roberts, 'Korle and the Mosquito: Histories and Memories of the Anti-Malaria Campaign in Accra, 1942-5', *Journal of African History*, 51:3 (2010), 343-65.

<sup>67</sup> PRAAD/A CSO 21/18/18 Teshi Mantse to Secretary, Ga State Council, 30 June 1933.

<sup>68</sup> PRAAD/A ADM 41/4/15 Civil Record Book Keta District 30 March 1932-30 December 1932: Rachael K. Sakume vs. J.B. Macaulay, 17 April 1932.

<sup>69</sup> M. Malowany, 'Unfinished Agendas: Writing the History of Medicine of Sub-Saharan Africa', *African Affairs*, 99:395 (2000), 325-49.

<sup>70</sup> K.D. Patterson, *Health in Colonial Ghana: Disease, Medicine, and Socio-Economic Change, 1900-1955* (Waltham, 1981), 69-71.

against malaria - and, at times, violently resisted. The campaign against smallpox involved the vaccination of as many Africans - potential 'reservoirs of infection' - as possible.<sup>71</sup> This aim was supported with financial incentives offered to the chiefs for each of their subjects who was vaccinated, and a pamphlet titled *Vaccination or Smallpox*, distributed through chiefs and schools, which 'explained the procedure and had grisly photographs to show what happened to those who evaded the needle.'<sup>72</sup> Vaccination involved a very direct intervention on the body of colonial subjects who often feared the consequences of such intervention. The suspicion might have been related to uncertainty about the intentions of the Medical Officers doing the vaccinating, or perhaps also informed by an awareness of an older, indigenous practice of smallpox inoculation that was not without risk as it involved the transfer of infective pus from the sores of a victim to a healthy person, and which was still continuing at the time.<sup>73</sup>

As a result, compulsory vaccinations against smallpox created particularly strong tensions. In May 1912, when the Medical Officer went to Klikor (Agbosome) to vaccinate, he was confronted with a riot, was threatened by one of the shrine priests, and was driven out of the town, having been unable to vaccinate the population. The next day the Keta District Commissioner and a police force went to Klikor and burnt down the priest's shrine and a number of houses in retaliation. In addition to aiding the vaccination programme, according to the Registrar of the District Commissioner's Court, Mr Ashiabor, 'the destruction of the fetish house will be beneficial to the district as it is notoriously a criminal fetish.'<sup>74</sup>

In addition to such expeditions, vaccination teams would patrol public places such as markets and demand that people show evidence of having been vaccinated, by showing the mark that a vaccination would have left on their upper arm. Those who had not yet been treated would then be injected. It is not surprising that many people disliked such very direct intrusion. Attempts to run away from the vaccination teams were common, and those who failed to escape often physically resisted vaccination. The teams were prepared for such responses, and included police officers, as well as sanitary labourers. For instance, when Kporha Akolor was asked to produce evidence of vaccination, having been stopped in the Keta market in April 1934, he first attempted to escape to his canoe on the lagoon. Once caught, a sanitary labourer tried to examine him, upon which Akolor allegedly threatened that anyone who asked

---

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid.* 334.

<sup>72</sup> Patterson, *Health in Colonial Ghana*, 71.

<sup>73</sup> E.W. Herbert, 'Smallpox Inoculation in Africa', *Journal of African History*, 16:4 (1975), 539-59.

<sup>74</sup> PRAAD/H KE/C 21 Fetish Customs: Report Public Inquiry into Fires at Klikor on the 14 May 1912.



him about vaccination would die with him and pulled out a knife. He was arrested and fined 10/- or ten days in prison.<sup>75</sup>

## Conclusion

There is no reason to suspect that the Keta District is an exceptional case. While the main town of Keta had a longer history of trade with Europeans and colonial rule than most African towns, and even the Colonial State had its doubts about the existence of a deeply-embedded system of customary law, the large rural district surrounding it had many features in common with rural districts elsewhere in colonial Africa. As one would expect from the existing literature on the Colonial State, the actions in and around the Keta District Commissioner's Court for the period from the 1880s to the 1940s show a significant amount of African agency as well as the mediation of the Colonial State through local, African representatives. However, there is also evidence of a great deal of very direct involvement of local officers of the Colonial State with often minute details of the lives of individuals. One way to resolve this apparent contradiction would be to think of ranking administrations on a range from the 'Bula Matari State' on the one extreme, to the 'Weak State' on the other, whereby the Colonial State as experienced in the Keta District would sit somewhere in the middle.<sup>76</sup> What such a 'middle way' interpretation would obscure, however, is the extent to which it was the Colonial State itself that decided, within the context of its limited resources, which areas of rule it would 'outsource' to local African intermediaries, and which aspects it considered so important that it would tightly control relevant policy and implementation - even to the extent that it was willing to risk conflict with those who were acting as their intermediaries for other areas of rule. To observe that colonial states were 'lumpy', does not imply that there is nothing left to compare between different states and colonisers' strategies: various colonial states were 'hard' and 'soft' in different places, relating to different issues, as they set distinct policy priorities, decided on contrasting strategies to achieve those, and engaged with civil society in diverse ways.<sup>77</sup>

In the British Gold Coast, revenue and public health policies, in particular, were not left to the discretion of local chiefs or even local District

---

<sup>75</sup> PRAAD/A ADM 41/4/56 Criminal Record Book Keta District 3 March 1934 - 25 June 1934: I.G.P. vs. Kporha Akolor, 10 April 1934.

<sup>76</sup> C. Young, *The African Colonial State in Comparative Perspective* (New Haven, 1997); Ochonu, *Colonial Meltdown*; Mamdani, *Citizen and Subject*.

<sup>77</sup> Baldwin, 'Beyond Weak and Strong', 12-33.

Commissioners. Rather, policies were devised centrally, and implemented through the District Commissioners, the Medical Service, the Police, and the Customs Preventive Service. While the African local agents of the State, including police constables and sanitary labourers, exercised some individual agency in deciding who to accuse of an offence (and who to solicit bribes from), the definitions of the rules, to whom they applied, and what would be the consequences of breaking them, were not up for negotiation. As a result, the population in the Keta District experienced continual harassment by local agents from the State.

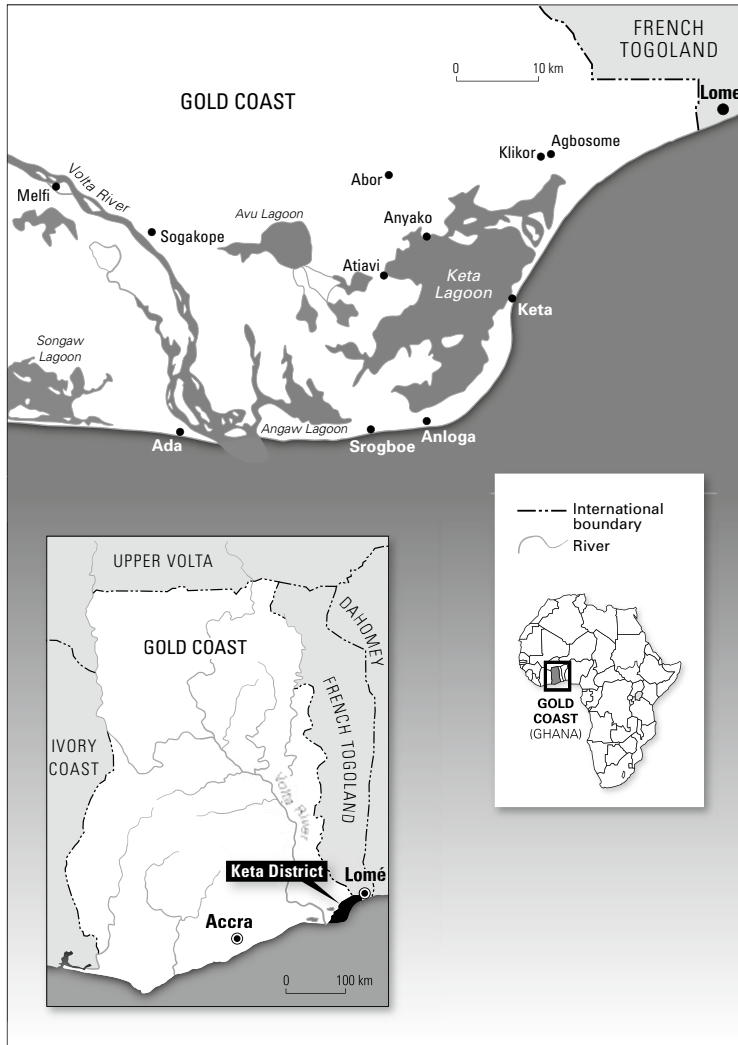
In a 1927 petition, the Fia and chiefs of Anlo complained to the Governor of the Gold Coast about the harassment that their subjects experienced. They pointed out that those accused were not given a fair opportunity to defend themselves, and that it had become possible 'to prosecute any innocent person at any time,' which had led, they claimed, to people moving out of the area.<sup>78</sup> This latter claim is not unusual, and cases of African colonial subjects relocating to escape taxation, military harassment, or labour recruitment, are well documented in the literature. If, as Akhil Gupta suggests, the translocal State is imagined through the interaction with the local state, then, to the inhabitants of the Keta District, the Colonial State must have been a nuisance.<sup>79</sup>

---

<sup>78</sup> PRAAD/H KE/C27 Petition from Togbi Sri II Awoame Fia of Anlo, 28 May 1927.

<sup>79</sup> A. Gupta, *Red Tape. Bureaucracy, Structural Violence, and Poverty in India* (Durham, 2012), 62.

Keta District, Gold Coast (Modern Ghana)



# Domesticating the Imperial Railroads: Perception and Appropriation of the Railroads in Early Colonial Northern Nigeria

*Shehu Tijjani Yusuf*

## Introduction

The imposition of British colonial rule in Northern Nigeria in the first decade of the twentieth century was accompanied by a series of developments, one of which was the construction of railway infrastructure in order to 'open up' the territory to the modernizing influence of European civilization. Central to this imperial ambition was the quest for cotton to feed British industries and also to provide the critical link Northern Nigeria needed to break away from its total dependency on Southern Nigeria. The construction of the line commenced from Baro on the Niger in 1908 and was completed at Kano in 1911. The completion of this line had enormous consequences on the social, economic and political as well as the cultural landscapes of the region.

The impact of the railroads and how Nigerians apprehended it has received a fair amount of attention in the literature. Despite the sustained attention, it is taken for granted that Nigerians appropriated the new transport almost immediately.<sup>1</sup> What is rarely mentioned in the narratives is that, in fact,

---

<sup>1</sup> N.T. Tamuno, Genesis of the Nigerian Railway II, *Nigerian Magazine*, 84 (1965), 31-43; N.T. Tamuno Genesis of the Nigerian Railway I, *Nigerian Magazine*, 83 (1963), 279-292; W. Oyemakinde, Railway Construction and Operation in Nigeria, 1895-1911: Labour Problems and Socio-Economic Impact",

appropriation of the new transport was not sudden. The narratives also overlook the initiative that resulted in a new concept of travelling that shaped people's everyday life. This gap in the literature is partly due to the materials available to the writers at the time they wrote, and also because they did not conceive the railway as technology, 'if they [...] [do], they conceptualize it as hardware, the development of which was a purely economic phenomenon, and ignored its wider semiotic qualities'.<sup>2</sup> This popular view needs to be reconsidered in the light of new evidence, because Nigerians encountered Western technologies, most especially the railways with mixed reactions. Using innovative sources such as travel accounts, songs and poems, in addition to the traditional historical sources, this paper demonstrates that the encounters of Northern Nigerian inhabitants with the locomotive were marked by mixed reactions of fear (*tsoro*) and wonder (*mamaki*), due to unfamiliarity. As soon as they became familiar with it, they appropriated and integrated it into their daily lives, to transform their living conditions.

The chapter is divided into three parts, the first looks at the perception and reactions to the locomotive and how the colonial authority familiarized northerners to it. The second looks at how the people apprehended and domesticated the train into their daily lives. The last part looks at the different uses to which it was put and its consequences.

This piece is a chapter<sup>3</sup> from my doctoral dissertation titled 'The Socio-Economic Impact of the Railway in Northern Nigeria: A Study in Transformation of the Rural Communities along the Rail line between Kano and Zaria, 1908-1970s', supervised by Prof Robert Ross. The dissertation benefited immensely from his guidance, especially in the way he critiqued my ideas and helped me to untangle it and also forced me to defend it.

## Perception of the railroads

### *Fear, Apprehension and the Locomotives*

Since the 1960s, when scholars began to study the history of the Nigerian Railways, much ink has been spilled on the experience of railway development in Nigeria. Such scholars who have commented on the topic often claimed that Nigerians appropriated the railroads infrastructures immediately on completion.

---

*Journal of Historical Society of Nigeria*, VII/2 (1974), 303-324; O. Oshin, 'Railway and Urbanization' in T. Falola & S.J. Salm, eds, *Nigerian Cities*, (Trenton-NJ, 2004), 101-126.

<sup>2</sup> C. Divall & G. Revill, 'Culture, Representation and Technology', *Journal of Transport History*, 3<sup>rd</sup> Series, 26:1 (2005), 104

<sup>3</sup> This is the focus in chapter three of my dissertation.

This classical view, so accepted and popularized by many writers is not only misleading but incorrect. Contrary to this well established claim, new evidence indicates that many Nigerians did not understand what they were, much less of appropriating them. For many northerners and Nigerians elsewhere, the ambivalence towards the locomotive and the train were marked by both fear and apprehension. This was a time when the Northern Provinces, according to the Europeans, were 'unexplored' and unfamiliar with Western technology and its workings. The new transport infrastructure had been constructed to put an end to this isolation and underdevelopment. The physical arrival of the locomotive made a strong impression - as it provoked mixed reactions of fear and apprehension as well as wonder - much more than writers had previously recognized.<sup>4</sup>

To understand why the new transport mode provoked mixed reactions, it is necessary to think of it as a 'colonial technological sublime'. The sublime is a mixed reaction of fear, apprehension and anxiety as well as awe, which the human mind experiences when faced with grand, man-made objects that it cannot comprehend.<sup>5</sup> Under colonial rule, the sublime was produced through infrastructural development, such as building of roads, railways and viaducts, bridges and locomotives as well as trains.<sup>6</sup> The movement of the locomotive, speed and sound and its use of motive power were some of the ways the sublime was produced as a spectacle of colonialism. The sublime works only when compared with other things. The goal was to indicate a sense of power and instill total submission.<sup>7</sup>

The tale of how northerners perceived and reacted to the locomotive and the train is well remembered in Northern Nigeria. When I asked elderly people what they remembered about how people encountered the locomotive and the train, their response was that the encounter was marked by fear and apprehension (*tsoro*). Some informants pointed out that the movement and speed of the train shook their houses to its very foundation, as they were not accustomed to such an experience.<sup>8</sup> In a society that was undergoing major transformation by steam technology, the sound and speed of the locomotive and the built structure of the train were novel experiences that the mind was not accustomed to. Of course, reactions would differ depending on an individual's understanding;

---

<sup>4</sup> S.T. Yusuf (2015), *The Socio-Economic Impact of the Railway in Northern Nigeria: A Study in Transformation of the Rural Communities along the Rail line between Kano and Zaria, 1908-1970s*, (PhD Thesis, University of Leiden), 61-81.

<sup>5</sup> D. Nye (1999), *The American Technological Sublime*, (USA: MIT), 3, 6; B. Larkin (2008), *Signal and Noise: Media Infrastructure, and Urban Culture in Nigeria*, (Durham, 1999), 15-40.

<sup>6</sup> Larkin, *Signal and Noise*, 15-40

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>8</sup> Interviews with Hamza Zawachiki & Ibrahim Alhassan, 19 May 2012.

indeed, some informants pointed out that some people ran into the wood as the locomotive approached.<sup>9</sup> Even animals scampered at the approach of the iron demon.<sup>10</sup> The psychologist<sup>11</sup> has argued that when the human body is terrified it responds in different ways, one of which is 'fight or flight'.

However, the evidence indicates that not everybody ran when they encountered the locomotive. Some stayed and preferred not to have anything to do with it. An annual report indicates that, the 'mighty and the powerful' were also terrified. When invited to take a train ride by the Resident, during the opening of the Ilorin section of the railway in 1908, the Emir of Ilorin declined the offer as he too was terrified.<sup>12</sup> The historian A.O. Anjorin<sup>13</sup> captured this reaction, stating that it took some time before the northerners:

began to make use of the new transport [...] due to the natural human suspicion against innovations, especially drastic ones, and their conservative attachment to long established means of travelling but mainly because the vast majority [...] were either unwilling or could not afford to pay the transport charges.

Anjorin was right on track in terms of the reactions, but he misses the point when he mentions attachment to older modes of transport and the inability to pay the fare, as part of the reasons why northerners refused to use the system. The refusal was neither because of the fare, nor because of attachment to the old modes of transport. Instead, it was out of fear of the locomotive. Brian Larkin<sup>14</sup> has pointed out that such reactions are a common response to new technology. For some, however, the locomotive was nothing but magic in the hands of the colonial authority. A colonial official, Major A.J.N. Tremearne<sup>15</sup> noted that the locomotive was the 'great juju in Northern Nigeria.' In other words, it was the white man's magic. Michael Adas has argued that Africans always resort to superstition to explain any situation that they do not understand.<sup>16</sup> No technology excites as much reaction as the locomotive. Even in Europe and the Americas, where the locomotive originated, its arrival was

---

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>10</sup> Zawachiki & Alhassan *ibid*; interview with Ali Zubairu, 19 May 2012.

<sup>11</sup> Lisa Fritscher (2011), "The Psychology of Fear: Understanding the Dynamic of Fear Response". Available at: About.Com Phobia, [accessed on 6 December 2012]. <http://phobias.about.com/od/introductiontophobias/a/psychologyfear.htm>

<sup>12</sup> Northern Nigerian Report for 1908.

<sup>13</sup> A.O. Anjorin, "Cotton Industry in Northern Nigeria during the Colonial Era" in I.A. Akinjogbin & S. Osoba, eds, *Topics on Nigerian Economic and Social History*, (Ile-Ife: University of Ife Press, 1980).

<sup>14</sup> Larkin, *Signal and Noise*.

<sup>15</sup> A.J.N. Tremearne, *The Tailed Head Hunter of Nigeria: An Account of an Official Seven Years Experiences in Northern Nigeria Pagan Belt and a Description of the Manners Habits and Customs of the Native Tribes*, (London, 1912).

<sup>16</sup> M. Adas (1968), *Machines as the Measure of Men, Science, Technology, and Ideologies of Western Dominance*, (Ithaca, 2008).

sometimes met with fear and apprehension.<sup>17</sup> As the evidence indicates, fear and awe and, in some cases, tragedy,<sup>18</sup> marked African reactions to Western technologies such as railways, motor cars, airplanes, electricity and even telescopes and cinema.<sup>19</sup>

### Marvel, wonder, awe and the locomotive

While some reacted to the locomotive with a sense of fear and apprehension, others marveled and wondered (*mamaki*). European travellers took their time to record African reactions to the locomotive. For instance, a member of the British Parliament, W. Ormsby-Gore<sup>20</sup>, who was on a tour of West Africa in the 1920s, wrote that; “[t]o the African[s] the steam engine is not so much a foreign devil as a new and wonderful toy.” The fantastic tales of how the northerners marvelled at the locomotive have been documented in travel accounts of Europeans. John Raphael<sup>21</sup>, a British journalist and editor of *African World*, who toured Nigeria in 1911, when steam power was still novel, wrote that:

[f]or the first few months or so that the weekly trains were running to Kano, natives from the city and the surrounding villages displayed curiosity concerning the locomotive to the degree of assembling in crowds on the track [...] to gaze again and again at the engine. Quite polite and giving no trouble to the officials, they [...] examine it from every point of view, some lying on the ground to look underneath the phenomenon thing.

---

<sup>17</sup> Adas, *Machines as the Measure of Men*, 223.

<sup>18</sup> Innocent Uzoechi (1985) points out that during the construction of the Eastern Railway, an Igbo chief protested against the line passing through his village for fear that it would take away their women. Since he could not stop the work, however, he promised to stop the train on the day it would pass. Mark Onyekwere (2011) provides a tragic account of what happened that day: the chief stood on the track warning the driver to stop. As the train pushed forward, the driver blared his horn, warning the chief to get off the track. Despite appeals from his subjects, he remained on the track. The train did not stop, however, it drove over him and his flesh was recovered from the track. The chief thought the driver would respect him, because he was a chief; but, unbeknownst to him, the train is no respecter of persons or status, and it has no destination other than the station. The chief's apprehension stemmed from his fear of the unknown, in this case steam power. The train, as the narrative suggests, would undermine male control over women and break down traditional control over women.

<sup>19</sup> W.G. Kwi, *Kfaang and Technologies: Towards a social History of Mobility in Kom Cameroon, 1928-1989*, (Leiden, 2011); J. Cary, *Mister Johnson*, (New York, 1939); B. Larkin (2008), *Signal and Noise*, 40-4; M. Adas, *Machines as the Measure of Men*; K.P. Vickery, *Railways, Railway Culture, and Industrial Work Discipline in the Rhodesia* in R. Ross, M. Hinfelaar & I. Pesa, eds, *The Object of Life in Central Africa: History of Consumption and Social Change 1840-1980*, (Leiden, 2013); I.F.A. Uzoechi (1985), *The Social and Political Impact of the Eastern Nigerian Railway on the Udi Division 1913-1945*, (PhD Dissertation, Kent University); M.U. Onyekwere, *Igbo Idioms*, (London, 2011).

<sup>20</sup> W. Ormsby-Gore, *The Economic Development of Tropical Africa and its Effects on the Native Population*, *The Geographical Journal*, 68/3 (1926), 240-253.

<sup>21</sup> J. Raphael, *Through Unknown Nigeria* (London, 1914).



Raphael provided an eye witness account. The railroad that Raphael depicted was the epitome of modernity, progress and development. It is uncertain whether these tales were true or merely the fantasy of a white man regarding African reactions to Western technology; or, as Louise White argues, 'popular ideas about the interaction between culture and technology, between bodies and machines'.<sup>22</sup>

Few displayed as much awe and curiosity towards the locomotive as Aliyu Dansidi, the British appointed Emir of Zazzau (1902-24). Dansidi took keener interest in the railway than any other person. During its construction, he played an active role and even composed a poem to mark the event.<sup>23</sup> According to Raphael, Dansidi '[...] repeatedly enquired how much the locomotive ate, in the matter of fuel-wood and what quantity of water it drank'.<sup>24</sup> He regarded the locomotive as a living creature. Its sound dazzled him so much so that 'he loved to hear its voice, to listen to its whistle and shriek,' and for his pleasure the whistle was kept to its loudest for several minutes.<sup>25</sup> Clearly, encounters with the locomotive evoked varying reactions. Contrary to the popular assumption that its appropriation was sudden, the decision to board or even touch the train was something planned over time.

The colonial authority was aware of the reactions to the locomotive. They were delighted at the terror and awe it unleashed. The railroads and its associated technologies were, as Ian Keer<sup>26</sup> pointed out '[...] part of the process of representing, and [...] signifying, what it was the railways were or hope to be.' For the colonial authority, the railroads symbolized the coming of the industrial age, their own technological achievement and the material side of colonialism. As Ormsby-Gore pointed out, the locomotive was the most outstanding symbol of European enterprise in Africa.<sup>27</sup>

The colonial authority made attempt to familiarize people with the new transport by offering them a free ride. They organized 'rituals' in the form of grand opening ceremonies, where some members of the public were treated to a train ride. Such ceremonies symbolized the triumph of British technological achievement. As Brian Larkin indicates, grand openings of infrastructure under colonial rule were visual spectacles and political rituals where the aesthetics of colonialism and their technological achievements were displayed. They were

---

<sup>22</sup> L. White, *Speaking with Vampire: Rumour and History in Colonial Africa*, (Berkeley, 2000), 132.

<sup>23</sup> NNPC 1980: 29. See S.T. Yusuf (2014), 'The Development of Baro-Kano Railway as an Aspect of Technology Transfer in Colonial Northern Nigeria', *Kano Journal of History*, 1/1, 142-166, 152-53

<sup>24</sup> Raphael, *Through Unknown Nigeria*.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>26</sup> I.J. Kerr, *Modern Asian Studies*, 291.

<sup>27</sup> W. Ormsby-Gore, *The Geographical Journal*, 68/3, 242.

also moments where the public display of colonial authority manifested.<sup>28</sup> Such ceremonies had their own specially codified genres, such as the decoration of stations, the running of special trains, military parades, Durbar,<sup>29</sup> firework displays and speeches, all of which provided opportunities for the colonial authority to stress the importance of the railway and encouraged people to use it.<sup>30</sup>

The colonial authority invited as many people as possible to these celebrations so as to impress them with their transport. During the opening of the railway in Kano in 1912, no fewer than 2,734 guests, comprising the Emir and his chiefs, the Emir of Katsina, government officials, important members of the community and students of the Nassarawa School were treated to a train ride from Kano station to Challawa-to and back (a distance of 12 miles). Six months earlier, the Emir of Zaria and government officials had been treated to a similar train ride. For the colonial authority, the ride was intended to demonstrate the benefits of colonialism and its transport innovation to the Emirs and their subjects. The ride also publicly demonstrated that the Emirs and their chiefs recognized the importance of technological advancement. Engineered into the locomotive was a kind of authority located in the technology as evidence of progress. The locomotive represented the spectacular heart of modernity, imperial values and power, and the locomotive was the vehicle that transported those values and power.<sup>31</sup> The opening ceremony also marked the beginning of railway operations, which again opened opportunities for the indigenous people who were seen as potential staff.<sup>32</sup>

Travelling by train ride differed from travelling in the saddle, as it offered passengers a new way to travel, new perceptions, thoughts and expectations. The political scientist, Wolfgang Schivelbusch observed that travelling by train was like being shot through the landscape, as it mechanized ones perceptions and offered a new view of the landscape from inside the car. According to him,

---

<sup>28</sup> Larkin, *Signal and Noise*, 19.

<sup>29</sup> A durbar is a classical form of entertainment or a colourful procession on horseback, carried out by Emirs and their chiefs and horsemen to show off their eminence and grandeur of their monarch. The procession is marked by parade and stud in which the Emir's chiefs pay homage to them as a public display of loyalty. It is often mistaken that durbar is indigenous Northern Nigeria, but it is not. Durbar, is a colonial creation, borrowed from India and domesticated into the Muslim emirates of Northern Nigeria. Durbar is also organized to honour a very important visitor or mark an important event as was the case with the opening of the railway in Kano in 1912 and Lugard's visit to Kano that same year.

<sup>30</sup> See Notes 1913: 291; Y. Nadabo (2010), *Tarihin Garin Kaduna: Hedkwataer Arewa*, (Zaria: Ahmadu Bello University Press) : 110-11; J.R. Raphael, *Through Unknown Nigeria*, (London, 1911), 301.

<sup>31</sup> C. Reichart-Burikukiye, "The Railway in Colonial East Africa: Colonial Iconography in Colonial and Post-Colonial Africa" in T. Falola & E. Brownell, eds, *Landscape, Environment and Technology in Colonial and Post Africa*, (New York, 2012).

<sup>32</sup> W. Oyemakinde, *Journal of Historical Society of Nigeria*, VII/2 (1978), 303-323

travellers do not feel the landscape as they do on a donkey.<sup>33</sup> A train ride was a novel experience that was an admixture of anxiety, thrill and sensation. Raphael wrote about the experience of those aboard the train ride describing how, after the initial uneasiness and anxiety, the travellers were thrilled at the novelty of being transported at a speed of twenty miles an hour without their own efforts.<sup>34</sup>

An old Hausa train song, *Wakar Jirgin Kasa*, which probably depicts the train ride in Zaria indicates that the local chiefs marvelled at the ride; *sarkin Kudan yace abin mamaki*, 'the chief of Kudan says it was marvellous' (collected from Hajiya Aishatu Abdussalam Dede, 23 August 2012). Raphael wrote that when the chiefs were asked whether the ride was better than travelling in the saddle their response was: 'certainly not, as the horse did not spit hot sparks at a man on his back.' When a student of the Nassarawa School, an old man who had been persuaded to board the train, was asked for his impressions, his response after a long hesitation was: 'the fact that the engine drank more water than a thousand elephants!' The old man's reaction was a combination of fear, anxiety and wonder<sup>35</sup>. The riders did not find their first ride that comfortable, due to the blast and sparks from the engine and also because the movement was jerky. For instance, Raphael wrote that the early trains were 'open truck,' i.e. without cover, and passengers provided their own chair.<sup>36</sup>

However, the sublime is only temporal, for after the initial incomprehension, people gradually discovered the advantages of train travel and began to appropriate it to transform their lives. As David Nye<sup>37</sup> argued, the technological sublime does not endorse human limitations; instead, it shows a split between those who understand machines and those who do not. The weakness of machine is that, as one become familiar to it, its novelty suddenly dissolved.<sup>38</sup>

## Socio-economic impacts

The railway had enormous consequences, which were immediate and long term as well as direct and indirect. One of the immediate effects of the railway was that it revolutionized travel time and relieved people of the burden of carrying loads over long distances. For instance, a journey from Kano to Lagos, which

---

<sup>33</sup> W. Schivelbusch, *The Railway Journey, the Industrialization of Time and Space in the 19th Century*, (Berkeley, 1986).

<sup>34</sup> Raphael, *Through Unknown Nigeria*, 302.

<sup>35</sup> Raphael, *Through Unknown Nigeria*, 302-3.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.* 44-55; 303.

<sup>37</sup> D. Nye, *The American Technological Sublime*, (Cambridge, MA, 1999)

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*

previously would have taken three weeks on foot and by animal transport, was accomplished in a little over three days by train. Such a reduction in travel time would have sounded like a fairytale in the pre-colonial time. The railway allowed people to travel in comfort at a speed of over 20 miles an hour. This increased mobility allowed people to participate in a worldwide cultural interaction called globalization. Unlike what had gone before, train travel was safe. There were no night journeys until 1918, as the line was not ballasted.<sup>39</sup> The railway also made British control over the region administratively and economically efficient.

The railway democratized travelling and weakened the established social structure. The completion of the line made it possible for Nigerians to travel in the same car as Europeans, though in different compartments, divided along the lines of race and status. Nigerians travelled third class, while the Europeans travelled in the first and second classes. Initially, no provision was made for African passengers during the planning of the railway. Indeed, when the train began operation, there was no third class service, only first and second class passenger services were provided for. This evidenced that it was never meant for use by Africans; but, as demand by Nigerians increased, the railway introduced a third class passenger service in 1912. Rail traveling, which until then had been exclusive to Europeans, became accessible to Nigerians. Contrary to the claim that the expensive fare discouraged people from travelling by train, the third class fare was just a farthing.<sup>40</sup> and this third class service ultimately became the main revenue earner for the passenger service. Although the colonial records suggest an increase in revenue, they do not indicate the motivation and destination of the travellers. They do record, however, that the third class compartments were always crowded beyond capacity.<sup>41</sup>

The passenger trains were always the most important things that galvanized the communities along the rail line into action. The arrival of the train was always an opportunity to make quick sales and people constructed their livelihoods around the service. The train became 'a resource around which they structured their material survival'.<sup>42</sup> They learnt to adapt to the railway and passengers' demand, expanding and optimizing their businesses in the process. One way to ensure success along the railway corridor was to convert or adapt from one trade to another in response to demand. The station became a sort of

---

<sup>39</sup> H.H. Bell (1911), Recent Progress in Northern Nigeria, *Journal of the African Society*, X/XL, 377-391; The Nigerian Pioneer 1915: 9.

<sup>40</sup> A.O. Anjorin (1980), Cotton Industry in Northern Nigeria during the Colonial Era" in I.A. Akinjogbin & S. Osoba, eds, *Topics on Nigerian Economic and Social History*, (Ile-Ife: University of Ife Press) : 120; Colonial Annual Report for 1912.

<sup>41</sup> Colonial Annual Report-Northern Nigeria for 1912: 28; J.R. Raphae, *Through Unknown Nigeria*.

<sup>42</sup> J. Monson, *Africa's Freedom Railway: How Chinese Development Project Changed Lives and Livelihoods in Tanzania*, (Bloomington IN, 2009), 95.

market and a point of entry and exit for people, goods, foods and ideas. The goods sold were paid for in cash, which facilitated the circulation of the colonial currency. As a result of the modernizing effects of trade, some people began to move out of the traditional walled towns to settle along the rail line.<sup>43</sup> This required some adjustments, however, due to the noise and sparks from the locomotive and also the risk of accidents.<sup>44</sup>

Traders along the line also appropriated the train to transport goods to the nearest or distant markets on the line. Transporting goods by train was faster and safer than by the caravan. In order to attract traffic, a reduced rate for some local commodities was introduced by the railway.<sup>45</sup> The long distance traders, in particular Kola traders in the 'closed settled zone' between Kano and Zaria, were the first group to take advantage of the new transport and a special train was devoted to their service.<sup>46</sup> Although they could travel with their goods on the passenger trains, once these goods exceeded a certain weight, they had to pay a higher fare. In the case of a heavy or large consignment, they could send it as cargo or a parcel, or if necessary hire a whole wagon. If a trader could not afford a wagon, he could join with others to hire one. In this way, the railway was able to transport cargo that previously would have been impossible to move by caravan.<sup>47</sup>

The freight trains arrived filled with goods belonging to commercial firms and indigenous traders. Kola and local staple foods from across Nigeria and European manufactured goods were among the popular items on the freight list; just as those from the North and, in particular, from the closed settled zone, were shipped southward. Those communities along the rail line became distribution points for Kola and other consumable goods across the North. This had a multiplier effect on the local economy. An informant stated that on the day the Kola train arrived, the stations were always a beehive of activities, with labourers offloading Kola and other things from the train.<sup>48</sup> Some informants at Dangora maintained that on such days, Kola traders from nearby and as far away as areas such as Faiki and Rogo always came to collect their goods or buy from a bigger trader at the station.<sup>49</sup> Intensive use of the system was facilitated by the construction of feeder roads for the traffic, not least because 'railways

---

<sup>43</sup> Colonial Annual Report-Northern Nigeria, for 1910: 115.

<sup>44</sup> NAK ZarProf 950/1911.

<sup>45</sup> Colonial Annual Report-Northern Nigeria for 1913: 26.

<sup>46</sup> This close-settled zone housed many long distance trader *fatake*, mostly kola traders with trade connections in Yoruba land and Gonja on the Gold Coast.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.* 23-6.

<sup>48</sup> Interview with Alhaji Yakubu Likoro, 11 July 2012.

<sup>49</sup> Interviews with Garba Adamu; Miko Barau and Sule Makama, 30 May 2011.

without roads are of little value,' though they are not substitutes for railways.<sup>50</sup> The roads also offered opportunity to donkey transporters who used the situation to their advantage by charging more for their services, even though short distance traffic was all they could capture.

The railway also fostered social relations between traders and industrialists along the railway corridor and others elsewhere in the South. It facilitated much greater collaboration in terms of economic activities than was previously possible. As a result of the cheap transport, local traders collaborated in their economic activities with others elsewhere in the country or at markets along the line, where there was always a demand for such products. This contact provided information on changes in price trends and demand. As a result of this collaboration, local staple foods and products of the local industries from the railway corridor found ready markets in the South and elsewhere in the country, just as those from the South found ready markets in the North. For instance, the popular Makarfi sugar cane and Gimi brown sugar *mazarkwailla* reached their widest markets due to access to transport. In the 1930s and 1940s, the sugar cane was in high demand as far away as Lagos and Port Harcourt, while the brown sugar found ready markets across the North.<sup>51</sup> Also, local textiles from Gimi, Madobi and elsewhere along the line were in great demand at Bornu, Plateau and as far away as French Niger.<sup>52</sup> In a similar manner, thanks to the railway, the popular Bida soap *sabulun sallo* found ready markets in the North.<sup>53</sup>

It is important to note that prior to the construction of the railway, contact between the North and the South was quite limited. The railway not only made the contact possible, it facilitated the union. Each region exchanged its most characteristic products for those of other regions.<sup>54</sup> As Simon Heap<sup>55</sup> also pointed out, European liquors also made inroads into the North, despite the prohibition by the colonial authority. The railway not only transported people and goods but also ideas, culture and civilization from one region to another. It played an even greater role in the creation of Nigerian national identity and integration. Part of the logic for amalgamating the northern and southern railways and the administration of the two regions in 1912 and 1914, respectively, was to break down the barriers that might undermine national integration.

---

<sup>50</sup> NAK SNP7/2227/1912; W. Ormsby-Gore, *The Geographical Journal*, 68/3 (1926), 240-253.

<sup>51</sup> NAK ZarProf 3296

<sup>52</sup> KSHCB Acc. No. 68; NAK ZarProf 5280.

<sup>53</sup> NAK ZarProf 5280.

<sup>54</sup> O. Oshin, "Railway and Urbanization" in T. Falola & S.J. Salm, eds, *Nigerian Cities*, (Trenton-NJ: 2004), 101-126; F.G.I. Umiunu & A.G. Onokerhoraye, *Transportation and the Nigerian Space Economy* (Benin, 1995).

<sup>55</sup> S. Heap, 'We think Prohibition is Farce...': Drinking in the Alcohol Prohibited Zone of Colonial Northern Nigeria", *International Journal of African Historical Studies*, 31, (1998), 23-51.

The railway had an indirect, but long term effect in terms of stimulating cash crops and mineral production, with multiplier effects on the local economy. As the *wakar jirgin kasa* suggests, the train transported groundnuts and hide and skins, *jirgin dakon gyada dana kirgi*. The railway was originally constructed to transport cotton; but, rather unexpectedly, people decided to grow groundnuts and other crops that, in their own opinion, were more profitable than cotton, the officially favoured crop. In fact, growing groundnuts was not only profitable, but also cheaper and easier to grow and maintain without hindering food production. It was no surprise that barely five months after the railway's inauguration, the groundnut export from the North far exceeded the official expectations and capacity of the railway, which actually caused embarrassment to the authority. During the planning of the railway it was decided that once train a week was adequate for developing the country at that time. It became clear soon after operations began that this was wholly inadequate. The groundnut export started from almost nothing in 1912 and climaxed into two rounds of export boom in 1913/14, reaching its peak in the 1950s, with enormous effects on the local economy.<sup>56</sup>

The railway also had long term effects in terms of offering permanent employment to men. Wage labour on the railway provided able-bodied men a steady income and the chance to become independent.<sup>57</sup> When the line was first opened, people were initially opposed to the railway work, but the need for cash to pay taxes and the prestige associated with the job, increasingly attracted people to the work. Until the 1930s, the northerners worked in the lowest cadre, as labourers, porters and guards. Despite their lower status, they were harbingers of industrial culture and modernity wherever they were posted.<sup>58</sup>

There is another way the people used the railway. To many rural dwellers along the rail line, the station was a place to send and receive or tap into the 'current' of information. In those days, when radio transistors were still new, the station was where people learnt about the happenings in the country. Each arrival of a train meant information, as mails and dailies as well as messages were sent and received through the train. Prior to the construction of the

---

<sup>56</sup> J.S. Hogendorn (1978), *Nigerian Groundnut Export: Origin and Early Development*, (Zaria: Ahmadu Bello University Press); F.A. Okediji (1970), *An Economic History of Northern Nigerian 1900-1939*, (PhD Dissertation, Indiana University); S.T. Yusuf (2015), *The Socio-Economic Impact of the Railway in Northern Nigeria: A Study in Transformation of the Rural Communities along the Rail line between Kano and Zaria, 1908-1970s*, (PhD Thesis, University of Leiden).

<sup>57</sup> Oshin (2004), *Railway and Urbanization*.

<sup>58</sup> A.G. Oilfield, *The Native Railway Workers in Nigeria*, *Africa: Journal of the International African Institutes*, 9/3 (1936), 379-402.

railway, it took days or weeks to send or receive message from one region to another. The railway almost immediately transformed the way news was transmitted. An informant at Bagardi stated that, “in those days when radio transistor and phone was not popular they always learnt about the sighting of the moon for the *Ramadan* fasting at the station in Likoro”.<sup>59</sup>

Nearly all the railway stations had a news stand, postal facility and telephone as well as a telegram, which revolutionized the dissemination of information. Such facilities were not only means of communication but also makers of modernity; indeed, a town or village lacking these things were considered backward. A town with a post office was as good as one with a bank nowadays. An informant in Madobi pointed out that, ‘in those days when banking was not popular, we sent and received money as well as mail through the post office. A town or village without a postal facility was as good as a person without a cell phone nowadays’.<sup>60</sup>

Although the colonial authority undermined Islam in Northern Nigeria, their transport system unexpectedly facilitated contacts between Muslims and the Arab world. As Alexander Thurston points out, the railway revolutionized *Hajj* pilgrimage, by diverting the pilgrims from the trans-Saharan routes to the rail line. The railway cut down travel time and costs for those with the means. Pilgrims without the means also followed the track to the Red Sea.<sup>61</sup> In the same manner, the railway unexpectedly facilitated the penetration of Christian missionaries (both Europeans and Africans) along the rail line. Until the 1930s, the colonial authority restricted missions into the North,<sup>62</sup> but the railway helped the missionaries spread the gospel and compete for converts. The railway had been designed to civilize region, land and people. However, the missionaries were unable to win Muslims’ souls, because the authority restricted them to the non-Muslims areas and those migrant settlements along the line.

### From appropriation to domestication

Appropriation is a process in which users interact with a technology and, consequently, better understand it.<sup>63</sup> This is because the success of any

---

<sup>59</sup> Interview with Haruna Balarabe, 7 April 2011.

<sup>60</sup> Interview with Alhaji Usman Abdurrahim, 6 January 2006.

<sup>61</sup> A. Thurston (2009), *Interactions Between Northern Nigeria and the Arab World in the Twentieth Century*, (MA Thesis, Georgetown University).

<sup>62</sup> E.A. Ayandele, *Nigerian Historical Studies*, (London, 1979)

<sup>63</sup> C. Reichart-Burikukiye, *The Railway in Colonial East Africa: Colonial Iconography in Colonial and Post-Colonial Africa* in T. Falola & E. Brownell, eds, *Landscape, Environment and Technology in Colonial and Post Africa*, (New York, 2012).



technology depends on its acceptability. After all, consumption fulfills the act of production. As Lee, Smith-Jackson and Kwon pointed out, appropriation is the first stage in the domestication of technology. It involves bringing the technology from the public realm into the private realm, allowing us to understand it more.<sup>64</sup> Contrary to the assumption that appropriation of this new transport infrastructure was sudden, it has been shown that it was something worked out over time.

The people were not passive recipients of this advance in transport, they were involved in its development during construction. Having completed it and discovered its advantages, they quickly apprehended and integrated it into their daily lives to transform their social and economic conditions. The French sociologist Michel de Certeau pointed out that, to appropriate a product or object is 'itself production and a mode of exercising power' and strategies.<sup>65</sup> It should also be emphasized that initiative also shaped the unexpected use of the railway. Initially, the railway was not intended for Nigerians' benefit, but somehow they discovered its advantages and appropriated it in their own distinct ways and also contributed to its development.

## Challenges

The railway also had the unintended consequence of breeding crimes and providing a platform for criminals. The train transported valuables, including cash, which provided opportunities for criminals.<sup>66</sup> Right from its opening in 1912, the passengers and freight trains were frequently robbed by train bandits *yan mirgine or yan ture* (they were called this because of the way they threw their loot down from the train). The bandits were mostly from those communities along the rail line between Dangora and Kano. The prevalence of these crimes led to the stationing of uniformed men on the line. Despite the presence of police on the line and on trains, the bandits continued to perpetrate their activities.

Railway stations also had their own aura, as they were havens for beggars and station loungers. They had a dark underside and criminal half-life, which co-existed with their public face. They were magnets for prostitutes and

---

<sup>64</sup> Lee, Smith-Jackson, Kwon (2009), Lee, Y.S; T.L. Smith-Jackson & G. H. Kwon (2009), "Domestication of Technology Theory: Conceptual Framework of User Experience". Available at: [http://goodgestreet.com/CHI09/submissions/YS\\_Lee.pdf](http://goodgestreet.com/CHI09/submissions/YS_Lee.pdf) [accessed on 4 March 2013].

<sup>65</sup> Cited in Reichart-Burikukiye, The Railway in Colonial East Africa: Colonial Iconography in Colonial and Post-Colonial Africa" in T. Falola & E. Brownell, eds, *Landscape, Environment and Technology in Colonial and Post Africa*, (New York, 2012).

<sup>66</sup> This is one of the focuses in chapter six of my dissertation.

pickpockets. That is not to suggest the crimes were colonial in origin, their origin was much more ancient, but the public nature of the stations and trains bred criminality and provided platforms for criminal to operate.<sup>67</sup>

The railway also contributed to the spread of diseases and epidemics. The public nature of stations, where people mingle and interact, and the enclosed nature of the trains provided conditions for the transmission of the viruses that caused diseases. Studies by Tokumbo Ayoola and Mohammad Wada indicate that when the worldwide influenza pandemic broke out in 1918, virus spread through the rail lines with a heavy mortality rate. Attempts to curtail its spread through quarantine totally failed. When the pandemic re-occurred in the 1950s, it also spread through the railways.<sup>68</sup>

## Conclusion

In conclusion, this chapter has shown that Northerners' encounters with the railroad provoked mixed reactions, largely due to lack of familiarity with the system. Contrary to the popular claim that its appropriation was sudden, it has been shown that it was gradual; but, as familiarity increased and people understood the benefits of the railway, they quickly appropriated it and domesticated it in order to transform their lives, while also developing new strategies. The colonial authority also made attempt to familiarize them with the system. As has been shown, Nigerians agency significantly influenced the use of the railway. Indeed, while the system was not built for their use, they unexpectedly discovered its benefits and used it to transform their lives. As the chapter further shows, the railway was also put to different uses and it had many consequences on the local economy.

---

<sup>67</sup> S.T. Yusuf (2015), *The Socio-Economic Impact of the Railway in Northern Nigeria: A Study in Transformation of the Rural Communities along the Rail line between Kano and Zaria, 1908-1970s*, (PhD Thesis, University of Leiden).

<sup>68</sup> T.A. Ayoola (2012), *The Price of 'Modernity'? Western Railroad Technology and the 1918 Influenza Pandemic in Nigeria*, in T. Falola & E. Brownell, eds, *Colonial Environment, Domestication, Medicine and Technology*, (New York: Routledge), 148-169, M. Wada (2013), *A History of Modern Health System in Kano*, (PhD Thesis, Bayero University, Kano)

## Unrelenting Scholars: Ulama Engagement with Western Education in Ilorin

*Sakariyau Alabi Aliyu*

As in the rest of the Islamic world, the encounter of the Muslim town of Ilorin, capital city of Kwara state in Western Nigeria, with colonialism in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries thrust another educational system, with its own *weltanschauung*, upon its inhabitants, who had to engage with this system and negotiate their lives around it. This chapter argues against the general notion that Muslims, led by their ulama, were against Western education by showing that scholars in Ilorin only opposed those norms in Western education that they perceived as antithetical to Islam. As Robert Ross has noted, the agency of Muslim educational activities can always be found wherever Muslims form a community and the ulama have always been the vanguard of resistance to hegemonic powers. The Muslims in Ilorin responded to Western education in a number of ways, from outright rejection to toleration and appropriation, all influenced by the hostile nature of the encounter. Far from being anti-intellectuals, the ulama have actually contributed to the promotion of Western education. Even the staunchest of critics have found positive ways in which to relate with the Western system of education.

Islam forms a contrasting worldview to Western liberal civilization. More than a geographical split, these two competing worldviews form an ideological cleavage rooted in intellectual traditions. Both have emerged into the modern

world on the basis of their respective intellectual legacy.<sup>1</sup> There have been positive and negative points in the encounters between them and both have shared ideas and influenced each other, but they have never come close to being one worldview.<sup>2</sup>

While the West in modern times has seen its knowledge bifurcated into the dual of the secular and religious, this has not been the case for Islam, at least theoretically. Indeed, it is this theoretical unification of Muslim knowledge and the separation of same by the West that is the essence of what differentiates between both worlds, irrespective of location.<sup>3</sup> The almost irreconcilable differences in their weltanschauungs has resulted in an uneasy relationship. This can be seen in the educational systems of the two worldviews, and is felt keenly by Muslims who have to engage with both systems.

Although Muslims hold with a unified theory of knowledge<sup>4</sup> - that all knowledge is rooted in the one divine deity and should not be separated into the opposites of secular and religious<sup>5</sup> - in reality, Muslims in the modern world have minimal control over secular knowledge. This is partly responsible for the separation of education in Muslim societies into the opposites of Western and Islamic education. The West, on the other hand, largely determines the trends in the secular knowledge world, the hallmark of which is scientism and individualism. This has given the West an almost unbridled power over the economic and political spheres that ultimately determines if not what sort of life, how Muslims live their lives.<sup>6</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> See part II and III of P.K Hitti, *History of the Arabs* (revised tenth edn, London, 2002) for early Muslim intellectual history and William Boyd & Edmund King, *The History of Western Education* (11<sup>th</sup> edn, London, 1975) for the history of western education.

<sup>2</sup> Understanding these dynamics forms part of the thesis of Edward Said, *Orientalism* (London, 1978); Samuel P. Huntington, *The Clash of civilizations and the Remaking of the World Order* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1996) also examined this phenomenon through a multi-civilizational framework of the post-cold war era.

<sup>3</sup> Islamization of knowledge as theory and practice is the response of the Muslim world to this phenomenon. See works such as S.M.N. Al Attas, *Aims and Objectives of Islamic Education* (London, 1979) and Bashir Galadanci, ed., *Islamisation of Knowledge -A Research Guide* (Kano: International Institute of Islamic Thought, 2000).

<sup>4</sup> This is closely related to the Unitarian theology of Islam. Unity of God as espoused by Islam presupposes unity of knowledge as well. If God is one and omniscient, then no knowledge can exist outside his knowledge. All knowledge emanates from the Almighty. This is also responsible for what Ware refers to as the universal paradigm in Muslims' approach to knowledge throughout the Muslim world, even though specific materials and techniques differ in different locations and at different times. Rudolph T. Ware III, *The Walking Qur'an - Islamic Education, Embodied Knowledge and His in west Africa* (Chapel Hill, 2014), 10.

<sup>5</sup> Moving from theism to deism. See Günther Lottes, 'The Birth of European Modernity from the Spirit of Enlightenment.' <http://www.aufklaerung-im-dialog.de/assets/Uploads/PDFs>. Accessed 27-12-2014.

<sup>6</sup> P.B. Clarke and Ian Linden, *Islam in Modern Nigeria: A Study of a Muslim Community in a Post-Independence State 1960-1983* (Munich, 1984), 126.

Since the colonization of Ilorin by the British in 1897, the history of Islamic education has largely been a dynamic of engagements with Western education that is constantly threatening the survival of the Islamic education system. However, it has also been a positive experience of adaption, appropriation and influence on one another.

### Islamic education system in Ilorin before colonialism

Islam took its first, tentative steps into the Yoruba-speaking areas of Nigeria sometime in the seventeenth century,<sup>7</sup> through the Madinka traders from Mali; hence, the Yoruba name for Muslims *imale* was derived from Mali. Islam would achieve real impetus among the Yorubas following the establishment of the Muslim emirate of Ilorin in the second decade of the nineteenth century.<sup>8</sup> The Fulanis, at the head of the multi-ethnic Muslims, emerged as the rulers of Ilorin, leading to the destruction of Okesuna and resettlement of its remnant scholars in Ilorin, under the first emir Abdulsalami (1823-1836).<sup>9</sup>

The foundation laid by Abdulsalami was built upon by his brother and successor Shitta (1836-61), who provides us with some written evidence of activities that took place in Ilorin. Shitta, we learned, was well versed in Arabic. Campbell noticed in 1859 that there were a number of Quranic schools in the town.<sup>10</sup> Throughout the nineteenth century, the emirs encouraged scholars to settle in Ilorin. The scholars who responded to these calls helped to spread learning in the town.<sup>11</sup> These scholars from different ethnic and geographic backgrounds also brought intellectual traditions from various places, giving scholars in Ilorin access to all these diverse knowledge backgrounds.<sup>12</sup>

As the nineteenth century drew to an end, Islam had become very strong in Ilorin, which gained the status of a centre of Islamic learning and attracted Muslims from all over the Yoruba region. By this time, Ilorin had begun to draw

---

<sup>7</sup> Gbadamosi, G.T.O, *The Growth of Islam Among the Yorubas 1841-1908* (London, 1978), 4; R.D. Abubakre, *The Interplay of Arabic and Yoruba Cultures in South-Western Nigeria* (Iwo, 2004), 18.

<sup>8</sup> Even this was built on an earlier foundation of the exclusive Muslim settlement of Okesuna, now defunct, on the outskirts of Ilorin. Stefan Reichmuth, *Islamische Bildung und Soziale Integration in Ilorin* (Munster: Lit. Verlag, 1998), 26, 39.

<sup>9</sup> For this history see L.A.K Jimoh, *Ilorin, The Journey so Far* (Ilorin, 1994) and Samuel Johnson, *History of the Yoruba*, (Lagos, 1976) chapters 30-32.

<sup>10</sup> Robert Campbell, *A Pilgrimage to Motherland*, (Philadelphia, 1861), 104.

<sup>11</sup> Adam Abdullahi Al-Iluri Lamahat *Ballur fi Mashahir Ulama Iluri* (Agege, 1982), 28.

<sup>12</sup> H.O.A. Danmole, 'The Growth of Islamic Learning in Ilorin in the Nineteenth Century,' *Journal of Religions*, Vol.6 & 7 (1982), 17; Stefan Reichmuth, 'Literary Culture and Arabic Manuscripts in nineteenth Century Ilorin' in G. Kratli and G. Lydon, eds, *The Trans-Sahara Book Trade manuscript culture, Arabic literacy and intellectual history in Muslim Africa*, (Leiden, 2011), 213-240.

the attention of the British, who had colonized Lagos for decades and whose hinterland trade was impacted by Ilorin and Nupe raids.<sup>13</sup> Ilorin's Islamic and military success among the Yorubas was partly put on hold with the military conquest of 1897. The power of Islam was, however, beyond the Maxim gun and some of the power that the Ilorin lost militarily was recouped intellectually as the British engendered peace enabled the easy movement of scholars from Ilorin to other Yoruba towns. This peaceful ambience coincided with the flowering of intellectual activities in Ilorin, which needed some out pouring to maintain the authority and hierarchical nature of Islamic learning in the city.

### Encounter with colonialism

The Royal Niger Company conquered Ilorin in February 1897 and thus the town came under the control of the British.<sup>14</sup> Resistance to colonial rule took many forms. After the feeble military resistance, there were civil disobediences but these were soon contained. More enduring opposition came in the form of intellectual resistance to the new order, which was not only foreign and non-Muslim but it also introduced a rival educational system that relegated the Muslim system to the background, leaving the ulama in a defensive position.

Unlike the emirs, the scholars had no throne to lose and were thus freer to manoeuvre against the new order.<sup>15</sup> The ulamas could choose not to have dealings with the emirs, but the emirs could not ignore the ulama since the emirs' prestige and authority partly derives from recognition from these scholars. They could also criticize the emirs in their sermons and, most importantly, they could refuse (as many did) to accept colonial innovations such as Western education and colonial bureaucracy. That said, some of them did acquiesce to these.

The history of Muslim intellectual and armed resistance to Western hegemony plays an important role in the popular but misconstrued idea that Muslims, especially their scholars, were against Western education.<sup>16</sup> In his work on the emergence of the colonial society in the Cape, Ross has shown that the nucleus of the Muslim community that emerged at the Cape was Muslim

---

<sup>13</sup> H.O.A. Danmole, 'The Abortive Peace Missions: Intervention of Lagos Muslims in Anglo-Ilorin Boundary Dispute 1894-1896' *Journal of Historical Society of Nigeria* Vol. XII Nos. 1 & 2 (1995/1996).

<sup>14</sup> For accounts of the conquest of Ilorin see C.F.S. Vandeleur, *Campaigning on the Upper Nile and Niger*, (London, 1898), 283.

<sup>15</sup> Muhammad S. Umar, *Islam and Colonialism: Intellectual responses of Muslims of Northern Nigeria to British colonial rule* (Leiden, 2006), 157.

<sup>16</sup> For the history of this resistance in the colonial period see Umar, *Islam and Colonialism ...* and for the current armed struggle against the state in northern Nigeria see Marc-Antoine Perouse de Montclos, ed. *Boko Haram -- Islamism, politics, security, and state in Nigeria* (Leiden, 2014).

scholars such as sheikh Yusuf al Taj al Khalwati al Maqasari<sup>17</sup> (1626-1699), a political exile of the Dutch East India Company, who was accompanied by dozens of disciples. Muslim scholars and their disciples were always at the forefront of resistance to hegemonic powers, as had happened in Java. Isolated to a farm to keep them away from contacting and influencing others, these fugitive slaves still managed to find their way to the community and found opportunities for social advancement in the egalitarian ambience of Islam against the restrictive policy in South Africa. A corollary of their propagation of Islam was the establishment of madrasahs, a key regenerative agency in a Muslim community.<sup>18</sup>

In similar ways, the scholars in Ilorin formed parts of the armed and intellectual resistance to colonial hegemony. Indeed, in Ilorin, resistance to the colonial order extended to the educational system it introduced. This encounter with colonialism and its educational system led to a threefold response from the ulama class: from outright rejection to toleration and appropriation.

The first stream of Muslim response to Western education to emerge was the tolerant Adabiyah stream, rooted in the missionary endeavours of Sheikh Tajul Adab (d.1924)<sup>19</sup> and carried out by his illustrious pupil Sheikh Muhammad Kamalud-deen al Adaby (d.2005). This stream began in Lagos and was eventually introduced in Ilorin. It began reforming Islamic education by adapting it to modern methods, some copied from Western schools as well as those inspired by the Sheikh's travel to Saudi Arabia in 1937.<sup>20</sup>

Tables and chairs were introduced for students, replacing the traditional system of sitting on the floor. Instructions were given on the blackboard; attendance registers and school uniforms were also introduced. Lesson times were shortened and Arabic language and literature were given prominence rather than rote learning. These reforms were met with stiff resistance by scholars who saw them as something alien to the people and their religion. Reformers faced many obstacles, such as stoning, cursing and being chased

---

<sup>17</sup> Robert Ross, 'Khoesan and Immigrants: The Emergence of Colonial Society in the Cape, 1500-1800' in Carolyn Hamilton, Bernard K. Mbenga and Robert Ross, *The Cambridge History of South Africa* Volume 1 (Cambridge, 2010), 194.

<sup>18</sup> Martin Legassick and Robert Ross, 'From Slave Economy to Settler Capitalism: The Cape Colony and its Extensions' in Hamilton, Mbenga and Ross, *The Cambridge History*. 274.

<sup>19</sup> For more on the life and career of this scholar see Yusuf Adebola Bamigboye, 'The Contribution of Sheikh Tajul Adab to Arabic and Islamic Learning in Yorubaland' (unpublished B.A. Long Essay, University of Ibadan, 1987).

<sup>20</sup> Stefan Reichmuth, 'Sheikh Adam As I Came to Know Him-Memories of an Islamologist,' Keynote Address at the International Conference on the Life and Times of Shaykh Adam Abdullahi al Iluri, University of Ilorin, August, 2012.

away from preaching grounds.<sup>21</sup> The reforms were dubbed *kewu shaitan* (devil's learning). While these reforms were going on, Western education was growing stronger, backed by the colonial state. It was producing new elites that were the envy of many, and by the 1940s, Western education had become popular among the people and was threatening its Islamic counterpart, even reformed systems such as the one introduced by Sheikh Kamalud-deen. Indeed, some of his students began to move to Western schools.

In response, the Sheikh introduced Western education into his school. He thus became the first individual to establish a private school in Ilorin. In 1946, he applied for and was given permission by the colonial authority to establish a co-educational, elementary day school.<sup>22</sup> This led to further criticism of his method, but he persevered and students from his school, with a background in Islamic and Western education, were to be among Ilorin's elite, especially in the post-independence period. Many of them would occupy important positions both in the government and private sectors, both at the state and the national levels. The Adabiyyah were thus the first Muslim scholars who were tolerant of Western education and, in the post-independence period, they established dozens of Western schools for their members in Ilorin and elsewhere, to guard against Christian domination of Western education and the conversion of Muslims.<sup>23</sup>

The second stream to emerge was the Zumratul Mu'minina, popularly referred to as *makondoro*. This group emerged around Sheikh Yusuf Agbaji in the 1940s, first in Ibadan and later in Ilorin. Sheikh Yusuf was a grand student of Sheikh Tajul Adab through his teacher Sheikh Zakariya, a student of Tajul Adab.<sup>24</sup> The group, unlike the Adabiyyah was non-conformist and strictly against Western education. Western education was considered a *Nasara* (Christian) and *Yehudi* (Jewish) knowledge, concerned with material multiplication that does not lead the Muslim to the hereafter but astray.<sup>25</sup> They subscribed to learning sitting only on the ground and were not comfortable with the reformed Islamic schools using chairs and tables. They believed in the authority infused nature of

---

<sup>21</sup> In the last forty years of his life, he became the most revered scholar and was made the *mufti* of Ilorin towards the end of his life. The ideals for which he was vilified have since become the norm in the city. Interviews with Sheikh Ahmad Adisa Onikoko, 21 June 2012 and Prince Salman Abdulkadir, December 2012.

<sup>22</sup> National Archives Kaduna, (Iloprof) 4659 'Adabiyyah Moslem School.'

<sup>23</sup> Between 1970 and 2006, 21 secondary schools were established in Kwara, Osun, Ondo, Kogi and Edo States. The Adabiyya group is now establishing its own university in Ilorin. See <http://www.mukef.org.ng/schools.php> for the list of the schools.

<sup>24</sup> Daud Olayinka Abubakr, Zumratul Mu'minina (makondoro), (B.A. Long Essay: Islamic Studies-Department of Religion, University of Ilorin, 1986), 3.

<sup>25</sup> Interviews with Sheikh Muhammad Hashimiyu Alfaanla Okutagidi, 14 July 2012 and Sheikh Abdulkareem Adaara Agbaji, 22 July 2012.



Islamic learning and held that understanding Arabic as a language was not coterminous with faith.

Adherents to this stream are distinguished in the society by their very large turban and flowing gown, the wearing of beards, keeping their women in purdah and spartan lifestyle.<sup>26</sup> Though they still hold on to their system, by the twenty-first century resistance to Western education has thawed considerably and is now more of a critical nature. Western education is no longer unconditionally rejected; rather, a caveat is given that before dabbling in western education, a Muslim should be well entrenched in the Islamic tradition to guard against the corruption inherent in the Western system.<sup>27</sup> The resistance by some of the ulama to Western education in the early colonial period stemmed from hostile encounters with colonialism, the relegation of Muslim scholars to the background and the conversion of Muslims to Christianity through mission education.<sup>28</sup>

Today's third and fourth generations of the *Zumratul Mu'minina* are more tolerant of some of the things the older generation would not have accepted, such as using electronics and an interest in the Arabic language. Members of the group in southwestern Nigeria have also embraced some reforms, such as using chairs and tables and in Ilorin, some of the younger generation now use blackboards to teach as well.

### Ulama engagement with Western education in the post-independence period

In the colonial period, only the *Adabiyah* stream was visibly involved with Western education in Ilorin. Resentment against colonial rule extended to Western education, but as the years progressed, resistance began to recede in the face of positive developments visible in the lives of those who have embraced Western education.

The third stream to emerge in response to colonial hegemony was the *Markazi* stream of Sheikh Adam Abdullahi al Iluri. It began in Abeokuta in 1952, and moved to Lagos in 1956, before berthing in Ilorin in 1963. The *Markazi* system reformed Arabic and Islamic education, drawing inspiration from the Egyptian model of Arabic schools. The emir of Ilorin, Muhammad Sulu-Gambari

---

<sup>26</sup> Taking after exhortation of Burhan al Din Az Zarnuji 602AH/1223CE, the author of the celebrated pedagogical treatise *Ta'lim al-Muta'allim-Ṭarīq at-Ta'-allum* (Instruction of the Student: The Method of Learning).

<sup>27</sup> Interview with Sheikh Muhammad Hashimiyu. 14 July 2012.

<sup>28</sup> Abubakr, 'Zumratul Mu'minina (makondoro).' 6.

(1959-1992), had seen the success of Markaz in Lagos and wanted Sheikh Adam to replicate the same in Ilorin, his home town. Unable to leave his work in Lagos and refusing the emir's request, he found a middle course. He initiated a league of the ulama (*Rabitah al Aimmah wal Ulama fi Bilad Yuruba*)<sup>29</sup> in Ilorin and a new *madrasah* (pl. *madaris*) *Darul Ulum li Jabhat Wal Aimmah* under the auspices of this league, with Sheikh Adam serving as a consultant.<sup>30</sup>

Though the view is sometimes held that the Markazi system was not tolerant of Western education, a cursory look at the system reveals a tolerant but cautionary approach to Western education.<sup>31</sup> Cognizant of the immense power inherent in Western education and the weakening of the Muslim system it has wrought, the founder of this stream, Sheikh Adam Abdullahi al Iluri was against the cohabitation of Western and Islamic education within the same premises, as was the case under the Adabiyah stream.

However, he valued Western education and the benefits to be derived from it and, as part of his admission policy, he encouraged students coming to his school to at least obtain a primary school leaving certificate; during which period they would also receive elementary Quranic education from one of the numerous Quranic schools in Muslim communities. Pupils are then steeped in Islamic and Arabic knowledge via a seven year programme divided into four years of *l'dadiyya level*<sup>32</sup> and three years of *Taujihiyya* level learning. Subsequently, they can proceed to higher Islamic education in the Arab world, or begin practice as a Muslim scholar/cleric, or cross over into the Western higher education system to pursue degrees in Arabic and Islamic studies, law and in some instances in the pure sciences.

Sheikh Adam himself took pains to learn to read and write in English.<sup>33</sup> In his writings, he also encouraged Western learning.<sup>34</sup> Many of his students would go on to study in universities in diverse fields, some becoming professors of Arabic and religious studies. He wrote on different fields such as history, geography,

---

<sup>29</sup> See Kamaldeen A. Balogun, 'An Exposition of Shaykh Adam al Ilory's Ta'rif Wajiz bi Rabitah al Aimmah wal Ulama fi Bilad Yuruba' in Razaq D. Abubakre, ed., *Shaykh Adam Abdullah Al Ilory in the Tableau of Immortality*, Vol. II. (Riyadh, 2013), 90-100.

<sup>30</sup> Ibrahim AbdulGaniy Jawondo, 'The Place of Mosque in the History of Ilorin Emirate 1823-2000' (unpublished PhD thesis, Usman Dan Fodiyo University, Sokoto, 2005), 114.

<sup>31</sup> Adam Abdullahi Al-Iluri, *Al Islam fi Nijeriyya wa Uthman bn Fudi* (Arabic) (Agege, Maktabat, 1978), 45.

<sup>32</sup> The formal Islamic schools have *Raadat l atfal* (nursery) *Ibtidaiyya* (primary) *l'dadiyya* (junior secondary) *Thanawiyya* or *Taujihiyya* (senior secondary) levels of studies.

<sup>33</sup> Badmus Olanrewaju Yusuf, 'The Views of Shaykh Adam Abdullahi Al Ilori on the Interaction between Religion and Culture' (MA Thesis: Islamic Studies-Department of Religions, University of Ilorin, 1985), 14.

<sup>34</sup> Al Iluri, *Al Islam fi Nijeriyya* (Agege, 1978), 154.

logic and philosophy. As a historian, he wrote and delivered lectures on the history of Islam in Ilorin and among the Yorubas.<sup>35</sup>

He often engaged with scholars of conventional universities in the sharing of knowledge. In one of his sermons, he critiqued the origin of the Yoruba as written in Samuel Johnson's work<sup>36</sup> and challenged the historians in conventional universities to work on the errors he pointed out.<sup>37</sup> In the same vein, he studied the work of Michael Crowther.<sup>38</sup> He acquainted himself with Arabic historical works such as the *Muqadimmah* of Ibn Khaldun, the works of Sokoto reformers and that of his own teacher Sheikh Adamu Namaji.<sup>39</sup> His main aim was to privilege Arabic as the language of Islam and scholarship, following its relegation to the background with the advent of colonialism and Western education.

Muslim scholars' engagement with Western education continued with new zeal in the post-independence period, with the British colonialists gone and Nigerians in charge of the country's affairs. Four new Islamic institutions of learning emerged in the decade of independence to complement the works already begun by Sheikh Kamalud-deen al Adaby in the colonial period; namely, Shamsudeen College, Muhyideen College, Darul Ulum and Al-Mahad al-Deen Al-Azhar (facilitated by Sheikh Kamalud-deen).

Sheikh Kamalud-deen visited Azhar University in Cairo and signed an agreement with its authority to have a West African branch of the university sited in Ilorin. In 1963, Al-Mahad al-Deen Al-Azhar was established in Ilorin under the aegis of the Ansarul Islam Society founded by Sheikh Kamalud-deen in 1942.<sup>40</sup> The school, running *l'dadiyya* and *thanawiyya* programmes, included English language as one of the subjects and science subjects were taught in Arabic in the school. On graduation, the best students were given scholarship to pursue degree programmes at Azhar University in Cairo. This would enable many Muslims to acquire higher education not only in the Arabic language and Islamic sciences, but some would branch into non-religious fields such as medicine, law, journalism, geology, agricultural science and engineering. With

---

<sup>35</sup> Such as in his books *Al Islam fi Nijeriyya* (1978) and *Lamahat Ballur fi Mashahir Ulama Iluri* (1982).

<sup>36</sup> Samuel Johnson, *History of the Yoruba*, (Reprint, Lagos, 1976).

<sup>37</sup> See the video of this sermon 'Itan Yoruba by Sheikh Adam Abdullahi' on [www.youtube.com](http://www.youtube.com).

<sup>38</sup> Michael Crowther, *The Story of Nigeria* (London, 1978)

<sup>39</sup> Reichmuth, 'Sheikh Adam.' August, 2012.

<sup>40</sup> Abubakr O. Nasir, 'The Role of Ma'had 'l-Azhar Ilorin in Manpower Development in Nigeria' (unpublished B.A. long Essay, University of Ilorin, 1991.), 32. See also its website [www.ansarulislam.org.ng](http://www.ansarulislam.org.ng).

the exception of medicine, these courses were taught in Arabic. Many of them, upon return to Nigeria, would work in the formal sector of the society.<sup>41</sup>

One of the schools that emerged in the 1960s is the Shamsudeen Society and School, in the eastern part of Ilorin, rooted in the missionary endeavour of Sheikh Girgisu Akalambi. Inspired by his contact with Arab scholars while in Abidjan, who introduced him to some modern methods of teaching, when he returned to Ilorin in 1943 he tried to put these into practice. He was stoutly opposed by the elders of the Gambari community and he shelved the plan.<sup>42</sup> Reported to the emir as introducing innovations; things of *bakatabi* (the people of the book - Jews and Christians) into Islamic education,<sup>43</sup> he was able to convince the emir of his good intentions. He showed the emir the *Qaidat Baghdadi*<sup>44</sup> Arabic primer he was using to teach his students. The emir gave his blessings and although Sheikh Girgisu could not establish a formal school, he continued his teaching at home using chairs, tables and chalkboard, without a purpose built school.<sup>45</sup>

Like all the Islamic scholars who began educational institutions, Sheikh Girgisu's school started from the mosque at his home and later he acquired a piece of land for a purpose built school. He passed away in 1956 and Sheikh Musa, his younger brother, was recalled to Ilorin from Lagos, but he did not return until the early 1960s. Sheikh Musa eventually shifted the school to the site acquired by Sheikh Girgisu.<sup>46</sup> While the school had its origin in the educational and missionary endeavours of the elder Girgisu, opposition to his reforms stalled progress until Sheikh Musa came into the picture. When he returned to Ilorin, Sheikh Musa raised the issue again of reforming the school along the lines of the modern trend and, as with the elder Girgisu, there was resistance. The imam of Gambari ward however had sympathy with the ideas of Sheikh Musa. This encouraged Sheikh Musa to start the school. When the school began, the imam had over a dozen children from his household sent to the school. Seeing the action of the imam, others enrolled their children in the school as well.<sup>47</sup>

---

<sup>41</sup> M.M. Jimba, 'The Role of Azhar University in Educating the Nigerian youth: Ilorin Azhar Institute as a Case study.' Paper presented at the workshop 'Islamic Institutions of Higher Learning in Africa: Their History, Mission and Role in Regional Development', Duke University, US, October 2013.

<sup>42</sup> Interview with Alhaji Ahmad Said, the Imam of Gambari Ward, Ilorin. 8 July 2013.

<sup>43</sup> Shamsudeen College of Arabic and Islamic Studies, 2011/2012 Year book.

<sup>44</sup> This Arabic primer has since become the standard text for teaching reading of Arabic in Ilorin.

<sup>45</sup> Shamsudeen College 2011/2012 Year book; Interview with Alhaji Lawale Mustapha Idiagbede, Ilorin, 6 December 2013.

<sup>46</sup> Interview with Alhaji Lawale Mustapha. 6 December 2013.

<sup>47</sup> Interviews with Alhaji Ahmad Said 8, July 2013; Alhaji Abubakar Ita Ajia, 28 July 2013 and Dr Ibrahim Mustapha. 5 July 2013.

A number of fortuitous factors influenced this second attempt at reform in Gambari ward. Nigeria had just gained its independence and people were full of hope for a prosperous country. Also at this time, the new emir, Muhammad Sulu-Gambari (1959-1992), was making moves to establish Darul Ulum. This meant that the much vilified integrationist Adabiyah school was not the only option in terms of a reformed Islamic school, as the unitary Arabic medium Markazi mode began to take root in Ilorin. People were also beginning to realize that Western education and the reformed Islamic schools were not altogether negating Islamic ideas and practices. The tacit support of the imam as the spiritual leader of the ward also had a remarkable influence in the success of the second attempt in Gambari.

By the mid-Seventies the school had collaborated with government and a Western primary school was established within its premises. But the government funded school soon eclipsed the madrasah and the school fought a long battle from the 1980s to have the government relocate the school. This was finally achieved in 2012.<sup>48</sup> Meanwhile the madrasah introduced some Western subjects into its curriculum and was affiliated to Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria. This provided a bridge for graduates into formal higher institutions of learning to continue their education.

Around the same period, Sheikh Abdullahi Jubril Sahban also introduced reforms into his own Quranic School, which would transform into the Muhyideen College of Arabic and Islamic Studies. He also favoured acquisition of Western education alongside Islamic education. He would pursue this ideal in a gradualist form, starting with Quranic education before introducing Western education. Financial constraints were largely responsible for this gradualist approach to reforms among the scholars. These scholars had to use their meagre personal resources to build their schools, making only a little progress at a time possible.

Two reasons inspired Sheikh Sahban to reform Islamic education. Firstly, he saw how difficult it was for knowledge to achieve impact using the traditional method, not least because most of the students had to study at a relatively older age; he therefore sought to simplify the knowledge acquisition process. Secondly, he wanted to draw young people into Islamic education without them running away from Western education.<sup>49</sup> He saw benefits to be derived from both systems and wanted to harness these for Muslim youths. His integrationist

---

<sup>48</sup> Interview with Alhaji Mashood, Principal, Shamsudeen College of Arabic and Islamic Studies, September 2012.

<sup>49</sup> Hambali Abdulsalam, 'Al Islam dini wa duniya' Interview with Sheikh Sahban Jubril in *Al Ihya*, The Annual Magazine of Muhyideen College of Arabic and Islamic Studies, Ilorin Kwara State, 1:1 (2003) 5-7.

approach is based on the belief that Islam is concerned with both worldly affairs and faith in the hereafter. For the generation of the independence era, fears of conversion to Christianity had largely dissipated; hence, scholars like Sheikh Sahban, who had no formal Western education, promoted its learning.<sup>50</sup>

He was also concerned about the low social status and mobility of the scholars due to a lack of working knowledge of the English language.<sup>51</sup> They were thus marginalized in formal institutions. Some of the attitudes towards the Muslim scholars dated from the colonial period and the post-colonial state did little to change the system. These things, among others, inspired the Sheikh to adopt an integrationist approach, similar to the earlier Adabiyyah movement. His take on the subject of integration is that worldly strivings connect with the quest for a positive hereafter.<sup>52</sup> This resonated with theories of the Islamization of knowledge, as put forward by al-Attas and other scholars.<sup>53</sup> While the Muhyideen Society serves his missionary aims, he pursued his educational ideas in his schools.<sup>54</sup>

Starting out in 1962 as a night class in a small room, by 1968 it had transformed into an *l'dadiyya* (junior secondary) *Madrrasah*. By 1970, the school had secured scholarship from Kuwait and Libya.<sup>55</sup> Through the 1980s and 1990s the school continued to develop, operating the two systems within the same premises: the Western section offering a secondary education funded by the government and the Arabic and Islamic education running a combination of Arabic/Islamic subjects and some Western subjects taught in English, offering the three levels of *ibtidaiyya*, *l'dadiyya* and *thanawiyya*, directly under the Sheikh.

Like the Markazi system the school encouraged applicants, especially at the *l'dadiyya* level, with a primary school education from a Western system school. In the early 1980s, the school was running Grade II teacher certificate courses for the training of primary school teachers. At the beginning of the twenty-first century, the school upgraded to offering a National Certificate of Education (NCE), a tertiary certificate in the school.<sup>56</sup>

---

<sup>50</sup> Abdulsalam, 'Al Islam.'

<sup>51</sup> Abdulsalam, 'Al Islam.'

<sup>52</sup> Ibrahim Ishaq, 'Hayat Samhat Sheikh Abdullahi Jibril Al Imam Sahban Mudiru Kulliyat Muhyideen I Dirasat Arabiyya was Islamiyya wa Masahamatuhu fi Thaqafatul Talabatul Muslimeena' (Long Essay, College of Education, Ilorin, 1990), 22.

<sup>53</sup> Al Attas, Aims and Objectives. 10-21.

<sup>54</sup> Ishaq, 'Hayat.' 13; Interview with Dr Hamzah Abdulraheem, 4 January 2014.

<sup>55</sup> Ishaq, 'Hayat.' 16. Two students were sent to Libya for further studies.

<sup>56</sup> This the minimal teaching certificate accepted in Nigeria. At the end of 2012, the school had been given approval to run degree programmes affiliated to Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria. This had begun as well. Interview with Alhaji Ibrahim Ishaq Shege, (Principal Muhyideen College of Arabic and Islamic Studies), 3 December 2013.

In the 1970s, in the wake of the government Universal Primary Education Program, many Muslim scholars felt Islamic education was once again under threat since many children would now focus on Western education to the detriment of Islamic education, which was financially constrained. Despite the efforts of the scholars to reform their schools along lines similar to Western education, the Western system continued to relegate the Muslim system to the background.

To counter this regression, a number of the scholars formed the Joint Association of Arabic and Islamic Schools (JAAIS), to create a common voice and to pressure the government to consider assisting the *madaris*. Led by the state Grand Khadi,<sup>57</sup> the group was able to get the government to give some grant-in-aid to some of the schools. However, this would only last till the mid-1980s when it was discontinued. The government also established a department in the Ministry of Education to relate with them.<sup>58</sup>

In 1980, as a result of lobbying by JAAIS, the Kwara State government constituted a 'Committee on Religious Education' with the aim of working out modalities on how government could aid these *madaris*. The committee's report and a subsequent review led to the establishment of four Government Arabic Teachers Colleges (ATCs) in the state at Okene, Jebba, Babana and Ilorin. The committee also recommended the establishment of a diploma awarding college that would provide access to higher education to graduates of *madaris* and provide mid-level manpower for the government bureaucracy, especially the judiciary and the Foreign Service.<sup>59</sup>

The objective of the diploma awarding college was achieved in 1993. This college would serve to bridge many of the products of the *madaris* into the mainstream Western higher education system. Now they could have pre-university higher education, not only in Arabic and Islamic studies but also in law, both common and Sharia law. Later, this college would introduce other courses such as Mass Communication and Library Science.<sup>60</sup>

Within a decade of its establishment, other non-religious courses had outnumbered Islamic and Arabic courses. This way, students from conventional secondary schools were able to attend the school originally intended to serve the products of the *madaris*. In turn, the students of the *madaris* were provided

---

<sup>57</sup> Justice Abdulkadir Orire was the Grand Khadi of Kwara State Sharia Court of Appeal (1975-2000).

<sup>58</sup> Salihu Oloruntoyin Muhammad, 'A Study of Selected Private Institutions of Arabic and Islamic Studies in Kwara State of Nigeria' (MA Dissertation, University of Ilorin, 1987), 81-2.

<sup>59</sup> A.K.W. Aliy-Kamal, 'Islamic Education in Ilorin' (MA Dissertation, University of Ibadan, 1984), 116.

<sup>60</sup> Abdullahi Abdulganiyy, 'The Kwara State College of Arabic and Islamic Legal Studies, Ilorin: The Journey So far' (Islamic Studies, Department of Religions, University of Ilorin, MA Dissertation, 2003), 45-57.

with a bridge to university education and an education that could launch them into non-religious subjects at universities as well. This tendency of the Western system to dominate the Islamic system whenever they co-exist is the reason many Islamic scholars have always been wary of western education.

In 1995, one of the avant-garde Islamic scholars began a *madrasah* offering a diploma course in Arabic and Islamic Studies and education. This was affiliated to Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria. Unlike the earlier *madaris*, which started with lower level education, Darul Kitab Was-Sunnah started with the provision of higher education and only later began its tuition free lower levels *madrasah* education. The school also has a fee paying Western nursery/primary school on its premises. The higher education section provides a bridge to universities where students could acquire education up to the terminal degree, not only in religious studies but also in other fields.<sup>61</sup>

From the mid-1980s, government dominance of the provision of education began to decline; the result of increased demand for education and its Bretton Woods-inspired Structural Adjustment Programs. This resulted in the prevalence of privately owned schools. The Christians who have always had an edge over the Muslims in Western education were the first to key into this business. Like the European missionaries, these schools privileged Christian ethics and Muslim children were being enculturated into Christianity. Western educated Muslims were the first to rise to this challenge and they also began to establish schools to cater for the Muslim population.

Some proprietors of the *madaris* also felt the challenge by the turn of the millennium and, encouraged by fellow Muslims, many *madaris* became bifocal schools providing both systems of education separately for Muslims within the same premises. They provided fee paying Western nursery/primary education in the morning and mostly tuition-free nursery through the secondary equivalent of the Islamic education system in the afternoon. Though some proprietors of the *madaris* were against this new trend, those who have bought into it have found it beneficial. Profits from the fee-paying Western system help to subsidize the mostly tuition-free Islamic system. Since most of their students were also Muslims, many do stay on after the morning school to attend the Islamic school in the afternoon, thus boosting Islamic knowledge acquisition.

Analysis of the engagement of Ilorin's ulama with Western education during the period examined shows a largely positive disposition. Despite early resistance and persistent wariness about the dominant nature of Western education, these scholars have been at the forefront of promoting Western education for Muslims in Ilorin, even as they struggle to protect and sustain

---

<sup>61</sup> Interview with Sheikh (Dr) Abdulkadir Oba Solagberu, founder of *Darul Kitab Was Sunnah*, 19 December 2012. See also its website <http://dks.com.ng/>.

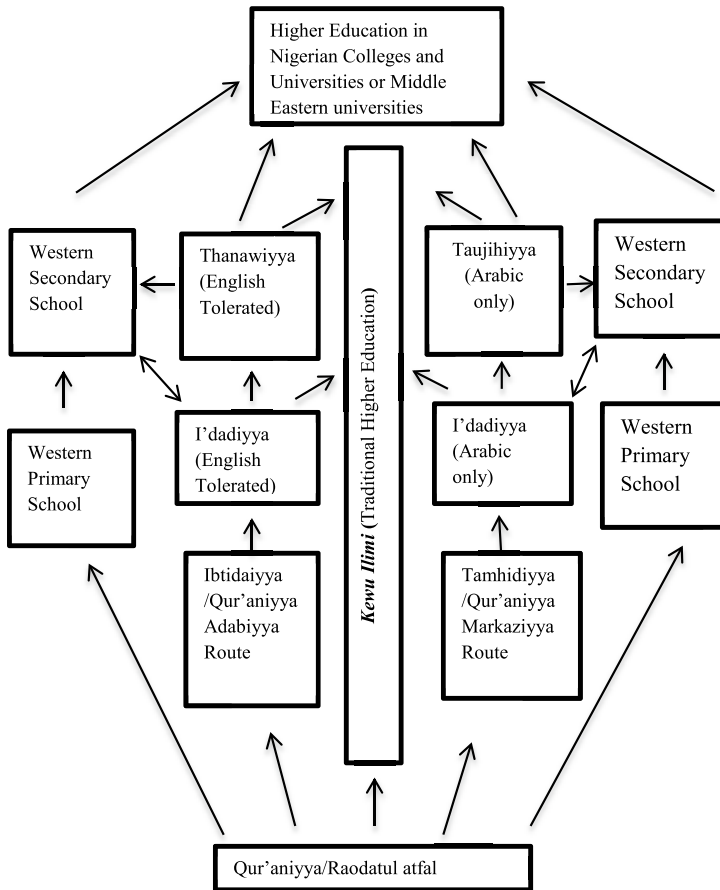


their own educational system. From their restricted position, they enabled reforms that led to new forms of social advancement for Muslims.

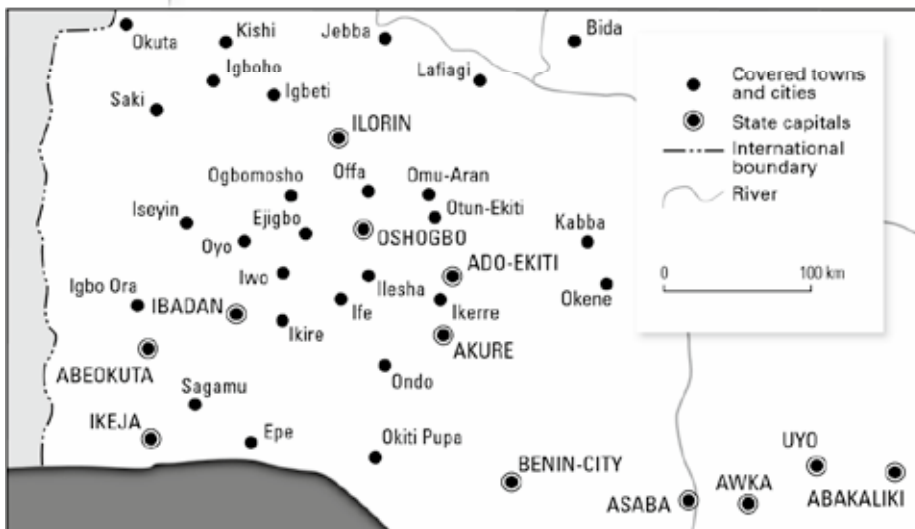
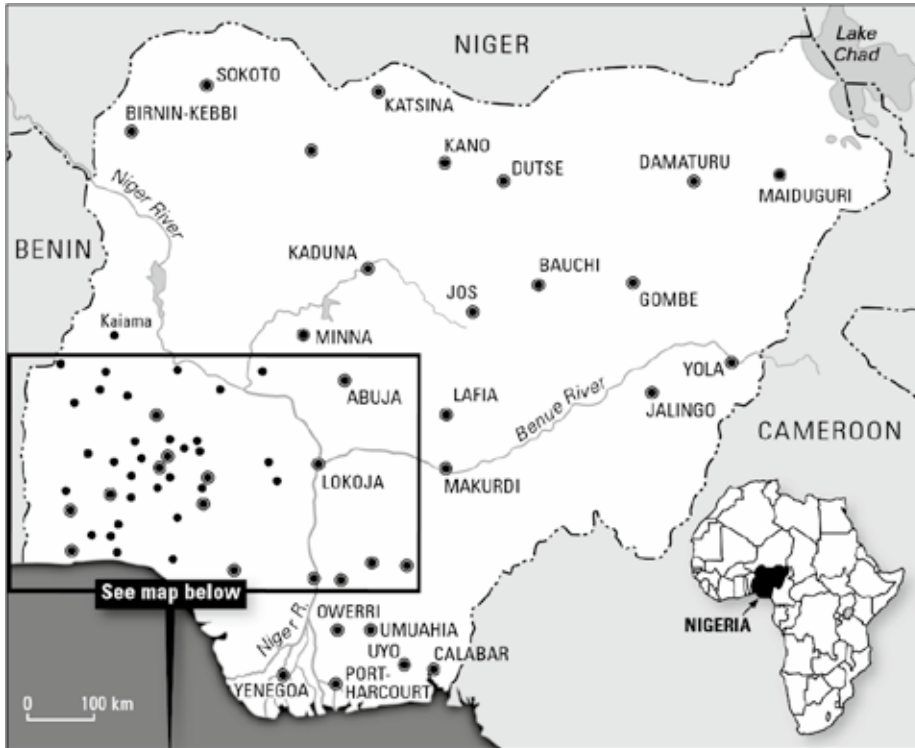
### Conclusion

Although Muslim scholars resisted Western education when it was introduced during the colonial era, they were also at the forefront of the promotion of this system of education in Ilorin. The bitter encounter with colonialism and the different ethos and aims of the two systems of education played a key role in this resistance. Despite this, from the colonial period through to the twenty-first century, the scholars of Islamic education have relentlessly risen to the challenge that Western education poses to their system and have contributed to the development of this system of education in Ilorin. They have done this in a number of ways: the formalization of their *madaris* along the lines of Western schools; accommodation of Western school subjects in their curriculum; establishment of Western schools from nursery to tertiary levels and general encouragement for the acquisition of learning. They did this in order to provide education for Muslims without losing their faith - as a consequence of the Christian origin and domination of Western education from the colonial period through to the twenty-first century - and serving as a buttress to the Islamic educational system.

The diverse routes a scholar can follow to acquire Islamic Education in Ilorin



Towns and cities Ilorin scholars were active in as missionaries during the colonial period



## Settlers, Semaphores and Speculators: The Remnants of War in Contemporary South Africa

*Jan-Bart Gewald*

Throughout his long academic career, Robert Ross consistently concentrated on the many and varied lives of people engaged in the everyday struggle for security, respect and dignity in the face of insecurity, disrespect and indignity. In the main, Robert focused his attention on southern Africa and the Eastern Cape in particular. His magnum opus on the Kat River settlement can be read as a version in miniature of South African history as a whole, a history in which decent, hard-working and God-fearing people appeared to be consistently thwarted in their endeavours by colonial settlers who operated safe in the knowledge that, ultimately, their activities would be covered by the callous and cruel military might of the British Empire.

The role of the British Army in shaping southern Africa after 1806, when British forces occupied the Cape of Good Hope, cannot be underestimated. In the century that followed, colonial settlers knew themselves to be part of the greatest empire the world had ever seen, and, more importantly, to be supported by the enormous power of its armed forces that could and did steamroller any form of opposition. Contemporary southern Africa is littered with the remnants of the British army's long-term presence in the sub-continent. Cities and towns bear the names of military commanders, the seldom

tended and largely forgotten graves of those who died fighting the British army crowd the countryside, and the earthworks and battlements conceived by British military engineers cover the lay of the land from Cape Town to Mbala. Central to the military success of the British army was the ever expanding industrial revolution in Britain, which assured its army of direct access to the cutting-edge of military technology. It is thus fitting, if hardly surprising, that the first glimpse that the artist Thomas Baines had of Grahamstown, on the Eastern Cape Frontier of South Africa, when he arrived by ox-waggon from Port Elizabeth in early March 1848, was of the very latest in military technology, namely the semaphore tower at Fort Selwyn on Gunfire hill, overlooking the garrison.<sup>1</sup> This was the latest in military, surveillance and communications technology - a technology that linked Africa to India and, in turn, both to the dictates of an economic system based on speculative finance that originated in Northern Europe. Grahamstown, as the garrison, the fort and the name of the hill upon which it was built lay at the forefront of British imperial expansion, and Baines, who would be based in the town for a number of years, reported this expansion. In his diaries, sketches and paintings, Baines chronicled the relentless drive of the British Empire as it expanded, carried forward by its missionaries, traders and soldiers.

In this paper, I will concentrate on one aspect of British military might that was highlighted in the work of Thomas Baines, namely the semaphore towers. The remains of the semaphore towers still stand in South Africa as mute testimony to the wars of dispossession fought on the eastern Cape; yet, the manner in which they are presented in the present consciously obfuscates the past. To contextualize the remains of these towers, I will briefly deal with the history of war on the Eastern Cape, and how, in the present, the material remains of these wars are being used for speculative purposes on the newly established game farms of the eastern Cape.

## Wars

To a certain extent, the history of South Africa can be presented as a history of war in which settler fortifications and strategies run through time as a continual thread and threat; beginning with the five-pointed star Castle in the Cape

---

<sup>1</sup> Approaching Grahamstown in early March 1848 Baines wrote, "just as Abram [waggon leader] was pretending to doubt the possibility of our reaching Graham's Town before nightfall, the semaphore of Selwin's Battery appeared upon the heights on our right hand. Thomas Baines", *Journal of Residence in Africa: 1842-1853*, Edited, with introduction, notes and map, by R.F. Kennedy, Vol. 1, 1842-1849 (Cape Town, 1961), p. 29.

(which later became the symbol of the South African Defence Force) through the fortified keeps and blockhouses of the South African War of 1899-1902, and onto the cut-lines, landing strips and military bases of the war that was waged in Northern Namibia and southern Angola between 1966 and 1990.

Baines spotted the semaphore tower at Selwyn's castle in early 1848, two years after the outbreak of the 7<sup>th</sup> Frontier War (The War of the Axe), and two years before the outbreak of the 8<sup>th</sup> Frontier War (Mlanjeni's War). The tranquil scenes portrayed by Baines, belies the savagery of the *Hundred Years War* that was waged on the eastern frontier of the Cape Colony between 1779 and 1880.<sup>2</sup> Wars in which thousands upon thousands of people died, either in battle or of starvation, and hundreds of thousands were left destitute and at the mercy of those more fortunate than themselves. These wars wrought havoc in the lives of people, commoners and royals alike. Xhosa chiefs were killed in battle, or died attempting to escape from capture and deportation. Hintska ka Khawuta, paramount chief of the Amaxhosa, was detained by British soldiers with whom he had tried to negotiate for peace in the 6<sup>th</sup> Frontier War (Hintska's War). He was subsequently shot in the back as he allegedly sought to escape. George Southey (son of 1820 settlers and brother of the later colonial secretary, Robert Southey) then shot Hintska in the head and cut off his ears, whilst his teeth were pulled out by a military surgeon. His head was taken to Great Britain as a trophy of war.<sup>3</sup>

In the 1980s, the eastern Cape was once again the site of turmoil, war, betrayal and death. In 1984, the South African Defence Force was deployed in Grahamstown to quell, in the words of Colonel Fred Oelschig, "the first real urban riots in South Africa" and to maintain the status quo. Once again, Fort Selwyn was used for military purposes as the 6<sup>th</sup> South African Infantry Battalion established searchlights that shone over Rhodes University and Grahamstown onto Fingo Village and Makana's Kop.<sup>4</sup> Throughout 1984 and 1985, shooting followed upon shooting, and funeral followed upon funeral. In June of 1985, four activists from Cradock were detained by security forces as they drove to

---

<sup>2</sup> J. Peires, "Nxele, Ntsikana and the origins of the Xhosa, religious reaction", *Journal of African History*, 20, 1 (1979), 51-61.

<sup>3</sup> P. Lalu, *The Many Deaths of Hintska: Post-apartheid South Africa and the Shape of Recurring Past* (Cape Town, 2009).

<sup>4</sup> South African Military History Society, Eastern Cape Branch, *Newsletter 106* July 2013, 3. Disconcerting, was the fact that white inhabitants of Grahamstown travelled to the fort and the searchlights in the evenings, with their children dressed for bed and wearing dressing gowns and slippers, to watch what was going on in the townships through binoculars. An aspect of this disquiet is to be found in the academic Margot Beard's reflection of her return to Grahamstown following a sabbatical in Oxford in 1984-5, "the horrendous symbolism of a search-light placed on Gunfire Hill [Fort Selwyn] beamed across at the huddled townships around Makana's Kop". Margot Beard, "Home from Home", *Reality: A Journal of Liberal and Radical Opinion*, Special issue the Eastern Cape, July 1985, 21.

Port Elizabeth; they were tortured to death and their bodies burnt and dumped in the bush.<sup>5</sup>

In southern Africa, the Eastern Cape has formed the stage where European settler expansion from the Cape was halted for the first time when it came up against settled agro-pastoralist Nguni-speaking peoples. From the late 1700s onwards, the Eastern cape formed the site of continual warfare where the massed ranks and superior logistics of the British army served to bludgeon African opposition into submission. This is reflected in the place names as well as the military remains of Fort Armstrong, Double Drift Fort, Fort Thompson, Fort Armstrong, Trompetter's Drift Fort, Sort Selwyn, Fort Brown, Fort Cox, Fort Hare, Fort Beaufort, Fort Malan, Fort Bowker, Fort Peddie and more. As instruments of control, maps, forts, roads and the very latest in military technology was used, and this included in the 1840s the Semaphore telegraphic system.

## Semaphore

Robert Ross consistently reminded his students and colleagues not to become antiquarian in their careers as historians, but if there is one aspect of military history that truly lends itself to the identifying, naming and listing of each and every nut and bolt, then surely it is the semaphore telegraph system. Imagine, if you will, a world in which humankind has failed to harness the power of electricity; a world in which the names of Thomas Edison, Alexander Graham Bell and Guglielmo Marconi have remained meaningless to all but themselves. Such a world exists, albeit in the realm of imagination as a vibrant sub-genre of Science Fiction known as Steampunk.<sup>6</sup> It is a world in which humankind seeks to communicate over long distances without access to electricity - a major though not insurmountable problem.

In the absence of radio, telephones, television, computers, electronic cameras and so forth, anyone seeking to transmit messages is consistently limited by the ever-present natural laws of time and space. Imperial Rome, Imperial China and the American West made use of relays of horse and rider to transmit written messages. Recent work on the efficiency of postal services

---

<sup>5</sup> <http://www.ru.ac.za/desmondututu/ourresidences/calatahouse/biographyofcalatafamily/fortcalata/> accessed 27 February 2014.

<sup>6</sup> A classic example of Steampunk is William Gibson and Bruce Sterling, *The Difference Engine* (London: Victor Gollancz Ltd., 1990). On Semaphore communication in fantasy see Terry Pratchett, *Going Postal* (London, 2004) as well as: [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Technology\\_of\\_the\\_Discworld#The\\_clacks](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Technology_of_the_Discworld#The_clacks) (Accessed 12 September 2014).

based on horses, indicates that, irrespective of time and place, be it the American West or Asia Minor, these services achieved, on average, a similar average travelling distance (20-5 kilometres) for horses prior to their being replaced by new horses. Anymore, and one risks the horse and, more importantly, the efficiency of the system.<sup>7</sup> In this manner, messages could be transmitted across vast distances at an average speed of approximately 16 kilometres per hour, depending on weather, health and other conditions. In other words, the fastest rate of transmission for a message from the Roman settlement at Leiden to the garrison in Nijmegen would be around ten hours. Not surprisingly, in times of war people sought faster means of communication. The Romans, Chinese, Incas, Egyptians and others used beacon fires set up along the line of sight to alert and send pre-arranged signals. Similarly, the use of smoke signals by Picts and North American Indians, or talking drums in central Africa, have long formed the stuff of legend and are subject to all manner of misunderstanding; what if a beacon has been lit accidentally, or wind disperses smoke or drum signals? The receiving party is unable to check on the validity of the message being sent.

It was not until 1792, and revolutionary France, that Claude Chappe developed and demonstrated the success of a semaphore system, which he referred to as the telegraph (distance writing). The basic form of semaphore consists of flags or arms being arranged in different positions to represent letters and numbers. Claude Chappe and his brothers developed a semaphore system based on a series of towers, each with a mechanical construction of rotating beams or arms mounted on masts that could relay messages from one tower to the next. Based on the work of Chappe, revolutionary France developed a semaphore system that extended over 5,000 kilometres along 534 stations from Paris to all the most important cities on its frontier.<sup>8</sup> Typically, messages travelled at a speed of approximately 250 kilometres an hour. Thus, within a matter of hours, as opposed to days, Napoleon could communicate with his commanders and administrators, even if they happened to be stationed in Amsterdam.<sup>9</sup> It is no surprise, then, that this system, with its military potential, was copied by Britain.<sup>10</sup>

---

<sup>7</sup> A. Minetti, "Efficiency of equine express postal systems", in *Nature*, Vol. 426, (18/25 December 2003), 785–786. "The design of ancient, horse-driven postal systems may have empirically converged to an optimized exploitation of horse and rider, compatible with their physiological and biomechanical burdens".

<sup>8</sup> J. Shectman, *Groundbreaking Scientific Experiments, Inventions and Discoveries of the 18<sup>th</sup> Century* (London, 2003), 172-173.

<sup>9</sup> Clockwise from Paris to Calais, Amsterdam, Mainz, Strasbourg, Venice, Marseille, Perpignan, Bayonne, Nantes, Brest, and Cherbourg. <http://www.bbc.com/news/magazine-22909590> How Napoleon's semaphore telegraph changed the world, 16 June 2013, accessed 27 February 2014.

<sup>10</sup> P. Johnson, *The Birth of the Modern: World Society 1815-1830* (New York, 1991), 165-166.



The semaphore system in the Eastern Cape came to be built at exactly the same time that Alexandre Dumas published *The Count of Monte Cristo* in serialized form between 1844 and 1845. In the book, the semaphore plays a central role. In much the same way as people once harped on about the proliferation of television aerials, the hero of the book describes in detail the impact of semaphore towers on the landscape:

Yes, a telegraph. I had often seen one placed at the end of a road on a hillock, and in the light of the sun its black arms, bending in every direction, always reminded me of the claws of an immense beetle, and I assure you it was never without emotion that I gazed on it, for I could not help thinking how wonderful it was that these various signs should be made to cleave the air with such precision as to convey to the distance of three hundred leagues the ideas and wishes of a man sitting at a table at one end of the line to another man similarly placed at the opposite extremity, and all this effected by a simple act of volition on the part of the sender of the message. I began to think of genii, sylphs, gnomes, in short, of all the ministers of the occult sciences, until I laughed aloud at the freaks of my own imagination. Now, it never occurred to me to wish for a nearer inspection of these large insects, with their long black claws, for I always feared to find under their stone wings some little human genius fagged to death with cabals, factions, and government intrigues. But one fine day I learned that the mover of this telegraph was only a poor wretch, hired for twelve hundred francs a year, and employed all day, not in studying the heavens like an astronomer, or in gazing on the water like an angler, or even in enjoying the privilege of observing the country around him, but all his monotonous life was passed in watching his white-bellied, black-clawed fellow insect, four or five leagues distant from him. At length I felt a desire to study this living chrysalis more closely, and to endeavour to understand the secret part played by these insect-actors when they occupy themselves simply with pulling different pieces of string.<sup>11</sup>

In much the same way as the hero of contemporary spy film will seek to hack into the proverbial “central computers and guidance systems” of one or other nefarious government, so too the count of Monte Cristo successfully “hacks” a telegram by bribing the telegraphist and is thus able to manipulate share prices to his advantage.<sup>12</sup>

Successful semaphore transmission depended upon efficient, diligent, and careful operators: men (no women then) who carefully transcribed what they saw coming in from another tower nearly 10 kilometres away, and were then able to transmit the exact same message down the line to the next tower. Not surprisingly, these towers were situated in conspicuous places with exceedingly good views of the surrounding countryside. In the world of Steampunk, in the

---

<sup>11</sup> Alexandre Dumas, *The Count of Monte Cristo*, Chapter 60: The Telegraph. <http://www.gutenberg.org/files/1184/1184-h/1184-h.htm#link2CH0060>, accessed 26 August 2014.

<sup>12</sup> Dumas, *Count of Monte Cristo*, Chapter 61: How a Gardener May Get Rid of the Dormice that Eat His Peaches. <http://www.gutenberg.org/files/1184/1184-h/1184-h.htm#link2CH0060>, accessed 26 August 2014.

absence of electricity, and in the world prior to 1850 and the development of the electric telegraph, semaphore systems were the fastest means of communication. A system of communication that depended on human ingenuity, efficiency, diligence, and daylight hours; a system that never lost sight of the human being, and herein, as the Count of Monte Cristo showed, lay its greatest failing. People need food and water, and if they are to be successful semaphore telegraphists they need to be able to see their neighbouring tower.

At the time of their building in the Eastern Cape in the early 1840s, semaphore telegraphy stood at the cutting edge of communications technology. However, they were of no use to the British in the Eastern cape, at the beginning of the war in 1846 (The War of the Axe), a number of the towers were immediately sacked and burnt.<sup>13</sup> In India, semaphore telegraphy was extremely successful and continued until finally being phased out in the 1860s.

### In the present

Fort Governor's Estate is a private game farm in the Eastern Cape of South Africa, just to the east of the settlement of Grahamstown. Fort Governor's Estate was established in 1997 and comprises four former stock farms that were drawn together to form a single "conservancy". Surrounded by 21 stranded three-metre high electrified game fences, the 6,715 hectares operation is marketed as a conservancy and game hunting farm anxious to protect and preserve the quintessential Africa of wildlife and open spaces. Fort Governor's Estate is run as a "turnkey operation", where all the property is held by a holding company stationed in the Netherlands and sold to investors. Its highly professional dedicated website (designed and developed in the Netherlands), glossy brochures, Facebook page and supplemental advertising blurb all market Fort Governor's Estate as a haven of luxury and tranquillity, deep in the African bush in "absolute privacy in a safe and secure environment" with "no land claims; no public roads or paths" and thus safe from the turgid turmoil of messy everyday life.<sup>14</sup> Big spending investors are invited to purchase title deeds to parts of the operation. In particular, Russian investors are courted and a dedicated website is also available in Russian and includes the name and mobile telephone number of the Dutchman in whose name the holding companies that formally own Fort Governor's Estate are held.<sup>15</sup>

---

<sup>13</sup> Linda Robson and Mark Oranje, *Strategic Military Colonisation: The Cape Eastern Frontier 1806-1872*, p. 62. <http://www.ajol.info/index.php/smsajms/article/viewFile/83730/73746>, accessed 18 July 2016.

<sup>14</sup> <http://fortgovernorsestate.net/overview/>, accessed 31 August 2014.

<sup>15</sup> <http://fortgovernorsestate.net/ru/> Тел: + 31 65375 0699 boudewijn@vanheuveln.nl, accessed 31 August 2014.

Fort Governor's Estate developed out of an initiative started in 1996 by Roy L. "Gubby" Hess, an American businessman, former Florida State representative and pilot from Pensacola Florida.<sup>16</sup> Hess purchased the initial farms and set about developing a hunting estate, he named "Done Rovin", by stripping out the internal camp fencing of the farms, establishing 40 kilometres of game fencing, introducing game, building a hunting lodge, an airstrip, restoring some of the former farm houses for occupancy, building roads and installing electricity at the various homesteads.<sup>17</sup> Unfortunately, Hess died in a plane crash in 2002.<sup>18</sup> In the words of the publicity material:

In 2003 the Reserve was acquired by the present overseas owner who saw the beauty and diversity of this land and immediately fell in love with it. He decided to carry on to complete and expand the work the previous owner had started. The dedicated staff - who had remained on the farm doing what they could to preserve it - and he promised to do their best to turn Amaraka into the best privately owned breeding and game hunting ranch in the Eastern Cape.<sup>19</sup>

An additional farm was added to the conservancy, "150 km of internal stock fences were removed, 50 km of new roads, tens of km of game fencing, three big dams, several smaller dams and a new airstrip were built" and further species of game introduced to the farms.<sup>20</sup> Currently, the whole enterprise is held by a set of four holding companies maintained in the name of a Dutch lawyer and property developer, Majoor KL/bd Boudewijn van Heuveln.<sup>21</sup> Through its own dedicated websites as well as established estate agents in South Africa and companies registered in the Seychelles, Fort Governors Estate seeks investors.<sup>22</sup> In the words of Pavilions of Splendour International Inc., one such company registered in the Seychelles that "offers the more discerning clientele a superior high net worth quality property service," purchase of any

---

<sup>16</sup> <http://jacksonville.com/tu-online/apnews/stories/072902/D7L2P3TO2.html> & <http://www.findagrave.com/cgi-bin/fg.cgi?page=gr&GRid=42526086>, accessed 31 August 2014.

<sup>17</sup> <http://fortgovernorsestate.net/overview/>, accessed 31 August 2014.

<sup>18</sup> <http://jacksonville.com/tu-online/apnews/stories/072902/D7L2P3TO2.html> & <http://www.findagrave.com/cgi-bin/fg.cgi?page=gr&GRid=42526086>, accessed 31 August 2014.

<sup>19</sup> <http://fortgovernorsestate.net/overview/>, accessed 31 August 2014.

<sup>20</sup> <http://fortgovernorsestate.net/overview/>, accessed 31 August 2014.

<sup>21</sup> Stichting Beheer Derdengelden Advocatenkantoor Mr. B.A. van Heuveln, Stationsweg 2, 1251KC Laren. Interestingly, the address provided is that for a shared office villa that houses a wide variety of short term legal corporations. Majoor (KL/bd) Boudewijn van Heuveln is listed as a participant in the Stichting Militaire Prestatie te Paard <http://www.mpttp.nl/?deelnemerslijst,26>, accessed 30 August 2014.

<sup>22</sup> [http://www.pamgolding.co.za/lifestyles/prop-dev-fort-governors.asp?complex\\_code=5005](http://www.pamgolding.co.za/lifestyles/prop-dev-fort-governors.asp?complex_code=5005), accessed 31 August 2014.

one of the 14 title deeds to the estate will allow one to “enjoy risk-free encounters with nature unlike anywhere else.”<sup>23</sup>

Essentially, Fort Governors Estate is a hunting estate that is home to “25 species of huntable game, including kudu, warthog, blue and black wildebeest, zebra, impala, bushbuck, waterbuck, gemsbuck, nyala, eland, bushpig, hartebeest, common reedbuck, blesbuck, white blesbuck, grey and blue duiker – all carefully managed and cared for.”<sup>24</sup> An estimated 300 animals are shot for trophy purposes on the farm every year. The advertising blurb justifies this hunting in the following manner:

Lacking predators like lion and hyena hunting is carried out to maintain optimum populations of certain species. Jackal and lynx are hunted by the Estate’s a pack of hounds. Hunting varies from “easy going” (hides, bow hunting) to “very challenging” and “driven hunting” (“monteria”).<sup>25</sup>

The estate is also home to “uniformed and friendly employees [who] man the Estate.” This includes a “qualified South African estate and game manager and assistant manager [who] operate under the supervision of the three directors.” In addition “two experienced trackers, two rangers, two guards, a professional hunter and four domestic and support staff complete the outfit.”<sup>26</sup> Mr. Rudie Swanepoel oversees the operation as caretaker.<sup>27</sup>

The dedicated website and Facebook pages promise a world of luxury, sundowners in the African bush, smiling maids, thoughtful game guards, extensive vistas and splendid hunting. Photographs show men striding from small propeller driven aircraft carrying their hand luggage and tell-tale *See Buy Fly* Schiphol Amsterdam International Airport duty free yellow shopping bags. Further pictures show evening drinks on the estate’s airstrip as well as manicured nails and distinctive signet rings next to Bushmen paintings.<sup>28</sup> In sum, Fort Governors Estate presents an ideal world and thus appeals to the big spender anxious to get away from it all.

Fort Governors Estate takes its name from the former stock farm Governor’s Kop which forms part of the operation. Situated on the farm is the former National Monument and currently Provincial Heritage Site listed as “Governor’s

---

<sup>23</sup> [http://www.pavilionsofsplendourinternational.com/company\\_details.php](http://www.pavilionsofsplendourinternational.com/company_details.php) & [http://www.pavilionsofsplendourinternational.com/properties\\_detail.php?cid=27&property\\_id=1720](http://www.pavilionsofsplendourinternational.com/properties_detail.php?cid=27&property_id=1720), accessed 31 August 2014.

<sup>24</sup> <http://fortgovernorsestate.net/wp-content/uploads/2013/02/Brochure-Fort-Governors-Estate.pdf>, p. 4, accessed 31 August 2014.

<sup>25</sup> <http://fortgovernorsestate.net/game/>, accessed 31 August 2014.

<sup>26</sup> <http://fortgovernorsestate.net/wp-content/uploads/2013/02/Brochure-Fort-Governors-Estate.pdf> p. 9, accessed 31 August 2014.

<sup>27</sup> <http://fortgovernorsestate.net/overview/>, accessed 31 August 2014.

<sup>28</sup> <https://www.facebook.com/FortGovernorsEstate/photos/pb.549627395145804.-2207520000.1409473494./549657685142775/?type=3&theater>, accessed 31 August 2014.

Kop Signal Tower, Albany District”, which formed part of the semaphore telegraph system centred on Grahamstown.<sup>29</sup> The tower features prominently in the advertising material of Fort Governors Estate, where it is presented as “[a]n abandoned fort in the vast African landscape reminds one that this is indeed frontier country,”<sup>30</sup> where “the nine Frontier Wars (1779-1878) demonstrated that this was a land so captivating that nations fought to possess it.”<sup>31</sup>

Fort Governors Estate has a particularly interesting take on history, its Facebook page has a number of pictures that seek to connect the estate directly to the 1820 settlers. This includes a stylized historical document commemorating the arrival of the British settlers as well as two reproductions of paintings by Thomas Baines depicting the arrival of the settlers at Algoa Bay in 1820.<sup>32</sup> In addition, there are a multitude of photographs of Grahamstown emphasizing the town’s settler credentials and alleged academic standing. Interestingly, the dedicated website and Facebook blurbs choose to conveniently gloss over the bulk of southern African history. Next to a photograph of a bushman painting depicting a human being, the operations Facebook page states:

The ancient San people once traversed this unspoilt paradise, leaving only their cave paintings as an ode to living in harmony with nature. Numerous centuries later Fort Governor’s Estate has resurrected this vision of a paradise reclaimed.<sup>33</sup>

This sentiment is echoed in the same words on the dedicated website.<sup>34</sup>

The Fort Governors Estate publicity tellingly notes that the whole operation is secure, no public roads or paths, and that there are no land claims to any of the farms that make up the estate.<sup>35</sup> However, it is indisputable that the estate has been established on farms that were surveyed and first given out to European settlers who from 1799 onwards engaged in consecutive wars to drive the original inhabitants off the land. In addition, following the ending of apartheid and the nationalist government’s farm subsidies to white farmers, many of the farms in the Eastern Cape ceased to be profitable as stock farms and were

---

<sup>29</sup> <http://www.sahra.org.za/sites/920030070>, accessed 10 June 2014.

<sup>30</sup> <http://fortgovernorsetate.net/wp-content/uploads/2013/02/Brochure-Fort-Governors-Estate.pdf> p. 3, accessed 31 August 2014.

<sup>31</sup> <http://fortgovernorsetate.net/wp-content/uploads/2013/02/Brochure-Fort-Governors-Estate.pdf> p. 3, accessed 31 August 2014.

<sup>32</sup> <https://www.facebook.com/FortGovernorsEstate/photos/pb.549627395145804.-2207520000.1409473494./549657685142775/?type=3&theater>, accessed 31 August 2014.

<sup>33</sup> <https://www.facebook.com/FortGovernorsEstate/photos/pb.549627395145804.-2207520000.1409473517./549643941810816/?type=3&theater>, accessed 31 August 2014.

<sup>34</sup> <http://fortgovernorsetate.net/overview/>, accessed 31 August 2014.

<sup>35</sup> <http://fortgovernorsetate.net/overview/>, accessed 31 August 2014.

converted to game farms. This transition, which is less labour intensive, led to the reduction of the amount of farm labour employed and thus permitted to reside on settler farms. Across South Africa, not only in the Eastern Cape, the “rationalisation” of farms has led to millions of people being evicted from farms where they are no longer employed.<sup>36</sup> It is inevitable that the same process played out on the farms that now make up Fort Governors Estate.

## Conclusion

Grahamstown was established to protect and advance the interests of white settlers and speculators in the Eastern Cape of South Africa. This was done through the use of the most modern military technology available at the time, technology which included the use of semaphore towers for telegraphic purposes. To this end, the Royal Engineers were deployed in the Eastern Cape to establish and build a military infrastructure second to none, and which mirrored developments in India at the time. The deployment of cutting-edge technology in the Eastern Cape and India belies the claim that developments on the Eastern Frontier of the Cape of Good Hope were nothing but a sideshow in the British Empire. Semaphore telegraphy, although not very successful in South Africa, stood at the forefront of communications technology at the time and came to be successfully deployed in the India of the Raj. It would be of interest for further research to examine what, if any, transfer there existed between India and back again. Robert’s work on the notebook of Uithaalter, based on the diary of a British officer engaged in duck-hunting in Burma, is a case in point.<sup>37</sup> Indeed, up to the Second World War and beyond, troops from one section of the Empire were regularly deployed and used in other sections and vice versa.

Within three years, the bulk of the 1820 settlers who arrived on the Eastern Frontier had sold off their allocated farms and established themselves as traders, craftsmen or speculators on the frontier. Many years later, these settler farms are now game farms that are traded and sold by investors, who make their money out of selling romantic “Out of Africa” dreams to the super-rich. The semaphore towers that were built for the purposes of war, have now become tourist attractions, robbed of their violence and war, but useful as props implying historicity in the advertising campaigns that seek to entice big spenders from overseas. Similarly, with apartheid, the scrapping of farm

---

<sup>36</sup> [http://www.uu.nl/SiteCollectionDocuments/GEO/SGPL/Spiereburg\\_Game%20ranches.pdf](http://www.uu.nl/SiteCollectionDocuments/GEO/SGPL/Spiereburg_Game%20ranches.pdf) & <http://www.econ3x3.org/sites/default/files/articles/Stanwix%20Jan%202013%20Minimum%20Wages%20FINAL.pdf>, accessed 31 August 2014.

<sup>37</sup> R. Ross, *The Borders of Race in Colonial South Africa: the Kat River Settlement, 1829-1856* (Cambridge, 2014), 219.

subsidies and the subsequent “market rationalization” of farms and farm labour, the game farms have been stripped of the people who once lived there and the wars their ancestors once fought. Instead, the many former farm workers, let alone the original inhabitants of the lands, have been reduced to prim and proper maids and game guards dressed in the uniforms of their employers’ predilection. Clothes that emphasize their subjugated and regimented position in a world of European dreams. At Fort Governors Estate, and with everything associated with the enterprise, historical ruins are being used to create a completely ahistorical landscape. Far from being the material remains emphasizing the history of more than 100 years of land dispossession and oppression on the Eastern Cape Frontier, at Fort Governors Estate the former semaphore tower on Governor’s Kop has become a quaint and photogenic prop to be used in the creation of a Neverland in which empty lands were settled and occupied by rosy-cheeked industrious settlers. It is indeed true that often the best hidden secrets are those hidden in plain sight.

# Porters in the Angolan Nationalist War (1961-1974)<sup>1</sup>

*Inge Brinkman*

## Introduction

The words 'nationalism' and 'porters' are not generally linked. Porters are associated with precolonial caravan trade, while nationalism has a 'modern' ring to it; especially if it concerns the nationalist movements of the late colonial era. In the case of Angola, however, the nationalist movements of the 1960s and 1970s all relied, to some extent, on human portage as, at times, no other means was available for transporting food, war materials, medicines, etc. The Angolan liberation movements could only operate in the border areas of the country while using neighbouring independent countries as their base; they were forced to avoid the more sharply policed central regions of Angola. Transport facilities had always been limited in these border regions and the little infrastructure that was present was destroyed during the war. This resulted in enormous logistical problems for the colonial army as well as for the Angolan guerrilla movements. While the Portuguese colonial state sought to redress this by focusing on constructing and maintaining a 'modern' transport network, the

---

<sup>1</sup> My sincere gratitude goes to Robert Ross for his unrelenting support over the years, and to Jan-Bart Gewald and Iva Peša for organizing the valedictory conference in his honour. Research was carried out within the framework of the SFB project ACACIA of the University of Cologne (Germany), and the WOTRO-funded programme 'Mobile Africa Revisited' at the African Studies Centre (Leiden, The Netherlands). Contact: Inge.Brinkman@Ugent.be



guerrilla armies had no other option than transporting goods by porters. These porters were young men (only exceptionally young women) in the guerrilla armies as well as civilians under the movements' control. This aspect of the war was one of the reasons why the nationalist war in Angola became 'a war for people' (as Basil Davidson put it), rather than a war for territory: all parties involved sought to gather as many people as possible under their control.<sup>2</sup>

One of the things Robert Ross has taught his students is to try and delve deeper than the surface of history, and arrive at an understanding of those aspects of social history that do not merely reflect what was predicted, but also take into account the unexpected. In this contribution, the Angolan case of portage during the nationalist war will be described and interpreted as part of the recent history of communication and transport in Africa. The interpretation will not focus on transport purely as a means (to get from A to B) but also as a social event in itself. Hitherto, the relationship between warfare in Africa and portage has hardly been studied: even the famous example of the East African 'Carrier Corps' of the First World War has received relatively little attention. The framework of portage as part of communication history leads us to studying the social hierarchies involved, the economic relations, the material aspects of carrying, and the routes at play. While acknowledging the vast changes in twentieth-century Angola, this contribution will describe some continuities that link the precolonial, colonial, nationalist and even postcolonial contexts. Such links between transport, mobility and guerrilla warfare have been under-researched. Indeed, the famous Ho Chi Minh Trail looms larger in popular imagination than in scholarly research,<sup>3</sup> and while Che Guevara's explanation of the ways in which guerrilla fighters had to transport goods is available on the internet,<sup>4</sup> the first scholarly analysis on guerrillas and transport still has to be written.

The basis of this article is primarily formed by interviews with people from Southeast Angola, but reports from foreign visitors and archival sources (especially from PIDE, the Portuguese secret police) are also be used. Interviews conducted with people from Northern Angola typically elicited few references to portage. Having more in-depth access to sources from the southeast, and given the fact that portage was more systematically used there than in the

---

<sup>2</sup> B. Davidson, *In the Eye of the Storm. Angola's People* (London, 1972), 27; Inge Brinkman, 'A War for People.' *Civilians, Mobility, and Legitimacy in South-East Angola during the MPLA's War for Independence* (Cologne, 2005).

<sup>3</sup> But see: J. Prados, *The Blood Road: The Ho Chi Minh Trail and the Vietnam War* (New York, 1999).

<sup>4</sup> Che Guevara (edition Brian Loveman and Thomas M. Davies), *Guerrilla Warfare* (Oxford, 2002), 36, 111.

north of Angola, the emphasis of the interpretation falls on the MPLA's Eastern Front.

### The war in brief

War broke out in Angola in 1961, when several nationalist movements sought to end Portuguese rule. Initially, there were instances of violence in Angola's capital Luanda and a region in the centre of the country (Kasanje), but the Portuguese soon regained control of the more central regions and the war was restricted to the border zones of Eastern and Northern Angola. The nationalist movements secured support from neighbouring Zambia and both Congos. Having been pushed out of Congo-Kinshasa, the MPLA operated mainly from its headquarters in Tanzania through to Congo-Brazzaville and Zambia, and its activities were concentrated in the eastern part of Angola and the enclave Cabinda. In the first instance, the MPLA, under the presidency of Agostinho Neto and its leadership, which mainly hailed from Luanda and its surroundings, had few connections with the local populace of these areas. The UNITA movement, in rivalry with the MPLA, had some influence in a small area in the east, but only managed to survive through accords with the Portuguese colonial government. In the north of Angola, initially the UPA (as of 1962, FNLA) and the MPLA were rivals for popular support and control, but the emphasis fell on the UPA/FNLA movement, which had strong ties with the Mobutu government of Congo Kinshasa (later Zaïre).

The Portuguese managed to regain control over most towns and their surroundings in the border areas of Angola, but they never managed to end the war completely. Angola's border regions hence remained military zones with limited freedom to move, concentrated villages surrounded by watch towers and barbed wire, military patrols, frequent guerrilla attacks, etc. The nationalist wars ended after a Portuguese coup in 1974, and Angolan independence was proclaimed in November 1975.<sup>5</sup>

---

<sup>5</sup> For an introduction to the war in Angola, see: J. Marcum, *The Angolan Revolution. Volume 1: The Anatomy of an Explosion (1950-1962)* (Cambridge, London, 1969) and J. Marcum, *The Angolan Revolution, Volume II: Exile Politics and Guerrilla Warfare (1962-1976)* (Cambridge, London, 1978).

### Angola and neighbouring countries



### Transport as a strategy

Transport possibilities and limitations are an important aspect of any war: all armies attempt to enlarge their transport facilities to the maximum, while aiming at minimizing the enemy's possibilities in this respect.<sup>6</sup> In the case of

<sup>6</sup> I. Brinkman, 'Routes and the War for Independence in Northern Angola (1961-74),' *Canadian Journal of African Studies*, 39:1 (2005), 205-234.

Angola, this aspect of the war took on specific properties. The centre of Angola was sharply controlled by the Portuguese secret police PIDE, and so the guerrilla movements focused their activities on the border regions – notably, in the southeast and the north of the country, operating from bases in neighbouring independent countries. These border zones were considered of little economic importance by the Portuguese colonial regime and had been neglected in terms of infrastructure throughout the colonial era. Moreover, during the nationalist wars, many roads and bridges were blocked and/or sabotaged by mines, destroying what little infrastructure there was.

This resulted in enormous logistical problems for the colonial army as well as for the guerrilla movements. Apparently, the Portuguese army at times also deployed civilian captives to carry loads. Jim Hoagland, who accompanied Portuguese troops in the region of Muie wrote: ‘The emaciated aged African women - ‘captured population’ in the terminology of this strange war - stumbled under the weight of the 40-pound field packs the soldiers had given them to carry [...].’<sup>7</sup> Yet, the Portuguese colonial state sought to redress the transport problem by focusing on constructing and guarding a ‘modern’ transport network. This road network was, of course, meant for the transport of troops and army supplies, but it also served as a weapon in itself. The Angolan guerrillas and civilians feared being spotted by the Portuguese while crossing the roads and tried to avoid them, only using the small local footpaths. Although formally forbidden, the colonial roads were at least partly built and maintained through forced labour. Women as old as eighty years worked on the roads, sometimes no food was provided to the villagers, and the place of work could be as far as twenty kilometres from their home.<sup>8</sup>

The guerrilla armies had no other option than to either not send supplies or to transport goods using porters. The various Angolan nationalist movements of the 1960s and 1970s all used human portage to some extent, as a means to transport goods and people when no other means was available for moving food, war materials, medicines, etc. While in the north portage was used, but remained unstructured and haphazard due to the nature of the war and local circumstances, at the MPLA’s front in the east of Angola, portage became an important feature of the war. Before setting out to explain the relations between portage and the nationalist war, I will first explain the continued importance of walking and portage in order to place the tendencies during the war in perspective.

---

<sup>7</sup> Davidson, *In the Eye*, 40, quoting Jim Hoagland.

<sup>8</sup> Brinkman, ‘Routes and the War for Independence’, 210.

## Before the nationalist war

In African history there is an emphasis on colonial history. Due to a lack of sources, precolonial African history, generally speaking, receives less scholarly attention. As always there are exceptions to the rule and in this case the literature on portage is one of them: there are more studies on the task of carrying in precolonial Africa than for the colonial era. These studies focus on precolonial caravan trade and can mostly be situated in the economic sphere, although the literature on the socio-cultural aspects of caravan portage is slowly growing.<sup>9</sup> This trend is also prevalent in the history of West-Central African: precolonial caravan portage in trade networks has received quite some attention. Beatrix Heintze, for example, has interpreted nineteenth-century caravans in the Kwango region as forms of cultural communication, while Alfredo Margarido has viewed porters as agents of change in the Angolan context.<sup>10</sup>

As transport facilities grew in the course of colonialism, portage disappeared from the picture,<sup>11</sup> and while some research has been done on the role of carriers during the First World War in East Africa, even about the famous 'Carrier Corps', not much has been written.<sup>12</sup> Obviously, train services, motorised transport, and bicycles wrought many changes in Africa, and large porter caravans for trading purposes were no longer organised. Yet, in many African contexts, walking and carrying has continued to retain its importance, although very little research has focused in this direction.<sup>13</sup> This also holds for the Angolan case: while many Angolans characterised roads as an important

<sup>9</sup> R. Rempel, "'No Better than a Slave or Outcast": Skill, Identity, and Power among the Porters of the Emin Pasha Relief Expedition, 1887-1890', *International Journal of African Historical Studies*, 43:2 (2010), 279-318; Stephen John Rockel, *Caravan Porters of the Nyika: Labour, Culture, and Society in Nineteenth Century Tanzania* (Ann Arbor, 1997).

<sup>10</sup> B. Heintze, 'Long-Distance Caravans and Communication beyond the Kwango (c. 1850-1890)' in B. Heintze and A. von Oppen (eds.), *Angola on the Move. Transport Routes, Communications and History* (Frankfurt/M, 2008), 144-159. See also, B. Heintze, *Afrikanische Pioniere. Trägerkarawanen im westlichen Zentralafrika* (ca. 1850-1890) (Frankfurt, 2002); A. Margarido, 'Les porteurs: forme de domination et agents de changement en Angola (XVIIe-XIXe siècles)', *Revue Française d'Histoire d'Outre-Mer*, 65:240 (1978), 377-400.

<sup>11</sup> J.-B. Gewalt, 'People, Mines and Cars: Towards a Revision of Zambian History, 1890-1930' in J.-B. Gewalt, S. Luning and K. van Walraven, eds, *The Speed of Change: Motor Vehicles and People in Africa, 1890-2000* (Leiden, 2009), 21-47.

<sup>12</sup> António Manuel Hespanha, 'Um relatório inédito sobre as violências portuguesas na frente moçambicana da I Grande Guerra', *Africana Studia*, 14 (2010), 163-197; G. Hodges, *Kariakor: The Carrier Corps: The Story of the Military Labour Forces in the Conquest of German East Africa, 1914 to 1918* (Nairobi, 1997); D. Killingray and J. Matthews (1979). 'Beasts of Burden: British West African Carriers in the First World War', *Canadian Journal of African Studies*, 13:1/2 (1979), 7-23.

<sup>13</sup> But see: G. Porter, 'Living in a Walking World: Rural Mobility and Social Equity Issues in Sub-Saharan Africa', *World Development*, 2 (2002), 285-300.

feature of the colonial era, walking and carrying remained the most widely used means of transport for the local population throughout the colonial era. Especially in the more remote regions - involving the larger part of the colony - Angolan subjects testify to a continued importance of portering, despite the changes.<sup>14</sup>

The southeast of Angola certainly counts as a 'remote area'. There were only a few roads and travel was slow: even in the 1940s it took two months to travel from Cangamba to Luiana, a distance of some 600 km. The return journey, which was upstream, would take about double that time.<sup>15</sup> Porter caravans and their organisation continued well into the colonial era. In 1920, Reverend Bailey was staying in a camp with a party of 1,200 carriers in Zambia near the border with Angola. He travelled with a number of these porters from Zambia to Muie in Angola and they carried the loads and the hammocks for the female whites and for those carriers who fell ill on the journey.<sup>16</sup>

Although such large caravans were beyond the memory of my interviewees, many men testified to having done forced labour for the Portuguese as carriers. As SaCindele, an elderly man, remembered:

SaCindele: We also had to carry the *cipoia* (hammock) with the Portuguese in it. I also did. We carried his goods. They built the small roads (*tapalo*) putting grass on the surface so that the porters could pass.

Author: Were you a big group or just a few?

SaCindele: A big group!

The *cipoia* is widely associated with the rhino-hide whip with which the carriers would be beaten, with the ultimate trope being that people also carried the pets of the Portuguese in hammocks.<sup>17</sup> This extremely negative popular image of *cipoia*-carrying for the Portuguese became an emblem of colonial oppression during the nationalist war. In the words of SaCindele:

So when the MPLA came, they took the people out of slavery. They said: 'Why should people carry a white person without getting anything in return?'<sup>18</sup>

In the popular imagination, portering is associated with extremely hierarchical, colonial relations. Yet, the practice of carrying also remained important in other

<sup>14</sup> I. Brinkman, 'Town, Village and Bush: War and Cultural Landscapes in South-Eastern Angola (1966-2002)', *Afrika Focus* 25, 2 (2012) pp. 31-43.

<sup>15</sup> *Mensagem de São Bento*, 10:3 (1941), 88 and 10:6 (1941), 181.

<sup>16</sup> A.W. Bailey, 'Commission and Conquest in South Africa. An Autobiographical Account of Pioneer Mission Work in Africa', edited by Metha D. Bailey (Unpublished typescript, Newark, 1968) 107-109.

<sup>17</sup> Interview in Kehemu (Rundu), 16 June 1997, with a man born in 1968 in Cuito Cuanavale; interview in Kehemu (Rundu), 23 July 1997, with a woman born in in 1950 near Ndima; interview in Kayengona, 19 August 1997, with a man born in 1941, in a village some 20 km from Cuito Cuanavale.

<sup>18</sup> Interview with SaCindele (born near Cuito Cuanavale, year unknown: his ID says 1926, but he may be from 1940) in Kehemu (Rundu), 29 November 2012.

ways. A number of men who were migrant labourers in South Africa explained that they required people to help them carry their newly acquired belongings home after they had crossed the border between Namibia and Angola. Up to the border, they could make use of motorised transport, but the final leg had to be done on foot. SaCindele's brother-in-law was one such man:

On the route back I had so much stuff, then I needed some people to carry the stuff over the Kuando. So they helped me for two days and then you have to pay them for their carrier services. Then it was too heavy to carry home. So I left it underway. I went home and then I told my relatives: 'I have to go back and get the rest'.<sup>19</sup>

Here, then, porterage is firmly embedded in local economic relations and does not have the connotation of colonial exploitation as in the *cipoia* accounts. These examples reveal that, instead of a sharp break and disappearance of porterage altogether, walking and various forms of porterage continued to remain important throughout the colonial era in the more remote areas of Angola. When the war started in 1961, walking and porterage were not rarities of a long-forgotten past, but part of a living reality. Yet, during the initial phases of the nationalist activities, there was not much to carry.

#### Few supplies, little transport: The north of Angola

In January 1961 a rebellion started in the cotton-growing region of Kasanje. Some Portuguese were killed, but the protest was largely peaceful and the - mostly material - damage was done with local farm knives. The Portuguese responded vigorously and the rebellion was crushed at the cost of many African lives. Some weeks later, when a march was held to free political prisoners in Angola's capital Luanda, the demonstrators were armed with knives and sticks of their own. Again the Portuguese reacted harshly, especially as in this case Portuguese civilians were aided by the state to organise massacres in the African neighbourhoods.<sup>20</sup>

War started in the north of Angola in March 1961. The Portuguese painted a picture of a large communist conspiracy carried out by well-trained terrorists, armed with weapons smuggled in from Congo-Léopoldville.<sup>21</sup> The evidence belies this version: secondary sources, PIDE documents and interviews concur that the start of the rebellion was carried out with local weapons. After

---

<sup>19</sup> Interview with the SaCindele's brother-in-law, Kehemu (Rundu), 30 November 2012. Born at the Kuatiri River, year unknown, but he is older than SaCindele; also: interview in Kehemu (Rundu), 1 December 2012 with a man born in Ndima in 1930; interview in Kaisosi (Rundu), 3 December 2012 with a man born in 1935 in Lumbala Nguindo (Moxico).

<sup>20</sup> Marcum, *Anatomy of an Explosion*, 124-130.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.* 130-134.

meetings and instructions from local UPA leaders, the young village men took their farm knives and the occasional hunting rifle to start their actions.<sup>22</sup> Soon, the local militias turned to the UPA leadership in Kinshasa for help, but often the results were poor: an attempt by one of the UPA guerrilla leaders to procure arms in March/April 1961 resulted in 'seven rifles, two machine guns, and some ammunition': obviously no porters were needed.<sup>23</sup> As the Portuguese stepped up their extremely violent counterinsurgency, indiscriminately bombing all areas outside the larger settlements, most of the UPA guerrillas withdrew to Congo and over half a million people fled over the border as refugees. Many of these left with hardly any possessions and had to survive for some time in the bush. As even clothes posed problems, some turned to fabricating shorts out of grass strings.<sup>24</sup> After the withdrawal of the majority of the UPA forces, there was an emphasis on hit-and-run cross-border attacks, whereby each UPA fighter carried his own weapon. Clearly, in such a context, portage was not an issue.

Further south - as far as the Dembos - pockets of UPA guerrillas remained active, but the lack of contact with headquarters in Congo was a source of much complaint. Initially, many requests for arms, ammunition, medicines and other necessities were made, but when these failed to materialize, anger and indignation mounted. Some local commanders and guerrillas switched loyalties for this reason, but this hardly had the desired result as it increased the risk of UPA interception: MPLA commander Ferreira was killed by UPA forces while carrying ammunition for troops in the Dembos.<sup>25</sup> The isolation of many of the guerrilla groups is clear from the report of one of the commanders in the Dembos, who recounts how a large sum of money taken from one of the captured Portuguese posts was burned 'to prevent people from squabbling over the money and because we had no need for it'. On this basis, John Marcum rightly concludes that 'the area had no access to source of supply through either an internal Angolan underground or an exile movement.'<sup>26</sup>

The lack of supplies was partly attributed to the indifference of the leadership in exile, as explained in the following letter, nearly a year after the rebellion had started in the north:

To our brothers resident in Léo[poldville], we have to say that we write you this letter to tell you that we complain immensely of your passivity [ ... ]. It is very sad to note that you do

---

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid*, 141; Davezies, *Les Angolais* (Paris, 1965), 34-35.

<sup>23</sup> Marcum, *Anatomy of an Explosion*, 146-147.

<sup>24</sup> NIZA archives (currently housed at the International Institute for Social History in Amsterdam, The Netherlands), Box 1, Angola Comité, 'Historisch archief Angola, 1961-1976', David Grenfell, notes 18/65 (8 May 1965).

<sup>25</sup> Marcum, *Anatomy of an Explosion*, 211; Davezies, *Les Angolais*, 35 (interview with Ciel).

<sup>26</sup> Marcum, *Anatomy of an Explosion*, 217, referring to Commander Gonçalves Benedito, 'Five months of independence in Angola', *African Revolution (Algiers)* 1, 1 (May 1963) 26-29.



not send the promised medicines, meaning that you do not sympathize with our pains or that we, who are fighting and suffering immensely for our country, do not matter to you. We affirm that your collaboration is inefficient.<sup>27</sup>

It is clear that the UPA leadership failed to arrive at a structured organisation of supplies, but they also faced problems in securing foreign support, leading to a general dearth of arms, ammunition and other necessities in the movement.<sup>28</sup> Furthermore, transport was often impossible: the Portuguese army was – after the initial phase of the war - trying to closely monitor the routes, many roads were mined and often it was a long journey: from the Dembos it took a month's walking to reach Congo.<sup>29</sup> Many of the local guerrillas were forced to cater for themselves; consequently, hunting practices and herbal medicines gained importance in these difficult circumstances.<sup>30</sup> At a certain stage, arms and ammunition even lost their priority: in 1963 the American visitor Garrison encountered a group of young men in rags with bare, bleeding feet underway from the Dembos to Léopoldville in search of clothes and food.<sup>31</sup>

The previous paragraphs suggest that porters were not important for Angola's nationalist movements in the north of Angola. In some cases, porters were not needed, as guerrilla activity took the form of small-scale cross-border attacks. In other cases, supplies were not forthcoming for various reasons - leadership indifference, lack of foreign support, and the extremely long and dangerous transport routes. Even in these contexts, however, we find evidence of portage. Not only do we hear about guerrillas carrying arms into Angola,<sup>32</sup> and the distribution of medicines,<sup>33</sup> a group of men arrested by the Portuguese secret police also declared that they had carried away goods from an ambushed lorry, after their chief had been requested by incoming 'terrorists' to send some men to help.<sup>34</sup> A boy was reported to have died as his midriff broke when he was made to cross the river Jeija with a much too heavy load.<sup>35</sup>

---

<sup>27</sup> Instituto dos Arquivos Nacionais, Torro do Tombo (IANTT), Lisbon, Portugal, PIDE, Delegação de Angola, Processo de Informação (Del. A., P.Inf), file no. 11.12.E, 650: 'Letter to our brothers in Léo', s.l. (Pangala), s.d., PIDE translation: 19 February 1962.

<sup>28</sup> Inge Brinkman, 'UPA Pamphlets and Politics in Northern Angola: Changing Concerns, Changing Messages, Around 1961,' *Portuguese Studies Review*, 19:1/2 (2011), 306-307.

<sup>29</sup> Davezies, *Les Angolais*, 35-36; IANTT, PIDE, Del. A., P.Inf. 14.15.B, 363: Ferreira to nephew David, Quimbumba, 17 July 1962.

<sup>30</sup> Brinkman, 'Routes and the War for Independence', 218; Brinkman, 'UPA Pamphlets', 306-307.

<sup>31</sup> Marcum, *Exile Politics*, 115.

<sup>32</sup> Marcum, *Exile Politics*, 114: referring to US visitor Garrison.

<sup>33</sup> Marcum, *Anatomy of an Explosion*, 232.

<sup>34</sup> IANTT, SC-CI (2) 2126/59, vol. 3, 682-685: PIDE Salazar, 'Relatório 'Actividades terroristas - na área de Camame - Golungo Alto', 23 March 1970 1961 or

<sup>35</sup> IANTT, PIDE, Del. A., P.Inf. 11.12.E, 624: Abraão Adão Masumbo to Geraldo Samuel Gungi, s.l., s.d (date of PIDE translation, 21 February 1961).

Evidence also comes from PIDE, stating that ‘the terrorists who are presently infiltrating are porters of new war material, furnished by Sweden.’<sup>36</sup> The dynamic intersections of ‘tradition’ and ‘modernity’ in the nationalist movements can be garnered from the following quote based on a field visit by John Marcum to the central UPA base in Northern Angola in January 1962: ‘After receiving their allotment of rifles, shells, grenades, plastic bombs, and, for the more fortunate, a few land mines and machine guns, nationalist patrols hoisted their loads onto woven palm leaves and trekked for as long as two to three weeks to their respective posts in the interior, as far south as Ucuá.’<sup>37</sup>

The UPA attempted to force people into carrying: orders from the ‘Serviço do Comité Popular’, found on a captive, explained that: people must help with food and carrying goods and money. People must organise porters for the soldiers, to carry letters and other objects to the central base. People who do not agree, must be severely punished.<sup>38</sup> Such ‘volunteers’ did not present themselves readily; at times, even trustworthy letter-carriers were hard to find.<sup>39</sup> The groups of UPA guerrillas that were forced to take care of themselves also required assistance with transport at a more local level, as can be inferred from a letter by Manuel Kiamfokola to Sr. Dinis Antonia about meat that they wanted to transport over the river that separated them, as well as a PIDE report of 1971 that Eduardo Panza was recruiting carriers in Congo, as he soon expected the return of a group of hunters who had been staying in Angola for three months.<sup>40</sup>

Generally speaking, porters appear to have been less important in the north than at MPLA’s Eastern Front. This also held for the Cabinda enclave, where the MPLA forces were active. Here, too, the guerrilla activities took on a hit-and-run character, in this case from nearby Congo-Brazzaville. Jean-Michel Mabeko-Tali has pointed out that the MPLA’s order ‘*Todos para o interior*’ actually only had any meaning at the Eastern Front.<sup>41</sup> It seems that if supplies were to be transported in the north – be it in the MPLA’s or FNLA’s case, portage was

---

<sup>36</sup> IANTT, PIDE, SC-CI (2) 2126/59, vol. 3, 931: PIDE Nóqui, 3 November 1969.

<sup>37</sup> Marcum, *Anatomy of an Explosion*, 229. The Americans John Marcum and George Houser visited the UPA region in Northern Angola in January 1962, starting in Léopoldville and covering some 200 miles in Angola itself.

<sup>38</sup> IANTT, PIDE, Del. A, P. Inf. 11.12.B, 42-43: UPA, Serviço do Comité Popular, Inga (Nova Caipemba), 3 July 1961.

<sup>39</sup> IANTT, PIDE, Del. A, P. Inf. 14.15.B, 121: Manuel Martins Pedro to Garcia Venâncio Dongala, Léopoldville, 14 October 1963; IANTT, PIDE, Del. A, P. Inf. 14.15.A, 330: José Victorino Gabriel to Batista, Banza Kumuaana, Uíge 1 July 1961; IANTT, PIDE, Del. A, P. Inf. 14.15.A, 109: Paolo Quindoqui to Miguel João Martins, Quincama, Ianguila, s.d.; IANTT, PIDE, 11.12.E, Del. A, P. Inf. 823, Eduardo Pereira, António to Manuel Gonçalves, s.l., s.d. (PIDE translation 22 January 1962).

<sup>40</sup> IANTT, PIDE, Del. A, P. Inf. 14.15.A, 211: Manuel Kiamfokola to Sr. Dinis Antonia, s.l., s.d.; IANTT, PIDE, SC-CI (2) 2126/59, vol. 3, 354: DGS – Angola ‘Actividades da “UPA”’, 3 March 1971.

<sup>41</sup> J.-M. Mabeko-Tali, *Dissidências e Poder de Estado: o MPLA Perante si Próprio (1962-77)*. *Ensaio de História Política*. Vol I (Luanda, 2001), 115 (‘*Todos para o interior*’: ‘All to the interior’).

organised haphazardly and without much structure. As I will outline below, this was different at MPLA's Eastern Front.

### The structure of carrying at the Eastern Front

As of 1966, MPLA guerrillas entered Eastern Angola, coming from Zambia, which had gained independence in 1964. Most of the MPLA leaders hailed from Angola's capital and its surroundings, and contact with people in the region had to be built up from scratch. Important in this connection were migrants (mostly male) from the east, residing in Zambia for labour purposes. Often led by these men, the MPLA guerrillas went from village to village in Eastern Angola, forcing people to leave their homes and leading them into the bush. There, the young men, and a handful of young women, were trained to be guerrillas and sometimes sent to Zambia to learn more. Older people, the majority of the women, and children would live in nearby 'villages', where they would grow food and draw water for the soldiers, occasionally run errands, and assist in political meetings. Young women in particular could become very active in these support activities, although only a few girls would actually fight. When, after some time (especially as of 1968, when Portuguese helicopter attacks increased), the situation in 'the bush' became too dangerous, many civilians withdrew to Zambia. Consequently, after the majority of civilians had moved, transport from Zambia remained important for the MPLA guerrillas.

In most cases, transport at the MPLA's Eastern Front started in Tanzania. Firstly, trucks had to cover a distance of some 2,000 km between Tanzania and Zambia – a difficult route over dirt roads with the risk of getting stuck, especially during the rainy season. Then, about 1,000 km over sandy roads in Zambia itself had to be covered before the MPLA bases near the border were reached. Finally, the goods were to be transported into Angola. It was impossible to build up large stocks in Angola itself, and motorised transport could not be used in many parts of Eastern Angola; either there were no roads or the Portuguese troops controlled them. So the goods had to be unpacked and divided among porters who would take the materials into Angola. They would walk over small local footpaths, crossing various rivers before finally reaching the guerrilla camps and the civilians living in the east. This entire system was, reportedly, called the 'Agostinho Neto Trail' by the Portuguese, analogous to the Ho Chi Minh trail in Vietnam.<sup>42</sup> The MPLA leadership realised the importance of

---

<sup>42</sup> Davidson, *In the Eye*, 251-254; Tor Sellström, *Sweden and National Liberation in Southern Africa: Solidarity and Assistance* (Stockholm, 2002) 115: referring to: Elisabeth Hedborg and Hillevi Nillson, visit to Eastern Angola in July 1971.

transport, and were also sharply aware of the logistical problems. On Neto's explicit request, over half of the support from the Swedish government to the MPLA in the early 1970s took the form of trucks, boats, bicycles and footwear; the remainder of the funds were spread over the health, agricultural, and educational sectors.<sup>43</sup>

Carrying things into Angola was no easy task. The distances were long and the loads heavy. Depending on the final destination of the goods, the journey could take considerable time; indeed, as long as a month and a half, which meant that carriers could be away for as long as three months.<sup>44</sup> Furthermore, it was frequently necessary to transport goods within the region itself. The various MPLA camps often exchanged items, such as food, blankets and clothes. Shot game had to be transported to the guerrilla bases. During actions, food, blankets, weapons and ammunition had to be taken along.<sup>45</sup> Many people were needed to assist the guerrillas in bringing in the materials. Sometimes, the caravans from Zambia consisted of fairly large groups and many goods were transported at once. More often, it concerned small groups that only brought in limited stocks. The American visitors Barnett and Harvey walked from Zambia into Angola at a rate of twelve hours a day, covering over thirty miles each day. The young boys who accompanied them carried packs weighing up to sixty pounds:

The guerrillas carried packs and weapons. It was necessary that they be very mobile, so their loads were nothing compared to the carriers', mostly young boys – they carried heavy war materials, food, blankets, etc. They wore rags: trousers of patched patches, shirts that were seams with tattered strings hanging from them; most of the carriers were barefoot – their feet were thick with callouses from the hot sand and thousands of miles.<sup>46</sup>

Sometimes, MPLA guerrillas would carry spare weapons and supplies in addition to their own arms.<sup>47</sup> Yet, the accounts of visitors also speak of specific 'transport men'<sup>48</sup>; it was also stressed in the interviews that guerrillas did no carrying:

Author: How did you get the material in? There was no transport...

---

<sup>43</sup> Sellström, *Sweden and National Liberation*, 119; Davidson, *In the Eye*, 243.

<sup>44</sup> D. Barnett and R. Harvey, *The Revolution in Angola: MPLA, Life Histories and Documents* (Indianapolis, New York, 1972), 284 (Anthropologist Don Barnett and reporter Roy Harvey visited Eastern Angola to attend the first Eastern Regional Conference of the MPLA in 1968, trekking over 14 days from Zambia to MPLA camp Hanoi II in Eastern Angola where the conference was held. They fell sick with malaria, experienced an attack (during which the famous MPLA doctor Américo Boavida was killed), and had to retreat); IANTT, PIDE, Del. A., NT 9084, Cuito Cuanavale, 40: Cuito Cuanavale, 15 June 1972.

<sup>45</sup> IANTT, PIDE, Del. A., NT 9089, 'Imediatos', 221: summary of statement made by Bimbe Cauina, Cuangar, 30 March 1970; Interview with a man born in 1951 by the Namomo River near Mavinga, 16 June 1999, Kehemu (Rundu).

<sup>46</sup> Barnett and Harvey, *Revolution in Angola*, 43-44, 51.

<sup>47</sup> Davidson, *In the Eye*, 222.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.* 268.

M: On the head, it was all carried. From Tanzania, to Zambia, Shikonge. Then the carriers of the povo (civilians) - the men and women would carry and bring it in. We were soldiers, we did not do that. We would receive it and fight.

Author: From Zwain (Johannesburg) you had carriers, in the war you also had carriers.

M: Yes, we had our own belongings already, then the gun. If we also had to do the carrying, how could we have fought? Then how could we have protected the civilians?<sup>49</sup>

While some sources stress the importance of young men, women also testified to having carried goods for the guerrillas. They not only provided the guerrilla camps with water and foodstuffs from their harvest, they could also be engaged in transporting goods over longer distances.<sup>50</sup> The idea that younger men would start as porters and, after this experience, could start training to become a guerrilla was also expressed in other interviews:

When MPLA came I was still young: I entered the pioneers. I entered the army in 1969 and became a helper of the commanders: preparing his place to sleep and to carry materials. Later only I became a soldier for fighting. [...] There were only few female soldiers. In our camp not, only in other camps and then also only at the end. At first it was too hard. Only later they would carry bullets, small arms to the camp from the centre.<sup>51</sup>

Most commanders had a personal servant who carried their belongings for them. While these practices were commonplace at the Eastern Front, the MPLA commanders in the north had no such privileges.<sup>52</sup> Some foreign visitors gained the impression that carrying was universal: 'We saw people of all ages - men, women and children - who were marching, loaded with supplies of different kinds.'<sup>53</sup> In fact, the transport system reflected internal hierarchies. As indicated, commanders appropriated the prerogative of having their bags carried by others, mostly boys who also acted as personal servants. Further, final responsibility for transport in the MPLA movement came with considerable power. Daniel Chipenda became responsible for all transport and logistics and in this manner expanded his influence in the movement. In the end, he became leader of the so-called Eastern Revolt in 1972, resulting in the splinter movement called the FNLA-Chipenda. Chipenda was originally from the Central Highlands (so not from the region, but he was, at least, a 'Southerner'). He based his support on the discontent of local MPLA members about the MPLA

---

<sup>49</sup> Interview in Kaisosi (Rundu), 3 December 2012 with a man born in 1935 in Lumbala Nguindo (Moxico).

<sup>50</sup> IANTT, SCCIA, ordem 134, n° 240, 9-16 November 1966, 29.

<sup>51</sup> Interview, see note 44.

<sup>52</sup> Mabeko-Tali, *Dissidências, I*, 130; IANTT, PIDE, SC-CI (2) proc. 6573, vol. 1, 480: Ninda, 27 October 1966.

<sup>53</sup> Sellström, *Sweden and National Liberation*, 116: referring to: Elisabeth Hedborg and Hillevi Nillson, visit to Eastern Angola in July 1971.

leadership from the capital who were portrayed as having privileges, not risking actively fighting, and were merely 'intellectuals'.<sup>54</sup>

It was not always easy to find people willing to carry goods. The MPLA prized itself on abolishing forced labour in the liberated areas. The exploitative labour relations in the Portuguese colonies were constantly criticised in the movement's propaganda. MPLA pamphlets stated that the movement's aim was to end slavery.<sup>55</sup> This point was certainly recalled by people from Southeast Angola: 'He [Neto] said: The slavery of yesterday will end. The children of today will not be slaves. The country belongs to them, they are free to do whatever they want.'<sup>56</sup> There are strong indications, however, that the MPLA forced people to carry goods, work on the fields and feed the guerrillas. Evidence coming from PIDE is of course difficult to weigh; perhaps the two men telling the Portuguese that they were tied to each other with one arm by the guerrillas, leaving the other free to carry goods, were exaggerating in order to escape Portuguese punishment.<sup>57</sup> Yet, other sources also stress the enforced organisation of caravans transporting MPLA equipment. Thus, a commander's notebook states that one comrade, Tukahiana Njunguma, had made the mistake of telling civilians during a meeting that 'during the entire colonial period he never carried a hammock, but now he did carry a hammock and it is a great shame.'<sup>58</sup> One of the reasons for abducting civilians came from the MPLA's need for large numbers of porters. After at least one action captives were made to carry the booty the guerrillas had taken.<sup>59</sup> Militias saw to it that the caravans were well organised and that nobody escaped.<sup>60</sup> Direct force was not always used, but long admonishing speeches were probably given to ensure a few volunteers to carry goods for the MPLA.<sup>61</sup>

The idea of force and coercion was not omnipresent, however. At least in retrospect, it was held by some that women would aid the guerrillas of their own accord:

---

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.* 115; Mabeko-Tali, *Dissidências. I*, 137-159.

<sup>55</sup> IANTT, PIDE, Del. A., NT 9084, Serpa Pinto, 175-176: MPLA pamphlet in Mbunda, with translation in Portuguese, Serpa Pinto, 29 April 1969.

<sup>56</sup> Interview in Kayengona, note 16; cf. Roeland Kerbosch, *Angola met Eigen Ogen* (Utrecht, Antwerpen, 1971) 56.

<sup>57</sup> IANTT, PIDE, Del. A., NT 9089, 'Imediatos', p. 530: Summary of statement made by Soloti Chamba, Cuangar, 20 November 1968.

<sup>58</sup> IANTT, PIDE, Del. A., NT 9084, Serpa Pinto, p. 16: 'Apontamentos extraídos no caderno do terrorista: Zorro', entry: 14 June 1970.

<sup>59</sup> IANTT, PIDE, Del. A., NT 9089, 'Imediatos', 16: Cuangar, 10 November 1972.

<sup>60</sup> IANTT, PIDE, Del. A., P.Inf. 110.00.30, pasta 15: 16: Summary of statement made by Lambi Cambungue, Cangamba, 22 August 1968; *Ibidem*, pasta 18: 41: Luso, 27 December 1969; *Ibidem*, pasta 19: 446: Luso, 16 February 1970.

<sup>61</sup> Kerbosch, *Angola met Eigen Ogen*, 48, 49.

Only our forebears worked in forced labour. UNITA also had forced labour, not MPLA. The MPLA has respect for women. UNITA gives heavy loads to women and children to carry on their heads. The MPLA in the beginning also had things to carry: they did that themselves. Even some women volunteered to help them. They'd choose only young women to carry the guns. They would go to town to catch people. You have to leave your father and mother behind and join them. The Portuguese also came with helicopters to fight. Sometimes they caught people and they'll take them again from bush to town.<sup>62</sup>

Another woman explained how portering became part of the propaganda machinery, both in the Portuguese hearts-and-minds campaign as well as in the MPLA's 'politics':

The Portuguese wrote pamphlets saying: 'We will shoot you. You are bandits. You cannot win. We have guns which we have made ourselves. We have cars, aeroplanes. Not you, blacks. Just come and fight with us, the white people. You have to carry your stuff on your shoulders.' MPLA said: 'Yes, we carry on our shoulders. But if we die, we die for our country. We go to Russia, we carry it to here with our own hands, one by one. We must suffer until the country will be in our hands.'<sup>63</sup>

While clearly coercion often played a role, the circumstances may have differed from case to case. Porterage, then, was in many ways a political affair, involving social hierarchies, internal power struggles and varying degrees of coercion and free will. This also becomes apparent in the more material and economic aspects of carrying.

---

<sup>62</sup> Interview with a woman born in Mavinga in 1964, 13 July 1997, Kehemu (Rundu).

<sup>63</sup> Interview with a woman born in Munyinda in 1942, 5 September 1996, Kaisosi (Rundu).

Transport of MPLA material



Source: Henk Odink, *De overwinning is zeker. Reisverslag van een verblijf bij de volksbeweging voor de bevrijding van Angola* (Amsterdam 1974) next to p. 48

### The material aspects of carrying: Routes, materials and economics

As indicated, various loads were carried. Although no heavy artillery was used in the east,<sup>64</sup> other weaponry was brought in through Zambia. Apart from arms and ammunition, personal belongings of those higher in rank could be carried as well as medical items, and goods that the MPLA sold to the people under its control, such as soap, salt, cooking oil, etc. At a more local level, blankets, clothes, hunting meat, agricultural produce and water were most likely to be carried from one place to the other. The important task of carrying wounded people will be discussed in the next section.

The routes along which people and goods were transported were not only long, they were often very complex. Many rivers had to be crossed. Sometimes these could be waded through, but often the travelling parties were dependent

---

<sup>64</sup> Mabeko-Tali, *Dissidências, I*, 128-129.



on canoes to cross to the other side. The owners of these canoes and the boatmen wielded considerable power. At least in one case, villagers halted the guerrillas' incursions by refusing to send canoes across.<sup>65</sup> Guerrillas prevented civilians from escaping by monopolising the available canoes,<sup>66</sup> and local owners of the boats attempted to increase their income by asking money for transporting people and goods over the rivers. An MPLA leader explained to Basil Davidson, who visited the Eastern Front in 1970, that at first they were not accepted: 'Or crossing a river: you'd have to pay fifty escudos to a man with a canoe. And then he'd stop in the middle and demand another fifty, and he'd threaten to drown you if you don't pay.'<sup>67</sup>

The economic aspects of portage remained a sore issue throughout the war. Barnett and Harvey interviewed MPLA commander Likambuila and he commented on this:

Some problems have also come up in transportation. Groups of volunteers from the villages are organized as carriers and sometimes walk a month or six weeks to the border for military supplies or goods for the people's stores. These carriers would often have to leave their work in the family fields, their hunting, etc., for as long as three months at a time.

As a consequence, people had no surplus whatsoever with which to buy things from the people's stores. This led to complaints. Some civilians said that they were willing to carry weapons, but not goods for the people's stores. The MPLA started helping the carriers, as they often wore nothing but rags and had no soap, salt, clothes, etc. The civilians, however, regarded this as payment: 'So before long people started flocking to the border to carry things; even if there was nothing to carry they came thinking they would be paid for their work.' Often there was nothing to even give to the carriers. The MPLA leadership tried to explain that their aim was charity, not payment.<sup>68</sup> Such differences in practices and perspectives between the MPLA leadership and the local population formed the basis of support for Chipenda's Eastern Revolt.

### Carrying the wounded

A crucial aspect of carrying was the transport of people in need of medical care. As Sellström explained: 'To get proper treatment, wounded freedom fighters and civilian medical patients from Angola had in the same way to be

---

<sup>65</sup> IANTT, PIDE, SC-CI (2) proc. 6573, vol. 4, 819: 28 January 1971, referring to UNITA guerrillas.

<sup>66</sup> IANTT, PIDE, Del. A., P.Inf. 110.00.30, pasta 15: 7-8: Summary of statement made by Machinoia Vindundo, Gago Coutinho, 28 August 1968.

<sup>67</sup> Davidson, *In the Eye*, 32.

<sup>68</sup> Barnett and Harvey, *Revolution in Angola*, 284-285.

transported by teams of carriers to MPLA's clinics in western Zambia.<sup>69</sup> Several interviewees also experienced this, either as carriers or as patients. SaCindele's brother-in-law was wounded during a Portuguese helicopter attack:

Author: Did you carry goods, like Mr. Vihemba here?

C: Yes it happened. And they also transported me into Zambia to get treatment with a *cipoia*, because that wound was not healing well. They came up and down to get people for treatment.<sup>70</sup>

Sometimes people were beyond help. A woman explained what happened after a Portuguese helicopter attack:

Then I went back in the bush to my mother, my sister and my child. But my sister's child had left already with the helicopters. I found many dead people and many injured. I found the daughter of NiaNdendenga Mpoko who was badly injured, her eyes had changed. She said: 'Carry me!' But we said: 'How are we going to carry you?' I saw people's blood like water in the river. Then we left to another place and the helicopters had gone.<sup>71</sup>

In the following, I will present an excerpt of an interview with a man who frequently carried goods for the MPLA. He was born and raised in Cuito Cuanavale. On his ID it said he was born in 1926, but he may not have been as old as that, although his third child was born already in 1962. Having been forcibly moved by the Portuguese when the war started, MPLA guerrillas came to their village and abducted them into the bush. They stayed there for some time, but soon found themselves on the frontline of attacks and then the MPLA moved them to the Kuando River, near Zambia. After some time, they were taken into the interior again and the MPLA leaders promised that they would be protected by the guerrillas, but when Portuguese air attacks increased, they started moving around in the region between the Kuito and the Kuanavale. They were repeatedly attacked and during one such incident a relative called SaMusole was injured. As they fled in different directions, they lost contact, but after some time they met with MPLA soldiers again.

They were called 'guerrillero'. They took us to the *kimbo* [civilian village near the MPLA camp]. That is where we saw SaMusole again and they said: 'Ah, you have to take him to the central hospital.' We took a *cipoia* and placed him in there. We went. Then when we came halfway, we found some other people and then we gave them that responsibility. From there we went together to the river Kuvuko. When we got to the river Kuvuko, they sent us on to Sikongo. So we went. The river Kengo, then the Kansato. Limbundi. Kuandu. Kumbule. Lungue. Muexe. Cikului. Kutsihi. Then from the Kumbule, Luaxoxi. Kapuihi. Mulai. Tundombe. Uhitu. Tulundulu. Then to Sikongo. We crossed all those rivers. Then we found the MPLA. It was their base. There, there were guns, bullets, and salt, and cloth, everything. Here we rested one day.

<sup>69</sup> Sellström, *Sweden and National Liberation in Southern Africa*, 115.

<sup>70</sup> Interview with the brother-in-law to SaCindele, note 18; also interview mentioned in note 62.

<sup>71</sup> Interview with a man, born at the Luaxoxi near Ciume, aged about 40 years at the time of the conversation, Kaisosi (Rundu), 16 July 1997.

The next day we started moving again. We arrived at the Kapuihi, then we arrived in Mulai. Then the helicopters found us again.

Author: So you were no longer in Zambia by then?

SaCindele: We had returned [to Angola]. We had already arrived at the Kapuihi. Then we crossed the road between Kucumi and Ninda. Then the helicopters found us, wrooom. Of the Portuguese. We lost so many people: 150 people. We were carrying guns and ammunition. Even hiding the bullets under the jacket. We crossed the road to the other side. We ran fast, because we feared that the cars would come and they would see us. And we entered the bush. We rested there a little. What is money?! You must make sure that you are alive, money is for later. We left everything behind: goats, chickens, food, etc. We were thinking about the people we had lost. Then they said: 'Let us continue.'

We were carrying kutiti [translation unknown, his son says it is a material]. And arms. All on our heads. And it was a lot! There were so many things! And there were no cars, everything on our heads. Then another group came to carry that material again. They divided it for carrying. So we slept there and then we returned to that place where we had come from. We arrived at the Kuntuva, yes. We crossed, the river, then on to the Civwe. On to the Kuvanga. We found back our children, who had become bigger. There was food there: cassava. There was a lot to eat.

Author: This was in Zambia?

Son who assists with translation: No, in Angola. That Kuvuko River is near the border, maybe one day from the Kuvuko and you reach the border.

SaCindele: Then they said: 'You young men, you have experienced a lot. Now you can become a soldier. Why should you carry the cipoia of the Portuguese again, and suffer all the time? Your job will just be to take food to the sections. When there is meat, you take meat to the section, or flour. So that the soldiers can be strong to fight the Portuguese.' Then we learnt the songs, about MPLA is coming, you colonial you go.

Author: Can he sing?

Son: She asks you to sing, like [starts singing] 'MPLA eja [...]'

SaCindele: [sings in Nyemba] 'MPLA eja, Vampuevo, vanalume kuateni kumata, tuxeke Salazale, aie kuimbo liavo,' They said [in Portuguese]: 'All the people will get a weapon at hand.'<sup>72</sup>

Shortly after, SaCindele and part of his family were captured by the Portuguese at the Kuvuko River and taken to the Portuguese-controlled town of Cuito Cuanavale where they were imprisoned and interrogated. On release, SaCindele joined his wife and children and they continued living in Cuito Cuanavale until after Angolan independence.

---

<sup>72</sup> Interview with SaCindele (born near Cuito Cuanavale, year unknown: his ID says 1926, but he may be from 1940) in Kehemu (Rundu), 10 December 2009. Translation of the song: 'MPLA come, women, men, take up a gun and chase Salazar, so that he goes back to his home.'

## Concluding remarks

This article forms part of a 'micro-history' of African nationalist movements. Instead of a layer of political ideologies, international linkages and personal rivalries at the top, formalised in power struggles, schisms and even civil war, it explores 'things otherwise inaccessible'.<sup>73</sup> Robert Ross has explained why 'a history of a relatively small number of people in what is today an impoverished backwater of the country' can matter in various ways.<sup>74</sup> Inspired by this approach to study the 'underneath of things',<sup>75</sup> albeit in a very different manner, this contribution reaches beyond people carrying things during a guerrilla war in remote Eastern Angola. The concept of 'nationalism' has a 'modern' ring to it. Associated with modern statehood, often with socialism and secularism, and aiming at a break with colonial structures whilst heading towards a future of independence, nationalist movements in Africa are associated with 'modernity' and the future, rather than with 'tradition' and the past. Indeed 'modern mass nationalism'<sup>76</sup> - as it used to be called - undisputedly displays some characteristics of 'modernity': the emphasis on literacy, the attempts to construct state structures and bureaucratic rule, the fascination with military and other technology was - as elsewhere - important in the Angolan nationalist movements.<sup>77</sup> While colonial regimes sought to denigrate Africa's nationalist movements as backward and traditionalist, nationalists themselves placed their ideas and practices firmly within the paradigm of High Modernism.<sup>78</sup>

Yet, in many ways, Africa's nationalist movement also show elements of historical continuity. In the Angolan nationalist movements, we can mention the links between nationalism and cases of witchcraft and magic - so often associated with 'tradition',<sup>79</sup> the 'wealth-in-people' paradigm - said to have ended with the coming of colonialism,<sup>80</sup> and in this contribution I have shown

---

<sup>73</sup> Keith Wrightson, *Ralph Taylor's Summer: A Scrivener, his City and the Plague* (New Haven and London) xii-xiii, quoted in Robert Ross, *The Borders of Race in Colonial South Africa. The Kat River Settlement, 1829-1856* (Cambridge, 2014), 3.

<sup>74</sup> Ross, *Borders of Race*, 4 (quote)-11.

<sup>75</sup> Mariane C. Ferme, *The Underneath of Things: Violence, History, and the Everyday in Sierra Leone* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, London, 2001).

<sup>76</sup> Terence O. Ranger, 'Connexions between 'Primary Resistance' Movements and Modern Mass Nationalism in East and Central Africa', *Journal of African History*, 9;3 (1968), 437-453 and 9;4 (1968), 631-641.

<sup>77</sup> Brinkman, 'UPA Pamphlets', 293-310.

<sup>78</sup> James C. Scott, *Seeing Like a State. How Certain Schemes to Improve the Human Condition have Failed* (New Haven and London, 1998) introduction.

<sup>79</sup> Inge Brinkman, 'War, Witches and Traitors. Cases from the MPLA's Eastern Front in Angola (1966-1975)', *Journal of African History*, 44 (2003), 303-325.

<sup>80</sup> Jan Vansina, *Paths in the Rainforest. Toward a History of Political Tradition in Equatorial Africa* (London 1990) p. ; Jane I. Guyer and Samuel M. Eno Belinga, 'Wealth in People as Wealth in

how portage continued to remain a feature from the precolonial past throughout the colonial period, and how it played a role in the Angolan nationalist movements. Obviously, transport and communication in Angola have undergone vast changes in the course of history. In relation to guerrilla warfare, however, the importance of porters continued to play a role; interviewees held that even in the postcolonial era UNITA forced civilians into carrying arms and war materials.<sup>81</sup>

## Abbreviations

FNLA: Frente Nacional de Libertação de Angola.

MPLA: Movimento Popular de Libertação de Angola.

PIDE: Polícia Internacional e de Defesa do Estado.

UNITA: União Nacional para a Independência Total de Angola.

UPA: União das Populações de Angola.

---

Knowledge: Accumulation and Composition in Equatorial Africa', *Journal of African History* 36, 1 (1995) 118; I. Brinkman, 'War and Wealth-in-People. Political and Economic Principles in Southeast Angola's Recent History' (unpublished paper, 2013).

<sup>81</sup> Interviews: with a man born in Cuito Cuanavale, in 1972, Kehemu (Rundu), 28 July 1996; with 3 women, aged about 25, 50 and 70, stating that they were born in Namibia (they were Angolans, but too afraid to say so as they had no papers), Kehemu (Rundu), 30 July 1996; with a man, born in Cuito Cuanavale, in 1951, Kehemu (Rundu), 3 September 1996; with a woman from Huambo, born in 1951, Kaisosi (Rundu), 3 December 2009.

# The Enchantment of Weber's Iron Cage: Financialisation and Insurance in South Africa<sup>1</sup>

*Erik Bähre*

## *Weber's stahlhartes Gehäuse*

Over the past 20 years, Robert has helped me to explore ideas on the dynamics of freedom and conformity, on individualism and collectivism, and on how people deal with volatile relationships. Because of Robert's extraordinary and humbling understanding of South African history and his commitment to his students I was confident that he would gently caution me if my ideas were insufficiently grounded in social facts. These are central to this chapter, which explores why so many South Africans embrace a financial world that we often hold to be oppressive.

Since democratisation in 1994, South African insurance companies have expanded their business to predominantly African low-income households. Within a relatively short period of time, companies like Sanlam, Old Mutual, Liberty Life, and Metropolitan, have become a crucial part for dealing with risks,

---

<sup>1</sup> Acknowledgements: I thank the participants of the workshop 'Contributions to History', held in honour of Robert Ross, for their inspiring comments and conversations. I am grateful to Edith Moyikwa and Mandisa Kunju for their vital support during the fieldwork, the Actuarial Society of South Africa for facilitating the survey among its members, and Jan-Bart Gewald and Iva Peša for their editorial feedback on this paper. The author can be contacted on [ebaehre@fsw.leidenuniv.nl](mailto:ebaehre@fsw.leidenuniv.nl).

also for the poor and lower middle classes. In the townships of Cape Town insurance adverts have become ubiquitous. Their products are advertised on billboards along the motorways; local newspapers feature insurance adverts; television programmes broadcast commercials and infomercials that target African clients; insurance companies opened offices in townships from where sales agents visit train stations, schools, and people's homes; and a wide range of shops - ranging from supermarkets to furniture stores - have started selling insurance policies.

These sales strategies are showing results. Even those getting by on the unstable income that one of the household members provides, typically working as a cleaner, security guard or in another job that rarely pays more than the minimum wage, take out policies. By far the most popular insurance policies are funeral insurances. A survey that I developed, and which was carried out in two townships in Cape Town in 2005 and 2006, reveals that 63 per cent of the respondents had at least one funeral insurance. Unemployment insurance (UIF) was held by 44 per cent; 27 per cent had medical aid; 26 per cent a pension fund; and 24 per cent a mortgage that included an insurance policy.<sup>2</sup>

One could see this as a success even though the expectations of the industry were higher and the targets that the industry set itself were not likely to be met.<sup>3</sup> This relative success is in some ways surprising. First, many stories circulated about how people are cheated into policies, how clients are unsuccessful when they submit a claim, or how clients cancel policies because they can no longer afford them. It is clear that for the poor in particular the world of insurance does not always meet expectations.<sup>4</sup> Second, funeral insurances are by far the most popular product but they offer a risk that can be covered through burial societies. Neighbours, fellow migrants (in Xhosa *abakhaya* meaning 'those of one home') and sometimes also clan members organise a wide range of burial societies that offer money, help organise the

---

<sup>2</sup> Other policies that respondents had were the provident fund (16 per cent), education policies (8 per cent), car insurances (8 per cent), disability policies (5 per cent), the insurance of loan instalments on furniture (4 per cent), and investment funds (4 per cent).

<sup>3</sup> Insurance take out is distributed unequally among the population and it could well be that insurance policies are sold more actively in Cape Town, among others, because it is where the head offices of some of South Africa's major insurance companies are located. According to Finscope, in 2008, 16 per cent of low-income population had a funeral policy (Enders 2014), 3. On market expectations see I. Melzer and M. Smith, 'Towards a Benchmark for Access to Life Insurance in LSM 1-5', (Johannesburg, 2004), D. Porteous and E. Hazelhurst, *Banking on Change: Democratizing Finance in South Africa 1994-2004 and Beyond* (Cape town, 2004), D. Porteous, 'The Access Frontier as an Approach and Tool in Making Markets Work for the Poor', (Bankable Frontier Associates, 2005).

<sup>4</sup> see E. Bähre, 'The Janus Face of Insurance in South Africa: From Costs to Risk, from Networks to Bureaucracies', *Africa*, 82:1 (2012).

funeral, and provide emotional support to the bereaved.<sup>5</sup> Third, one can expect that the trust in burial societies is much higher than in commercial insurance companies. Historically, South African insurance companies, as other financial companies, focused on the white population and neglected Africans as clients. Financial inclusion was therefore one of the central policies of the post-apartheid government as laid down in the Reconstruction and Development Program.<sup>6</sup> This can also be expected from the analysis of trust by Giddens (1991) and Putnam (1993).<sup>7</sup> Both expect that trust historically starts within interpersonal relations and that over time such interpersonal trust can expand to trust in abstract institutions where personal relations are absent. Are we perhaps seeing such an expansion of trust from burial societies to funeral insurance, or more generally from financial mutuals to large-scale financial companies?<sup>8</sup> Why did insurance policies become popular within a relatively short time span?

The answer, I argue, lies partly in people's desire for the Weberian ideal type of impersonal bureaucracy. It might be the enchantment of an environment that, at least ideally, is stripped of sociality including its moralities, hierarchies, and emotional turmoil. Could it be that the enchantment of modernity is felt in the bureaucracy of insurance?<sup>9</sup> It seems that clients are not discouraged by what Weber saw as the 'polar nights of icy darkness' of modern bureaucracy.<sup>10</sup>

Weber stressed that the rational and impersonal bureaucracy is an ideal type that was far removed from everyday reality.<sup>11</sup> The same can be said for the clients that take out these insurance policies who know that insurances are far from ideal. The attraction of these large bureaucracies needs to be set against

---

<sup>5</sup> See E. Bähre, ed., *Money and Violence: Financial Self-Help Groups in a South African Township*, (Leiden, 2007), R. Lee, 'Death in Slow Motion: Funerals, Ritual Practice and Road Danger in South Africa', *African Studies* 71:2 (2012), R. Thomson and D. Posel, 'The Management of Risk by Burial Societies in South Africa', *South African Actuarial*, 2 (2002).

<sup>6</sup> ANC, *The Reconstruction and Development Programme: A Policy Framework* (Johannesburg, 1994), Ivan Turok, 'Restructuring or Reconciliation? South Africa's Reconstruction and Development Programme', *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research* 19 (1995).

<sup>7</sup> A. Giddens, *The Consequences of Modernity* (Cambridge, 1991), R.D. Putnam, *Making Democracy Work; Civic Traditions in Modern Italy* (Princeton, N.J., 1993).

<sup>8</sup> UIF is not so relevant in this respect because it is a legal requirement for people with certain types of employment.

<sup>9</sup> See P. Geschiere, *The Modernity of Witchcraft: Politics and the Occult in Postcolonial Africa* (Charlottesville, 1997), B. Meyer, *Translating the Devil: Religion and Modernity among the Ewe in Ghana* (Edinburgh, 1999), M. Taussig, *The Devil and Commodity Fetishism in South America* (Chapel Hill, 1980), H.U.E. Thoden van Velzen and Ineke van Wetering, *The Great Father and the Danger; Religious Cults, Material Forces, and Collective Fantasies in the World of the Surinamese Maroons* (Leiden, 1991).

<sup>10</sup> P. Lassman and R. Speirs, eds, *Max Weber, Political Writings. Cambridge Texts in the History of Political Thought* (Cambridge, 1994: xvi).

<sup>11</sup> See M. Herzfeld, *The Social Production of Indifference; Exploring the Symbolic Roots of Western Bureaucracy* (Chicago, 1992), 19.



the complexities of the personal relations in financial mutuals, such as burial societies and the other savings and credit groups that in Xhosa are called *imigalelo* (singl. *umgalelo*, which is derived from 'to pour').

The appeal of bureaucracy is present in *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* but has been deflected in its translation. Weber writes about the *stahlhartes Gehäuse* that characterised the disciplining forces of modernity.<sup>12</sup> Parsons translated this into the famous 'iron cage'. Baehr pointed out that this translation is 'hermeneutically superficial.'<sup>13</sup> First, a *Gehäuse* is not necessarily a cage. A cage provokes the image of being locked up, of involuntarily confinement, like in prison. Weber's *Gehäuse* has a more ambiguous meaning as it also means casing or shell, a word that suggests confinement *and* protection, a place that can be left. This ambiguous meaning is relevant to Weber's argument. He argues that it is not that people cannot escape the modern world, but rather, as Baehr (2001) put it, that 'Weber's bourgeois philistine [...] has his nose so close to the ground that he is incapable of aspiring to heaven or to any nonutilitarian value.'<sup>14</sup> Weber's point is that capitalism and modernity are characterised by the inability to realise that one is in a protective *and* confining casing that leads to the inability to aspire to escape.

Second, Weber writes about *stahlhart*, which literally means 'hard as steel'. Steel has a much stronger connection to progress and modernity than iron. This must almost certainly have been the case for Weber when he developed his thoughts that led to the publication of *The Protestant Ethic*. It was less than fifty years earlier that the invention of the Bessemer process made it possible to create steel at much lower costs than ever before.<sup>15</sup> Chicago was the first place in the world where steel was at the heart of an architectural revolution. The Great Chicago Fire of 1871 killed hundreds of people and left thousands homeless and destroyed large sections of the city's business district.<sup>16</sup> This tragedy created space for a new type of architecture, the Chicago School, which designed buildings around a steel frame, leading to the invention of the skyscraper, one of the symbols of American modernity. Chicago's Montauk Block (completed 1882), the Home Insurance Building (completed in 1884) and the Reliance building (completed in 1890) were the world's first steel frame

---

<sup>12</sup> See D. Chalcraft, 'Bringing the Text Back' in On Ways of Reading the Iron Cage Metaphor in the two editions of *The Protestant Ethic* in L.J. Ray and M. Reed, eds., *Organizing Modernity: New Weberian Perspectives on Work, Organization and Society* (London, 1994), 16-45 and P. Baehr, 'The "Iron Cage" and the "Shell as Hard as Steel": Parsons, Weber, and the Stahlhartes Gehäuse Metaphor in the Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism', *History and Theory* 40:2 (2001).

<sup>13</sup> P. Baehr, 'The "Iron Cage" and the "Shell as Hard as Steel"', 157.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.* 160.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.* 160-161.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*

buildings.<sup>17</sup> Max Weber and his wife Marianne were impressed by the new architecture of Chicago and Max Weber called the steel-framed skyscrapers ‘an expression of economic strength.’<sup>18</sup> It appears that when Weber wrote *The Protestant Ethic* he not only saw Chicago as a metaphor for the horrors and blessings of modernity in a general sense, but that his term *stahlhartes Gehäuse* was an almost exact translation of ‘steel framed building’.

Baehr points out: ‘Our own shell, in which we live and breathe, is our shelter and constraint, yet it allows choices of various kinds, movements and directions that are our own.’<sup>19</sup> Weber’s metaphor of *stahlhartes Gehäuse*, especially when one considers that it was inspired by the rebuilding of Chicago, might help us to appreciate the charm and possibly even enchantment of commercial insurances.

### The data (how information was collected)

The data on which this study is based was collected between 1995 and 2013 during several research stints, ranging from a few weeks to a year in length - about two and a half years of fieldwork in total. I held interviews with actuaries and others working in the insurance industry in Johannesburg and Cape Town, and interviewed people who were involved in selling insurance policies or were otherwise involved in the insurance world. However, most of the research was carried out in the townships of Cape Town, a city that is particularly interesting due to the strong presence of the insurance industry: many South African insurance companies have their headquarters here. Almost all of the residents of the studied areas are Xhosa who, with the abolition of apartheid, left the impoverished Bantustans Ciskei and Transkei to try to earn an income in the city.<sup>20</sup>

In 1995, Indawo Yoxolo was still a small squatter camp and, over the years, with the aid of governmental development funds, it transformed into a township with electricity, sanitation, paved roads, schools, a clinic, and demarcated and privately owned residential plots. Its residents are among the poorest of Cape Town and many live in shacks of corrugated iron sheets, wood, or other available and affordable building materials. Unemployment is a major concern and even ‘lucky’ residents earn little as security guards, cleaners, or

---

<sup>17</sup> See J.A. Rayfield, Tragedy in the Chicago Fire and Triumph in Architectural Response. Available online [www.lib.niu.edu/1997/jht419734.html](http://www.lib.niu.edu/1997/jht419734.html). Accessed 20-2-2015.

<sup>18</sup> Max Weber quoted in L. A. Scaff, *Max Weber in America* (Princeton, N.J., Press 2011), 42.

<sup>19</sup> P. Baehr, ‘The "Iron Cage" and the "Shell as Hard as Steel"’, 164.

<sup>20</sup> See R. Ross, ‘Getting to the New South Africa from the Old’, *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, (April 1996), R. Ross, *Status and Respectability in the Cape Colony 1750-1870: A Tragedy of Manners* (Cambridge, 1999).

nannies. Moreover, violence is a significant issue, not least because Indawo Yoxolo is ruled by a mafia-style organisation that controls all the development resources.<sup>21</sup>

Tembani is about five kilometres from Indawo Yoxolo and it is a very different neighbourhood. Tembani is one of the wealthier parts of Cape Town's largest African township, Khayelitsha. Many of its residents earn a salary as teachers, nurses, or civil servants, and some own small businesses that seem to be quite prosperous. The area consists largely of privately owned, two- or three-bedroom brick houses, some of which have a garage. Violence is not nearly as rampant in Tembani as it is in Indawo Yoxolo.

In addition to interviews, participant observation, and other standard ethnographic research methods, I developed two surveys. In 2005 and 2006, my research assistants Edith Moyikwa and Mandisa Kunju carried out a survey among 110 residents in Indawo Yoxolo and Tembani, about half from each area. This survey contained questions on, among other things, financial services, household composition, trust in institutions and personal networks, and concerns that people had about risks. The households were visited at different times of the day, including weekends and evenings. This was done to make sure that people who were working could also be interviewed. After Edith was robbed, while going door-to-door for interviews, and the robbers threatened to kill her, we decided that Edith's husband Vido would accompany them for security.

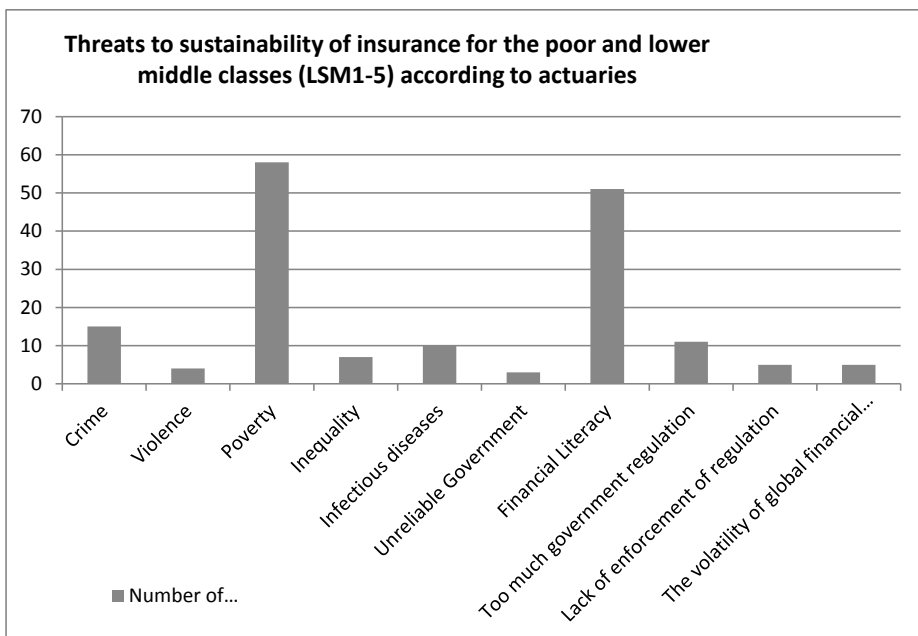
A second survey was carried out among members of the Actuarial Society of South Africa (ASSA) in November and December 2011. The survey was developed in consultation with ASSA and the South African branch of the international network Actuaries Without Borders. The survey contained questions on developments in the insurance sector in South Africa, on particular products, on the political landscape in South Africa, and on experiences with and opinions on insurance for low-income households that the financial sector roughly defines as Living Standards Measure (LSM) 1-5. I wrote an email invitation that contained a link to an online survey tool – but not freeware like SurveyMonkey because of privacy – and ASSA forwarded the email to its members who could complete the survey anonymously. I was told that ASSA had approximately 600 members and 79 responded to the invitation. Most respondents (74%) had some or a lot of experience with insurances for poorer households.

---

<sup>21</sup> E. Bähre, *Money and Violence*.

## What actuaries think their clients think

To some degree, actuaries have a clear understanding of the problems that poor South Africans have and the issues concerning risk that the policies that they design are expected to address. This is based on statistical information and is also due to the fact that actuaries are part of South African society and are thus confronted with its complexities. At the same time, it is undeniable that the actuarial profession is an elite white world that is far removed from the everyday life of the African low-income households for whom they design insurance products.



For actuaries it was clear that poverty was one of the main problems. In the survey, actuaries were asked to identify up to three of the most important hazards for the sustainability of insurance for low-income households, here defined as LSM1-5. Poverty was in the top three of the main concerns for 85% of the actuaries. Poverty, actuaries told me during conversations at their offices, is a problem of insecure income, irregular employment, little education, and it leads to family circumstances that make it difficult to afford insurance. Even when poor people take out a policy they are more likely to cancel it, which is seen as a problem for the client - who loses the protection that the insurance

offers - and for the insurance company, who loses a client. Due to poverty, insurance companies can only offer policies that cover a very limited amount of risks, such as funeral insurance, and the relatively high costs of managing such small policies have to be included in the monthly premium.<sup>22</sup>

The second hazard that actuaries identified was financial literacy (73%). Actuaries pointed out that: people often do not understand the products; that they do not understand a basic concept like insurance; that they lack financial skills; that they have problems with budgeting and administration; and that a limited command of English creates many misunderstandings. But the engagement with actuaries revealed that financial literacy is more broadly defined. Conversations sometimes ended up being about the personal characteristics of people, characteristics that had to change through financial education. Financial literacy is about the building of character and about morality.<sup>23</sup> In 2008, the government initiated the annual July National Savings Month, hoping that especially the youth would be socialised into saving more and relying less on credit. A wide range of programmes were designed to install a new 'culture of saving' that would teach people to delay gratification and stop living from day-to-day.<sup>24</sup> The discourse of these programmes suggested that over indebtedness, bad financial planning, and problematic financial decisions were as much, or maybe even more so, a personality problem as they were structural problems.

As Peter, an actuary who set up a group scheme for African clients, explained to me from his Johannesburg office: 'We now live in an entitlement society. There is no sense of delayed gratification by the poor and this results in a big push to get things now.' Peter argues that society has changed: 'Black society does everything for a great funeral,' and he continues to lament how the government strengthens people's feelings of entitlement and how people's behaviour adds to the cost of health insurance: 'People do not visit a doctor but

---

<sup>22</sup> See E. Bähre, 'The Janus Face of Insurance in South Africa'.

<sup>23</sup> See also D. James, *Money for Nothing: Indebtedness and Aspiration in South Africa* (Stanford, CA, 2014).

<sup>24</sup> Examples of promoting the culture of saving can be found on: <http://sanews.gov.za/south-africa/young-people-introduced-culture-savings> and: <http://mg.co.za/article/2012-08-08-turning-south-africa-into-a-nation-of-savers>. On financial education and gambling among South Africa's poor, see Ilana van Wyk, 'Tata Ma Chance': On Contingency and the Lottery in Post-Apartheid South Africa' *Africa* 82:1 (2012), 45-46). On the morality of financial education related to credit and how this emphasises personal characteristics above the structural causes of debt, see Deborah James, *Money for Nothing*, especially p. 216-224.

a witchdoctor and then they wait too long before they get proper medical help.<sup>25</sup>

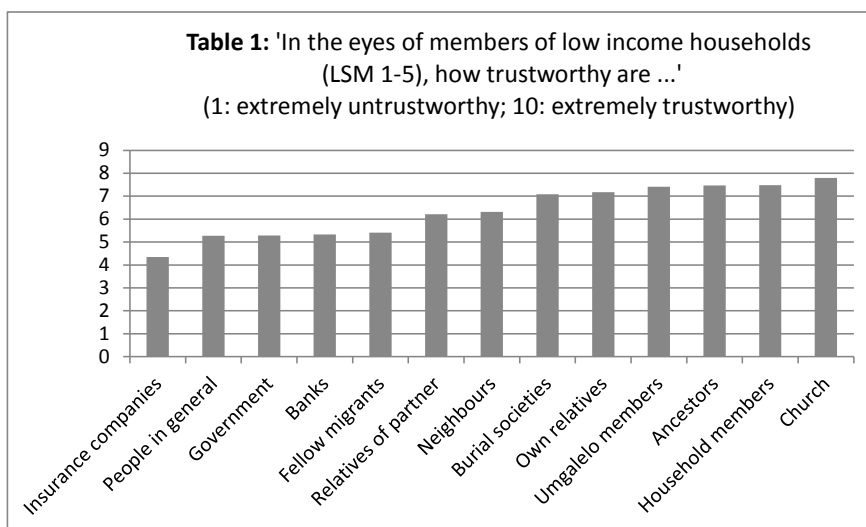
An actuary in his thirties, who highlighted that he felt that he was part of a new generation that was not tainted by apartheid, explained to me that his company tried to hide its identity: 'This company is seen as a snooty brand. Therefore we are working with Standard Bank and that works very well. We also work together with a clothing company that is popular among people with a low income. You have to build on social capital through banks, retailers, and churches.'

A conversation with two actuaries at their office in Cape Town took a similar turn. One of them explained to me: 'The consumer has a short time horizon. It is better to develop policies that also deliver after five years. A pure risk product is less popular than if a savings component is available.' Their insurance company felt that they could solve this problem by developing products that combined savings – where clients would receive some money every couple of years – with that of insurance where clients would only receive money in compensation for the loss that the insurance covered. Both said that informal financial arrangements such as burial societies only aggravated the problem of poverty: 'It should stop that ministers of churches take money out of these clubs. Informal arrangements are very difficult.' They argued that community sharing is high risk and that their products were better but were misunderstood. In general, actuaries felt that they had to bridge this gap; that in addition to financial education they had to make financial products that emphasised the collective and the group, and which combined short-term incentives with long-term security.

In the survey among actuaries, I asked actuaries how they thought that low-income households would evaluate the trustworthiness of insurance companies and other institutions and personal relations. The survey question was: 'In the eye of members of low-income households (LSM 1-5), how trustworthy are [...]'; this was followed by a list of different institutions and networks. Respondents could answer on a scale from one 'extremely untrustworthy' to ten 'extremely trustworthy'.

---

<sup>25</sup> Bill Maurer argued that the plea for a socialisation of finance underestimates the complexity of these relations and systematically underestimates the value of calculative rationality. B. Maurer, 'Resocializing Finance? Or Dressing it in Mufti? Calculating alternatives for cultural economies', *Journal of Cultural Economy* 1:1 (2008).



The responses show that actuaries think that insurance companies are the least trustworthy of all, followed by 'people in general', government and banks. They expected that the insurance companies they worked for would be trusted the least (average of 4.4)<sup>26</sup> and also other large bureaucracies, the government and banks were expected not to be seen as trustworthy (average of 5.3 and 5.3, respectively). Actuaries expected that low-income households would have greater trust in burial societies (7.1), *umgalelo* members (7.4), the church, the ancestors, and household members.

According to the survey, actuaries expected that the poor would distrust large institutions that involved money like banks, insurance companies and the government, and would have much more trust in personal relations, even when they were set up around the pooling of money, such as the burial society and the *umgalelo*.<sup>27</sup> In the same survey, nearly two thirds (65 per cent) of the actuaries expected that this part of the population preferred burial societies above funeral insurance. The main reasons for this preference was that actuaries expected that these clients believe that burial societies are more trustworthy and that people enjoy the social aspect that funeral insurance does

<sup>26</sup> This can be partly explained because one is most familiar with the shortcomings of the world you are part of. These dynamics has been developed in detail in: M. Herzfeld, *Cultural Intimacy: Social Poetics in the Nation State*, (Routledge, 2005).

<sup>27</sup> The position of the church is more ambiguous as some churches are very large and others are congregations of a few dozen people.

not offer.<sup>28</sup> The insurance sector has therefore developed a marketing strategy that emphasises community and personal relations, to develop an image that they believe to be closer to the world that poor clients lived in; a world that they expect to be characterised by distrust in large financial institutions and high levels of trust in personal networks and social organisations such as burial societies. Insurance companies set up a wide range of group schemes that emphasise a collective identity and community; for example, by offering a funeral insurance in cooperation with the fan club of the Kaiser Chiefs, one of South Africa's most popular soccer clubs, or by offering insurance through burial societies, singing clubs, churches, and a wide range of other groups.<sup>29</sup> But the perception that actuaries have of how poorer clients perceive large financial bureaucracies, like insurance companies and personal networks like burial societies, appears to be fundamentally wrong.

### Precarious cooperation

The residents of Indawo Yoxolo and Tembani had many stories about problems that people had experienced with insurance companies and readily told me about how proper claims were not granted and how they felt, and sometimes also were, cheated by brokers, as well as how the complex bureaucracies made it impossible to claim successfully.<sup>30</sup> For these reasons I expected that trust in insurance companies would be very low, but the survey among the residents in Indawo Yoxolo and Tembani offered a different picture. They were asked to indicate how trustworthy specific organisations and networks were and could give an answer on a scale of extremely untrustworthy (1) to extremely trustworthy (10). The survey among the residents of these two Cape Town townships revealed very different results than the survey among actuaries. The lowest scores were for the *umgalelo* (4.9) 'people in general' (5.1) and burial societies (6.0). Household members were regarded as the most trustworthy (9.1), followed by banks (8.9). Insurance companies were also seen as quite trustworthy (6.8).

Actuaries overrated the trust that low-income households had in personal relations, especially those that involved money and that were not based on

---

<sup>28</sup> Nearly all (89 per cent) said that they expected that their LSM1-5 clients felt that burial societies were more trustworthy than funeral insurance, while two out of three actuaries also expected that LSM 1-5 clients preferred burial societies because of its social aspects.

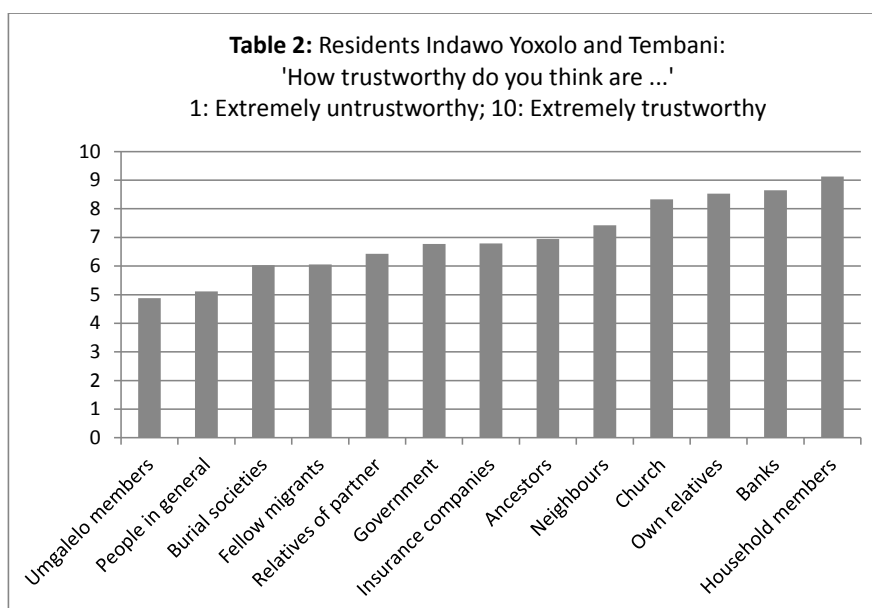
<sup>29</sup> An advert for Hollard's Kaizer Chief Plan can be seen here: [www.youtube.com/watch?v=OwrgDvZpk8M](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OwrgDvZpk8M). Accessed 5 February 2015. See also E. Bähre, 'The Janus Face of Insurance in South Africa'.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*



kinship (the *imigalelo* and burial societies). Actuaries grossly underestimated their trust in large-scale financial institutions such as insurance companies and especially banks. The marketing strategy of insurance companies seemed to be based on a misconception that clients were looking for communities and social organisations in which they could entrust their money.

There seems to be an enchantment with bureaucratic organisations, which many associate with apartheid, and which are run by a predominantly white elite, and where there is relatively little space for personal relations. This enchantment that can partly be explained by the double meaning of *stahlhartes Gehäuse*, but should also be understood in relation to the alternative of circulating money in burial societies and *imigalelo* that were established by neighbours, fellow migrants, and sometimes also other personal relations. To understand the interest in insurance one therefore needs to examine the experiences that people have with burial societies and *imigalelo*.



Mbulelo was born in Encobo, which until 1994 was part of the apartheid Bantustan Transkei. He moved to Cape Town's township Langa in 1971 and became a member of the newly founded Didi Burial Society. The society was called Didi Burial Society because all the members were from the area near the

village Didi, which is located halfway between Umtata, the capital of the former Bantustan Transkei, and Port St. Johns. Over the next 40 years Mbulelo lived in a few other places in Cape Town and in the mid-1990s he moved to Indawo Yoxolo, where he ran a little neighbourhood *spaza shop* selling, among other things, sugar, soap, matches and cooking oil. During these years Mbulelo remained a member of the burial society but several conflicts had changed the organisation.

Mbulelo vividly recalled how status was connected to financial support. It was not very common for children to die in Cape Town during apartheid as laws made it much more likely that children would stay with family in the Bantustan.<sup>31</sup> But in 1985 a child died unexpectedly during a family visit to Cape Town. The child's father was a member of the Didi Burial Society and the members started to collect some money for the funeral. Mbulelo thinks that they collected between R10 to R20 (at that time, approximately 25 to 50 GBP), which was the usual amount. The board of Didi then decided to also pay for and organise the funeral, even though this was against the society's constitution and would cost much more. The board bought a coffin for the child, paid for the body to be brought to the Transkei, and paid for other expenses as well. Mbulelo was upset that the rules were not followed and he was convinced that this was because the child's family was wealthy and had status. Not much later, the death of another member was treated differently. An old man had been sick for quite some time before he died and, due to his illness, he had missed three payments. The burial society's constitution was very clear: If a member missed three payments in a row, that member and his or her dependents had no rights to entitlements or services. At the same time, it was possible to make exceptions, especially when payments missed due to sickness. Didi members debated whether they should make an exception or not. Mbulelo as well as other members argued that the bereaved were entitled to financial and organisational support. They argued that the old man was willing to pay but that he had been too sick to do so. But the board Didi decided that the bereaved were not entitled to financial or other support but also realised that they had to find a way to have the man buried, preferably in the Transkei. The board decided to lend the money to the bereaved family. The family accepted the loan, organised the funeral and eventually paid the money back. Mbulelo and other members of Didi felt that the burial society should have been more sympathetic. He was certain that the board's decision was due to the low status of the deceased and his family.

---

<sup>31</sup> See J.S. Sharp and A.D. Spiegel, 'Vulnerability to Impoverishment in South African Rural Areas; the Erosion of Kinship and Neighborhood as Social Resources', *Africa* 55:2 (1985).

The way in which the board dealt with these two deaths caused Didi to split into three. Two groups consisted of migrants who had been in favour of paying for the old man's funeral. One group called themselves the Maya Burial Society after a smaller area within the Didi area, which was close to the place where the old man came from. The other protesters called themselves Didi Ulahliweyu which meant 'Didi Thrown Away'. This group comprised disgruntled members who were not from the Maya area, like Mbulelo. The members that had supported the board's decision renamed themselves Masekodube meaning 'Let's Go Home'.

Didi Ulahliweyu came to an agreement with another burial society called Qinqana, a place not too far away from Didi. The two organisations remained separate but decided to contribute R400 to the funerals organised by the other society. It was a token of solidarity among fellow migrants but also a way to use transport efficiently. In return for the R400 they would get a few seats in the minibus that accompanied the corpse to the Transkei.

People living in the Didi district were unhappy that their relatives in Cape Town were not cooperating. The conflicts in Cape Town had started to affect kinship and clan relations in the Transkei, particularly because some clan members had family members in different burial societies. The conflicts in Cape Town were seen as unacceptable and they were affecting life in the Transkei; under pressure, the three burial societies got together and united under the name Didi. But the cooperation between the three organisations was limited and perhaps more cosmetic, designed to appease clan and kin in the Transkei. The three groups remained distinct identities with distinct boards and distinct funds. The change was that whenever a member of one of the three groups died, the other two groups would each contribute R800 to the funeral costs. In return, they would each receive three seats in the minibus to the Transkei. The cooperation between Qinqana and Didi Ulahliweyu also continued.

After a member of Didi Ulahliweyu died in 1996, this form of cooperation stopped again. The deceased was a poor migrant man and, as Mbulelo remembered:

We notified the others and all groups contributed [to the funeral expenses] and we hired a minibus to the Transkei [which by then had become part of the Eastern Cape Province, but which was still spoken of as Bantustan]. When we returned to Cape Town the minibus broke down and the two other groups pointed the finger at us: 'You are responsible,' they said. The minibus owner promised to send another vehicle but he did not do so. We were stuck on the road without transport and we had to hire another minibus. The owner of the broken minibus later refused to pay for these additional costs. The two other groups, Maya and Masekodube, refused to contribute to the extra costs and we ended up paying for everything ourselves. That is why we split again.

Maya and Masekodube continued to cooperate without Didi Ulahliwey and shortly after they were struck by misfortune. Maya and Masekodube members were returning from the funeral of a Maya member in the Eastern Cape when the minibus broke down. They too had to hire a second minibus in order to get home, but Masekodube and Maya decided to share the cost. Although Mbulelo feels vindicated he adds that it is also uncomfortable meeting the members of Maya and Masekodube. It seems that Mbulelo is concerned that the Did Ulahliwey members could be accused of witchcraft: 'They know that what they did to us now happened to them.'

Mbulelo's experience with these financial constraints, complex identity politics and concerns about morality and respectability are not exceptional. For burial societies to work - and they often work well - members have to intensively navigate complex personal relations. In this instance, these are relations among fellow migrants called *abakhaya* in Xhosa. This can be translated as 'migrants from the same home' and refers to kinship relations that are affected by the long distance between the former Bantustan Transkei and Cape Town, as well as the responsibility and respect for the deceased. The reciprocal obligations that burial societies are built on are strongly entangled with reciprocal obligations among fellow migrants; obligations that are felt towards kin and neighbours as well as other relations, each with a wide range of moral obligations. These moralities were at the core of the social tensions that Mbulelo experienced.<sup>32</sup>

### Tense neighbourliness

Sandile and his wife took care of two small dogs. The dogs were not theirs but belonged to friends who temporarily could not take care of them. The dogs would usually be in the fenced yard in front of Sandile's house. One day, however, one dog crawled under the fence into the neighbours front yard, chased the neighbour's cat and killed it. To avoid further problems, Sandile put the two dogs on a leash so they could still be in the front yard but not escape through the fence. But the owner of the cat wanted to retaliate and he started to throw rocks at the dogs who, being on a leash, could not escape. Sandile phoned the dogs' owners who jumped in their car and drove to Sandile's house. When they arrived they started to intimidate Sandile's neighbour. They said:

'A dog is a dog, there is nothing it can do about its behaviour. Your cat should know when to run away. Who are you, are you also a dog? You are surely acting like one, throwing stones at our dogs'!

---

<sup>32</sup> See also E. Bähre, *Money and Violence*.

Then they started to beat the man with their fists. The man entered Sandile's house and returned with a large axe in his hand and threatened the neighbour, after which the neighbour ran off. He later told me that he never intended to use the axe on Sandile's neighbour and only wanted to intimidate him. He felt it was very funny that it worked so well and told me: 'Nobody touches my dogs, you should let people know that they cannot play with you and you have to make it clear that you will defend yourself.' For Sandile and his wife this whole incident was very unfortunate as it severely damaged the relationship with their neighbours, who eventually moved.

Such neighbourhood dynamics might make the *stahlhartes Gehäuse* of bureaucracy, especially when it facilitates individualisation, seem like an appealing alternative. This seemed to be particularly so for Vivian. Vivian decided to abandon burial societies and *imigalelo* altogether. Vivian lives in a five-roomed house in Tembani where she moved in 1994. She lives there with her nine-month-old daughter, three of her brothers, and her sister-in-law. The same year, she joined the Universal Church of the Kingdom of God, a neo-Pentecostal church of Brazilian origin.<sup>33</sup> She explains to me: 'God found me. I did nothing for God in return, I joined because God does a lot for me.' She is an assistant in the church and helps with services, visits members of the congregation in hospital and prays for them. She works for the local government council. When she started, in 1986, she had a standard 8 certificate and 20 years later she had completed her Masters in Public Administration at the University of the Western Cape. 'I paid for it myself,' Vivian proudly adds. It was very hard for her to study as she was often the only breadwinner in the house.

In the past, Vivian had participated in three burial societies. In 1989 she left the burial societies that were organised by fellow migrants from the Eastern Cape and by her fellow clan members. In 2004, she left the burial society that was set up in her neighbourhood. The church was more important for her than these societies: 'I have to take care of my spiritual life and the people from the burial society did not understand this.'

In 2002 and 2003 she left two *imigalelo*, both of them saving groups. One of the groups met monthly and the money they collected was put into an account. By the end of the year, in December 2002, they were going to divide the money. Vivian trusted the members of this group. They were her neighbours as well as

---

<sup>33</sup> On this church in South Africa, see E. Bähre, 'Liberation and Redistribution: Social Grants, Commercial Insurance, and Religious Riches in South Africa', *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 53:2 (2011), I. van Wyk, *The Universal Church of the Kingdom of God: A Church of Strangers* (Cambridge, 2014).

former neighbours from the location where one of her neighbours used to live. The former neighbours were police officers, which for her only made them more trustworthy. The personal networks and close proximity also provided some opportunity for social control. But when the money was divided in December, they noticed that a substantial amount was missing. During the meeting it became clear that the police officers had stolen it. An argument developed and the police officers pulled their guns and held her and other neighbours at gunpoint. They left and the money was gone. There was nothing that Vivian could do. The group disintegrated after this incident and Vivian decided to join another *umgalelo* in January 2003. This group was not set up by her neighbours but by the parents of a friend. Vivian thought she could trust these personal relations. She went to the monthly meetings, saved money which was deposited into a bank account, and some of the money could be borrowed by members. These loans of R100 had to be paid back the next month with 30% interest. This is a lot but one should also remember that the interest is not lost but shared among the members at the end of the year. By the end of the year they were going to buy groceries at a wholesaler, which was a lot cheaper, but often only sold household items in bulk; it also required transport. That said, it was much more practical to buy like this as a group and then divide the groceries. Some of the money would not be spent on groceries but given in cash to the members. The members could use the money in the way that they felt was best and many would use it to pay for a trip to the Eastern Cape for the Christmas holidays and maybe buy a sheep there to share with family and neighbours. When, in December, the groceries were bought and divided and the cash was given to the members, Vivian was very disappointed. The groceries were far too little and there was not even R400 for her to buy a sheep. For her, this was the last time she would join such a group: 'I have no time for them anymore.' Vivian does not trust her neighbours, or her fellow migrants, or her ancestors. She never invites a neighbour into her house for a meal and they never ask her to lend them some money. It seems she has little confidence in reciprocal relations in general, except maybe for the reciprocal relations among members of her own household.

Vivian does trust her church and insurance companies. The ontology of wealth in the Universal Church of the Kingdom of God and that of insurance policies is in some ways similar. Both are based on a notion of redistribution, where money is pooled in a fund from where it is shared among the members.<sup>34</sup> Vivian has five funeral policies with Avbob, Metropolitan, AIG, ABSA, and Standard Bank. She has a pension fund with Metropolitan; a medical insurance

---

<sup>34</sup> For a historical analysis of the similarities between insurance and certain neo-Pentecostal churches, see E. Bähre, 'Liberation and Redistribution'.

with Bonitas; a car insurance with Auto & General; and a provident fund (she is not sure of the company) that runs via her work. She says she does not have an Unemployment Insurance Fund (UIF) but given her employment status I suspect that she might have it without being aware of it.<sup>35</sup> Vivian feels strongly that these insurance policies help her to be responsible and help her to take care of herself and others. Vivian has also experienced that insurances can disappoint. Her husband died in 2004 after he was drawn into a fight and was shot twice. Vivian submitted a claim with an insurance company and because his death was an accident she expected the insurance company to double the usual benefits, as was stipulated in the policy papers. She was disappointed when the insurance company did not double the benefits and argued that his death was due to a crime, not an accident: 'They said that it was a crime because he was shot twice and not once.' Nonetheless, she prefers insurances to burial societies and *imigalelo*. When insurances create problems, she believes, it is often due to the way they become part of social networks. She says she regularly sees how people take advantage of someone's death; how they take out funeral policies on people who are not related; how they try to make money on someone's death; how they take out insurance policies on sick people so they can profit when they die; how family members steal money from the widow or widower, leaving the household of the deceased without anything.

### Conclusion: The *stahlhartes Gehäuse* of sociality

In order to examine the attraction of commercial insurance it is necessary to examine the interdependence between insurance and mutual help that people receive through personal networks. This becomes clear when the configuration of people's social and institutional networks is taken as the starting point of the analysis.

Actuaries typically expect that their prospective clients have little trust in insurance companies, banks, and the government. They expect that people with a lower income, mostly Africans, have much more trust in neighbourhood-based financial mutuals, such as burial societies and *imigalelo*. Based on this perception they develop insurance products that emphasise the social and the collective, and in order to hide their identity they cooperate with burial societies and other social groups. This perception shows how, in some ways, South African society is divided by race and class. This results in actuaries and others working in the insurance industry having a stereotypical image of their

---

<sup>35</sup> UIF premium is automatically deducted by the employer from the employee's salary.

prospective clients. Such an image also seems to drive financial education, which is not only seen as an education in financial skills, but also a transformation of the norms and values of consumer culture where people demand instant gratification.

Residents of Indawo Yoxolo and Tembani find banks, insurance companies, churches, and the government more trustworthy than actuaries expected them to be. Moreover, they have much less trust in burial societies and *imigalelo* than actuaries imagine. They trust banks more than they trust their own ancestors, and have more trust in insurance companies than they have in the mutual aid organisations that are set up between neighbours.

Weber's original metaphor of *stahlhartes Gehäuse* offers much more space for the dynamics of security and confinement than Parson's prevailing translation 'iron cage'. 'Iron cage' lacks connotations that are crucial in order to appreciate the way in which Xhosa clients living in the townships in Cape Town are often ready to voluntarily engage with these large-scale and, in many respects, impersonal bureaucratic organisations. Weber's metaphor of society as a *stahlhartes Gehäuse* may have been inspired by his visit to the United States. He saw with his own eyes how Chicago was rebuilt after the Great Fire; a rebuilding in which steel-frame construction revolutionised architectural design and in which the skyscraper has become a hallmark for modernity.

Weber's metaphor of *stahlhartes Gehäuse* not only defines modern society with its view of the icy cold darkness of bureaucracy, but also offers protection and care. This ideal type of society is not based on personal relations and is not burdened by personal dependencies.

The enchantment with commercial insurance might lie in the hope that it alleviates some of the strains that are felt when care and money are part of personal relationships among neighbours but also clan members and between fellow migrants. The reason for taking out insurance policies, mostly funeral policies, is that they offer people a way to relax about personal dependencies that not only take a lot of time but that also reproduce a wide range of social hierarchies. These hierarchies seem to revolve largely around respectability. For some it is easier to be respected than others, depending on one's wealth, social status, and gender. For an insurance company everyone is the same, at least that is the bureaucratic ideal. Maybe one can talk of the *stahlhartes Gehäuse* of relations that were built during an exploitative political and economic regime and commercial insurance makes it possible to relax some of these tensions. The *stahlhartes Gehäuse* of bureaucracy to some extent frees people from the *stahlhartes Gehäuse* of mutual obligations among migrants and neighbours.



# Subverting the Standard View of the Cape Economy: Robert Ross's Cliometric Contribution and the Work it Inspired<sup>1</sup>

*Johan Fourie*<sup>2</sup>

For much of twentieth-century scholarship, the capitalist, industrialising South African economy began with the 1860s discovery of diamonds in the interior. The Cape Colony of the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries was, to quote some prominent authors, a 'social and economic backwater,' 'more of a static than a progressing community,' a slave-based subsistence economy that 'advanced with almost extreme slowness.'<sup>3</sup> The traditional view was that although pockets of wealth emerged close to Cape Town during the eighteenth century,<sup>4</sup> this relative affluence was overshadowed by the increasing poverty of the frontier farmers who, 'living for the most part in isolated homesteads, gained a scanty subsistence by the pastoral industry and hunting.'<sup>5</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> I would like to thank Jan-Bart Gewald and Iva Pesa for inviting me to a workshop in honour of Robert Ross (in Leiden during September 2014) and for participants of this workshop for providing valuable feedback and suggestions.

<sup>2</sup> Department of Economics, Stellenbosch University, South Africa. E-mail: johanf@sun.ac.za.

<sup>3</sup> S. Trapido, 'From Paternalism to Liberalism: The Cape Colony, 1800–1834', *The International History Review*, 12, 1990, 76–104; M.H. de Kock, *Economic History of South Africa* (Cape Town, 1924), 24, 40.

<sup>4</sup> L. Guelke and R. Shell, 'An Early Colonial Landed Gentry: Land and Wealth in the Cape Colony, 1682–1731', *Journal of Historical Geography* 9, 1983, 265–286.

<sup>5</sup> De Kock, *Economic History*, 40.

In the 1980s, Robert Ross, economic and social historian of the Cape, subverted this view by extolling the virtue of numbers. He was the first to recognise the value of the mass of Cape production statistics assiduously collected by the Dutch East India Company.<sup>6</sup> Ross argued that the belief that early Cape farmers 'overproduced' during the first half of the eighteenth century - that the market was too small to absorb the rising production of wheat, wine and meat - was 'not only empirically false, but also conceptually absurd.'<sup>7</sup> He showed that consumption was rising too, driven not only by the demand from ships sailing between Europe and the East, but also by an expanding domestic market of Company officials and settler farmers.

Ross's seminal arguments of the 1980s, and his hard work digitising the production records of the Colony, breathed new life into a neglected area of South African history. Yet, more than two decades later, his cliometric contribution often goes unnoticed. In this paper, I summarise a new body of work that uses econometric techniques and largely confirms Ross's arguments. In the introduction to her recent history of mining in South Africa, Jade Davenport suggests that before mining began in the latter half of the nineteenth century, 'South Africa was a sleepy colonial backwater whose unpromising landscape was seemingly devoid of any economic potential.'<sup>8</sup> Robert Ross and his students would not agree.

### The traditional view

When three ships arrived bearing VOC officials and workmen in the autumn of 1652 to establish a refreshment station at the Cape of Good Hope, the best the new arrivals could hope for was a mild winter. Work began immediately on the construction of a fort. The leader of the party, Jan van Riebeeck, experimented with a variety of crops, vegetables and fruit to feed the fledgling community and supply fresh produce to the ships passing between Holland and the East Indies. Those early years were tough; Van Riebeeck repeatedly wrote to the VOC to explain the precariousness of the station's food supply, as the original plan to trade with the local Khoesan was not delivering the desired results. The Khoesan were less than enthusiastic about trading. Not only had the arriving Europeans displaced them from their winter-rainfall grazing areas, but they were demanding the one commodity the Khoesan valued above all, cattle. In 1657, realising that Company efforts alone would not suffice to produce enough

---

<sup>6</sup> *Vereenigde Oost-Indische Compagnie*, hereafter VOC, or the Company.

<sup>7</sup> P. van Duin and R. Ross, *The Economy of the Cape Colony in the 18th Century* (Leiden, 1987), 3.

<sup>8</sup> J. Davenport, *Digging Deep: A History of Mining in South Africa* (Johannesburg and Cape Town, 2013), 1.

for the passing ships, Van Riebeeck released nine Company servants to become free settlers on lands close to the fort. The process of land dispossession and colonisation had begun.

Van Riebeeck had envisaged a tight-knit community of crop farmers, but the cost of crop cultivation and the poor soil of the Cape Peninsula - bar the areas close to Table Mountain - meant that most early farmers chose to practise stock farming. His journal describes the difficult conditions the early farmers faced; many chose to stow away on ships leaving for Holland, preferring a life of poverty in Holland to one of hardship at the isolated Cape. The situation changed little until Commander Simon van der Stel, later the first governor of the Colony, expanded the territory into the fertile area west of the first mountain ranges. Boosted by the arrival of 160 Huguenots in 1688, production finally reached a level to satisfy the demand of the passing ships around the turn of the eighteenth century.

Because the Company set prices for the various commodities, which all had to be sold to the Company itself, farmers were obliged to keep their input costs as low as possible. The Company was willing to help, offering in-kind loans of seed and equipment to the new settler arrivals. But the farmers were seriously hampered by the shortage of labour. A VOC law prohibited them from enslaving the Khoesan and the wages they offered were too low to entice the free-roaming Khoesan to work as labourers. The Company therefore decided to import slave labour. The first slaves had already arrived in the 1650s, but most were employed by the Company itself and it was only by the turn of the century that the private ownership of slaves, mostly from regions on the east coast of Africa and the Indies, became widespread. Early in the eighteenth century the number of slaves surpassed the number of settlers.

Traditionally, scholars based their interpretations of the wealth of these settler farmers on anecdotal accounts by travellers, Company ordinances and letters of complaint written by the farmers themselves. The poverty of the early farmers is juxtaposed with the affluence of the elite. On one side would be the church collecting money to give to needy farmers whose 'naked children were sleeping in the hay with horses and cattle,'<sup>9</sup> and on the other the Governor and his council in 1755 issuing a *plakkaat* with a view to 'limiting the number of horses, carriages, jewels, slaves, etc. which an individual of this or that rank might possess'.<sup>10</sup> Although similar ordinances had been issued earlier, the High Government in Batavia noted in the preamble to this 1755 ordinance that the

---

<sup>9</sup> J.H. Coetzee, *Verarming en oorheersing* (Cape Town, 1942), 41.

<sup>10</sup> H. Giliomee, *The Afrikaners* (Cape Town, 2003), 30. A *plakkaat* was an ordinance, known as a sumptuary law.

'splendour and pomp among various Company servants and burghers' had 'reached such a peak of scandal' that the problem had to be dealt with more seriously.<sup>11</sup> Visitors also noted the expensive tastes of some farmers. In 1783, a traveller to the region wrote that on several farms he had observed 'nothing except signs of affluence and prosperity, to the extent that, in addition to splendours and magnificence in clothes and carriages, the houses are filled with elegant furniture and the tables decked with silverware and served by tidily clothed slaves.'<sup>12</sup>

The prosperity of the elite provided a sharp contrast to the representations of life on the frontier. Travel diaries document the abject poverty of many frontier families, who often lived in wagons and tents. MHO Woeke, the first colonial official of Graaff-Reinet, described his living quarters as 'a hut [...] without door or glass windows, where the wind continuously blows dust inside.'<sup>13</sup> Carl Peter Thunberg, a Swedish botanist in the interior during the 1770s, noted the use of tanned animal skins for ropes, bags and blankets, and even as clothes for the poorest of the poor.<sup>14</sup>

The impression of a generally impoverished Colony - apart from 'pockets of wealth'<sup>15</sup> that existed close to Cape Town - that could be deduced from these anecdotal sources gave rise to two twentieth-century narratives: the Afrikaner-nationalist narrative of a 'people that saved itself' from the throes of poverty and the anti-apartheid narrative expounding the backwardness and racism of the Afrikaner people.

Here is F.A. van Jaarsveld on the pre-nineteenth-century settlement:

Although an Afrikaner nation existed by 1836, it had little idea of its own existence, no collective 'history' and even less awareness of its destiny. The majority simply existed. The isolation of the farms exacerbated the situation. Only on the Eastern frontier, where the white trekboere had established contact with the Bantu for sixty years, did a greater degree of group consciousness develop. No stimulus and no great common risk existed in the other areas of the Colony to spark and enliven such a consciousness.<sup>16</sup>

In a similar vein (but for different reasons), Alistair Sparks's *The Mind of South Africa* neatly captures the anti-apartheid narrative:

[T]he mind of the Afrikaner was shaped during the six generations they were lost in Africa: a people who missed the momentous developments of eighteenth-century Europe, the age

<sup>11</sup> R. Ross, *Status and Respectability in the Cape Colony, 1750-1870: A Tragedy of Manners* (Cambridge, 1999), 9.

<sup>12</sup> S.D. Naudé, *Willem Cornelis Boers* (Cape Town, 1950), 414.

<sup>13</sup> A.L. Müller, *Die Ekonomiese Ontwikkeling van Suid-Afrika* (Pretoria, 1980), 26.

<sup>14</sup> C.P. Thunberg, *Carl Peter Thunberg: Travels at the Cape of Good Hope, 1772-1775* (Cape Town, 1986), 52.

<sup>15</sup> Guelke and Shell, 'An Early Colonial Landed Gentry'.

<sup>16</sup> F.A. van Jaarsveld, *Die Afrikaner en sy Geskiedenis* (Cape Town: Nasionale Boekhandel, 1959); own translation.

of reason in which liberalism and democracy were born and which had its climax in the great revolution of the French bourgeoisie; a people who spent that time instead in a deep solitude which, if anything, took them back to an even more elementary existence than the seventeenth-century Europe their forebears had left; a people who became, surely, the simplest and most backward fragment of Western civilization in modern times.<sup>17</sup>

While not addressing per se the settlers' economic standard of living, both quotations accept it as a given that the average Cape farmer suffered from the economic, social and intellectual backwardness of isolation. The possibility that the Cape might have been a thriving commercial economy is not considered.

Such beliefs about the early Cape economy have persisted into the post-apartheid era. Charles Feinstein, in his authoritative *An Economic History of South Africa* published in 2005, dedicates only minimal space to the first two centuries of European settlement at the Cape. After briefly discussing them, he concludes that 'the great majority of colonists were poor and discontented.'<sup>18</sup>

### A reinterpretation

Robert Ross has shown that the belief that the early Cape was an economic backwater is based on biased evidence, as are the narratives that sprang from this belief. In 1987, with Pieter van Duin, he collaborated on a manuscript - *The Economy of the Cape Colony in the 18th Century* - that made use, for the first time, of the rich quantitative sources left behind by the VOC administration and available in the Nationaal Archief in The Hague.<sup>19</sup>

What prompted Ross to investigate the early Cape economy? His doctoral dissertation on the Griquas, published by Cambridge University Press in 1976, argued that what had happened to the Griquas in the nineteenth century was largely the consequence of things that had happened in the eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century Cape Colony.<sup>20</sup> Yet, the then current state of research on the early Cape economy was sparse and based almost entirely on a few anecdotal traveller accounts. From his visits to The Hague archives and the discovery of vast numbers of statistical records for the period of Dutch rule, investigating the early Cape economy seemed like the logical next step.

What Ross found surprising was that earlier historians completely neglected the large body of empirical evidence that was available to support or refute their hypotheses about the early Cape settlers' standard of living. As Van Duin

---

<sup>17</sup> A. Sparks, *The Mind of South Africa: The Story of the Rise and Fall of Apartheid* (Cape Town and Johannesburg, 1990), 40.

<sup>18</sup> C. Feinstein, *An Economic History of South Africa* (Cambridge, 2005), 24.

<sup>19</sup> Van Duin and Ross, *The Economy of the Cape Colony*.

<sup>20</sup> R. Ross, *Adam Kok's Griqua* (Cambridge, 1976).

and Ross point out, it is notable that 'all these historians have given their portrayals of the Cape's economy without any extensive empirical back-up, even though immense quantities of evidence, statistical and other, exist on the nature of and changes within the economy of the Cape under the VOC.'<sup>21</sup> They continue:

It has been too commonly assumed that the farmers' own complaints on their poverty and on the absence of markets reflected economic reality. As a matter of course, historians should consider such expressions of grievances to be special pleading, and they should therefore subject them, where possible, to independent testing. This we have done, and we consider that in general they cannot be corroborated, as is indeed not surprising when it is realised that they were made sporadically. The Cape farmers, like all entrepreneurs at all times, did not believe that they were operating in the best possible economic climate, and therefore did all they could to improve that climate. But, in the circumstances within which they did have to act, as a body they found reason to expand and opportunity to flourish.<sup>22</sup>

In contrast to these earlier historians, Van Duin and Ross calculate production and consumption figures published in the *opgaafrolle*, the tax records collected annually by the Company, the meat lists, and letters written every March to the VOC in Holland, which served as an annual report of the activities at the Cape station. These annual production figures, published at the end of their manuscript and now transcribed digitally and available online, list the quantities of vines owned, wine produced (in *leaguers*), wheat sown and reaped (in *mudden*), barley and rye sown and reaped (in *mudden*), and horses, cattle, sheep and pigs owned, split by production region (Cape District, Stellenbosch, Drakenstein, Swellendam and Graaff-Reinet). They also list the quantities of exports of grains and pulses, wines and stock products, as well as butter, fat, tallow, aloe, ivory, train oil and wax. On the consumption side, they report the size of the population split by settler men, women and children, and slave men, women and children. Because there is no mention of the Khoesan in the official records, they are excluded from the Van Duin and Ross analysis too. Total consumption also included the ships arriving annually at the Cape; the number of ships as reported by Coenraad Beyers is therefore also listed.<sup>23</sup>

With these statistics at their disposal, Van Duin and Ross then equate production and consumption. Earlier historians had noted the 'overproduction' of Cape farmers and claimed that this was evidence of a saturated market. Van Duin and Ross, however, show that this idea of 'overproduction' is empirically and conceptually indefensible, 'since it is difficult to imagine any entrepreneurs who would continue to produce for a structurally glutted market, on which,

---

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.* 3.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.* 88.

<sup>23</sup> C. Beyers, *Die Kaapse Patriotte, 1779-1791* (Cape Town, 1929).

presumably, they would continually be operating at a loss.<sup>24</sup> Rather, they argue, the market for Cape farmers' produce was 'much larger, more dynamic and quicker growing than has previously been thought, so that a very considerable rate of agricultural growth was possible.'<sup>25</sup>

Unfortunately, broader changes in the study of South African history obscured their revisionist story of the wealth of the Cape economy so that it had little immediate impact on the discipline.<sup>26</sup> The strong interest in Cape colonial history, evidenced by the multiple print runs of Richard Elphick and Hermann Giliomee's *Shaping South African Society*<sup>27</sup> in English and Afrikaans, died down towards the end of the 1980s, as political changes, in South Africa and in the rest of the world, shifted the historian's interests away from the eighteenth century and towards the twentieth. In addition, the fall of communism took the edge off the intense debates between liberal and Marxist scholars in their attempts to explain South Africa's economic trajectory.<sup>28</sup> The study of economic history lost ground to more popular social and cultural history.<sup>29</sup>

The decision, subject to the requirements of their funding, to publish their work in a relatively unknown series - *Intercontinenta*, a series published by the Centre for the History of European Expansion - also did not help to disseminate their research to a wider audience. Ross, in a chapter on the Cape economy for the second edition of *Shaping*, did make a strong case for a more optimistic view of the Cape economy, but by that stage the view of the Cape as a social and economic backwater had become fixed.<sup>30</sup> Ross's later work, published in the 1990s and 2000s, mostly steers away from the macroeconomic changes in the Cape Colony and follows the trend in the field of history to focus more on

---

<sup>24</sup> Van Duin and Ross, *The Economy of the Cape Colony*, 3.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.* 3.

<sup>26</sup> J. Fourie, 'The Quantitative Cape: A Review of the New Historiography of the Dutch Cape Colony', *South African Historical Journal* 66:1 (2014), 142-168.

<sup>27</sup> R. Elphick and H. Giliomee, eds, *The Shaping of South African Society, 1652-1820* (London, 1979), republished as *The Shaping of South African Society, 1652-1840*, 2nd edn (Cape Town, 1989).

<sup>28</sup> See J. Fourie and S. Schirmer, 'The Future of South African Economic History', *Economic History of Developing Regions* 27:1 (2012), 114-124.

<sup>29</sup> See, for example, R. Shell, *Children of Bondage: A Social History of the Slave Society at the Cape of Good Hope, 1652-1838* (Hanover and London, 1994); S. Newton-King, *Masters and Servants on the Cape Eastern Frontier, 1760-1803* (Cambridge, 1999); N. Penn, *Rogues, Rebels and Runaways: Eighteenth-Century Cape Characters* (Cape Town, 1999); K. Ward, *Networks of Empire: Forced Migration in the Dutch East India Company* (Cambridge, 2008); N. Worden, *Cape Town between East and West: Social Identities in a Dutch Colonial Town* (Auckland Park, 2012).

<sup>30</sup> R. Ross, 'The Cape Economy' in R. Elphick and H. Giliomee, eds, *The Shaping of South African Society, 1652-1840*, 2nd edn (Cape Town, 1989).

social and cultural histories of the eighteenth and nineteenth century.<sup>31</sup> His most recent survey of the emergence of Cape colonial society, published in the latest *Cambridge History of South Africa*, mostly avoids discussing the economic conditions of the settlers.<sup>32</sup> Although he notes that there ‘was clearly a steady expansion of the pastoral sector of the Cape economy’ so that by the last years of the eighteenth century ‘the foundations of a commercial colonial economy’ had been ‘definitively established,’ this expansion was ‘far from simple or certain.’<sup>33</sup> He had shown at a macroeconomic level that the Cape economy was more dynamic than the early scholarship had suggested, but richer micro-level empirical evidence would be needed to uproot the perception of the average Cape settler as living just above subsistence levels.

### Quantitative verification

The microeconomic evidence had to wait for the rise of a new generation of economic historians trained in the use of the econometric techniques that are now a standard part of an economist’s toolkit. Cliometrics, the use of quantitative data and econometric techniques in historical analysis, can be dated back to its emergence in the US in the 1960s, where interest in development economics was growing. Scholars were particularly interested in explaining the disparity in incomes between the developed and developing world. Although some cliometric work was done in South Africa in the early 1980s, mostly by scholars trained in the US, the real shift towards cliometric analysis would only begin in the 2000s. Three trends led to this upsurge in interest. The first was economists’ renewed enthusiasm for economic history, sparked by the work of Douglass North and, notably, two sets of authors writing about the economic histories of developing countries: Daron Acemoglu, Simon Johnson and James A. Robinson, and Kenneth L. Sokoloff and Stanley Engerman.<sup>34</sup> The second was the availability of large new data sets, especially

---

<sup>31</sup> R. Ross, *Beyond the Pale: Essays on the History of Colonial South Africa* (Hanover and London, 1993); Ross, *Status and Respectability*; R. Ross, *Adam Kok’s Griquas: A Study in the Development of Stratification in South Africa* (Cambridge, 2009); R. Ross, *The Borders of Race in Colonial South Africa: the Kat River Settlement, 1829-1856* (Cambridge, 2014).

<sup>32</sup> R. Ross, ‘Khoesan and Immigrants: The Emergence of Colonial Society in the Cape, 1500-1800’ in R. Ross, C. Hamilton and B. Mbenga, eds, *Cambridge History of South Africa*, Vol. I. (Cambridge, 2010), 168-210.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.* 201-209.

<sup>34</sup> D. North, *Institutions, Institutional Change and Economic Performance* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990); D. Acemoglu, S. Johnson, J. Robinson, ‘Reversal of Fortune: Geography and Institutions in the Making of the Modern World Income Distribution’, *Quarterly Journal of Economics* 117:4 (2002), 1231-1294; K. Sokoloff and S. Engerman, ‘History Lessons: Institutions, Factor Endowments, and Paths of Development in the New World’, *Journal of Economic Perspectives* 14:3 (2000), 217-232.



for the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, and often available for free online, and the third was the standardisation and widespread use of statistical programmes and data-editing software.

It was at the Department of Economics at Stellenbosch University that I and several of my colleagues first began to experiment with cliometric analysis of the Cape Colony.<sup>35</sup> Willem H. Boshoff and I used free online Dutch East India Company shipping data to investigate business cycles between the demand created by ship traffic and local Cape production.<sup>36</sup> Dieter von Fintel and I, using the digitised *opgaafrolle* compiled by Hans Heese and Rob Shell in the 1970s, investigated settler inequality at the Cape up to 1773.<sup>37</sup> We also extended this analysis to consider the role of the French Huguenots in Cape production.<sup>38</sup> With Jeanne Cilliers, I calculated demographic trends and with Jolandi Uys I investigated ownership of luxury goods.<sup>39</sup>

My main focus, however, was on the wealth of the average Cape farmer. To measure this, I used the probate inventories that had been digitised over several years by a team of scholars from the universities of Cape Town and the Western Cape. I found strong evidence to support Van Duin and Ross's notion that the Cape was more dynamic than had been previously thought; in fact, when I compared the baskets of goods owned by settler households at the Cape to those owned by households in Holland, England and the Chesapeake region of North America, I found that the average affluence of Cape settlers matched that of the wealthiest countries of the world.<sup>40</sup>

Others have corroborated this finding. Pim de Zwart, using wage data, showed that the rise in real wages across the eighteenth century in South Africa

---

<sup>35</sup> An overview of this literature has recently been published in the *South African Historical Journal*: J. Fourie, 'The quantitative Cape'.

<sup>36</sup> W. Boshoff and J. Fourie, 'Explaining the Fluctuations in Shipping Traffic to the Cape Settlement, 1652-1793', *South African Journal of Economic History* 23:1&2 (2008), 1-27; W. Boshoff and J. Fourie, 'The Significance of the Cape Trade Route to Economic Activity in the Cape Colony: A Medium-term Business Cycle Analysis', *European Review of Economic History* 14:3 (2010), 469-503.

<sup>37</sup> J. Fourie and D. von Fintel, 'The Dynamics of Inequality in a Newly Settled, Pre-Industrial Society' *Cliometrica* 4:3 (2010), 229-267; J. Fourie and D. von Fintel 'A History with Evidence: Income Inequality in Dutch South Africa', *Economic History of Developing Regions* 26:1 (2011), 16-48.

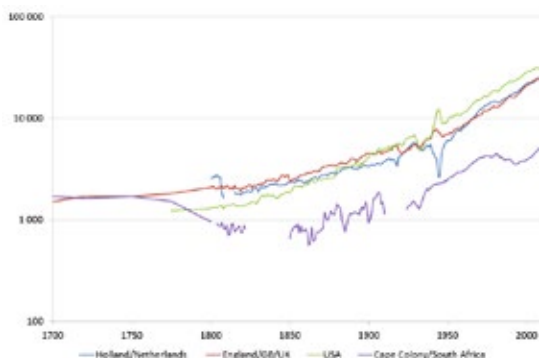
<sup>38</sup> J. Fourie and D. von Fintel, ' 'n ongelyke oes', *Tydskrif vir Geesteswetenskappe* 51:3 (2011), 332-353; J. Fourie and D. von Fintel, 'Settler Skills and Colonial Development: The Huguenot Wine-makers in Eighteenth-Century Dutch South Africa', *Economic History Review*, in press.

<sup>39</sup> J. Cilliers and J. Fourie, 'New Estimates of Settler Life Span and other Demographic Estimates from South Africa, 1652-1948' *Economic History of Developing Regions* 27:2 (2012), 61-86;

<sup>40</sup> J. Fourie, 'Die relatiewe welvaart van die vroeë Kaapse setlaars', *Litnet Akademies* 9:2 (2012), 442-467; J. Fourie, 'The Remarkable Wealth of the Dutch Cape Colony: Measurements from Eighteenth-Century Probate Inventories', *Economic History Review* 66:2 (2013), 419-448.

equalled that of European countries at the end of the Dutch period,<sup>41</sup> and Sophia and Stan du Plessis expanded De Zwart's data and found that real wages were already high, but unequal, at the beginning of the century.<sup>42</sup> Together with Jan Luiten van Zanden, who was also my supervisor at Utrecht University, I calculated a measure of GDP for the Cape Colony in both the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.<sup>43</sup> We extended the series to link with current Reserve Bank data of South African twentieth-century GDP. The data has now been added to the Maddison Project Database, and is available for free online. The graph shown in Figure 1 compares the GDP figures for the Cape Colony and South Africa as published in the Maddison database<sup>44</sup> to those of Holland, England and the US.

Comparison of GDP per capita (1990 Int. GK\$) by country, 1700-2010



Source: The Maddison Project  
([www.ggdc.net/maddison/maddison-project/data.htm](http://www.ggdc.net/maddison/maddison-project/data.htm))

As the graph shows, Cape Colony GDP per capita in the middle of the eighteenth century was comparable to that of Holland and England. Towards the end of the period, however, there was a general decline in living standards at the Cape, while the GDP per capita of England and Holland continued to increase slowly. The large differences in living standards between England and South Africa today may to a large extent be the result of the large gap that opened up in the

<sup>41</sup> P. de Zwart, 'Real Wages at the Cape of Good Hope: A Long-term Perspective, 1652-1912', *Tijdschrift voor Sociale en Economische Geschiedenis* 10 (2013).

<sup>42</sup> S. du Plessis and S. du Plessis, 'Happy in the Service of the Company: The Purchasing Power of VOC Salaries at the Cape in the 18th Century', *Economic History of Developing Regions* 27 (2012).

<sup>43</sup> J. Fourie and J.-L. van Zanden, 'GDP in the Dutch Cape Colony: The National Accounts of a Slave-based Society', *South African Journal of Economics* 81:4 (2013), 467-490.

<sup>44</sup> Unlike the Maddison database, which publishes GDP only for every 25 years during the eighteenth century, our calculations are available by year, and published in Fourie and Van Zanden, 'GDP in the Dutch Cape Colony'.

1780–1860 period, and to some extent in the later 1970–1990 period. What is clear, though, is that the pronouncements that the eighteenth-century Cape was an economic backwater are not supported by the historical quantitative evidence.

To date, much of the new cliometric work has been aimed at answering ‘what happened’ questions: Was the Cape Colony an economic backwater? Were living standards comparatively high in the eighteenth century? What we need now is a shift to investigating the *reasons* for answers we have found. We need to look for the mechanisms responsible for the Cape’s gradual decline towards the end of the eighteenth and during the beginning of the nineteenth century. We need to turn to the ‘why did it happen’ questions, to improve our understanding not only of the South African past but also of how the country’s economy developed and grew.

There are so many of these questions. Why did an unequal settler society spring up so suddenly in the Cape Colony?<sup>45</sup> Why did settlers invest so much of their savings in slaves?<sup>46</sup> And given the high levels of wealth, why did the Cape Colony not experience an industrial revolution? Why instead, as we can see from Figure 1, did living standards decline from around 1780? We still do not know why. Did population growth simply outpace production? Did slavery stall investment in new technologies? Did market demand decline with the decline in ship traffic? Did institutions imported by the British stifle or invigorate trade? Did government policies - including tax regimes, currency deflation or frontier conflict - hamper economic development?

Although historians have touched on many of these topics, it is difficult to answer ‘why’ questions satisfactorily without the empirical tools that enable economic historians to test the causal determinants of change. The large new transcribed and digitised micro-level datasets, combined with the statistical tools that enable us to identify causal mechanisms, will help us shed new light on Cape economic development and continue the trend that Robert Ross started of using quantitative data to inform the historical narrative.

## Conclusions

To date, Robert Ross’s contribution to the economic history of the early Cape has been largely neglected. In the late 1980s, he and co-author Pieter van Duin

---

<sup>45</sup> G. Williams, ‘Who, Where, and When were the Cape Gentry?’ *Economic History of Developing Regions* 28:2 (2013), 83-111.

<sup>46</sup> J. Fourie, ‘Slaves as Capital Investment in the Dutch Cape Colony, 1652–1795’ in P. Svensson and E. Hillbom, eds, *Agricultural Transformation in Global History Perspective* (Oxford, 2013).

reversed the widely accepted view of the Cape economy as a 'social and economic backwater' of widespread subsistence farming and overall poverty, scattered with small islands of relatively affluent farmers. Exploring the rich quantitative records kept by Dutch East India Company officials, they argued that the Cape had been more dynamic and progressive than earlier historians had assumed and that the market for Cape agricultural produce had been 'much larger, more dynamic and quicker growing' than previously thought, so that 'a very considerable rate of agricultural growth' had been possible. To back up their argument they relied on the *opgaafrolle*. The transcription and digitisation of these records during a time when personal computers were unavailable is in itself an astonishing achievement. Van Duin and Ross used these records, together with what was known about the size of the population, and assumptions about everyday food consumption, to show that production was much higher than earlier thought, and that significant underreporting had occurred in the *opgaafrolle* themselves.

Their work was not immediately recognised in the broader economic history literature, largely because political change at the end of the 1980s shifted interest away from colonial history. As mentioned above, in his seminal contribution published in 2005 Feinstein was still describing conditions in the Colony as undeveloped before the discovery of minerals in the interior.<sup>47</sup> Feinstein fails to cite Van Duin and Ross.

Yet, by the 2000s Ross's statistical evidence had begun to entice a new generation of economic historians, now equipped with better tools. New contributions using Cape Colony price series and probate inventories began to be published, all confirming Van Duin and Ross's hypothesis that the Cape economy was a more dynamic, market economy. In fact, using probate inventories, instead of a poor, decrepit community, the new picture of the Cape was one of a thriving, affluent society, just as Ross had proposed.

Ross's pioneering work on the Cape economy was perhaps a generation too early to be fully appreciated. Only now with the emergence of a new generation of economic historians, adapting the econometric techniques of economists and using newly digitised Cape Colony data, is his cliometric contribution finally receiving the recognition it deserves.

---

<sup>47</sup> Feinstein, *An Economic History of South Africa*, 24.

## Between Success and Failure The Mwinilunga Pineapple Canning Factory in the 1960s and 1970s

*Iva Peša*

The misery of being exploited by capitalists is nothing compared to the misery of not being exploited at all.<sup>1</sup>

In 1969 the United National Independence Party (UNIP) government erected a pineapple canning factory in Mwinilunga District, in the north-western tip of Zambia.<sup>2</sup> At the time that the canning factory was built, high hopes of 'development' prevailed among planners and among the local population of this remote rural area. The newly installed UNIP government envisaged that through economic entrepreneurship the cannery would lift the district out of poverty and that it would encourage a closer allegiance of producers to the state.<sup>3</sup> Despite a promising inception and enthusiastic responses from producers, it soon became apparent that the future of the canning factory was gloomy. Turnover rates were too low to sustain continuous production and the factory never became profitable. Towards the second half of the 1970s the canning factory slowed down production and eventually completely shut down, after

---

<sup>1</sup> J. Robinson, *Economic Philosophy: An Essay on the Progress of Economic Thought* (1962), 45.

<sup>2</sup> The only mention of the Mwinilunga pineapple canning factory so far is in J.A. Pritchett, *The Lunda-Ndembu: Style, Change and Social Transformation in South Central Africa* (Madison: 2001), 60-1.

<sup>3</sup> See: I. Pesa, 'Moving along the Roadside: A Social History of Mwinilunga District, 1870s-1970s' (Unpublished PhD Thesis, Leiden University, 2014), 94-7.

the managing parastatal G.M. Rucom Industries pulled out.<sup>4</sup> This development scheme has thus been regarded as a 'failure'. Nonetheless, notions of success and failure can be questioned through the case of the Mwinilunga pineapple canning factory.<sup>5</sup> Today, pineapple producers identify the period of the canning factory as a 'golden age', clamouring for the re-opening of the factory.<sup>6</sup> By examining the rise and demise of the canning factory, notions of failure, success and development can be examined. This chapter will look into the motives behind the decision to establish a capital intensive canning factory in a remote rural area. Local perceptions of and reactions to the canning factory will also be explored. What were the popular expectations of development and how did people deal with decline once the canning factory closed its doors? While writing my PhD thesis, Robert Ross dropped the opening quote on several occasions. At the time, the significance of the sentence did not fully sink in, but Joan Robinson's words are indeed invaluable for understanding the fate of the Mwinilunga pineapple canning factory. This shows how well Robert Ross was able to link small case studies to broader theories and questions, inspiring his students to make unexpected linkages in their thought process. By analysing one specific example, broader conclusions about capitalism and the post-colonial state in Zambia can be reached.

### Development schemes: Beyond the market and the state

Although G.M. Rucom Industries primarily intended to create a profitable enterprise, the Mwinilunga pineapple canning factory was simultaneously a development scheme that attempted to lift producers in the district out of poverty.<sup>7</sup> The UNIP government envisaged that by constructing the pineapple canning factory producers would be spurred to participate in the market and would become more amenable to state control.<sup>8</sup> Development schemes in late colonial and post-colonial Africa have received much academic attention.<sup>9</sup> The impact of development schemes has predominantly been analysed in relation to

---

<sup>4</sup> Interview with Mr. and Mrs. Ntanga, 4 March 2010, Mwinilunga.

<sup>5</sup> G. Carswell, *Cultivating Success in Uganda: Kigezi Farmers & Colonial Policies* (Oxford, Athens and Kampala: 2007) has theorised notions of 'success' and 'failure' in useful ways.

<sup>6</sup> Interview with Mr. John Kamuhuza, March 2010, Ikelenge.

<sup>7</sup> National Archives of Zambia, hereafter (NAZ) MCD1/3/13 Loc. 4440, Provincial Team Minutes, North-Western Province, 23 May 1969.

<sup>8</sup> This is amply documented in the following file: (NAZ) MAG2/17/86 Loc. 199, Pineapples.

<sup>9</sup> See: J. Ferguson, *The Anti-Politics Machine: "Development", Depoliticization, and Bureaucratic Power in Lesotho* (Cambridge: 1990); J.C. Scott, *Seeing Like a State: How Certain Schemes to Improve the Human Condition Have Failed* (New Haven and London: 1998); J.M. Hodge, *Triumph of the Expert: Agrarian Doctrines of Development and the Legacies of British Colonialism* (Ohio: 2007); etc.

the state and the market.<sup>10</sup> Marxist and neo-Marxist observers have interpreted development schemes as a tool for the expansion of capitalism. By integrating producers into the market and altering the relations of production, development schemes have been interpreted as ‘part of “the expansion of the capitalist mode of production”’.<sup>11</sup> On the other hand, development schemes have often been viewed as a humanitarian exercise aimed at improving the ‘quality of life’ and the ‘standard of living’ of beneficiaries by ameliorating poverty.<sup>12</sup> This is a social goal in which the state has a crucial role to play. In a political economy approach, development is analysed in terms of power relations, having political aims and outcomes. James Ferguson described ‘the “development” apparatus’ as ‘an “anti-politics machine,” depoliticizing everything it touches [...] all the while performing, almost unnoticed, its own pre-eminently political operation of expanding bureaucratic state power.’<sup>13</sup> Yet development schemes have contradictory effects, which cannot be wholly explained by looking at market and state integration alone.

The Mwinilunga pineapple canning factory indeed had economic and political effects. It promoted market participation of pineapple cultivators and it strengthened the presence of the UNIP government on the ground. So, if development schemes have economic and political intentions, and the pineapple canning factory successfully furthered these intentions, why was the scheme nevertheless seen as a ‘failure’? Why did the canning factory close down if producers marketed pineapples en masse? The ‘success’ or ‘failure’ of development schemes, in terms of their intended and unintended outcomes, can be defined in multiple ways.<sup>14</sup> The notions of ‘success’ and ‘failure’ should be problematised: ‘What makes a successful development project? How is success measured, and by whom?’<sup>15</sup> In most cases it is not the ‘development beneficiaries’ but the ‘experts’, be they government agents or NGO representatives, who ‘define what counts as development and how it can be achieved.’<sup>16</sup> Yet ‘project success was not just a matter of measurement of

---

<sup>10</sup> See: M. Jennings, ‘Building Better People: Modernity and Utopia in Late Colonial Tanganyika’, *Journal of Eastern African Studies* 3:1 (2009), 94-111; J.D. Grischow, ‘Late Colonial Development in British West Africa: The Gonja Development Project in the Northern Territories of the Gold Coast, 1948-57’, *Canadian Journal of African Studies* 35:2 (2001), 282-312; T.M. Li, ‘Beyond the State and Failed Schemes’, *American Anthropologist* 107:3 (2005), 383-94, for reviews.

<sup>11</sup> Ferguson, *Anti-Politics Machine*, 15.

<sup>12</sup> Ferguson, *Anti-Politics Machine*; Jennings, ‘Building Better People’, 101; Grischow, ‘Late Colonial Development’, 283.

<sup>13</sup> Ferguson, *Anti-Politics Machine*, XV.

<sup>14</sup> Li, ‘Beyond the State’; Carswell, *Cultivating Success*.

<sup>15</sup> Carswell, *Cultivating Success*, 1.

<sup>16</sup> Li, ‘Beyond the State’, 384.

achievement and empirical evidence [...] success was a matter of definition, a question of meaning, of sustaining a particular interpretation of events.<sup>17</sup> If the canning factory spurred pineapple production throughout Mwinilunga District, why then was it nevertheless designated a 'failure'? 'Failure', just as 'success', 'means different things to different people, depending on where they locate themselves in relation to what success might be.'<sup>18</sup> Paradoxically, the years that the canning factory was in operation are remembered as good days by pineapple cultivators. Producers still call for the re-opening of the factory, even though a new factory would most likely face similar difficulties as in the 1970s and would equally risk becoming a 'failure'.<sup>19</sup>

This paper will examine 'the effects of planned interventions [...] empirically, in the various sites where they unfold.'<sup>20</sup> Through a specific case it seeks 'to acknowledge the fragmented, the ambiguous and ambivalent in the nexus of development, community and the state.'<sup>21</sup> This case study aims to move beyond analyses of development schemes, which focus solely on the interactions between development, the state and the market. It will be argued that factors such as consumption, ideology and representation played a major role in defining the 'success' or 'failure' of this particular development scheme. To understand the successes and failures of the Mwinilunga pineapple canning factory it is not enough to look at the state and the market. Even if '[m]uch analysis of government development policy and practice has assumed political objectives and control lie at the heart of interventions,'<sup>22</sup> Jennings contends that it needs to be questioned whether there is 'something fundamental to the notion of "development" itself, something integral, that leads to outcomes that have tended to increase the authority of central structures [...] [and to increase] the power of market forces over individual action.'<sup>23</sup> Did development schemes necessarily lead to market and state integration? The case of the Mwinilunga pineapple canning factory appears contradictory in this respect. Even though the canning factory spurred market and state integration during the years of its operation, the scheme was dubbed a 'failure' and it did not receive the necessary support to keep running. The closure of the canning factory caused a reversal to the previous state of government and market neglect of the area.<sup>24</sup>

---

<sup>17</sup> Carswell, *Cultivating Success*, 9.

<sup>18</sup> Carswell, *Cultivating Success*, 206.

<sup>19</sup> Interview with Mr. Beston Mapulanga, 1 November 2010, Mwinilunga.

<sup>20</sup> Li, 'Beyond the State', 391.

<sup>21</sup> E. Bahre and B. Lecocq, 'The Drama of Development: The Skirmishes Behind High Modernist Schemes in Africa', *African Studies* 66:1 (2007), 4.

<sup>22</sup> Jennings, 'Building Better People', 104.

<sup>23</sup> Jennings, 'Building Better People', 104.

<sup>24</sup> Compare this with: I. Pesa, 'Cassava is our Chief': Negotiating Identity, Markets and the State through Cassava in Mwinilunga, Zambia' in J-B. Gewald, A. Leliveld and I. Pesa, eds, *Transforming*



By looking at the messy, contradictory and conjectural effects of the Mwinilunga pineapple canning factory,<sup>25</sup> broader conclusions can be drawn about development schemes, state power and capitalism.

### Tapping productivity: Pineapples in Mwinilunga District

Throughout the twentieth century, Mwinilunga District has generally not been considered as an agriculturally promising area.<sup>26</sup> The acidic nature of the soils and their limited fertility, coupled with long transport hauls to major markets, made official outlooks sceptical.<sup>27</sup> Notwithstanding the dynamism of existing patterns of production and trade, European travellers, colonial officials and post-colonial agents persistently reasserted grievances about the 'subsistence level' of agricultural production in Mwinilunga District. In 1950, the District Commissioner was so negative as to remark that: 'To say that the Lunda [...] do no more than scratch at the earth, is no understatement [...] the overall production of crops [...] would hardly do justice to the Sahara desert.'<sup>28</sup> Rural producers were blamed for general 'apathy', a lack of initiative and an absence of 'market logic'. As late as 1970 officials noted that: 'Most of the people are still subsistence farmers, growing enough only for their consumption requirements, and only selling a little which enables them to purchase basic household utensils.'<sup>29</sup> To change this dire state of affairs, officials proposed making production the focal point of various schemes of 'development', especially after 1945.<sup>30</sup> Development schemes would necessarily be initiated by external actors, in particular by agricultural 'experts' summoned by the government and propagating 'superior' scientific innovations.<sup>31</sup> Development discourse constructed 'certain regions as objects of development, regardless of the actual histories of those regions.'<sup>32</sup> One proposal to 'develop' agricultural production in Mwinilunga District was pineapple cultivation.

---

*Innovations in Africa: Explorative Studies on Appropriation in African Societies* (Leiden etc.: 2012), 169-90.

<sup>25</sup> Li, 'Beyond the State', 383.

<sup>26</sup> Pritchett, *Lunda-Ndemba*. See also: A. Von Oppen, *Terms of Trade and Terms of Trust: The History and Contexts of Pre-Colonial Market Production around the Upper Zambezi and Kasai* (Munster etc.: 1994).

<sup>27</sup> Pesa, 'Moving along the Roadside'.

<sup>28</sup> (NAZ) SEC2/958, K.Duff-White, Mwinilunga District Tour Report, March 1950.

<sup>29</sup> (NAZ) MRD1/8/27 Loc.4272, North-Western Province Development Committee, 20 March 1970.

<sup>30</sup> More generally, see: Hodge, *Triumph of the Expert*.

<sup>31</sup> See: J. McCracken, 'Experts and Expertise in Colonial Malawi', *African Affairs* 81:322 (1982), 101-16.

<sup>32</sup> Grischow, 'Late Colonial Development', 286.

Although pineapples are so intimately associated with Mwinilunga that the area today is referred in the rest of Zambia as 'pineapple country',<sup>33</sup> pineapples only developed as a major cash crop in the area in the 1950s and 1960s. Pineapples, a crop of American origin, first spread through the long-distance caravan trade from the Angolan coast into the interior.<sup>34</sup> By the 1850s, Livingstone noted that pineapples were grown, but not consumed, by the people in the area of Mwinilunga.<sup>35</sup> Over the course of the twentieth century the cultivation of pineapples spread more widely throughout Mwinilunga District.<sup>36</sup> As a result of colonial and missionary propaganda, as well as local initiative, approximately 30 per cent of all villages cultivated the crop by the 1940s.<sup>37</sup> Nevertheless, pineapples did not become a staple in the diet and producers did not afford the crop much importance, or even attention. Officials lamented this indifference:

Unfortunately, vegetables, fruit and coffee are not thought of as serious cultivation but to be tried as a side-line, or in the case of fruit, to be planted around the village and trust to Providence. Providence does not co-operate well with pineapples I found when trying to buy some.<sup>38</sup>

During the first half of the twentieth century pineapples served mainly to diversify the dietary and marketing repertoires of producers in Mwinilunga District.

Commercial pineapple cultivation was initially concentrated in the village of Samahina, inhabited by a group of Ovimbundu immigrants from Angola who had settled in Chief Ikelenge's area.<sup>39</sup> Officials described pineapple production as being: 'confined to comparatively few people who came from Angola where they had been trained in the art of fruit husbandry and have been practicing it fairly successfully for a number of years.'<sup>40</sup> More important than pre-existing knowledge of cultivation was the ready market for pineapples provided by the European population of the nearby mission station, Kalene Hill.<sup>41</sup> Because the demand for pineapples proved persistently high during the 1940s and the 1950s, missionaries and officials used propaganda to stimulate pineapple cultivation, providing funds, technical and marketing assistance to cultivators in

---

<sup>33</sup> In Lusaka and on the Copperbelt, Mwinilunga was immediately associated with pineapples.

<sup>34</sup> J.E. Mendes-Ferrão, *The Adventure of Plants and Portuguese Discoveries* (1994).

<sup>35</sup> I. Schapera, ed., *Livingstone's African Journal 1853-56* (London: 1963), 228.

<sup>36</sup> Pritchett, *Lunda-Ndemba*, 60-1.

<sup>37</sup> Rhodes House, Oxford, Bodleian Library, hereinafter (BOD) Richard Cranmer Denning, Mwinilunga District Tour Report, 1947.

<sup>38</sup> (NAZ) SEC2/967, C.J. Fryer, Mwinilunga District Tour Report, 27 May 1959.

<sup>39</sup> Interview with Headman Larson Samahina, 17 March 2010, Ikelenge.

<sup>40</sup> (NAZ) NWP1/2/101 Loc.4919, H.T. Bayldon, North-Western Province Annual Report, 1961.

<sup>41</sup> See: W.S. Fisher and J. Hoyte, *Ndotolu: The Life Stories of Walter and Anna Fisher of Central Africa* (Ikelenge, rev. ed.: 1992).

Samahina. The Ovimbundu thereby gained a major advantage over other producers. Nonetheless, from the 1950s onwards, once it became apparent that pineapple production and marketing could be lucrative, cultivators in other villages throughout Mwinilunga District increasingly started planting pineapples as well.<sup>42</sup> At first, the pineapple trade was confined to the local market, supplying missions and administrative staff. But soon, occasional surpluses would be sold in Solwezi, at Kansanshi, or even further afield. Officials heralded bright prospects for pineapple cultivation from the outset: 'there is no doubt that with a little organisation and initiative the production of this fruit could be worked up into a valuable cash crop.'<sup>43</sup> Due to the acidic soils and high rainfall, Mwinilunga proved to be more suited to pineapple cultivation than any other area in Zambia.<sup>44</sup> As a crop, pineapples appeared particularly suitable for lifting the marketing impediments hitherto experienced in Mwinilunga. The marketing of this 'luxury fruit', which had a good value/weight ratio and could therefore withstand the high transport costs to distant markets, gradually stepped up. Traders started: 'buying up the pineapples to fill up back load capacity to the Copperbelt.'<sup>45</sup> The market niche among the urban population on the Copperbelt for this high-value crop spurred production in Mwinilunga. Marketing considerations and environmental compatibility, in turn, encouraged government officials to propagate pineapple cultivation on a large scale, by providing technical and marketing assistance. Due to this mix of factors, pineapple production steadily increased throughout the 1950s and 1960s in Mwinilunga District.

---

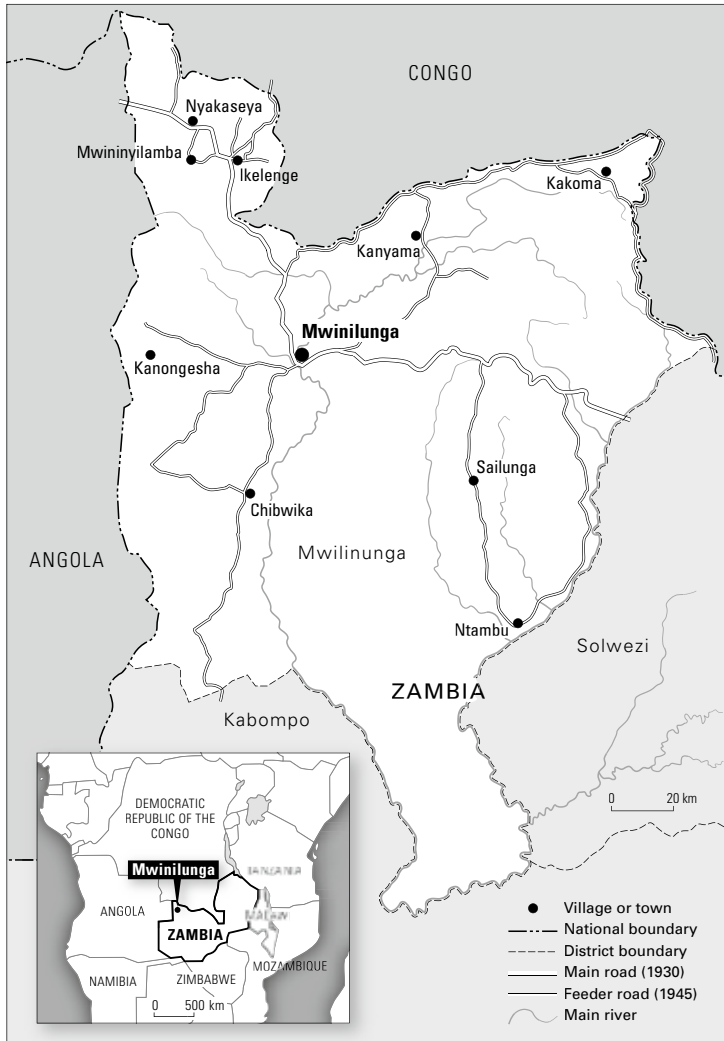
<sup>42</sup> Interview with Mr. Aaron Chikewa, 27 April 2010, Nyakaseya.

<sup>43</sup> (NAZ) SEC2/963, R.S. Thompson, Mwinilunga District Tour Report, 26 April 1955.

<sup>44</sup> D.S. Johnson, ed., *Handbook to the North-Western Province* (Lusaka: 1980).

<sup>45</sup> A. Sardanis, *Africa, Another Side of the Coin: Northern Rhodesia's Final Years and Zambia's Nationhood* (London: 2003).

## Mwinilunga District, Zambia



Pineapple producing areas

## Creating an opportunity: The Mwinilunga pineapple canning factory

It was only after independence, though, that the production and sale of pineapples really took off. Pineapple cultivation received official endorsement, as:

There is a clear need to improve the standard of living in the rural areas by increasing the quantity and widening the variety of foodstuffs produced and consumed in the villages [...]

In practically all areas there is much room for greater consumption of fruits and vegetables to help bring health-giving variety to an often monotonous diet.<sup>46</sup>

Government officials conducted economic surveys to assess the viability of pineapple cultivation. An agricultural research station was set up, where trials with regard to time of planting, fertiliser use and improved pineapple varieties were conducted to achieve optimal yields.<sup>47</sup> Furthermore, marketing outlets for the crop were provided through the Agricultural Rural Marketing Board (ARMB) and later the National Agricultural Marketing Board (NAMBOARD).<sup>48</sup> Buying depots, where pineapples were bought at fixed prices, were set up close to major areas of production. The subsidies, technical and marketing assistance provided by the government, coupled with the ready market that existed for the crop, encouraged widespread cultivation of pineapples after independence. Whereas in 1965 43 tons of pineapples had been marketed from Mwinilunga District, by the 1969-70 agricultural season this figure had risen to 480 tons, sold at a price of 3 ngwee per lb.<sup>49</sup> In the early 1960s, there had already been discussions that pineapple cultivation 'should go hand in hand with processing of the product rather than endeavouring to sell it in bulk.'<sup>50</sup> Yet, the construction of the pineapple canning factory awaited further appraisal, based on economic viability.

In the 1960s, Mwinilunga District was 'considered a bad risk' by businessmen,<sup>51</sup> as 'the North Western Province is relatively one of the backward areas in economic and social development in Zambia.'<sup>52</sup> However, within a general environment of constraint pineapples appeared as a unique opportunity. This high-value crop could generate considerable profits and therefore pineapple cultivation merited official attention. Government schemes to promote pineapple cultivation were set up and officials appealed to farmers to grow more pineapples, as:

The aim is to raise productivity on as wide a front as is practical in order to improve the diet of the subsistence cultivators, and by improving his prospects to make rural life more attractive and thus curb the current drift towards urban employment.<sup>53</sup>

---

<sup>46</sup> (NAZ) Northern Rhodesia Crop and Livestock Production Policy, 1963/1964.

<sup>47</sup> (NAZ) MAG2/17/86 Loc. 199, Pineapples, 25 July 1972.

<sup>48</sup> For more on ARMB and NAMBOARD, see: A.P. Wood *et al.*, eds, *The Dynamics of Agricultural Policy and Reform in Zambia* (Ames: 1990).

<sup>49</sup> (NAZ) LGH5/2/2 Loc. 3611, Marketing of Produce North-Western Province, 23 July 1970; (NAZ) MAG2/17/86 Loc. 199, Pineapples, July 1970.

<sup>50</sup> (NAZ) MCD1/3/13 Loc. 4440, Provincial Team Minutes, North-Western Province, 22 September 1961.

<sup>51</sup> (NAZ) MCD1/3/13 Loc. 4440, Provincial Team Minutes, North-Western Province, September 1962.

<sup>52</sup> (NAZ) MAG2/5/91 Loc. 144, Minister of Agriculture Tour North-Western Province, 6-13 January 1968.

<sup>53</sup> (NAZ) MCD1/3/29, Annual Report of the Ministry of Agriculture, 1965.

The potential for pineapple production in Mwinilunga District enticed the UNIP government to erect a pineapple canning factory in 1969, under the direction of the parastatal G.M. Rucom Industries. Before the factory was built, calculations pointed out that at prevailing rates of production the plant could only be kept running for 29.2 hours a year, which meant that the factory would be unprofitable from the outset.<sup>54</sup> And even once it was opened the viability of the factory did not improve much, despite the large amounts of pineapples that were processed. In the 1970s, the prospects for the cannery appeared gloomy: 'The actual growing conditions, the quality of fruit for canning, the high cost of transport, road conditions and high production costs of the cannery alone, have an extremely negative influence on the profitability of the cannery.'<sup>55</sup> In 1974, the first temporary closures of the canning factory occurred. Following these disruptions, 'farmers preferred to sell their pineapples to the Copperbelt where they received high prices rather than at the factory.'<sup>56</sup> Towards the end of the 1970s, the cannery started to experience more frequent closures and production almost came to a standstill, although the cannery officially remained open throughout the 1980s, closing its doors permanently in the early 1990s.<sup>57</sup> The closure of the canning factory resulted in the disappearance of a major market for pineapples in Mwinilunga District. Whereas some producers maintained small fields of pineapples and organised their own marketing, most were discouraged and abandoned the crop.<sup>58</sup> Although some traders did continue to transport small amounts of pineapples to urban markets, the bright prospects for the future of pineapple production had been dashed. How can the establishment and rapid demise of the pineapple canning factory best be understood?

### A high modernist failure?

Since James Scott's influential book 'Seeing like a State', development schemes have been understood as 'high modernist', based on scientific knowledge and implemented in a top-down manner by external 'experts'. Through minute planning of a development scheme, state officials would render problems technical, proposing technical solutions, based on advances in science and

---

<sup>54</sup> (NAZ) MAG2/5/91 Loc.144, Mwinilunga District Tour Report, 14 May 1969.

<sup>55</sup> (NAZ) MAG2/17/86 Loc.199, Pineapples, 24 July 1972.

<sup>56</sup> (NAZ) Rural Development Seminar: Programme for the Nation, 19 September 1974.

<sup>57</sup> Unfortunately, I do not have data concerning the canning factory in the 1980s. From interviews and limited archival evidence I gather that its operations were very minimal throughout the 1980s.

<sup>58</sup> This view is based on numerous oral interviews.

technology.<sup>59</sup> Within this framework, development interventions have been interpreted as standardised, technical and apolitical in nature.<sup>60</sup> Does the Mwinilunga pineapple canning factory fit this high modernist framework?

Pineapple cultivation was indeed accompanied by scientific trials conducted by agricultural experts. Fruit trials were conducted at the government research station in Mwinilunga relating to time of planting, fertiliser use and improved varieties.<sup>61</sup> Similarly, extensive research into the economic viability of the pineapple canning factory was conducted, even before its construction:

The establishment of a canning factory has been a subject for discussion since 1964. Going, Doughty and Savage examined the viability of a plant. [...] With increased production INDECO are looking into the project as a matter of priority. Canning may go a long way to solving the problems being encountered in handling, packaging and transportation. [...] If a factory is set up there will be need for a greater extension effort to expand production in the area.<sup>62</sup>

Scientific analysis and planning played a role even before the construction of the pineapple canning factory. Yet, this research pointed out that there were fundamental impediments to expanding pineapple production and thus to generating a viable canning industry. Despite planning endeavours, the establishment of the canning factory was based on misguided optimism about future productive capabilities. Inaccurate estimates masked the overall unprofitability of the pineapple canning enterprise.<sup>63</sup>

Before the canning factory was built, it was estimated that under prevailing levels of pineapple production the 'machine would be in use only for 8½ hours per annum.'<sup>64</sup> Even in May 1969, just before the opening of the cannery, it was lamented that 'the pineapple canning factory at Mwinilunga will be too big for the present production.' With an annual production of 375 tons of pineapples, the factory could only be kept busy for 29.2 hours a year.<sup>65</sup> These were hardly encouraging figures. In an attempt to supplement pineapple production, trials were conducted with tomato and guava canning. To cover the gap between pineapple seasons, tomatoes were canned, yet 'the project division is losing

---

<sup>59</sup> Scott, *Seeing Like a State*; For a critique, see L. Schneider, 'High on Modernity? Explaining the Failings of Tanzanian Villagisation', *African Studies* 66:1 (2007), 9-38.

<sup>60</sup> Ferguson, *Anti-Politics Machine*, 69.

<sup>61</sup> (NAZ) MAG2/17/86 Loc. 199, Pineapples, 25 July 1972.

<sup>62</sup> (NAZ) LGH5/2/5 Loc. 3612, Ministry of Agriculture North-Western Province Tour Report, 20 March 1968.

<sup>63</sup> Pritchett, *Lunda-Ndemba*, 60-1; Compare with: Schneider, 'High on Modernity?'

<sup>64</sup> (NAZ) LGH5/2/5 Loc. 3612, Ministry of Agriculture, North-Western Province Tour Report, 20 March 1968.

<sup>65</sup> (NAZ) MAG 2/5/91, Loc. 144, Ministry of Agriculture, Tour Report North-Western Province, 14-17 May 1969.

money on the tomato production.<sup>66</sup> Rucom had to compensate for the loss, covering all running costs and part of the overheads. Further trials with non-perishable and high-value crops were conducted at the Mwinilunga research station. Despite attempts to ensure the profitability of the pineapple canning factory through trials and scientific research, within a few years of its opening negative calculations were made:

According to the calculations of Rucom, the loss per case in 1971-72 was K9.45. The total production cost K14.40 per case in comparison with the average Zambia retail price of Kenya pineapples at K5.30. By increasing production, the average production cost per case may go slightly down, but the total loss will be higher.<sup>67</sup>

Instead of a high modernist detailed planning initiative, at times there appeared to be misguided planning, or even lack of planning.<sup>68</sup> This resulted in an unprofitable enterprise and the eventual closure of the canning factory.

Rather than this being due to excessive planning or scientific knowledge, it might be argued that the demise of the pineapple canning factory was 'the result of a lack of planning regarding the implementation of the scheme.'<sup>69</sup> Scientific trials underpinned the original erection of the pineapple canning factory, but real production figures subsequently caused its demise. Despite their attempts at planning, state officials had 'very little control over events,' but they did have 'control over the interpretation of events.'<sup>70</sup> Rather than allowing low production figures to be a 'legitimation or justification of further interventions,' officials dubbed the canning factory unprofitable, a 'failure,' and closed down the factory.<sup>71</sup> This development scheme, therefore, cannot be seen as a 'high modernist' technical endeavour to establish a profitable enterprise. Other motives might better explain the establishment of a canning factory in Mwinilunga District.

### A route to prosperity: Marketing pineapples

If the aim of the pineapple canning factory was to bring about market integration or to strengthen capitalism in Mwinilunga District, the canning factory can be regarded as a success.<sup>72</sup> During its lifespan large amounts of pineapples were produced, marketed and processed at the factory. Yet, if the aim was to create a self-sustaining and viable enterprise, the pineapple canning

---

<sup>66</sup> (NAZ) MAG2/17/86 Loc. 199, Pineapples, 24 July 1972.

<sup>67</sup> (NAZ) MAG2/17/86 Loc. 199, Pineapples, 24 July 1972.

<sup>68</sup> Schneider, 'High on Modernity?'

<sup>69</sup> Schneider, 'High on Modernity?', 26.

<sup>70</sup> Carswell, *Cultivating Success*, 207.

<sup>71</sup> Carswell, *Cultivating Success*, 5.

<sup>72</sup> See: Ferguson, *Anti-Politics Machine*, 15.



factory was a failure, as losses occurred from the outset. The economic aims and effects of the Mwinilunga pineapple canning factory thus appeared contradictory.

Rhetorically, the establishment of the pineapple canning factory was an attempt to spur agricultural levels of production from subsistence to market production in Mwinilunga District. Fruit cultivation would be particularly valuable in this respect, as remarked in 1945:

Dr. Fisher said that in the long run the wealth and stability of our rural population would depend upon them being able to grow more food than they required for their own use [...] There was a large market for all kinds of vegetables and fruits in the urban areas.<sup>73</sup>

By growing pineapples for sale in urban areas, producers in Mwinilunga District would make the transition from 'subsistence' to 'market' production, an agricultural transformation that would link the area more firmly to the capitalist world economy.<sup>74</sup> Over the course of the 1950s and 1960s pineapple production picked up rapidly. In 1962, officials contentedly remarked that 'Mwinilunga had exported quite a large number of pineapples at an average price of 1/- per fruit.'<sup>75</sup> The rapid increase in pineapple sales after independence signalled eager market participation by producers. Whereas in 1965 95,431 lbs of pineapples had been marketed, this figure rose to 141,277 lbs in 1966, 168,294 lbs in 1967 and 202,154 lbs in 1968.<sup>76</sup> Pineapple cultivation was embedded within the humanist rhetoric of self-reliance under the UNIP government. Prior to the provision of government support, the economic viability of pineapple cultivation had to be ensured: 'People produce pineapples before canning factories are established.'<sup>77</sup> To reward and sustain increased production, the government offered marketing and transport services to pineapple cultivators. In 1968: 'ARMB were purchasing an average of about 12,438 lbs of pineapple fruit a week. The fruits are transported to the Copperbelt by CARS.'<sup>78</sup> Pineapple sales generated large amounts of money, causing increased prosperity among producers. In February 1968, a sale of 66,443 lbs. of pineapples raised K1,328.66.<sup>79</sup> Notwithstanding increased production and market participation, marked fluctuations in pineapple sales occurred from month to month and

---

<sup>73</sup> (NAZ) Mutende No. 197, July 1945.

<sup>74</sup> See: Pesa, 'Moving along the Roadside', Chapter 2.

<sup>75</sup> (NAZ) MCD1/3/13 Loc. 4440, Provincial Team Minutes, North-Western Province, September 1962.

<sup>76</sup> (NAZ) MAG2/17/86 Loc. 199, M.M. Muyenga Comments on Mr. Croft's Report on the Canning Factory.

<sup>77</sup> (NAZ) 1970-74 Development Strategy.

<sup>78</sup> (NAZ) MAG2/5/91 Loc.144, Minister of Agriculture Tour North-Western Province, 6-13 January 1968.

<sup>79</sup> (NAZ) MAG2/5/91 Loc.144, Minister of Agriculture Tour North-Western Province, March 1968.

levels of pineapple production never proved sufficient to make the canning factory an economically viable or self-sustaining enterprise.

Agricultural producers in Mwinilunga District did not grow sufficient amounts of pineapples to keep the canning factory running throughout the year. The pineapple canning factory proved unprofitable from the beginning and the question of purchasing prices therefore received much attention. The subsidisation of pineapple cultivation was vehemently discussed:

The question of prices deserves special mention because this is a motive force behind increasing production [...] It should be accepted that in developmental stages prices are bound to rise mainly arising from the indivisibility of the factors of production and the lack of throughput and to reject this is tantamount to saying that nothing should be produced in Zambia because of lack of markets or because of costs of a project.<sup>80</sup>

Paradoxically, market production itself did not prove problematic, as ample amounts of pineapples were produced throughout Mwinilunga District. Producers even complained about 'overproduction' at certain times when the government failed to buy their crops.<sup>81</sup> In 1963, pineapple cultivators complained that CBC Stores were not buying enough pineapples and that pineapples lay rotting in their fields. But according to the buying agent, this complaint was unjustified:

It was pointless to help people grow crops for which there was no market. [...] Before loans could be made available to local farmers they had to show that they could grow economic quantities of crops for which there was a good market. At present it was a bad risk to make loans to farmers in the [Mwinilunga] District.<sup>82</sup>

The presence of the canning factory spurred pineapple cultivation throughout Mwinilunga District, yet it left some structural features of market integration unaltered. Factors of transport, distribution and marketing remained problematic:

The pineapple farmers in Chiefs Ikelenge, Mwinimilamba and Nyakaseya have expressed their dissatisfaction over the delay in buying their fruits. Several tons were reported rotting in gardens including those which were already delivered at the market. The ARMBoard's failure to organise the buying of pineapples at the right time will discourage most interested persons from coming forward.<sup>83</sup>

More than production itself, marketing proved a structural problem.<sup>84</sup> Due to the financial losses of the factory, it started to experience temporary and more

---

<sup>80</sup> (NAZ) MAG2/17/86 Loc. 199, M.M. Muyenga Comments on Mr. Croft's Report on the Canning Factory.

<sup>81</sup> Interviews with Mr. Kamuhuza, Mr. Saipilinga and Mr. Chikewa, April-May 2010, Ikelenge & Nyakaseya.

<sup>82</sup> (NAZ) MCD1/3/29, North-Western Provincial Team Meetings, Mwinilunga District Team, January 1963.

<sup>83</sup> (NAZ) LGH5/2/7, Loc. 3612, Quarterly Newsletter North-Western Province, December 1967.

<sup>84</sup> Pritchett, *Lunda-Ndembu*; Von Oppen, *Terms of Trade*.

permanent shutdowns from 1974 onwards. Consequently, pineapples lay rotting in producers' fields, as the major market for the crop had disappeared. Individual producers did continue to market their crops. Some found a market on the Copperbelt for their fruits, organising transport, marketing and distribution themselves.<sup>85</sup> Rather than abandoning pineapple cultivation altogether, producers sought the highest price for their crops and maximised their profits. Pineapple cultivation thus appeared to be an economically rational endeavour for producers in Mwinilunga District, who sought increased market participation through pineapple sales. If the Mwinilunga pineapple canning factory never became economically viable, it still appeared worthwhile for producers in the district to market their crops.

Marketing opportunities and the presence of the canning factory raised levels of pineapple cultivation throughout the district, brought about increased market integration and transformed patterns of agricultural production. Even if pineapple production faced numerous problems, with regard to marketing, transport and overall profitability, the presence of a market for pineapples spurred agricultural production and market integration. Yet, despite increased market integration, the pineapple canning factory did not change the structural position of producers in Mwinilunga District, who continued to face problems related to transport, distribution and marketing.<sup>86</sup> Market integration was spurred by the pineapple canning factory, but not to such an extent that market participation could become economically self-sustaining. Structural economic features would have to be altered and subsidies would have been required in order to keep the canning factory open. Due to these structural difficulties, the decision was made to shut down the pineapple canning factory, because it did not prove economically viable and because the political will to sustain the enterprise was lacking. The canning factory was thus a limited 'success' as it did spur market integration, but it was a 'failure' in that it did not spur overall economic transformation.<sup>87</sup> The canning factory did not structurally transform the economic position of producers in Mwinilunga District, leaving constraints of transport, marketing and distribution in place. After the shutdown of the factory, pineapple producers in Mwinilunga District were once again left to their own devices, organising their own forms of market integration.<sup>88</sup>

---

<sup>85</sup> (NAZ) Programme for the Nation, Rural Development Seminar, 19-22 September 1974. Supported by various interviews.

<sup>86</sup> Pritchett, *Lunda-Ndembu*; Pesa, 'Moving along the Roadside'.

<sup>87</sup> Ferguson, *Anti-Politics Machine*; Grischow, 'Late Colonial Development'.

<sup>88</sup> Pesa, 'Cassava is our Chief'.

## The Mwinilunga pineapple canning factory, UNIP and the state

James Ferguson has argued that despite adopting apolitical language, development schemes are principally about 'expanding the exercise of a particular sort of state power.'<sup>89</sup> Even if not explicitly stated, development schemes can have political motives and effects.<sup>90</sup> Whilst state efforts motivated the establishment of the Mwinilunga pineapple canning factory, the closure of the canning factory was motivated by a lack of political will to keep the cannery running. If the canning factory accomplished the goal of extending the political power of the state apparatus, causing a closer allegiance between producers and the UNIP government, why did the cannery nonetheless close down? Rather than adopting a depoliticising language, as Ferguson has argued, political objectives seem to have been a driving force behind the construction of the Mwinilunga pineapple canning factory.<sup>91</sup> The political 'instrument effects' of the canning factory should therefore be explored.

At the 1964 elections that led to Zambian independence, Mwinilunga District was one of the few districts outside of the Southern Province where an ANC candidate won more votes than his UNIP rival. After independence, Mwinilunga remained an opposition stronghold, even though some voters did cross the floor in support of UNIP and its policies.<sup>92</sup> The establishment of the pineapple canning factory was an attempt to bring the district more closely within the reach of the state and UNIP policies. Alleviating claims of government neglect, the pineapple canning factory would bring 'development' to Mwinilunga. In an effort to 'build the nation' and lessen rural-urban income disparities, UNIP embarked on ambitious and costly projects in remote areas, especially in opposition strongholds such as Mwinilunga.<sup>93</sup> After independence, one UNIP constituency was established in each chiefdom of Mwinilunga District and this constituency

---

<sup>89</sup> Ferguson, *Anti-Politics Machine*, 21.

<sup>90</sup> Grischow, 'Late Colonial Development'; Jennings, 'Building Better People'; Li, 'Beyond the State'.

<sup>91</sup> Ferguson, *Anti-Politics Machine*; Grischow, 'Late Colonial Development'; Schneider, 'High on Modernism?'

<sup>92</sup> See: I. Pesa, 'We Have Killed this Animal Together, May I Also Have a Share?: Local-National Political Dynamics in Mwinilunga District, Zambia, 1950s-1970s', *Journal of Southern African Studies* 40:5 (2014), 925-41; M. Larmer and G. Macola, 'The Origins, Context, and Political Significance of the Mushala Rebellion Against the Zambian One-Party State', *The International Journal of African Historical Studies* 40:3 (2007), 471-96.

<sup>93</sup> Examples of similar schemes during this period are the Kawambwa Tea Company (<http://www.lusakatimes.com/2013/11/01/zafico-takes-over-kawambwa-tea-company/>) and Mansa Batteries (<http://www.lusakatimes.com/2009/02/18/state-threatens-to-repossess-mansa-batteries/>). Both these industries were established after independence in 'remote rural areas' and closed their doors in the 1990s. On the political leanings of Luapula Province after independence, see: Giacomo Macola, 'It Means as if we are Excluded from the Good Freedom': Thwarted Expectations of Independence in the Luapula Province of Zambia, 1964-6', *Journal of African History* 47 (2006), 43-56.

was charged, among other things, with promoting pineapple cultivation.<sup>94</sup> It was stated that in order to effect a change from 'traditional production habits to new methods,' a 'strong political support will be needed.'<sup>95</sup> Politics was linked to pineapple cultivation and political aims and objectives proved important for the establishment of the canning factory. Limited government funds were available after independence, and the decision to allocate a large sum of money for the construction of a pineapple canning factory in Mwinilunga might be interpreted as an attempt to bring voters in the district into closer touch with the government.<sup>96</sup> Whereas voters had previously been disgruntled by a perceived governmental neglect of the area, the pineapple canning factory took away these grudges. UNIP officials stated that in order to make the canning factory feasible, 'great effort will be put into the production of pineapples to feed the newly constructed pineapple canning factory.'<sup>97</sup> Notwithstanding difficulties, the Ministry of Agriculture professed to 'leave no stone unturned in its efforts to keep the plant going.'<sup>98</sup> This exceptional political support was not due to the inherent importance of pineapples for the national economy, but rather presented an attempt to win voter support for UNIP policies.<sup>99</sup>

Political considerations also played a role in the decision to establish the canning factory in Mwinilunga Township, rather than close to the main areas of pineapple production in Ikelenge and Nyakaseya chiefdoms. A central location was chosen for the pineapple canning factory, so that producers from the areas of Chiefs Kanongesha, Chibwika and Ntambu would be spurred to produce and market pineapples.<sup>100</sup> As a result, '[t]he plantations are spread in different parts of the Mwinilunga District, a few of them are as far as 130 to 140km from the cannery.'<sup>101</sup> The overwhelming majority of pineapple production in Mwinilunga was concentrated in the north-western part of the district and the decision to establish the canning factory in Mwinilunga Township, at 70 to 110 kilometres away from the main areas of production, proved problematic.<sup>102</sup> Due to the bad condition of the roads, especially in the rainy season, transport proved problematic and ripe pineapples failed to find their way to the canning factory.

---

<sup>94</sup> (NAZ) Agricultural Rural Marketing Board Report, 29 May -2 June 1967.

<sup>95</sup> (NAZ) MAG2/17/86 Loc. 199, Pineapples, 24 July 1972.

<sup>96</sup> Compare with: M. Larmer, *Rethinking African Politics: A History of Opposition in Zambia* (Farnham and Burlington: 2011).

<sup>97</sup> (NAZ) MAG2/21/86, Brief on Rural Development, North-Western Province, July 1970.

<sup>98</sup> (NAZ) MAG2/21/86, Brief on Rural Development, North-Western Province, July 1970.

<sup>99</sup> Pesa, 'We Have Killed This Animal Together'.

<sup>100</sup> Pritchett, *Lunda-Ndemba*; Interview with Mr. Peter Matoka, December 2009, Lusaka. Interview with Mr. Beston Mapulanga, October 2010, Mwinilunga.

<sup>101</sup> (NAZ) MAG2/17/86 Loc.199 Pineapples, 24 July 1972.

<sup>102</sup> Johnson, *Handbook to the North-Western Province*.

The decision to establish a pineapple canning factory in the centre of the district was a political one: 'Each depot will have its markets scattered throughout the district sited to serve the most productive areas bearing in mind the need for a road to allow the produce to be brought out.'<sup>103</sup> Whereas UNIP already enjoyed support in the areas of Chief Ikelenge and Nyakaseya, major opposition strongholds were located in the areas of Chief Kanongesha, Sailunga and Ntambu. In an attempt to win over the opposition, UNIP engaged in buying pineapples from these areas, at the cost of overall productivity.<sup>104</sup> Although economically detrimental, this policy was successful in political terms. Pineapple producers in Chief Kanongesha's area today recall that: 'Kaunda days were all right, he built us the pineapple canning factory and life was good.'<sup>105</sup>

The Mwinilunga pineapple canning factory was not a simple technical or apolitical intervention. To the contrary, politics played a major role. Due to the pineapple canning factory support was generated for UNIP and its policies, and voters throughout Mwinilunga District praised President Kaunda for its construction.<sup>106</sup> Nonetheless, the decision to establish the canning factory in the centre of the district, far away from the main areas of production, proved economically detrimental. It was not profitable to transport pineapples over long distances and the resulting economic losses caused diminished political will to engage in further investments to keep the pineapple canning factory running.<sup>107</sup> The closure of the canning factory reversed political gains, as voters once again engaged in opposition to UNIP. The closure of the Mwinilunga pineapple canning factory coincided with broader macroeconomic and political trends. Whereas the 1960s had been a time of economic prosperity and multiparty campaigning, the 1980s were a time of economic crisis under a one party regime. In this context, UNIP had neither the monetary means, nor the political will to sustain a costly development initiative in a remote rural area.<sup>108</sup> Nonetheless, in the 1960s and early 1970s the canning factory proved 'successful', to a certain extent, with regard to national integration, as it generated support for government policies throughout Mwinilunga District. Yet, political gains were limited and national integration was offset by a lack of economic profits from the canning factory. Due to a lack of economic profit policymakers lost interest in the canning factory, and the canning factory was thus a 'failure', insofar as it did not change the structural position of Mwinilunga

---

<sup>103</sup> (NAZ) Agricultural Rural Marketing Board Report, 29 May - 2 June 1967.

<sup>104</sup> Pesa, 'We Have Killed This Animal Together'.

<sup>105</sup> Interview with Headman Kachacha, 27 July 2010, Kanongesha.

<sup>106</sup> Interview with Mr. John Kamuhuza, Ikelenge; Mr. Kachacha, Kanongesha and others.

<sup>107</sup> Compare with Carswell, *Cultivating Success*; Ferguson, *Anti-Politics Machine*.

<sup>108</sup> Larmer, *Rethinking African Politics*.

District within the Zambian nation state.<sup>109</sup> The Mwinilunga pineapple canning factory shows that there was an 'inability of the state to control the outcome of development.'<sup>110</sup>

### The yellow gold: Notions of success among pineapple producers

Despite the 'failure' of the pineapple canning factory in achieving certain economic and political goals, producers throughout Mwinilunga District remember the days of the pineapple canning factory as good times. Pineapples are labelled the 'yellow gold' for the profits they bring and producers still clamour for the reopening of the canning factory.<sup>111</sup> How, then, can it be explained that this development scheme was a failure according to policymakers, yet a success according to producers? '[D]evelopment success is not merely a question of measures of performance, but also about how particular interpretations are made and sustained socially.'<sup>112</sup> This social construction of notions of success reveals the structural workings of markets and the state and the inability of the pineapple canning factory to alter these structures.

At independence, Mwinilunga District was relatively one of the less 'developed' areas of Zambia. Yet, this conceptualisation of Mwinilunga as a 'less developed' area should itself be examined. Capitalism and state policies worked to construct 'certain regions as objects of development'.<sup>113</sup> In some cases, a 'geographical location on the margins of markets and states' enabled subjects 'to retain their autonomy and practical knowledge intact.'<sup>114</sup> Paradoxically, producers in Mwinilunga did not seek overall disengagement from the market and the state, but welcomed the pineapple canning factory as an avenue for market and state integration. The period of the pineapple canning factory is remembered as a period of success, as producers earned money and found an entry into the market.

Pineapples are locally regarded as a successful crop, for although they could not be processed and marketed at economic prices by the canning factory, pineapple sales nevertheless generated profits for individual producers throughout the district. Pineapples are referred to as 'yellow gold' and cash

---

<sup>109</sup> Compare with Larmer, *Rethinking African Politics*.

<sup>110</sup> Bahre and Lecocq, *The Drama of Development*, 2.

<sup>111</sup> Interview with Mrs. Nancy Kamafumbu, March 2010, Ikelenge; Mr. and Mrs. Ntanga, October 2010, Mwinilunga.

<sup>112</sup> Carswell, *Cultivating Success*, 208.

<sup>113</sup> Grischow, 'Late Colonial Development', 286.

<sup>114</sup> Li, 'Beyond the State', 385.

incentives enticed individuals to expand pineapple cultivation.<sup>115</sup> The profitable market provided by the canning factory caused a boom in pineapple cultivation throughout the district. A survey conducted in 1969 counted 251 pineapple producers in Mwinilunga District, who cultivated a total of 288 acres, with individual field sizes ranging from 0.11 to 8.25 acres. The average yield per acre was 1.5 tons, and although this figure does not come close to the optimum yield of 18 tons per acre under irrigation and close supervision, yields and profits nevertheless proved satisfactory to the cultivator. If cultivated on fertile red soils, irrigated and properly managed, a pineapple field could yield between K26.30 and K700 per acre in certain parts of Mwinilunga District.<sup>116</sup> Economic 'success' thus spurred producers throughout the district to engage in pineapple cultivation.

Not all producers engaged in pineapple cultivation with equal zeal. Due to the relatively low labour demands of pineapples some cultivators engaged in pineapple production as a mere sideline. Officials complained that on occasion: 'little attention is paid to the pineapple plots during the rains when more labour is needed in the cassava and maize gardens.'<sup>117</sup> Other producers, however, saw pineapple cultivation as a real business enterprise. Some maintained large fields, engaged pieceworkers and made arrangements for transport and marketing, even after the closure of the pineapple canning factory. A handful of producers were able to purchase motor vehicles with the profits from pineapple sales, and these vehicles enabled them to transport harvests to the canning factory or to urban markets. These sales, in turn, allowed producers to realise high profits and to invest in the further expansion of their enterprises.<sup>118</sup> Pineapple profits were not only ploughed back into agricultural production, but equally stimulated the purchase of consumer goods.<sup>119</sup> The period when the canning factory was in operation is remembered as a time when people 'started building good houses and wearing nice clothes.'<sup>120</sup> One woman who cultivated a large pineapple field together with her husband proudly recalled that she 'had cloth of which other women were jealous' and 'could eat lots of meat every day while others were just eating vegetables.'<sup>121</sup> Production and consumption were intricately linked, as the prospect of buying consumer goods with the profits from pineapple sales stimulated agricultural production. Pineapple cultivation

---

<sup>115</sup> Interview with Mr. Aaron Chikewa, Nyakaseya.

<sup>116</sup> (NAZ) MAG2/17/86 Loc.199, Pineapples, 24 July 1972.

<sup>117</sup> (NAZ) MAG2/17/86 Loc.199, Pineapples, 24 July 1972.

<sup>118</sup> Interview with Mr. Saipilinga Kahongo, 22 March 2010, Ikelenge.

<sup>119</sup> For more on the role of consumption in this area, see: Robert Ross, Marja Hinfelaar and Iva Pesa (eds.), *The Objects of Life in Central Africa: The History of Consumption and Social Change, 1840-1980* (Leiden and Boston: 2013).

<sup>120</sup> Interview with Mr. Saipilinga Kahongo, 22 March 2010, Ikelenge.

<sup>121</sup> Interview with Mrs. Nanci Kamafumbu, 19 April 2010, Ikelenge.



did cause a degree of material wealth in the area, yet it did not amount to the emergence of a distinct class of entrepreneurs. The earnings of successful pineapple producers would circulate through the wider community, whereas individuals would be socially penalised if pursuing profit too blatantly. Individuals who failed to consider the well-being of kin and friends risked being ostracised or might become the target of witchcraft accusations.<sup>122</sup> Although pineapple cultivation caused an amount of economic 'success' it did not cause overall economic transformation.

Within a general environment of constraint throughout Mwinilunga District, pineapple cultivation provided a distinct opportunity. Pineapple cultivation was attractive to producers because it did not require a reorganisation of existing agricultural practices. It could be practiced as a supplementary activity without jeopardising food security. This compatibility meant that pineapple production built on the existing foundations of production in Mwinilunga.<sup>123</sup> Throughout the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s, pineapple production proved profitable to producers; yet, structural problems of transport and marketing predominated and led to the demise of the canning factory.<sup>124</sup> Although after the closure of the factory some producers continued to market pineapples at urban markets, this trade at best provided a volatile and limited market outlet for the crop. These structural constraints highlight the marginal position of Mwinilunga District within Zambia as a whole.

### Conclusion: Understanding the pineapple canning factory

Numerous factors motivated the establishment of the pineapple canning factory in Mwinilunga District. Political and economic factors, both explicit and more covert, played a role. In some respects, the pineapple canning factory was quite 'successful', as it raised levels of pineapple cultivation throughout the district and it generated support for UNIP policies. Nonetheless, the scheme was dubbed a 'failure' and the factory started to experience shutdowns within several years of its opening. Within a macro-economic and political context this makes sense. Whereas the establishment of the pineapple canning factory coincided with economic boom and multiparty campaigning, its closure coincided with economic crisis and a one-party state. The case of the

---

<sup>122</sup> The man who claims to have introduced the first pineapple to Mwinilunga District has been attacked by an *ilomba* (magic serpent), which explains his short stature. Interview with Mr. Aaron Chikewa, 27 April 2010, Nyakaseya.

<sup>123</sup> Interview with Mr. John Kamuhuza, March 2010, Ikelenge.

<sup>124</sup> Pritchett, *Lunda-Ndemba*, Chapter 2.

Mwinilunga pineapple canning factory might not be wholly exceptional within the Zambian context:

The parastatal sector was faced with several challenges which could not always be reconciled [...] most companies operated at a loss, particularly in the rural areas. The companies lacked term capital, became over-politicised with the passage of time and had blotted structures not linked to production. The other issue was the political location of industries away from market centers such as the Luangwa Industries, Mansa Batteries, and Livingstone Motor Assembly, which increased production and marketing costs.<sup>125</sup>

This highlights that the problems faced by the Mwinilunga pineapple canning factory were not unique, but should be compared to other understudied parastatal initiatives such as the Mansa battery factory or Kawambwa tea company.<sup>126</sup>

This paper has explored differing notions of 'failure' and 'success'. Development schemes did not 'always succeed, and when policies did 'succeed' it may have been as much to do with how success was being defined, as anything else.'<sup>127</sup> According to pineapple cultivators, the canning factory was a success as it caused a bout of prosperity. The failure of the pineapple canning factory was not due to low productivity or lack of profitability alone. The closure of the pineapple canning factory must instead be attributed to power relations, which reveal the structural workings of the market and the state in Mwinilunga District. Although the pineapple canning factory furthered market and state integration, this did not go far enough. Structural impediments remained in place, underlining the marginal position of Mwinilunga within Zambia. After several years of operation, officials considered that there was no 'need for further action' with regard to the canning factory.<sup>128</sup> Scholars have explored how 'failed' development schemes get replicated again and again, how 'failure' can be an excuse for further intervention.<sup>129</sup> Yet, the Mwinilunga pineapple canning factory did not justify further interventions, its continued operation could not raise sufficient political support. What the canning factory failed to do was to change the structural position of Mwinilunga District within the Zambian nation state. Transport, distribution and marketing continued to be problematic, despite the presence of the canning factory. The position of Mwinilunga continued to be marginal, and that is why the canning factory closed down. Nonetheless, pineapple producers continue to voice hopes for the re-opening of the canning factory, because this would be a means of renewed

---

<sup>125</sup> I. Mwanawina and J. Mulungushi, 'Zambia' in B.J. Ndulu et al., eds, *The Political Economy of Economic Growth in Africa 1960-2000, Country Case Studies Volume II* (Cambridge etc., 2008), 302.

<sup>126</sup> This pertinent remark was made by Bernard Mbenga and Marja Hinfelaar, I thank them.

<sup>127</sup> Carswell, *Cultivating Success*, 3.

<sup>128</sup> Carswell, *Cultivating Success*, 208.

<sup>129</sup> See Ferguson, *Anti-Politics Machine*; Carswell, *Cultivating Success*.

integration with the market and the state. In line with Robert Ross, quoting Joan Robinson, it might be argued that the only thing worse than being exploited by capitalism is not being exploited at all.<sup>130</sup>

---

<sup>130</sup> Robinson, *Economic Philosophy*, 45.

# Livingstone in Northern Rhodesia (now Zambia): Historical Sketch of a British Colonial Town, 1897-1924<sup>1</sup>

*Bernard K. Mbenga*

## Introduction

I met Robert Ross for the first time in 2006. Before even then, I was already familiar with much of his enormous published work. From that year for the next four years, Robert, Carolyn Hamilton and myself met regularly at Wits University in Johannesburg, to work on *The Cambridge History of South Africa, Vol. 1, From Early Times to 1885*, published by Cambridge University Press in 2010. While working together on the manuscript, I benefitted a great deal from Robert's highly perceptive and insightful mind, as well as the impressive historical corpus on South Africa which he has produced. This chapter on a social history of Livingstone has, therefore, benefitted from the very many aspects of social history in the numerous publications by Robert, by focussing in particular on the town's social life, transport and other neglected cultural aspects.

The advent of mining in Kimberley in the 1870s and gold mining on the Rand from the mid-1880s was to change fundamentally the economic and political

---

<sup>1</sup> I am very grateful to Prof Hugh Macmillan for indicating to me a number of very useful sources for this article, including some of his own works, from which this chapter has greatly benefitted.

prospects of the sub-continent. Up to that point, the primary concern of the British Imperial government was to govern the Cape as cheaply as possible. But with the discovery of diamonds and gold, Britain took a new interest in the region.<sup>2</sup> These two factors of diamonds and gold fuelled imperial rivalry in the sub-continent and strongly influenced British imperial minds into thinking that precious stones and metals were likely to be found in the African interior further to the north, including the area of modern Zambia.

Modern Zambia was colonised close to the turn of the nineteenth century. On the eve of the extension of British rule over the territory, it consisted of separate and independent African kingdoms and chiefdoms of varying sizes, whose peoples traded with one another and lived off the land through herding, fishing and cultivating. Probably the biggest of these was the kingdom of the Lozi, or Barotseland, in the west, then ruled by King Lubosi Lewanika. Prior to colonisation, slave-raiding and inter-ethnic warfare were the general features of these societies.<sup>3</sup> All this was to change, however, with the new era of British imperial intervention in the region.

Published literature on the histories of Zambian towns is scanty, with the exception of Lusaka, whose history was first published in 1959.<sup>4</sup> From the 1940s to the 1960s, various colonial settlers and officials in Northern Rhodesia wrote their reminiscences and personal experiences about various *aspects* of the early histories of Zambian towns, including Livingstone, which were published from time to time in the *Northern Rhodesia Journal*. In the mid-1950s, a colonial official and professional historian, L. H. Gann, published a book on the colonisation of the country by the British South Africa Company (BSAC).<sup>5</sup> Much later, from the late 1990s to the mid-2000s, the work of another professional historian, Hugh Macmillan, then teaching at the University of Zambia, published two books about the Jews in Zambia, which deal in some detail with the early history of Livingstone.<sup>6</sup> These accounts certainly do provide useful pointers to those early urban histories and this paper has benefitted from them. But, apart from an unpublished and very Eurocentric book manuscript by Duncan Watt, there has not been any *holistic* research on the history of Livingstone, other

---

<sup>2</sup> B. Willan, *Sol Plaatje: South African Nationalist, 1876-1932* (London, 1984), 1.

<sup>3</sup> For details of slave-raiding and -trading, see, for example, A.J. Willis, *An Introduction to the History of Central Africa: Zambia, Malawi and Zimbabwe* (London, Fourth Edition, 1985), 75-81.

<sup>4</sup> See, for example, R. Sampson, *This was Lusaakas* (Lusaka, 1971). This book was first published in 1959 by the Lusaka Publicity Association.

<sup>5</sup> L.H. Gann, *The Birth of a Plural Society: The Development of Northern Rhodesia Under the British South Africa Company, 1894-1914* (Manchester, 1957).

<sup>6</sup> H. Macmillan and F. Shapiro, *Zion in Africa: The Jews of Zambia* (London and New York, 1999); H. Macmillan, *An African Trading Empire: The Story of Susman Brothers & Wulfsohn, 1901-2005* (London and New York, 2005).

than aspects of it.<sup>7</sup> The objectives of this paper are, therefore, two-fold: firstly, to give an account of the social and political aspects of the early history of Livingstone from the late 1890s to 1924 by bringing together what has already been written, and secondly, to fill the void in the historical literature on Zambian towns.

### The imperial context

The town of Livingstone was named after the nineteenth-century Scottish explorer of central Africa, David Livingstone, the first white person to see the town's local Mosi-oa-Tunya falls in November 1855, which he renamed the Victoria Falls, after the then reigning British Queen, Victoria. The creation of Livingstone was a consequence of the northward expansion of the British Empire from South Africa. It is, therefore, necessary to situate briefly the creation of the town within the broader context of European and British imperial rivalry and expansion in the southern African sub-region in the last quarter of the nineteenth century.

There were three threats to the British imperial ambitions of northward expansion: (a) Germany's ambition to link her 'spheres of influence', Tanganyika and South West Africa across the Zambezi; (b) the Portuguese aspirations of linking Angola with Mozambique;<sup>8</sup> and (c) the acquisition in 1884 of the Congo by Belgium's King Leopold and his intention to take the copper-rich Katanga as well.<sup>9</sup> Sharing fully in, and central to, the imperial designs of the British government was John Cecil Rhodes, the financial tycoon who had earlier made his mammoth pile through diamond mining in Kimberley. He was willing and ready to use his own resources to realise the British imperial goals.

In his strongly imperial mind, Rhodes could see the African interior as 'vast lands [...] rich in precious stones, gold, or copper.'<sup>10</sup> In 1889, Rhodes created the BSAC for the realisation of his dreams and was granted a Royal Charter by Queen Victoria. The Charter gave Rhodes the right to make treaties with African rulers and acquire territories on behalf of the British Empire north of Bechuanaland. Rhodes saw his Charter as 'a royal permit to conquer, occupy,

---

<sup>7</sup> D. Watt, *The History of Early Livingstone, 1898-1911*, unpublished book manuscript, n.d. Watt was born in Livingstone and lived there until he was 13. Later in life, he was curious to know about the early history of his birthplace and researched on it but does not seem to have published his manuscript, which the writer located in the Livingstone Museum in 2000. The author is aware that in the 1980s, Gabriel Muvwanga completed an MA study on the history of housing in Livingstone but, unfortunately, has not been able to have access to it.

<sup>8</sup> T.R.H. Davenport, *South Africa, A Modern History* (Johannesburg, 1987), 205.

<sup>9</sup> B. Roberts, *Cecil Rhodes, Flawed Colossus* (London, 1987), 168.

<sup>10</sup> R.I. Rotberg, *The Founder: Cecil Rhodes and the Pursuit of Power* (Johannesburg, 1988), 320.

administer, and absorb a vast hinterland [...].'<sup>11</sup> As Brian Roberts, a biographer of Rhodes has recorded: 'This was one of the reasons why no northern boundaries had been set when the Charter was granted; the less Rhodes was confined, the freer he would be to realise his imperial ambitions.'<sup>12</sup> Rhodes received moral support at the highest level of the British government, notably from Joseph Chamberlain who became Colonial Secretary and was a firm believer in British expansion into tropical lands.<sup>13</sup>

In June 1890, on the basis of the BSAC charter, Rhodes' agent, Frank Lochner, signed a treaty with King Lewanika, giving the BSAC mining rights in the kingdom and offering the king and his people 'protection.' Lewanika would receive £2,000 per year and a royalty on minerals exported by the BSAC. A Resident would be sent to live in Barotseland.<sup>14</sup> More importantly, in the treaty, Lewanika's account of the size of his kingdom was vague and highly exaggerated, claiming that it 'extended in the north from Lovale country as far as the Katanga, while in the east it included all the tribes as far as the Lenje, including the Ila, and the Tonga and the peoples of the Zambezi valley above the Victoria Falls,'<sup>15</sup> thus including the area of modern Livingstone. This exaggeration and vagueness of the borders of Lewanika's kingdom, of course, suited the BSAC's imperial and economic agenda, i.e. the more imprecise the boundaries were, the freer Rhodes would be to realise his imperial ambitions.

Following the signing of the Lochner agreement, Rhodes appointed a young South African, Robert Coryndon, as Resident in Barotseland, based at the Lozi capital, Lealui, from 1897. Coryndon promptly renegotiated the terms of the Lochner agreement, giving the BSAC more extensive rights to colonise the kingdom and bring it under formal British imperial rule.<sup>16</sup>

Consequently, in 1899 and 1900, the British government issued two Orders-in-Council, which created the territories of North Eastern Rhodesia (NER) and North Western Rhodesia (NWR) both of which were gazetted in Cape Town. Coryndon was appointed Administrator of NWR and he divided the territory into

---

<sup>11</sup> Quoted in A.J. Wills, *An Introduction to the History of Central Africa*, Third Edition (London, 1973), 163.

<sup>12</sup> Roberts, *Cecil Rhodes*, 168.

<sup>13</sup> J. Indakwa, *Expansion of British Rule in the Interior of Central Africa: 1890-1924, A Study of British Imperial Expansion into Zambia, Zimbabwe, and Malawi* (Washington, 1977), 147-148.

<sup>14</sup> Wills, *History of Central Africa*, 164. For a very detailed account of how Barotseland was acquired by the BSAC up to the time of the Lochner Concession, see Rotberg, *The Founder*, 320-327. See also the very detailed Indakwa account, *Expansion of British Rule*, 86-248.

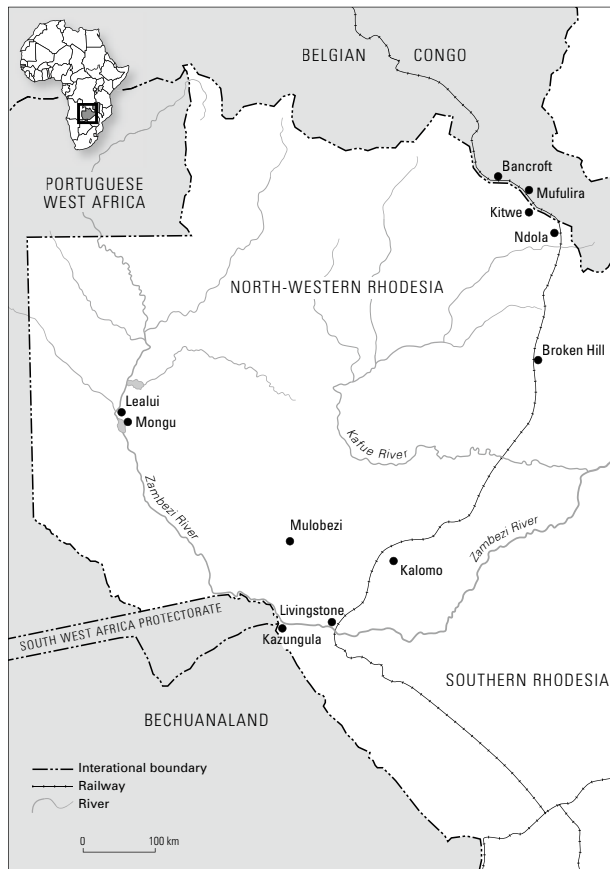
<sup>15</sup> Cited in Wills, *History of Central Africa*, 162-163.

<sup>16</sup> Wills, *History of Central Africa*, 166. The wording in the treaty that it was with Queen Victoria was, in fact, a misrepresentation and 'a piece of duplicity which earned Rhodes a rebuke from Whitehall.' See R. Hall, 'Missionaries and Explorers,' in B.M. Fagan, ed., *A Short History of Zambia* (Oxford, 1966), 144.

three districts: Barotse, Victoria Falls and Batoka, each under a white District Commissioner.<sup>17</sup> While in theory the entire NWR was regarded by the BSAC as being under Lewanika's jurisdiction, in practice it was under Company rule and his powers were quickly whittled away and his jurisdiction limited to the Barotse Valley. In these actions, Coryndon had the support of the BSAC directors and the Colonial Office in London.<sup>18</sup>

### The founding of Livingstone

North-Western Rhodesia during the early 20th century, showing Livingstone and other places mentioned in this chapter



<sup>17</sup> Indakwa, *Expansion of British Rule*, 205-206. See also K. Bradley, "Company Days: The Rule of the British South Africa Company in Northern Rhodesia," *Northern Rhodesia Journal*, IV (1961), 446.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.* 227-228.



From the mid-1890s, white settlers began to arrive in NWR. The BSAC created a tiny settlement, called The Old Drift, in 1897 on the northern bank of the Zambezi, about three kilometres upstream from the Falls. Up to that time, The Old Drift was the only entry-point into Barotseland officially recognised by both the BSAC and King Lewanika.<sup>19</sup> Getting to The Old Drift from the south meant crossing the Zambezi, and canoes were the only means to do this. One of the earliest white settlers of The Old Drift was an Irishman named William Trayner who was in-charge of overseeing canoe ferries crossing the Zambezi. When canoes became redundant with the arrival of the railway in Livingstone in 1904, Trayner lost his job.<sup>20</sup> Another 'Old Drifter,' as the early white settlers of the place came to be known, was F.J. Clarke who operated as a freight agent. He also established a small hotel built of pole and mud on the northern bank of the Zambezi. He too moved to Livingstone when The Old Drift was abandoned in 1905, as it was malaria-ridden, in preference for the site of present-day Livingstone, which was higher and, therefore, relatively more healthy.<sup>21</sup>

Founded in 1905, Livingstone was situated on what the town's early European settlers termed the 'sandbelt' because its site was extremely sandy. The surrounding environment of Livingstone, situated about eight kilometres north of one of the biggest rivers in Africa, the Zambezi, was heavily wooded, with big, tall and leafy trees. Livingstone generally received plenty of rain during the rainy season. However, because of its close proximity to the Zambezi River at a point where it is very low, it had extremes of heat in summer and cold in winter. But the shift to Livingstone may have been influenced by the arrival of the railway, following which the Victoria Falls bridge across the Zambezi was officially opened in 1905.<sup>22</sup> Pauling & Company were the contractors that built the railway line northwards between NWR and NER,<sup>23</sup> extending it to Broken Hill (now Kabwe) in 1906, Ndola in 1909 and Katanga in 1910.<sup>24</sup> While the construction of such infrastructure obviously needed a lot of local African labour, much of it was destined for the colonial territories south of the Zambia.

Before the development of the Copperbelt, the destinations of unskilled African labour from NWR and NER were the farms and mines of the

---

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.* 127.

<sup>20</sup> 'The Livingstone Pioneer,' as told by W. Trayner and written by P. Barnes, *Northern Rhodesia Journal*, V (1963), 561.

<sup>21</sup> E.K. Jordan, 'Early Days in Kalomo and Livingstone,' *Northern Rhodesia Journal*, IV (1950-1952), 16; K. Ese, 'An Historical Guide to Livingstone Town,' [www.Kristinese.no/download/historical\\_guide\\_livingstone.pdf](http://www.Kristinese.no/download/historical_guide_livingstone.pdf), 7, 20. Downloaded on 12 October 2014.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.* 22.

<sup>23</sup> Watt, *History of Early Livingstone*, 56.

<sup>24</sup> Rotberg, *The Founder*, 595.

comparatively more developed economy of Southern Rhodesia. From the late 1890s, such labour passed through the three principal drifts of Kazungula, Victoria Falls and Walker's Drift.<sup>25</sup> These three crossing points were considered part of Livingstone, which became a major labour recruiting centre for unskilled labour, organised and managed by the Southern Rhodesia Native Labour Bureau, established (in Salisbury) in 1903, and destined specifically for Southern Rhodesia.<sup>26</sup> Presumably, even as early as this time, some of the more adventurous of these labour recruits would have found their way to the economically more attractive labour destinations of the Rand and Kimberley mines in South Africa. Interestingly, while African labour recruits were going southwards for economic reasons, some of the white citizens in South Africa were heading northwards to NWR for new economic opportunities.

During this period, on the basis of the BSAC-Lewanika agreements, 'white farmers, especially Boers, were increasingly moving into the country [i.e. NWR] in large numbers and beginning to acquire large farms in the highlands in the Batoka District between Kalomo and Mazabuka.'<sup>27</sup> Official policy, however, was against large-scale European settlement north of the Zambezi. Lord Milner, British High Commissioner at the Cape from 1897 to 1905, for example, saw the country as a tropical dependency rather than a white settlers' territory. But white settlement was, nevertheless, encouraged as white settlers 'would help the mines by providing cheap food.'<sup>28</sup> In 1907, Coryndon no longer referred to Lewanika as 'king' but 'Paramount Chief' of the Lozi and his son, Letia, no longer as 'prince'.<sup>29</sup> Coryndon, however, ran a troubled administration. Without an established civil service in NWR, which the BSAC was unwilling to pay for due to insufficient funds, its officials were engaged by contract. Consequently, there was much discontent, resulting in frequent resignations.<sup>30</sup> Administration improved somewhat with the next Administrator.

In about 1906, Robert Codrington, who had previously been in the administration of NER, succeeded Coryndon as Administrator of NWR. As he found malaria-ridden Lealui unhealthy, Codrington moved his headquarters to Kalomo, situated along the newly-constructed railway line.<sup>31</sup> Codrington had barely lived in Kalomo when, prompted again by health problems, this time blackwater fever and malaria, he began planning to shift the capital to

---

<sup>25</sup> Indakwa, *Expansion of British Rule*, 195.

<sup>26</sup> Wills, Introduction to the History of Central Africa, 214.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.* 223-224.

<sup>28</sup> Gann, *Plural Society*, p. 137.

<sup>29</sup> Indakwa, *Expansion of British Rule*, 243.

<sup>30</sup> Gann, *Plural Society*, 106.

<sup>31</sup> Wills, *History of Central Africa*, 220.

Livingstone.<sup>32</sup> In October 1907, the BSAC moved the capital from Kalomo to Livingstone where the Company bought the North-Western Hotel along Fairway (now Chimwemwe Way) road, Codrington renamed it Government House, and turned it into Codrington's official residence.<sup>33</sup>

Codrington arrived in Livingstone from NER 'with a great reputation [...], but very soon he became most unpopular.' One of his contemporary critics, Piet Erasmus, recorded that 'Codrington was disliked' because he was 'a rough, uncouth, brutal fellow: utterly without regard for his subordinates and intent on his own way at all costs.'<sup>34</sup> Another source, Kenneth Bradely, records that Codrington was 'the autocrat whom few dared to advise, but whom all obeyed.'<sup>35</sup> Gann records that he was 'a stern disciplinarian and a believer in efficiency.' These traits made Codrington unpopular. However, although some of Codrington's administrative reforms might have been unpopular, such as the banning of the ownership of land and cattle by officials, he also 'introduced better conditions of service and better housing.' Consequently, civil servants became more contented and staff turn-over much lower than before his arrival.<sup>36</sup> Codrington died in mid-December 1908 while on leave in London. He was replaced by Lawrence Wallace who arrived in Livingstone early in 1909 and remained there as Administrator of NWR and, later, the amalgamated Northern Rhodesia, until his retirement in 1921.

### Establishing an administration

At the top of the colonial administration in Livingstone when it became the capital of NWR were the Administrator, Chief Secretary, Chief Native Commissioner, Native Commissioner, Civil Commissioner, Magistrate and chief of police. The Administrator was accountable to Lord Selborne, the British High Commissioner for South Africa based in Cape Town, who oversaw legal and administrative matters affecting NWR. BSAC officials were generally from the Cape Colony. Among the other more important white figures in the town were the head of postal services, the Chief Surveyor and the two medical doctors in

---

<sup>32</sup> Bradley, 'Company days,' 447; B.L. Hunt, 'Kalomo - Livingstone in 1907,' *Northern Rhodesia Journal*, Vol. IV (1959), 9.

<sup>33</sup> Hunt, 'Kalomo - Livingstone in 1907,' *Northern Rhodesia Journal*, Vol. IV (1959), 12; Wills, *History of Central Africa*, 220. The hotel was bought from Pauling and Company, a private contractor that had built the Livingstone – Broken Hill railway line. See Hunt, 'Kalomo - Livingstone in 1907,' 12.

<sup>34</sup> Quoted in Watt, *History of Early Livingstone*, 89.

<sup>35</sup> Bradley, 'Company days,' 448 - 449.

<sup>36</sup> Gann, *Plural Society*, 107.

Livingstone hospital. In 1907, Livingstone had about 53 prominent European-owned buildings, most of them business premises. The rest were Company buildings, such as, for example, the Post Office, the Cattle Inspector's House and the Comptroller's House.<sup>37</sup> By 1910, Livingstone had a post office, several new shops, the Civil Service building, two hotels, an Anglican church, a Standard Bank and a residential area for white, high-ranking civil servants.<sup>38</sup> The first high court in Northern Rhodesia, a large wood and iron building, was opened in 1910. In 1924, it housed the first Legislative Council of Northern Rhodesia but was re-built in the late 1920s.<sup>39</sup>

The establishment of a colonial administration creating a system of structures and mechanisms throughout both territories of NWR and NER. The two entities were divided into districts and an elaborate system of African census devised, with all villages counted under their headmen and chiefs. The names of all male adults and their wives (if married), children and all stock were recorded. Government settlements, soon known as *bomas*, were erected at selected sites. Slave raids and inter-ethnic wars were stopped. A general complaint of colonial administrators in all of the three Rhodesias was the scarcity of manual labour. To alleviate the problem, a hut tax was imposed on all able-bodied African men in NWR in 1904, both to encourage regular colonial-related work and to enlarge the revenue base.<sup>40</sup> European men with some capital and experience obtained land, usually along the new line of rail, where they established farms and cattle ranches, as, for example, one George Horton did, several kilometres outside Livingstone in about 1906.<sup>41</sup> The white settlers needed visible security, which the colonial administration provided.

To enforce colonial rule, the Barotse Native Police (BNP) was firmly in place, created at the turn of the century and consisting of African policemen, officered by Europeans. A contemporary white resident, who was impressed by the black policemen's 'spotless and pressed khakhi, their tall tarboosh and their shining (polished with dry soap) dark legs,' thought that they 'were a joy to watch – a wonderfully drilled and disciplined body of men.' The means of transport used by the BNP was horses. However, the police were unable to keep the horses as most of them died, 'owing to the scourge of horse-sickness,' except for a few ponies for ceremonial purposes.<sup>42</sup>

---

<sup>37</sup> Watt, *History of Early Livingstone*, 6- 65.

<sup>38</sup> Ese, 'Historical Guide to Livingstone,' 10, 22.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.* 10.

<sup>40</sup> Wills, *History of Central Africa*, 215-216.

<sup>41</sup> E. Knowles, 'Early days in Kalomo and Livingstone,' *Northern Rhodesia Journal*, IV (1950-1952), 23.

<sup>42</sup> R. Murray - Hughes, 'Livingstone (1910-11),' *Northern Rhodesia Journal*, III (1956-1959), 358; Hunt, 'Kalomo - Livingstone in 1907,' 12; Wills, *History of Central Africa*, 218.

During the late 1910s, there was much activity in and around the offices of the District Commissioner in Livingstone. Early in the morning as white colonial officials arrived for work, they were 'greeted by the loud clapping of hands by numbers of natives [...].' The 'natives' came for a variety of reasons, such as paying the hut tax, to be registered for work, or for consultation about some local ethnic matter. White men, especially colonial officials, were treated with a mixture of awe and reverence by African villagers, as the aforementioned manner of greeting attests. Some African chiefs, however, could approach white colonial officials with dignity and pride. During one morning in the late 1910s, for example, an unnamed Ila chief arrived in Livingstone to meet with the Secretary for Native Affairs (SNA). It is unclear whether or not the SNA was expecting the chief that morning, but as the chief approached the offices of the SNA, he did so with all the pomp, pride and ceremony befitting his status. A white clerk in the Native Department offices described the scene as follows: 'His approach was heralded by a man beating a small drum and he was accompanied by several followers, all tall men, with their topknots decorated with the tail feathers of the blue crane.'<sup>43</sup> Clearly, this chief was not intimidated by the presence of white authority.

### Economic and social development

In 1911, for economic reasons and administrative convenience, NWR and NER were merged into one country, Northern Rhodesia, but still under BSAC rule. The same year, Colonel Burns-Begg was appointed Resident Commissioner of Northern Rhodesia and 'watch-dog' of the Imperial government to be based in Livingstone, in place of the High Commissioner in far-away Cape Town.<sup>44</sup> Livingstone, which at the time was the most developed urban centre in the entire combined territory, became the capital from where all decisions affecting the country were made. The civil service was upgraded, graduates from British universities were employed and a pension scheme introduced.<sup>45</sup> During the 1910s, in the larger context of Northern Rhodesia, Administrator Wallace oversaw the general economic development of the country and was satisfied that it was moving in earnest. Copper production was in progress at mines near Mumbwa and at Kansanshi, while lead and zinc mining at Bwana Mkubwa in Broken Hill (now Kabwe) was beginning to yield the first exports. Along the new line of rail, cattle ranching by Europeans was taking off, while maize, cotton and

---

<sup>43</sup> Jordan, 'Early days in Kalomo and Livingstone,' 23.

<sup>44</sup> Gann, *Plural Society*, 102.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.* 107.

tobacco were being exported, albeit in small quantities. Prospecting at Nkana in 1921 gave the first indications of the country's great potential in terms of mineral wealth.<sup>46</sup>

The economic transformation of Northern Rhodesia was brought about by the construction of the railway line - presumably the major achievement of the BSAC. The railway enabled the movement of bulky mineral ores out of the country and heavy mining equipment to the mines, for example. New employment opportunities opened up, while the transportation of goods became much less dependent upon porters. The Afrikaner transport riders that had been active in the areas of Monze, Kalomo and Barotseland working for traders and the Administration became redundant. Consequently, most of them settled down to farming. Administratively, it became much easier to post or transfer officials from one place to the other. Moreover, the railway line greatly stimulated agriculture and agricultural settlement.<sup>47</sup> The slow but steady economic development in the colony was paralleled by developments within Livingstone itself.

At the beginning of the twentieth century, a small but increasingly important aspect of daily life within Livingstone was the issue of transport. There were no cars yet and most people in the town, black and white, simply walked. However, for those who could afford it - generally white people - mule transport was the norm, as horses were susceptible to horse-sickness. The few horses in use in Livingstone, such as those used by the police, had to be salted to keep them alive.<sup>48</sup> A small number of the notables in Livingstone owned what was, at the time, luxurious transport. In the early 1900s in NWR and NER, motorcycles were 'the preserve of the wealthier colonial officials.'<sup>49</sup> Thus, His Honour the Administrator, Codrington, for example, had a motorcycle, in addition to carts pulled by mules, while Freddie Mills, the owner of the Livingstone Hotel, owned a wagonette pulled by six mules that carried passengers to and from the railway station.<sup>50</sup>

An unusual means of transport within Livingstone town was trolleys. Introduced in 1907-1908, trolleys ran on two-foot gauge tracks constructed by the BSAC and forming a network. The trolley line stretched from a point in the centre of the town to the Zambezi river, where the Livingstone Boat Club now stands. The trolleys were pushed by Africans. Obviously, going downwards to the river was much easier and quicker than getting back to the town, which was

---

<sup>46</sup> Bradley, 'Company days,' 449, 451.

<sup>47</sup> Gann, *Plural Society*, 129-130.

<sup>48</sup> Watt, *History of Early Livingstone*, 65.

<sup>49</sup> J-B. Gewalt, "Transport transforming society: Towards a history of transport in Zambia, 1890-1930," unpublished paper, African Studies Centre, Leiden, The Netherlands, (n.d., 2007), 15.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.* 66.

much harder and needed at least three men to push due to the incline. Many white families owned their own trolley, while others shared.<sup>51</sup> For many years, the first and only car to be seen driving through Livingstone was that of the two German Oberlieutenants, Paul Graetz and Von Roeder, who were passing through the town in 1908, travelling from Dar es Salaam in German East Africa (now Tanzania) to Swakopmund in German South West Africa (now Namibia).<sup>52</sup> Motor vehicle transport was only introduced into Northern Rhodesia on a general scale from the 1920s, with the arrival of the Model T Ford.<sup>53</sup> By 1927, the Batoka Province, which included Livingstone, had some 240 motor vehicles and many more motorcycles. As the national capital, we can reasonably assume, that many of these would have been in Livingstone. With the provision of a ferry to carry vehicles across the Kafue River, road travel to the north was made easier.<sup>54</sup> The 5 March 1920 saw the arrival of the first aircraft to reach Livingstone, a Vickers Vimy, named the *Silver Queen*, piloted by Colonel Pierre Van Reyneveld and Captain Brand. Virtually the entire town's population, black and white, turned out for the spectacle - including Chief Imwiko, who had travelled all the way from Sesheke and afterwards presented the Colonel with a fly-whisk.<sup>55</sup>

### Amenities and race relations

As in all colonial contexts, social amenities were racially segregated. Probably the first European Christian church building in the town was the Anglican St. Andrews Church, which opened in 1911. Built through voluntary donations, it remained a Europeans-only church until the 1960s. The language of worship, however, was still English. Next to the church was the Church House completed in 1910 and home to the clergy in-charge of the church. Adjacent to the Church House was the first primary school for white children, built in 1908. Prior to this date, European parents in the town sent their children to either South Africa or Southern Rhodesia. Some parents, however, continued the practice as they did not trust the school's academic standards. Another notable whites-only facility, also built through voluntary donations by whites, was the 'European Library', which was officially opened in 1921 by the Duke of Connaught who was visiting the town that year.<sup>56</sup>

---

<sup>51</sup> Hunt, 'Kalomo - Livingstone in 1907,' 13; Watt, *History of Early Livingstone*, 66-67.

<sup>52</sup> For details of this trip across Africa, see Gewalt, 'Transport transforming society,' 15-16.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.* 20-21.

<sup>54</sup> Macmillan, *An African Trading Empire*, 150.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.* 149.

<sup>56</sup> Ese, 'Historical Guide to Livingstone,' 4-6.

The BSAC built the Livingstone Hospital, for whites only, in 1905, and it was occupied the following year. The hospital infrastructure was steadily improved and, by 1911, it had two medical doctors, a few nurses and other para-medical staff. Meanwhile, there was no hospital for Africans, which prompted the militant and highly influential white resident of the town, Leopold Moore, to insist upon 'asking [the BSAC] where the Native Hospital is.' Moore complained in his newspaper: 'Daily we are solicited by indignant natives to supply them with "muti" for the cure of repulsive-looking sores, or to minister to other ailments. We wonder what an employer is supposed to do with his sick boy (*sic*)?' Largely because of this persistent pressure from Moore, the BSAC relented and 'by 1907 the Native Hospital was built, and Africans were charged half a crown *per diem*: in the European [hospital] fees were more exorbitant; a private ward cost 20/-.'<sup>57</sup>

The town's first hotel, the Livingstone Hotel, built in 1905 by a local white resident, Fred Mills, was also racially segregated. Two years later, 'Mopane' Clarke built another hotel, the North-Western. The BSAC, perhaps feeling that they also ought to be seen to be doing something for its white community, built the Livingstone Club and later a government kindergarten for white children. The older white children went to boarding school in Plumtree in Southern Rhodesia (Zimbabwe).<sup>58</sup> The Livingstone Golf Club was established in March 1908 and, a year later, had nine holes and 39 members. A small wooden club house was erected in 1914 with financial assistance from Mopane Clarke and the Railways.<sup>59</sup> Interestingly, there was intra-white *class* discrimination regarding membership of the golf club. Some whites, who were excluded from membership apparently on the basis of their 'lower' social class, accused the club 'of being discriminatory' and 'an exclusive clique,' with an elitist group of members, such as the Administrator and the hospital's medical doctor, for example, setting the rules and dominating it.<sup>60</sup> For the 'lower' class of white males in Livingstone, however, 'the bars were the main source of pleasure of an evening' and, in particular, Christmas and New Year's Days were celebrated 'by an inordinate consumption of alcohol.'<sup>61</sup> Cricket was another popular white sport in Livingstone, but it appears to have been less controversial than golf.<sup>62</sup>

But, according to Duncan Watt, 'probably the most important of all sports held in Livingstone are the regattas on the Zambezi that occur annually and started in 1905.' Regattas were a very popular form of sport and entertainment

---

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.* 71.

<sup>58</sup> Hunt, 'Kalomo - Livingstone,' 12.

<sup>59</sup> Ese, 'Historical Guide to Livingstone,' 12.

<sup>60</sup> Watt, *History of Early Livingstone*, 59, 79. Quotation, 59.

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.* 53-54.

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.* 59.



among the white community of Livingstone.<sup>63</sup> They attracted white competitors not only from within Livingstone itself, but from much further afield. The first regatta, for example, which was held on 12 June in 1905, attracted competitors from South African towns like Cape Town, Port Elizabeth and East London. Locally, they came from the budding small settlements, such as Kafue and Kalomo. The assembly point of the competitors, called 'Regatta Camp', was located about 1.5 kilometres above the Falls, where the Zambezi is at its widest, relatively calm and without rapids. Competitors from outside Livingstone stayed in the Victoria Hotel, close to the Falls. Although this inaugural event was intended to be an all-white affair, some Lozi men were included, with two races organised for them, using their own 'native canoes'. E. Knowles Jordan, an employee in the office of the Administrator noted of the Lozi competitors: 'Many of the Barotse paddlers are as good as any in the world.'<sup>64</sup> However, the fact that the Lozi men competed only amongst themselves and not against the whites, clearly indicates the racism of the event. This regatta, incidentally, was attended by the Litunga of Barotseland, King Lewanika, who turned up smartly dressed in a grey suit, a top hat and carrying a pair of binoculars and a riding crop.<sup>65</sup> By 1907, the Livingstone Boat Club had been built on the site where the regattas used to be held. Early in 1908, both this club and the Kafue Boat Club merged and was renamed the Zambezi Boat Club,<sup>66</sup> a name it has held to this day.

What is today known as Mukuni Park along Mainway (now Mosi-oa-Tunya Road) was created as a recreational park in 1905, the land reportedly having been donated to the BSAC by King Lewanika for that purpose. It was originally called Barotse Centre and renamed Barotse Gardens from the 1950s. From the early colonial era, the park was an important centre for the town's Europeans. With its beautiful flowers and trees, it was the venue for many European bazaars, functions and receptions.<sup>67</sup>

Shopping was also racially segregated. The main shopping street for Europeans only was Mainway, which had the best equipped shops, jewellers, tea-rooms and restaurants. European trade and traders were allocated this

---

<sup>63</sup> Watt, *History of Early Livingstone*, 60.

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.* 60; E. K. Jordan, 'Early days in Kalomo and Livingstone,' *Northern Rhodesia Journal*, IV (1950-1952), 22.

<sup>65</sup> Watt, *History of Early Livingstone*, 60.

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.* The Zambezi Boat Club is still functional today, patronized by the black elite of Livingstone. However, the regattas have completely disappeared and the venue is now used generally for drinking and social events like wedding and birthday parties.

<sup>67</sup> Ese, 'Historical Guide to Livingstone,' 6-7. In 1995, the park was renamed Mukuni Park, in honour of the local Toka-Leya Chief, Mukuni.

street.<sup>68</sup> Although legally there was no racial segregation imposed between Europeans and Indians, Indian houses were all together in one part of the town, separate from Europeans. While both Europeans and Indians employed African labour, neither of them socialised with Africans, except on a strict master/servant basis.<sup>69</sup>

### The African population

Both the earlier settlement of The Old Drift and, later, Livingstone were never exclusively white settlements and Africans were always a part of them. Africans came from different ethnic groups and parts of the country, but the majority were Lozi people from Barotseland. As Merran McCulloch recorded in the mid-1950s, following the construction of the Mulobezi-Livingstone railway line in 1922, 'hundreds of men, women and children have walked each month from Mongu to Mulobezi, where they join the Zambezi Sawmills railway.' While some of the male migrants went on to Southern Rhodesia and South Africa for work, the rest would settle permanently in Livingstone, which explains why the great majority of the town's African population was from Barotseland and its most widely spoken language, Silozi.<sup>70</sup>

While, as noted, the residents of Livingstone, both black and white, were mostly immigrants, the land the town was founded on originally belonged to the local Toka-Leya people, a small component of the much larger Tonga group of ethnic communities (or *Bantu Botatwe*). The Toka-Leya under their chief, Mukuni, were dispossessed of much of their land following the founding of Livingstone. Their population at the time is not known but by 1946, they numbered less than 4,000 and made up 'only a very small fraction of the town's population.'<sup>71</sup> In terms of numbers, even the Toka-Leya's northern neighbours, the Ila and Tonga came a poor second, despite their close proximity to Livingstone, followed by those from the rest of Northern Rhodesia.<sup>72</sup> In fact, as McCulloch recorded in the mid-1940s, 'over half of Livingstone's population comes from Barotseland [...]'<sup>73</sup> From the founding of the town, its white authorities saw the need to provide some kind of accommodation for the African population.

---

<sup>68</sup> Ese, 'Historical Guide to Livingstone,' 10.

<sup>69</sup> McCulloch, *A Social Survey of the African Population*, 3-4.

<sup>70</sup> McCulloch, *A Social Survey of the African Population of Livingstone* (Manchester, 1958), pp. 25, 30. Quotation from 25.

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid.* 1.

<sup>72</sup> McCulloch, 'A Social Survey', 30.

<sup>73</sup> *Ibid.* 50.

Residential accommodation for Africans was totally segregated along racial lines, apart from domestic workers who lived in their tiny servants' quarters in the backyards of their white employers' houses in town. This was the norm in all colonial towns in Africa. An average European family in Livingstone had three servants, with one accommodated on the plot and the rest elsewhere. Africans lived in what were called 'compounds' on the outskirts of the town, mainly south of the commercial and industrial areas. Employers were legally obliged to provide accommodation for their African employees. Large-scale employers, such as the Zambezi Sawmills, for example, built houses for their African workers. But the lesser ones rented houses for their African workers in Municipal Compounds, if available. The earliest Municipal Compound was Maramba, consisting of temporary structures built in two phases close to the Maramba River from 1907, while Libuyu was built later. The structures were temporary, presumably because Africans in urban centres were officially considered to be only temporary 'sojourners', expected to return to their permanent village homes after a while. Most Municipal and government employees lived in Maramba and Libuyu. The more permanent structures in Maramba were built much later, in the 1950s and 60s. While nuclear families could stay permanently, their visitors had to pay a 'lodger fee' of 3d per week to the Municipality, for which they received a visitor's identity card.<sup>74</sup> By 1910, there were about 1,000 Africans in Livingstone.<sup>75</sup> By June 1911, Africans 'numbered 1,965 and others totalled 11.' The 'others' presumably were Asians and/or Coloureds. The white population was 306.<sup>76</sup>

In the town itself, the Africans' movement was curtailed. They had to have a permit to work outside their home village and had to carry an identification card, called a *situpa*, in the town. The employer's name was written on the *situpa*. Africans were not allowed into town after dark. They were also not allowed to enter any European amenity, including the Europeans-only shops in town along Mainway (now Mosi-oa-Tunya Road). They could only buy from shops in the 'Second Class' trading zone of the town designated for Africans only. They had to move off the sidewalk when passing a European person.<sup>77</sup>

There were virtually no social amenities for Africans, apart from the huge Beer Hall built specially for them on the edge of Maramba Township. Other than in the Beer Hall, which only sold *chibuku* beer brewed from sorghum, Africans

---

<sup>74</sup> *Ibid.* 4-6.

<sup>75</sup> Ese, 'Historical Guide to Livingstone,' 13, 27.

<sup>76</sup> *Ibid.* 55, 60.

<sup>77</sup> *Ibid.* 27-28.

were not allowed to drink beer anywhere else, or brew their own. Profits from the Beer Hall sales went into African housing and welfare.<sup>78</sup>

Racial segregation was extended to the spiritual sphere too. The Coillard Memorial Church was built for Africans in 1908 on the corner of Nakatindi and Nkumbi Roads. It was built in memory of the late Rev. Francois Coillard of the Paris Evangelical Mission Society, the first white missionary to the Lozi in 1885. By 1914, two more mission stations had been set up for Africans in Livingstone, the Universities' Mission to Central Africa from 1910 and the Church of Christ in 1912.<sup>79</sup>

In view of the racial segregation and lack of civil or political rights Africans were subjected to, it is not surprising that Africans in the town were beginning to react to their socio-political situation. It is unclear precisely when African interest in anti-colonial politics in the town began. However, an African reading circle formed in 1926 in Maramba developed into the African Welfare Society, which in turn became a branch of a political party, the Northern Rhodesia African Congress in the mid-1950s. Membership of the Welfare Society consisted mainly of white-collar workers, and the executives were largely Lozi individuals.<sup>80</sup>

From its founding, the town's greatest tourist attraction was the Victoria Falls. Thus, for example, 'in 1906, a hundred and one [white] people visited the [Victoria] Falls.' On Sundays, Tuesdays and Fridays, a special train transported tourists four times a day between the town and the Falls. In June 1907, 'three special trains brought about four hundred Colonists to the Victoria Falls.' It is not clear where these 'Colonists' came from, but presumably Southern Rhodesia and South Africa. From Mafikeng (Mafeking) during the 1910s, special trains termed 'Falls Excursion Trains', were regularly taking tourists to the Victoria Falls.<sup>81</sup> At the time, as now, white-owned shops in Livingstone selling curios 'did a roaring trade [...]'<sup>82</sup> Africans in the town were not to be left out of this 'roaring trade', though, and they too were 'offering for sale anything between a spear and a kaffir [*sic*] orange: the prices they asked was [*sic*] enough to take one's breath away [...]'<sup>83</sup> However, much larger and more profitable economic activities were beginning to take off and become the commercial hallmarks of the town.

---

<sup>78</sup> *Ibid.* 13.

<sup>79</sup> *Ibid.* 14.

<sup>80</sup> McCulloch, *A Social Survey*, 8.

<sup>81</sup> Mafikeng Town Council Log Book, (April - December, 1913), J.R. Algie, Town Clerk, Mafikeng, to General Manager, South African Railways, Johannesburg, (5 June 1913), 250.

<sup>82</sup> *Ibid.* 81.

<sup>83</sup> *Ibid.* 82. Interestingly, in Livingstone today, African curio sellers charge the foreign white tourist buyers much higher prices than they charge Africans because the former are assumed to be 'loaded' with money.

## The Zambezi Sawmills Company

From its beginning, Livingstone was more of a commercial than an industrial town. The largest and most important enterprise of the town was the Zambezi Sawmills Company Ltd, a timber business. The company originated from a much earlier timber company, the Livingstone Saw Mills set up in 1911 by two Lithuanian Jewish brothers, Lewis and Michael Jacobs and a Greek, Hippocrates Troumbas. Although based in Bulawayo in Southern Rhodesia, the company had a branch in Livingstone by 1914. In 1916, Zambezi Sawmills, as the Livingstone branch had now become, began its operations at Mapanda Forest, some 38 kilometres west of Livingstone. That same year, the company secured a lucrative contract to supply wooden railway sleepers to the national railways. As the mining industry on what was soon to become the Copperbelt developed, the railway lines expanded and the old iron sleepers could no longer sustain the heavy loads of coal, copper, lead and zinc. Hence, the resort to wooden sleepers made of the tough mukusi teak (or redwood). The 1910s and 20s were the boom years of the company.<sup>84</sup> In 1922, for logistical and economic reasons, the Mapanda mill was relocated to the southern outskirts of Livingstone where it employed about 30 Europeans and 700 Africans. Apart from the Administration and the Railways, the Sawmills was the town's most important employer of labour. By the mid-1930s, a subsidiary mill had been opened at Mulobezi, about 90 kilometres south-west of Livingstone, to which a railway line had been extended for both sawmill operations as well as passenger and goods transport.<sup>85</sup> Timber operations were, however, considerably slowed down by the economic depression of 1929-34, but picked up again thereafter. Apart from timber business, there were other major commercial enterprises in the town, mostly in the hands of Jewish business people, as discussed below.

## The Susman Brothers

Businesses in Livingstone were almost all owned by whites, most of them Jews. In mid-1910, the Jewish traders included Isadore Aberman, Max Taube and Kopelowitz. In the same year, the town had 260 white residents, about 38 (or 15%) of whom were Jewish.<sup>86</sup> However, the town's most successful businessmen were two brothers, Eli and Harry Susman. Originally from

---

<sup>84</sup> The Zambezi Sawmills story is related in great detail in Macmillan, *An African Trading Empire*, 154-163, which this section draws from. See also Ese, 'Historical Guide to Livingstone,' 32-33.

<sup>85</sup> *Ibid.* 32-33.

<sup>86</sup> Macmillan and Shapiro, *The Jews of Zambia*, 42.

Lithuania, they arrived in Barotseland in the early 1900s and established businesses at Lealui, Nalolo and Sesheke, dealing in cloth, beads, blankets, salt, cattle trading, grain, curio selling and transport contracting. But cattle trading was their most important activity. Within five years of June 1907, the Susmans' business capital had grown from £6,000 to £33,000 and their assets from £10,000 to £60,000.<sup>87</sup> In July 1909, while still based at Sesheke, they bought a bakery and a butchery in Livingstone, which they made their permanent home, while keeping the Sesheke business as well. At this time, the two brothers had become 'perhaps the largest cattle owners in the country.'<sup>88</sup> By 1910, they had acquired two farms around Livingstone from which they supplied the town with fresh butter and vegetables.<sup>89</sup> From this period, they also became heavily involved in the extraction and sale of timber from the Kazungula and Westwood forests. By the mid-1910s, both brothers had grown so wealthy that they could afford to employ European nannies and governesses for their children.<sup>90</sup>

Interestingly, even though very rich and dubbed one of the town's 'group of commercial tycoons,' Harry was reportedly illiterate: 'When he signed a cheque he made a fixed number of vertical strokes to which he added so many horizontal ones, and this hieroglyph was recognised by our Mr Swanson at the Bank as spelling "H. Susman".' Subsequently, sometime during the First World War, Harry 'went south,' presumably Southern Rhodesia or South Africa, where he 'found a very nice girl for a wife, and later she undertook the task of teaching Harry how to read and write.'<sup>91</sup>

The two brothers, apart from being preoccupied with their highly successful businesses, also participated in Jewish religious activities in the town. Although not deeply religious, they both served as president of the Livingstone Hebrew Congregation, whose synagogue building they had generously contributed to. The Congregation was established in 1910 and the synagogue opened in 1928. This was, in fact, the first Jewish synagogue in the whole of Northern Rhodesia and also doubled as a school for Jewish children.<sup>92</sup> Harry hosted some of the leading members of the Zionist movement visiting southern Africa.<sup>93</sup> The two brothers understood the value of good public relations and, therefore, were active participants in the European public life of the town. In 1910, Elie donated a challenge cup to the NWR Rifle Association, whose president was the

---

<sup>87</sup> *Ibid.* 22; Macmillan, *An African Trading Empire*, 92.

<sup>88</sup> Macmillan, *An African Trading Empire*, 95; Macmillan and Shapiro, *The Jews of Zambia*, 22-24.

<sup>89</sup> Macmillan, *An African Trading Empire*, 97, 143.

<sup>90</sup> *Ibid.* 143, 156.

<sup>91</sup> Murray-Hughes, 'Livingstone (1910-11),' 360.

<sup>92</sup> Ese, 'Historical Guide to Livingstone,' 6. In 1972, Nickie Iljon, one of the last Jews to leave Livingstone transferred the 'sefer torah' and books of Jewish law to Lusaka. *Ibid.*, 6.

<sup>93</sup> Macmillan, *An African Trading Empire*, 88, 144.

Administrator Lawrence Wallace. The trophy, which became known as the Susman Cup, was won by the best marksman in the country during competitions. Elie became the Association's vice-president the same year. From the end of the First World War, Elie was also an active member of the Livingstone Motor and Cycle Club formed in 1918. Throughout the 1920s to the 1930s, Elie was an active member of the North-Western Rhodesian Farmers' Association and, from 1929, the Livingstone Town Council.<sup>94</sup>

Several other wealthy Jewish business families also made their pile in Livingstone and contributed to the town's socio-economic development. A good example are the Grills, headed by Solomon ('Solly'). Also originally from Lithuania, Solomon Grill arrived in the town shortly before 1910. The Grill family opened the first open-air cinema in 1917 and a more permanent 'Grill's Kinema' in 1919. Solly and his sister Gertrude built the more splendid Capitol Cinema with a 500-seat capacity along Mainway in 1931. It had an indoor stage, a bar, grill, tea garden, dining room, lounge and a dancing hall, clearly reflecting the town's rising social standards. One of the first garages in the town was the Livingstone Motor Works, also established by the Grill family in 1919. It was housed in what is today Liso House along Mosi-oa-Tunya Road.<sup>95</sup>

Despite the social status of the Jewish families and their contributions to the town's socio-economic development, there was a degree of anti-Semitism against them from the English-speaking whites of the town, including the Administrator himself. In February 1911, a white public meeting in the town elected a two-man deputation to travel to Cape Town to lobby the High Commissioner against the levying of municipal rates by the BSAC. The Administrator, Lawrence Wallace, wrote to the High Commissioner exhibiting his anti-Semitism as follows: 'The deputation to your Lordship was voted for by seventeen persons including several alien Jews who cannot be said to be representative either of the better element or even the majority of Livingstone's residents.' Twenty-eight Europeans had attended the meeting, ten of them Jews.<sup>96</sup> When Elie and Bertha Susman needed a nanny for their new-born baby at the end of 1915, the local English medical doctor, Ellacombe, recommended to them Louise Brattle, also English, adding that 'they are Jewish, but they are a very nice family.'<sup>97</sup>

The irony of this anti-Semitism is that the Jews would treat the Africans with the same 'racial' prejudice. While the early stores were not racially segregated,

---

<sup>94</sup> *Ibid.* 89, 147-148.

<sup>95</sup> Ese, 'Historical Guide to Livingstone,' 11-12; Macmillan, *An African Trading Empire*, 93.

<sup>96</sup> Quoted in *Ibid.* 90.

<sup>97</sup> Quoted in *Ibid.* 143. My emphasis.

they were later. In the mid-1930s, for example, when Messrs Jacobson and Kiel were opening their new store in Livingstone, they assured their prospective white customers that it would be strictly for 'white trade; [white] ladies will not be required to rub shoulders with a crowd of clamorous and odorous natives.'<sup>98</sup> Macmillan and Shapiro further relate that commercial segregation in the town became more firmly rooted only after the First World War, probably due to 'the arrival of larger numbers of white women,' when serving African customers through a hatch at the side of the shop became general practice and was later extended to towns further up the railway line.<sup>99</sup> However, aside from racial prejudice, the town also had other more mundane matters to contend with, notably the problem of water.

From its inception, Livingstone was dogged by problems of getting water to the residents of the town. From about 1905 the town got its water supply from the Maramba River, which was pumped by a private entity, the Beira and Mashonaland Railway Company. The water quality was poor and supply erratic. It was only in August 1909 that the Livingstone Water Works Board, which was created by the BSAC, began to pump water from the Zambezi River over a distance of about six kilometres. This water, which was mainly for the white residents, was pumped into three steel reservoirs on the hill behind the Livingstone Hospital. Under Company responsibility, water supply was now regular, reliable and clean. This improvement, however, was prompted partly (largely?) by the impending visit of the Duke and Duchess of Connaught the following year.<sup>100</sup>

The royal visit to Livingstone by the Duke and Duchess of Connaught in 1910 was more than adequately prepared for by the colonial leadership of Livingstone. Administrator Wallace had ensured that many preparations for the royal visit, including a steady and reliable supply of water to the town, were undertaken starting from the previous year. The Victoria Falls Hotel, for example, was 'renovated and rebuilt,' while Government House in the town was 'refitted and refurnished to suit the Duke of Connaught's pleasure.'<sup>101</sup> After holding an investiture ceremony in Bulawayo on 21 November 1910, the Duke and his entourage proceeded to visit Livingstone. The purpose of this royal visit is not clear, but seeing the Victoria Falls would most likely have been the major attraction. While in Livingstone, the Duke also received King Lewanika who had travelled all the way from Lealui to meet him,<sup>102</sup> apparently by arrangement.

---

<sup>98</sup> Quoted in Macmillan and Shapiro, *The Jews of Zambia*, 43.

<sup>99</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>100</sup> Watt, *History of Early Livingstone*, 72-74; Hunt, 'Kalomo - Livingstone in 1907,' 14.

<sup>101</sup> Watt, *History of Early Livingstone*, 63.

<sup>102</sup> Murray-Hughes, 'Livingstone (1910-11),' 358.



The next visit by British royalty to Livingstone was only in 1925 when the Prince of Wales came to the town as an extension of his tour of South Africa and afterwards Northern Rhodesia, where he also officially opened the Mulungushi Dam near Broken Hill.<sup>103</sup>

All of the foregoing events and developments were reported on by the one local newspaper in the town, the *Livingstone Pioneer and Advertiser*, started by William Trayner. (As we have already noted, Trayner had earlier lost his job as the overseer of canoe-crossing over the Zambezi at The Old Drift.) The paper was the town's first and also 'the first newspaper in Central Africa north of the Zambezi.' The paper's first issue was in January 1906 and soon became 'a very popular weekly.' More appropriately termed a newsheet, the paper carried events and developments among the tiny white settler community in the town and, later, the rest of both NWR and NER. With neither a railway, nor a telephone system, and with letters coming into Livingstone about once a month, Trayner gathered news from the outside from tourists coming in from Southern Rhodesia and South Africa.<sup>104</sup> While the paper's publisher was Trayner, its editor was Leopold Moore. Soon after its beginning, the paper had improved so much in its quality and coverage that it attracted the attention of the local senior BSAC officials, who began to publish their official notices in it.<sup>105</sup> However, for reasons that are unclear, the Trayner-Moore partnership soon floundered. Moore then took over complete control of the paper and renamed it *The Livingstone Mail*. Moore financed the paper from the profits from his chemist business in the town. By the 1910s, it was being read in areas as far afield as Lealui, Mongu, Sesheke, Broken Hill, Kalomo, Petauke, Choma, Sioma and Kasempa.<sup>106</sup> We should note that there was no African language newspaper during this early period of colonial rule. This could be explained by the fact that for Africans in NWR and even by the beginning of the amalgamated Northern Rhodesia, the costs of setting up and running such a venture would have been prohibitive. Moreover, levels of literacy in African languages in NWR at the time would have been too low to justify such a costly venture.

In the entire white settler community of Livingstone, the one man who was a constant 'thorn in the flesh' of the BSAC was the aforementioned Leopold F. Moore (later Sir Leopold F. Moore). Moore arrived in the town in 1904 from South Africa. From the time of his arrival in Livingstone and taking over of *The Livingstone Mail*, Moore relentlessly targeted his ire against Codrington and his

---

<sup>103</sup> *Ibid.* 361.

<sup>104</sup> The *Livingstone Pioneer*, 'as told by W. Trayner and written by P. Barnes, Northern Rhodesia Journal, V (1963), 561-562.

<sup>105</sup> Barnes, 'The *Livingstone Pioneer*,' 564.

<sup>106</sup> Watt, *History of Early Livingstone*, 54.

administration.<sup>107</sup> He made it his personal mission and crusade to fight the BSAC over two issues: (a) the participation of the white community of Livingstone in matters affecting them locally and territorially, and (b) his strong desire to ensure that Northern Rhodesia would remain a white man's country. Through his newspaper, Moore persistently attacked the BSAC as 'a company [...] possessing neither knowledge of the country, nor sympathy with the [white] people whose destinies are in their hands, their aim apparently being first and foremost to wring profit and advantage from their position without effort or the expenditure of money.'<sup>108</sup> The BSAC's attitude was that the white settlers had to accept its policies as they lived on its land. This and the settlers' perception that the BSAC neglected their welfare became sources of conflict between the two parties.<sup>109</sup>

Following his adversarial stance, in March 1907, for example, Moore influenced his fellow white ratepayers in the town into rejecting the town regulations promulgated by BSAC's newly created Village Management Board. The basis of their objection was that BSAC itself did not pay rates and yet it controlled the town. Moore was also opposed in principle to BSAC not paying tax on the basis that it owned the land.<sup>110</sup> Although placated by his election to the three-member Village Management Board in 1911, Moore continued to fight for a greater settler voice and representation because, he argued, the settlers made major contributions to the coffers of NWR. Regarding his race policy, Moore made it clear that he would 'consistently oppose the employment of natives where they compete with or are substituted for white men.'<sup>111</sup> However, some of the BSAC policies and practices that Moore so persistently attacked had to do with the poor financial and economic situation the Company was going through. Whether or not Moore was aware of this, is not clear.

At the beginning of the 1920s, due to serious budget deficits, BSAC 'were only too anxious to hand over their responsibilities' over Northern Rhodesia to the British Colonial Office. But the European settlers were equally keen to see Company rule go. Thus, BSAC rule came to an end and Northern Rhodesia was taken over by the British Colonial Office on 1 April 1924. Following the end of Company rule, instead of the chief officer of the territory being an

---

<sup>107</sup> *Ibid.* 89. Moore was born in London but emigrated to South Africa from where he eventually left for North-Western Rhodesia, arriving in Livingstone in 1904.

<sup>108</sup> S.R. Denny, 'Leopold Moore Versus the Chartered Company, An Introduction to Federation,' *Northern Rhodesia Journal*, IV (1960), 220.

<sup>109</sup> Ese, 'Historical Guide to Livingstone,' 28.

<sup>110</sup> *Ibid.* 221.

<sup>111</sup> *Ibid.* 223-224. Quotation 223.

'Administrator' representing the Duke of Abercorn and his co-directors, Northern Rhodesia now had a 'Governor' representing the Colonial Office.<sup>112</sup>

## Conclusion

This paper has attempted to bring out the various social features of Livingstone during its early days. We have noted that Cecil Rhodes played an instrumental role in the process that led to the founding of Livingstone, a practical result of his imperial ambition to acquire large swathes of British-ruled territories. Livingstone was founded as a result of the creation of NWR, itself a result of treaties between King Lewanika of Barotseland on the one hand, and the BSAC, on the other. Livingstone was created under peaceful circumstances following negotiations, unlike many other colonial settlements that were created out of conditions of military conflict, such as the town of Mafikeng in north-western South Africa. Livingstone grew and developed generally peacefully under BSAC rule throughout the period under study. Colonial administration originated and was planned from Livingstone. From its beginning, the white administration of the town created racially segregated amenities and institutions, with those of the whites being far superior. The Jewish component of the town's white-owned businesses made important contributions to its development.

---

<sup>112</sup> Bradley, 'Company rule,' 452; R. Murray-Hughes, 'Livingstone (1910-11),' *Northern Rhodesia Journal*, III (1956-1959), 361.

## Defiant Protest or Pure Exhibitionism? Nudity as Dress in Yoruba Culture

*Bukola Adeyemi Oyeniya*

### Introduction

On Monday, 2 June 2014, Robyn Rihanna Fenty, popularly known as Rihanna, shocked attendees at the 2014 Council of Fashion Designers of America (CFDA) awards ceremony and television viewers across the world when she appeared semi-nude on stage. Rihanna, a Barbadian singer, actress and fashion designer, who collected the coveted Style Icon Award wore a part Josephine Baker and part sphinx sheer dress, which was so obtusely transparent that her entire body, except for her genitalia, which was covered with a nude-coloured thong, was seen through the dress. The dress, which was hand-made, using over 200,000 Swarovski crystals, was accessorized with a white fur stole, smoky eyes, glittering gloves and a turban of the same colour.<sup>1</sup> Her poise and carriage at the event showed that she did not care less about the shock many expressed at her dress.

The Texan singer, songwriter and actress Beyonce Giselle Knowles-Carter, known popularly as Beyonce, wore a similar dress at the 2015 Met Gala and, in no small measure, earned her own share of accolades, as her fans and photo journalists either praised or hooted at her dress.

---

<sup>1</sup> Council of Fashion Designers of America (CFDA), "Rihanna Dares and Dazzles at the CFDA Fashion Awards", accessed 26 May 2015 at <http://cfda.com/blog/rihanna-dares-and-dazzles-at-the-cfda-fashion-awards>.

While a few British newspapers and their online counterparts went as far as to boycott photos of Rihanna taken at the awards ceremony, many American media published them. *The Washington Post* was one such outlet that used the images, however added coyly: “well, what we can show you, anyway,”<sup>2</sup> a phrase indicative of the high moral ground populated by most commentators, editors, audiences and television viewers globally. As *The Washington Post* noted, Rihanna’s dress was “more naked than Carrie Bradshaw’s naked dress from ‘Sex and the City’” and rivalled “the dress Marilyn Monroe wore to sing President John F. Kennedy happy birthday.”<sup>3</sup> However, in *The Independent* of Wednesday, 4 June 2014, Ella Alexander noted that Rihanna’s practically naked dress remained one of the most powerful feminist statements the pop world has made to date. Ella was worried, however, by the outrage that Rihanna’s semi-nude dress attracted, asking why the world is not ready for such bold a display of female sexuality.<sup>4</sup>

While popular sentiment, as captured in the media reports noted earlier, on Rihanna’s semi-nude dress presents the deployment of the naked body in public space as novel, examples abound that demonstrate that nudity in public space is not a new development. As this chapter will show, in different communities across the world, the naked body is a site, whose use is not limited to the strictly private, but is also a public business. At yet another level, nudity, which describes both the unwrapping of the human body and the deployment of the unwrapped body for specific purposes, is, in itself, a form of dress. As dress, what are the uses of the unwrapped body in the socio-political space? What value or values are inherent and projected by and with the unwrapped body?

While enormous literature on nudity and the naked body abounds in the arts,<sup>5</sup> the study of nudity and the naked body in other disciplines has revolved around issues of health and education,<sup>6</sup> religions and social values.<sup>7</sup> Feminist

---

<sup>2</sup> S.N. McDonald, “See the sparkly, naked dress Rihanna wore to the CFDA Awards - well, what we can show you, anyway”, *The Washington Post*, 3 June 2014, accessed August 21 2015 at <http://www.washingtonpost.com/news/morning-mix/wp/2014/06/03/see-the-sparkly-naked-dress-rihanna-wore-to-the-cfda-awards-well-what-we-can-show-you-anyway/>.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>4</sup> E. Alexander, “Rihanna’s practically naked dress: Why it might be one of the most powerful feminist statements the pop world has made to date”, *The Independent*, Wednesday, 4 June 2014, accessed May 25, 2015 at <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/people/rihannas-practically-naked-dress-why-it-could-be-one-of-the-most-powerful-feminist-statements-the-pop-world-has-made-to-date-9485981.html>.

<sup>5</sup> See among others: S.G. Frayser, T.J. Whitby, *Studies in Human Sexuality: A Selected Guide* (Endlewood, Colorado, 1995); P. Stewart, *Engraven Desire: Eros, Image and Text in the French Eighteenth Century* (Durham, N.C., 1992); K. Clark, *Feminine Beauty* (London, 1980); and G. Legman, *The Horn Book: Studies in Erotic Folklore and Bibliography* (New Hyde Park, N.Y., 1964).

<sup>6</sup> J.P. Kearney, *A History of Erotic Literature* (London, 1982).

scholars have also emphasized the privileging of the female body over those of the male.<sup>8</sup> Empirical evidence of this privileging of the female naked body over the male version also abounds in North America and Europe, on the walls of most museums, monasteries, temples and public buildings, which are decorated with murals of partially or fully nude females of different ages and statuses. As argued, these depictions are inherently voyeuristic, as they appeal only to the male gaze.<sup>9</sup> Beyond voyeurism, these depictions also speak to a commoditization of the female body and the objectification of females. While a counter narrative in the arts is that there is a scarcity of female artists,<sup>10</sup> this has, in no way, excused either the commodification or the objectification of the female body. In general, a number of studies have underscored the dynamic ways in which the naked body has been put to use.

Whether in private or in public space, the scarcity of female artists can neither excuse, nor obscure the fact that societies across the world placed and continue to place greater emphasis on female nudity than on that of the male. In media practice today, implied nudity - described as the deliberate composition of photos and films in ways that no genitalia are seen, as opposed to explicit nudity, i.e. the privileging of the genitalia - is a popular practice. This is in spite of societies' deliberate efforts to police and regulate the deployment of nudity and the naked body, especially in public.

While Rihanna made a conscious effort to cover her genitals, in the same way as the nude protesters described below, full frontal depiction of nude women also abounds in public spaces across North America and Europe and in magazines. What are the underlying motives of these depictions? For the most part, partial or full nudity in media practice today is aimed at drawing attention, especially as images evoke and provide visual pleasure. In another sense, partial or full nudity is used for its scarcity-value; that is to say, the rare evokes the most attention. Undoubtedly, whether used for its attention value or for its scarcity value, the phenomenon speaks to commodification and objectification of the naked (female) body.

The scholarship on the deployment of nudity and the naked body is nuanced. Natalya Lusty emphasized the eroticism associated with the naked human body, especially as characterized by the use of the unwrapped body between lovers.<sup>11</sup>

---

<sup>7</sup> P. Webb, *The Erotic Arts* (Revised ed., New York, 1983).

<sup>8</sup> S.R. Suleiman, ed., *The Female Body in Western Culture: Contemporary Perspectives* (Cambridge, Mass., 1986).

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, see also D.S. Farrer, ed., *Martial Arts as Embodied Knowledge: Asian Traditions in a Transnational World* (New York, 2011); and K.-J. Hallu, *Aestheticism and the Marriage Market in Victorian Popular Fiction* (New York, 2015).

<sup>10</sup> E. Lawton Smith, *Evelyn Pickering De Morgan and the Allegorical Body* (Cranbury, New Jersey, 2002).

<sup>11</sup> N. Lusty, *Surrealism, Feminism, Psychoanalysis* (Aldershot, 2007).

In this sensual sense of the body, the naked body “destroy(s) the self-contained character of the participators as they are in their normal lives.”<sup>12</sup> In contrast to the world of the “dressed people,” nudity is a decisive action that offers a contrast to self-possession.<sup>13</sup>

Whether wrapped or unwrapped, the human body is both a site and a dress. It is also both a private and a public phenomenon. As both a site and a dress, self-possession exists only in the private domain. At this level, individuals decide entry, understood as access to the body, and exit, which describes denial of access to the body. In the public domain, the body, whether wrapped or unwrapped, is a commonwealth and societies impose different rules and customs guiding not only deployment of the body both in private and public space, but also entry and exit.

While not discounting the use of the dressed and undressed body in private use, this chapter, which takes impetus from Robert Ross’s *Clothing: A Global History*, has isolated for analysis only the use of the unwrapped or undressed body in the public space. As Ross notes, “Of all the forms of clothing that men and women have put on, uniforms are those whose message is the least ambitious, and they are also those in which the efforts of those with power to impose their will through the use of dress are most plain.”<sup>14</sup> In other words, except official uniforms like those of the police, army, nurses and others in that category, other dress (or clothes) can exude unintended meanings, which can also sometimes be at variance with the meanings the wearer intends.

For analytical purposes, this chapter describes the unwrapped or undressed body in the public space as: the conscious and intentional display of nudity, be it partial or full, by an individual or a group in a public space, where such display aims at achieving a particular stated or unstated goal. Conceptually, a public space is any social space that is generally open and accessible to all people. This ranges from roads and public squares to parks and beaches and even government buildings, even if they have limited and/or restricted usage.

While the examples of Rihanna and Beyonce are used to illustrate individual displays of nudity or near-nudity in the public space, the Ekiti women’s nude protest of 2009 in Nigeria is used to illustrate group displays of nudity or near-nudity in public space.

---

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.* 57.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.* 17.

<sup>14</sup> R. Ross, *Clothing: A Global History* (Cambridge, 2006), 103.

## The 2009 Ekiti women for peace nude protest

On 29 April 2009, more than one hundred women and girls took to the streets of Ado-Ekiti, the capital of Ekiti State in Nigeria, to protest the truncation of the electoral process that, as these women and girls argued, ought to install Dr. Kayode Fayemi, the candidate for the Action Congress (henceforth AC) political party as the governor of the state.<sup>15</sup>

While a majority of the women and girls protested with their breasts uncovered, others wore white-coloured bras and were waving white handkerchiefs. All of them paraded the streets with their hair dishevelled and uncovered.<sup>16</sup> The age range of these semi-nude protesters was between 16 and 70 and the group comprised of old women, young ladies, and girls from the 16 local government areas in Ekiti State.<sup>17</sup> Under the aegis of the Ekiti Women for Peace, the group also included Mrs. Ronke Okusanya, the president of the group, the wife of the AC candidate, Mrs. Olabisi Fayemi and the Governorship candidate's running mate, Mrs. Funmilayo Olayinka. According to Mrs. Okusanya, the women decided to go half-naked to press home the demand for the sanctity of their votes.<sup>18</sup> She added that the protest was a warning to election riggers and manipulators that they could no longer get away with fraud.

Impetus for the nude or near-nude protest came from the controversies surrounding the state governorship election. Prior to the protest, an election was held where Mr. Segun Oni of the Peoples' Democratic Party (henceforth PDP) was declared winner and sworn-in as the state governor. Dr. Fayemi and the AC challenged Mr. Oni's victory at the Election Petition Tribunal, which later ruled against Mr. Oni and ordered a re-run of the election in a number of voting units.

A few weeks prior to the re-run election, politicians from different parts of Nigeria converged on Ekiti to ensure adequate preparation. As the day of the re-run drew closer, the atmosphere became tense, as the ruling party and its main contender, the AC, jostled for support. Midway into the election, the Independent National Electoral Commission (henceforth INEC) Resident Electoral Officer, Mrs. Aduke Adebayo, disappeared and the process was halted. The government initially reported that she had been taken ill. Later, she sent in a resignation letter purporting that she was not ill but that she went underground as she was being forced to declare an unpopular candidate, which was against both the wishes of Ekiti people, as expressed in the voting, and her

---

<sup>15</sup> The Editor, "Women Protest", *Nation Newspaper*, April 30, 2009, 1, 2.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.* 2.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.* 2.

<sup>18</sup> Interview with Mrs. Okusanya, Ado-Ekiti, 30 April 2009.



conscience, as a Christian.<sup>19</sup> In response to her resignation and going underground, the police declared her wanted.

On 29 April 2009, half-naked Ekiti women marched on the streets of Ado-Ekiti and other parts of the state to protest an alleged attempt to subvert the electoral will of the people. The protesters argued that Dr. Fayemi had won the re-run election and they demanded that the INEC should declare him the winner. They deplored the delay in announcing the winner of the 25 April governorship election rerun. They invoked the spirits of their ancestors against those *“who planned to announce the loser of the election as the winner.”*<sup>20</sup> The peaceful protest by the placard-carrying women paralyzed economic activities and vehicular movement in Ado-Ekiti, the state capital. Some of their placards read: “INEC, Announce Election Result Now”; “Prof Iwu, Be Warned”; “We Salute Mrs. Ayoka Adebayo’s Courage”; “Dr. Fayemi Won, No Magomago”; “Iwu, Stop Your Antics”; “VP Jonathan, Stop Your Imposition”; “Ayoka Adebayo, Heroine of Democracy”; and “Prof Iwu, Fear God.”<sup>21</sup>

The women, numbering about 300, and comprising of young mothers, schoolgirls and aged women, also sang:

*“Magbe, magbe o,  
Ibo Fayemi ko see gbe,  
Magbe, magbe”*

(Don’t steal it, don’t steal it,  
Fayemi’s votes cannot be stolen,  
Don’t steal it, don’t steal it.)

*“Mayi, mayi o,  
Ibo Fayemi ko see yi,  
Mayi, mayi”*

(Don’t manipulate it, don’t manipulate it,  
Fayemi’s votes cannot be manipulated,  
Don’t manipulate it, don’t manipulate it.)

While the outcome of the election is of secondary concern to this chapter, it must be noted that Mrs. Aduke Adebayo later resurfaced, recanted her earlier position and declared the PDP candidate as the winner of the re-run election. It took another round of court activities to restore Dr. Fayemi’s mandate.

---

<sup>19</sup> The Editor, “Women Protest”, 1.

<sup>20</sup> The Editor, “Women Protest”, 1-2.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.* 1.

Notwithstanding this development, the Ekiti women's nude protest re-enacted an age-old practice of unwrapping as a form of (en) gendering civil protest in Nigeria. While many people have berated these women as over-sentimentalizing the issue, others have argued that such action portends great danger for Nigeria and democratic growth in the nation.

A Yoruba woman wearing Iro, Buba and Gele. Photo Bukola Adeyemi Oyeniyi



Nude protest is not peculiar to Yoruba people, as it is a general practice across Africa. For instance, in June 2002, hundreds of women, whose ages ranged between 20 and 90, overran oil-producing facilities in Nigeria's Niger Delta, to demand a safer environment and infrastructural development in the region.<sup>22</sup> Similarly, in 2006, female South African prisoners staged a naked protest to prevent prison authorities from relocating them to another prison facility.<sup>23</sup> On June 7 2012, thousands of men and women in Montreal, Canada, stripped to protest planned hikes in tuition fees, while at Berlin-Tegel Airport in Germany, semi-nude Germans staged a naked protest against the use of body scanners at the airport on 15 November 2010.<sup>24</sup> From these and other examples, there is no gainsaying the fact that the use of the unwrapped body, as a political tool, is not limited to Yoruba people or Nigerians alone, but it is a common practice across the world.

### The female body: The politics of wrapping and unwrapping

In most societies, there are rules guiding access to and control of the body. Dress, among other things, limits access to the body, as individuals dress to ward off unwanted and unsolicited gazes and to determine who gains access to the body and who is denied. Societies expect individuals to exercise caution in granting access to their bodies; hence, all members of societies are expected to dress properly, with each society determining what it regards as proper dressing. As far as the Yoruba people of Nigeria are concerned, a general rule of dressing and behaving is subsumed in the ethical and moral category of being an *Omoluabi*. This has been defined, among other things, as being lofty in speech and in appearance, being intelligent and considerate to others.<sup>25</sup>

Beyond dressing well, the semiotic of meanings associated with dress encompasses the granting of and denial of access to the human body. Hence, families go to greater lengths to ensure that their children are not promiscuous and wayward. Promiscuous and wayward children are described as having

---

<sup>22</sup> S. Ekine, *The Curse of Nakedness: Women in Nigeria Threaten to Bare it All to Better Their Communities*, accessed 21 August 2015 at: <http://www.imow.org/exhibitions/women-power-and-politics/biology/curse-of-nakedness#sthash.wGG68Fmv.dpuf>.

<sup>23</sup> Human Rights Watch, *Prison Conditions in South Africa*, African Watch Prison Project, New York: Human Rights Watch, 1994.

<sup>24</sup> Metro News: *Naked Canadian students protest 2012*, accessed August 21 2015 at <http://metro.co.uk/2012/06/08/pictures-naked-canadian-students-protest-2012-3035009/>.

<sup>25</sup> B.A. Oyeniyi, *Dress in the Making of African Identity* (Armhest, USA, 2015), 129.

soiled the dress of the family. When this happens, deviants and, sometimes, their families are either punished or socially rejected.<sup>26</sup>

A Yoruba man wearing Dansiki and Fila Adiro. Photo Bukola Adeyemi Oyeniya



---

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.* 130-132.

As the Yoruba people would say, dress the way you want to be addressed. This not only points to the importance of dress alone, but also the importance of the dressed body. As already noted, the female body is the most censored among Yoruba people. In traditional Yoruba society, a girl is expected to be a virgin before marriage. After marriage, she must ensure that there is no unauthorized intrusion into her body, with her husband as the only person authorized to access her body. In general, whether single or married, a woman must censor who gains access and who is denied access to her body.

As suggested by the example of Rihanna and Beyonce, the politics associated with access to and control of the female body has traditionally been used as a form of control and/or protest. There are two ways in which this politics has manifested itself. On the one hand, some females consciously used denial of access to and control of their body to either negotiate profitable deals or to influence circumstances in their favour. On the other hand, human societies used different customs and practices to police and control the body, most especially the female body. It must be noted that both manifestations are conscious, deliberate and geared towards certain ends. While in the first situation, females consciously negotiate profitable deals with their body either through granting of access or through denial of access, in the other, the society, as an agency of socialization, imposes limitations on the body in order to attain societal goals. Although societal imposition of rules over access and control is not limited to wrapping and unwrapping, this chapter focuses exclusively on wrapping and unwrapping, as one of the numerous ways through which society negotiates ownership and control of the body with its members.

Why is the body so fundamentally important that both females and society constantly negotiate with one another over whether it is wrapped or unwrapped and over ownership, access and control? Where does ownership of the body lie - with the female or with the society? In other words, is the female body, wrapped and unwrapped, a commodity that can be owned?

Clearly, females own their bodies. However, as members of society, males and females become collective property of social groups. They are both bound by sets of rules and practices that define and guide the social groups. At this level, the human body becomes a commonwealth. It is owned both by the individual and the social group to which the individual belongs. It is for this simple reason that suicide, for instance, is illegal and punishable under the law. Societies all over the world have rules and regulations, customs and practices that are geared towards order, control and administration. The need for control and administration therefore allows a state to encroach on members' rights and lay claims to such liberties that ensure peace, harmonious coexistence and

sustainability of the group. Certainly, the power to review and police an accessorized body falls under this social contract. However, this does not explain why the female body is the most censored.

In addition to the above, is accessorization symptomatic of commoditization? Put differently, does the imputing of any addition and/or supplement to the body transform the body into a commodity that can be owned? When a body is accessorized, whether consciously or unconsciously, it takes on the values inherent in the accessories. The body is also reviewed in line with the values added by the accessories. This process, more than ever before, deepens ownership, as individual's ownership of the body is asserted further by the act of accessorization. Communal ownership is also deepened, as the society is transformed from being a passive bystander, issuing rules and practices on good and bad dress, into an active reviewer, approving and rejecting whatever it deems as good and bad dress. As a result, the accessorized body is validated by the society when there is a correspondence between the intended message and the review. However, where there is no correspondence, social rejection follows.

A number of questions can be asked here: does the societal gaze, or more appropriately, the power to review an accessorized body, shift ownership and control from the female to the society? In other words, does the power to review impact on ownership of the body? Does it shift ownership of the body from the individual to the society? Or does it create joint ownership? Can a spectator claim ownership of a football club by being a fan? Can a shareholder in a football club direct the on-field structure of a game?

Undoubtedly, displaying an accessorized body, like a football game, feeds into the review process. Invariably, the wrapped and the unwrapped human body, when displayed, becomes a commodity. In other words, when displayed deliberately and consciously, females commoditize their bodies. Like displaying, policing is also dependent on the recognition of the existence of an aberration. If any accessory to the human body displays or reveals the body, why then is the female body the most censored and policed? After all, males also accessorize their body.

Fundamental to the above is the need to ascertain whether the wrapped and unwrapped body is a private or a public good. The semiotic of meanings associated with 'the wrapped body' shows that it is a public good, while 'the unwrapped body' is a private good. Displaying a private good in the public space is therefore an aberration, which society seeks to censor and police. It is in this context that nudity becomes valuable, as it is displayable only in private spaces. As the various cases used in the previous section demonstrate, private goods, under special circumstances, can be displayed in the public space. Under these

circumstances, such display is tolerated and understood, but remains an aberration. The question, then, is when is a private good permissible in the public space.

As shown above, in some cases, females have used the threat or actual act of nakedness/undress or denial of sexual/conjugal relations as a tool for effective political engagement. In traditional Yoruba society, it is a vote of no confidence passed by the female folks on the male folks and not just the wielders of power in the society; hence, the wielders of power are expected to vacate their offices. Other males in the society must ensure that this is done within seven days of the nude protests.<sup>27</sup>

In other words, nude protest was one of the extreme checks and balances put in place by the indigenous people to check the arbitrary rule by the king in traditional Yoruba society. It must be noted it is not the cases that all nude protests result in the king having to abdicate the throne. In most cases, the women themselves expressed the focus of their protests and agitation. The king is expected to ensure fulfillment of these desires; if not, he is expected to abdicate the throne, as the mothers of the state have, by their action, pronounced the king an enemy of the state.

Like the gathering in Ekiti, nude protest derived from a cultural milieu that regarded female nakedness as a virtue not only of the woman or her husband but also of her community. Hence, in traditional Yoruba society, brides and their immediate relations - parents, brothers, sisters and community - celebrated virginity to the highest degree on the wedding night. Given this view of the body, nude protest is treated, like rape and sexual violence, as an insult or assault not only on the woman but also on the community where she came from.

The perpetrators of nude protest as a form of sexual violence include the people whose actions or inactions caused the protest and even the onlookers. To avoid guilt-by-association, onlookers are also expected to go naked in solidarity with the women. Nude protest is therefore an asymmetric strategy aimed at forcing the target of the action to accede to their will as well as forcing onlookers to compel the powerful to accede to the will of the powerless. Nude protest happens only in a mutually intelligible cultural milieu that values women's sexuality as a property that must be cherished and upheld.

From the above, it can be argued that in extreme circumstances, such as those involving the Ekiti women, private goods can be brought into the public space, not for display, but for protest. Under such circumstances, the utility of both public and private goods become so elastic that it can be extended,

---

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.* 130-132.

without necessarily breaching the societal ethics of good or errant behaviour. In the case of Rihanna and Beyonce, the display of the unwrapped body is purely exhibitionism.

### Between scarcity and surfeit - Is control necessary?

Can it be argued that societal policing of the human body deals essentially with the need to protect and preserve the scarcity value of the body? In this sense, how does the surplus value of the body affect the value a society places on the human body? Is it in the display of the body or in access to the body? While unsolicited and unauthorized access is a violation, which individuals and society tend to prohibit, display certainly attracts reviews. Display, especially when it is positive, benefits people and therefore can serve as a motive for intentional display. However, display in itself is believed, in most societies, to erode the scarcity value (of the body) and other ideals a society might place on the body.

From Rihanna and Beyonce to Olufunmilayo Ransom-Kuti, who led the Egba Women, a group of female nude protesters in Western Nigeria in 1929, to the Ekiti Women for Peace protesters, the display of nudity in the public space is not tantamount to exhibitionism or a display of surplus or the scarcity value of the female body, but rather a negotiation between a segment of society and society itself. In other words, females across the world have leveraged and continue to leverage their body in a cultural milieu that cherishes and continues to cherish and glorify female sexuality. Whether making a statement and gaining fame using the body, as the case of Rihanna seems to suggest, or negotiating shared cultural value, like the Ekiti Women for Peace, the body becomes a site for socio-political administration and control as well as a form of dress.

Notwithstanding the issue of ownership, does displaying the body commoditize it? In other words, when Rihanna turns up at an awards ceremony almost nude, and when the Ekiti Women protested semi-naked on the street, both can be said to have brought private goods into the public space. The question is, did they, by so doing, commoditize their bodies? Another dimension to the argument is the process of commoditization itself. Who commoditizes the body, the owners of the body themselves or the society that polices and reviews the displayed body? In other words, did Rihanna or Beyonce commoditize their bodies by dressing semi-nude at an awards ceremony or were their bodies commoditized in the way the public, comprising the media and the society, reported and reacted to their dress? The same question can be posed in the case of the Ekiti women.

As a young man, I am familiar with and I have joined other boys whistling approval, rejection, and/or fascination when a lady passes by. Sometimes the



whistling is in respect of the lady's beauty or of her dress. I have also witnessed people demanding other people's opinion on the way they dress. When people whistle or demand opinions on their dress, do they, unknowing or knowingly, commoditize their body? Can an individual and, at the same time, a society commoditize a person's body? In other words, did the Ekiti women, with their deliberate display of nudity or semi-nudity, commoditize their bodies? While it is up for debate whether there was a societal mediation in the case of the Ekiti women, certainly the media and various commentators that reported and/or wrote on the near-nude dress of Rihanna and Beyonce at the awards ceremonies presented views that can be considered as commoditizing the bodies of these women. Can we also argue that both Rihanna and Beyonce set themselves up for commodification by stepping out of the social norms to dress semi-nude?

Irrespective of place and time, societies all over the world place considerable importance on the human body, whether for its scarcity value or because nudity evokes a sense of shame. As the cases used in this chapter have showed, both the wrapped and unwrapped body possess values and humans have used the body to attain considerable gain. As Ross, earlier cited, noted, "The casual relationship between dress and other forms of behaviour, social, economic and political, is one way." Like Rihanna, Beyonce and the Ekiti women, people wrap and/or unwrap for a number of reasons, one of which is because "they accord with the sort of person they are, or want to be thought of as." In other words, wrapping and/or unwrapping does not in itself turn a person into the sort of individual who would normally dress or unwrap that way unless it "is imposed by force of law"; however, in the case of Rihanna and Beyonce, fame and popularity as well as the need to sell costumes play important parts in the way they dress; whereas, the intention in the case of the Ekiti women is to invoke an old Yoruba custom that reveres nudity as a tool in the socio-cultural and political administration of the society. "The outer," Ross warned, "may reflect the inner; it does not seem to effect it."<sup>28</sup>

---

<sup>28</sup> Ross, *Clothing*, 106.

## List of Contributors

Aliyu Sakariyau Alabi teaches history of the Muslim world at Bayero University, Kano, Nigeria. His research interests include history of Islamic education and philosophy of history. He has a chapter, 'Historiophoty and Historiography: Subtle Narratives in Afonja' in Muhammed O. Bhadmus (ed.), *The Nigerian Cinema- Reading Nigerian Motion Pictures* (Spectrum Books, 2016).

Erik Bähre is associate professor at the Institute of Cultural Anthropology and Development Sociology at Leiden University. He specialises in economic anthropology, mainly in South Africa and more recently in Brazil. He is the author of *Money and Violence: Financial Self-Help Groups in a South African Township* (Leiden: Brill, 2007).

Dmitri van den Bersselaar is Professor of African History at the University of Leipzig. He is a social and cultural historian with an interest in economic history. His research interests include the impact of multinational business on local African cultures of work and labour. He wrote *The King of Drinks: Schnapps Gin from Modernity to Tradition* (Leiden, 2007).

Inge Brinkman is professor of African Studies at the Department of African Languages and Cultures at Ghent University (Belgium). She has been involved in research on war, mobility and communication in Angola, having published *A war for people* in 2005 (Köppe Verlag). Currently her research interests include the intersection between text and context, notably in Angola and Kenya.

Johan Fourie is associate professor of economics at Stellenbosch University (South Africa). He completed his PhD at Utrecht University in 2012 on the wealth of the Cape Colony settlers, which won the best dissertation prize in the 'early-modern history' category at the World Economic History Congress in 2015. Johan is editor of *Economic History of Developing Regions*, is a founding member of the African Economic History Network and is affiliated to the Laboratory for the Economics of Africa's Past (LEAP).

Jan-Bart Gewald, is Professor of Southern African History at Leiden University. His research interests include the history of the social relationship between people and technology in Africa. He wrote, *Forged in the Great War : people, transport, and labour, the establishment of colonial rule in Zambia, 1890-1920* (Leiden, 2015).

Baz Lecocq is Professor of African History at the Humboldt University of Berlin. He specialises in the contemporary history of the Central Sahara and Sahel, and studies a broad set of social-political topics, such as nationalism and (post)slavery, and the global connectivity of the region via technology and religious identity.

Anne Kelk Mager is Emeritus Professor of History at the University of Cape Town, author of *Gender and the Making of a South African Bantustan: A Social History of the Ciskei; Beer, Sociability and Masculinity in South Africa* and a co-editor with Robert Ross and Bill Nasson of the Cambridge History of South Africa.

Bernard Mbenga is a History Professor at the North-West University, Mafikeng Campus, South Africa. He is co-author with Andrew Manson of *People of the Dew: The Bafokeng of the Phokeng-Rustenburg District of South Africa, from Early Times to 2000* (Jacana, 2010). He has also co-authored/co-edited the following books: with Carolyn Hamilton and Robert Ross, *The Cambridge History of South Africa, Vol. 1: From Early Times to 1885* (Cambridge, 2010); with Andrew Manson and Arianna Lissoni, *A History of the ANC in the North-West Province of South Africa since 1909* (Unisa, 2016).

Kirsten McKenzie is Professor of History at the University of Sydney, Australia. Her most recent books include *Imperial Underworld: An Escaped Convict and the Transformation of the British Colonial Order* (Cambridge, 2016) and *A Swindler's Progress: Nobles and Convicts in the Age of Liberty* (Harvard, 2010).

Susan Newton-King is an Extraordinary Associate Professor in the Department of History at the University of the Western Cape. Her research interests include the private lives, family relationships and social networks of settlers and freed slaves at the Cape of Good Hope in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. She has also written about sodomy trials at the Cape and about the relationships between Dutch-Afrikaners and Khoisan on the eastern frontiers of the colony.

Bukola Adeyemi Oyeniyi is a historian at the Missouri State University, Springfield, Missouri, United States. His research interests include culture, identity and conflict in Africa. He authored *Dress in the Making of African Identity: A Social and Cultural History of the Yoruba People* (Cambria Press, 2015).

Iva Peša is a historian who does research on the Central African Copperbelt at Oxford University. After having studied Mwinilunga District in North-Western Zambia, her current research focuses on the environmental history of the Zambian and Congolese Copperbelt. She has co-edited *Transforming Innovations in Africa* (Brill, 2012) and *The Objects of Life in Central Africa* (Brill, 2013).

Fiona Vernal is a historian at the University of Connecticut. Her research interests include the intersections of race, identity and missions in the Eastern Cape as well as Cape slavery. She is the author of *The Farmerfield Mission: A Christian Community in South Africa, 1838-2008*.

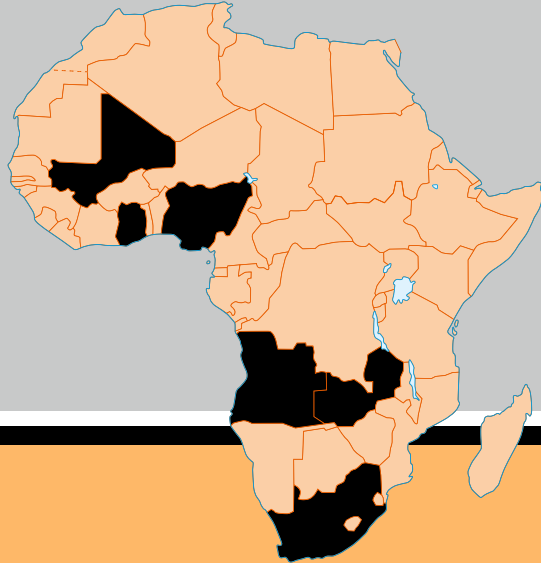
Nigel Worden is Emeritus Professor of History at the University of Cape Town. His research focuses on social and cultural identities in the early colonial Cape Colony and its connections with the Indian Ocean world. He edited *Cape Town between East and West: Social Identities in a Dutch Colonial Town* (Jacana and Verloren, 2014) and co-edited *Honourable Intentions? Violence and Virtue in the Australian and Cape Colonies, c 1750 to 1850* (Routledge, 2016) with Penny Russell.

Shehu Tijjani Yusuf teaches African history at Bayero University, Kano, Nigeria. His main research interests include the social and economic history of Nigeria and the history of science and technology in Africa. His PhD thesis, defended at Leiden University in 2015, explored the history of railways in Northern Nigeria in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. He has published in a number of journals and edited volumes, including *Transforming Innovations in Africa* (2012) and *African Roads to Prosperity* (2015).









## Occasional Publication 26

*Magnifying Perspectives* is a festschrift for Robert Ross, Emeritus Professor of African History at Leiden University. The contributions have been written by the students and colleagues of Robert Ross, reflecting his broad-ranging thematic and geographical research interests. Individual chapters cover topics such as slavery, gender and gossip, but also reflect an eye for detail in narrating about mosquitoes, semaphores and pineapples. Big themes such as race and imperialism are tackled by paying attention to language, material objects and the powerful role of individuals in shaping history. Contributions on all parts of the African continent, from Nigeria and Mali to Angola and South Africa, as well as Britain and Australia are included. This book attempts to do justice to the unique approach to African history which Robert Ross advocated, an approach which emphasises the complexity and dignity of human nature by placing it at the centre of historical writing.

Iva Peša is a historian who does research on the Central African Copperbelt at Oxford University. After having studied Mwinilunga District in North-Western Zambia, her current research focuses on the environmental history of the Zambian and Congolese Copperbelt. She has co-edited *Transforming Innovations in Africa* (Brill, 2012) and *The Objects of Life in Central Africa* (Brill, 2013).

Jan-Bart Gewald, is Professor of African History at Leiden University. His research interests include the history of the social relationship between people and technology in Africa. He wrote *Forged in the Great War : people, transport, and labour, the establishment of colonial rule in Zambia, 1890-1920* (Leiden, 2015).