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CAPTURING THE SOUL
ENCOUNTERS BETWEEN BERLIN MISSIONARIES AND TSHIVENDA-SPEAKERS IN THE LATE NINETEENTH CENTURY

By

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ABSTRACT

Alan Kirkaldy "Capturing the Soul: Encounters between Berlin Missionaries and Tshivenda-Speakers in the Late Nineteenth Century"

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During the 1990s, missionaries and their interaction with local societies began to assume a central role in historiographical debates in, and about, South Africa. This new focus built on pioneering work produced during the preceding two decades.

My study foregrounds the value of the archives and library of the Berlin Mission Society as a source of new insights into the history of Vendaland (today part of the Northern Province of South Africa). In contrast to previous works, which have "gutted" them for "facts", I have used them to engage with the view into the past provided by the missionaries.

The main body of the work is prefaced by a background discussion of some of the persistent myths about the inhabitants of Vendaland. This leads into an overview of the nineteenth century history of its indigenous African and settler inhabitants, followed by a short outline of the beginnings of mission activity in the area.

The thesis proper (Chapters 2 to 8) begins with an examination of the beginnings of Christianity in the area prior to the arrival of the Berlin Missionaries. I then go on to look at the changed situation, and the differing paths followed by these converts, after the arrival of missionaries.

Having grounded the study in Africa, I move to Germany in an attempt to understand the making of the missionaries who would record what occurred in Vendaland. I then return to this area with the missionaries. I explore the ways that they experienced, came to terms with and inscribed themselves on the environment. This leads to discussions of the ways that the missionaries portrayed the landscape and its inhabitants textually and iconograpically for themselves, their superiors at home and the wider circle of friends of the mission.

In order to make converts, the missionaries had to draw the local people out of the environment and understand them. In their terms, only by first understanding local ways could they hope to transform them. Examining their attempts to do this, I look at missionary writings on local beliefs in the supernatural, and their impressions and analysis of the metaphysical and physical bases of the power of local rulers, the ancestors and medico-religious practitioners. I then go on to look at missionary discourse about the power of local rulers and society over, and the inscription of power on, the African body.

I conclude the thesis with an extended case study of the interaction between the rulers of the Mphaphuli people and the Berlin Missionaries. This engages, and draws together, the major themes raised in the preceding chapters. As with the first chapter, it also again draws out the African voice which is present as a sub-text to the missionary discourse.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Professors Norman Duncan, Peter Geschiere, Utte Luik and Christoph Marx read and commented on drafts of various sections of this work. So too did Jean-Marie Dederen, Murray Hofmeyr, Peta Jones, Premesh Lalu, Virginia van der Vliet and Lesley Witz. They all influenced the final product. I hope that any of them who may read this thesis are happy with at least some of the directions that I have taken using their ideas as my starting point (and will forgive me for cases where I have not taken their advice)!

Professor Elias Lukhaimane, Felix Malunga, Nkadimeng Mahosi and Rachidi Molapo, my colleagues in the Department of History at the University of Venda for Science and Technology [UNIVEN] were extremely supportive in allowing me to take a year's sabbatical out of the Departmental leave cycle to complete writing-up. They have also been extremely understanding about my propensity to consume far more than my fair share of the Departmental stationery and printing allowance in this process. Although some of them come from a far more von Rankean tradition than myself and seriously doubt that what I write is history, they will no doubt see that they have managed to influence me in my writing. I also thank them for the heated debates that we have had about issues such as anthropophagy and *vhuloi* and hope that they feel that I have gone far enough in allowing their concerns and criticisms to inform my text.

My trip to Germany and my research in the Library and Archives of the Berlin Mission Society were made possible by financial assistance from the Deutscher Akademischer Austauschdienst, the (South African) National Research Foundation (formerly the Centre for Science Development) and a UNIVEN Research Grant. I thank them for their support. Conclusions reached in this thesis do not necessarily reflect the views of these institutions.

Thanks to funding organised by Phyllis Ferguson, I was able to present the second draft of my chapter on the Mphaphulis to the African Research Seminar at

St. Antony's. I would like to thank her and Professor Terrence Ranger for the trouble that they took in giving detailed comments on my paper and in familiarising me with the mysteries of the Oxford library system.

In Germany, I relied heavily on the expertise of the librarians, Frau B. Golz and Frau D. Schmager, and the archivist, Frau B. Lück. They really went out of their way to help me and to make me feel welcome (and make the best coffee in the former GDR). My family and I have extremely fond memories of them and hope that we will be able to repay some of the assistance and hospitality one of these days. Mission-Director Hans Luther also made me extremely welcome.

Professor Albert Wirz of the Institute for Asian and African Studies at Humboldt University at Berlin acted as my host Professor in Berlin. Beyond giving me office space and computer facilities in his Institute, he personally went out of his way to assist me in settling in and in learning how to use research facilities in Berlin. In regular meetings, we discussed the progress of my research and he bombarded me with fresh insights on how to approach my material. In him and his wife, Tina, I also had a ready hotline which was accessible at any time that I felt tempted to throw myself into the Spree. I thank them both for their assistance and their friendship.

While at the Institute, I was also able to present two papers at their research seminar. I learned a great deal through these and am particularly grateful to Heike Schmidt, who acted as discussant at my presentations. Her criticisms, and those of her colleagues, forced me to re-think many of my assumptions and re-work many of my interpretations. Jürgen Becher and Ulrich van der Heyden also assisted me in finding my way around the archives and generally went out of their way to make my stay pleasant and memorable.

One would have thought that supervising my Master's thesis would have been enough for Professor Patrick Harries. He nevertheless agreed to face my 118-page draft chapters once again (luckily this time in space-and-a-half rather than single spacing). Perhaps the only reason was that we were now 2000 Kilometres apart and he knew that I could not arrive unannounced on his doorstep clutching

chapters in the early hours of the morning. On a more serious note, I thank him for the direction that he gave to the thesis and the support at times when it seemed that it would never come together.

Doctor Nigel Penn agreed to step in as internal supervisor for 2001, when Patrick Harries had left the University of Cape Town. I thank him for preparedness to do this and the interest that he has shown in the work. While Patrick had the advantage of receiving the work in manageable segments, he received the whole thesis in a couriered box at the busiest time of the year and still managed to keep his sense of humour.

Working at an under-resourced university with a very basic library and erratic results from attempts to obtain material through inter-library loan, I spent occasional trips to Cape Town frantically photocopying. There were nevertheless times when I urgently needed sources after my return to Louis Trichardt. At such times, I relied on the goodwill of Julian Massawe from U.C.T. Libraries, who photocopied a pile of articles for me. My parents, Tom and Jean Kirkaldy, also spent a great deal of time scouting bookshops in Cape Town and collecting and posting material for me.

Before I obtained my own scanner, Izak de Vries scanned many of the illustrations used in this thesis for me.

In the final weeks of writing, Professor Johann Tempelhoff loaned me his own and Nemudzivhadi's Ph.D theses. Since I had been unsuccessful in a number of attempts to acquire these through inter-library loan, I greatly appreciated this.

Tessa Kirkaldy read through the final draft, proof-reading and offering editorial suggestions. I thank her for this and for putting up with a husband involved in the final stages of thesis-writing. Nine times out of ten, she was more prepared than anybody could reasonably expect to discuss my thesis (and at least pretend to be interested) in the early hours of the morning with a full day of work ahead. I hereby promise her, Hannah and Benjamin that I will become human again now that this damn thing is finished.

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INTRODUCTION

THE START

This thesis started off being about something totally different. The processes and intellectual shifts that I have gone through in writing it have played a major role in determining its final form.

I began by attempting to explain the reasons behind the witch-hunts, accusations of ritual killing and highly-publicised (and sensationalised) trials of those who had taken part in ritual homicide. These played a major role in the political life of the then-existing Venda Bantustan during the late 1980s and early 1990s.[1] I ended up writing about encounters between Berlin Missionaries and Tshivenda-speakers in what is today a part of the Northern Province of South Africa in the late nineteenth century. Originally totally opposed to the use of mission sources in the writing of history, I ended up anchoring my work in sources found in the archives and library of the Berlin Mission Society (*Berliner Missionsgesellschaft*,

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[1] Two government commissions (one by the bantustan government and one by the democratic government of the Northern Province), an HSRC report and a number of academic and popular articles have not adequately explained these events. The field is still open for study. Among government reports and academic articles, see especially D.H.J. le Roux (sole Commissioner) Report of the Commission of Enquiry into the Causes of the Unrest in Venda during August 1988 and the Investigation of Ritual Murders; N.V. Ralushai (Chairperson) "Report of the Commission of Inquiry into Witchcraft, Violence and Ritual Murders", 1995/1996; A. de V. Minnaar, D. Offringa and C. Payze *To Live in Fear: Witchburning and Medicine Murder in Venda*, ASS/BSS-20, Pretoria, Human Sciences Research Council, 1992; J.M. Dederen "Book review of *To live in Fear: Witchburning and Medicine Murder in Venda* by A de V Minnaar, D. Offringa and C Payze", in *Social Dynamics: A Journal of the Centre for African Studies, University of Cape Town*, Vol. 18, No. 2, December 1992, pp.95-100 (an annihilation of the HSRC Report); J. Mihálik and Y. Cassim "Ritual murder and Witchcraft: A Political Weapon?", in *The South African Law Journal*, Vol. 110, Part 1, February 1993, pp.127-140 and M.W. Prinsloo and J.H. Du Plessis "Towenaarmoorde, rituele doding en medisynemoorde in Venda", in *Tydskrif vir die Suid-Afrikaanse Reg/Journal of South African Law*, 4, 1988, pp.617-624. Among newspaper and popular magazine reports, see especially J. Arenstein "Armed with a Bible, the clerics cash in on muti", in *Sunday Times*, 28 May 1995, p.3; S. Balic "Change brings muti murders", in *New African*, No.272, May 1990, pp.32-33; E. Brits "Witchcraft Report Tabled", in *Times: The Newspaper for the Northern Province*, 14 July 1995, p.1; E. Koch and E. Ritchken The political economy of witchcraft", in *Weekly Mail*, 23-29 March 1990, pp.10-11; J. Maluleke and A. Horler "The Zombie Hunter", in *Drum*, No. 195, July 1995, pp.14-16; P. Molokomme "The Witch-Hunters", in *Pace*, September 1994, pp.20-22 & 24; N. Musetha "No amnesty to witch hunters", in *Mirror*, Year 10, 19 May 2000. p.1 and A. Siebane "Killing his own child for muti ... Life imprisonment for murderer", in *Mirror*, Year 9, Vol. 8, 23 October 1998, p.1.

now the *Berliner Missionswerk*). Lastly, when I started this thesis, I was still strongly wedded to a revisonist approach to history. Now I am far more interested in narrative and in comparing various versions of texts.[2]

I was originally attempting to expose the role played by unemployed youths with no hope of a meaningful future under the bantustan system in the genesis of the often brutal attempts to rid society of alleged *vhaloi*, zombie-keepers and ritual killers.[3] I was also explaining ritual homicides themselves in terms of the economic instability and political uncertainties which characterised the social formation at the time. The catalyst which sparked action, I argued, was the attempt by underground structures of the liberation movements and those acting in their name, to make the country ungovernable.[4] However, these forces could

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[2] I believe that the whole debate surrounding the history of events and revival of narrative has been waged often enough, and with enough intensity, for me merely to mention it here. Whether they recognise (or admit) it or not, in essence, historians have never really departed from narrative. However, since the 1970s, there has been a great increase in the interpretative ambition, scope and self-consciousness of narrative history. As Nigel Penn has pointed out, this has been accompanied by a keen awareness that, while it may approach the truth, historical narrative "is not, of course, the truth." One of the ways to represent the reality of the past is by organising it into narrative structures. "Historians, like other people, make sense out of reality by ordering it into story forms." However, as E.J. Hobsbawm pointed out right at the beginning of the debate on the revival of narrative, one of the key characteristics of the new sensitivity to narrative and narrative structures has been the idea that "the event, the individual, even the recapture of some mood or way of thinking of the past, are not ends in themselves, but the means of illuminating some wider question, which goes far beyond the particular story and its characters." It is against this background that I use the term "narrative". For the original debate, see L. Stone "The Revival of Narrative: Reflections on a New old History", in *Past and Present*, No. 85, 1979, pp.3-24; E.J. Hobsbawm "The Revival of Narrative: Some Comments", in *Past and Present*, No. 86, 1980, pp.3-8 (quotation, p.4) and P. Abrams "History, Sociology, Historical Sociology", in *Past and Present*, No. 87, 1980, pp.3-16. See also P. Burke "History of Events and the Revival of Narrative", in P. Burke (ed.) *New Perspectives on Historical Writing*, Cambridge and Oxford, Polity Press, 1991, pp.233-248 and N.Penn *Rogues, Rebels and Runaways: Eighteenth-Century Cape Characters*, Cape Town, David Philip, 1999, pp.2, 3, 5 (quotation) & 168 (note 10).

[3] Locally, no distinction is made between witches, wizards, warlocks and sorcerers. They are all described as *vhaloi* (singular, *muloi*). Similarly, witchcraft and sorcery are both described as *vhuloi*. During the 1980s and 1990s, the accepted term for ritual homicide was *u via*. However, the verb *via* translates as "to butcher" or "to slaughter". It would appear that, in Tshivenda, there is no generic term for the different kinds of homicide that westerners lump together under the term "ritual homicide", "ritual murder", "ritual killing" or *muti* murder. I use the term "ritual homicide" as it seems to be the least value-laden.

[4] A. Kirkaldy (a) "Aspects of Work in Progress on Ritual killing and Witchcraft", unpublished paper presented at the international conference entitled "From the Zoutpansberg to the Sea" held at UNIVEN, 16 September 1995; (b) "'Images of savagery': Ritual Cannibalism, Ritual Killing and the Power of *Mahosi* in Vendaland until 1930", unpublished paper presented to the Forschungskolloquium, Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin, 13 May 1996 and (c) "Witch-Burnings", unpublished paper read at the International Conference on Violence [Department of Psychology, UNIVEN; Centre for Peace Action and UNESCO] held at UNIVEN, 10 October 1997. For exceptionally interesting discussion of witchcraft allegations at Green Valley in the former Lebowa Bantustan, see I.A. Niehaus (a) "Witchcraft, Power and Politics: An

only operate in a situation where many of those who participated in the attempts at social cleansing accepted the reality of *vhuloi* and believed that ritual homicide could achieve specific ends. This was where my real problem began.

In my attempts to gain an understanding of beliefs of this nature, I was frequently told that "this is our tradition". In addition to what I was being told in interviews, published sources and assignments and Honours theses produced by my students contained detailed descriptions of these purportedly "traditional" cultural practices.[5] What all of these accounts lacked was any sense of the idea of the invention of tradition, as discussed by contributors to Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger's seminal work *The Invention of Tradition* (1983).[6] This work clearly demonstrates that traditions which are generally thought of as extremely ancient may, in fact, have been invented comparatively recently.

It was against this background that I set out to attempt to recover descriptions of local societies during the nineteenth century. I wasn't interested in Schoemansdal and the Boers – I wanted to get at the heart of what was happening in independent Vendaland where Boer officials, traders and freebooters were not keeping records. I knew that there was more going on than I was accessing through oral sources but how was I to get at this?

On a visit to South Africa in 1995, Professor Albert Wirz attempted to convince me that there was a wealth of material available in records of the Berlin Mission Society. He was certain that there would be at least some useful information for me there. In this, he was supported by Professor Patrick Harries, my supervisor.

Ethnographic Study of the South African Lowveld", Ph.D. thesis, University of the Witwatersrand, 1997 & (b) "Witch-Hunting and Political Legitimacy: Continuity and Change in Green Valley, Lebowa, 1930-91", in *Africa*, Vol. 63, No. 4, 1993, pp.498-530 and I.A. Niehaus with E. Mohlala and K. Shokane *Witchcraft, Power and Politics: Exploring the Occult in the South African Lowveld*, Anthropology, Culture and Society series, Cape Town, David Philip and London, Pluto Press, 2001.

[5] See, for example, P.B. Khangala "The role played by witchcraft and ritual murder beliefs in Venda with special reference to the Western, Eastern and Northern areas from 1979 to 1990", B.A. Honours thesis, University of Venda, 1990 and R.V. Mathagu "The origin, causes and consequences of ritual murder in Venda, with particular reference to the period between 1979 and 1990", B.A. Honours thesis, University of Venda, 1990.

[6] E. Hobsbawm and T. Ranger *The Invention of Tradition*, Cambridge, Canto (Cambridge University Press), 1983.

My first reaction was total horror. During my own training as an historian and in my teaching until recently, the standard line was that the acceptable face of Christianity in Africa was that presented by what we then called Independent Churches (referred to in the remainder of this thesis as African Initiated Churches), such as those among the Zulu described by Sundkler, the Israelites and the Aladura or "prayer" Churches of Nigeria.[7] Similarly, we focused on the study of the "phenomenology" and "rationality" of African conversion to Christianity and Islam, the degree of survival (or otherwise) of original African religious elements in the cosmologies of converts and the related construction of models to explain the transformation of "traditional" cosmologies from an African perspective.[8] In my interpretation, the motor driving this kind of focus was the fact that we were in the final stages of the decolonisation of Africa in Angola, Mozambique and Zimbabwe and the liberation struggle in South Africa. At this stage, missionaries were seen as (conscious or unconscious) agents of

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[7] See, for example, R. Edgar (a) "The Prophet Motive: Enoch Mgijima, the Israelites and the Background to the Bulhoek Massacre", in *International Journal of Historical Studies*, Vol. XV, No. 3, 1982, pp.401-422 & (b) *Because they chose the Plan of God: The Story of the Bulhoek Massacre*, History Workshop Topic Series 1, Johannesburg, Ravan Press, 1988; G.V. Mqingwana "The Israelite Movement and the Bulhoek Episode", M.A. thesis, Northwestern University, Evanston, Illinois, 1976; J.D.Y. Peel *Aladura: a Religious Movement among the Yoruba*, London, Oxford University Press for the International African Insitutute, 1968; E. Roux *Time Longer than Rope: A History of the Black Man's Struggle for Freedom in South Africa*, Second Edition, Madison and London, University of Wisconsin Press, 1964 (first published, 1948), pp.77-86 & 135-140; B.G.M. Sundkler *Bantu Prophets in South Africa*, Second Edition, London, Oxford University Press, 1961 (first published, 1948). See also p.353, footnote 79 (Chapter 6). For discussion on changing terminology in dealing with what have been called (among other terms) Ethiopian, Zionist, Native Separatist, Bantu Independent, African Independent, heretical, proselytic, millennial, quasi-Christian, cultic, syncrestic, magico-religious and neo-pagan churches and the implied attitudes, value-judgements and perspectives of church and government officials and scholars, see S. Hayes "The African Independent Churches: Judgement through terminology?", in *Missionalia*, Vol. 20, No. 2, August 1992, pp.139-146 (see also http://www.geocities.com/missionalia/aic-stud.htm, accessed 16 October 2000) and H. Pretorius and L. Jafta "'A Branch Springs Out': African Initiated Churches", in R. Elphick and R. Davenport (eds.) *Christianity in South Africa: A Political, Social & Cultural History*, Oxford, James Currey and Cape Town, David Philip, 1997, pp.211-212. In using the term "African Initiated Churches", I follow the argument of Hennie Pretorius and Lizo Jafta that this focuses "on the churches' distinctive African origins (p.211)."

[8] See H.J. Fisher "Conversion Reconsidered: Some Historical Aspects of Religious Conversion in Black Africa", in *Africa, Journal of the International African Institute*, Vol. XLIII, 1973, pp.27-40 and R. Horton (a) "African Conversion", in *Africa, Journal of the International African Institute*, Vol. XLI, No. 2, April 1971, pp.85-108 & (b) "On the Rationality of Conversion" (Parts I and II), in *Africa, Journal of the International African Institute*, Vol. 45, No. 3, 1975, pp.219-235 & 373-399. Note that these articles are a debate between Fisher and Horton and that Fisher focuses on Islam, rather than Christianity. For African conversion, African religious responses to mission Christianity, the interaction between African religions and Christianity and the vitality of African religions, see also R. Strayer "Missionary History in Africa: New perspectives on an encounter", in *African Studies Review*, Vol. XIX, No. 1, April 1976, pp.2-8.

colonial regimes. Their writings were useful sources for cataloguing the injustices experienced by, and the sufferings of, indigenous communities. They were also useful tools for exposing the missionary role in conquest and the assimilation of Africans into an emergent capitalist economy. However, according to this approach, when dealing with issues such as religion, missionary writings were so influenced by the paternalist, Eurocentric and racist ideologies of their authors that they were not worthy of serious consideration as historical sources. At this stage, there was no attempt to "get into the head of" – to imaginatively reconstruct the experience of – the missionaries.

MISSIONARY HISTORIOGRAPHY

Attacks on missionaries from settler historians and Afrikaner nationalist historians and politicians had long formed a component of South African historiography.[9] Polemical works by Hosea Jaffe (in his "Mnguni" guise) and Dora Taylor (masquerading as Nosipho Majeke), both first published in 1952, laid the foundation for later attacks from the Left which formed the basis of my own reading.[10] Jaffe argued that the missionaries found and opened up "new markets for England's textiles, and new sources of cheap labour to produce raw materials for England's industries." Their "'soeten praatjies' lowered the fighting resistance of Africans". In addition to their role in providing markets and labour, mission stations acted as "buffer states" between the colonised and the yet to-be defeated African groups, and as recruiting grounds for colonial military forces. Moving out from these bases, missionaries acted as spies and scouts during the wars of conquest. Having assisted in the subjugation of Africans, they helped in drafting peace treaties which deceived and discriminated against the rulers and

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[9] See especially J. du Bruyn and N. Southey "The Treatment of Christianity and Protestant Missionaries in South African Historiography", in H. Bredekamp and R. Ross (eds.) *Missions and Christianity in South African History*, Johannesburg, Witwatersrand University Press, 1995, pp.27-28 & 32; C. Saunders *The making of the South African past: Major historians on race and class*, Cape Town and Johannesburg, David Philip, 1988, pp.19-20, 25-26 & 41 and K. Smith *The changing past: Trends in South African historical writing*, Johannesburg, Southern Book Publishers, 1988, pp.36, 38, 47 & 63. The du Bruyn and Southey chapter is a particularly useful overview.

[10] "Mnguni" (pseud. – Hosa Jaffe) *Three Hundred Years*, Unity Movement History Series, Cumberwood, APDUSA, 1988 (first published 1952), numerous references but see especially pp.69-74 and "N. Majeke" (pseud. – Dora Taylor) *The Role of the Missionaries in Conquest*, Alexandra, Society of Young Africa, 1952.

their people. They then played a major role in drafting the "Native Policy" documents which would cement dispossession and exploitation. To complete their task, after conquest and subjugation, armed with an "Aryan" doctrine of segregation, "the missionaries became the educators of the dispossessed." [11] Similarly, in her polemical exposure of "the distortions of history which are presented by the herronvolk as truth and taught to the young in schools and universities", Taylor argued that:

> It is against this background of vast economic forces that the influx of missionaries to the colonies acquires meaning. The missionaries came from a capitalist christian civilization that unblushingly found religious sanctions for inequality, as it does to this day, and whose ministers solemnly blessed its wars of aggression. ... They saw themselves as the chosen race.[12]

During the late 1970s, explanations became more subtle. For example, Colin Bundy argued that, by their own proud admission, missionaries acted as "standard bearer[s] for the commercial economy and western manners", that mission stations and mission schools "served as foci of social change" and that:

> Missionary enterprise, ultimately, was concerned to transform social institutions and practices that were alien or incompatible with capitalist society into ones that were compatible, and hence to encourage a total change in the world-view of these people in whose midst they lived.[13]

Inverting this, he also developed the extremely interesting argument (to which I will return shortly) that:

> The transmission of skills from missionaries to Africans was not the one-sided process that mission (and other) sources suggest: there was present, in varying degrees and at different times and places, an active decision by Africans (individually or collectively) to partake of new skills, implements or life styles. What were hailed in the vigorous ecclesiastical press of the day as 'missionary successes' might justifiably be described in retrospect as 'African successes', in that the initial decision to invite the missionary and the subsequent cultural adaptations were conscious and deliberate choices by chiefs, clans or

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[11] "Mnguni" *Three Hundred Years*, pp.69-72.

[12] "N. Majeke" (pseud. – Dora Taylor) *The Role of the Missionaries in Conquest*, n.p. (Introduction – first quotation) and p.4 (indented quotation).

[13] C. Bundy *The Rise and Fall of the South African Peasantry*, London, Heinemann Educational Books, 1979, pp.36 & 37 (indented quote, p.37).

individuals.[14]

Also focusing on political economy, Bernard Magubane argued that, whether they were aware of it or not, the missionaries "were used by the colonists to justify their own position and to psychologically enslave the colonized peoples." Condemning African institutions and customs, they:

> taught the social norms of a capitalist civilization as if they comprised a universal moral code. They instilled in their converts a belief in the virtues of work, private property, and respect for authority, and thus translated African peasant life in a methodical way to the life of industrial capitalism.[15]

One of the ways that this agenda was concretised was through mission education. As Peter Walshe has pointed out, this form of education provided what the missionaries saw as the "moral principles for individual righteousness." Implicit in this ideology was the wholesale rejection of "traditional" ethics and patterns of organisation.[16] Similarly, Magubane argued that the colonial education system (effectively, the mission educational system) was the "chief instrument of ideological subversion" in bringing about colonial domination in South Africa. In his view, the price paid by Africans for their education was "alienation from the masses and loss of their cultural heritage." Essentially, what the missionaries were doing was teaching "human brotherhood in a capitalist economy based on racist exploitation and class rule" in a way that would win Africans' "voluntary acceptance of a servile status."[17]

According to Magubane, this ideological subversion operated at an extremely sophisticated level. In arguing this, he drew attention to Perry Anderson's analysis of the role of the missionary in conquest:

> Christianity in colonial areas is a domestication of the indigenous population: objectively, it breaks the Africans into European thought

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[14] *Ibid.* p.36.

[15] B.M. Magubane *The Political Economy of Race and Class in Southern Africa*, New York and London, Monthly Review Press, 1979, p.56.

[16] P. Walshe *The Rise of African Nationalism in South Africa*, Cragihall, AD. Donker, 1987 (first published, 1970), pp.7 (quotation) – 8.

[17] B.M. Magubane *The Political Economy of Race and Class in Southern Africa*, pp.57, 67 & 261.

> and mores: subjectively, it frees the European of his terrors of the African by including him within the same canon as himself. At the same time, it has a crucial additional merit for any colonizer. It represents an ideal arrested threshold of acculturation for the natives. A colonial system needs a subject population with a certain minimal level of Europeanization, for the purpose of order and exploitation. On the other hand, too great an assimilation of European culture and techniques would directly threaten the inequality on which religion offers almost the perfect device for securing the fruits of the first without incurring the dangers of the second.[18]

Moreover, this permeated all aspects of life. Magubane also drew attention to Norman Etherington's argument that even the clothing and "upright houses" which the missionaries recommended to their converts were "an introduction to a new system of production and exchange" for many.

A similar argument was developed by Bundy, who argued that: "The missionary's insistence on European dress, his propensity for measuring civilization in terms of the consumption of manufactured goods, his zeal for square houses, and so on" were indicative of an extremely potent link between the missionary and the trader.[19] Against this background:

> The strategy for ensuring conversions in 'savage' lands involved an explicit need to 'tame', to alter such societies to a degree whereby their members would be receptive to the Gospel as well as to the benefits of western civilization. Only by restructuring African societies in the rough likeness of their own European society could the necessary links be forged that would attach the African community securely to the Home Country, and permit all the benefits of religious, economic and social intercourse to flow between the two. From the conjunction of these processes – the establishing of the cash nexus and the restructuring of 'savage' society – missionaries believed that a whole constellation of beneficial results would flow. These were: a stimulated demand for the consumption of British goods, the increase of commerce, of civilization and of learning, the spread of Christianity and the defeat of heathenism, polygamy and barbarism – in short, the extension of British control, protection, culture, economy, religion and language.[20]

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[18] P. Anderson "Portugal and the End of Ultra Colonialism", Part 2, *New Left Review* 16 (1962), pp.102-103, quoted in B.M. Magubane *The Political Economy of Race and Class in Southern Africa*, p.57.

[19] C. Bundy *The Rise and Fall of the South African Peasantry*, p.37.

[20] *Ibid.* p.38.

This was the kind of thinking with which I had come into contact and which I thought was the only useful way of approaching the missionaries. However, once I began to look around in order to make a decision on whether or not to use missionary sources, it became clear that, during the 1970s, there were already early pointers of changes in focus to come in the future. These lay in the detailed discussions of the evangelical encounter by authors such as Marcia Wright and Norman Etherington.[21] As the Comaroffs have pointed out, works such as these nevertheless did not as yet "go beyond detailed, if often sensitive, chronicles of actions and events."[22] In addition, early calls by T.O. Beidelman and Robert Strayer for research into what they called "missionary sociology" would go unheeded until the early 1980s.[23] In my interpretation, it was only then that these early seeds began to show promise of germination with a chapter by Richard Elphick (1981), books by T.O. Beidelman (1982) and Jeff Guy (1983) and an article by Norman Etherington (1983). It was my encounters with works such as these which ultimately radically altered the focus of my thesis.

In his examination of African reactions to the Christian message in frontier zones of Southern Africa during the period surrounding the imposition of colonial rule, Elphick argued that, during the nineteenth century, "it was the African losers, rather than the European winners, who reworked their cultures more thoroughly as a result of the frontier experience." The two main reasons leading to this situation that he identified were, firstly, that Africans:

> gradually became convinced that the prowess of Europeans was rooted in deeper aspects of Western culture than military and technological skill. To some degree Africans saw their defeat as a defeat of their world-view; in order to rally from defeat, they decided to rethink their culture, partly along European lines. Second, while they were in a self-critical and impressionable mood, they came under the influence of missionaries who urged them to alter their culture and offered them

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[21] M. Wright *German Missions in Tanganyika 1891-1941: Lutherans and Moravians in the Southern Highlands*, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1971 and N. Etherington *Preachers, Peasants and Politics in Southeast Africa, 1835-1880: African Christian Communities in Natal, Pondoland and Zululand*, London, Royal Historical Society, 1978.

[22] J.L. Comaroff, and J. Comaroff *Of Revelation and Revolution: Christianity, Colonialism and Consciousness in South Africa*, Volume One, Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1991, p.7.

[23] T.O. Beidelman "Social Thought and the Study of Christian Missions", in *Africa*, Vol. 44, July 1974, pp.238-239 and R. Strayer "Missionary History in Africa", pp.9-13.

various inducements to do so.[24]

Elphick continued by arguing that both the presence of missionaries on the frontier and African "religious" thinking ensured that a great deal of "the clash and interchange between European and African cultures took place on ground which modern Westerners label 'religious'". Against this background, religion provides "a sensible focus for a study of frontier culture change." However, since "religious change" was too broad a concept to engage in a single chapter, Elphick focused on finding "ways in which the frontier may have influenced the intensity, shape, and direction of the religious changes" he described.[25] Although neither the culture of nineteenth century Protestant missionaries nor that of Africans was uniform, Elphick nevertheless argued that there were broad similarities within, and even between, the two groups. In particular, his focus was on the way that "people practicing different cultures clashed and communicated on the frontier."[26] He set out to achieve this by looking at areas of similarity, as well as conflict, between African and missionary world views. In doing so, he also investigated the kind of people who became missionaries (including their class and educational backgrounds).

In Elphick's reading, African and missionary world-views had much more in common than we have often thought. Both groups believed in a High God, whose presence as "the prime mover in the universe" permeated their thought-world to a significant degree. The ethical systems of the two broad groupings were "fundamentally compatible." Where they differed was in their conception of the role that God played in history and in nature. For Africans, God was too great, too near, to be known directly. He worked in history and in nature mainly though lesser spirits. On the other hand, for the missionaries, God was a personal God whose will could be discerned by his subjects. He worked in history through human agents to whom he had given a mind to master. Beyond this, he worked in nature through laws, rather than as a direct presence or through intermediaries.

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[24] R. Elphick "Africans and the Christian Campaign in Southern Africa", in H. Lamar and L. Thompson (eds.) *The Frontier in History: North America and Southern Africa Compared*, New Haven, Yale University Press, 1981, p.271.

[25] *Ibid.*

[26] *Ibid.* p.272.

Africans viewed this personalising of God and this severing of nature from history with a mixture of horror and fascination – "horror at the strangers' presumption, fascination at the power they could possibly command."[27]

Fired by the Evangelical revival, for the most part, the nineteenth century missionaries who brought this message were from the upper working class and lower middle class, artisans and skilled workers. A considerable number had a relatively low level of formal education. Elphick argued that this led to a situation where, despite the fact that "some of their minds were powerful, they ran in fixed grooves. In dealing with African culture they lacked both the flexibility and the imagination which a university education might conceivably, but not necessarily, have stimulated."[28]

In discussing the theology of these missionaries, Elphick argued that they were "Calvinist in broadest sense." By this, he meant that they regarded the Bible as the sole authority for matters of faith and practice, stressed the fallen nature of "man", taught that salvation was granted solely by grace through faith, were austere and comparatively nonsacramental in their form of worship and demanded iron discipline in moral matters. While Lutherans (including the Berlin Mission Society) "tended to quietism in social and political matters", the other Protestant groups "were heirs to an activist tradition of 'cleansing church and nation' in the name of God."[29] Virtually all Protestant missionaries at this time were influenced by the Evangelical Revival, especially in their stressing of "the need for personal, crisislike conversions accompanied by varying degrees of emotion." In Elphick's opinion, the reorientation of thought and behaviour which the missionaries demanded of Africans "can only be called revolutionary". He then went on to draw parallels between the missionaries and modern revolutionaries. Discussing the limited number of conversions, the significant percentage of backsliders and the vitality of so-called "traditional" African cultures in the face of these pressures to conversion, he remarked that, seen from one perspective, the missionary endeavour can only be seen as a failure.

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[27] *Ibid.* pp.272-278.
[28] *Ibid.* pp.279-280 (quotation, p.280).
[29] *Ibid.* pp.280-281 (quotation, p.281).

However, at another level, the most interesting question for him was "not to explain the missionaries' failure, which was to be expected, but to ascertain and explain the rather surprising degree of their success."[30]

Elphick then identified three stages of frontier history and argued that African responses to the presence of missionaries could also be broken down into three stages. First there was "the open frontier (when a strong African state came into contact with white neighbours); then the closing frontier (conflict between African and white powers); and finally, the closed frontier (unambiguous white rule)." Moving to African responses, on the mission stations which survived, in the first stage, "the African ruler allowed, or even urged, a missionary to set up a station in his territory." Then, in the second stage, "Africans began to participate in the life of the station, some by settling there, others by coming intermittently to attend school or church." Lastly, in the third stage, "Africans affiliated themselves with the church either through a publicly attested conversion, or through baptism, or both." In the last two sections of his article, headed "The Mission Station" and "The Missionaries' Message" respectively, Elphick set out to "suggest connections between these stages in Africans' positive response to missions – permission, participation, affiliation – and the stages of frontier history."[31]

In his socio-historical study of the Church Missionary Society [C.M.S.] in Ukaguru, T.O. Beidelman argued that anthropologists had neglected the study of colonial life from the perspective of the coloniser. Like the colonised, the colonisers also underwent "profound changes". However, these changes seemed to have been ignored by anthropologists. For example, while there were a number of studies of Christianised Africans, there were no comparable studies of the Europeans who ran the mission stations. It seemed "as though anthropological curiosity stopped at the colour bar and that European colonialists were just like us." A similar situation prevailed for European planters, traders and officials.[32] In Beidelman's opinion, because of their "cultural arrogance", missions were a good

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[30] *Ibid.* pp.282-285.
[31] *Ibid.* See especially pp.288-305 (quotations, p.288).
[32] T.O. Beidelman *Colonial Evangelism: A Socio-Historical Study of an East African Mission at the grassroots*, Bloomington, Indiana University Press, 1982.

place to begin in investigating examples of colonial organisation. In his reading, Christian missions represented:

> The most naive and ethnocentric, and therefore the most thorough-going, facet of colonial life. Administrators and planters aimed at limited ends such as order, taxation, profits, cheap labour, and advantages against competing Europeans, and in that quest they sometimes attempted psychic domination as well. Missionaries invariably aimed at overall changes in the beliefs and actions of native peoples, at colonization of the heart and mind as well as the body. Pursuing this sustained policy of change, missionaries demonstrated a more radical and morally intense commitment to rule than political administrators and business men. While missionaries deliberated about the results of their polices, in their repeated protestations that they pursued only sacred ends they underrated the impact of their deeds.[33]

For Beidelman, data relating to the study of missions and to basic sociological theories could be grouped into six broad analytical principles or themes. The first of these was the secular attributes of the missionaries. Here, in brief, he argued that it was essential to consider the ethnicity, class and economic background of the members of any missionary group. Only then would one be able to interpret their ideas about issues such as etiquette, diet, dress, drink, personality, patriotism and imperialism.[34] Related to this, the second main theme was that of religious beliefs and missionary activities. Often, there was the temptation to view missionaries as a single category. However, there were actually fundamental differences between Catholic and Protestant missionaries and even between those the various Protestant denominations. These particular religious beliefs had important consequences for the character and organisation of mission life, attitudes towards priests and pastors, the nature of conversion, attitudes towards African societies and attitudes to literacy and language. Overlapping these two main themes were issues such as education of priests and pastors, their skills and those that they imparted to their converts.[35] The second theme also gave rise to the third, namely that of theories of conversion and associated beliefs. Here Beidelman argued that it was only through comprehending a missionary's theories about conversion that one could determine why he proceeded along a certain course in his attempts to convert others, his portrayal of African societies

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[33] *Ibid.* pp.5-6.
[34] *Ibid.* pp.9-11.

and indigenous religious systems, the degree to which he was prepared to accommodate African cultural practices and religious beliefs. One of the differences here was that Roman Catholics viewed conversion as a gradual process and group activity, involving the wider community. Protestants, on the other hand, tended to look for a much more dramatic, radical and individualised change in conduct. However, despite these differences, all missions demanded total control over their converts.[36]

The remaining three themes identified by Beidelman were careers in mission work, the compartmentalization of sacred and secular affairs and parallels in colonial structure. Under the first of these, he argued that careers in missionary organisations resembled those in other colonial institutions. As their efforts were rewarded with success, the duties of missionaries changed radically. At first, during the "period of individualism", a single missionary was involved in a host of tasks, ranging from evangelism and teaching to house building, road building, trading and research on language and customs. As staff and converts increased, and governments began to subsidise mission work, missionaries increasingly became involved in administrative paperwork. Beyond their roles as "servants and menials", Africans began to be employed to perform the secular and junior administrative tasks which had formerly been carried out by missionaries. "Eventually most evangelism was conducted by Africans rather than Europeans." Mission stations also exhibited a developmental pattern. The first stage was characterised by "enthusiasm and loose organization with a few supervisors". With increasing success, this gave way to a stage of "growing routinization and understaffing in relation to the rapidly growing number of converts". Finally, even greater increases in the number of converts and the scope and scale of the enterprise led to "further routinization and lower standards in staff" with evangelization coming to be seen "as a work rather than a life." This paralleled "broader developments of other colonial organizations" and a distinctive missionary subculture emerged.[37]

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[35] *Ibid.* pp. 11-16.
[36] *Ibid.* pp.16-22.
[37] *Ibid.* pp.22-25, quotations, p.23.

Discussing the penultimate theme, Beidelman argued that during the nineteenth century, European and North American societies were experiencing:

> profound secularization; religious beliefs were questioned or segregated from the rest of social life. In contrast, in traditional African societies religion remained an essential part of everyday affairs. Ironically, missionaries, grieving over the loss of religious pervasiveness at home, arrived in Africa to destroy such beliefs among natives ... The most poignant and destructive aspect of evangelism in Africa was the missionaries' failure either to appreciate fully the integrated quality of traditional African life or to appraise realistically the discordant bases of their own societies. ... Missionaries failed to appreciate the full implications of their actions. They presented Christianity as somehow integrally connected with literacy, Western medicine, and such technological wonders as guns and textiles ...[38]

Lastly, in discussing parallels in colonial structure, Beidelman argued that all colonial structures were similar. Within the colonial world, "the colonialist became the undisputed ruler, sometimes benevolent, sometimes harsh, but insulated from effective criticism and unaware of changes outside his narrow realm." Missionaries were no exception.[39]

During the following year, Jeff Guy produced his "study of the life" of John William Colenso. In demonstrating that the Bible could not be taken as the literal word of God, the mathematician and missionary Bishop of Natal scandalized Victorian society. Found guilty of heresy, he was excommunicated from the Anglican Church. Despite the hostility of his contemporaries, he then dedicated himself to exposing the injustices suffered by Africans in Natal and Zululand at the hands of the British and attempting to seek redress on their behalf.[40] As Johannes du Bruyn and Nicholas Southey have pointed out before me, this work clearly revealed that "understanding the life of a clergyman or missionary does not necessarily require defending and championing him overtly and enthusiastically." Guy himself stated that a major reason for writing the book was his "own dissatisfaction with Colenso's defenders and his detractors, and ... [his] concern that patronizing liberalism and dismissive radicalism would obscure" his

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[38] *Ibid.* pp.25-27, quotation, pp.25 & 27.
[39] *Ibid.* pp.28-29, quotation, p.28.
[40] J.Guy *The Heretic: A Study of the Life of Johan William Colenso, 1814-1883*, Johannesburg, Ravan Press and Pietermaritzburg, University of Natal Press, 1983.

courage, his insight, the issues that he confronted, but also his limitations.[41]

In the same year as Guy's work was published, Etherington lamented the fact that: "Historical studies of Christian missionaries in Africa have not prospered in recent years." He ascribed this situation largely to attempts to decolonise the history of Africa after the political decolonisation of the 1950s, the attempts by missionaries themselves to reappraise their place in decolonised Africa and the emphasis by black clergy "on peculiarly African contributions" to church history in Africa.[42] Interestingly, he pointed out that, for some, "the missionary deserved more opprobrium even than the white settler or the mining magnate. The latter merely wanted the Africans' lands and labour. Missionaries wanted their souls."[43] In advocating a comprehensive history that engaged both African religion and missionary theology, he asserted that:

> We look for a sensitive understanding of the traditional religions encountered by European missionaries and hope that this will be balanced by an equally informed treatment of missionary theology. ... We want to know as much as possible about the social origins of both evangelists and converts. We wish for as much information about the political economy as about the politics of the society in question.[44]

In issuing this challenge, he nevertheless recognised that, in the "absence of a powerful new stimulus to research" on missionaries and missions, it would probably take some time before these and other problems of comparable interest received the attention that they deserved. Despite this, he expressed the hope "that a low flame of scholarship will be kept alight by the small group of workers and publishers who have encouraged research on African missions during the last decade."[45] He could not have known at the time that 1990s would see a revival of interest in the very kinds of study that he was advocating. In my interpretation,

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[41] J. du Bruyn and N. Southey "The Treatment of Christianity and Protestant Missionaries in South African Historiography", p.37 and J.Guy *The Heretic*, pp.X & XI.

[42] N. Etherington "Missionaries and the Intellectual History of Africa: A historical survey", in *Itinerario*, Vol. VII, No. 2, 1983, pp. 116, 117-118 & 120. See also R. Strayer "Missionary History in Africa", pp.1-2 for a similar (though less developed) argument.

[43] *Ibid.* p. 117. See also J.L. Comaroff, and J. Comaroff *Of Revelation and Revolution*, Volume One, p.6.

[44] N. Etherington "Missionaries and the Intellectual History of Africa", p.128. See also J. du Bruyn and N. Southey "The Treatment of Christianity and Protestant Missionaries in South African Historiography", pp.28-29.

Jean Comaroff's work *Body of Power, Spirit of Resistance* (1985) played a major role in creating the intellectual climate which made this possible.[46]

A study of power and resistance, Comaroff's anthropological history analysed the tragically changing predicament of the Barolong boo Ratshidi (the Tshidi) of the South African-Botswana borderland over a period of about one hundred and fifty years. In doing so, she departed radically from conventional descriptions and analyses of "resistance" in South Africa. While she acknowledged the role played by more overt, chiefly and political forms of struggle, she focused instead on the concept of symbolic practice, representing acts of interpretation as resistance. Contesting the spirit of capitalism in its most tangible form – the Protestant ethic – the Tshidi turned to the dissenting Churches of Zion as a powerful vehicle for expressing their protest. Going far deeper than a surface reading of these African Initiated Churches as an overt act of Biblically-validated defiance against churches and the state, she argued that they provided a far more subtle "rejection of domination in all its aspects." In arguing this, she examined issues as diverse as diet, attitudes to money and collective production, attitudes to smoking, alcohol and western and African doctors and medicine, dress, hairstyle, endogamy within the church or the wider movement, prayer, spirit possession, dance and song. Comaroff asserted that the intimate and nurturing environments of the congregation and the home, and the re-fashioning of the spiritual, social and personal bodies of converts – the body social and the body personal – were all "weapons of the weak". People used these sites to set themselves apart and as bases in and from which to counter the depredations of the South African state.[47]

As Terence Ranger pointed out in a lengthy article in 1986, the inspiration to approaches such as those of Etherington and Comaroff was provided by a growing realization that revisionist works had focused far too narrowly on colonialism as the sole causative or explanatory factor in discussing the significance of religious movements in Africa. Scholars on the left had learned

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[45] N. Etherington "Missionaries and the Intellectual History of Africa", pp.130-131.

[46] J. Comaroff *Body of Power, Spirit of Resistance: The Culture and History of a South African People*, Chicago and London, University of Chicago Press, 1985.

[47] *Ibid.* See also P.S. Landau "Hegemony and history in Jean and John L. Comaroff's *Of Revelation and Revolution*", in *Africa*, Vol. 70, No. 3, 2000, p.501.

they had ignored religious commitment and other ideological factors previously described as "false consciousness" to their cost. In response, as identified by Ranger, in Southern African Studies, there had "been a transition from the unpeopled structures of political economy to a primary concern with experience and consciousness." A crucial part of this process was a turning or, in some cases, returning to the study of African religion.[48] In my interpretation, this did not as yet necessarily imply increased cognisance of missionaries and missionary sources as worthy subjects of study. For example, in spite of its focus on African resistance to the world brought by the missionaries, Comaroff's work hardly mentioned them. (She included only about twelve pages on missionaries.)[49] However, this was about to change dramatically. Jean Comaroff teamed up with her partner, John, to drop a bombshell which – whether they liked it or not - would completely transform the way that historians, anthropologists and others would look at missionaries, their records and their interaction with African societies. This was the two volume *Of Revelation and Revolution* (1991 & 1997).[50]

In the first volume, the Comaroffs' "study of the colonization of consciousness and the consciousness of colonization in South Africa", they explored the early phases of what would become the "long conversation" between British Missionaries and the Southern Tswana peoples. The introductory chapter focused on "Missionaries, Motives, and the Motors of History" and an understanding of "culture", consciousness and representation anchored in a reading of Gramschian and neo-Gramschian concepts of hegemony. From here, in Chapters 2 and 3, they went on to explore "the social and cultural roots – and the ideological motivations – of the Nonconformist mission". In doing so, they provided a masterful

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[48] T. Ranger "Religious Movements and Politics in Sub-Saharan Africa", in *African Studies Review*, Vol. 29, No. 2, June 1986, pp.1-69. See especially pp.1-2, 4, 5, 7, 9, 10 (quotation), 11-12, 24-29 (discussion of Jean Comaroff's work), 32-41 (Etherington is discussed on pp.37-38) and 50-53.

[49] J. Comaroff *Body of Power, Spirit of Resistance*. These are pp.1, 10-11, 22, 26-27, 31, 33, 135-136, 137 and 152.

[50] J.L. Comaroff and J.Comaroff (a) *Of Revelation and Revolution*, Volume One and (b) *Of Revelation and Revolution: The Dialectics of Modernity on a South African Frontier*, Volume Two, Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1997. Note that a third volume is projected. For a brief (but extremely informative) overview of some of the changes in thinking about the history of missions and missionaries from this time onwards, see D. Peterson and J. Allman "Introduction: New Directions in the History of Missions in Africa", in *The Journal of Religious History*, Vol. 23, No. 1, February 1999, pp.1-7.

overview of the nature of British culture and society at the turn of the nineteenth century – the beginning of the era of the missionaries.[51] As Paul Landau pointed out in his excellent review of the two volumes:

> Here all the prejudices that will later come to fruition in South Africa are unearthed. Some were based in the turbulent emergence of the middle class, from the lower reaches of which most missionaries were drawn. Others were rooted in the biological determinism that was recasting race and gender, and which infected the abolitionist world even as Europe pressed into Africa from its – or, rather, from her – coastline. There the tropes of femininity, darkness, filth, and sexual depravity were adapted in order to fit the 'prior' notion of Africa, the Africa that needed to be rescued by European civilization. All these ideas are convincingly tied to the growth of the capitalist economy in Europe.[52]

Chapter 4 of the Comaroffs' first volume looked at the situation from the other side, sketching the nature of "Tswana society" at the time, and the complex historical dynamics which had gone into shaping it. Flowing logically from this, Chapter 5 went on to look at the "Heroic Journeys" and "First Encounters" between the Nonconformists and the Tswana. Leading into Chapter 6 and its discussion of literacy, the Comaroffs argued that, during these encounters, in attempting to redefine the other, each side learned to know themselves differently, setting "the terms of the 'long conversation' to follow." In their interpretation:

> Here, once more, lies the point. In being drawn into that conversation, the Southern Tswana had no alternative but to be inducted, unwittingly and often unwillingly, into the *forms* of European discourse. To argue over who was the legitimate rainmaker or where the water came from, for instance, was to be seduced into the modes of rational debate, positivist knowledge, and empirical reason at the core of bourgeois culture. The Tswana might not have been persuaded by the substance of the claims made by the churchmen, and their world was not simply taken over by European discursive styles. Yet they could not avoid internalizing the terms through which they were being challenged.[53]

In the last chapter of the first volume, subtitled "The Politics of the Mission", the

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[51] J.L. Comaroff and J.Comaroff *Of Revelation and Revolution*, Volume One, pp.xi-125.
[52] P.S. Landau "Hegemony and history", p.505.

Comaroffs examined the attempts by the Nonconformists to separate and isolate the spiritual and temporal realms, both indigenous and imperial. In doing so, they attempted "to lay the ground for a new moral economy based on the clear separation of church and state, or state and authority – to establish, in short, a state of colonialism in anticipation of the colonial state."[54] The volume then concluded with what the Comaroffs termed "less a conclusion than ... a coda, a restatement of our original theme to mark the end of the first movement of a larger work."[55]

The second volume began with a complex seven-part definition of colonialism, leading into an extremely interesting discussion of "The Everyday as Epiphany". Their central argument in the second section was that, despite the fact that colonial missionaries "conceived of their crusade, and represented it, in heroic terms ... theirs was no ordinary epic. It was an epic of the ordinary." This they ascribed to the Nonconformist concern with "small things", laying up treasures "on earth, as they were in heaven, by the steady accumulation of modestly practical achievements. Little by Little." Following the missionaries in moving the everyday to centre stage, the Comaroffs argued that: "Out of this vision evolved the fully fledged bourgeois subject; that biologically framed, legally constituted, morally accountable, right-bearing citizen subsumed in modern European selfhood." Having "discussed the rise of this Promethean everyman (gender and irony, alike, intended)" in the first volume, in the second they set out to "pursue its production in the everyday, both at home and abroad."[56] Taking advantage of the six year gap between the publication of the first and second volumes, the Comaroffs were able to include discussion of, and reply to, criticisms of the first volume in their introductory chapter.[57]

In the second volume, the Comaroffs set out to explore how the processes discussed in the first volume "worked themselves out over the much longer run:

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[53] J.L. Comaroff and J.Comaroff *Of Revelation and Revolution*, Volume One, pp.11 & 126-251 (quotations, p.11 & 213).
[54] *Ibid.* pp.11 (quotation) & 252-308.
[55] *Ibid.* pp. 309-314 (quotation, p.309).
[56] J.L. Comaroff and J.Comaroff *Of Revelation and Revolution*, Volume Two, see especially pp.14-29 (particularly pp.19-27) for their discussion of colonialism and pp.29-35 (quotations, pp.29, 30 & 32) for the discussion of "The Everyday as Epiphany".

how 'margin' and 'metropole' recast each other as Africans and Europeans, plural both, came to mark their similarities and dissimilarities, to inhabit and inhibit one anothers' fantasies – and taken-for-granted practices."[58] In line with this aim, they began the first chapter of their main narrative, Chapter 2, by discussing the major theological concerns of the colonial evangelists. Flowing from this, they also explored some of the variety of ways in which this message was appropriated by Southern Tswana people. Chapters 3 and 4 discussed "Christian political economy", an ideological construct of the time. Beginning with missionary attempts to bring about an agrarian revolution in the first of these chapters, they went on, in Chapter 4, to examine the ideology of money among Nonconformist missionaries. In both chapters, they then went on to examine African responses. Similarly, missionary attempts to re-make the inner being of the Southern Tswana, and local responses, formed the basis of Chapters 5 and 6, which engaged issues of dress and bodily management (Chapter 5) and architecture and domesticity (Chapter 6). Chapter 7 dealt with the healing ministry and the Nonconformist conviction that the treatment of bodily ills would open the way to conversion. In their final chapter, they explored the struggle over the making of the modernist subject.

Although critical of the Comaroff's work, J.D.Y. Peel (1995) drew attention to the central role played by Volume 1 of *Of Revelation and Revolution* in foregrounding what he saw as the increasingly important role played by concerns with, and debates about, missionary narrative in anthropological writing from about the mid 1980s. In his opinion, this was also reflective of a wider concern with narrative and the historicization of anthropology in the discipline in general. Peel also set out to demonstrate "why narrative is so important for the achievement of a properly historical anthropology."[59]

Far more rhapsodically, the contribution of the Comaroffs' works to historiography has been commented on by Paul Landau. He has argued that:

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[57] *Ibid.* See especially pp.35-53.
[58] *Ibid.* p.7.
[59] J.D.Y. Peel "For Who Hath Despised the Day of Small Things? Missionary Narratives and Historical Anthropology", in *Comparative Study of Society and History*, Vol. 37, No. 4, 1995, pp.581-607 (quotation, p.581). For his discussion of the Comaroffs, see pp.585 & 586-589.

> One cannot talk about colonialism in Africa like one used to. It is not enough to document conquests, administrative methods, land tenure, industry, the growth of political resistance movements, and nationalism. Today, students of empire must pay attention to more intimate matters. They must look at changes in the quotidian habits of Africans, the reformations of their rituals, the alterations in their perceptions, and their attempts to define themselves. They must examine the social constructions of work, gender, space, time, value, and belief. South African studies has two figures to thank for forcing this broad subject matter upon it: Jean and John L. Comaroff. Whether or not most scholars can articulate their thanks is another matter, because many of the Comaroffs' insights have been naturalised, in a sort of benevolent hegemony, as commonsense wisdom. Even when the specifics of their arguments are debated, their most fertile ideas are now implicitly shared by a wide constituency, which includes me.[60]

The central criticism offered by both of these authors was that, without denying the Tswana some form of historical consciousness, the Comaroffs had overvalued the impact of missionaries and denied the existence of Tswana narrative structures. Since, in the interpretation of the Comaroffs, this historical consciousness did not occur "in narrative style, as a linear account of events", southern Tswana people lacked "authentic narrative".[61] I will return to Landau and Peel's criticisms when discussing methodological issues in my own work later.

The work arising from the new focus on missions and missionaries which I personally find among the most interesting is Elizabeth Elbourne's D.Phil. "To Colonize the Mind" (1991). This examination of the British Protestant mission movement of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries included an extended case study of interaction between the London Missionary Society and Khoisan groups in the Eastern Cape. She began by discussing previous writings on the LMS in South Africa and her own work in the context of ongoing historiographical debates. Following this with discussion of the underlying ideologies and foundation of the leading missionary societies in Britain in the 1790s, she then went on to concentrate on the LMS in South Africa. Beginning

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[60] P.S. Landau "Hegemony and history", p.501.

[61] See especially J.D.Y. Peel "For Who Hath Despised the Day of Small Things?", pp.586-587; J.L. Comaroff and J.Comaroff *Of Revelation and Revolution*, Volume One, pp.34-35 and P.S. Landau "Hegemony and history", p.515

with an examination of the images of Africa brought by the missionaries, she then went on to examine early Khosian understandings of Christianity. This was followed by discussion of the biography of Johannes van der Kemp (head of the LMS South African Mission), events between 1799 and 1877 (including missionary involvement in the Third Frontier War), settler stereotyping of missionaries and Africans, and (in the section which I found most interesting) Khosian religious and political uses of missionary Christianity. She concluded with a discussion of changes in missionary activism influenced both by shifts in government policy and a series of scandals involving missionaries which called their methods and models into question.[62]

Elbourne's central criticism of the Comaroffs focused on what she saw as a conflict between "their study of the fluidity of meaning [and] ... their overarching analysis." On the one hand, they wrote about two systems of meaning, African and European, in dialectical tension. On the other, they also stressed cultural variation, the fluidity of signs and the wider range of religious, political and economic ways in which Africans used missionaries. She argued that this illustrated the point that:

> missionaries and Africans began as representatives of entirely different systems but sometimes became, by virtue of living in close proximity, in some sense part of the same system which cannot be captured by a purely dualistic model.[63]

In related points of discussion, Elbourne argued that "Christianity was available for interpretation in many different ways in Britain and South Africa" and that the missionary encounter was not only "a dualistic clash between cultures, but also ... a series of negotiations within the limits of shared language."[64] In related arguments, Elphick has argued both that African and European and African cultures were multiform and in a state of flux, and that the mission process

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[62] E. Elbourne (a) "'To Colonize the Mind': Evangelical Missionaries in Britain and the Eastern Cape, 1790 - 1837", D. Phil. thesis in Modern History, Oxford University, 1991. See also (b) "Early Khoisan Uses of Missionary Christianity", in H. Bredekamp and R. Ross (eds.) *Missions and Christianity in South African History*, pp.65-95.

[63] E. Elbourne "To Colonize the Mind", pp.17-18 (indented quote, p.18).

[64] *Ibid.* pp.7 & 21. This is similar to the Comaroff's idea of a "long conversation" between cultures discussed earlier.

consisted of "innumerable skirmishes ... fought by disparate contenders – African and European – over highly individual agendas." Terms such as "Christianization" are extremely problematic as Christianity meant different things to different people. For example, many Africans continued to follow many of the practices of African religions, while being sincere Christians.[65] Leon de Kock's work *Civilising Barbarians* (1996) focused on some of the ways in which European missionaries in the Eastern Cape attempted to shape the way in which Africans constructed and viewed their identity by means of a "civilising" discourse which denigrated Africans as "low", "dark" and the "Other". He then contrasted this with the reaction of African converts and the way that Christianised intellectuals, such as Tiyo Soga and John Tengo Jabavu, attempted to subvert this discourse and transform it for their own purposes. In doing so, he specifically warned about the dangers of dismissing African converts as having been "duped".[66] Similarly, Henry Bredekamp and Robert Ross drew attention to the fact that, ultimately, people converted to Christianity of their own free will. Missionaries could attempt to force or pressurise conversions but were doomed to failure in this regard.[67] From a more extreme perspective, Lamin Sanneh and Richard Grey argued that, even when missionaries were at the height of their power during the nineteenth century, African Christianity could profitably be seen in terms of the ordinary worldwide development of Christianity, rather than as an imposition of colonialism. Sanneh in particular distinguished Christianity from the coercive means used in presenting it to Africans. In doing so, he argued that the translation of the Bible into African languages enabled local Christians to appropriate and recraft the Christian message in ways which suited the local

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[65] R. Elphick (a) "Africans and the Christian Campaign in Southern Africa", pp.273 & 302 & (b) "Writing Religion Into History: The Case of South African Christianity", in H. Bredekamp and R. Ross (eds.) *Missions and Christianity in South African History*, pp.17 (quotation) & 19-20. See also L. de Kock *Civilising Barbarians: Missionary Narrative and African Textual Response in Nineteenth-Century South Africa*, Johannesburg, Witwatersrand University Press, 1996, p.22; E. Elbourne "To Colonize the Mind", pp.8-19 and P. Landau "'Religion' and Christian Conversion in African History: A New Model", in *The Journal of Religious History*, Vol. 25, No. 1, February 1999, pp.10-11.

[66] L. de Kock *Civilising Barbarians* (see p.13 for his warning). For an interesting review of this work, see N. Erlank "Book Review of Leon de Kock, *Civilising Barbarians: Missionary Narrative and African Textual Response in Nineteenth-Century South Africa*", in *South African Historical Journal*, No. 36, May 1997, pp.336-337.

[67] H. Bredekamp and R. Ross "Introduction: The Natrualization of Christianity in South Africa", in H. Bredekamp and R. Ross (eds.) *Missions and Christianity in South African History*, pp.5-6.

context.[68]

Many of these issues resonated in Andrew Porter's article "'Cultural Imperialism' and Protestant Missionary Enterprise" (1997). Here he argued that authors such as the Comaroffs had re-asserted "that there was an intimate, inevitable connection between missions and 'cultural imperialism.'" However, in his interpretation, the supposed power and vitality of this missionary-designed and implemented "cultural imperialism" needed closer scrutiny. This he did by looking at three main sets of questions. Firstly, he focused on the terminology used, questioning whether it was precise and well-suited enough to be used as an analytical tool. Secondly, he questioned whether or not the missionaries had "either a sufficient consensus as to their own culture and understanding of Christianity, or an adequate agreement on modes of transmitting it, for the term 'cultural imperialism' to have general explanatory value". Lastly, he asked whether or not missionary activity on the ground was as successful in leading to the experience and assimilation of the culture that they bore at the expense of "traditional ideas" as authors such as Edward Said and the Comaroffs suggested.[69]

In the first place, Porter concluded that the very terminology used prompted questions. Different authors used the terms "imperialism" and "culture" in very different ways. For example, Said and the Comaroffs differed widely on what constituted "culture". Given the "variety of definitions, it is clearly difficult to use the term 'cultural imperialism' either systematically or as a reliable portmanteau term." The concept had also become "inconveniently amorphous and heavily value-laden."[70] Similarly, in engaging his second and third inter-linked questions, Porter argued both that "Extra-European societies were clearly not set in stone

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[68] R. Gray *Black Christians, White Missionaries*, New Haven, Yale University Press, 1990 and L. Sanneh (a) *Translating the Message: The Missionary Impact on Culture*, Maryknoll, NY, Oribis, 1989 & (b) *Encountering the West: Christianity in the Global Cultural Process: The African Dimension*, Maryknoll, NY, Oribis, 1993. Also cited in P. Landau "Religion and Conversion in African History", p.10.

[69] A. Porter "'Cultural Imperialism' and Protestant Missionary Enterprise, 1780-1914", in *The Journal of Commonwealth and Imperial History*, Vol. 25, No. 3, September 1997, pp.367-372 (quotations, pp.367 & 372). See also E.W. Said *Culture and Imperialism*, London, Vintage, 1994.

[70] A. Porter "'Cultural Imperialism' and Protestant Missionary Enterprise", pp.372-373 (quotations, p.373).

before the arrival of missionaries and other Western influences" and that the metropolitan culture was less monolithic than it has often presented to be. In his interpretation, there were also more significant differences in attitudes to culture, Christianity and modes of transmission of religion among missionaries and between missionary societies than many authors have taken account of. Against this background, it was "no easier to pin down the culture imparted by the missions than it is the nature of missionary culture itself." Relations between missionaries of different mission societies, and between missionaries and governments, could be ambiguous, ambivalent or even hostile. In some cases, interdenominational ties between mission societies transcended national boundaries. Thus, in response to the third broad question, looking at the situation "on the ground" not only did they have no monolithic "culture" to impose, they also did not have the power to impose themselves or the ideologies that they brought upon the local people.[71]

For Porter, this did not mean that the missionaries had no effect at all in promoting cultural change. In the sections of his argument which I found the most interesting, he argued that it was only once the missionaries took account of the diversity of local cultures and adapted their message to the expressed needs of the local peoples that their impact began to grow. This was also predicated upon "a reduction in the claims of missionary culture to dominate and control, and an increase in the likelihood that local peoples would find value for themselves in the Christianity preached to them."[72]

In Porter's interpretation, these preconditions were essential. The reality of the situation on the ground simply invalidated missionary attempts to impose their culture and power by other means. As one of his examples, he took the starting point of many scholars, including the Comaroffs, that missions played crucial roles in the development of non-European languages and that "linguistic

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[71] *Ibid.* pp.375-381 (quotations, pp.375 & 377). One should also note Norman Etherington's argument that: "When the flag followed religion it was not always the national flag of the pioneer missionaries. ... When missionaries followed the flag, it was not always their own." N. Etherington "Missions and Empire", in R. Winks (ed.) (Series ed. W.R. Louis) *The Oxford History of the British Empire Volume 5: Historiography*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1999, p.303.

[72] A. Porter "'Cultural Imperialism' and Protestant Missionary Enterprise", p.376.

colonialism" had an extremely invasive impact. However, in his interpretation, the varying backgrounds and skills of the missionary codifiers led to variations in, and disputes over, vocabulary and correct meanings in translations, dictionaries and grammars. Moreover, even missionaries who had acquired a working knowledge of local languages often had to rely on interpreters of varying competence. As with their secular counterparts, missionaries acquired the portions of local languages which suited their role and theology and often ignored the rest. Throughout much of the process, they had to rely on local input and assistance and "'cultural concessions' were being made on all sides." As languages became codified, "choices had to be made as to what would be recognized as a vernacular language for missionary" and administrative purposes. These tied the whole issue of language firmly to local and colonial structures of social and political power. According to Porter, in settings such as these it made little sense to talk of the "employment or transmission of a 'colonial discourse'". Instead:

> It would seem appropriate to argue that the 'cultural imperialism' associated with missionary efforts and linguistic change was not that of the expanding metropole, but of the local classes and ethnic communities turning missionary offerings to their own advantage.[73]

In a similar way to that in which local people acquired control over the process and fruits of language development, so they were able to seize control of the knowledge that they had acquired through missionary education. This could then be exploited for ends other than those originally intended by the missionaries. Missionary education thus had a liberating impact which went far beyond that intended by those who had formulated it. Against this background, even conversion to Christianity could be interpreted as "representing far more than a simple surrender to white power or an accommodation to the enlargement of scale and outlook introduced by colonial contacts." Instead, they offered alternative answers to the converts than those held out by local religious beliefs to explain existing uncertainties and the changing situation. Once they began to be conveyed by indigenous Christians, as opposed to white missionaries, these

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[73] *Ibid.* pp.378-380 (indented quote, pp.379-380).

alternative explanations began to hold even greater power.[74] Far from being hopeless, gullible victims, converts were more than capable of shaping their own destinies. For the missionaries, their continued presence in any area depended on "their value and usefulness, the willingness of local leaders and their people to cooperate with them, and the possibility of Christianity being constructed in a manner answering to local circumstances." This could only be achieved by negotiation and compromise. In this process, local societies showed great power to deflect or selectively absorb western influences.[75] Against this background: "Highly effective as missions were in promoting cultural change, they were amongst the weakest agents of 'cultural imperialism'."[76]

Changing direction slightly, Paul Gifford, David Chidester and Paul Landau have pioneered interesting shifts of focus from nineteenth century missions and missionaries to the dynamics of African Religions and African Christianity themselves. In doing so, they have engaged issues such as developments in African Christianity, the emergence of the concepts of "religion" and "religions" on colonial frontiers and the problematic of the very idea of "religion" as a useful category of analysis in African societies.

Gifford examined developments in African Christianity in Africa north of the Limpopo River during the 1980s and early 1990s. In particular, he focused on the mushrooming of new churches, and the missionary and Pentecostal explosion. The overwhelming majority of these missionaries seem to have come from North American based Pentecostal sects. However, his analysis also covered the "mainline" churches, such as the Roman Catholics, and the African Initiated Churches.[77]

In his work *Savage Systems* (1996), David Chidester examined the emergence, construction, development, meaning and definition of the concepts of "religion" and "religions" on colonial frontiers. In doing so, he set out to analyse the ways

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[74] *Ibid.* pp.382-384 (quotation, p.384).
[75] *Ibid.* pp.386-388 (quotation, p.386).
[76] *Ibid.* p.388.
[77] P. Gifford "Some Recent Developments in African Christianity", in *African Affairs*, 93 (1994), pp.513-534.

in which European travellers, missionaries, settlers and government agents, in interaction with indigenous Africans, forged a comparative religion. In this process, as one dimension of intercultural contact, both European and indigenous "comparativists" played an active role in advancing comparisons of alternative religious ways of life. Early chapters focused on the Khoikhoi, while the main focus was on nineteenth century frontier relations. The work closed with a chapter on Louis Leakey's encounters with the Mau Mau secret society during the 1950s.[78]

It was the nineteenth century material which interested me the most. As part of the overall process, at the inception of Europe's colonial expansion, westerners frequently used the concept of "religion" to describe what Africans lacked, rather than what they possessed. In Chidester's words: "It required systems of colonial administration – the 'savage systems' of the commando system, the magisterial system, the location system, and the reserve system – to discover that Africans had a religious system." On the other hand, for Africans, laughter, pain and comparative religion debates were used as defence mechanisms against victimisation by the predominantly Protestant missionaries. The latter group defined everything else as "Other", thereby entering into a discourse which still remains."[79]

Reacting against the very idea of religion, and of "systems", as a basis for analysis, Paul Landau argued that, in studying African Religion, "historians have inherited a problematic view of the processes that they have investigated." In sub-Saharan Africa, "missionaries gave the name 'religion' to African practices that *looked a bit like* Jewish, Christian, Muslim, or Hindu practices but *were not* them." They then took the African names for these practices and missionary interpretations of the concepts underlying them and either applied them to Christian concepts or used them to differentiate (usually with negative connotations) between "African religion" and Christianity. Whatever their

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[78] D. Chidester *Savage Systems: Colonialism and Comparative Religion in Southern Africa*, Cape Town, University of Cape Town Press, 1996.

[79] *Ibid.* (quotation, p.xv). For a review placing this work in a wider context, see Alex Burns "On Religion in South and Southern Africa", at Spiral Dynamics Web Reviews, at http://www.spiraldynamics.com/reviews/ religious_SA.htm, accessed 5 December 2001.

ideological starting point, since then, scholars have used these written words and concepts as a starting point for their analyses. In doing so, they have acted as if these concepts have maintained consistent meanings over time and have unknowingly adopted the evangelical ideas which determined the form of their original translation. Against this background, the very concept of religion has been "an artefact of Christian encounters with non-Christians" which has mistakenly been taken as an accurate guide. One of the important effects of this has been that much of the intellectual history of Africa has been described in terms described as being "religious" [read also "of lesser value"]. In Landau's reading, even the apparently progressive argument that Africans knew God "would appear, self-evidently, to require its listeners to believe in God themselves: otherwise there would be nothing for Africans always to have 'known'". For Landau, this uncritical reliance on "shared faith" as an analytical construct was unacceptable. The concept of "religion" could not be used to provide insight into the very historical processes which had produced it. Instead, he proposed "a model for understanding evangelism and conversion that does not rely on the supposed ubiquity of religion." Focusing on the term *tui-qua*, used by the Khoikhoi and translated as "God", but buttressing his argument with analysis of other terminology such as Tswana concepts of "*pula*" ("rain" but also "social harmony and the sharing of resources"), he argued that:

> we should retranslate the African terms from African contexts that have come to us as God, Jesus, Spirit, sin, salvation, and so forth, and we should do so outside the ready-made framework of "religion."[80]

Landau acknowledged that, in some cases, one would be unable to "get at prior meaning." He nevertheless argued that "since religion in sub-Saharan Africa was assembled within those concepts in evangelical encounters, discarding its contours for the duration of the effort will help us."[81]

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[80] P. Landau "'Religion' and Christian Conversion in African History", pp.8-30 (quotations, pp.11, 15, 21 & 29 – indented quote).

[81] *Ibid.* p.29.

INSIGHTS AND INFLUENCES

In applying insights from my reading of these works to my own thesis, the articles by Gifford, Chidester and Landau assisted me in formulating some of the broad ways in which I viewed African responses to the presence of missionaries in their territories. At a similarly general level, I was also influenced by Guy's approach to biography as an indication of how far individuals were representative of, and shaped by, their community and the times. However, other works reflecting the changes in perspective from the 1980s onwards had a much more direct influence on my thinking.

Following the lead of Michael Bourdillon and Richard Gray, the Comaroffs have dismissed T.O. Beidelman's study as "'sadly incomplete' precisely because it fails to bring a systematic – or novel – anthropological perspective to bear on the subject."[82] I feel that this is partly unfair criticism. In my reading, his comments about what missionaries set out to achieve quoted earlier provide one of the intellectual foundations of the Comaroff's conception of "fashioning the colonial subject."[83] In addition, for me, the value of the work lay in his identification of the six broad analytical principles. While not the major theme of the present work, these will be seen to be recurring inter-linked sub-themes (thus, I hope, absolving me from similar criticisms!). Lastly, I found his discussion of the role played by African agency in the spread of Christianity particularly interesting. A number of authors have developed the theme that, whatever the role played by European missionaries, in most parts of Africa, the spread of Christianity owed far more to the zeal of African converts than to them. As a part of this process, Christianity came to be increasingly moulded by converts – a process of naturalization which, to varying degrees, was resisted by white missionaries.[84]

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[82] M.F.C. Bourdillon "Review of *Colonial Evangelism*, by T.O. Beidelman, in *Man*, n.s., 18, 1983, p.215 and R. Gray "An Anthropologist on the Christian Kaguru. Review *of Colonial Evangelism*, by T.O. Beidelman, 1982", in *Journal of African History*, 24 (1983), p.405 (full article, pp.405-407). Both cited in J.L. Comaroff, and J. Comaroff *Of Revelation and Revolution*, Volume One, p.7.

[83] J.L. Comaroff and J.Comaroff *Of Revelation and Revolution*, Volume Two, Chapter 5.

[84] H. Bredekamp and R. Ross "Introduction: The Naturalization of Christianity in South Africa", pp.1 & 3-4; R. Elphick (a) "Writing Religion Into History", p.17 & (b) "Introduction: Christianity in South African History", in R. Elphick and R. Davenport (eds.) *Christianity in South Africa*, p.4; K.A. Opuku "Religion in Africa during the colonial era", in A.A. Boahen (ed.) *General History of Africa, Volume VII: Africa under Colonial Domination 1880-1935*,

This too is a theme which echoes through my thesis, particularly in Chapters 2 and 8.

Due to the relatively late military conquest of Vendaland, my focus is on the decades preceding subjugation, rather than those which followed it, as Elphick's was for other groups. Despite this, many of the core themes of my thesis engage points about the nature of God, missionary types and missionary thinking, and the missionary message raised by Elphick and outlined earlier. Thus, although this was not my intention in writing the thesis, in passing I am fulfilling his challenge to test his arguments, derived from secondary literature, with more detailed work in primary mission records.[85] I also directly engage Etherington's challenge, still pertinent after almost twenty years, to provide an understanding of both missionaries and converts.

At a more hidden level, Elphick's conception of "frontier zones" is relevant in attempting to understand the situation in which the missionaries in Vendaland were operating. In 1979, basing his definition on those of Martin Legassick and Hermann Giliomee, Elphick defined a frontier as "a region where regular contact takes place between two or more culturally distinct communities, and where at least one of the communities is attempting to control the others but has not yet completely succeeded in doing so."[86] Refining this definition slightly, contributors to the Lamar and Thompson volume on *The Frontier in History*, in which Elphick's chapter appeared, identified frontier zones as zones "of interaction among peoples practicing different cultures", often one indigenous (or having occupied the area for many generations) and the other intrusive. Moreover, in the cases discussed in the book, "in many cases, rival segments within both the indigenous society and the intrusive one" competed with each

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Abridged Edition, London, California and Paris, James Currey, University of California Press and UNESCO, 1990, pp.221-222 and G. Scriba with G. Lislerud "Lutheran Missions and Churches in South Africa", in R. Elphick and R. Davenport (eds.) *Christianity in South Africa*, pp.188-190. This also forms the main underlying theme of Bengt Sundkler and Christopher Steed's magnum opus *A History of the Church in Africa* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2000).

[85] R. Elphick "Africans and the Christian Campaign", p.271.

[86] R. Elphick "The Khoisan to c. 1770", in R. Elphick and H. Giliomee (eds.) *The Shaping of South African Society, 1652-1820*, Cape Town, Maskew Miller Longman, 1979, p.7 (footnote).

other in a frontier zone.[87] These ideas are also evoked in Mary-Louise Pratt's definition of a "contact zone" (borrowed from linguistics) as "the space of colonial encounters, the space in which peoples geographically and historically separated come into contact with each other and establish ongoing relations, usually involving conditions of coercion, radical inequality, and intractable conflict."[88]

In informal discussions, my colleagues in the History Department at UNIVEN expressed serious reservations about the use of these terms as, in their reading, they implied that both parties in the exchange had equal legitimacy. This, they argued, could be used as a justification for loss of independence by, and seizure of land from, African societies.

Their point is well taken. However, I am convinced that this was not the reading intended by Elphick and Pratt. Moreover, what interests me is the idea of competing claims for recognition, submission, adherence and loyalty from rival segments which fractured along lines which were far more subtle that a simple settler-indigene divide suggests. While the interests of the Boer or British administration and those of the missionaries coincided at times, there were also many occasions when they were antagonistic to each other. As evidenced by the expulsion of two of the missionaries who served in Vendaland during the period under review, even the missionaries had their differences and clashes from time to time. On many occasions, the interests of the so-called Native Assistants and converts and those of the missionaries coincided, breaking down the simple white-black opposition. However, as vividly illustrated in Chapter 2 of my thesis, there were also cases where these differed greatly. In the same way, among African groups, from time to time, tensions and divisions emerged between rulers and ruled, between various rulers and between competing candidates for succession and power. As I show in my Background chapter, there were also cases where African princes sought the support of whites in succession disputes. The situation was further complicated by the presence of Albasini and the Buys

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[87] R. Elphick "Africans and the Christian Campaign", p.270 and L. Thompson and H. Lamar "Comparative Frontier History", in H. Lamar and L. Thompson (eds.) *The Frontier in History*, especially pp.4-5 & 7.

[88] M.L. Pratt *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation*, London, Routledge, 1992, p.6.

brothers and their African followings. These kinds of shifting tensions and alliances are typical of the situation sketched by Elphick and Pratt. So too is the lack of certainty about the eventual outcome at the time that the events were occurring. Bearing in mind the fact that I use the terms without suggesting equal legitimacy, I am thus led to conclude that the idea of a "frontier zone" or "contact zone" provides a useful conceptual backdrop against which to consider the playing out of the events described in my thesis.

The aspect of Jean Comaroff's *Body of Power* which I found particularly useful was her exploration of the relationship between the human body and the social collectivity. For Comaroff, the human body provides the "'raw material' ... upon which collective categories and values are engraved". As much as it is a physical reality, the human body is also culturally constructed and "the body social and the body personal always exist in a mutually constitutive relationship."[89] Thus, male initiation and circumcision sets out to produce a "new man" by working on the body. In circumcision, the body is the medium "for the symbolic recording of social categories, both specific and general in reference. Thus, in the painful destruction of an old identity, and the emergence of a new one, the bodies of the youths served as icons for the renewal of the community at large."[90] On the other hand, for females, initiation "opened" the body for sexual intercourse and taught docile endurance.[91] Equally important was the idea of clothing and presentation of the body. Here, Comaroff argued that "the dressing of the 'social skin' in mission garments marked off converts and would-be converts, signifying, along with their recruitment to 'civilization,' their initiation into a world system of industrial production and commoditized consumption."[92]

Conceptions of missionary attempts at succouring the body physical and re-making the body social, together with African reactions to this, were further refined in John and Jean Comaroff's joint works. I found my reading of their arguments particularly useful in shaping my own thinking. Missionary attitudes

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[89] J. Comaroff *Body of Power, Spirit of Resistance*, pp.6, 7 & 8. For a useful introduction to the history of the body, see R. Porter "History of the Body", in P. Burke (ed.) *New Perspectives on Historical Writing*, pp.206-232.

[90] J. Comaroff *Body of Power, Spirit of Resistance*, pp.8 & 97 (quotation).

[91] *Ibid.* pp.116-117.

to local practices which worked on, and inscribed their power on, the African body are discussed in Chapter 7. Similarly, ideas about the clothed and unclothed ("traditionally" attired) male and female body are recurring themes in Chapters 2, 5 and 8. In Chapter 5 in particular, I was influenced by their ideas surrounding the foregrounding of the everyday and I draw heavily on their formulations surrounding the fashioning of the colonial subject. Their idea of the "long conversation" between Africans and Europeans - reflected in various forms which stressed the element of choice open to Africans by Elbourne, Elphick, de Kock and Bredekamp and Ross - also helped to formulate my own thinking in dealing with issues such as the interaction between the Mphaphulis and the missionaries in Chapter 8. So too did the related formulations about power and negotiation discussed by Porter (or, in the case of the nineteenth-century missionaries in Vendaland, the inability to take part in the process of negotiation).

I was also influenced by the Comaroff's reading of the social and cultural influences on missionaries, the European pre-conditioning which influenced how they experienced, saw and wrote about Africans and Africa. My reading here was also refined by Elbourne's discussion of similar issues. My debt to the Comaroffs and Elbourne for insight into these ways of seeing is particularly evident in Chapters 3 and 4. Lastly, the horticultural metaphors of the Comaroffs' discussion of "Cultivation, Colonialism and Christianity" influenced my reading of the material discussed in Chapters 4 and 5.

I had not read all of these works before leaving for Germany to do my research in the archives and library. From what I had read, I nevertheless had some idea that there was a new move to take missionaries seriously and to look deeper than their paternalism, Eurocentrism and racism in attempting to gain insights into them, the societies in which they operated and the interaction between them and local people. I still intended to use the records in a very narrow way, namely as sources to get some insights into nineteenth century beliefs about *vhuloi* and ritual homicide.[93] However, this was soon to change.

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[92] *Ibid.* p. 219.

[93] I thought that this section of the introduction was safely completed when Peter Delius produced an extremely interesting article which took a significant step in the direction of doing for the Pedi what I had wanted to do for Tshivenda-speakers. Here he argued that the published and

BERLIN AND THE BERLIN MISSION

While in Berlin, I spent seven months as a Visiting Researcher in the Institute for Asian and African Studies. As in the wider university, at that stage (1996) the old spectre of Karl Marx and the new spirit of deconstructionism stalked each other rather uneasily through the corridors of the Institute. The creative tensions arising from this, and the contributions by staff and students of the Institute made in seminars, have played the greatest role in shaping the ways that I have tackled the wealth of material that I found at the Berlin Mission.

I still believe that the missionaries were paternalist, Eurocentric and racist. This played a major role in influencing what they saw in Vendaland, how they interpreted what they saw and how they wrote about this. On the other hand, the sources that I found convinced me that the archives and library of the Berlin Mission Society are a treasure-trove of sources on the history of this area which, until now, have largely been neglected or under-utilised by historians and others interested what was happening here during the nineteenth century.[94] As a result,

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unpublished records of the Berlin Missionary Society "are sufficiently rich to allow for at least a partial reconstruction of perceptions and practices with regard to witchcraft in African societies" in the nineteenth century Transvaal. Using the perspective provided by this material, he went on to re-interpret the clashes between converts to Christianity and the wider Pedi society in the 1860s – "a key episode in the history of the region". Demonstrating that "concern about witches was profound and pervasive and needs to be given fuller attention in historical analysis", he nevertheless also argued "that the incidence of individuals being either openly accused of, or punished for, witchcraft was low, and that large-scale and legal witch-hunts were extremely rare." Furthermore, his reading of the Berlin Mission material also suggested "that the contemporary tendency to see women as particularly prone to witchcraft is not paralleled in the nineteenth century accounts and may therefore be the result of processes of social change set in motion late in the century." Lastly, he argued "that the 'zombies' who have commanded widespread comment and concern in recent years are probably neither as exotic nor as new as some writers have supposed." (P. Delius "Witches and Missionaries in Nineteenth Century Transvaal", *in Journal of Southern African Studies*, Vol. 27, No. 3, September 2001, pp.429-443, quotations, p.429.) The cases of suspected *vhuloi* which I discuss in Chapter 6 (see pp.350-363) are in conformity with Delius' assertions about the incidence and scale of witch-hunts, as well as the gender of the accused. Neither he nor I have managed to trace any nineteenth century accounts of the existence of "zombies" [*maduxwane* (plural), *duxwane* (singular) in Tshivenda] among the Pedi and Tshivenda speakers respectively. Delius argued that the relationship between "witches" and various forms of familiars who were kept hidden away during the day "suggests that the zombie genealogy is rather deeper and more localised than some imagine and needs to be located as much in a colonial encounter as in a post-colonial 'parallel and refracted modernity.'" (P. Delius "Witches and Missionaries", p.443.) I have a strong gut feeling that a similar argument may be developed for Vendaland but am as yet unable to substantiate this further.

[94] In the context of what has become the Northern Province, thus far, anthropologists,

what was meant to be my whole thesis has come to form parts of Chapters 6 and 7. The work now focuses on three main groups of themes. It begins by focusing on African agency in bringing Christianity to Vendaland prior to and after the arrival of the missionaries. The second major preoccupation, which dominates the thesis, is that of the missionaries as recorders of, and contributors to, the history and culture of the area, and their interaction with the environment and the people (which they saw as being inseparably linked). Lastly, particularly in the case study which draws together these themes, I attempt to deconstruct some of the motivations and interpretations of the African actors in the drama of nineteenth century Vendaland.

Arising from the changed focus, the main sources used in this work have been station files of the Berlin Mission Society stations in Vendaland, the personnel

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educationalists and historians working on the history of the Pedi, the Pedi African Independent Church or mission history have been the scholars who have made the most use of the Berlin Mission Archives. See, for example, S.P.P. Mminele "The Berlin Lutheran Missionary Enterprise at Botshabelo, 1865-1955: An Historical-Educational Study", Master of Education thesis, University of the North, 1983; K. Poewe "Africans, Missionaries and the Making of an Independent Church: the case of Bapedi converts and Berlin missionaries in northern Transvaal, South Africa", manuscript of proposed Journal Article, Department of Anthropology, University of Calgary, 1996; D.W. van der Merwe (a) "Van Paternalisme tot Selfbeskikking: Die Berlynse Sendinggenootskap en Kerkstigting in Transvaal, 1904-1962", PhD thesis, University of South Africa, June 1980, subsequently published as (b) *Die Berlynse Sendinggenootskap en Kerkstigting in Transvaal, 1904-1962*, in Argief Jaarboek vir Suid-Afrikaanse Geskiedenis, Deel II, Pretoria, Government Printer, 1987 & (c) *Die Geskiedenis van die Berlynse Sendinggenootskap in Transvaal, 1860-1900*, in Argief Jaarboek vir Suid-Afrikaanse Geskiedenis, Deel I, Pretoria, Government Printer, 1983 (publication of his Masters thesis) and P. Delius *The Land Belongs To Us: The Pedi Polity, the Boers and the British in the Nineteenth Century Transvaal*, Johannesburg, Ravan Press, 1983. The person who has made the most use of the Berlin Mission Archives in writing about the history of both the Vhavenda and the Pedi has been the (former East German) historian and political scientist Ulrich van der Heyden. See, for example, U. van der Heyden (a) "Die letzten kolonialen Eroberungskriege in Südafrika: Die Unterjochung der Pedi und Venda Transvaals in dem Jahren 1876 bis 1898, vornehmlich anhand deutschsprachiger Quellen", Dissertation zur Erlangung des akademischen Grades doctor philosophiae (Dr. phil.), Gesellschaftwissenschaftlichen Rates Fakultät des Wissenschaftlichen Rates der Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin, März 1984; (b) "The last War of Conquest in South Africa: The Subjugation of the Pedi and Venda, 1876-98", unpublished manuscript, n.d.; (c) *Die letzten kolonialen Eroberungskriege in Südafrika. Die Unterjochung der Pedi und Venda Transvaals in dem Jahren 1876 bis 1898, vornehmlich anhand deutschsprachiger Quellen*, in *EAZ Ethnogr.-Archäol.Z.*, 26, 1985, pp.702-711; (d) "Untersuchungen zum sozialökonomischen Entwicklungsstand und zur Stammenorganisation der Pedi in Transvaal (Südafrika) am Vorabend ihrer kolonialen Unterjochung", in *EAZ Ethnogr.-Archäol.Z.*, 27, 1986, pp.569-594; (e) "Der sozialökonomische Entwicklungsstand und zur Stammenorganisation der Venda in Transvaal (Südafrika) am Vorabend ihrer kolonialen Unterjochung", in *Jahrbuch des museums für Völkerkunde zu Leipzig*, Band XXXVIII, Berlin, Akademie-Verlag, 1989, pp.248-268 and (f) "Vom Innerkirchlichen zum Politischen Protest. Die Vorgeschichte der Bapedi-Nationalkirche im Südafrikanischen Transvaal", in W. Wagner (ed) *Kolonien und Missionen: Referate des 3. Internationalen Kolonialgeschichtlichen Symposiums 1993 in Bremen*, Münster/Hamburg, LIT, 1994, pp.279-

files of the missionaries who served in the area, tractates produced about the local missionaries and African people, published reports appearing in the Mission Society publications *Bawenda-Freund* and the *Berliner Missions-Berichte* [*BMB*], and illustrations, maps and photographs, all of which are held by the archives and library.

The first publications of the Berlin Mission Society were annual reports, published from 1824.[95] From 1833 onwards, they began to publish *Missionsberichte*.[96] Brief reports on the Zoutpansberg area appeared in this source sporadically from 1860, with detailed reports (including reports on Vendaland) from 1865 to 1866, when the Mission were first exploring the possibilities of expanding into the area.[97] Reports on Vendaland appeared in almost every issue of the *Missions-Berichte* from 1872 onwards.[98]

The basic source material for the *Missions-Berichte* was the reports, largely diarised but also consisting of letters, that the missionaries were compelled to send back to Headquarters from the "Heathen Lands".[99] In 1844 a decision was taken to start producing a wider range of *Missionsschriften*. This was done in order to reach a far wider readership, informing them of the great need for mission work among the "heathens" and the work of the society, and encouraging them to make financial contributions. The decision began to be implemented

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[95] *Nachricht von der Bildung der Gesellschaft zur Beförderung der evangelischen Missionen unter den Heiden, Mit Beziehung auf den Aufruf zu milden Beisteuern für die evangelischen Missionen unter den Heiden von Dr. Reander*, Berlin, In Commission in der Fr. Nicolaischen Buchhandlung und bei Ferdinand Dümmler, 1824 and R. Bodenstein *Die Schriftenreihen der Berliner Missionsgesellschaft*, Berlin, Berliner Missionswerk Bibliothek, 1996, p.2.

[96] *Missions-Berichte der Gesellschaft zur Beförderung der Evangelischen Mission unter den Heiden zu Berlin für das Jahr 1833*, Berlin der Gesellschaft, 1833 and R. Bodenstein *Die Schriftenreihen der Berliner Missionsgesellschaft*, p.2.

[97] *BMB*, No. 4, 1860, p.63; No. 14, 1860, pp.267-268; No. 18, 1860, p.329; No. 19, 1860, pp.343 & 344; No. 1, 1863 [pp. 3, 8 & 9-11; No. 21, 1865, p.354; No. 5, 1866, pp.68-78; No. 6, 1866, pp.83-94; No. 7, 1866, pp.100-108; No. 9 bis 12, 1866, p.199; Nr. 7, 1868, pp.100- 102; Nr. 8, 1868, p.124; Nr. 6, 1869, pp.82-83 and Nr. 7, 1869, pp.106-107. Note that the title *Berliner Missionsberichte* was hyphenated to *Berliner Missions-Berichte*, and the abbreviation of number was changed from No. to Nr. from 1868.

[98] *BMB*, Nr. 9 u. 10, 1872, pp.158-162 onwards.

[99] *Missions-Ordnung der Gesellschaft zur Beförderung der evangelischen Missionen unter den Heiden zu Berlin*, Berlin, Im Selbst-Verlage der Gesellschaft, 1882, p.67; R. Bodenstein *Die Schriftenreihen der Berliner Missionsgesellschaft*, p.2. Until 1914, reports from the various areas of operation of the Society were grouped under two main headings: "*A. Heimat*" and "*B. Heidenländer*" (see Annual Reports [*Jahresberichte*], 1870-1914).

during the following year.[100] This was also directly in line with the Pietist conception of the role of the spoken and written word in conversion. According to this way of thinking, conversion "could only be brought about in one of two ways: by way of a verbal challenge or invitation, or through the example of a godly life (i.e. a life according to the Pietist understanding of the Gospel)." The verbal challenge or invitation could take the form of personal testimony, a sermon or a tract. Even in cases where emulation of a godly life served as the power of attraction of the Gospel, it was expected that this would be explained by a Pietist missionary in a pastoral discussion or testimony. Thus, according to the Pietist understanding: "The word is ... the central and overwhelming dimension of a call to conversion ... Deeds were in a decidedly second position, and then only deeds expressing the sincere faith of the missionary himself or herself."[101] In line with these aims, by 1848, besides the annual reports, the *Missionsberichte* and J.C. Wallmann's *Die Missionen der evangelischen Kirche*, a publication entitled *Die Indianer in Nordamerika* had been produced.[102]

During 1850, the first series of *Berliner Missionstraktate* was opened, with eight titles having produced by 1864.[103] This was followed by the *Tractate der Berliner Missionsgesellschaft, Neue Folge*, which produced three editions between 1866 and 1867, the *Berliner Missionstraktate, Neue Folge*, which produced twenty-eight titles between 1871 and 1886, the *Neue Missionsschriften* of eighty-seven titles between 1889 and 1907 and the *Neue Missionsschriften [Neue Folge]* of

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[100] *Ein und zwanzigster Jahresbericht der Gesellschaft zur Beförderung der evangelischen Mission unter den Heiden für das Jahr 1844*, Berlin, Gedruckt bei Frederich Schantze, n.d., p.5 and R. Bodenstein *Die Schriftenreihen der Berliner Missionsgesellschaft*, p.3. For discussion of the importance which Mission Societies attached to publications of this nature and some discussion of their role as sources for academic writing, see especially P. Brantlinger "Victorians and Africans: The Genealogy of the Myth of the Dark Continent", in *Critical Inquiry*, Volume 12, Number 1, Autumn 1985, p.178; J.L. Comaroff and J. Comaroff *Of Revelation and Revolution*, Volume One, pp.172-178, 183, 189 & 192-193; L. de Kock *Civilising Barbarians*, pp.141-142, 144, 162, 168; E. Elbourne "To Colonize the Mind", pp.110-120; B.V. Street *The Savage in Literature: Representations of 'primitive' society in English fiction, 1858 - 1920*, London, Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1975, pp.39-41. Nicholas Thomas discusses similar themes for missionaries to the Solomon Islands from the Australian branch of the Methodist Church in "Colonial Conversions: Difference, Hierarchy and History in Early Twentieth-Century Evangelical Propaganda", in *Comparative Study of Society and History*, Vol. 34, No. 2, 1992, pp.366-389.

[101] J.J. Kritzinger, P.G.I. Meiring and W.A. Saayman *On being Witness*, Halfway House, Orion Publishers, 1994, p.28.

[102] *BMB*, No. 3, März 1848, p.48.

[103] *BMB*, No. 10, Oktober 1850, p.218 & No. 1, 1864, p.15 and R. Bodenstein *Die Schriftenreihen der Berliner Missionsgesellschaft*, pp.3-4.

ninety-one titles between 1905 and 1937. Specifically for children, a series called *Hosiannah*, which began publication in 1859, was followed by *Der Kleiner Sammler* of 1868, *Missionsschriften für Kinder*, which published fifty-five titles between 1890 and 1906, *Missionsschriften für Kinder [Neue Folge]*, which produced seventeen titles between 1909 and 1914, *Kindermissionsschriften* of fifteen titles between 1926 and 1935 and five titles of *Kleine Kindermissionsschriften* in 1937.[104] With the spread of the missionary enterprise and in an attempt to come to terms with the question of what the relationship between the mission and German colonialism should be, fourteen titles of "*Beiträge zur Missionskunde*" were produced between 1902 and 1907.[105]

These publications appear to have been very well received within mission circles and by the wider public. For example, between 1890 and 1895, 110 257 copies of "*Neue Missionsschriften*", 149 893 copies of "*Missionsschriften für Kinder*" and 28 754 copies of the "*Berliner Missionstraktate*" were produced.[106] Both the large range of titles and these extremely large print runs demonstrate the importance which the leadership of the Mission Society attached to tractates and other missionary writings. Furthermore, in the period of self-examination prior to being accepted as candidates for training in the Society's seminary, aspirant missionaries were required to have "thoroughly [*eingehend*]" read its publications.[107] During their period of training at the seminary, candidates for South African mission work were also expected to familiarise themselves with the geography, climate and peoples of South Africa, the "native question" and the work of the mission in the region.[108] While I have not been able to find any direct

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[104] R. Bodenstein *Die Schriftenreihen der Berliner Missionsgesellschaft*, pp.4 (*Hosiannah and Der Kleiner Sammler*), 11 (*Tractate der Berliner Missionsgesellschaft, Neue Folge)*, 13-14 (*Berliner Missionstraktate, Neue Folge*), 16-21 (*Neue Missionsschriften*), 23-28 (*Neue Missionsschriften [Neue Folge]*), 30-32 (*Missionsschriften für Kinder*), 34 (*Missionsschriften für Kinder [Neue Folge]*), 36 (*Kindermissionsschriften*) and.37 (*Kleine Kindermissions-Schriften*). Note that dates given are those of first publication.

[105] *Ibid.* pp.38-39.

[106] *Ibid.* p.7. In comparison, Rider Haggard's works *King Solomon's Mines* (first published in 1885), *She* (first published in book form in 1887) and *Allan Quatermain* (first published in book form in 1887) were the blockbusters of their day. *King Solomon's Mines* sold 31 000 copies in its first year of publication, *She* sold 30 792 copies in June of 1887 and the author received payment for 29 403 copies of *Allan Quatermain* in the first year of its publication (G. Ching-Liang Low *White Skins/Black Masks: Representation and Colonialism*, London, Routledge, 1996, p.6 and B.V. Street *The Savage in Literature*, p.13.

[107] *BMB*, Nr. 11 u. 12, 1880, p.272.

[108] H.T. Wangemann *Unterrichtsordnung des Berliner Missionsseminars*, Berlin, Verlag des

evidence of their use in teaching, the presence of tractates and other mission writings in the mission library strongly suggests that it was expected that they would be consulted. Moreover, as they were written by, or in consultation with, missionaries in the field, one may safely presume that candidates who had completed their training were encouraged or compelled to read mission publications covering their areas of placement.

A reasonable number of these publications emanated from the Vendaland Mission. Thus the "*Neue Missionsschriften*" included six texts on Vendaland. These were an anonymously authored tractate of the life of the Georgenholtz Missionary Dietrich Baumhöfner; an account by Missionary Carl Beuster of the life of Johannes Mutsaheni, his first local "Native Assistant" at Ha-Tshivhase; accounts by Mission Inspector Gabriel Sauberzweig-Schmidt on the history of Ha-Tshivhase and Georgenholtz Mission Stations and accounts by Missionary Reinhold Wessmann of his mission-journey to the Limpopo River and of the life of August Makhahane, a local ruler who converted to Christianity.[109] Demonstrating their popularity, two of these texts ran to two editions and two to three editions.

Sauberzweig-Schmidt also produced a tractate on the life of the Georgenholtz missionary Klaas Koen for the *Dornen und Ähren vom Missionsfelde* series, while Wessmann was responsible for a life-history of his "Native Assistant" Philippus Thai.[110] Lastly, two publications in the *Neue Missionsschriften [Neue*

Evangelischen Missionshauses, 1882, p.4.

[109] [Anon.] *Dietrich Baumhöfner, ein Missionar aus dem Ravensburger Land*, Neue Missionsschriften Nr. 18, Berlin, Buchhandlung der Berliner evangelischen Missionsgesellschaft, 1890; C. Beuster *Johannes Motscheni. Ein Lebensbild aus der Missionsarbeit in Nord-Transvaal*, Neue Missionsschriften Nr. 26, Berlin, Buchhandlung der Berliner evangelischen Missiongesellschaft, 1890 [Zweite Auflage, 1897]; G. Sauberzweig-Schmidt (a) *Ha Schewasse, eine Hütte Gottes unter den Bawenda*, Zweite Auflage, 1890, Neue Missionsschriften Nr. 32, Berlin, Buchhandlung der Berliner evangelischen Missionsgesellschaft, n.d. [1896] [Erste Auflage, 1890] & (b) *Georgenholtz im Lande der Bawenda*, Neue Missionsschriften Nr. 33, Berlin, Buchhandlung der Berliner evangelischen Missions-Gesellschaft, 1891 [Zweite Auflage, 1891; Dritte Auflage, 1896] and R. Wessmann (a) *Eine Missionsreise nach der Limpopofluss*, Neue Missionsschriften Nr. 4, Berlin, Buchhandlung der Berliner evangelischen Missionsgesellschaft, 1890 & (b) *Der Häuptling August Makhahane, ein Lebensbild aus der Bawenda-Mission*, Berlin, Buchhandlung der Berliner evangelischen Missionsgesellschaft, 1892 [Zweite Auflage, 1897, Dritte Auflage, 1903].

[110] G. Sauberzweig-Schmidt *Klaas Kuhn, ein Missionar aus den Hottentotten*, Vierte Auflage, Dornen und Ähren vom Missionsfelde Nr. V, Berlin, Buchhandlung der Berliner

Folge] series were based in Vendaland. These were the life-history of a local Christian, Mashambe, by Erdmuthe Dorothea Giesekke and a history of Georgenholtz by Missionary Paul Heimbach.[111]

In 1882, ten years after the Berlin Missionaries had established themselves in Vendaland, *Das Ausland*, then a widely-read paper in Germany, argued that the missionaries of the Berlin Mission Society were "like no other Europeans" in that they used "their thorough knowledge of languages to collect those old traditions [of Africans in South Africa] and to study the old customs and religious beliefs." In the opinion of the famous mission scholar Gustav Warneck, the author of the article, these missionaries were "the most enthusiastic collectors, and their reports can almost all claim the value of a far more authentic resource than those of erudite travelers - who were not acquainted with these particular peoples even though they had knowledge of the language."[112]

This enthusiasm for the accuracy and insight of the writings of the Berlin Missionaries is shared by a number of modern scholars who have extensively used the archives of the Berlin Mission Society for their source material. Both the anthropologist Karla Poewe and the historian and political scientist Ulrich van der Heyden have drawn attention to the great importance that Berlin Missionaries attached to the collection of oral testimony from the people among whom they worked. They have also both argued that missionary attempts to understand local history and local culture were an early form of ethnographic fieldwork.

In the introduction to her paper on Africans, Missionaries and the making of the Pedi African Independent Church, Karla Poewe noted that:

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evangelischen Missionsgesellschaft, n.d. and R. Wessmann *Philippus Thai, ein Treuer Nationalhelfer im Bawendalande*, Missionsschriften für Kinder Nr. 46, Berlin, Buchhandlung der Berliner evangelischen Missionsgesellschaft, n.d. [1902].

[111] E.D. Giesekke *Zwischen Sonne und Feuer: die Geschichte eines Muvenda von ihm selbst erzählt; übersetzt von Erdmuthe Dorothea Giesekke*, Neue Missionsschriften [Neue Folge], Nr. 85, Berlin, Buchhandlung der Berliner evangelischen Missionsgesellschaft, 1937 and P. Heimbach *Neu-Georgenholtz im Wenda-Lande*, Neue Missionsschriften [Neue Folge] Nr. 25, Berlin, Berliner Missiongesellschaft, n.d. [1909].

[112] G. Warneck "Kleinere Mitteilungen. Zur Südafrikanischen Ethnologie", in *Das Ausland. Wochenschrift für Länder- und Völkerkunde, unter Mitwirkung von Professor Dr. Friedrich Ratzel und anderen Fachmännern*, Fünfundfünfzigster Jahrgang, Nr. 1, Stuttgart, 2. Januar 1882, p.77. Also quoted in U. van der Heyden "The Archives and Library of the Berlin Mission Society", in *History in Africa: A Journal of Method*, Vol. 23, 1996, p.413.

> The Berlin missionaries taught Africans the Christian metanarrative as stories about early church fathers, reformers and church formation ... At the same time that they taught, however, missionaries also learned to think and live their way into the specific culture of the people (*Eigentümlichkeit des Volkes*) ... This was done by acquiring an intimate knowledge of the people's language, grammar and narratives. Berlin missionaries were instructed not only to (*ablauschen*)[113], to listen and take down a people's dictionary, that is, to take in the 'whole beauty, complexity, and regularity of a language', but also to 'hear their way into' the intricacy of that people's stories ... Africans ... knew themselves to be not only taught but also intently listened to.[114]

As an illustration of the importance that the Berlin Mission attached to local historical narrative, she drew attention to the fact that H.T. Wangemann, the Director of the Berlin Mission Society from 1865 to 1894, saw it as being important that he inspected "the mission field by doing what resembled ethnographic fieldwork of local mission stations." He conducted two research tours of the South African mission field lasting a year each, from 1866 to 1867 and from 1884 to 1885.[115]

Ulrich van der Heyden was equally enthusiastic when he argued that:

> The missionaries knew how to use this knowledge broadly to their advantage. Evidence of this is the huge mountain of records in the archives, as well as in the books held in the library which retain literature that was written, in a period of one hundred and fifty years, by the missionaries of this society with their deep understanding of the visited ethnic groups or written by authors in contact with the missions on the basis of the information collected and recorded by the missionaries. By interviewing elderly people, the missionaries got a large proportion of their 'precolonial information.' They used, though not perfectly according to present scholarly parameters, methods of recording and accessing oral history.[116]

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[113] *Ablauschen* means to listen so intently and receptively as to take away with you a very intimate and accurate rendering of what was said.

[114] K. Poewe "Africans, Missionaries and the Making of an Independent Church", pp.2-3. See also H.T. Wangemann *Unterrichtsordnung*, pp.28 & 29.

[115] K. Poewe "Africans, Missionaries and the Making of an Independent Church", pp.3-4 (quotation, p.4).

[116] U. van der Heyden "The Archives and Library of the Berlin Mission Society", p.413.

The only real caution that van der Heyden offered in using these records was that:

> Most of the literature produced in this way did not primarily fulfil a scholarly purpose because it was produced working in accordance with the Biblical injunction: "Go and make all people believers: Baptize them in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost." [See Illustration 1.] But for the present historical and ethnological sciences, they are still of significance.[117]



1. Inscription over the front entrance of the New Mission House (Headquarters of the Berlin Mission Society and the site of its Seminary) [118]

I share their enthusiasm for the sources and for the seriousness with which the missionaries approached the collection of oral history and oral testimony. Beyond the approaches and instructions quoted by Poewe, the Mission Regulations to which every missionary was subject stated that "the first task of a missionary who begins his work among a pagan tribe is to learn the language of that tribe, so that he becomes deeply acquainted with the people, and thus accepted as a member of the tribe, and earns their confidence, and thoroughly learns their customs and

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[117] *Ibid.*

[118] Photographed by the author, 1996. The inscription reads: "Go forth and teach all heathens and baptise them in the Name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Ghost." Its situation may be seen in the illustration of the Mission House appearing on p.204.

habits."[119] Moreover, missionaries were compelled to keep diaries and send regular letters and reports home to Germany which gave details of events and conditions of life both on the mission stations and in the "heathen" communities. These accounts were not to be "overstated" or "exaggerated". Rather, they were to be "objective". Nevertheless, at the same time, "in his correspondence with the home country the missionary has to be very attentive he should refrain particularly from all which could show the mission, the missionary himself and the bureaucracy of the mission in a bad light."[120] In a random survey conducted on letters and reports sent from South Africa until around 1890, the central office of the Berlin Mission found that almost all of them were free of such "bad lights".[121]

Where I differ from Poewe and van der Heyden is in my more cautious approach to the "scientific" value of ethnographic research. Since my own approach relies more on attempting to deconstruct the role of missionaries-as-recorders, I found the tractates and other writings that van der Heyden sees as "not primarily" fulfilling "a scholarly purpose" as being among the most useful sources in the library. My underlying thinking here has also been influenced by Teresa van Ryneveld's recent thesis, which "uses the historical figure of João Albasini to explore some historiographical issues of how people commemorate their past". Here van Ryneveld argued that:

> The problem of 'different perspectives' is central to a discussion of how academic discourse has tended to gloss over different points of view to produce one omniscient version of reality, or 'master narrative'. The idea of there being a single, true version of the past has been undermined by the proliferation of alternative histories such as women's histories, regional histories or working class histories, that challenge many traditional narratives of the past, and draw attention to the way in which these narratives reflect relations of power. At the same time, the idea of a single common-sense reality that can be accurately represented has been called into question. The idea of an author being able to discover or narrate 'the truth' about peoples or societies, without recognising that they, too, operate within a culturally

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[119] *Missions-Ordnung*, p.16. See also U. van der Heyden "The Archives and Library of the Berlin Mission Society", p.414.
[120] *Missions-Ordnung*, p.17.
[121] U. van der Heyden "The Archives and Library of the Berlin Mission Society", p.414.

constituted version of reality has been thoroughly undermined.[122]

SOME METHODOLOGICAL ISSUES

Related to the idea of different versions, there is a further problem with the sources arising from the fact that I am writing this thesis in English. In his magico-realist autobiography, Malidoma Patrice Somé wrote that one of his greatest problems in writing the book "was that the things that I talk about here did not happen in English; they happened in a language that has a very different mind-set about reality."[123] In the case of this thesis, the problem is even more complex. Most of the events that I discuss involved Tshivenda speakers. In the early days of the missionary presence in Vendaland, they had to rely on interpreters who translated what was being said into one of the versions of Sotho with which the missionaries were familiar. Sometimes, the languages involved included Dutch/Afrikaans or English. The missionaries then produced their version of events in German. Later, as the missionaries became more familiar with the local language, descriptions of events were translated into German directly from Tshivenda. I, in turn, have translated the missionary records into English. In each of these cases, there is a strong possibility that meaning has been transformed or lost.

In translating, I attempted as much as possible to keep the spirit of the German text. While translations from archival sources, books and *Bawenda-Freund* are mine alone, the *Berliner Missions-Berichte* reports were also translated by Helga Giesekke, of the Vendaland mission family. This has been a real labour of love

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[122] T.A. van Ryneveld "Remembering Albasini", Unpublished M.A. thesis, University of Cape Town, 1998, Abstract & pp.3-4 (indented quotation). See also especially E. Abelson, D. Abraham and M. Murphy "Interview with Joan Scott", *in Radical History Review*, 45, 1989, pp.49-51; P. Burke "Overture: the New History, its Past and its Future", in P. Burke (ed.) *New Perspectives on Historical Writing*, p.3 and N. Wachtel "Introduction", in *History and Anthropology*, Vol. 2, Part 2, October 1986, Special Edition entitled "Between Memory and History", pp.217-218. João Albasini is discussed on pp.16-17, 75, 77, 79, 80-81, 82-83, 84, 87, 88, 356, 364, 467-468 footnote 144 and 469 of the present thesis.

[123] M.P. Somé *Of Water and the Spirit: Ritual, Magic and Initiation in the Life of an African Shaman*, New York, Penguin Arkana, 1995, p.2. Large sections of this work require one to suspend any kind of western rationalist thinking. For example, his grandfather dies in another

on her part, for which I am extremely grateful. In addition to the fact that German was her first language, she also grew up speaking (and still speaks) fluent Tshivenda. Since she is able to translate far faster than me, and devoted long hours each day to this task, Helga soon got far ahead of me in her translations. I was able to use these to read vast quantities of text far quicker than would otherwise have been the case. This enabled me to select sections to translate myself. As it is, I spent four years on translation work. Had I not had her easy-to-read guideline, it would have taken me at least another year to select the texts for translation. In addition, beyond annotations she made on her texts, we have also discussed some sections at length. In cases where I felt that this was necessary, I used her translations to refine my own. I must confess that I was pleasantly surprised by the fact that there were no significant differences in our translation and that, in many cases, the wording was identical. While this does not obviate the problems of transformed and lost meaning, it means that I am satisfied with the translations as they stand. I also did the translations from Dutch and Afrikaans sources. Those from French were performed by Pippa Davies.

I anticipate that the issue which I have left to last will be seen as a major problem by some readers of this thesis. This is the fact of my overwhelming focus on Berlin Mission records to the exclusion of other archival records and oral evidence. This raises the question of whether or not Landau and Peel's criticisms of the Comaroff's works are not equally applicable to mine. However, I would argue that I have in fact done something else. I made no attempt to deny that Tshivenda-speakers had a sense of narrative (whether "authentic" or not). Instead, what I have done is to take a conscious decision engage with the view into the nineteenth century provided by the Berlin Missionaries. I am not claiming that this is the only view, or even the most important one. What I am saying is that I do not see this as an omission. In my reading, my thesis fills a gap in the local historiography by foregrounding sources which, with the partial exception of Delius' recent article *Witches and Missionaries* (discussed in footnote 93), have not previously been given the recognition which they deserve. They have either been ignored or have been ruthlessly "gutted" for "facts" that they provide to

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village. Rituals are performed which cause the corpse to walk home under its own steam to be buried properly.

supplement those gleaned from other sources.[124] They have not been treated as sources in their own right which, in my reading, they certainly are. For me, the mission sources have two main foci of interest. Firstly, they give us insights into the attempts by missionaries to make sense of the African landscape and its inhabitants. A conventional reading of this situation would be that of the European insider attempting to make sense of the African "Other". However, I would like to argue that this may also be read in another way. I am neither Christian nor German. I grew up in South Africa in an anti-racist tradition of opposition to the apartheid state. I have lived in the Northern Province, and worked in historically disadvantaged institutions there, for thirteen years. For me, the nineteenth century Berlin Missionaries are just as much "the Other" as the local African people ever were for them. I started out unable to see beyond their very real paternalism and racism. However, as I grappled with their writings to attempt to see both how they came to be what they were and how they saw, I came to new understandings of them, the local people and the area which I feel have a useful role to play in both mission historiography and the historiography of the Northern Province.

For me, the second focus of interest of the mission sources arises from the fact that they are an extremely detailed contemporary record of events in the heart of Vendaland at a time when nobody else was recording what went on in any sustained way. Explorers and officials left records of individual journeys or negotiations, some of which are discussed in this thesis. However, the missionary records are the only sustained record of events, often recorded on a daily basis, which cover the whole period under review. In dealing with them, I have adopted

[124] I was hoping that Elfriede Höckner's (1998) work on the Lobedu of Modjaji would provide a refreshing exception. She spent a great deal of time transcribing the Berlin Missionary Friedrich Reuter's diary onto computer. When I heard about the progress of her work, I was hoping that she would use this far more sensitively than she eventually did to open up new views into the nineteenth century history of her area of study. Instead, she first became tied into using her data to test Walter Dostal's models of social evolution. Finding that her data did not fit these, she became tied up instead in modes of production analysis. In my reading, this caused her to miss a great opportunity for doing something interesting and novel, for which she had already done more than enough of the basic groundwork. (E. Höckner *Die Lobedu Südafrikas: Mythos und Realität der Regenkönigin Modjaji*, Missionsgeschictliches Argiv 4, Stuttgart, Franz Steiner Verlag, 1998. The work by Dostal that she refers to is W. Dostal *Egalität und Klassengesellschaft in Südarabien Anthropologische Untersuchungen zur sozialen Evolution*, Wiener Beiträge zur Kulturgeschichte und Linguistic, Bd. XX, Wien, Horn, 1985. I have not accessed this except through Höckner's work.)

a strategy of close reading. This involves looking at the possible ideological, environmental and psychological influences on the way that missionaries recorded what they saw and experienced. In some cases, it has been possible to compare different versions of the same basic text, covering the original diary entry, the subsequent published version and even later published versions. I strongly believe that this has enabled a nuanced reading simply not available from other kinds of sources. In engaging issues arising from the continued interaction between the Berlin Missionaries and local people in this way, I believe that I have also been able to deconstruct possible ways of seeing and some of the likely intentions of the local African actors. More than a century later, oral evidence will not add anything to this. It would merely provide a twentieth/twenty-first century interpretation of what was going on in the nineteenth century. I certainly do not wish to suggest that oral history has no role to play in writing the history of the region. On the other hand, I do not valorise its contribution to the same degree as the other recent Ph.D. on the history of Vendaland. Here Henry Nemudzivhadi (1998) drastically over-simplified (and over-dramatised) the situation by arguing that:

> What will be evident from the outset of this particular project is the lack of documentary evidence, felt so necessary for the writing of a history, a major prerequisite in historiographical collations of the histories of first world countries. Therefore, extensive use will be made of oral sources, just as was done in the reconstruction of the past of Western, Middle and Far Eastern history beyond the 6 000 years period.[125]

He then went on to argue that earlier academic authors had misrepresented "Venda history" both as a result of their Eurocentrism and racism and because they had not combined oral and written sources.[126] Similarly over-simplifying the situation, without consulting primary missionary sources, he argued that, in the case of "the early missionaries in the region", their "Christian background appears to have opened their eyes to only one side of a people they considered to

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[125] M.H. Nemudzivhadi "The attempts by Makhado to revive the Venda kingdom 1864-1895", Ph.D. thesis, Potchefstroom University for Christian National Higher Education, Vaal Triangle Campus, 1998, p.xi.

[126] *Ibid.* pp.xi-xiv

have no knowledge of God."[127] In his own opinion, "The paucity of written material on the Venda, as well as the vagueness and insufficiency of that which has been recorded, compels the writer to lean heavily on oral information." For Nemudzivhadi, this, and the fact that he was writing as a cultural insider, were the major strengths of his thesis.[128] I have great sympathy for his frustration with much that has been written about Vendaland and aspects of his approach. However, in my reading, his uncritical use of oral sources enabled him to indulge his Venda Nationalist fantasies about "the Venda as personified by Makhado, as a people of Southern Africa with their shortcomings and virtues" and portray a cultural and centralized political unity which, in my reading, is not supported by the historical record.[129] In doing so, he treated oral history as unproblematic and completely neglected the subtleties of approach to oral history shown by authors such as Isabel Hofmeyr. Building on, and refining, Leroy Vail and Landeg White's vivid demonstration that "oral forms are in a process of constant change and transmutation both with other oral forms and with literate ones", she has argued that oral historical narrative should be treated as a literary form. Far from being immutable, and in addition to the more crass influences such as political expediency and the wider socio-political situation at the time of their telling, oral accounts interact with, and are influenced and transformed by, a host of oral and written media. These include folktales, radio and television dramas and other broadcasts, newspaper and magazine reports, Bible stories and sermons and the accounts of others about the same or similar events.[130] Against this background, I believe that, in the context that I am using the missionary texts, no useful function will be served by bringing oral historical records into play. Look at the oral history of the nineteenth century could be a project on its own. However, since I am attempting to engage with a view into the past, and use this to refine my own view, rather than recapture the past itself, the two types of sources are simply not compatible.

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[127] *Ibid.* p.xiii.

[128] *Ibid.* pp.xiv-xv.

[129] *Ibid.* See especially pp.v, vi (quotation), ix, x, 1, 2-6, 51, 53 and 217.

[130] I.Hofmeyr (a) "The Narrative Logic of Oral History", African Studies Seminar paper, African Studies Institute, University of the Witwatersrand, May 1988; (b) "'Wailing for Purity': Oral Studies in South African Studies", in *African Studies*, Vol.54, No. 2, 1995, pp.16-31 (quotation, p.27) & (c) *"We Spend Our Years as a Tale That is Told": Oral Historical Narrative in a South African Chiefdom*, Johannesburg, Witwatersrand University Press, 1993 and L. Vail and L. White *Power and the Praise Poem: Southern African Voices in History*,

THE STRUCTURE

Against this background history, the thesis as it has finally emerged consists of eight chapters. The first of these is a background chapter. This provides a structure to ground my argument in the remainder of the thesis in the wider context of the nineteenth-century situation in Vendaland. In providing an introductory overview of the local actors, I begin by dispelling some of the persistent myths which have influenced previous representations of the population of the area and the pre-colonial history of Tsivenda-speakers, who formed (and continue to form) the majority of the local population. Since my main account is thematic, I then move on to provide a chronology of events before and after the arrival of the missionaries. In my reading, particularly important themes raised here are those of conflict and shifting alliances, labour and forced labour, and the great degree of political independence still exercised by local groups at a time when most other societies in South Africa had already been incorporated into the colonial social formation. Coupled with the idea of representation and misrepresentation, these themes constantly recur in, and inform my interpretation of, the sections which follow. Since it attempts to pull together information from a variety of sources and provide the kind of overview of local history which has been lacking until now and does not form part of my main argument, this is the only section of the thesis which relies mainly on secondary sources. Indeed, for me, one of the strengths of the chapters which follow is that they draw almost exclusively on primary material contemporaneous to the events which they describe and engage. The chapter ends with a brief overview of mission activity in the area in the late nineteenth century.

With the exception of Ethiopia, when one thinks of the history of Christianity in Africa, the idea of white missionaries immediately springs to mind. One of the things that I found extremely refreshing in my research for this thesis was the discovery that in what is today called the Northern Province, the first agents of the new religion were local people who had been converted while working as migrant labourers in the Cape Colony and Natal. Largely because of this, I begin

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Charlottesville, University Press of Virginia and London, James Currey, 1991.

Chapter 2, and the thesis proper, with a consideration of the local beginnings of Christianity in Vendaland under Johannes Mutshaeni, Solomon, Totane, David Denga and others. Having returned to Vendaland, to varying degrees, they attempted to keep their new faith alive in the face of considerable pressures to abandon it and return to local ways. Prior to the arrival of the missionaries, they had considerable freedom to retain what they wanted of the Christian message and abandon or transform the rest. However, after the establishment of a missionary presence in the area, any possibilities for creative adaptation of Christianity to meet local needs in the public sphere were closed off. People could, and no doubt did, blend Christianity and African religious beliefs in creative ways in private. However, any exposure of this in public could lead to suspension or, as in the case of Totane, excommunication. The missionaries would not accept anything but conversion to, and the practice of, orthodox Christianity as interpreted, and policed, by them.

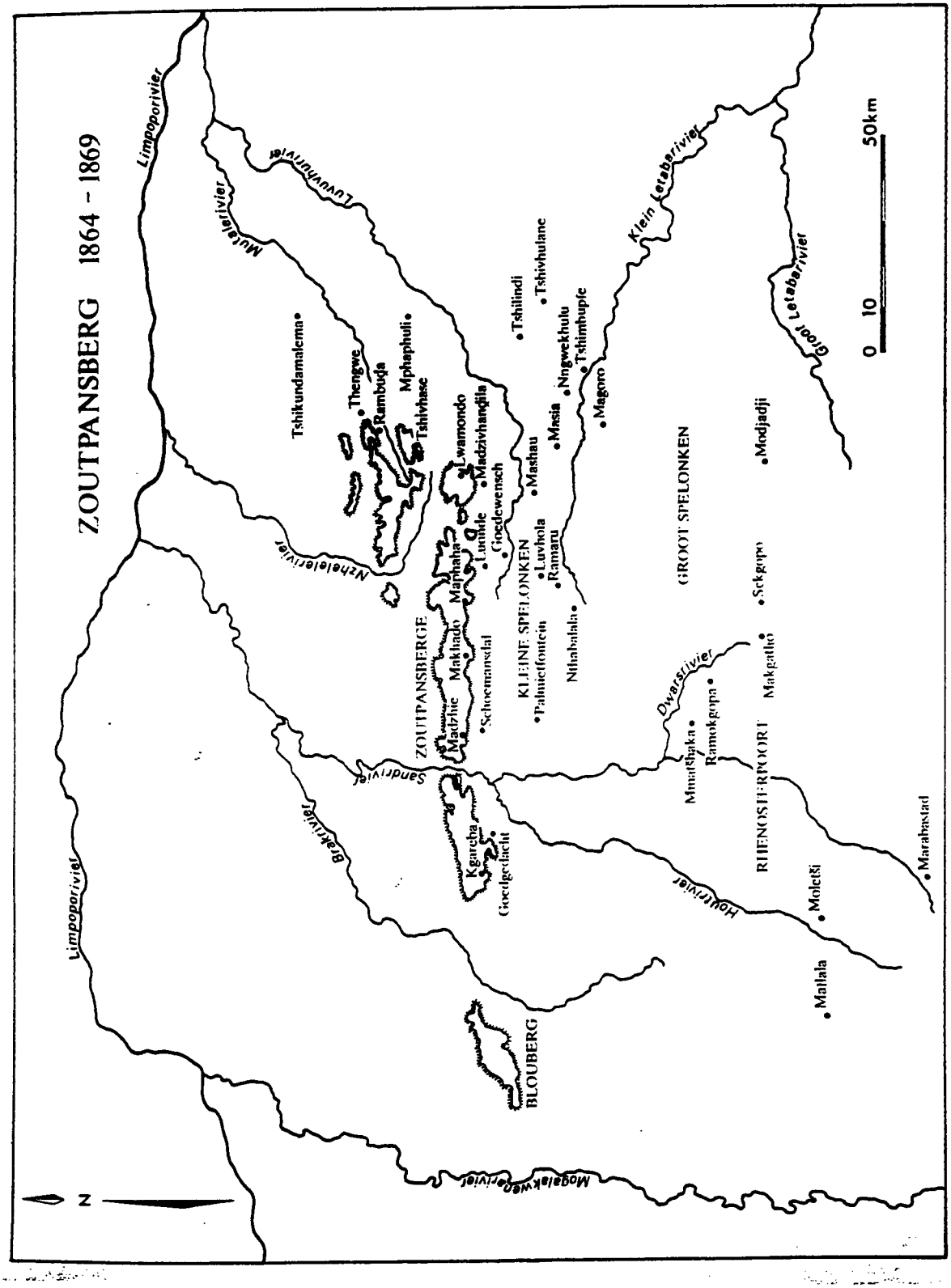
This raises questions about who these missionaries were, the kind of training that they received and the way that they viewed the world in general and Vendaland in particular. Since my thesis focuses on the interaction between the missionaries, the environment and the people of Vendaland and the kind of interpretations and misunderstandings that arose from this, these are crucial questions. In engaging them, in Chapter 3, I start by looking at the development and nature of the Mission Society which trained the missionaries and sent them out to the mission field. This leads me into discussion of the life histories of the missionaries who served in Vendaland and some of the ways in which their background shaped the way that they viewed the world. Here I use biographical narrative as a means of accessing and illustrating wider issues. In particular, I examine the ways in which, with few exceptions, the seminary training refined the world-views of the candidate missionaries and transformed them into the kind of representatives which the mission sought. Moving to the exceptions, in the penultimate section of the chapter, I discuss the career and trial of Reinhold Wessmann, the mission's most spectacular failure as a missionary in Vendaland. The chapter ends with a discussion of the life and death of Klaas Koen, the perfect example of what the mission wanted to produce in its converts and its missionaries. Building on this largely German focus and moving to South Africa, in Chapter 4, I discuss the

local missionaries' experience of the environment of Vendaland and some of their views on its landscape. This leads into discussion of how they depicted this, and those who populated this landscape, iconographically for their colleagues, their superiors and the wider circle of friends of the mission back at home, which I engage in Chapter 5.

In order to make, and keep, converts in Vendaland, the missionaries had to wean people away from African religion. In missionary interpretation, the power of the supernatural was inseparably linked to the power of the *mahosi*, supported by the *dzinanga*. Mass conversion would thus depend either on the conversion of royalty or on weaning people away from the authority of the *mahosi* to that of the missionaries. In order to prepare the ground for this, they went to great lengths to attempt to understand local religious beliefs, how they functioned in society and how their power was appropriated by the *mahosi* and *dzinanga*. Their findings here are discussed in Chapter 6. In Chapter 7, I discuss their analysis of some of the ways in which this power was inscribed on the bodies of their subjects by the *mahosi* and how the African body was treated as a source of power. The thesis concludes with a study of the interaction between the missionaries and the rulers of the Mphaphuli people (especially *Khosi* Makwarela Mphaphuli) during the late nineteenth century. This contextualises and elucidates the main themes raised in the preceding chapters.

MAP 1: Zoutpansberg 1864 – 1869

[J.C.A. Boeyens *Die konflik tussen die Venda en die Blankes in Transvaal, 1864 1869*, Archives Year Book for South African History, Part I, Pretoria, Government Printer, 1990, p.x.]



CHAPTER 1
BACKGROUND

This chapter provides an overview of the nineteenth century history of the area which the Berlin Missionaries called Vendaland. The boundaries of the area at this time are difficult to define. The borders of the territories of the various *mahosi* and their subordinates, and of Vendaland itself, varied over time, depending on the strength of the rulers.[1] During the 1890s, the Boer authorities unsuccessfully attempted to fix these boundaries to confine the rulers and their people to so-called locations. It was only after the colonial subjugation of the area after the Boer-Mphephu War of 1898 that this could be achieved, mainly by the new British rulers after the return of Makhado from exile in what was then called Rhodesia in 1904 and then by the so-called Location Commission of 1906. In addition, the Berlin Missionaries found groups of Tshivenda speakers living on the supposed Tsonga-Shangaan (XiTsonga-speaking) side of the Luvuvhu River and vice versa. There were also a number of Sotho-speaking groups settled within the boundaries of areas claimed by Tshivenda-speaking *mahosi*. However, despite these difficulties, during the nineteenth century, the Venda heartland seems to have lain between the Limpopo and the Luvuvhu, mostly within latitude 22° to 23° [see Map 1].[2]

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[1] Translating the Tshivenda terms *khosi* (plural, *mahosi* – "kings" or "chiefs") and *gota* (plural, *magota* – "sub-chiefs" or "headman") into English opens a whole debate on the nature of leadership in African societies which I do not want to enter into in this thesis. After the formation of the Dzata empire, unless in quotation, or directly presenting the views of the missionaries, I avoid using the English terminology.

[2] *BMB*, Nr. 19 u. 20, 1891, p.451 & Januar 1898, p.7; C.J. Conerly "The Surrendering of the Lands in the Northern Transvaal of Mahosi Davhana, Makhado, Mphephu and Sinthumule", B.A. Honours thesis, University of Cape Town, 1990, pp47, 55-56 & 78-82; D. Mcdonald "Vendaland", in *The Blythswood Review: A South African Journal Review: A South African Journal of Religious, Social and Economic Work*, Vol. X, No. 110, February 1933, p.12; M.H. Nemudzivhadi "The attempts by Makhado to revive the Venda kingdom, pp.2, 3, 6-7, 106, 148, 159, 239-248, 250, 266 & 270-273 and R. Wagner "Zoutpansberg: the dynamics of a hunting frontier, 1848-67", in S. Marks and A. Atmore *Economy and Society in Pre-Industrial South Africa*, London, Longmans, 1980, pp.322-323. The fact that the Luvuvhu River did not form a rigid ethnic boundary became particularly clear once Swiss Missionaries established themselves in the area from the mid-1870s. In consultation with missionaries from the Berlin Mission Society, the Swiss agreed to restrict their activities to the area south of the Luvuvhu River. They believed that, in doing so, they would mainly work among groups who would later be classified as Tsonga-Shangaan. This was meant to ensure that they

I preface the overview of the nineteenth century history of Vendaland which forms the bulk of this section with some comments on the origins and migrations of Tshivenda-speakers in, and into, the area. This enables me to relate some of the religious practices discussed in Chapter 6 back to migrations and informs my reading of some of the rituals performed on the body of a fallen enemy at Ranwedzi Mphaphuli's capital discussed in Chapter 8.[3] Perhaps more significantly, I feel that it is necessary to attack the Singo-centric interpretation of local history which has been the dominant one in the majority of existing histories of Tshivenda-speakers. According to this interpretation, the Vhavenda consist of various unrelated clans that were united under the Singo about 250 years ago. The Singo are thus seen as the "original" or "real" Venda.[4] Despite having been exposed by Ralushai as containing contradictory, vague and often unauthentic elements, this interpretation well-suited

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would not compete with the Berlin Missionaries, who were already operating among the predominantly Vhavenda groups to the north of the river, and the Pedi to the south of their area of operations. In fact, settlement of Tshivenda- and Xitsonga- speakers was far more mixed than they, or later apartheid planners, thought. (*BMB*, Nr. 19 u. 20, 1881, p.335 & Nr. 5 u. 6, 1885, p.74 and P. Harries "Exclusion, Classification and Internal Colonialism: The Emergence of Ethnicity Among the Tsonga-Speakers of South Africa", in L. Vail (ed.) *The Creation of Tribalism in Southern Africa*, London, James Currey, 1989, especially p.86.) Because of this, in order to implement its bantustan policy, the apartheid state had to undertake major forced removals in Venda and Gazankulu in the late 1960s and 1970s. (See especially Surplus People Project *Forced Removals in South Africa, Vol. 5: The Transvaal*, Cape Town and Pietermaritzburg, Surplus People Project, 1983, numerous references.)

[3] See pp.319 and 458.

[4] E.K. Lukhaimane "A short history of the Venda" unpublished manuscript held in the Special Collections section of the University of Venda Library, n.d.; S.M. Dzivhani "The Chiefs of Venda", in N.J. van Warmelo (ed.) *The Copper Miners of Musina and the Early History of the Zoutpansberg*, Union Of South Africa, Department of Native Affairs, Ethnological Publications, Vol. VIII, Pretoria, Government Printer, 1940, pp.33-50; E. Gottschling "The Bawenda, A sketch of their history and customs", in *Addresses and Papers read at the Joint Meeting of the British and South African Associations for the Advancement of Science held in South Africa, 1905*, Volume III, Johannesburg, South African Association for the Advancement of Science, 1905, pp.195-198; G.P. Lestrade (a) "Some notes on the political Organisation of the Venda-Speaking Tribes", in *Africa: Journal of the International Institute of African Languages and Cultures*, Vol. III, No. 3, July 1930, pp.306-307 & (b) "Some Notes on the Ethnic History of the Vhavenda and their Rhodesian Affinities", in N.J. van Warmelo (ed) *Contributions towards Venda History, Religion and Tribal Ritual*, Union of South Africa, Department of Native Affairs, Ethnological Publications, Volume III, Pretoria, Government Printer, 1932, pp.XX-XXVIII; M.M. Motenda "History of the Western Venda and of the Lemba", in N.J. van Warmelo (ed.) *The Copper Miners of Musina*, pp.51-70; E. Mudau "Ngoma lungundu" in N.J. van Warmelo (ed.), *The Copper Miners of Musina*, pp.10-32; H.A. Stayt, *The Bavenda*, London, Oxford University Press, 1931, pp.9-19 and N.J. van Warmelo (ed.) *Contributions Towards Venda History*, pp.5-36.

the needs of the apartheid and the bantustan regimes.[5] For example, President P.R. Mphehpu assumed the apparently-invented title of *khosikhulu* ("chief of chiefs" or "paramount chief") and bantustan political life was dominated by Singo *mahosi* and *magota*. Instead, I would like to argue that many of the Tshivenda-speaking *mahosi* that the missionaries came into contact with in the 1870s ruled over people whose ancestors had been settled in the region since at least the Early Iron Age. Moreover, even the Singo rulers, and the Singo admixture to the population, were but the last major wave of immigrants to the area who merged with the Tshivenda-speaking majority. Lastly, not all of the rulers were Singo in origin.

DISPELLING SOME PERSISTENT MYTHS – PEOPLE AND PLACES

Early Iron Age archaeological sites in the far north of the Northern Province of today have been dated to the third and fourth centuries A.C.E. The people living here at that time were agro-pastoralists, who also possessed the ability to smelt and work metal, including iron and copper. Hunting also provided an important dietary component. Because their diet was deficient in salt, they needed to obtain this from an outside source. Salt flats, such as those in the Soutpansberg, became important meeting places and trading centres. So too did areas where copper and iron ore were mined and worked.[6]

The spatial layout of Early Iron Age settlements has been termed the Central Cattle Pattern. Already by this stage, cattle seem to have been used as a means of reckoning

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[5] N.M.N. Ralushai "Conflicting Accounts of Venda History with Particular Reference to the Role of Mutupo in Social Organization", Ph.D. thesis, Queen's University of Belfast, 1977.

[6] W.S. Fish "Cows and Kraals: The Early Iron Age, Nandoni and interaction", unpublished paper presented at the international conference "From the Zoutpansberg to the Sea" held at the University of Venda, 16-18 September 1995, p.1; M. Hall *The Changing Past: Farmers, Kings and Traders in Southern Africa, 200 - 1860*, Cape Town, David Philip, 1987, pp.39-43 & 66-68; E.O.M. Hanisch "Legends, Oral Traditions and Archaeology: A look at early Venda history", in *Luvhone*, Department of Education and Culture, Venda, Vol.3, No.4., April 1994, p.69; T. Maggs "The Early History of the Black People in Southern Africa", in T. Cameron and S.B. Spies (eds.) *A New Illustrated History of South Africa*, Second Edition, Johannesburg and Cape Town, Southern Book Publishers and Human & Rosseau, 1981, p.37-39 & 43; P. Maylam *A History of the African People of South Africa: from the Early Iron Age to the 1970s*, Cape Town, David Philip, 1986, pp.2-3, 5-7 & 9 and S.M. Miller, and J.W.N. Tempelhoff "Die romantiek van 'n grensterrein", in *Fauna and*

wealth. Great efforts were made to protect this wealth from marauders. Simply put, the easiest way to do this was to place the cattle kraal in the centre of the village and to herd the cattle into this central enclosure at night. Dwellings and living areas would form a roughly circular configuration around the cattle kraal. It would appear that Early Iron Age societies were reasonably egalitarian, with a rather weakly-developed institution of chieftainship. Archaeological and historical evidence seems to suggest that, in societies that used cattle as the primary source of wealth, any man had, in most cases, quick and direct access to the local chief or headman. There also appear to have been relatively few court cases requiring the attention of the chief, even in larger towns. Most cases appear to have been resolved between the relevant families without judgement having to be handed down by the chief.[7]

Important changes took place among societies living in the Limpopo River valley from about 800. Beyond the continued presence of the smaller villages, larger centres began to emerge. The archaeological sites of Schroda (dated to between about 800 and 850) and K2 (dated to between about 950 and 1150) show evidence of trade networks extending to the east coast and linking into the trade between this area and sea-borne Arab traders from the northern hemisphere.[8] Huffman and Hanisch have argued that, accompanying the growth in trade, at K2 the central cattle pattern gradually began to give way to a situation where the cattle kraal was situated on the side of the town. This they ascribe largely to a decrease in the value of cattle in favour of a new form of wealth reckoning based on the trade goods acquired through the East Coast trade.[9] Taking this argument further, Hanisch has argued that, at first,

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Flora, Transvaalse Direktoraat Natuur- en Omgewingsbewaring, No. 47, 1990, p.34.

[7] W.S. Fish "Cows and Kraals", p.1; E.O.M. Hanisch "Legends, Oral Traditions and Archaeology", p.70; T.N. Huffman "Broederstroom and the Central Cattle Pattern", in *South African Journal of Science*, Vol.89, 1993, pp.220-226, M. Hall *The Changing Past*, pp.72 & 73 T. Maggs "The Early History of the Black People in Southern Africa", p.39 and P. Maylam *A History of the African People of South Africa*, pp.11 & 15. Since we do not know what language was spoken at this time, I use the English terminology when referring to rulers of pre-Dzata social formations. I also refer to rulers of large formations as "kings".

[8] E.O.M. Hanisch "Legends, Oral Traditions and Archaeology", pp.69-70 and M. Hall *The Changing Past*, p.77. For discussion of trade between the interior and Arab traders on the east coast, see M. Hall *The Changing Past*, pp.78-79 and T. Maggs "The Early History of the Black People in Southern Africa", p.40.

[9] E.O.M. Hanisch "Legends, Oral Traditions and Archaeology", p.70 and T.N. Huffman "Archeology and the ethnohistory of the African Iron Age", in *Annual Review of Anthropology*, 11, 1982, pp.133-

it was the chief, the person ultimately responsible for trade, who settled disputes arising from this activity. However, the increasing volume of trade led to an increase in the number of court cases that were heard to mediate disputes arising from this. Based on available evidence, it seems that the chief alone could no longer handle the number of problems that were being presented to him for resolution. He was thus forced to hand cases over to trusted councillors to make judgements on his behalf, only making a final ruling on the most difficult or most important cases. This, in turn, gradually led to his seclusion from his people. In Hanisch's opinion, this seclusion of the ruler from his people reached its height with the shift from K2 to the Leopard's Kopje B kingdom based on Mapungubwe Hill, somewhere between about 1075 and the beginning of the twelfth century. Already before the occupation of Mapungubwe, it had become accepted practice that the residence of any headman, chief or king was situated so that commoners could not look down upon it. No burials with golden objects were found elsewhere than on the hilltop at Mapungubwe. Based upon this evidence and data gleaned from further excavations in the area, it is clear that the hilltop area was occupied by an aristocracy. Below this lay a less rich though still important area, the south terrace. Livestock and the majority of the human population lived spread out in the town beneath, and surrounding, the hill. It is estimated that about 5 000 people lived here at any given time. From here, the ruler controlled a trading kingdom which extended over much of the Limpopo Valley area and apparently also across the river into Zimbabwe.[10]

Mapungubwe appears to have been abandoned in about 1250. With this, the main centre of power and trade seems to have shifted to Great Zimbabwe. However, this did not mean the immediate collapse of the Leopard's Kopje B kingdom in its entirety. The culture persisted for at least a further 200 years in the Soutpansberg and the Matopos. Elsewhere in Zimbabwe, it evolved into the historically-known Shona culture.[11]

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[10] E.O.M. Hanisch "Legends, Oral Traditions and Archaeology", pp.70-71. See also M. Hall *The Changing Past*, p.82 and T. Maggs "The Early History of the Black People in Southern Africa", p.41.

[11] M. Hall *The Changing Past*, p.88; E.O.M. Hanisch "Legends, Oral Traditions and Archaeology",

Signs of the decline of Great Zimbabwe are evident towards the middle of the fifteenth century. There appear to have been several movements away from the capital. Communities moving southwards across the Limpopo at this time incorporated or annihilated people identified in recorded oral tradition as the *Vhangona*, who seem to have been the scattered descendants of earlier communities in the area. There was also a considerable degree of interaction and amalgamation between the Shona-speaking immigrants and early Sotho-speakers, known archaeologically as the Moloko culture, who had settled in the Soutpansberg from about 1300.[12] In these re-alignments, new settlements were founded and existing ones were further developed. Stone-walled villages built on the Zimbabwe pattern arose at Thula Mela and Makahane on the banks of the Luvhuvhu River in what is today the Kruger National Park, Tshitaka tsha Makoleni in the mountains above the present-day village of Mianzwi in the Mutale River Valley, Tshaluvhimbi across the Mutale River to the east of Mianzwi, Mutakolwe high up in the mountains near the present-day village of Netshiendeulu, as well as Matshema and Verdun along the Sand River in the western part of the Soutpansberg.[13] A number of Tshivenda-speaking groups, such as the Mbedzi, the Nyai and the Lembethu claim their ancestry from these ruins and there is no evidence to contradict this. The fact that these

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pp.71-72 and T.N. Huffman "The Rise and Fall of Zimbabwe", in *Journal of African History*, Vol. XIII, No.3, 1973, pp.353-366.

[12] The Vhangona are also referred to as the BaNgona, the VhaNgona and the VhaNgona. (S.M. Dzivhani "The Chiefs of Venda", p.34; E.O.M. Hanisch "Legends, Oral Traditions and Archaeology", pp.73-74; E.K. Lukhaimane "A short history of the Venda", pp.5 & 6; M.M. Motenda "History of the Western Venda and of the Lemba", pp.51-52; E. Mudau (a) "Ngoma lungundu and thè early invaders of Venda", in p.10 & (b) "The Dau of Tshakhuma", in N.J. van Warmelo (ed.), *The Copper Miners of Musina*, pp.71-80 and H.A. Stayt, *The Bavenda*, pp.10 & 11.) Over and above the strong linguistic resemblance that it has with Shona, Tshivenda, the Venda language, also has strong links with Sesotho/Sotho-Tswana. There are also many other cultural elements in common between these groups. "This is no doubt as a result of the early mixing of the Moloko people with the remnants of the Mapungubwe people in the Soutpansberg, and with the later Shona speakers." (E.O.M. Hanisch "Legends, Oral Traditions and Archaeology", p.74 (quotation); T.N. Huffman and E.O.M. Hanisch "Settlement Hierachies in the Northern Transvaal: Zimbabwe Ruins and Venda History", *African Studies Journal*, Vol. 46, No. 1, 1987, p.79; G.P. Lestrade "Some Notes on the Ethnic History of the Vhavenda", pp.XXI & XXII and H.A. Stayt, *The Bavenda*, p.9.)

[13] E.O.M. Hanisch "Legends, Oral Traditions and Archaeology", p.73; T.N. Huffman and E.O.M. Hanisch "Settlement Hierachies in the Northern Transvaal", pp.106-110 and N.V. Ralushai "A Preliminary Report on the Early History of Thulamela Archaeological Site", Unpublished report, Kruger National Park/Thulamela Project, n.d. (1997).

capitals were of roughly equal size also seems to indicate equal political authority. Thus, there is clear evidence of occupation of the Soutpansberg by early Shona speakers long before the Singo occupation took place. In addition, as Huffman and Hanisch have pointed out, key elements of what would be called "Venda culture had evolved well before the arrival of the Singo." Far from being the "original" or "real" Venda who introduced political centralisation to the area for the first time the Singo had essentially the same political structure and cosmology as the people they conquered.[14]

The archaeological record suggests that the much-later Singo breakaway only occurred during the second half of the seventeenth century as a result of a succession dispute at Dhlo Dhlo, successor state to the Khami Empire which in turn had broken away from the declining Zimbabwe Kingdom sometime after the 1450s.[15] According to recorded oral traditions, on their movement southwards, the Singo were protected by a drum with magical powers. This drum was known as the *Ngoma Lungundu*, the drum of the dead or the drum of Mwari/Mwali. It is said to have been given to the breakaway chief by his father/ancestor, the God/king Mwari. The chief and, through him, his people, were greatly feared because of the powers of the drum. Provided that it was continually beaten by the chief during times of threat, it would both protect the people against attack and cause them to defeat their enemies. The drum struck such fear into the souls of the enemies that they either fled in terror or fell to the ground in a swoon "as in death". This then enabled them to be defeated with ease. If the chief stopped beating the drum, or allowed it to touch the ground, the Singo would be vanquished. Indeed, it was the power of this drum that enabled the Singo to undertake their migration and occupy and hold land to the south of the Limpopo River. At times, the power of the drum was so great that it would appear to play itself. This was because the invisible Mwari himself was playing it.[16]

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[14] E.O.M. Hanisch "Legends, Oral Traditions and Archaeology", p.73 and T.N. Huffman and E.O.M. Hanisch "Settlement Hierachies in the Northern Transvaal", especially pp. 79, 106 and 112-114 (quotations, p.113 & 114).

[15] E.O.M. Hanisch "Legends, Oral Traditions and Archaeology", p.74 (quotation) and M. Hall *The Changing Past*, pp.119, 121-122 & 133-134.

[16] E. Mudau "Ngoma lungundu", see especially pp.10-11, 13-14, 17 & 28. See also S.M. Dzivhani

Eventually the Singo crossed the Limpopo river and settled at Dzata. Some accounts suggest that they entered the Nzhelele Valley immediately and settled at Dzata.[17] Others (which seem to be supported by ongoing archaeological research in the area) contradict this, stating that the Singo first settled on top of the mountains at Tshiendeulu (Dzata I).[18] Within these two broad interpretations, there is a considerable degree of disagreement about the genealogies of the rulers who led the occupation.

Research by Hanisch has also suggested that Dzata II was built at an earlier date than was previously thought. Radiocarbon dating suggests that the site was occupied in about 1700 A.C.E. and abandoned some fifty to sixty years later.[19] Dates for the occupation of Dzata are also supported by at least one documentary source. In 1730, the Dutch in Delegoa Bay interviewed Mahumane, an African, about his travels to the Kingdom of Thovela about five years earlier. This account makes it clear that this was a powerful kingdom in the area which would later be called Vendaland.[20] Hanisch has argued that, at the height of its power, this empire extended as far as the Olifants River near Phalaborwa in the south, the Blouberg in the far west and northwards to across the Limpopo River.[21] I have found no evidence to contradict this assertion. However, based on my reading of the difference between idealised

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"The Chiefs of Venda", pp.33-34. Note that Mudau starts the migration not from Dhlo Dhlo but from a place called Matongoni, apparently in the north of present-day Zimbabwe. For an heroic poem entitled "Ngoma Lungundu", see G. Bloomhill *The Sacred Drum: A collection of stories based on folklore of Central Africa*, illustrated by L. Kibel, Cape Town, Howard Timmins, 1960, p.167.

[17] E.K. Lukhaimane "A short history of the Venda", pp.9-10; S.M. Dzivhani "The Chiefs of Venda", pp.33-34; E.O.M. Hanisch "Legends, Oral Traditions and Archaeology", p.75; M.M. Motenda "History of the Western Venda and of the Lemba", p.53 and N.J. van Warmelo (ed.) *Contributions Towards Venda History*, p.6.

[18] E.O.M. Hanisch "Legends, Oral Traditions and Archaeology", p.75; E. Mudau "Ngoma lungundu", p.23; L. Norden "Die Heilige Tamboere van Tshiendeolo", in *Die Huisgenoot*, 6 November 1942, pp.7 & 31; H.A. Stayt, *The Bavenda* p.12 and J.W.N. Tempelhoff *Townspeople of the Soutpansberg: A Centenary History*, Louis Trichardt, Greater Louis Trichardt Transitional Local Council, 1999, p.17.

[19] E.O.M. Hanisch "Legends, Oral Traditions and Archaeology", p.75.

[20] G. Liesegang "New light on Venda traditions: Mahumane's account of 1730", in *History in Africa*, 4, 1977, pp.163-181.

[21] E.O.M. Hanisch "Legends, Oral Traditions and Archaeology", p.76. See also ; J.W.N. Tempelhoff *Townspeople of the Soutpansberg*, p.

conceptions of royal power and the situation "on the ground" at a later date, I do have reservations about the degree of control that the centre would have been able to exert over peripheral areas or even some of the supposedly subordinate *mahosi* closer to the centre of power. Hamilton has argued that, throughout his reign, even Shaka's position was by no means secure.[22] There is no reason to suspect that conditions in Vendaland were any different. Thus Huffman and Hanisch's assertion that the contribution of the Singo lay in their having in unified "the mountainous country for the first and apparently the only time in pre-colonial history" may be true at an abstract level.[23] However, the way that this was reflected in the actual exercise of power may have been different, and varied over time.

This was certainly the case during the nineteenth century. Recorded oral traditions agree that after the death or disappearance of the Singo leader Thoho-ya-Ndou, civil war broke out. Dzata was abandoned and the nation fragmented into independent chiefdoms. Accounts vary as to who succeeded him but include various combinations of his sons and/or his nephews. During this time of upheaval, some of the subordinate *mahosi* and *magota* also managed to establish themselves as independent rulers in their respective areas.[24] The area came to be dominated by three great *mahosi* of Singo descent: *Khosi* Makhado (Ramabulana), *Khosi* Tshivhase and *Khosi* Mphaphuli. [See Map 1.] There were also a considerable number of lesser *mahosi* and *magota*, who exhibited varying degrees of independence. Some of these, such as the Madzivhandila *mahosi* at Tshakhuma and the Maphuphe *mahosi* at Lwamondo were not of Singo descent. They nevertheless did have ties of marriage to

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[22] C. Hamilton *Terrific Majesty: The Powers of Shaka Zulu and the Limits of Historical Invention*, Cape Town, David Philip, 1998, pp.49-50.

[23] T.N. Huffman and E.O.M. Hanisch "Settlement Hierachies in the Northern Transvaal", p.114.

[24] E.K. Lukhaimane "A short history of the Venda", p.10; S.M. Dzivhani "The Chiefs of Venda", pp.39-40 & 44; E. Gottschling "The Bawenda", p.196; E.O.M. Hanisch "Legends, Oral Traditions and Archaeology", p.76; T.N. Huffman and E.O.M. Hanisch "Settlement Hierachies in the Northern Transvaal", p.112; M.M. Motenda "History of the Western Venda and of the Lemba", pp.54-60; E. Mudau "The Dau of Tshakhuma", pp.76, 78 & 79; H.A. Stayt, *The Bavenda*, p.15 and N.J. van Warmelo (ed.) *Contributions Towards Venda History*, pp.6, 12-24, 30-32 & 36. Supportive evidence for the abandonment of Dzata II and the collapse of the Dzata empire is provided by the archaeological record. Excavations by Edwin Hanisch have shown that the town was abandoned in about 1760 and that the departure was "hurried and violent". Many houses were burnt down and many household goods were "left behind, showing that there was little time for the inhabitants to flee." (E.O.M. Hanisch "Legends, Oral Traditions and Archaeology", p.76.)

the VhaSenzi (the descendants of Thoho-ya-Ndou).[25] By this stage, these rulers were also beginning to come into sustained contact with the first white hunters and pastoralists to enter the region.

SOJOURNERS AND SETTLERS IN VENDALAND

It is possible that Portuguese hunters and traders may have entered Vendaland during the eighteenth century. However, the penetration of people of Western European origin into the Zoutpansberg area is generally considered to have begun in the nineteenth century. They were largely in search of hunting and grazing.[26]

The first sustained contact between "white" immigrants and the Vhavenda seems to have occurred at some time between 1810 and 1820. This was when Coenraad de Buys, a hunter and adventurer from the Cape Colony, his Black wife and their children entered the area and were given land on the outer regions of Vhavenda-held territory by *Khosi* Ravele Mpofu.[27] His sons were also provided with wives from the royal settlement. After Coenraad's wife died, possibly of malaria, he moved on, leaving his sons behind. His movements after this are unknown. However, some traditions suggest that he went to look for help from the Portuguese in Mozambique and either died there, or settled and remarried there. His sons subsequently settled at Tshikhovhokhovo (near the Blouberg Mountains and the Sand River) on stands allocated to them by Mpofu [see Map 1].[28]

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[25] *Bawenda-Freund*, Nr. 23, Oktober 1888, VI Jahrgang, p.67 & Nr. 42, Juli 1893, 11 Jahrgang, p.161; *BMB*, Nr. 21 u. 22, 1878, p.490 *Mitteilungen des Vereins «Heidenfreund"*, Nr. 18, 1 Juli 1887, V Jahrgang, n.p. (p.2); G.P. Lestrade "Some Notes on the Ethnic History of the Vhavenda", p.XXVII and R. Wessmann *Philippus Thai*, p.1. The Berlin Missionaries recorded Makhado as Makato, Tshivhase as Tschewasse or Schewasse and Ranwedzi (Masindi) Mphaphuli as Pafuli or Pafudi.

[26] J.W.N. Tempelhoff *Townspeople of the Soutpansberg*, p.18.

[27] According to the Mphephu/Ramabulana version of local history, *Khosi* Tshisevhe, also known as Ravele Mpofu, also known as Tshisevhe, was the son of Thohoyandou who succeeded him as ruler of Dzata II in the Nzhelele/Nyelele Valley (J.W.N. Tempelhoff *Townspeople of the Soutpansberg*, p.17). *Khosi* Mpofu was succeeded by *Khosi* Rasetuu Ramabulana, then by *Khosi* Makhado and then by *Khosi* Mphephu. They were all of the Mphephu/Ramabulana dynasty.

[28] *BMB*, No. 5, 1866, p.69; C.J. Conerly "The Surrendering of the Lands", p.6; W.L. Maree, *Lig in Soutpansberg: Die Sendingwerk van die Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerk in Noord-Transvaal,*

Following this, between 1836 and 1837, a number of voortrekker groups temporarily established themselves in the general area. Their first main base was on the western side of the mountain at the salt-pan after which the Soutpansberg is named [see Map 2]. Later, they moved to the area surrounding what would become Schoemansdal and the present-day town of Louis Trichardt. They found that the area was abundantly stocked with game for hunting and provided ample pasturage for their cattle.[29]

Recorded oral accounts state that *Khosi* Rasetuu Ramabulana came into contact with the voortrekker leaders Louis Trechardt (Trichardt) and Hendrik Andries Potgieter and called on them, the Buys brothers and Tlokwa and Pedi warriors for assistance in his succession dispute with his brother Ramavhoya. Having defeated and strangled his brother with their assistance in late November or early December 1836, he allegedly promised Trechardt and Potgieter access to land in the area should they desire it.[30]

After this early contact, the voortrekker leader Andries Hendrik Potgieter and his followers settled in the Soutpansberg in 1848, creating a potential for conflict. Not

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1863-1963, Pretoria, Sinodale Sendingskommissies van die Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerk, 1962, pp.42-45; S.M. Miller, and J.W.N. Tempelhoff "Die romantiek van 'n grensterrein", p.35 and J.W.N. Tempelhoff *Townspeople of the Soutpansberg*, pp.18-19. See also D. Möller-Malan *The Chair of the Ramabulanas*, South Africa, Central News Agency Ltd., 1953, pp.39-41. Note that the Maree and Tempelhoff works also contain brief life-histories of Coenraad de Buys.

[29] *BMB*, No. 5, 1866, pp.69-70; S.M. Miller and J.W.N. Tempelhoff "Die romantiek van 'n grensterrein", p.35 and J.W.N. Tempelhoff *Townspeople of the Soutpansberg*, pp.19-22.

[30] J. Boeyens "Louis Tregardt en die Opvolgingstryd tussen Ramabulana en Ramavhoya", in *South African Historical Journal/Sud-Afrikaanse Historiese Joernaal*, 23 (1990), pp.41-53; C.J. Conerly "The Surrendering of the Lands", pp.8-10; E. Gottschling "The Bawenda", p.197; M.M. Motenda "History of the Western Venda", pp.55-56 and N.J. van Warmelo (ed.) *Contributions Towards Venda History*, pp.6 & 20-22. Note that, in his work produced for the centenary of the town of Louis Trichardt, Tempelhoff glosses over this tradition, merely stating that Trechardt "had considerable dealings with the Venda ruler Rasetuu Ramabulana (Spelt as Rasetau in his diary) and also Mashau." (See J.W.N. Tempelhoff *Townspeople of the Soutpansberg*, p.21.) However, in a paper presented to the biennial conference of the South African Historical Society in 1997, he and Nemudzivhadi acknowledge Trechard's assistance to Ramabulana in regaining his throne and the promise of land "In exchange for the services rendered". (J. Tempelhoff and H. Nemudzivadi, "Riding the storm of change: Makhado, Venda and the South African Republic (1864-1895), in *New Contree* (Department of History, University of the North West), No. 45 (September 1999), p.104.) For a short life-history of Louis Trichardt, see J.W.N. Tempelhoff *Townspeople of the Soutpansberg*, pp.20-22.

only were the Vhavenda pressurised to cede a part of their land to the new-comers, they were also forced either to provide them with labour or to pay tax.[31]

As Boeyens has shown, for a considerable time before the establishment of an official collection system, and scarcely two years after the founding of the Zoutpansberg settlement, the early Boer settlers in the area were raiding for African stock and children. In August 1850, Thomas Baines, the traveller, was told that a Zoutpansberg commando under the command of commandant-general Andries Hendrik Potigieter had attacked a number of local villages. They had killed many of the occupants, seized about 1 500 cattle and between one- and two-thousand sheep, and captured a substantial number of children – estimated at about two hundred.[32]

In late October And early November 1855, a Soutpansberg commando participated in the so-called siege of Makapansgat, launched on the pretext of being a revenge attack for the killing of forty-two Boers, including the "notorious slave-raider" and "cold-blooded killer" Hermanus Potgieter. This resulted in the defeat of Mughombane I's BaKekana, the massacre of about three thousand of his people and the capture of about one thousand AmaNdebele women and children.[33] About three months later, early in 1855, the Zoutpansberg commando moved against the BaLetwaba of Maraba, another northern AmaNdebele group who had been regarded as allies of Mughombane. About two thousand of the defenders were reported killed

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[31] J.C.A. Boeyens *Die konflik tussen die Venda en die Blankes*, p.110; C.J. Conerly "The Surrendering of the Lands", pp.13-14 and J.W.N. Tempelhoff *Townspeople of the Soutpansberg*, p.22.

[32] J. Boeyens "'Black Ivory': The Indenture System and Slavery in Soutpansberg, 1848-1869" (revised, English version of "Zwart ivoor" – see footnote 62), in E.A. Eldredge and F. Morton (eds.) *Slavery in South Africa: Captive Labour on the Dutch Frontier*, Boulder, San Fransisco and Oxford, Westview Press and Pietermaritzburg, University of Natal Press, 1994, pp.196-197.

[33] I. Hofmeyr *We Spend Our Years as a Tale That is Told*, pp.139-159; C. Saunders (ed.) *Reader's Digest Illustrated History of South Africa: The Real Story*, Cape Town, Reader's Digest Association, 1988, p.145 (quotations) and T.A. van Ryneveld "Remembering Albasini", pp.48-49 & 54-56. See also J. Albasini III "João Albasini, 1813 - 1888", pamphlet produced by the Albasini family and printed by Leach Printers, Louis Trichardt, no date (1988?), pp.23-25 and J.B. de Vaal *Die Rol van João Albasini in die Geskiedenis van die Transvaal*, Argiefjaarboek vir Suid-Afrikaanse Geskiedenis, Deel I, Pretoria, Staatsdrukker, 1953, pp.20-21. Note that Albasini and his African auxiliaries took part in this battle.

and about four hundred children were abducted.[34]

In 1856, two more raids were launched. In response to accusations of stock-theft made by João Albasini, whose career will be discussed shortly, Commandant J.H. Jacobs led a patrol against Rasikhuthuma, son of *Khosi* Ramabulana of the Vhavenda. In the attack on Rasikhuthuma's stronghold at Tshitungulu, twenty-five of his subjects were shot and thirteen young people were taken prisoner. One hundred and eight sheep and goats and seventy-six head of cattle were also seized. The prisoners were subsequently divided among the patrol members. In a raid against *Khosi* Ramabulana in November of the same year, eleven of his people were reported killed and five children were distributed among members of the commando.[35]

As these events were occurring, the Zoutpansbergers were devising their systems of collection for tribute and labour. Boeyens has argued that:

> The Zoutpansbergers divided African communities into two categories, namely Africans "doing service" (*diensdoende* kaffers) and Africans "rendering tribute" (*opgaaf* kaffers). *Diensdoende* Africans were those living in the immediate vicinity of whites and therefore subject to greater control. *Diensdoende* chiefs had to provide laborers to the whites and were exempted from paying *opgaaf*. In exchange for their labor some of the smaller groups were permitted to remain in their original dwelling places, even those allocated as part of white farms. In contrast *opgaaf* chiefs lived on the fringes of white influence and retained a larger measure of independence.[36]

Opgaaf was made up of items such as cattle, sheep, goats, grain, hoes, ivory, copper ingots, or leopard skins. Translated literally, the term means "return", as in an income tax return. The settlers seem to have viewed it as a form of tribute paid to them by African rulers in the area in recognition of their military and political authority and as reflecting an "established practice among African communities."[37]

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[34] J. Boeyens "Black Ivory", p.197.
[35] *Ibid.*
[36] J. Boeyens "Black Ivory", p.195. See also and R. Wagner "Zoutpansberg", p.333.
[37] *Ibid.* See also P. Bonner *Kings, Commoners and Concessionaires: The evolution and dissolution of the nineteenth-century Swazi state*, Johannesburg, Ravan Press, 1983, pp.33 & 88-89 and P. Delius

Michael Buys, son of Coenraad, was placed in charge of the collection of *opgaaf* in 1855. This was largely because he had the military power necessary to collect it – an estimated 15 000 to 20 000 Africans either recognised his leadership or, at the very least, were placed under his authoirty.[38]

Resistance to the collection of taxes, and the scope for abuse of the system, are clearly described by the local trader, farmer, "native tax" collector and historian, B.H. Dicke, who settled in the Zoutpansberg in the late 1880s. He wrote that:

> The accounting of native taxes collected was, in the early days, a most difficult and complicated business. Besides the unconquered chiefs who did not pay taxes there were some who, although they refused to pay taxes, were agreeable to give a "present" for "Paul," meaning by this disrespectful "Paul" (without even adding the word "Baas") the President, Paul Kruger. It paid these chiefs to send – they, of course, disdained to come themselves – a "present"; it was good business to do so; it supplied them with an excuse for collecting from their subjects six or more times the amount sent. Then there were the chiefs who permitted their subjects to pay individually, which was how the taxes should be paid, but who did not allow the native constables to enter their country and take a census of the huts the taxes had to be paid for; if a retainer paid his chief a little "palmoil," he need not pay the government.[39]

Dicke identified the greatest difficulty with this system as lying in the fact that "most of the taxes were paid in livestock; there was at that time not sufficient money in circulation amongst the natives." This was then sold to obtain the cash to remit to Pretoria. Often, only selected people were informed about the sales, so that prices could be kept low and the livestock sold to friends and confidants. Sometimes, false records were kept of the prices realized for the livestock. There were a number of advances, commissions and fees paid in maintaining the cattle before sale which

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The Land Belongs To Us, p.33.

[38] J. Boeyens "White Ivory", p.196 (quotation); W.L. Maree *Lig in die Soutpansberg*, p.49 and R. Wagner "Zoutpansberg", p.321. Note that Gabriël Buys, Michael's brother had originally been appointed. With his death in the same year, Michael took over his position. (See J. Boeyens "White Ivory", p.210, note 52.)

[39] B.H. Dicke *The Bush Speaks, Border Life in the Old Transvaal*, Second Edition, Pietermaritzburg, Shuter & Shooter, 1937, pp.27-28. For his historical works, see, for example, B.H. Dicke "The first Voortrekkers to the Northern Transvaal and the Massacre of the van Rensburg Trek", in *South*

could be fraudulently inflated. The possibilities for fraud were increased even further by the fact that the "native commissioners" did not perform all the collection themselves, or through their offices.[40]

> The accounting was further complicated by the native commissioners not doing all the collecting themselves or through their own office. Part of the collecting was handed to other people. Usually fieldcornets were appointed sub-native-commissioners and were entrusted with collecting against commission. Here also the difficulty with regard to payments in livestock arose, and even more so as these fieldcornets arranged for their own "sales". Often private individuals were deputed to obtain (against commission and expenses) from dangerous chiefs, living further away, what they could get. These men, in most cases, received "presents" only, and that after much insult had been heaped upon them; the chiefs kept them waiting for days, and then the "present", a hat full of silver, was thrown into the dirt of the cattle kraal where these white men had to pick it up (if pennies had been in circulation, the chiefs would have thrown pennies). They must have been thick-skinned people who did this dirty business under such degrading circumstances, just in order to earn a commission. It will be seen through how many hands cash and livestock went, and how many commissions, expenses and etceteras were deducted. Surely, it must have been an art to keep accounts correctly under such difficulties."[41]

Paralleling these developments, a community started to develop in the village of Zoutpansbergdorp, later re-named Schoemansdal. Some members of the Potgieter trek lived in the village while others established farms in its vicinity. Opportunities for trade attracted Portuguese traders from the coast, as well as British traders from Natal, Port Elizabeth and, to a lesser degree, Cape Town. Among their number were Casimoro Simoês, born in Goa of Portuguese descent, Antonie Fick, Maré, Carvallio and Eberhart. Commercial possibilities attracted artisans such as blacksmiths, carpenters, wagon makers, locksmiths and masons. Timber from the mountain was exploited both for local use and even for export to other parts of southern Africa. There were also itinerant traders who visited the town, men such as J. Fleetwood Churchill and the big game hunter Henry Hartley. People from other parts of the

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African Journal of Science, Vol. XXIII, pp.1006-1021 and *The Northern Transvaal Voortrekkers*, Archives Year Book for South African History, Part I, Pretoria, Government Printer, 1941.

[40] B.H. Dicke *The Bush Speaks*, p.28.

[41] *Ibid.* pp.28-29.

Transvaal began to trek to the Bushveld for the winter hunt. They would often use Schoemansdal as a base, increasing its population from time to time.[42] The number of residents of the town, and, indeed, of the entire Zoutpansberg district, tended to fluctuate. It was estimated that the white population of the Zoutpansberg district numbered only about 1 800 people, divided into about 260 families, in 1856. Within this district, Schoemansdal had only about 70 houses in 1861 and it is unlikely that the town contained more than 100 families at any stage in its history.[43]

One of the most colourful (and powerful) settlers who established themselves in the Zoutpansberg at this time was João Albasini, a Portuguese citizen who began trading in Portuguese East Africa (at first, primarily in slaves and ivory) in 1831.[44] In the 1840s, he moved to the Lowveld and began trading with the voortrekker communities there. He trekked to Zoutpansbergdorp with the voortrekkers in 1848. Starting with the nucleus of slaves and voluntary followers he had acquired in Portuguese East Africa, he began building up a considerable fighting force. In particular, he absorbed Tsonga-Shangaan groups fleeing from Mozambique as refugees from the wars of Soshangane, various other conflicts and the civil war between Mzila and Mawewe in the 1860s. Because of their numbers, and because they were black, his Tsonga-Shangaan followers were forbidden to stay at Zoutpansbergdorp and he based them on the farm Goedewensch at Piesangkop. In

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[42] J.B. de Vaal *Die Rol van João Albasini*, pp.12 & 14 and J.W.N. Tempelhoff *Townspeople of the Soutpansberg*, pp.23-25.

[43] J.C.A. Boeyens *Die konflik tussen die Venda en die Blankes*, p. 1 and "Black Ivory", p.194; D.F. Das Neves *A Hunting Expedition to the Transvaal*, with a new preface by J.B. De Vaal and an index by P.M. Malherbe, State Library Reprints No. 95, Pretoria, The State Library, 1987 - Facsimile edition of D.F. Das Neves *A Hunting Expedition to the Transvaal*, translated from the Portuguese by M. Monteiro, London, George Bell and Sons, 1879, p.140; S.M. Miller, and J.W.N. Tempelhoff "Die romantiek van 'n grensterrein", p.36 and J.W.N. Tempelhoff *Townspeople of the Soutpansberg*, p.24.

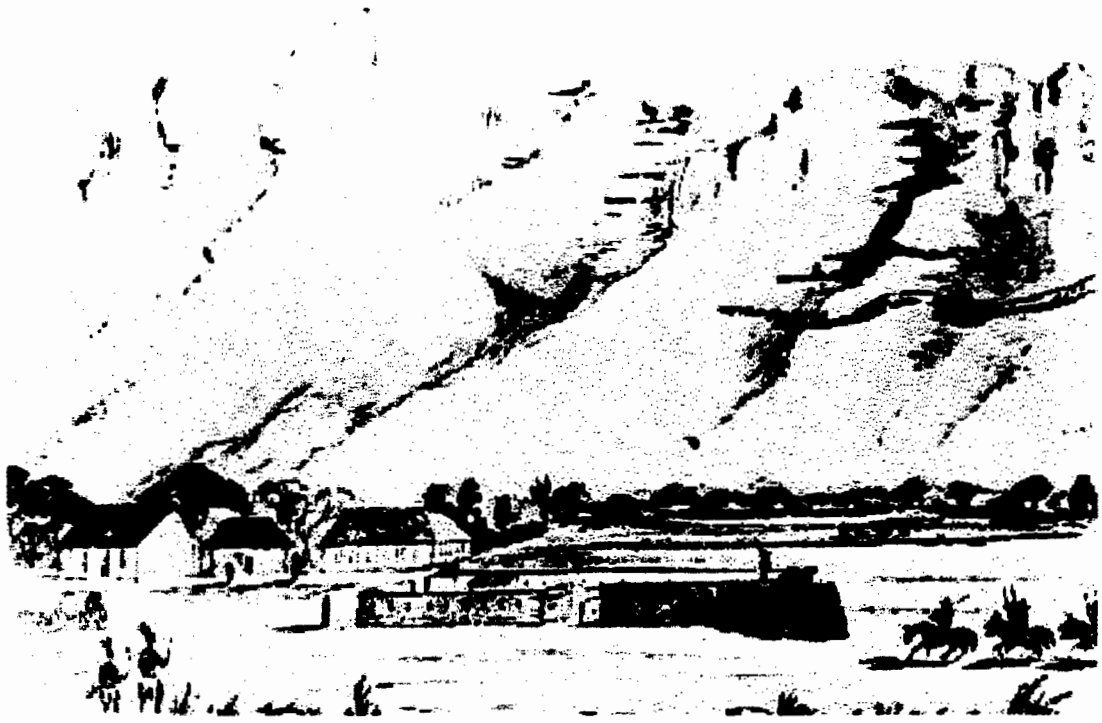
[44] The standard biography of Albasini is J.B. de Vaal *Die Rol van João Albasini*. See also especially *BMB*, Nr. 21 u 22, 1880, p.403 & Nr. 21 u 22, 1882, p.422 & Nr. 5 u 6, 1885, pp.71-72; J.C.A. Boeyens (a) *Die konflik tussen die Venda en die Blankes*, pp.4-5 & (b) "Black Ivory", pp.196 & 210, note 52; J.W.N. Tempelhoff *Townspeople of the Soutpansberg*, p.24 and T.A. van Ryneveld "Remembering Albasini" (for Albasini's biography, see especially pp.16-41). As van Ryneveld (p.16) has pointed out, many of Albasini's personal details are contested. Elizabeth Eldredge has suggested that Albasini may have fabricated his past, possibly to conceal mixed European and African ancestry. (E. Eldredge "Delagoa Bay and the Hinterland in the Early Nineteenth Century: Politics, Trade, Slaves and Slave Raiding", in E.A. Eldredge and F. Morton (eds.) *Slavery in South Africa*, pp.163-164.

1857, Albasini left Schoemansdal and settled at Goedewensch. Not only did develop this into one of the more impressive farms in the district, it also boasted a fort to which he could retire in times of unrest. In 1859, he was appointed as ZAR government-collector of *opgaaf* from Africans to the east, northeast and southeast of Schoemansdal, supplementing the area covered by Michael Buys. Appointed as *Superintendent van Kafferstammen* ("Superintendent of Kaffir-tribes") for the same area in April 1863, his main tasks remained the collection of *opgaaf*. He also served as Portuguese Vice Consul to the South African Republic from about this time until 1866. Known as "Juwawa" by the local Tsonga-Shangaan people, Albasini was considered by many to be the "white chief" of the "knobnoses".[45] At the height of his power, in about 1864, he could reportedly "summon an estimated 4,000 VaTsonga supporters by merely beating a drum."[46] Indeed, as with Buys, it was because of this following, and the military power which it brought, that he was placed in charge of the collection of *opgaaf*. Albasini died in 1888.

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[45] The Tsonga-Shangaan, also frequently referred to as the MaGwamba, especially in Swiss Mission sources. The term knobnoses is thought to be derived from the nasal cicatrization practised by some of the immigrants. (See especially *BMB*, No. 19, 1867, p.314; P. Harries "Exclusion, Classification and Internal Colonialism", pp.84-90 (cicatrization on p.85) and T.A. van Ryneveld p.132.) For the Boers, the appointment of Albasini as *Superintendent* also marked their official acceptance of him as a "chief". When the Brisith annexed the Transvaal in 1877, they also officialy recognised him as a "chief" (T.A. van Ryneveld "Remembering Albasini", p.41). Reports in the *Berliner Missionsberichte/Missions-Berichte* recognise that he had at least some claim to this status. For example, they talk about "the Portuguese *Kaptein* Albasini, who lived like a chief amongst the tribes" of the Zoutpansberg area (Nr. 23 u 24, 1876, p.394) and state that "The Knopneusen no longer have any chiefs – they regard Albasini as their big chief." (Nr. 5 u 6, 1885, p.74.) In a similar vein, Mission Director Wangemann commented that Albasini had "gained a sort of chieftainship amongst the Knopneusen... He has set out his homestead like the estate of a nobleman and like a fortress... His garden is well kept. A place which is surrounded by closely planted trees, is his court-room. This is where he listens to complaints, allows witnesses, judges their opinions and then delivers his judgement – against which no appeal is permitted." (*BMB*, Nr. 5 u 6, 1885, p.72). For uncritical acceptance of Albasini as a "chief", see especially J. Albasini III "João Albasini, 1813 - 1888"; B.H. Dicke *The Bush Speaks*, pp.19-40, especially p.24 (pp.19-22 refer to Albasini and pp.22-40 to the conflicts between his family and Schiel over succession to the chieftainship after the death of Albasini) and H. Klein "Die Wit Opperhoof Van die Sjangaans", in *Die Brandwag*, 8 July 1938, pp.8, 9 & 43. For a discussion of the whole question of what the title of "Chief of the Knobnoses" could have meant, see T.A. van Ryneveld "Remembering Albasini", especially pp.60-64, 112-113, 132-133, 135, 138, 140-143 & 148-150.

[46] J. Boeyens "Black Ivory", p.196.



2. "A part of Schoemansdal in 1865"[47]

The hunter-trader Alexander Struben, brother of the Transvaal trader and later Volksraad member Harry Struben, sketched a part of the village of Schoemansdal in 1865. This sketch depicts a number of houses abutting what appear to be agricultural lands. The village is situated at the foot of the impressively-depicted Zoutpansberg mountains. These appear to be devoid of human habitation in the illustration. However, the capital village of Khosi Madzhie (known by the Boers as Katlachter), a Vhavenda ruler and "vassal" of the Ramabulanas overlooked Schoemansdal [see Illustration 2 and Map 1].[48] The redoubt, or *skans*, in the centre of the drawing, the armed commando arriving home after some kind of mission, and the presence of two armed warriors (who seem to be visiting, rather than attacking, the village) nevertheless suggest that this is a frontier settlement which needs to be able to protect itself against hostile enemies. The sketch fits in well with the comments on

[47] D.F. Das Neves *A Hunting Expedition to the Transvaal*, n.p. See also J.C.A. Boeyens *Die konflik tussen die Venda en die Blankes*, facing p.47.

[48] A *diesndoende* ruler, he provided the white community with labour, including a considerable number of marksmen, or *skuts*. See J. Boeyens "Black Ivory", p.204 and R. Wagner "Zoutpansberg", p.333.

the potential of the area made in an article on mission work in the Soutpansberg District in the *Berliner Missionsberichte* of 1866. This noted that the area around Schoemansdal was "extremely fertile" and rich in trees. It was also suitable for farming but "one has always to live in fear of war."[49]

In the wider context of Southern African historiography in general, Phil Bonner has argued that any attempt to see Boers and Africans as separate or monolithic groups is completely inaccurate. Rather, it is more accurate to see their relationship in terms of political interdependence. Moreover, different factions within the Boer communities frequently competed against themselves for African support. At the same time, competing factions within African communities attempted to manipulate those divisions for their own sectional ends.[50] In a related argument, Norman Etherington has drawn attention to the folly of attempting to view the so-called "Mfecane" and the "Great Trek" in isolation from each other. He has also argued that the debate sparked by Julian Cobbing's calls for the jettisoning of the term and the concept of "the Mfecane" has forced scholars to re-examine earlier ideas about the allegedly reactionary, pre-capitalist nature of Boer society and the nature of precolonial African social formations. These arguments are also germane to wider debates about free and unfree labour and the growth of commodity production in South Africa.[51] Moving to a further great myth, Isabel Hofmeyr has strongly argued that presenting the *Voortrekkers* as agriculturalists and the Blacks as hunters has been an inversion that naturalised the Boers' right to the land.[52] Van Ryneveld has argued that these

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[49] *BMB*, No. 5, 1866, p.77.

[50] P. Bonner *Kings, Commoners and Concessionaires*, pp.67-72.

[51] N. Etherington (a) "Putting the Mfecane Controversy into Historiographical Context", in C. Hamilton (ed.) *The Mfecane Aftermath: Reconstructive Debates in Southern African History*, Johannesburg, Witwatersrand University Press and Pietermaritzburg, University of Natal Press, 1995, pp.13-19 and (b) "Old Wine in New Bottles: The Persistence of Narrative Structures in the Historiography of the Mfecane and the Great Trek", in *ibid.* pp.35-49. See also especially J. Cobbing (a) "The Mfecane as Alibi: Thoughts on Dithakong and Mbolompo", in *Journal of African History*, 29 (1988), pp.487-519 & (b) "Grasping the Nettle: The Slave Trade and the Early Zulu", unpublished paper privately circulated by the author, September 1990; E.A. Eldredge and F. Morton (eds.) *Slavery in South* Africa and J.W.N. Tempelhoff "Die okkupasiestelsel in die distrik Soutpansberg, 1886 – 1899", D. Litt. et Phil. thesis, Universitiet van Suid-Afrika, Oktober 1989.

[52] I. Hofmeyr "Popularizing History: The case of Gustav Preller", in *Journal of African History*, 29 (1988), p.533. For a discussion of the development of elements such as this in the nationalist tradition, see also I. Hofmeyr "Building a nation from words: Afrikaans language, literature and

kinds of arguments are particularly pertinent when analysing existing portrayals of Schoemansdal, particularly that offered in J.B. de Vaal's work *Die Rol van Joao Albasini in die Geskiedenis van die Transvaal.* This has generally been seen as purely white enclave (albeit surrounded by a "hostile" and "barbaric" African other), populated by God-fearing agriculturalists. However, for van Ryneveld, this is a mythical picture.[53]

In marked contrast to the received orthodoxy, the hunting industry was the greatest source of income for the Zoutpansbergers. For about nineteen years, Schoemansdal was the most important trade centre in the Northern Transvaal. Thousands of tons of wild animal meat, horns, whips, wood and salt were taken to Mozambique, the Cape Colony and Natal. White employers also illegally armed local Africans with firearms to hunt elephants for them. The area became of the major centres for the ivory trade in the interior of South Africa.[54] Ivory was the single major export item of the Transvaal before the discovery of gold, and the Zoutpansberg settlement dominated this trade during the whole period of its existence. For example, it was estimated that, during the hunting season from April to September of 1856, more than 1 000 elephants had been shot. During the 1850s, the annual average of ivory exported from Schoemansdal was estimated to be in the vicinity of 45 000 kg.[55] Between June and December 1864, ivory to the value of about £30 000 was exported from the South African Republic. This was about one-fifth of the total value of exports, and

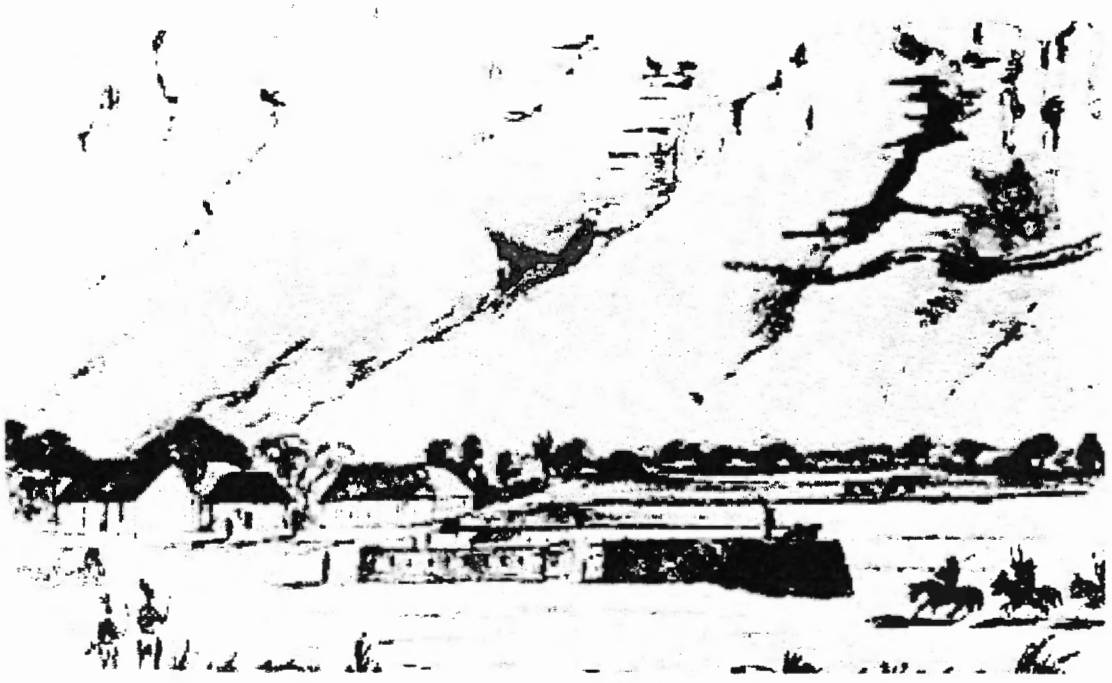
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ethnic identity, 1902-1924", in S. Marks and S. Trapido (eds.) *The politics of race, class and nationalism in twentieth-century South Africa*, London and New York, Longman, 1987, pp.95-123.

[53] T.A. van Ryneveld, "Remembering Albasini", see especially pp.30 & 114. Cf. J.B. de Vaal *Die Rol van João Albasini*, especially Chapter III.

[54] *BMB*, No. 4, 1860, p.63 & No. 1, 1863, p.3; C.J. Conerly "The Surrendering of the Lands", pp.12-17; J.B. de Vaal "Geloftedagtoespraak oor die geskiedenis van Zoutpansbergdorp (1848 tot Okt.1858); Schoemansdal (Nov.1858 tot 1867)," unpublished paper in the possession of the de Vaal family, Louis Trichardt, n.d.; J.W.N. Tempelhoff *Townspeople of the Soutpansberg*, pp.22-25; J. Tempelhoff and H. Nemudzivadi, "Riding the storm of change", pp.104-106; T.A. van Ryneveld "Remembering Albasini", pp.31 & 33-34 and R. Wagner "Zoutpansberg", especially pp.315, 330-331, 333, 336 & 337. The Hunting Act of 1858 specified that no Black person was to be sent on an elephant hunt without the presence of a white, all black hunters had to be registered with the landdrost, black hunters separated from their white supervisors during the hunt had to be back with him by the same evening and no white was allowed to take more than tow Black *skuts* into the field with him (Wagner p.31).

[55] J.B. de Vaal *Die Rol van João Albasini*, p.15 and J.W.N. Tempelhoff *Townspeople of the Soutpansberg*, p.23.



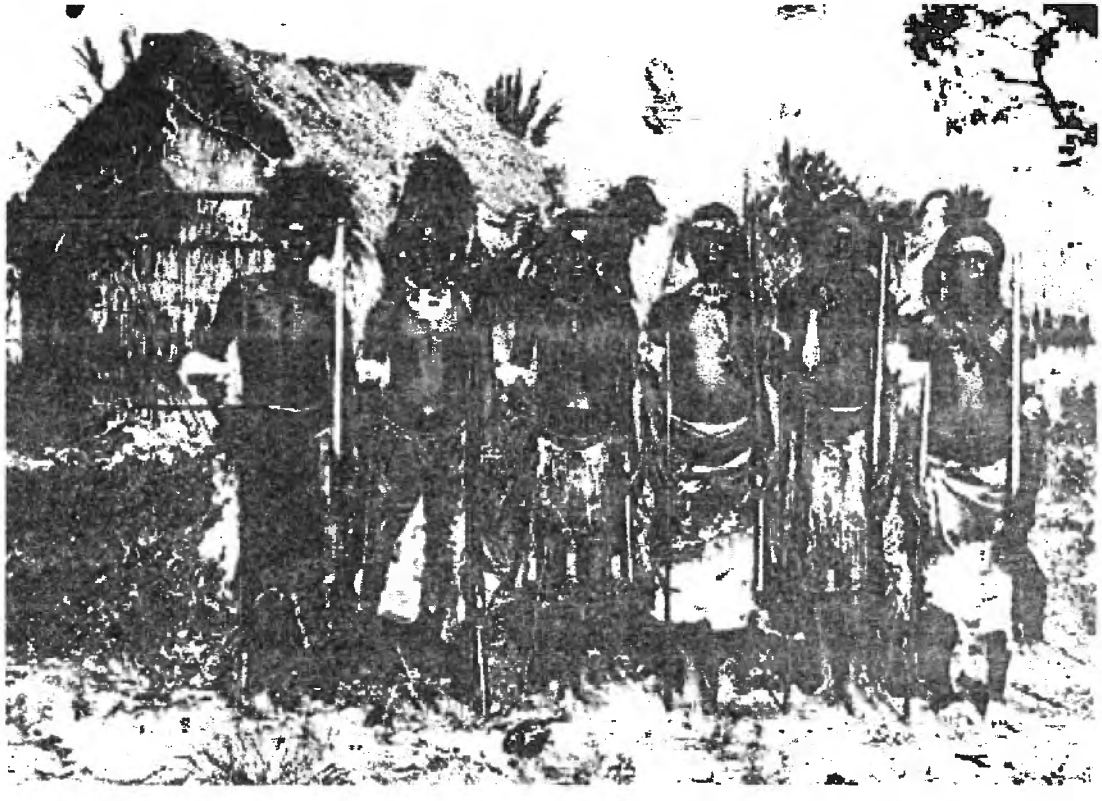
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[48] A *diesndoende* ruler, he provided the white community with labour, including a considerable number of marksmen, or *skuts*. See J. Boeyens "Black Ivory", p.204 and R. Wagner "Zoutpansberg", p.333.

approximately two-thirds of the ivory came from the Zoutnapsberg.[56] In addition to the other armed *skuts* - either working directly for or as agents of white hunters – Albasini and Michael Buys employed a large number of hunters. Albasini's hunters reportedly had about one hundred elephant guns [see Illustration 3]. In contrast to the other skuts, some of these were in fact legally armed. By special dispensation, he was permitted to arm guards for the protection of his travelling parties, no more than five per party. Similarly, in terms of the Hunting Act of 1858, Buys and his *skuts* hunted "for the benefit of the [ZAR] government." Some of these forces were thus also legally armed.[57]



3. "A picture of six of Albasini's elephant hunters" [58]

[56] J.C.A. Boeyens *Die konflik tussen die Venda en die Blankes*, p.1; T.A. van Ryneveld "Remembering Albasini", p.31 and R. Wagner "Zoutpansberg", p.315.

[57] J. Boeyens "Black Ivory", p.196 and R. Wagner "Zoutpansberg", pp.331-332. For a discussion of hunting legislation in the Transvaal/ZAR between 1858 and 1881, see E.J. Carruthers *Game Protection in the Transvaal, 1846 to 1926*, Archives Year Book For South African History, Pretoria, Government Printer, 1995, pp.25-44.

[58] D.F. Das Neves, D.F. *A Hunting Expedition to the Transvaal*, n.p.

African hunters enjoyed a major advantage over their white counterparts – their greater resistance to the "fever" (malaria) which killed many of those who came into the area to seek their fortunes.[59] Due to their proximity to Schoemansdal, many of Ramabulana's subjects were employed either as gun carriers or hunters.[60] Included among these was his son Khakhu, who would later achieve fame as Makhado.[61]

Running alongside this "white ivory" trade, there was a brisk illegal trade in what was euphemistically referred to as "black ivory" or "apprentices".[62] This system had its origins originally in Cape slavery and the indenture system at the Cape, as well as a Natal Volksraad Law of 9 May, 1851, under the title of "A law approved by the Volksraad concerning orphans or so-called apprentices, brought in by the Kaffir tribes around us."[63] The guiding spirit (and, indeed, many of the provisions) of this legislation was adopted in the Transvaal/South African Republic with an Apprentice Act of May 1851. Under the provisions of this Act, Transvaal burghers could indenture "'any child, orphan or orphans [who] were given as gifts or obtained in other legal or voluntary manner' from Africans." Such children could be compelled to serve these burghers until twenty-five years of age, after which they were supposed to be freed from "all compulsory labor obligations".[64]

In the absence of clarity about what constituted "illegal" procurement, since "apprentices" could be legally traded and inherited, and due to the support which local officials held for the system, it was extremely difficult to secure convictions for

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[59] *BMB*, No. 4, 1860, p.63 & Nr. 7, 1868, p.100; J. Tempelhoff and H. Nemudzivadi, "Riding the storm of change", p.104.

[60] J. Flygare *De Zoutpansbergen en de Bawenda Natie*, Pretoria, The State Library Reprints, No. 86, 1979 (originally published by Pretoria, De Volksstem Drukkerij, 1899, p.11.

[61] N.J. van Warmelo, N.J. (ed.) *Contributions Towards Venda History*, p.29 and R. Wagner "Zoutpansberg", pp.330 & 335.

[62] J. Boeyens (a) "'Zwart ivoor': Inboekelinge in Zoutpansberg, 1848-1869", in *South African Historical Journal/Sud-Afrikaanse Historiese Joernaal*, 24 (1991), pp.31-66 & (b) "Black Ivory", pp.187-217 and R. Wagner "Zoutpansberg", pp.332-333. For a discussion of the "apprenticeship" question in general (especially in Natal and the South African Republic/Transvaal), see J.A.I. Agar-Hamilton, *The Native Policy of the Voortrekkers: An essay in the history of the interior of South Africa - 1836-1858*, Cape Town, Maskew Miller, 1928, pp.169-195.

[63] J.A.I. Agar-Hamilton, *The Native Policy of the Voortrekkers*, p.180 and J. Boeyens (a) "Zwart ivoor", p.31 & (b) "Black Ivory", p.188.

[64] J. Boeyens (a) "Zwart ivoor", pp.31, 32 & 37-38 & (b) "Black Ivory", p.188 (quotations).

unlawful trade in African children. They were exported to other districts in the Transvaal and as far away as the Orange Free State. Even President M.W. Pretorius participated in this traffic.[65] The system had many features in common with slavery and many "apprentices" were, in fact, slaves under a different name. Since the term "apprentices" is a misleading one, I will refer to such people as "*inboekelinge*" – their particulars were supposed to be recorded in a book by a landdrost or field-cornet of a district at the time that they were indentured. As Boeyens has argued, it is impossible to determine the number of African children indentured in Zoutpansberg with any real degree of accuracy. However, according to the Berlin missionaries Heinrich Grützner and Alexander Merensky, the annual total was about 1 000.[66]

In attempting to understand the nature of this system, Agar-Hamilton argued that there was no real slavery in most areas of the Transvaal. However, conditions in the north and east, particularly in the Zoutpansberg, differed from those in the remainder of the area and the institution existed in various forms – some more disguised than others. Thus, in his opinion:

> In order to procure the necessary "orphans" men like Buijs and Albassini fell back on raids upon kraals which were frankly kidnapping expeditions. The dealers could well guarantee that the children whom they sold were orphans – they were certainly in a position to know![67]

This led Agar-Hamilton to the conclusion that men like Buys and Albasini "were cleary guilty of slave-dealing and kidnapping". Moreover, in the District of Zoutpansberg: "Apprenticeship was a mere pretext for the purchase and sale of native children and was often used as a polite mask to what were really blatant slave –dealing operations."[68]

In spite of these conclusions, Agar-Hamilton went to some trouble to find mitigating

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[65] J.A.I. Agar-Hamilton, *The Native Policy of the Voortrekkers*, p.218 and J. Boeyens (a) "Zwart ivoor", pp.31-32 & 35 & (b) "Black Ivory", pp.187, 190 & 202-203.
[66] J. Boeyens (a) "Zwart ivoor", p.32 & (b) "Black Ivory", p.202.
[67] J.A.I. Agar-Hamilton, *The Native Policy of the Voortrekkers*, p.192.
[68] *Ibid.* pp.192-193.

evidence, arguing that, in spite of the existence of various forms of slavery, "Genuine cases of destitution no doubt did exist." In support of this, he cited the evidence of the Reverend Stéfanus Hofmeyr, who stated that "a commando after a brush with a native tribe would often find numbers of children deserted by their parents and be obliged in common humanity to carry them off to save them from death by exposure." He also Quoted Hofmeyr's statement that:

> This also I know, that a Boer came home with a Kaffir youngster and said he had found him in the veld one day with a Captain who said to him- "I cannot feed this child, if you give me a blanket, take him, if not I am going to kill him."[69]

What this plea for mitigation does not adequately take into account is that even in cases where the settlers were acting out of "common humanity", the abandoned or threatened children had been placed in this position as a result of hostilities between commandos and the local African people. Rescuing people from a situation that one has had a hand in creating is less heroic than it may appear at first sight.

More recently, Jan Boeyens has argued that it is possible that "A small minority of the children indentured in Zoutpansberg were ... genuine orphans who were cared for by the masters of their deceased parents." Others were obtained from African leaders as "gifts" or were bartered from them in exchange for goods. Still others were obtained by Black marksmen, who used their guns not only to hunt elephants but also to capture children. However, in his opinion, the great majority of *inboekelinge* in the Zoutpansberg "were captured during the perennial wars which were waged between the Boers and the Africans on the northern frontier."[70] Moreover, it seems that prior to 1855, captives were mainly produced by wars waged in an attempt to open up areas of the interior of the far north for white settlement. However, after this, especially after 1860, most of the African children who became *inboekelinge* were captured in wars fought in response to African resistance to Boer attempts to enforce

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[69] *Ibid.* p.187 and S. Hofmeyr *Twintig Jaren in Zoutpansberg. Een Verhaal van Twintig Jarigen Arbeit onder de Heidenen in de Transvaal door den Eerw. Stéfanus Hofmeyr*, Kaapstad, J.H. Rose & Co., 1890, p.27.

their authority through demands for labour and, especially, tribute.[71] In these campaigns, almost without exception, the Boers were assisted by Black auxiliaries, especially Tsonga-Shangaan refugees who had fled Mozambique and settled in Zoutpansberg, either independently or under Albasini's protection. These auxiliaries often bore the brunt of the fighting. To encourage their enlistment, re-enlistment and continued loyalty, they were given the women captured during the engagements. They were also given land formerly belonging to those who they defeated, for example, a number of groups were given land which had formerly belonged to the Vhavenda.[72]

In attempting to trace the fate of inboekelinge, Boeyens has argued that "racial and other differences precluded [them] ... from being fully incorporated into Boer society". However, they underwent a process of acculturation and, in many cases, learned to speak Dutch. Since the majority were indentured at an early age and since they often intermarried with other *inboekelinge*, some of whom were of different "ethnic" origin, this process of acculturation was often comprehensive. For example, *inboekelinge* often lost the ability to speak their mother-tongues and forgot the cultural practices of their youth. As a result, they "became estranged from their societies of origin." It is probable "that a new social stratum emerged from the ranks of the 'apprentices', and that many of the so-called 'oorlams' Africans referred to in nineteenth-century literature on the Transvaal could trace their roots to the 'apprenticeship' system."[73]

We have already seen that raiding for African labour started hardly two years after the establishment of the white settlement. Boeyens has argued that prior to 1860, the burghers had not yet come to see that the kidnapping of women and children from *diensdoende* groups was counter-productive. They thus raided both these groups and

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[70] J. Boeyens (a) "Zwart Ivoor", p.31 (quotations) & (b) "Black ivory", pp.187, 198 & 201.
[71] J. Boeyens "Black ivory", pp.187 & 195 and T.A. van Ryneveld "Remembering Albasini", pp.34-35.
[72] J. Boeyens "Black Ivory", pp.196 & 201. Note that reports invariably fail to mention what happened to the children.
[73] J. Boeyens (a) "Zwart ivoor", p.32 (quotations) & (b) "Black Ivory", pp.206-207.

those who paid *opgaaf*. However, in November of that year, Mashau, a *diensdoende* Vhavenda *khosi*, was attacked by a commando under the leadership of Spelonken ward field-cornet Jan Pretorius, reportedly to punish him for his "disobedience". After the raid, white farmers complained to Pretoria that commando members had used the opportunity to divest Mashau's people of their livestock, hoes, grain, and women and children, as spoils of war. From this point onwards, raids took place almost entirely against African groups from whom the Boers claimed *opgaaf*. Indeed, the whole idea of "tribute became increasingly equated with indentured children."[74] Also by this time, the official collectors of *opgaaf* in the Zoutpansberg, Michael Buys and João Albasini were involved in many of the raids. As has already been alluded to, not only did their hunters capture children in addition to their hunting activities but, using their other armed followers, they also launched raids especially to capture children. These forces, together with local commandos and volunteer units sent by the ZAR government, provided the means to establish the ZAR indenture system.[75]

In addition to their raids on Vhavenda *mahosi*, Zoutpansberg commandos were dispatched against the people of "Makakabula" (led by Michael Buys), Modjadji of the BaLobedu and her Tsonga-Shangaan "vassal" Xiluvana in 1861. Cattle, sheep and children formed a significant part of the booty seized in all of these raids.[76]

In October 1863, Albasini, who by then had been appointed as superintendent of African chiefdoms, sent a Tsonga-Shangaan force under Munene – a leader of a section of the Maswanganyi who had become one of his military leaders - against the Vhavenda ruler *Khosi* Rambuda. The latter had closed the hunting trail through his territory and refused to pay *opgaaf*. While they failed to defeat Rambuda, Munene's force killed seventy-seven of his people and abducted women and children. By the mid-1860s, Albasini was sending Munene on frequent raids against Africans refusing

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[74] J. Boeyens "Black Ivory", p.197.

[75] J. Agar-Hamilton *The Native Policy of the Voortrekkers*, pp.192; J. Boeyens "Black Ivory", p.196 and T.A. van Ryneveld "Remembering Albasini", especially pp.78-80, 110, 124-126 & 161.

[76] J. Boeyens "Black Ivory", p.198 and D.F. Das Neves *A Hunting Expedition to the Transvaal*, pp.191-192.

to pay *opgaaf*. During these raids, he also captured children and kept them aside for Albasini. Possibly in part as a result of these raids, a number of rulers began to make children a part of their *opgaaf* payments at about this time.[77]

Among the other category of rulers defined by the Boers, *diensdoende mahosi* provided whites with marksmen (*skuts*), who in turn often provided whites with captured children. This practice was referred to in a statement made by M.W. Pretorius to a Volksraad Commission of 1865. He argued that he had been convinced:

> by two young African children (*Kaffer-kindern*) from the Kraal of Katlachter [Madzhie], who were driven by hunger to his laager, that the African hunters (*jagt Kaffers*) had the habit of capturing children from other Africans (*Kaffers*) and declaring them to be orphans.[78]

By the mid-1860s, the Zoutpansberg whites had come to rely heavily on Africans to do their fighting. This, and tax-collecting raids in general, played a large role in fueling and building tension in the Zoutpansberg.[79] This tension eventually came to a head over two conflicts within the African communities in the region – the succession dispute in the Gaza kingdom (in modern-day Mozambique) which followed the death of Manukosi in 1858 and that which followed the death of the Vhavenda *Khosi* Ramabulana in 1864.

With the death of Manukosi, the two main claimants to the throne were Mawewe and Mzila. Many of the settlers in the Zoutpansberg were threatened by Mawewe's attempts to bypass the Portuguese traders who operated through Delagoa Bay and Schoemansdal and instead open up more lucrative avenues of trade with Natal traders. Since Mawewe controlled access to very important elephant hunting areas,

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[77] J. Boeyens "Black Ivory", p.198. Before joining Albasini, Munene had broken away from the Gaza King Manukosi with his Maswanganyi warrior following. While technically a rebel of the Gaza, by this time he had been associated with Albasini for nearly twenty years. (J.C.A. Boeyens *Die konflik tussen die Venda en die Blankes*, p. 10 and T.A. van Ryneveld "Remembering Albasini", p.36.)

[78] Volksraad minutes, 6. Mar. 1866, art. 268, SAR Tvl, no. 5: 104, quoted in J. Boeyens "Black Ivory", p.198.

[79] J.C.A. Boeyens *Die konflik tussen die Venda en die Blankes*, pp.4-5.

this represented a very real threat to the economy of the Zoutpansberg. As a result when, after suffering a defeat, Mzila sought refuge with the Zoutpansberg Boers, they placed him under the authority of Albasini in 1859. On the one hand, the trader unsuccessfully attempted to engineer an alliance to put Mzila on Mawewe's throne. In contrast, there were also allegations that Albasini had agreed that he would kill Mzila for Mawewe in return for a reward of ivory. It was said that the fact that the ivory was paid but Mzila was not killed incensed Mawewe.[80]

Mawewe interpreted Albasini's collection of tribute from Sikwalakwala, one of his most important liegemen in the trans-Limpopo hunting grounds as a deliberate act of provocation. In response, at the end of 1860, the *hosi* closed the hunting grounds to people from the Zoutpansberg – a serious blow to the economy of Schoemansdal. By the following year, it seemed that his forces were ready to cross the Limpopo into the Zoutpansberg. Arising from the dual economic and military threat, a rival faction within the Zoutpansberg area entered into negotiations with Mawewe about the return of Mzila. While these negotiations were continuing, and realizing that he was about to be sold out, Mzila returned to the coast without Boer assistance. With the support of the traders of Lourenço Marques, who provided him with large quantities of firearms, he successfully ousted Mawewe.[81]

Despite losses on both sides in the continuing battles between the contending forces, by 1864, Mzila had consolidated his power enough to start exerting pressure on the Zoutpansberg hunting community. Having re-opened the hunting grounds, he then closed them again, demanding the surrender or execution of Munene and the repatriation of his Maswanganyi followers in return for their re-opening. It would seem that Mzila had calculated that the Boers would not execute Munene and this

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[80] P. Bonner *Kings, Commoners and Concessionaires*, pp.96 - 97; J.B. de Vaal, J.B. de Vaal *Die Rol van João Albasini*, pp.57– 58; T.A. van Ryneveld "Remembering Albasini", p.35 and R. Wagner "Zoutpansberg", p.326.

[81] P. Bonner *Kings, Commoners and Concessionaires*, pp. 97-99; J.B. de Vaal *Die Rol van João Albasini*, pp.59 – 63; T.A. van Ryneveld "Remembering Albasini", pp.35-36 and R. Wagner "Zoutpansberg", p.326.

demand was aimed against Albasini and the Boers, rather than at Munuene. [82]

It would appear that Albasini was preparing to return Munene. He was nevertheless warned in advance and managed to escape. Seeing himself as having been betrayed by Albasini and looking for new sources of patronage, he transferred his allegiance away from Albasini to an opposing faction at Schoemansdal. This consisted of *Kommandant* Frederick Geyser and *Landdrost* Jan Vercueil. It was at this stage that he gave the accounts of child-kidnapping on behalf of Albasini mentioned earlier. He also accused him of having had secret dealings with Mzila that contributed to the closing of the hunting grounds and of routinely falsifying the *opgaaf* collection accounts. These accusations, coupled with local power politics, led the local court to remove Albasini from his position as *Superintendent*. Claiming that he was accountable only to the *Uitvoerende Raad* (Executive Council), Albasini refused to accept the authority of the court. The *Raad* then overturned the decision of the court and restored Albasini to his position.[83]

The *Uitvoerende Raad* then sent a commission under President Pretorius and Commandant General Kruger to attempt to solve the impasse. Munene was placed in custody on 15 March 1865. The commission then decided to return him to Mzila. Almost certainly assisted by Vercueil, Munene escaped and took refuge in Vendaland. In attempts to recapture him, patrols under the command of *Commandant* Venter and Albasini attacked a number of Vhavenda groups. This caused tensions and the levels of conflict to rise considerably.[84] At this time, the conflict with Mzila converged with a second major conflict in the area.

In 1864, Ramabulana, the *khosi* based on the Western end of the mountains whose territory abutted that of Madzhie, died [see Map 1]. The main contenders in the

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[82] J.C.A. Boeyens *Die konflik tussen die Venda en die Blankes*, p.10; T.A. van Ryneveld "Remembering Albasini", p.36 and R. Wagner "Zoutpansberg", pp.326-327.

[83] J.B. de Vaal *Die Rol van João Albasini*, pp.78-79; T.A. van Ryneveld "Remembering Albasini", p.36 and R. Wagner "Zoutpansberg", pp.327-328.

succession dispute which followed were Davhana, the eldest son of the great house of Ramabulana, and Makhado, a younger son. While his claim to the throne appears to have been weaker, Makhado had greater support than Davhana. Most importantly, he had the support of the *makhadzi*, Nyakhulu, and the *khotsi-munene*, Madzhie.[85] The Boers also became involved in the dispute, with different factions supporting different claimants. In the fighting which followed, Davhana first fled to Tshivhase. When the latter decided to join Madzhie, Madzivhandila, Neluvhola, Matidza, Maphapha and Lwamondo in supporting Makhado, Davhana fled to Mphaphuli. When he no longer felt safe there, he fled to Albasini and sought his protection at Goedewensch. This action subsequently received the blessing of the *Uitvoerende Raad*. Davhana's presence at Goedewensch, and the support he was receiving from whites, were a serious source of conflict.[86]

In one of the first engagements, on 3 July 1864, Davhana was attacked by an impi under the command of Funjufunju (also known as Tromp), one of *Landdrost* Jan Vercueil's skuts and Michael Buys. Although a number of homesteads were fired, Davhana managed to beat the attack back and deliver a severe blow to the enemy.[87]

From time to time, clashes occurred. Matters worsened. Davhana was included in the force sent to pursue Munene, since the *makhadzi* who had opposed his claims was

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[84] J.C.A. Boeyens *Die konflik tussen die Venda en die Blankes*, pp.10-12; J.B. de Vaal *Die Rol van João Albasini*, pp.82-83; T.A. van Ryneveld "Remembering Albasini", pp.36-37 and R. Wagner "Zoutpansberg", p.328.

[85] The term *makhadzi* refers to a paternal aunt or any other ortho-cousin of the father who is *khaladzi* to him. *Khaladzi* refers to the sister of a male, the brother of a female, and ortho-cousins in the same way. (N.J. van Warmelo *Venda Dictionary: Tshivenda-English*, Pretoria, J.L. van Schaik, 1989, pp.99 & 168.) In the context of the royal family, as the term is used here, it is also used to represent one of the officials involved in choosing the successor to a *khosi*. According to Vhavenda tradition, the *mahosi* [chiefs] cannot name their successors. At the time of the *khosi*'s passing, his eldest sister from the third house becomes *makhadzi*. In conjunction with the late *khosi*'s elder brother from the second house, the *khotsi-munene*, she chooses the successor within two years of the *mativha o xa* (death of the *khosi*). (C.J. Conerly "The Surrendering of the Lands", p.xviii.) During the *khosi*'s lifetime, the *makhadzi* and *the khotsi-munene* act as his chief advisors. Together with him, they form the top executive structure.

[86] J.C.A. Boeyens *Die konflik tussen die Venda en die Blankes*, pp.10 & 18; C.J. Conerly "The Surrendering of the Lands", pp.18-22; J.B. de Vaal *Die Rol van João Albasini*, pp.75-76; T.A. van Ryneveld "Remembering Albasini", p.37 and R. Wagner "Zoutpansberg", p.329.

[87] J.B. de Vaal *Die Rol van João Albasini*, p.75.

killed during these operations.[88] At about this time, the conflict intensified. From April 1865, the Zoutpansberg community was forced to remain in laager. From their stronghold, they sent out raiding parties. They remained in this state, and at war, until 1867. The conflict was partly economic and partly military. The Vhavenda rulers blocked access to the remaining hunting grounds north of the Zoutpansberg, thus completely destroying the basis of the Schoemansdal economy. Added to this, the Vhavenda were in possession of a large number of guns, retained by the *skuts*. Unlike many African people in other parts of the country, because they had been trained as hunters for the Boers, they had been well trained in the use and maintenance of these weapons. They were able to use them with deadly accuracy against their former masters.[89]

Some idea of just how bloody clashes in this war could be is well illustrated by an attack mounted by about sixty whites and one thousand Tsonga-Shangaan on the mountain stronghold of the Vhavenda leader Magoro in August 1865. The Boers claimed that he was colluding with Makhado and had also refused to pay *opgaaf*. The engagement was won by the Boers and their Tsonga-Shangaan auxiliaries, who killed Magoro and about three hundred of his subjects. Alexander Struben's eye-witness account clearly illustrates the gruesome death which adult males, not in demand as *inboekelinge*, faced:

> At the foot of the hill I witnessed a fearful scene. They had brought down a lot of prisoners and then ensued a work of butchery which was fearful to behold – with a refinement of cruelty one was thrust forward and ordered to run and a short start was given to him. He was a well made athletic man but exhausted by thirst and hunger – and without a word he sprang forward and bounded swiftly down the glade. For about thirty yards he ran without interruption and then with a fierce yell and whoop about a dozen warriors clutched their assegais and tore away in pursuit. They draw nearer and nearer – in another moment they will be upon him – one has already raised his arm to strike, but with a fearful effort he rouses all his

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[88] J.C.A. Boeyens *Die konflik tussen die Venda en die Blankes*, pp.11 & 12; J.B. de Vaal *Die Rol van João Albasini*, p.75; T.A. van Ryneveld "Remembering Albasini", p.37 and R. Wagner "Zoutpansberg", p.329.

[89] J.C.A. Boeyens *Die konflik tussen die Venda en die Blankes*, pp. 12, 19 & 110; C.J. Conerly "The Surrendering of the Lands", pp.23-24 & 25-27; T.A. van Ryneveld "Remembering Albasini", p.37 and R. Wagner "Zoutpansberg", p.335-337.

> failing energies and with a look of terror springs forward and regains the start he has lost but it is the last effort of exhausted nature; slower and slower he runs now and his body is swaying to and fro and his limbs trembling beneath him. God help him for it is his last moment upon earth. A huge savage clad in a long hunting shirt of tiger [leopard] skins bounds forward with a fearful yell of triumph and with his long keen assegai stabs him in the back. He sinks to the earth clutching the tufts of grass wildly with his hands and biting the ground in agony. Warrior after warrior approaches and uttering his war whoop plunges his assegai into his yet breathing body or whirling his tomahawk above his head brings it down upon the warm yielding flesh. One then clutches the leg of the dying Maccatee and with wild yells and bounds, their feathers tossing fiercely in the wind, they drag the moaning body over the rough ground, and then casting it loose they spring away to repeat the performance upon another – and lying there bleeding, torn and mutilated the soul of the Maccatee warrior passes to its last account.[90]

The Vhavenda women and children who were captured were much more highly prized. This does not mean that their fate was not a tragic one. Women captives were given to the Tsonga-Shangaan combatants. Each white commando member was allowed to take two children to be apprenticed to him. Struben recalled that it:

> was a sad, sad heart-rending sight to see children, some of whom were yet hanging at their mothers' breasts, torn shrieking away, the parents yielding them in tearful silent agony... One woman as she was being led away fell down upon her knees to her owner and prayed him to get back her child – "it is so small," she said, "see it can scarcely stand, it suckles yet – it is no good to anyone but me – get me back my child," and she knelt wringing her hands and the tears streaming down her face. The warrior to whom she belonged pushed her up and led her out to the camp and so finished that morning's work.[91]

Though successful from the point of view of the Boers, the attack failed to reverse the erosion of the Boers' position in the Zoutpansberg. Periodic negotiations aimed at reaching a peaceful settlement failed. So too did a number of attempts to call up a commando from other districts to assist the Schoemansdal community. This was largely because those liable for commando duty were unwilling to respond. This

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[90] Struben account, A 595, 41, TAD, quoted in J. Boeyens "Black Ivory", p199.
[91] *Ibid.* p200.

unwillingness arose from fears that conflicts would break out in their home districts if they left them to fight in Schoemansdal, fears of contracting malaria in the Zoutpansberg in summer and a widely-held feeling that the Zoutpansbergers had given firearms to Blacks (for hunting) in contravention of the law, and that they were not prepared to face those guns. As was the case in other parts of the country, men were also resistant to periods of long, unpaid commando duty.[92]

It was only in June 1867 that a commando under Paul Kruger, commandant-general (and later President) of the ZAR, reached Schoemansdal. Hampered by a shortage of ammunition and the small number of people who had responded to the call, and facing a well-armed foe, they failed to dislodge Madzhie from his stronghold above Schoemansdal. Accompanying the commando was a commission which had instructions to investigate the extent to which the inhabitants of the district were responsible for the conflict. A number of officials, including Albasini, were charged with a variety of offences including murder, manslaughter, child-theft, theft, and improper procedure, and had to appear before a High Court that had been sent to Schoemansdal. Most of the charges arose from the campaign to recapture Munene but the action against Magoro was also represented. On some charges, the court ruled that the accused could only be tried by a military court as their alleged acts had taken place under conditions of war. These charges were then allowed to lapse. Two of the officials were found guilty, and sentenced to fines. However, a group of angry spectators stormed the court, chased out the court officials and freed the accused. They then prevented the later cases from being heard. Shortly afterwards, in the face of the continued closure of the hunting fields by the Vhavenda, the unsatisfactory military situation, the depletion of local wildlife reserves through overhunting, and with the settlers suffering a high incidence of malaria, the decision was taken to withdraw and abandon Schoemansdal, retreating southwards. Schoemansdal was abandoned on 15 July 1817. Albasini remained in the district and his fort provided a focal point for the small group of remaining white families in the area. A new town,

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[92] T.A. van Ryneveld "Remembering Albasini", pp.37-38.

Marabastad, was established in the south of the Zoutpansberg district.[93]

In the aftermath of the retreat from Schoemansdal, a number of attempts were made to subjugate the Vhavenda. The first commando to arrive was a volunteer force commanded by Stephanus Schoeman and accompanied by African auxiliaries. Avoiding Makhado and Madzhie because of their strength, they attacked a number of smaller rulers, including a number that Albasini had accused of not paying *opgaaf*. For example, in October, they attacked the Vhavenda *Khosi* Mashau, capturing five children and a few women. In a subsequent battle with one of Modjaji's headmen, they took seventy-four children and a number of women as booty. Subsequent to this, fifty-five children deemed to be above the age of three years when captured were provisionally divided among Schoeman's volunteers and a few local whites. Children under three were supposedly returned to their mothers. Captured women were allotted to Tsonga-Shangaan who took part in the campaign. In attacks on the BaBirwa in the Groot Spelonken in December 1867, Schoeman's volunteers captured a number of women and children. They were then taken to Albasini's farm. In late January of the following year, Michael Buys led a patrol against Serakalala, a Northern Sotho-speaking *gota* of Madzhie. They brought back a few women and children. The commando was later accused of having attacked rulers who had peaceful relations with the Republic.[94]

When it became clear that the campaign to subdue the Vhavenda had failed, the ZAR requested assistance from African leaders outside the Zoutpansberg, such as Mzila in Mozambique and Mswati of Swaziland. Attempts to recruit Mzila's Ngoni were delayed by a power struggle between Albasini and Schoeman. Even after this, the campaign was not successful. Mzila's forces did not attack either Makhado or

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[93] *BMB*, Nr. 7, 1868, p.102; J.C.A. Boeyens (a) *Die konflik tussen die Venda en die Blankes*, pp.66-82 & 110 & (b) "Black Ivory", pp.200 & 211 (note 69); C.J. Conerly "The Surrendering of the Lands", pp.23-28; J.B. de Vaal *Die Rol van João Albasini*, pp.90-104; S.M. Miller and J.W.N. Tempelhoff "Die romantiek van 'n grensterrein", p.36, pp.25-27 and T.A. van Ryneveld "Remembering Albasini", pp.38, 50, 51-52, 84 & 123.

[94] J.C.A. Boeyens (a) *Die konflik tussen die Venda en die Blankes*, pp. 83-93 & (b) "Black Ivory", p.200 (quotations); J.B. de Vaal *Die Rol van João Albasini*, pp.105-110 and T.A. van Ryneveld "Remembering Albasini", p.38.

Madzhie, the major players in the conflict. Instead, they attacked a number of smaller Vhavenda groups who were not in conflict with the ZAR.[95]

As Phil Bonner has pointed out, the Swazi took two years to respond to the request for assistance. Moreover, the remaining Zoutpansberg Boers soon found to their cost that "the Swazi were as apt to attack the chiefdoms supporting them as those they opposed, and their predicament became, if anything, worse."[96] The Swazi army nevertheless began its campaign against the Vhavenda in October 1869, launching an attack on Makhado. However, he proved to be a far more formidable opponent than they were used to. Both sides suffered heavy losses in a violent battle, beginning on 21 October. Despite their success in storming one of Makhado's main villages, "the Swazi then withdrew to find more vulnerable prey."[97] In November, they left the Zoutpansberg, reportedly with 4 000 head of cattle, 200 guns and 400 women and children. However, before reaching Swaziland, "Bemused by hemp and sharpening their spears", the Swazi and their booty were set upon by Africans in the lowveld and virtually wiped out.[98]

While the Vhavenda had not been subjugated, the stresses of these campaigns were taking their toll. This pressurised a number of *mahosi* to approach the *Uitvoerende Raad* to open negotiations for peace. As a result, a commission headed by Paul Kruger succeeded in negotiating some kind of fragile peace in November 1869. This did not mean that Makhado accepted the authority of the Transvaal government. Although he attempted to maintain peace with his troublesome neighbours, he ruled as an independent chief north of the Thorn River, a tributary of the Luvuvhu. The Transvaal government had lost effective control over a part of the Zoutpansberg District.[99]

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[95] J.C.A. Boeyens *Die konflik tussen die Venda en die Blankes*, pp. 93-100 and T.A. van Ryneveld "Remembering Albasini", p.39.

[96] P. Bonner *Kings, Commoners and Concessionaires*, p.115.

[97] J.C.A. Boeyens (a) *Die konflik tussen die Venda en die Blankes*, pp. 100-101 & (b) "Black Ivory", p.200 and P. Bonner *Kings, Commoners and Concessionaires*, p.115 (quotation).

[98] J. Boeyens "Black Ivory", pp.200-201 and P. Bonner *Kings, Commoners and Concessionaires*, p.115.

[99] J.C.A. Boeyens *Die konflik tussen die Venda en die Blankes*, p.110; C.J. Conerly "The Surrendering of the Lands", pp.28-31 and T.A. van Ryneveld "Remembering Albasini", p.39.

Attempts to subjugate the Venda were temporarily abandoned after this. Marabastad (just north of present-day Pietersburg) continued as the center for adminsistration until the founding of Pietersburg in 1885 [see Map 1].[100] Van Ryneveld has argued that "By this stage it was clear that the hunting frontier had been closed, and the main focus of Boer settlement had moved permanently southwards."[101]

Officially, this brought to an end the capturing of women and children as war spoils in the Zoutpansberg.[102] However, Boeyens has pointed out that slave trading may have continued in the area. Morrison Barlow, special commissioner for Waterberg during the British administration of the Transvaal (which began in 1877), stated that he had been offered first two and then three children in exchange for a Martini Henry gun by *Khosi* Mphaphuli. The *Khosi* had reportedly taken them from the Tsonga-Shangaan ruler, Xikundu, whom he had beheaded. Commissioner Barlow also reported that "certain white traders, I regret to say, Englishmen, are carrying on a regular slave trade with some of the Chiefs in the Zoutpansberg Mountains". They were allegedly exchanging "guns, powder and lead ... for young Kaffirs" provided by Mphaphuli, Makhado and Tshivhase. These unfortunates were then allegedly disposed of across the Limpopo in "Sechele's country". However, Boeyens has argued that, at this later date, slave trading between the Northern Transvaal and the BaKwena and BaNgwato in the Kalahari region seems unlikely.[103]

The northern part of the Zoutpansberg District was essentially cleared of white settlers until the conquest of the Vhavenda by the Boers in the Boer-Mphephu War of 1898. By then, the Boers had conquered the other African groups in the Transvaal. They were thus in a position to devote their full attention to the conquest of Vendaland. In common with other northern areas, this area had also been devastated by famine arising from a combination of the destruction of crops by locust swarms,

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[100] J. Boeyens (a) "Zwart ivoor", p.32 & (b) "Black Ivory", p.193; J.B. de Vaal *Die Rol van João Albasini*, pp. 142-143; T.A. van Ryneveld "Remembering Albasini", p.39 and R. Wagner "Zoutpansberg", p.316.

[101] T.A. van Ryneveld "Remembering Albasini", p.39.

[102] J. Boeyens (a) "Zwart ivoor", p.32 & (b) "Black Ivory", p.201.

[103] J. Boeyens "Black Ivory", pp.208-209, footnote 30.

drought and the decimation of livestock holdings by rinderpest in 1896 and 1897. The Berlin Missionaries estimated that a third of the population of Vendaland had died in this famine.[104] This seriously weakened the military might of the local *mahosi* and the ability of their people to withstand siege and the disruption caused by warfare. Against this background, Tshivhase and Mphaphuli seem to have concluded that the forces ranged against them were too powerful to defeat in open warfare. They also appear to have treated the war as a further campaign in the continuing battle for supremacy between the three great ruling houses. They rejected Mphephu's pleas for the formation of a united front against the invading Boers. Instead, they accepted the assurances of the Berlin Missionaries working in their areas that their best hope of retaining the maximum degree of power and independence (however limited this would be) lay in distancing themselves from the fray and negotiating with the Boers. With the fall of his mountain stronghold, and relentlessly hunted by the Boers who had put a price on his head, Mphepu was forced to flee into what was then called Rhodesia in December 1898. (He would only return in 1905, after the British victory in the South African War of 1899 to 1902) The Vhavenda were thus the last of the African groups in the Transvaal to be subjugated by the Boers.[105]

These events clearly demonstrated that, despite their vaunted military strength, Boer

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[104] Mpahpuli's country was the worst-hit in Vendaland and the famine only started easing off there at the end of 1897. In other parts of the region it started easing off much earlier. From about March 1897, people began moving from Mphaphuli's area to Makhado's area, where conditions were better. From about this time onwards, parts of Tshivhase's country also had good harvests. In July, people were still moving out of Mphaphuli's country and into Makhado's lands in considerable numbers. So serious was the situation that people caught stealing any remaining food in other people's gardens and fields were put to death. (*BMB*, Februar 1897, pp.69, 108, 109, 110, 112; Mai 1897, pp.274-275; Juni 1897 [Jahresbericht 1896], pp.336-339; September 1897, pp.531-532; Dezember 1897, pp.724-727 & 732-733; Januar 1898, pp.5-11 (killing of people stealing food on p.11); Juni 1898 [Jahresbericht 1897], pp.314-315 & 318 (estimated death of one-third of the population of Vendaland) & Oktober 1898, p.585 and *Bawenda-Freund*, Nr. 56, 4 Quartal 1896, 14 Jahrgang, pp.328-330; Nr. 57, 1 Quartal 1897, 15 Jahrgang, pp.343-345; Nr. 58, 2 Quartal 1897, 15 Jahrgang, p.351 & Nr. 59, 3 Quartal 1897, 15 Jahrgang, pp.358-363.)

[105] C.J. Conerly "The Surrendering of the Lands", p.31; D. McDonald "Vendaland", No.110, p.12; S.M. Miller and J.W. Tempelhoff "Die romantiek van 'n grensterrein", p.37 and U. van der Heyden "The Fighting Tradition of the Venda People", in *Sechaba: official organ of the African National Congress of South Africa*, January 1986, pp.10-12. For details of the Boer-Mphephu War, see especially *BMB*, Dezember 1898, pp.679-680; Januar 1899, pp.6-8; Februar 1899, p.45, März 1899, pp.93-96; Juni 1899 [Jahresbericht 1898], pp.324-325; Oktober 1899, pp.640-644; Juni 1900 [Jahresbericht 1899], pp.304-305 & November 1900, p.680 and J.I. Rademeyer "Die Oorlog teen Magato", in *Historiese Studies*, Vol. 5, No. 2, 1944, pp.104-113.

claims of supremacy in the Zoutpansberg had never been unconditionally accepted by Africans. During "the third quarter of the nineteenth century the dominion of the South African Republic over black communities was by no means a foregone conclusion."[106] In addition, the Zoutpansberg Boers were often engaged in factional disputes and were not the united group that they have often been portrayed as. Settlers of other European origin were divided in their support for the various Boer factions. Similarly, the ZAR was not as powerful, or as capable of imposing its will on its inhabitants, as nationalist historiography would like us to believe.[107]

It is against this background of conflict, labour-raiding, shifting alliances and mistrust, as well as the victory over the Boers at Schoemansdal, that missionaries came to operate in Vendaland.

MISSIONARIES

The first church at Schoemansdal had been built in 1851. Until the appointment of a full-time Dominee, the Rev. N.J. van Warmelo of the Nederduitsche Hervormde Church, services were held by community members and visiting Ministers.[108] This church was intended for the exclusive use of the inhabitants of Schoemansdal and their visitors. The first mission station to be established in the immediate vicinity of Vendaland was the Dutch Reformed Church station of Goedgedacht, founded among the Buys people by the Rev. Alexander MacKidd in 1863 [see Map 2]. The land to establish the station was given to him by the Brothers Lottering[109] and was on the periphery of the lands claimed by Makhado. Sotho groups (particularly those under *Kgoši* Seakamela) and Tsonga-Shangaan groups also had some claims to authority in the area. On McKidd's death (from "fever") at the end of the same year, he was

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[106] T.A. van Ryneveld "Remembering Albasini", p.28 (quotation) and R. Wagner "Zoutpansberg", p.318.

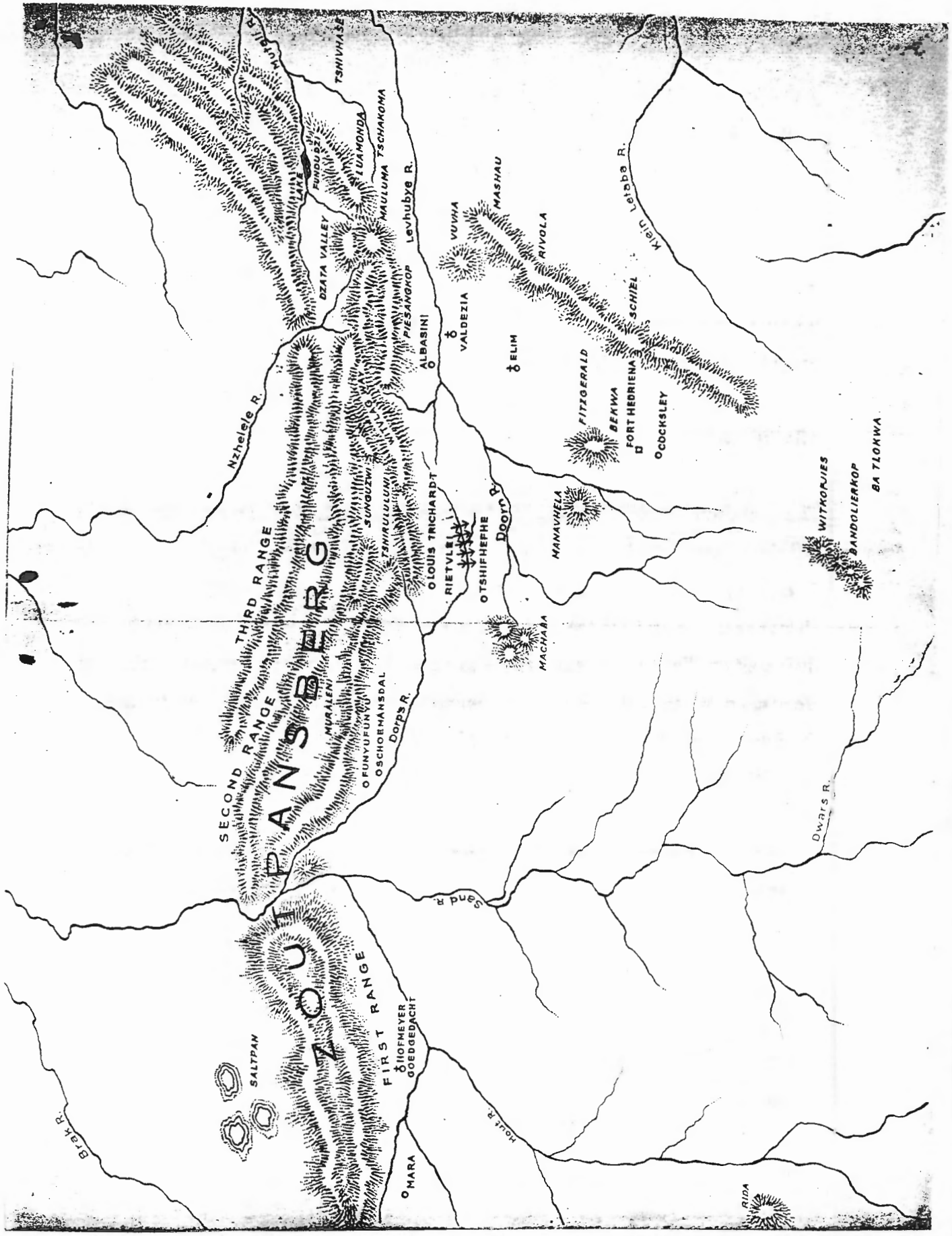
[107] See especially J. Boeyens (a) "Zwart Ivoor", p.31 & (b) "Black Ivory", pp.187 & 194-195; T.A. van Ryneveld "Remembering Albasini", pp.27-28 & 121 and R. Wagner "Zoutpansberg", pp.318-320.

[108] J.B. de Vaal *Die Rol van João Albasini*, p.13 and J.W.N. Tempelhoff *Townspeople of the Soutpansberg*, p.24.

[109] Referred to in some sources as Lothering.

MAP 2: Pre-1900 Settlement of the Zoutpansberg

[D. Möller-Malan *The Chair of the Ramabulanas*, end-papers (untitled in original).]



succeeded as missionary by Stéfanus Hofmeyr. Having abandoned Goedgedacht because of disturbances caused by the Boer-Mphephu War of 1865, Hofmeyr moved the mission station to the nearby farm of Kranspoort, which had been purchased from the Lotterings by McKidd.[110] Although the mission had African members, it remained largely Buys-centred. Because of its geographical situation (about 34 Km to the West of Louis Trichardt in lands that did not fall under the direct control of Vhavenda *mahosi*) and its membership, its activities remained largely peripheral to developments in Vendaland proper. Hofmeyr and the Berlin Missionaries nevertheless maintained a cordial relationship.[111]

In an interesting aside on the attitude of the Schoemansdalers to the mission, Hofmeyr would later record that, at the time of his arrival, the Boer attitude towards missionaries was distinctly unfavourable. His predecessor had been threatened with physical violence by two farmers armed with sjamboks. He himself had suffered ostracism because of his vocation. He had often had to outspan in the market square of Schoemansdal, eating and sleeping alone in his wagon, since nobody would have him in his house.[112]

It was missionaries from the Berlin Mission who would establish themselves in the heartland of Vendaland in areas under the direct control of local *mahosi*. They began to feel their way into the Zoutpsansberg area and give tentative thought to establishing themselves in Vendaland from the mid-1860s. An article in the *Berliner Missionsberichte* for 1866 introduced readers to the area:

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[110] *BMB*, No. 5, 1866, p.74; J.C.A. Boeyens "Die Konflik tussen die Venda en die Blankes", p.110; Bureau for Economic Research Co-operation and Development and the Institute for Development Studies, Rand Afrikaans University *The Independent Venda*, Pretoria, Benso, 1979, pp.20-21 & 34; C.J. Conerly "The Surrendering of the Lands", pp.6 & 27-31; S. Hofmeyr *Twintig Jaren in Zoutpansberg*, especially pp.35-42; W.F. Malunga "A Century of Dutch Reformed Church Missionary Enterprise in the Soutpansberg Area – the story of Kranspoort", M.A. thesis, University of the North, 31 January 1986, pp.1-7; W.L. Maree *Lig in die Soutpansberg*, especially pp.13, 36 & 49-60 and S.M. Miller and J.W. Tempelhoff "Die romantiek van 'n grensterrein", pp.35-36.

[111] *BMB*, No. 5, 1866, pp.74 & 77; No. 6, 1866, p.88; Nr. 9 u. 10, 1872, p.161; Nr. 7 u. 8, 1873, p.133; Nr. 5 u. 6, 1874, pp.70-71; Nr. 7 u. 8, 1874, pp.125 & 136 and Nr. 19 u. 20, 1881, pp.335-336, 337 & 340.

[112] S. Hofmeyr *Twintig Jaren in Zoutpansberg*, p.26. See also J.A.I. Agar-Hamilton, *The Native Policy of the Voortrekkers*, pp.117-118.

> The Sautpansberg district is in the northern part of the Transvaal Republic. ... It is named in the Dutch language and means the mountain of the salt-pans ... The mountain, which is named after the effervescent salt-pans at its foot, has also given its name to the entire district, which is bounded in the west and north by the Limpopo, in the east by the meeting of the Drakensberg and the upper reaches of the Lepalule, and in the south by the district of Pretoria. Many mountain ranges give the whole area the character of a mountainous landscape. There are also many springs.[113]

Turning to the inhabitants of this landscape, the article drew attention to the fact that the missionaries had "only recently ... managed to find out the names of some of the smaller tribes and their chiefs - some have not yet been identified."[114]

A visit to *Khosi* Madzhie, by Mission-Inspector Charles Murray of the Dutch Reformed Church in mid-1865 had been followed by a journey of exploration by Brothers Merensky, Grützner, Trümpelmann and Köhler from the Berlin Mission Society in September 1869. Included in this journey was a meeting with Madzhie.[115] Murray had incorrectly described Madzhie as "the paramount chief of all the Kaffir tribes in the Sautpansberg [Zoutpsansberg]" and his German Brothers accepted this.[116] By the time of the meeting of 1869, the Berlin Mission were noting that:

> the Batsoëtla or Batsoëta,[117] number about 40 - 50 000 heads; they are not proper Bassuto or Betscuana, because their language differs from Sutho [Sotho] as sharply as from Zulu, and shows a relationship with the languages of the tribes further north.[118]

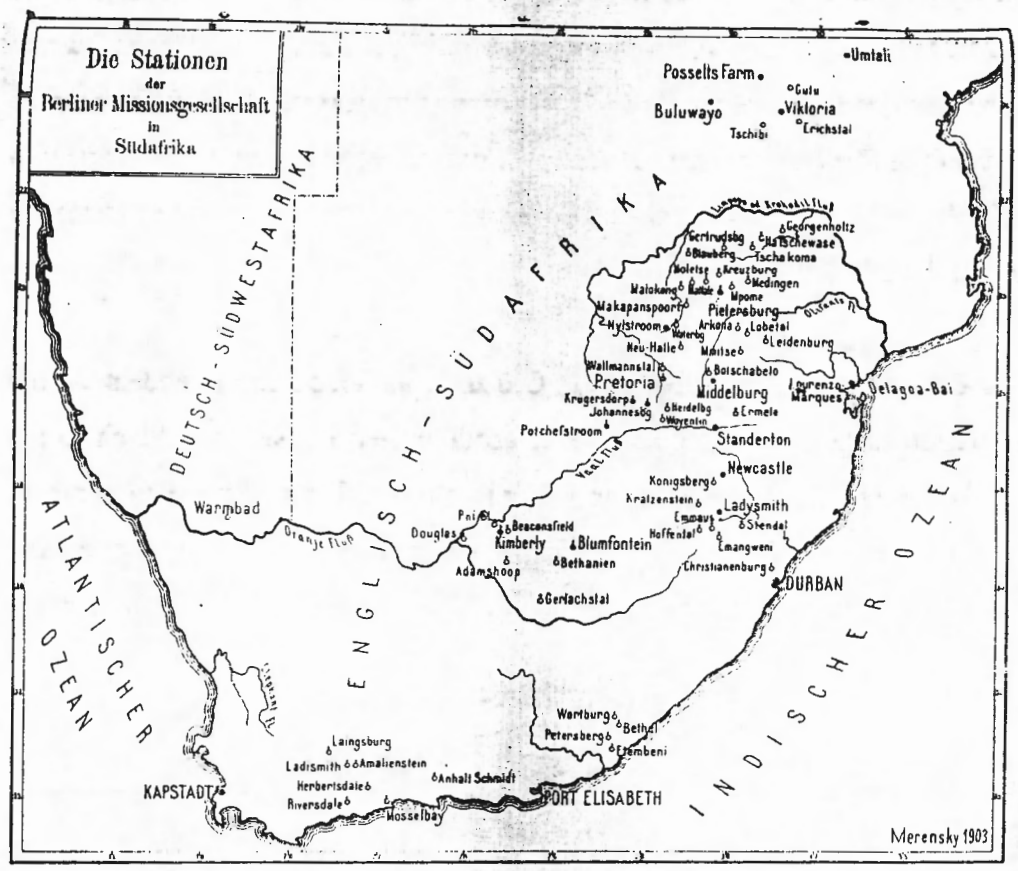
In October 1870, Brother Beyer, at Blauberg mission station - the closest Berlin Mission station to the Soutpansberg, undertook an investigative journey to what he identified as "the Batschuetla [Vhavenda] in the east of the Zoutpansberg."[119] [See

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[113] *BMB*, No. 5, 1866, p.69.
[114] *Ibid.* pp.71-72.
[115] *Ibid.* pp.74-76 (Murray visit) and Nr. 12 u. 13, 1870 [Jahresbericht 1869], pp.215-216.
[116] *BMB*, No. 5, 1866, p.74. We have already seen that Madzhie was ***khotsi-munene*** and a sub-ruler of *Khosi* Makhado.
[117] The Sotho name for the Vhavenda.
[118] *BMB*, Nr. 12 u. 13, 1870 [Jahresbericht 1869], p.215. The group further north were presumably the Karanga.
[119] *BMB*, Nr. 9 u. 10, 1872, p.159; Nr. 7 u. 8, 1873, p.133 & Nr. 7 u. 8, 1874, p.123 (quotation).

Map 3.] His main aim was to meet with Tshivhase to sound him out about the possibility of starting a mission station in his lands. He nevertheless had to give up the attempt as large areas were cut off by flooding as a result of extremely heavy rains. During the rainy season, "great surfaces of water, similar to lakes, restrict[ed] communication almost totally."[120] As a result, in his own words, he "had only travelled for half a day beyond Albasini's farm when the continuous rain made further journeying in to the mountains impossible."[121]

MAP 3: Stations of the Berlin Mission in South Africa
at the turn of the nineteenth century
[(No cover, bound in *BMB* 1909 Volume) Jahresbericht 1908, p.11]



[120] *BMB*, Nr. 9 u. 10, 1872, p.159 (quotations); Nr. 7 u. 8, 1873, p.133 & Nr. 7 u. 8, 1874, p.123.

In May 1871, Missionaries Grützner, Beyer and Beuster visited Makhado to discuss opening a mission station in his lands. By now they had realized it was he, rather than Madzhie, who was one of the great *mahosi* of Vendaland. At this meeting, Makhado managed to keep their hopes that they would be given land for a mission station alive, without actually committing himself to anything.[122] Just under a year later, in March 1872, Missionaries Beyer (from Blauberg) and Baumbach (from Makgabêng) made a reconnaissance journey to *Khosi* Tshivhase. At this meeting, the *khosi* made it very clear that "he had already for a long time wanted teachers to come, who could teach his people to read and write."[123]

Early in October 1872, Brothers Beuster and Stech started a mission station in the lands of *Kgoši* Mutle, a vassal of Sekhukhune. However, within a few days of its opening, and allegedly "much to Mutle's sincere regret," Sekhukhune "ordered that they stop work and leave his country." They returned to Botshabelo on 9 October. In the words of the *Berliner Misisons-Berichte*: "Soon after that they made their way to Sebase [Tshivhase], who accommodated them and gave them permission to start a new station there."[124]

From 24 October to 4 November 1872, Grützner, as Vice-Superintendent of the Berlin Mission in the Transvaal, and Beyer accompanied Beuster and Stech to the lands of *Khosi* Tshivahse. In Grützner's words, they had gone "there to come to know the conditions there and to consider the feasibility of establishing a new mission station there." Beuster and Stech would be left behind at the newly-founded

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[121] *BMB*, Nr. 7 u. 8, 1874, p.123.

[122] *BMB*, Nr. 9 u. 10, 1872, pp.158-162.

[123] *BMB*, Nr. 7 u. 8, 1873, pp.132-137 (quotation p.136) & Nr. 7 u. 8, 1874, pp.123-136. At this stage, the missionaries wrote Makgabêng as Makchabêng. Also, in this particular case, they recorded the *Khosi*'s name as Sebase. They also used the spellings Sebâse, Sewase and Shewasse.

[124] *BMB*, Nr. 7 u. 8, 1873, p.132. Botshabelo was the big mission station which Merenksy established in the farming area near Middelburg (Transvaal) for the Christian refugees during the Sekhukhuni wars.

station.[125] First called Ga-Sebase, following the SeSotho orthography developed by the missionaries in Sekhukhuneland, this was also at first known as "Sebâse (pronounced Schwâhsse) [Tshivhase – see Map 3].[126] Commenting on the people, Grützner noted that:

> Outwardly the people seem friendly; the language is very different from that of the Basutho or Matabele.[127] Our mission will again be entering a new language area! and Brother Beuster, who has just learned to speak the language of the Basutho, has the work, as well as the pleasure, to start at the beginning for a second time.[128]

The founding of the first station was followed by the establishment of Ga Matzebandela (later called Tshakhuma), in the lands of *Khosi* Madzivhandila, by Br. Erdmann Schwellnus, in May 1874 [see Map 3].[129] Although he was in fact an independent ruler, the missionaries at first incorrectly identified him as a vassal of Khosi Makhado.[130] Three years after the foundation of this station, in July 1877, a

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[125] Acta der Berliner Missionsgesellschaft betreffend Personalia: Beuster, Carl, Abt.II, Fach 3, Nr.14, 1865 – 1902 and *BMB*, Nr. 5 u. 6, 1874, pp.67-69 (quotation p.67); Nr. 7 u. 8, 1874, pp.130-134 & 136-137 (note that the first report on the station is pp.136-143).

[126] *BMB*, Nr. 7 u. 8, 1874, pp.123 & 136. Later, the correct Tshivenda orthrography of Ha-Tshivhase was used. After the death of Beuster, the area became known as Beuster. Today, it is either known as Beuster or by its Tshivenda name of Maungani. For the history of this station, see especially W. Gründler *Geschichte der Bawenda-Mission in Nord-Transvaal*, Berlin, Buchhandlung der Berliner evangelischen Missionsgesellschaft, n.d. [1897], pp.23-52 and G. Sauberzweig-Schmidt *Ha Schewasse*.

[127] Basotho or Ndebele.

[128] *BMB*, Nr. 5 u. 6, 1874, p.68.

[129] Acta der Berliner Missionsgesellschaft betreffend Personalia: Schwellnus, Erdmann, Abt.II, Fach 3, No.25, n.d.; [Anon.] *75th Anniversary of the Berlin Mission Station Tshivhase, 8 November 1872 - 1947*, Pamphlet distributed for the celebration, No Publisher [Berlin Mission Society], n.d. [1947], filed in Ha Tschewasse: NT von 1908 bis 1956, AUFB. FRIST a; ABGEL IV, 2E, 11; Bd. 1 [Box 3], Acta der Berliner Missionsgesellschaft betreffend Tschewasse, Abt. IV, Fach IIE, Nr. 11, Angefangen 1908 Beendigt 1958, Band 1 and M.I. Bressani [Comp.] *Im Dienst der Mission: Ein Gedenkbüchlein der Berliner Missionsgesellschaft*, Berlin, Berliner Missionsgesellschaft, 1963, pp.57-58.] Earlier spellings of Tshakhuma by the missionaries were Tschakoma, Tsakoma, Tshakuma and Tsakhuma. They first recorded Madzivhandila as Matzebandela and later as Matsebandela. For the history of this station, see especially W. Gründler *Geschichte der Bawenda-Mission in Nord-Transvaal*, pp.52-68.

[130] Thy used the term *Vassall* (*BMB*, Nr. 17 u. 18, 1875, p.364). By the second semester of 1875, they had tempered their description and were stating that Makahdo "exerts a sort of paramountcy [*Oberhäuptlingschaft*] over Matzebandela [Madzivhandila – *BMB*, Nr. 23 u. 24, 1876, p.392]." By 1878, they were referring to Makhado as Madzivhandila's "commander-in-chief" [*BMB*, Nr. 21 u. 22, 1879, p.409]. Madzivhandila was not one of the VhaSenzi rulers. For the sake of expediency, one of his daughter had married into the VhaSenzi royal family - the legend of the *Ngoma-lungundu* says that she was one of Thohoyandou's wives, the one who looked after the Drum.

third station, named Georgenholtz, was established in the lands of *Khosi* Makwarela Mhaphuli, son and vassal of *Khosi* Ranwedzi Mphaphuli.[131] [See Map 3.] The first missionary to be stationed there was Klaas Koen, a "born Hottentot", who had received some of his schooling and his theological training in Germany.[132]

While several out-stations were established from these main stations, the main *mahosi* were resistant to allowing the founding of further main stations in their areas or those of their subordinate *mahosi* and *magota*.[133] My own reading is that what they were attempting to do was to give themselves access to missionaries through

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However, as the ruler of a smaller group bordering on Makhado's territory, he had to be careful not to bring down the wrath of his much more powerful neighbour. During the nineteenth century, the missionaries referred to Madzivhandila as Matzebandela or Matzebandala.

131 Stationschronik von Georgenholtz, p. 1 in Acta der Berliner Missionsgesellschaft betreffend Missions-Station Georgenholtz, Abt. IV, Fach IIE, Nr. 13, Stations-Synodalakte Band I von 1906 bis 1962, p.125. Filed in Berlin Mission Archives, Berlin, Acta der Berliner Missionsgesellschaft betreffend Missionsstationen: Georgenholtz: NT von 1906 bis 1962, AUFB. FRIST a; ABGEL. IV, 2E, 13, Bd. 1 [Box 3]; Tagebuch der Station bei Ha Makoarela (Nicolaus Koen), 26 Juli 1877, in Berlin Mission Archives, Berlin, Acta der Berliner Missionsgesellschaft betreffend Missionsstationen: Tagebücher der Missionare auf Makoarela (Georgenholtz), Abt. III, Fach 5, No. 16, (I) [Box 1]; *Bawenda-Freund*, Nr. 54, 2 Quartal 1896, 14 Jahrgang, pp.292-293; *BMB*, Nr. 23 u 24, 1876, p.400; Nr. 11 u 12, 1878 [Jahresbericht 1877], p.256 & No. 21 u 22 1878, pp.490-492; *Mitteilungen des Vereins «Heidenfreund"*, Nr. 18, 1 Juli 1887, V Jahrgang, n.p. (pp.2-3) & Nr. 19, 1 Oktober 1887, V Jahrgang, n.p. (p.2-3) and G. Sauberzweig-Schmidt *Klaas Kuhn* , pp.11, 12 & 14. Missionary sources from the nineteenth century refer to *Khosi* Makwarela Mphaphuli as Makoarele. While Makwarela eventually came to succeed his father as *khosi*, during the period when his father was still alive his actual position was that of a *gota*. However, in common usage, a *gota* is referred to as *khosi* by his subjects. To show respect to somebody, one makes them greater than they are. On the other hand, people in positions of power often make people under them in the hierarchy smaller than they are. Thus, some professors at the University of Venda will address even married senior lecturers with children in their departments as 'boys' (*muthanga*, plural *vhathanga*). Throughout this thesis, I refer to Makwarela as *khosi*. See Footnote 25 for Ranwedzi Mphaphuli. For the history of Georgenholtz Mission Station, see especially W. Gründler *Geschichte der Bawenda-Mission in Nord-Transvaal*, pp.69-91 and G. Sauberzweig-Schmidt *Georgenholtz*. For New Geogrenholtz, established after the station was moved for health reasons, see P. Heimbach *Neu-Georgenholtz*.

132 Although mission sources noted that he himself spelt his name as Klaas Koen, in the writings of the Berlin Mission his name was usually "Germanised" to Klaus Kuhn or Klaas Kuhn. See, for example, Letter: Missionar F. Prietsch an Missionsinspektor X [name not given] in Berlin, 24.4. 1883, also reproduced in "Aus dem Leben des Missionars Niklas Koen", both in Acta der Berliner Missionsgesellschaft betreffend Personalia, Koen, Klaas, Abt. II, Fach 3K, No. 7, 1876-1883 and G. Sauberzweig-Schmidt *Klaas Kuhn*, p.5. Koen's biography is discussed on pp.200-223 of this thesis.

133 *Mitteilungen des Vereins «Heidenfreund"*, Nr. 16, April 1887, V Jahrgang, n.p. (pp.2-3); *Bawenda-Freund*, Nr. 42, Juli 1883, 11 Jahrgang, p.161; Nr. 23, Oktober 1888, VI Jahrgang, p.67; Nr. 54, 2 Quartal 1896, 14 Jahrgang, p.292; Nr. 55, 3 Quartal 1896, 14 Jahrgang, p.310; Nr. 2, April 1914, 31 Jahrgang, p.22; Nr. 4, Oktober 1916, 33 Jahrgang, p.11 & Nr. 2, April 1918, 35 Jahrgang, p.5 and *BMB*, Nr. 7 u 8, 1873, pp.132-137; Nr. 12 u 13, 1873, p.213; Nr. 7 u 8, 1874,

intermediaries without allowing them to establish themselves too close to the royal capitals or establish too great a presence in Vendaland. One of their aims in doing so was that they hoped to be able to use the missionaries as intermediaries between themselves and the encroaching Boers but still keep them at a distance from the socio-political centre.[134] Indeed, it was only in 1899, after the defeat of Makhado and the seizure of large sections of his former lands, that a fourth Berlin station could be established. Named Gertrudsburg, this was situated at Makhado, near the new white settlement of Louis Trichardt, on lands given to the mission by the Boer authorities. The missionaries saw this as a high-point in the development of mission activity in the area.[135]

Lastly, Swiss Missionaries first came to the northern part of what came to be called the Transvaaal in 1873. Their first mission station and farm was established at Valdezia (Lwalani) in 1875. Elim mission station was established in 1879 [see Map 2]. The mission farm of Kurulen was later established nearby. In continuation of their earlier medical work, the missionaries would establish Elim Hospital in 1899.[136] We have already seen that they came to an agreement with the Berlin Mission not to

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pp.123-143; Nr. 11 u 12, 1875 [Jahresbericht 1874], p.231 & Nr. 17 u 18, 1875, p.368.

[134] See, for example, A. Kirkaldy (a) "'Digging in the Archives': *Khosi* Masindi Mphaphuli, *Khosi* Makwarela Mphaphuli and the Berlin Missionaries in Vendaland, c.1876 - 1897", unpublished paper presented to the Biennial Conference of the South African Association of Archaeologists, Thohoyandou, 6 July 1998, pp.18, 37 & 43 & (b) "Makoarele's return to 'the darkness of heathenism': *Khosi* Makwarela and the Berlin Missionaries", in U. van der Heyden and J. Becher (eds.) *Mission und Moderne. Beiträge zur Geschichte der christlichen Missionen in Afrika anläßlich der Jahrestagung der VAD und des 12. Afrikanistentages vom 3. - 6. Oktober 1996 in Berlin*, especially pp.122 & 128.

[135] Stationschronik von Georgenholtz, p.2, *BMB*, November 1899, p.696 and G. Sauberzweig-Schmidt *Klaas Kuhn*, pp.31-32. For missionary discourse about the breaking of the power of Mphepu in this war as a breaking of the power of "heathenism", an opening of the door for evangelisation in his formerly closed kingdom and the founding of the station of Gertrudsburg, see especially *BMB*, März 1899, p.94; Juni 1899 [Jahresbericht 1898], p.326; Oktober 1899, p.643; November 1900, pp.696 & 706; Juni 1900 [Jahresbericht 1899], pp.259, 304, 306 & 308 & November 1900, pp.680 & 694.

[136] *BMB*, Nr. 23 u. 24, 1876, p.394 & Nr. 19 u. 20, 1881, p.335; C.J. Conerly "The Surrendering of the Lands", p.35 and Alexandre Jaques "Les coutumes funéraires des meurt dans l'eau", in *Bulletin de la Mission Suisse Romande*, Vol. XXXVI, No. 475, March - April 1927, p.256. See also [Anon.] "Das Missionshospital der Mission Romande in Elim", in *Mitteilungen des Berliner Vereins für Ärtzliche Mission und seiner Zweigvereine*, Nr. 2, Berlin, März 1910, pp.49-56; Nr. 3, Mai 1910, pp.73-83 and Nr. 4, Juli 1910, pp.101-107; M. Dreyer "'Welche Gleichgültigkeit! Welch Widerstand!' - Elim Hospital 1899-1906", student seminar paper, University of Basel, 1999

compete with them. They thus operated outside Vendaland. They nevertheless maintained a close collegial relationship with their German colleagues. In particular, they provided treatment for malaria and other forms medical care for the Vendaland missionaries and vaccines for them, their converts and local people whom they were able to persuade to be vaccinated against diseases such as smallpox.[137]

On a first reading, these events appear to follow the conventional pattern of popular consciousness whereby missionaries carry the Gospel to areas where its message has not been heard before. However, despite its apparent conventionality, this story has some surprising twists. When missionaries from the Berlin Mission Society arrived in the area, they found a small number of Christian converts already living there. Their activities form the basis of the chapter which follows.

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and T.N. Thavhiwa "Elim Hospital: Pure, Medical and political Administration, 1899-1997", B.A. Honours thesis, University of Venda, 1998.

[137] See especially *BMB*, Nr. 23 u. 24, 1877, p.485; Nr. 11 u. 12, 1878 [Jahresbericht 1877], p.251; Nr.21 u. 22, 1878, p.489; Nr. 21 u. 22, 1879, p.410 and Nr. 5 u. 6, 1886, p.78.

CHAPTER 2
LOCAL BEGINNINGS

Extremely surprised at finding a group of Christians in Vendaland whose conversion pre-dated the arrival of missionaries there in 1872, the Berlin Missionary Carl Beuster referred to them as having formed "a kind of conventicle".[1] Sundkler and Steed have pointed out that in doing so, he was using "a classic Pietist term, in vogue at the same time in nineteenth-century Germany and Sweden" to describe this early local group of believers.[2] Their core members had originally been Johannes Mutshaeni, Piet (who would assume the name and title of Totane) and Solomon.[3] Basing their arguments on cases such as these, and reflective of the wider context discussed earlier, Sundkler and Steed have also argued that the first few years of Vhavenda, Pedi and Lobedu "Church history elucidate in sharp relief an important theme in the South African development: the extent to which the spread of Christianity depended on local African initiative."[4] In attempting to explain this for

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[1] *BMB*, Nr. 19 u. 20, 1875, p.401. The concept of "collegia pietatis", conventicles (small groups or assemblies) of Christians meeting to study the scriptures and devotional literature, was first advanced by the German Protestant reformer Martin Bucer. A century later, Philip Jacob Spener (1635-1705) adopted the idea in an effort to implement the program of reform revolving around Bible study, spiritual exercises, personal piety and increased lay activity that has come to be kown as Pietism. (S.B. Ferguson and D.F. Wright (eds.) *New Dictionary of Theology*, Leicester and Illinois, Inter-Varsity Press, 1988, pp.515-516). For further discussion of Pietism and its influence on the Berlin Mission and its missionaries, see pp.39, 167-170, 172, 174 and 181.

[2] B. Sundkler and C. Steed *A History of the Church in Africa*, p.394. I was as surprised to find Johannes Mutshaeni, Andries and David Funzane discussed (albeit very briefly on pp.393 & 394-395) in this work as Beuster was in finding out about their existence in the first place. I only read this in the final stages of writing up and until then thought that they had never made it out of the original mission sources and had been ignored since then.

[3] Piet's father was a *gota* of Tshivhase's whose throne-name was Totane. I have been unable to trace the son's name prior to his baptism. Piet was his baptismal name. After succeeding to his father's throne, he adopted his throne-name, Totane. I use the name Totane both before he was baptised as "Piet" and after his accession to his late father's throne as *gota*. For the period when he was part of a Christian fellowship, I refer to him as Piet. Note that mission sources consistently refer to him as *Häuptling* (*khosi* or chief). Since he was a *gota*, and not in the line of succession of one of the great houses, I describe him as such unless in quotation. Thus far, all efforts to trace Totane and his father in sources other than Berlin Mission sources have proved to be unsuccessful. I have also been unable to trace Solomon's family name.

[4] B. Sundkler and C. Steed *A History of the Church in Africa*, p.383. For the cases of Jan Jan Masadi (recorded as Mafadi in contemporary mission sources), Jacob Mantladi and their convert Martin Sewushane (recorded by the missionaries as Sewúschan) among the Pedi during the 1850s and 1860s, see P. Delius (a) *The Land Belongs To Us*, p.111 & (b) "Witches and Missionaries in

the Pedi, Delius has argued that, for some, their first encounter with Christianity had come through their having been *inboekelinge* of the Boers. Others had lived on land settled by Boers, sold their labour to eastern Transvaal farmers, or had taken part in hunting parties organised by the Boers and other white hunters. With the developing importance of migrant labour, increasing numbers of men had also been exposed to the Christian message though their having worked as migrant labourers in the Cape Colony (particularly Port Elizabeth and Uitenhage) and Natal.[5] These themes also recur in the life histories of converts from Vendaland who adopted Christianity prior to the arrival of the missionaries. Extremely interestingly, they also contradict Delius' assertion (commonly accepted by historians of the northern areas) that, while significant numbers of Pedi, Sotho, Tsonga-Shangaan and Lobedu migrant workers

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Nineteenth Century Transvaal", pp.436-437 & 439-440; G. Scriba with G. Lislerud "Lutheran Missions and Churches in South Africa", pp.188-189; B. Sundkler and C. Steed *A History of the Church in Africa*, pp.384-385 and H.T. Wangemann (a) *Jan Mafadi, der Todesmutige Held*, Berliner Missionstraktate, Neue Folge, Nr. I, Dritte Auflage, Berlin, Selbstverlag des Missionhauses, 1883 [1. Auflage, 1871]; (b) *Jacob Mantladi, der tiefe Denker*, Berliner Missionstraktate, Neue Folge, Nr. II, Dritte Auflage, Berlin, Selbstverlag des Missionhauses, 1883 [1. Auflage, 1871] & (c) *Martinus Sewischan, der muthige Bekenner*, Berliner Missionstraktate, Neue Folge, Nr. III, Erste Auflage, Berlin, Selbstverlag des Missionhauses, 1871 [2. Auflage, 1890]. For the dramatic story of *Kgoši* Khashane Mamatepha among the BaLobedu, see pp.49-50, footnote 144. For the presence of groups of Christians in the BaTlokwa area who had been converted in the Cape and Natal and were holding secret church services in the late 1880s to avoid persecution by their rulers, see *BMB*, Nr. 11 u. 12, 1877 [Jahresbericht 1876], p.217; Nr. 11 u. 12, 1878 [Jahresbericht 1877], p.256; Nr. 21 u. 22, 1878, p.483 and Nr. 11 u. 12, 1879 [Jahresbericht 1878], p.199. In comparative perspective, for the activities of Robert Mashaba and several other migrant converts to Christianity who preached in Mozambique prior to the arrival of, or in competition to, the missionaries, see P. Harries "Through the Eyes of the Beholder: H.A. Junod and the Notion of Primitive", in *Social Dynamics*, Vol. 19, No. 1, June 1993, p.5 and *Work, Culture and Identity: Migrant Labourers in Mozambique and South Africa, c. 1860-1910*, Social History of Africa Series, Portsmouth, Heinemann, Johannesburg, Witwatersrand University Press and London, James Currey, 1994, especially pp.105-106 & 160-162. Mashaba's case is particularly interesting. He was a migrant worker who had acquired an education in Natal and the Eastern Cape and returned to Lourenço Marques in 1885 to preach his message that Christianity would bring about an African renaissance.

[5] P. Delius *The Land Belongs To Us*, pp.108-110. For the growing importance of migrant labour at this time, see Chapter 3 and P. Delius "Migrant labour and the Pedi, 1840-80", in S. Marks and A. Atmroe (eds.) *Economy and Society in Pre-Industrial South Africa*, pp.293-312. For a discussion of migrant labour to the Natal sugar fields, see P. Harries *Work, Culture and Identity*, Chapter 2. While this focuses on migrant labour from Mozambique, the text does engage the changing attitude of Sotho and Pedi workers (and workers from other groups) to this form of migrant labour. It also introduces some of the main issues involved and provides a useful overview of the changing conditions of, and attitudes and types of action engendered by, this form of employment.

were tied into providing labour to the Cape Colony and Natal in the 1860s and 1870s, "the Venda do not appear to have been involved".[6]

I begin this chapter with an examination of the lives of the principal members of the Vendaland conventicle prior to the arrival of the missionaries. This is followed by a discussion of the personal history of David Denga, who was converted independently of the others while working as a migrant labourer in Natal, over the same period. It was only after the break-up of the group that he came into sustained contact with Mutshaeni. I conclude the chapter with an examination of the changes brought to the lives of these converts by the arrival of the missionaries.

As Denga's case demonstrates, before the missionaries established themselves in Vendaland, there were other individuals in the area who had converted to Christianity independently of Johannes Mutshaeni and the Vendaland conventicle. They were either only peripherally involved with the latter group or had no contact at all with them. With the exception of Denga, it is generally impossible to reconstruct their life histories as no record of their existence remains beyond fleeting references in missionary diaries and the published records of the Berlin Mission. For example, Isaiah, a man of royal birth who had converted independently in Natal but was in occasional contact with Piet, did not seem to have the outgoing personality or ambition of Solomon and Piet from Mutshaeni's group. Despite his noble status, he had no great drives that have been captured in the historical record and seems to have been content to remain in the background. His tale coasts along as an adjunct to that of Piet (especially after the latter had assumed his father's throne and title) and then slides from missionary consciousness, and the historical record, without much more than a whisper.[7]

I do not see this problem of reconstruction as being a crippling one. Other lives may have raised other issues. Johannes Mutshaeni, Solomon and Totane nevertheless

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[6] P. Delius *The Land Belongs To Us*, p.63.

[7] *BMB*, Nr. 9 u. 10, 1874, p.174; Nr. 19 u. 20, 1875, pp.401-402, 409 & 420-421 and Nr. 21 u. 22, 1875, pp.439-440 & 442-443.

raise more than enough issues between them to significantly add to our understanding of the experiences of migrant labourers and converts to Christianity from Vendaland in the latter part of the nineteenth century. David Denga's life history amplifies some of the themes raised. In addition to my discussion of his life, some of the fears raised about the possible exhumation of his corpse for *muti* purposes are discussed in Chapter 7.[8] In this chapter, I also discuss aspects of Andries' life. Another migrant labourer convert, he had no contact with the Vendaland conventicle. His testimony amplifies issues surrounding local attitudes to the birth of twins also raised by Totane's experiences.[9]

JOHANNES MUSTSAHENI AND THE VENDALAND CONVENTICLE

In presenting his life history to Beuster, who would later publish it in the Berlin Mission's *Neue Missionsschriften* series, Johannes Mutshaeni fondly recalled both the hardships and the joys of his childhood. On the whole, since the Boers had not yet made themselves too troublesome in the area where he was born, the description focuses on the peaceful rhythms of a "traditional" rural lifestyle. Mutshaeni portrayed himself very much as an ordinary Muvenda, having grown up in a way which did not differ from that of his contemporaries. The obvious sub-text here was that just as he had been reborn as a new man in Christ, so too his contemporaries could experience the same wondrous transformation. While he seems to have recalled the tales and beliefs that he was exposed to during his childhood with fondness, since they were eventually published in a mission text, there is a covert message of what the missionaries saw as "superstition" in the way that they were presented to the reader. This becomes more overt when engaging his initiation and his acceptance into the *thondo* military formation, an institution which I discuss more fully in Chapter 7.[10]

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[8] See pp.397-399.
[9] See pp.368 and 385-393.
[10] See pp.383-385.

Mutshaeni stated that he was born about 1840 in the Province of Tshiheni, ruled by a *gota* of Tshivhase's.[11] His mother died when he was very young but he was well looked after by his father's two remaining wives. It will be seen that the missionaries were vehemently opposed to the practice of polygyny and could see no good in it. The irony of one of their greatest converts having benefited from this practice in his childhood seems to have escaped them.



4. Lake Fundudzi[12]

From his father's wives, and from his elder brothers and sisters, "he learnt about all the wonderful legends of this country" Many of these were connected to Lake Fundudzi, near his village, Thoho-ya-Ndou and his disappearance and the ancient capital in the Nzhelele Valley [see Illustration 4].[13] These "tales" reportedly made a deep impression on Mutshaeni. When he was old enough to look after his father's goats, he would often water them at one of the rivers in the vicinity of the lake. He would nevertheless "never have dared to approach the lake itself. Only from the top of the mountains, did he look down upon its mysterious mirror, over which flocks of water birds circled." Similarly, if his path led him near to any of the ruins in the Nzhelele Valley, "then he hastened his steps, casting cautious glances sideways, as if

[11] Tshiheni was recorded as Tschehenei. In today's terms, this is the village on the north-west boundary of the Tate Vondo forest, at the look-out tower which overlooks Lake Fundudzi.

[12] *Venda Travelogue*, Sibasa, Department of Information and Broadcasting, n.d, p.13 (titled "Fundudzi" in original).

he was afraid that the old king 'Head of the Elephant' might suddenly appear before him."[14]

Describing how Mutshaeni was inducted into the *thondo* of *Gota* Totane, the father of his friend and fellow convert whose case will also be discussed, Beuster recorded that:

> When he came of age [reached puberty], he went through all sorts of ceremonies and witchcraft incantations [*Zauberformeln*] which finally led to his appointment as one of Chief Totane's guards. Most of the Chiefs - as well as the wives of King Tschewase [Tshivhase] - had such bodyguards made up of semi-adult[15] heathen youths, whose duty it was to comb the whole countryside for the enemy or for spies of the enemy. Left complete to themselves, these youths soon fell into the most evil ways. Under the pretext of seeing to the security of the Chief, they moved through the villages, always on the look-out for a favourable opportunity to steal something - which they then skilfully and cheekily executed under cover of darkness. Nobody dared to resist them - were they not the Chief's "modinda" [sic. - *vhadinda*] or guards.[16] Motscheni [Mutshaeni] also fell into this wild way of living, and he enjoyed it.[17]

Thus, with Mutshaeni's early manhood and military training, the idea of at least the potential for warfare is introduced. This leads into a discussion of the disruptions and dislocations occasioned by the encroaching Boers at about this time. Mutshaeni and Beuster nevertheless did not see the impact of these new settlers as having been totally negative. Their presence also offered new opportunities for labour. According to the convert and the missionary, this had both advantages and disadvantages.

In conformity with descriptions verifiable from other sources already referred to (see especially pp.75, 77 and 80-81), Mutshaeni informed Beuster that, some years before, news had reached their community that Albasini "had come from Delagoa

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[13] C. Beuster *Johannes Motscheni*, pp.1-2. Recorded as "Tocho ea dou" and "Djelele".

[14] *Ibid.* p.2.

[15] He uses the term "*halberwachsenen*", which translates as semi-adult. I would rather use the term "young unmarried" instead, as that more clearly describes their status. Locally, a boy becomes a man when he has gone through the initiation school and he marries. The young men in the *thondo* had been initiated but he not yet married.

[16] *Mudinda* is the singular while *vhadinda* is the plural

Bay with a crowd of savage Knopneusen [Tsonga-Shangaan], and that he had settled on the boundary of their country." Having entrenched himself in his fortress, he and his troops set out "to raid the surrounding villages. He mowed down the men and carried off the women and children as slaves." It was only the protection offered by its inaccessible position high in the mountains that had saved Tshiheni from the "savage atrocities of the Knopneusen".[18]

Matters reportedly became much worse and the ordinary people's "fear became even more intense [when] ... Albasini and his crowd of Knopneusen" allied with the Boers to attack some of the most powerful rulers in the region. Unable to resist this superior force, Tshivhase was forced to sue for peace. Under the harsh conditions imposed upon him and his people, "He had to pay his suppressors not only cattle and ivory, but also women and children - even some from his own family." However, this was at least partly successful in bringing peace to "his country, while the surrounding territories were filled with the tumult of raids and wars." It was only with the fall of Schoemansdal, in 1867, that some kind of more widespread peace was secured.[19]

Mutshaeni informed Beuster that, at first, local people had been very suspicious of voluntarily going to work for these people who forcibly carried off their compatriots. In addition, during the time of his youth, the idea of working for wages had not yet taken root in the area. However, after several years people who had some experience of the Boers began to return to Vendaland. Presumably they were either *inboekelinge* who had been freed by or escaped from their former masters or the first returning voluntary migrant labourers. They stated that the Boers badly needed labour and paid a cow for a year's work. This was reportedly:

> something unheard of for the Bawenda [Vhavenda]. The prospect of obtaining cattle - and thereby acquiring the means to buy wives and so gain the honour and respect of their people - even overcame their fear and

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[17] C. Beuster *Johannes Motscheni*, p.2.
[18] *Ibid.* pp.2-3.
[19] *Ibid.* p.3.

> aversion of the unknown foreign regions. And when this one, and then that one, returned hale and hearty, driving the well-earned cow proudly before him, the wanderlust took hold of more and more of the young people around there. It was soon regarded as a disgrace if one had not been to foreign lands.[20]

Thus, the idea of going away to work gradually became an important rite of passage on the road to manhood. Apparently in the late 1850s or early 1860s, Mutshaeni and several of his companions left and successfully found work with a Boer. As with his fellows, he was reportedly "harsh and demanded hard work." Mutshaeni nevertheless rose to the challenge and proved to be a hard worker.[21]

Apparently reflecting both Mutshaeni's testimony and Beuster's impressions of the Boers, and in direct contradiction to the commonly-held impression in South Africa that the Boers used to have their servants attend home prayers, Mutshaeni reportedly:

> did not get a good understanding of Christianity from what he saw in the home of the Boer. The Black people [*farbigen Leute*] were not allowed to participate in the morning and evening prayers, and no-one in the home thought of worrying about the well-being of the souls of the Black people. After all, they were just "*skepsels*"[22] i.e. creatures, like the animals of the fields, good enough to be used and then to be cast aside. But Motscheni [Mutshaeni] saw hardly any difference between them [the Boers] and his own compatriots, other than that they only married one wife and observed the Sunday.[23]

Moreover, according to Mutshaeni's testimony, undisputed by Beuster, these Boers were not to be trusted:

> The closer it came to the end of the year, the harder the work became, and the harsher and hostile the treatment was. This was the usual way which many Boers regularly applied, to get their Black labourers - who were by then tired of the drudgery - to run away. The labourers had then broken the contract, and their master was the no longer obliged to pay them the cow

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[20] *Ibid.* pp.3-4.
[21] *Ibid.* p.4.
[22] Written as "*Schepsels*".
[23] C. Beuster *Johannes Motscheni*, p.4.

> for the work done. Motscheni however had a tough nature, and he persevered.[24]

In addition to this portrayal of the Boers as hypocritical, exploitative, devious and cunning, the account characterized them as being cruel as well. Mutshaeni continued his tale by stating that there were still many lions in the area where the Boer lived. One day, he went hunting, taking Johannes with him to carry his gun. Seeing a lion, the Boer instructed Johannes to give him the gun and to carry on walking towards the lion, presumably to attract its attention, while he shot. "But Baas, the lion will bite me!" "Be quiet Boy," commanded the Boer, "and walk. I will shoot it."[25]

Mutshaeni tremblingly followed his master's order. The Boer fired but missed. Again the Boer loaded and told Johannes to walk towards the lion. Terrified out of his wits, Mutshaeni attempted to climb a tree. The Boer threatened to shoot him if he refused to come down and approach the lion. Climbing down, he begged for a knife so that he could at least attempt to defend himself. His master refused to supply him with this but Johannes was as scared of him as of the lion and continued walking. The Boer fired for a second time, again missing the lion. Wheeling his horse around, he fled from the scene, leaving Mutshaeni at the mercy of the lion. In what he would later interpret as a sign of divine protection, the enormous lion calmly turned its back and walked away. [26]

As the account continues, it becomes clear that Mutshaeni and Beuster were strongly implying that there could have been more to the flight of the Boer than mere cowardice. Were his labourer to disappear or die in his service, there would be no need to pay him his wage of a cow at the end of the contract period. During the closing part of the contract period, when Mutshaeni and his master were returning from one of their many hunting trips together, the Boer sent the wagon ahead. He followed on horseback while Mutshaeni walked and ran next to the horse. As the sun

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[24] *Ibid.*
[25] *Ibid.*
[26] *Ibid.* pp.4-5.

started setting, the Boer instructed him to follow the horse's spoor home. "With that he dug his heels into the horse and raced away."

For a while, Mutshaeni managed to follow the spoor. He nevertheless lost it once it began to get properly dark:

> He then continued on in good faith and with luck, managed to get to the wagon trail. Suddenly he heard a loud roar, and saw several lions at the water just ahead of him. What should he do now? Should he climb into a tree? But what if the lions lay in wait for him there, or if he fell out of the tree in his sleep? So he tried to evade them and to reach the wagon along a detour. But he had hardly gone a few paces, when the eyes of another lion shone at him through the darkness. Terrified he fled from there, but the lion gave no indication of wanting to follow him. When he finally reached the wagon - out of breath and half dead from the heart-stopping terror he had experienced - the leader of the wagon, Jacob, and the other Black people [*Farbigen*] could hardly believe it that he had found the road in the dark of night and they were very happy about his lucky escape. The Boer seemed less pleased. It would most probably not have been too unwelcome to never set eyes on his labourer again, so close to the end of his year of service. So there was nothing else left to him, but to present the labourer with the stipulated cow, with which Motscheni [Mutshaeni] proudly returned to his home.[27]

In the light of Mutshaeni's later consciousness, and in an interpretation shared (and possibly partly shaped by) Beuster, God was clearly protecting Mutsaheni and leading him to the point where he would have to make a decision about conversion and salvation – the gradual turning to God so characteristic of Pietistic thinking. In line with this cosmology, the hardships and disappointments that he was experiencing were also helping to strengthen and shape his character and lead him to the point where he would turn to God. However, before he could reach this position, he would need to learn that, without the grace of God, all human endeavour and all human strength was bound to fail. While he would reach the first stage of this new consciousness in continuing labour for a Transvaal Boer, later developments would have to await his move to Natal as a migrant labourer.

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[27] *Ibid.* p.5.

From a less theological perspective, Johannes' elder brother wanted to get married. The negotiations with his prospective bride's family had already taken place but he did not have enough cattle to hand over to them. As the younger brother, Johannes therefore agreed to go and work for another year. He would then give his cattle to his brother so that he could get married. At a later date, his brother would help him to obtain a wife.[28] This arrangement was (and still is) the expected one in terms of the local cosmology. In ideal terms anyway, there was a strong pecking order and the younger was expected to be submissive to the elder. To balance this, the older one was expected to take care of the younger one. It was therefore natural for the older brother to marry first. Also, what one had earned did not belong to one alone, but belonged to the family or clan. It was therefore natural for the cow to be used for the elder brother's marriage. In this particular case, the father was still alive and was the head of an extended polygamous family. Under such conditions, the eldest son could not be expected to go away to work, leaving the family alone, as he was expected to assist his aged father in managing the family. He therefore had to take care of problems at home. So the younger ones could be sent out to work, while he remained at home helping his father, the head of the family.

Since he was still young, strong and a hard worker, Mutsaheni soon found work again. At the end of his year's contract, "he had had more than enough of his work for this Boer and his heart beat impatiently for home, which he did not intend to leave again. But man proposes and God disposes." On his way home, in the vicinity of Waterberg Mission Station, near present-day Kranspoort, he met some people from home. They informed him that his eldest brother had died of smallpox. It reportedly seemed to him as if all that he had been looking forward to had evaporated. "The joy in the cow as well as the return to his home all disappeared and turned to disgust, and he reached Tschehene [Tshiheni] in a state of gloom and depression."[29]

Having spent some months at home, Mutshaeni came into contact with some local

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[28] *Ibid.* pp.5-6.

people who had returned home from labour contracts in Natal. They reportedly:

> told him that far, far beyond the land of the Boers, there lived another people, called the Muinglisman [*Vha-Isimane*] i.e. Englishmen. [30] They are said to be as rich as kings, but they have better customs and treat their labourers more gently than the Boers. And the main thing was, that one could there buy precious guns for the easily earned money - the possession of a gun was the essence of the longing of all Black people. Motscheni [Mutshaeni] did not take long to make up his mind. This time he did not have to go alone. Some of his earlier comrades - amongst whom was Totane, the son and heir of the Chief - accompanied him, hoping to also procure guns in this far away land.[31]

Although guns were freely available to Africans in the Cape Colony, especially on the Kimberley diamond fields, laws against the possession of firearms by Africans were much more vigorously enforced in Natal. This did not prevent a lively trade in illegal weapons from developing to cater for the demands of African migrant workers. A number of authors have commented on the crucial importance attached to firearms both for use in the defence of home communities against settler intrusion or in other local battles, and as an essential symbol of manhood.[32]

After a long and difficult walk, Mutshaeni and his travelling companions reached Pietermaritzburg:[33]

> Here they saw things they had never seen before: the shops, the cannon and especially the soldiers with their bright decorated uniforms and good

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[29] *Ibid.* p.6.

[30] *Isimane* is the Tshivenda pronunciation of the term "Englishman" or "Engelsman". "*Mu*" is the singular prefix, while "*Vha*" is the plural

[31] C. Beuster *Johannes Motscheni*, p.6.

[32] See, for example, P. Delius "Migrant Labour and the Pedi", pp. 296, 297, 300-302, 303-304 & 307-308; P. Harries *Work, Culture and Identity*, pp.32 & 84; J. Kimble "Labour migration in Basutoland, c.1870-1885", in S. Marks and R. Rathbone (eds.) *Industrialisation and Social Change in South Africa: African class formation, culture and consciousness 1870-1930*, London and New York, Longmans, 1982, pp.121 & 124-125; S. Marks and A. Atmore "Introduction", in S. Marks and A. Atmroe (eds.) *Economy and Society in Pre-Industrial South Africa*, pp.31-32; S. Marks and R. Rathbone "Introduction", in S. Marks and R. Rathbone (eds.) *Industrialisation and Social Change*, p.15; B. Sundkler and C. Steed *A History of the Church in Africa*, p.392 and R. Turrell "Kimberley: labour and compounds, 1871-1888, in S. Marks and R. Rathbone (eds.) *Industrialisation and Social Change*, p.50. For discussion of the trade in guns between Natal and Lourenço Marques and Delagoa Bay, see P. Harries *Work, Culture and Identity*, especially pp.84, 85, 99-101 and 104-105.

[33] Recorded as "Martizburg".

> weapons. All of these roused their amazement and admiration. Things were certainly different here than they had been with the Transvaal Boers. They had never seen things like this before; yes, this was beyond anything they had ever imagined.[34]

Some of their fellow countrymen had come to Pietermaritzburg earlier, found jobs, married and no longer wished to return home. A number of these had already been baptised, or were attending baptism classes. They made it their special concern to take care of the new arrivals. They helped them to find work and encouraged them to attend Christian meetings with them during the evenings and on Sundays. Neither Mutshaeni nor any of his travelling companions "had the least idea about what these meetings were about." However, out of "mere curiosity", on the Sunday after his arrival, he attended "the Methodist chapel with his mouth and eyes wide open,[35] listening to the sermon of the Rev.Alison [Allison], who proclaimed the Gospel to the Black people [*Farbigen*] with holy zeal." Since the preaching was in Zulu, Mutshaeni "could not understand very much. But the service itself made a deep impression on him. On the next Sunday, he went again and never missed a single church meeting after that."[36]

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[34] C. Beuster *Johannes Motscheni*, p.7.

[35] "mouth wide open" indicates amazement, "eyes wide open" indicates that he was alert, wanting to see everything that was going on.

[36] C. Beuster *Johannes Motscheni*, p.7. Allison's class background was very similar to that of the Berlin Missionaries (see especially pp.172-174 & 186-187). Born in Edinburgh in 1872, James Allison was the eldest son of the seven children of James Allison, a soldier, and his wife, Ann. In 1820, the family emigrated to South Africa and settled near Grahamstown. Apprenticed as a hatmaker, the young Allison in turn became a master-craftsman. After a religious conversion experience, Allison resolved to become a Wesleyan missionary. In 1832, he joined the Rev. John Edwards as an artisan and catechist, labouring with him among the Griquas under Barend Barends at Boetsap, Bechuanaland. In a move to more fertile agricultural land, in December 1833, a number of missionaries and about 12 000 Rolong, Griquas, Korana and Bastards moved to a tract of country obtained from Moshoeshoe, King of the Basotho, and Sekonyela, leader of the Tlokwa. Allison formed a new station at Imperani, near the home of Sekonyela. Here he built a chapel, started a school and took ten young men, the children of the principal men of the area, into his home for religious instruction. As a foretaste to the task which would eventually be fulfilled by some of his converts from Vendaland, once he was satisfied with their progress, he sent them out to preach in nearby villages. Allison was accepted as a candidate for the Wesleyan ministry in 1839 and achieved the status of and assistant missionary in 1843. (W.J. De Kock (ed. in chief) *Dictionary of South African Biography*, Volume I, Cape Town, Published for the National Council for Social Research, Department of Higher Education by Nasionale Boekhandel Beperk, 1968, p.11 and S.M. Meintjes "Edendale 1850-1906: A Case Study of Rural Transformation and Class Formation in an African Mission in Natal", PhD thesis, School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London, 1988, pp.46-47, 62-64 & 65-78.)

In 1845, Allison took charge of the new mission station of Mohamba in Swaziland. Having

In true Pietistic mould: "The more he began to understand the sermons, the more a new light began to shine over his whole previous life. Suddenly he realised that he was a terrible sinner, and a big turmoil took hold of him." In his time of trouble, he turned to his Christian friends for advice. They informed him that the only way to quieten his heart again was to "go to the teacher and learn about the Word". Accepting their advice, he began attending baptism classes. He was joined in this by some of his friends, including Totane. It was reportedly:

> no easy matter for the men to practice the difficult art of reading by the sweat of their brows, in the evening, after they had worked hard for the

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been expelled by King Mswati II for giving refuge to one of his enemies, Alison and about one-thousand inhabitants of the mission station left Swaziland in April of the following year. In 1847, he and his flock settled at Indaleni, near Pietermaritzburg, on land granted by the Natal government. While mission work here enjoyed great success, the station had a controversial history. Having become embroiled in a power struggle between various missionaries in the Natal District, Allison was suspended from the Wesleyan ministry in 1848, only a year after his ordination. In response, he resigned, but continued the mission on his own account. Reinstated in 1851, he nevertheless resigned again as this reinstatement was conditional on his accepting a transfer. Discovering that Allison had contemplated joining the "Reformers", a movement which had arisen in Britain against the more authoritarian aspects of Wesleyan doctrine, the mission responded by nullifying his resignation and summarily expelling him from the Society. With this, he and his congregation established an independent mission on the farm Welverdiend, which was re-named Edendale. Here individual plots were laid out with the intention that, once the land was paid for, these would be held in freehold tenure by the inhabitants of the mission station. (W.J. De Kock (ed.) *Dictionary of South African Biography*, Volume I, p.12; J.S.M. Matsebula *A History of Swaziland*, Third Edition, Cape Town, Longman, 1988, pp. 38, 39-43, 103-104 & 248-249 and S.M. Meintjes "Edendale 1850-1906", pp. 33-34, 64, 78-81, 98, 102 & 104-117. See also S. Meintjes "Law and Authority on a Nineteenth Century Mission Station in Natal", University of the Witwatersrand, History Workshop Conference, Class Community and Conflict: Local Perspectives, February 1994, pp.7-9.)

Towards the end of 1859, the farm having been paid off, the shareholders demanded their individual title deeds. To their dismay, they discovered that survey and transfer fees would cost over £500. Had this been done earlier, it would only have cost £150. Seriously doubting Allison's *bona fides*, the shareholders turned to the Wesleyan Missionary Society in 1860, seeking reconnection. The missionary's actions during the negotiations transferring the mission to the Wesleyans completely estranged him from the community. He demanded payment for his mission service to the community over the previous six years and retention of his mill, together with forty acres of land. This he let to a white miller for the sum of £180 per annum. He also demanded payment for the village bell, which he had purchased many years before in Grahamstown. Unwelcome at Edendale from this point onwards, he continued his Christian work in Pietermaritzburg. Here he built Ebenezer Chapel, other places of worship and a house. It seems to have been at this stage that Mutshaeni, Totane and their companions came into contact with, and were baptised by, him. Having joined the Free Church of Scotland as a Minister in 1867, Allison founded the Impolweni Mission, about fourteen miles from Pietermaritzburg, in 1869. He died in April 1875, still unreconciled with the Edendale community. (W.J. De Kock (ed.) *Dictionary of South African Biography*, Volume I, p.12 and S.M. Meintjes (a) "Law and Authority", p.9 & (b) "Edendale 1850-1906", pp.146-148.)

> whole day. Sometimes the curly signs would just not stick in Motscheni's [Mutshaeni's] head. Where the natural aptitude of the others put them ahead of Motscheni, he had to make up for it with faithful and hard work, so that his teacher came to have a special soft spot for him.[37]

Having received the name Johannes on his baptism, he and his fellow Vhavenda baptismal mates, Piet (Totane), Jacob, Jesaias and Solomon "promised each other that they would faithfully keep contact with one another and mutually strengthen each other in the new-found faith." They also decided to return to Vendaland "to preach the Good News to their relatives and friends there."[38]

Before they returned home, they travelled to the sea and were greatly impressed by what they saw as this "great wonder of the world, the large mass of water." While on this trip, they also visited Christianenburg, the Lutheran Mission Station (founded in 1854) at New Germany, on the outskirts of Durban. This was where all the new missionaries to Natal and the Transvaal were received, when they arrived by boat. Here they met Missionary Posselt, who "sincerely welcomed the young Christians as Children and Brothers in Christ." [39] Again in conformity with Pietistic notions of conversion, Beuster recorded that: "The meeting with this faithful witness for Christ and his urgent warning that they should now be faithful unto death, made a lasting impression on Johannes."[40]

Having returned to Pietermaritzburg, the group took leave of their friends and began preparations for the journey home:

> It was a considerable caravan that left Maritzburg - for they had not only bought guns and other desirable goods with their legitimately earned

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[37] C. Beuster *Johannes Motscheni*, p.7.

[38] *Ibid.* p.8.

[39] Wilhelm Posselt had started as a missionary on the Bethel Mission Station (at Stutterheim in the Eastern Cape) in 1839. Due to the wars between the Xhosa and the settlers at the time, the Bethel missionaries often had to seek refuge either in Grahamstown, or across the mountains in Natal. During the frequent visits in Natal, the missionaries preached to the Boers there and also came to know the Zulu people. So Posselt decided to start mission work in Natal. He founded the Emmaus Mission Station (between Winterton and Escourt) in 1843. He was widely regarded as the Father of the Berlin Mission people in Natal. He died at Christianenburg in 1885.

[40] C. Beuster *Johannes Motscheni*, p.8.

> money, but also several horses with which to carry these goods. Accompanied by the best wishes of the small congregation, they started off on their journey, and walked along proudly, with heads held high, next to their pack-animals.[41]

"Alas, their joy did not last long." Upon reaching Boer territory, they were stopped. It was forbidden for Africans to import guns, gun-powder, bullets or horses into the ZAR. Thus, the most valuable parts of their possessions were confiscated - it was left to them to carry the remainder on their backs. Solomon wrote to Allison, requesting him to assist them to reclaim the confiscated goods. The missionary replied that there was nothing that he could do as the officials had been acting in terms of the law. "He could only advise his pupils to rather look for the treasures which neither moths nor rust could destroy; the things which thieves will not dig up or steal." Despite "being very sad himself," Mutshaeni took this test in his stride and used it to build the faith of the group. He comforted his companions as best as he could, telling them that the Word which they had learnt was better than all that they had lost. He also insisted that they regularly pray and read God's Word throughout the journey.[42]

From Johannes' and Beuster's perspective, the group's conversion and regular prayers also secured them divine protection on their way home. One day, while they were praying:

> they were surprised by a group of Boers who rode straight towards them. When the Boers saw that they were reading from the Bible, they turned their horses around and raced away. On another occasion they met a pious Boer woman. She was very happy when she heard that they were Christians, and admonished them, with tears in her eyes, that they should remain faithful to the end.[43]

As the converts neared their homeland, they heard of a "White teacher" living at Blauberg. Deciding to visit him immediately, they were well-received by Missionary

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[41] *Ibid.* For comparative discussion of goods taken home by returning workers, the dangers and hardships of the journey and the seizure of guns by white farmers and government officials, see P. Harries *Work, Culture and Identity*, especially pp.30-31, 32, 101, 115-118 & 176 and J. Kimble "Labour migration in Basutoland", p.127.

[42] C. Beuster *Johannes Motscheni*, p.8.

Beyer. He promised to visit them at some stage after they had reached home and to ask *Khosi* Tshivhase whether he would allow white teachers to live in his realm. Johannes' eyes reportedly "lit up with sheer joy" at this prospect. Hardly had they returned home when he persuaded his companions to accompany him to Tshivhase to tell him about all that had befallen them.[44]

As was customary "on special occasions", Tshivhase took the Christians aside and listened to their tale:

> Without any reservations, they confessed that they were now Men of the Book. On his insistence, they read to him out of the Book, during which Tschewase [Tshivhase] was most amazed by the turning of the pages. When Johannes then turned the conversation to the teacher, he [Tshivhase] declared: "Listen, you people, if this teacher feels like you are saying he does – that, if I wish it, a White teacher would probably come here - then find one for me. I will give you the region of Tschimbone [Tshimbone]. You can live there with your teacher, and I myself will go there and learn."[45]

After they had taken their leave from Tshivhase, this small group separated, each returning to his own family.[46] Soon thereafter, Jacob and Jesias abandoned Christianity as a result of "the enticements of their heathen relatives".[47] For a time, Johannes Mutshaeni, Piet and Solomon formed the core of the "conventicle" whose existence had so surprised Beuster. Both Piet and Solomon were married and their wives joined the praying and the singing.[48] Having been a particularly bright student, Solomon had received extra training as a so-called "Native Teacher" from Allison, who had also appointed him as teacher for the Vendaland area. He began by teaching his eldest son "most earnestly, and also witnessed in other ways."[49] Having failed in their attempts to proselytise adult members of the community, Piet and Johannes turned their attention to the children, teaching them all the songs and stories which

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[43] *Ibid.* pp.8-9.
[44] *Ibid.* p.9.
[45] *Ibid.*
[46] *Ibid.*
[47] *Ibid.* p.10. I have not been able to learn anything of their subsequent fate.
[48] *BMB*, Nr. 19 u. 20, 1875, p.401.
[49] *Ibid.* p.415.

they knew.[50] In Mutshaeni's words, Piet's wife "used to cheer up us men". On the occasions when the three Christians and the two wives come together to pray and offer each other mutual support, they "had great pleasure" together.[51]

Because he lived reasonably far away from Mutshaeni and Piet, Solomon gradually began to drift away from them. Despite his lack of regular contact with his fellow believers, he nevertheless seems to have still considered himself to be a Christian.[52] This left Mutshaeni and Piet in contact with each other. Due to his noble birth, Piet faced pressures and temptations which commoners like Mutsaheni and outsiders like the missionaries could presumably not have understood or related to. Similarly, even today, we can only attempt to unravel and understand some of these complexities but cannot claim anything approaching a full insight into them.

While Piet managed to resist these pressures for some time, they began immediately after his return. His father having died while he was away in Natal, with Piet's return home, *Khosi* Tshivhase appointed him as *gota* [*Kraalkapitain*] of the area formerly ruled by his father.[53] With this, he started to use, or reverted to using, the name Totane. To me, this strongly suggests a rejection of missionary-interpreted Christianity by assuming his deceased father's throne-name, which may or may not also have been his name prior to baptism.[54] The changeover is marked in mission reports by an entry referring to the *gota* as "Chief Totane (who was called Piet in previous Mission Reports)".[55] From here onwards, he is only referred to by the name of Totane. While this may partly have been because the missionaries did not want to use the Christian name of such an obvious "backslider", they continued to use these names in the case of other defected Christians. I strongly suspect that Beuster, and through him the Mission Society in general, were simply calling him what he called

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[50] C. Beuster *Johannes Motscheni*, p.9.
[51] *BMB*, Nr. 19 u. 20, 1875, p.415.
[52] *BMB*, Nr. 7 u. 8, 1873, p.136; Nr. 7 u. 8, 1874, p.134 and Nr. 9 u. 10, 1874, p.174.
[53] *BMB*, Nr. 9 u. 10, 1874, pp.174 & 175; Nr. 19 u. 20, 1875, pp.402 & 408 & Nr.21 u. 22, 1878, p.439 and C. Beuster *Johannes Motscheni*, p.9. Bearing in mind my earlier comments about Totane's status (see footnote 3), the title *Kraalkapitain (gota)*, as Missionary Stech described him, seems to be far more accurate than Beuster's continual use of the term *Häuptling*.
[54] C. Beuster *Johannes Motscheni*, pp.2, 6 & 7.

himself.

Despite these changes, Totane "for a long time, continued to pray and remained faithful" after his return from Natal. Beuster would later record that the *gota* had at first used his position "to spread the Word amongst his people. He did not drink any intoxicating beer, observed the Sunday and gathered the children of his village around him to teach them how to pray and sing." On Sundays, Johannes Mutshaeni would come through with a children's choir which he was training. They would then celebrate the Day of the Lord together. However, in Beuster's interpretation, "soon the enthusiasm of the young chief cooled down. The strength of his faith was not up to resisting the temptations – a man in his position had to face double the usual temptations." Gradually, he began to evade "Johannes' serious and penetrating warnings, or he would interrupt Johannes abruptly with: 'You have now spoken enough good words; so you can go.'"[56]

In my interpretation, Totane had retained some of the Christian teachings that he had been exposed to in Natal but was gradually becoming less orthodox in terms of the then–current western definitions of Christian belief and practice. As with many other local people at the time, he would later raise the issues of polygyny and power as his main reason for turning aside from Christianity and argue that:

> the traditions of his country and the constant nagging of his relatives, as well as the king [Tshivhase], finally got the better of him - they had often wondered why he, who had enough cattle to buy other wives, only had one wife.[57]

Polygyny was frequently used as a symbol of problems with accepting Christianity, or as a reason for rejecting Christianity, especially by male members of the local elite. They frequently expressed concern about what would happen to their other wives if they had to select just one. Even male commoners used a similar argument,

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[55] *BMB*, Nr. 21 u. 22, 1878, p.439.
[56] C. Beuster *Johannes Motscheni*, pp.9-10.
[57] *BMB*, Nr. 9 u. 10, 1874, p.175.

either worrying about sending wives away or about closing off the possibility of marrying more than one wife.[58] On the one hand, this perhaps shows how deeply-rooted was the idea that one had to have more than one wife if possible. On the other, the elite had the most to lose through conversion. Bearing in mind the status which they had to uphold, and the social and economic role that they were expected to perform, it is unlikely that they could have done this successfully with only one wife.

In spite of difficulties and concerns such as these:

> For a long time he had persevered: It is God's wish that he only has one [wife] and he wants every man to have only one wife. And, oh, he bore this with pain, as his wife was without child for a long time. This caused his own people to despise him even more. They said to him: He can now see how God punishes him, because he did not keep to the customs of the land; he had to have another wife because he had to provide the descendants.[59]

This was a matter of no trivial concern. It would appear that, according to local belief structures, a man who had not fathered children had not fulfilled one of his primary missions (if not his primary mission) in life.[60] Without descendants, the family line, and hence its ancestors, would die out. Some idea of the seriousness with this was viewed locally may be gleaned by the discussion of rites surrounding the death of a young man who had not yet given birth to children in the chapter on missionary photography in this thesis.[61] This is also illustrated by the Northern Sotho practice of hammering a stake up the anus of an adult person who had died without marrying and having children, cursing him and burying him face down.[62]

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[58] Among numerous references, see for example: *Bawenda-Freund*, Nr. 54, 2 Quartal 1896, 14 Jahrgang, pp.294 & 295 & Nr. 2, April 1912, p.20 and *BMB*, Nr. 7 u. 8, 1874, p.138; Nr. 9 u. 10, 1875, p.175; Nr. 17 u. 18, 1875, p.368; Nr. 19 u. 20, 1875, pp.400, 401-402, 406, 407, 410, 411, 412 & 415-416; Nr. 23 u. 24, 1877, p.484; Nr. 21 u. 22, 1878, p.488; Nr. 21 u. 22, 1878, p.492; Nr. 21 u. 22, 1879, p.413; Nr. 11 u. 12, 1880, p.211; Nr. 11 u. 12, 1881, p.185; Nr. 21 u. 22, 1881, p.358; Nr. 19 u. 20, 1883, p.368; Nr. 13 u. 14, 1886, p.218 & Nr. 23 u. 24, 1888, p.533.

[59] *BMB*, Nr. 9 u. 10, 1874, p.175.

[60] Personal communication, W.F. Malunga, Department of History, UNIVEN and H.A. Stayt *The Bavenda*, p.242.

[61] See pp.305-307.

[62] Personal communication, W.F. Malunga.

In spite of this extremely difficult situation, Totane:

> resisted for a long time, until something happened which reminds one very much of the Levirate marriage. His brother had died, without any descendants. Now they wanted to force him, according to tribal custom, to take this woman as his other wife, as he was the rightful heir. In this way, he could provide his dead brother with descendants. Again he refused for a long time, until his resistance was finally worn down by all the threats and nagging, and he took her as his wife. [63]

To refuse to do this would have represented a complete dereliction of his social duty to ensure the continuation of his brother's (and hence his own) lineage and to care and provide for his brother's widow. It was only acceptable to refuse to do this in cases where the woman was suspected of witchcraft or was "of doubtful worth in other respects". [64]

Having broken with Christian practice by taking a second wife, Totane was faced with a further serious challenge to his faith. Again, this was a situation where refusal to follow existing practices would have placed him beyond the pale of local society, placing not only him but the whole society in danger:

> But then a strange thing happened: His own wife gave birth to twins. Now, according to the custom here, only the first-born child is allowed to live. The second child is automatically, as if it was the most natural thing to do, immediately strangled at birth. In this case, the first-born child was still-born and he naturally let the last child live. But this caused a new fight. Through all impossible means, they tried to force this poor person to strangle his last born child. Again he refused to do so, for a long time. At first it looked like he would win, in that he declared: The first child did not have life. It therefore was not a child. Only the second child was a child. That is why not two, but only one child was brought into the world. And that child is staying alive. But the Power of Darkness here is still an almighty Power and its king is even mightier. Again his soul became

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[63] *BMB*, Nr. 9 u. 10, 1874, p.175.

[64] For so-called Levirate practices, see especially N.J. van Warmelo in collaboration with W.M.D. Phophi (a) *Venda Law: Part 2, Married life*, Ethnological Publications No. 23, Pretoria, Government Printer, 1948, p.403 (1035-1039) & (b) *Venda Law: Part 4, Inheritance*, Ethnological Publications No. 23, Pretoria, Government Printer, 1949, pp.919 (2311) – 923 (2323) & 925 (2327) (quotation). The term Levirate is derived from the forms of marriage introduced by the Levites - in the days of Moses - to take care of widows.

weary and he permitted his child to be murdered.[65]

Given that there was no mission station in Vendaland at the time, I do not see that the future *gota* had any option other than to bow down to societal pressure in these two major cases. Perhaps he could have gone to one of the mission stations in the Sotho-speaking areas, but this would have represented a complete break with his people. Even if he had been accepted at the Dutch Reformed Mission to the Buys, this would have represented an equally dramatic break. There is also the possibility that, despite his assertions to the contrary, he had not rejected his upbringing and believed that the actions that he was forced to take in terms of local ways were, to varying degrees, "correct' or "just".

Such tensions and subtleties had no place in missionary thinking. Once they established themselves in the area, they would attempt to make sense of these events for themselves. For Beuster, it was Totane's decision to allow the surviving twin to be killed that marked "his real defection from the faith". The missionary also reported that Mutshaeni had been greatly saddened by these events as "he knew very well that the defection of the chief would also close the ears of his people to the Word of God."[66] He would later inform the *gota* that: "Totane, you are like the leader of a wagon. If the leader takes a wrong turn, the whole wagon will have an accident. You are now walking on the wrong path and you will destroy your whole nation."[67]

With Solomon too far away for any kind of sustained contact and Totane increasingly moving away from orthodox mission-style Christianity, Mutshaeni became isolated. Since the adults in his area generally turned a deaf ear to him, his main contact was with the children. He taught them all of the Bible stories and Christian songs and hymns that he knew.[68] He also continued to read his Bible on his own and prayed all the more. In conformity with local practice, he married

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[65] *BMB*, Nr. 9 u. 10, 1874, p.175. See also C. Beuster *Johannes Motscheni*, p.10.
[66] C. Beuster *Johannes Motscheni*, pp.9-10.
[67] *Ibid.* p.14.

Mufanatsho, the woman who had been promised to his deceased brother as a bride. The big difference between his action and that of Totane was that he resolved to take her as his only wife. Also, although she was not a Christian, "he presented his marriage to the Lord through God's Word and prayer, and he did everything he could to also win over the heart of his wife for the Lord."[69]

Soon after his marriage, at this father's wish, Johannes moved to Tshakhuma with his father and their extended family. On his arrival there, he heard that "White teachers" [Beyer and Baumbach] had passed through the area on their way to Tshivhase.[70] Seeing this as a fulfilment of Beyer's earlier promise to him and his fellow converts:

> A happy and excited Johannes rushed after them. But he was too late. They had already returned to Blauberg along a different route. A disappointed and dejected Johannes returned home to Tschakoma [Tshakhuma]. His longing to hear God's Word regularly intensified all the time, and he contemplated leaving his homeland and friends, and moving to Blauberg. But his plans were wrecked by opposition from his wife and the constant pleas from his grey-haired father. So he remained in Tschakoma and in quiet hope, continued to sow the seed of the Word.[71]

Thus, by the time that the Berlin Missionaries began to enter Vendaland, the so-called conventicle of Christians who had been baptised by Allison were suffering the effects of their isolation from a wider established Christian community. Not only would a sense of group identity have been much more cohesive in a larger group but, as relatively new converts, they would also have had the support and guidance of

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[68] *Ibid.* p.9.

[69] *Ibid.* p.10. Despite the fact that his brother had died before his wife had moved to his home, the negotiations for the marriage had already taken place. The woman had thus already been promised to the Mutshaeni family, and they had promised to receive her. So the Mutshaeni family were responsible for her welfare. Since Johannes was a Christian, and could only have one wife, he took her as his one and only wife, even though she was not a Christian (Christians usually preferred marrying Christians, as this caused less complications in the marriage). It was then up to him to see that she became a Christian, as he attempted to do. Mufanatsho was recorded as "Mofanatso". She would finally be baptised on the First Sunday after Trinity of 1877, in the year after her husband's death. At her baptism, she took the name Johanna to commemorate Johannes. Soon after this, the late Mutshaeni's brothers followed her example. (*BMB*, Nr. 21 u 22, 1878, p.486 and C. Beuster *Johannes Motscheni*, p.22.)

[70] Tshakhuma was recorded as "Tshakoma" and Tshivhase as "Tschewase".

more experienced Christians whose faith had been forged and strengthened over time. Coupling this with pressures to resume local ways and local indifference towards, or hostility to, their teachings, their group identity was very much weaker than it had been on their first return from Natal. Mutshaeni and Solomon were basically the only two out of the original five who maintained a commitment to their new religion. It will also become clear that Mutshaeni remained much more orthodox than Solomon. In order to illustrate that these experiences were not confined to this small group alone, I will now examine the story of David Denga. I will then look at the changing position of previously-baptised Christians in Vendaland after the arrival of the missionaries.

DAVID DENGA

David Denga only moved to Ha Tshivhase when Johannes Mutshaeni had already been there for two years. Also, as Beuster recorded, he had "lived together with him for hardly a year" before his sudden death. As a result, not as much was recorded about his life prior to his move to the mission station as had been the case with Mutshaeni, whom the missionary had got to know well over a period of four years. He nevertheless related "fragments of his life" to Beuster from time to time. These were not enough to produce a full tractate about his life. Also, even if Beuster had managed to write this, it is unlikely that the mission would have published two tractates about Native Assistants from Vendaland at the same time. It would thus presumably have had to compete with Johannes Mutshaeni's story for publication. Beuster nevertheless managed to produce a feature article – a form of mini-tractate – which was published in the *Misisons-Berichte* under the title "David Denge (A life-story out of South Africa)."[72] This enables us to get at least some ideas of his life prior to his move to the mission station.

As with Mutshaeni, Denga was portrayed as being very much of the people. It will become clear in discussing Makwarela Mphaphuli's life history that even heirs to the

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[71] C. Beuster *Johannes Motscheni*, p.10.
[72] *BMB*, Nr. 15 u. 16, 1879, pp.308– 316 (quotation, p.308).

throne grew up in a similar way to their peers.[73] Despite the fact that his mother was of royal blood: "David's youth was spent in a similar way as that of other heathen boys - herding the cattle, guarding the mealie [*Korn*] fields against baboons and birds, working in the gardens [fields], etc."[74]

Memories of hardships suffered at the hand of the encroaching Boers, and their raids for *inboekelinge* played a more significant role in Denga's recollections than in those of Mutshaeni. Interestingly, while some of these appear to be direct memories, others have a folkloristic element. In dealing with these invaders, personal experience could be integrated with the collective experience and the collective claimed as the individual. In this situation, where much of the "truth" was bizarre, even the bizarre could be accepted, and claimed, as "true". Thus:

> When he [Denga] had grown into a youth [teenager?], he also came to feel the pressure under which the whole country groaned at that time, viz. the strong hand of the Boers [*Bauern*]. The Boers, with the terrible gun in their hands, intimidated the Black man into slavery. David still remembered well how the Boers, sjambok (riding crop) in hand, entered his village and demanded to see the chief, and how he appeared trembling, and had to supply food and people - as much as they demanded. As the poor Blacks cannot return force with force, they try to protect themselves against total domination with cunning trickery. While the Black servants appear to willingly follow the Boers to the hunting fields, they scheme to escape as soon as possible under cover of the darkness of night. But the Boers soon became experienced; they tied their servants [*Diener*], just like their oxen, to the wagon every evening. This also happened to our David several times. It is said here that the Bakalanga[75] use another form of trickery to escape from the Boers. When they are surprised by the Boers in the plains, and it is not possible to hide, they stand on their heads with their legs stretched straight up into the air. The Boers then take them to be poles and go past them (?).[76]

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[73] See p.420.

[74] *BMB*, Nr. 15 u. 16, 1879, p.308.

[75] Karanga (or VhaKaranga) - the people living in eastern Zimbabwe, who are closely related to the Vhavenda. The VhaSenzi stayed there for a long time before moving southwards. This is why the Vhavenda have many relatives there and they often visit each other across the Limpopo. Even when the security fence was put up in the 1980's special gates had to be put into the fence to allow the free passage of people across the border, to their relatives on the other side.

[76] *BMB*, Nr. 15 u. 16, 1879, p.308.

Judging by the accounts of the *inboekelinge* system discussed earlier, the descriptions of the ruthlessness of the Boers in demanding food and labourers and their treatment of their workers do not seem over-stated. [77] Whether, in commenting on this, Denga was recounting his own experiences or whether these were influenced by a common experience is unclear but, I would argue, irrelevant. It certainly seems that he was either coerced into accompanying, or willingly accompanied, the Schoemansdal Boers on hunting trips.[78] This suggests the possibility that he originally came from, or settled for a time in, Makhado's area, the western Soutpansberg. Alternatively, he may have been captured elsewhere and taken there by force. There is also the strong possibility that, like many others, he went there to earn some money. Since, at the time that the missionaries arrived in Vendaland, he, his mother and the rest of the family were living in Mphaphuli's area, this seems to be the most likely explanation.[79] However he came to be there, it would seem that he got very little in return for his labour.

The statement about Karanga methods of hiding from the Boers is more complicated. As indicated by the question-mark appearing in the original text, even the missionaries had problems in accepting Denga's assertion about people disguising themselves as poles. I am convinced that it is a folkloristic element. It is nevertheless difficult to know what to make of it. On the one hand, it may demonstrate the fear that the Boer raiding parties engendered by showing that people were prepared to try anything to escape from them. On the other, it may have been designed to show how ingenious or cunning Africans were in comparison to the rather slow-witted Boers. More cynically, in telling Beuster what he thought that he wanted to hear, perhaps Denga was attempting to find the boundaries of what the missionary was prepared to believe.

At a more metaphorical level, Denga could have been saying to Beuster that the

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[77] See especially pp.76-80.

[78] For discussion of so-called *swart skuts* (Black marsksmen), see J.C.A. Boeyens *Die konflik tussen die Venda en die Blankes*, pp.3, 5, 7 & 10; S. Marks and A. Atmore "Introduction", p.30 and R. Wagner "Zoutpansberg", pp.330, 331-335 & 337.

[79] *BMB*, Nr. 15 u. 16, 1879, p.310.

Boers could not differentiate between people and "things" – a commentary on their relations with African people. Alternatively, it could have been a metaphorical way of saying "we have ways and means of avoiding capture by these Boers." Thus, David Denga was apparently using his statement about disguising oneself as a pole as a way of commenting on fear of capture by, and forced labour for, the Boers, on power relations and on African ingenuity.

As with Mutshaeni, Denga's life-story reveals that, in addition to the horrors of war and labour raids, he had also tasted the hardships of working for what he portrayed as the cruel and treacherous Boers:

> While on these hunting trips with the Boers [*Bauern*], it often meant doing long journeys. And it was not seldom that David was put in danger and was tired to the point of exhaustion. "Tobacco revives the dead", he once said and when I expressed my doubt about this, he told me how, on such a trip he used tobacco to bring back to life one of his comrades who already appeared to be dead. He did this by pouring a good dose of snuff into the mouth of his dying friend. After that, totally exhausted as he was, he still managed to get his companion to the water. They regained some of their strength there. And when they then craftily managed to catch a badger [*Dachs*], and had eaten the meat raw, they could again walk on slowly.[80] Once, when they were very hungry, they were given food by some people. But they ate so much of the food, that they almost did themselves an injury - the pains were terrible. Once David accompanied a Boer [*Bauer*] far into the hunting-field. All the Boer's oxen died after being bitten by tsetse-flies. The Boer had to leave his wagon behind in the veld. They had to walk back on foot.[81]

Again in conformity with his later world view, which corresponded to that of Beuster, Denga still had to be tempered more by disappointment and suffering before he could become a fine tool in the service of the Lord. According to what he later told the missionary, once he became a man, "he was also drawn to Natal, the country of guns."[82] At this stage, labour opportunities in Natal included work in the port or work in agriculture, either on the sugar cane plantations or other farms. Taking up

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[80] As the Afrikaans word "dassie" is similar to that of "*Dachs*", I would suggest this is a dassie/rock-rabbit or else a cane rat (a delicacy in the area). I doubt that they ate a badger.
[81] *BMB*, Nr. 15 u. 16, 1879, pp.308-309.
[82] *Ibid.* p.309.

these opportunities involved a long journey, which was usually completed on foot. Working so far away from home, to obtain the cash to purchase a gun, a sign of manhood, was obviously something which had to await the assumption of the status of manhood through attending (depending on the time period) a so-called "bush school" or circumcision lodge.[83]

Denga was reportedly "a hard worker [who] ... knew how to satisfy his master." It did not take him long to earn enough to obtain a gun and return home. However, in a similar experience to that suffered by Mutshaeni and his party, he "was not destined to reach home with his treasure." Discovered in possession of the firearm, it was taken from him "and after that his beautiful gun decorated the bare room of a Boer [*Bauer*]."[84]

Denga's sense of honour did not allow him to return home without the gun he had worked so hard for. Thus, without even reaching his home, he reportedly turned back to work to obtain another gun. Enlisting for a second period of labour on the same farm where he had worked before, he was determined to be more careful when smuggling the gun home this time.[85]

A number of his fellow workers on this farm were Christians. They attempted to persuade him to "recognise God's ways and become a believer." However, he mocked them, telling them: "You are foolish boys. I am a man; what can you teach me." After having earned enough to buy a second gun, he again left for home, ignoring the pleadings of the believers. Unfortunately for him, he was just as unsuccessful this time:

> Once again his gun ended up in the house of a Boer - another cunning farmer had outsmarted David. It was of no use feeling angry, or sorry for oneself; it was impossible to take revenge. But to appear at home without

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[83] For male initiation, the so-called "bush schools" without circumcision and the adoption of circumcision after Makhado was circumcised at a Lemba circumcision school at Mashau, see pp.369-380.

[84] *BMB*, Nr. 15 u. 16, 1879, p.309.

[85] *Ibid.*

> a gun was too sad to bear thinking about. After all, the thing that mattered was not so much how long he stayed away from home, but much rather on what he gained from it. For this reason David once again turned his footsteps to the Land of Guns - and that was not nearby.[86]

This third trip was destined to change his whole life. In Beuster's interpretation, "David had mellowed; his pride was broken." Having been foiled in his smuggling attempts, he began to listen to the believers and to believe that he could achieve nothing in his own strength. Although he again worked hard and earned another gun, "this time he did not only think about the work - the Hand of the Lord had become too powerful for him." He started attending Christian instruction with the believers.[87]

In keeping with the Pietistic idea of a conversion experience, his acceptance of God was not only the product of a gradual process. He also experienced what he (and Beuster) interpreted as the power of God at first hand:

> One day, a crowd of workers stood in front of the house of the teacher, Mr Allison, and asked for passes so that they could return home. They had worked in the town for a while and were carrying many goods [home with them]. The teacher drew their attention to the fact that they should have rather stayed so that they could still learn about God's Word; after that they could return home with this additional most precious treasure. Some of the people heeded to the teacher's words and stayed. But others, ten in number, hit together the metal bracelets on their wrists so that they clattered and said: "We are '*Makarapa*'i.e. well travelled men who are experienced in the ways of the world.[88] We do not need this." and they left. After a short while, the newspapers brought news that ten Black men [*Kaffern*], on their way back from Natal, had been attacked and murdered by Mapoch's people.[89] Those were the world-wise men. A beneficial shock-wave passed through all members of that congregation and even

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[86] *Ibid.*

[87] *Ibid.* pp.309-310.

[88] *Magaraba*. This is the Tshivenda name for those working in the mines i.e. working in the towns down South. It seems to have originated from the first workers who went to work on the diamond-fields at Kimberley. Those people scratched about in the ground for diamonds. Thus, the Tshivenda word is derived from the Afrikaans word "*krap*" - the people who *krap*/scratch. In those days it might have very well been written with a "k" but nowadays it is definitely pronounced with a "g". It also no longer just applies to those scratching about in the mines, but to all those who work in the cities away from here - at Easter and Christmas the "*Magaraba*" return home to Venda.

[89] The Pedi ruler who stayed in Sekhukhuneland, just east of the Steelpoort river, on the western slopes of the Steenkamps Berg (the Roossenekal area). See also P. Harries *Work, Culture and Identity*, p.66.

> through the heathens, when the teacher publicly related this tale during the church service. It made a huge impression on David. The works of the Christians were also powerful testimony of the truth of their teachings. He had always despised them, but they had always been prepared to accept him lovingly.[90]

Having accepted the Lord, Denga would remain firm in his faith. Although he managed to take his third gun home, this did not bring him the kind of pleasure that it would have previously. At the time that he returned home, he was the only Christian convert returning to Vendaland. While there were converts such as Mutshaeni living in other areas, there were also no Christians living in or near Denga's parents' village at the time:

> He had to walk a solitary road back home - no fellow-Christian stood by his side. ... David declared to his mother and his family: "Only my body is here; my heart is not here, it is with the teacher." His whole family insisted that David often had attacks of madness. David told his people of other people who are just as he is - he could not show them these people because of the great distances.[91]

Like Mutshaeni and Solomon, Denga was awaiting the arrival of missionaries. Their wishes would soon be granted. For me, the question remains as to whether or not they got what they were longing for. In my reading, Solomon was sadly disappointed when the reality did not meet up with his expectations. In contrast, Mutshaeni and Denga made themselves indispensable to the missionaries and managed to win their respect and support. They gladly gave their lives in the service of the new God.

THE ARRIVAL OF THE MISSIONARIES

In commenting on the role played by previously-converted Christians after the arrival of the missionaries in Pedi areas, Delius has argued that they "provided a number of ready adherents for the missionaries when they arrived, and ... continued to play an active role in the spread of Christianity within Pedi society." Lacking the

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[90] *BMB*, Nr. 15 u. 16, 1879, p.310.
[91] *BMB*, Nr. 15 u. 16, 1879, p.310.

necessary linguistic, political and social skills to engage with the local community in any meaningful way, the missionaries were "heavily dependent" on the assistance of this group. In Delius' reading, most souls won for the Lamb were won through the efforts of other converts. Far from leading the way, certainly in the early days, "the missionaries were constantly attempting to keep pace with these converts."[92] Similar patterns are revealed by the continuing case studies of the converts in Vendaland.

Solomon was the first of the Vendaland conventicle to come into contact with the Berlin Missionaries. He would do so at the urging of Samuel, another Christian who had been converted earlier while working as a migrant labourer.[93] This came about when Missionaries Beyer and Baumbach stopped at Makhado's village on the way to *Khosi* Tshivhase for their March 1872 meeting.[94] Reportedly "very happy to hear that [they] ... were going to his father-in-law", Makhado provided them with Samuel as a guide.[95]

The missionaries were extremely pleased with Makhado's choice. On their journey, Samuel proved to be "the best guide" as he pointed out or named every "mountain or village or other obvious significant fact".[96] He must have spoken Northern Sotho, English, Dutch or a combination of these as, at this stage, the missionaries could speak no Tshivenda. However, his use to them would have gone much deeper than this. In common with the other previously-converted Christians, at the most obvious level, Samuel was an "insider" – one of "us", rather than one of "them". It is safe to argue that Beyer and Baumbach would have felt that they had more in common with a Christian than with the mass of the population. Already having received the Christian message, Samuel would have grasped what they were saying and been able to translate it for others, much more easily and accurately than a non-Christian.

From the perspective of the local people, Samuel was also an insider. He knew his

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[92] P. Delius *The Land Belongs To Us*, p.111.

[93] Since Samuel does not seem to have become involved with the missionaries to any significant degree after this first meeting, I have been unable to reconstruct his life-history.

[94] See p.97.

[95] *BMB*, Nr. 7 u. 8, 1874, pp.126-127 (quotation p.126). See also *BMB*, Nr. 7 u. 8, 1873, p.133.

way around the area and around local ways of doing things. They would presumably have trusted him far more than any Native Assistant from Northern Sotho or Tswana speaking areas who may have accompanied the missionaries. Moreover, it is likely that Makhado saw him as an ideal informant and intermediary. Not only would he have been more trusted by Beyer and Baumbach than non-Christian local people, he would also have had non-Christian relatives in the area and had to continue to live there after the departure of the missionaries. This would have ensured that any loyalty that he may have had to the new God and his representatives did not cancel out the duty to keep his ruler informed of anything he should know about the missionaries. Moreover, as with other former migrant labourers, since he knew both local ways and the ways of the whites, he would have made the best possible intermediary between the *khosi* and the missionaries.

Since one of the stated aims of the trip had been that of making contact with previously-converted Christians, Beyer and Baumbach were extremely pleased when Samuel put them in touch with Solomon. Beyer would write that. after the meeting with Tshivhase, just before they were about to leave:

> Solomon appeared; he had not heard about our arrival earlier, until Samuel had come to him to fetch him. We went to a remote hut with these two Christians, Samuel and Solomon. There we reminded them, through God's Word, to remain firm in their faith and to love Christ; we advised them to come to one of our stations every now and again, to strengthen themselves through contact with other Christians and through partaking in Holy Communion; finally we prayed with them and for them. Both Samuel and Solomon gave us the impression that they were still Christians, albeit very weak ones.[97]

Samuel would again prove his worth on the trip back from Tshivhase. As he and the missionaries approached a mountain village, they received a message that Makhado was visiting there and wished to speak to them. Unsaddling at the foot of the mountain, Baumbach waited with the horses while Beyer and Samuel climbed up, to hear what the *khosi* wanted. Invited to stay and take part in the feasting, drinking and

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[96] *BMB*, Nr. 7 u. 8, 1874, pp.128-129.

dancing which was about to begin, the missionary was clearly unimpressed. Moreover, in his interpretation, the real reason why Makhado had invited him then became apparent, for he "immediately" began to ask him for his saddle. This made Beyer even more grumpy:

> I did not feel like using this given opportunity to preach the Word of God to such a crowd of heathens with their empty chatter. I therefore asked Makchato [Makhado], and those around him, to pay attention to me for a short time only, because I have an important message for them. At this hour, the Lord gave me much joy and enthusiasm, to speak about him in front of this crowd of heathens; to my amazement they listened to what I had to say. An added joy was having the king listening to me - had he known that I would speak so freely and that I would attack his superstitions and idol-worshipping with the word of God, he would surely not have called us to him.[98]

Acting as both a cultural interpreter and a mediator, Samuel clearly felt that the missionary had gone too far. On the way back, he said: "Teacher you spoke harshly. The words will give Makchato sleepless nights." He also attempted to ameliorate the missionary's impression of his *khosi* by informing him that "Makchato would like teachers but his people constantly talk against it."[99]

After this, it would be some time before the missionaries would again have contact with the previously-converted Christians of Vendaland. It would be Johannes, rather than Solomon, who would first come into contact with them this time. The initiative would also come from him, rather than the missionaries. This was because they had to neglect the interests of the previously-converted Christians while they began establishing a base from which they could operate. They were simply too busy with essential building and clearing work to undertake journeys in search of the Christians and evangelisation journeys. After about two months of hard work in heavy summer rains, on Boxing Day 1872, Beuster and Stech sat in front of their candle-lit Christmas tree in the small home which they had constructed. As they did so, they reportedly reflected on:

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[97] *Ibid.* p.134. See also *BMB*, Nr. 7 u. 8, 1873, p.136.
[98] *BMB*, Nr. 7 u. 8, 1874, p.135.

what a sad Christmas it was! Not one of the Christians, whom they had so hoped to find here, had made an appearance. The heathens shyly stood back and looked at the White men with distaste and suspicion. So it was no wonder that the faces of both missionaries were troubled when they sat opposite one another on the second day of Christmas, and that all sorts of fearful thoughts moved their hearts.[100]



5. "MuVenda Man"[101]

As the missionaries sat contemplating their misery:

That is when a young, strong man walked into the house. He wore a leather loin-cloth like all the men of his tribe do [see Illustration 5]; a leather apron hung across his back; and his head was covered with the leather helmet of a soldier. He wore not a single item of European clothing. The man looked all around the house, and as he did this his face became more and more pleased and satisfied. He then sat down and explained in broken Dutch [Afrikaans]: "My name is Johannes. I am a Christian. Some teachers already know me. You can ask Brother Beyer about me."[102]

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[99] *Ibid.*
[100] C. Beuster *Johannes Motscheni*, p.11.
[101] H.A. Stayt *The Bavenda*, facing p.22. See also Illustration 30 on p.299.
[102] *Ibid.*

The association of western clothing with civilisation or a civilised veneer in missionary writing forms a recurring theme in this thesis. Skin clothing, on the other hand, was associated with the "forest" and the "darkness of heathenism".[103] In the person of Mutsaheni, these opposites were presented in inverted form.

Commenting on the arrival of Mutshaeni, Beuster recorded that "You can imagine with what joy the missionaries greeted this first Christian amongst the Bawenda [Vhavenda]." He and Stech had indeed heard a great deal about his "dedication and enthusiasm" when they were still at Blauberg. They had also been informed that it had been he who had first asked Tshivhase to allow missionaries to stay in his kingdom.[104]

When asked why he had not come earlier, Mutshaeni answered that, because of the move to Tshakhuma, his extended family had not been able to prepare their fields in time. Their supplies had soon been exhausted. So, he had taken a goat, hoping to exchange it for maize. At Lwamondo, the prices had been too high. He also could not agree on a price in the neighbouring area. So, he had "moved on further and further" until he had finally reached Tshimbone in Tshivhase's country:

> "That is when I heard that Boers had settled here. When I heard that these Boers are called 'Mynheer', I had a premonition which I had to investigate. I looked around in your house; I saw you and the books, and immediately knew that these are the teachers whom I had asked God to send for so long already. It is God the Lord who has led me to you."[105]

They spent some hours talking "with each other about that which lay closest to their heart." After this, Johannes left, promising to come to Sunday services regularly after this. In a continuation of the inversion of missionary ideas about forms of dress and the recurring theme of the interplay between the outer and the inner personality, Beuster's descriptions of Mutshaeni would also reverse the usual trope of a "bright"

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[103] See pp.283 & 291-293.
[104] C. Beuster *Johannes Motscheni*, p.11.
[105] *Ibid.* p.12. Note that Lwamondo was recorded as "Lamondo", Tshimbone as "Tschimbone" and Tshivhase's as "Tschewase's".

or "pleasant" exterior masking a hidden "dark" core.[106] Mission sources would record that Mutshaeni's:

> visit had miraculously comforted the Missionaries. And yet, at that time they had no idea what a Christmas gift God had presented to them in the form of this man - the man of whom Missionary Beuster was to later testify: that his outward appearance may have been coarse and harsh, like John [the Baptist], but his inner self had been kind and gentle, like that of Jesus' favourite apostle.[107]

Undeterred by the four hour walk, Mutshaeni appeared again on the following day. He soon "found all sorts of ways of making himself useful to the missionaries." He showed them what sorts of wood to use to build their houses and ensured that the children supplied them with good thatching grass, rather than merely collecting the grass which was found nearby, which easily rotted. He also intervened to ensure that the local people did not cheat the missionaries in trading.[108]

In February 1863, Beuster received a message that he should immediately leave for Natal to be married, a round trip which was expected to take between four and five months.[109] Johannes was reportedly "overjoyed" when he heard about this: "That is good Mynheer. You will then have a totally different standing in the eyes of my people."[110] Mutshaeni was the natural choice to accompany Beuster to Natal as his guide as he had travelled to Natal on foot before and was experienced in handling oxen. It was on this journey that Beuster really began to appreciate the worth of the man who would become his assistant. Just after they left, as a result of a serious cold,

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[106] See p.239.

[107] C. Beuster *Johannes Motscheni*, p.12. Cf. pp.438-439.

[108] C. Beuster *Johannes Motscheni*, p.12.

[109] *BMB*, Nr. 7 u. 8, 1874, pp.143, 144 & 148. The missionaries were forced to get established on their mission stations before their brides or wives were sent out to join them. In some cases, as with Beuster and Koen, they married women whom they had already met while in Germany. In others, as with Stech and Baumbach, brides were chosen for them by the Director of the *Missionshaus* in Berlin - usually from girls who had declared themselves willing to do mission work. In those days, women were not sent out as mission workers, instead they were prepared for the mission field as wives of missionaries. They would be sent out to the Transvaal via Port Natal - there was a mission station, Christianenburg, at New Germany, a settlement of Germans just outside Port Natal (Durban). If the man had come out unmarried, they would be married in Christianenburg, by the missionary (Missionary Posselt, in those days). If they were already married, they would meet up again at Port Natal or Christianenburg.

Beuster suffered an attack of rheumatism. This was soon exacerbated by gout. For days on the way down to Natal, he was in too much pain to get off the wagon. During this time, Mutshaeni, the "outwardly so coarse man nursed him with true motherly care." He prepared Beuster's "food for him, made his bed, and knew how to read the patient's every wish before the words had even been properly uttered." When they reached Pietermaritzburg, "he was rewarded with the joy of having his beloved teacher walk towards his bride, supported by a stick."[111]

The journey was also a symbolic turning-point for Mutshaeni. Not only his mind was being transformed but his body also. For the whole time that they were travelling, he had worn the skin loin-cloth and cape described at his first meeting with Beuster and Stech. Entering Pietermaritzburg with Beuster:

> He now found that in the whole town, not a single Black person appeared on the street without European clothing. A strange feeling of shame came over him, when he noticed that the passers-by stared at him in amazement and with disapproval. As soon as he had out-spanned the oxen, he crept into the back of the wagon, pulled down the flap and only stuck his head out to see around him. Missionary Beuster gave him a shirt, to help him overcome part of the problem. But how amazed he was when Johannes came towards him that evening, fully clothed. With a beaming face he told Beuster that his Christian friends had heard of his arrival and had brought him all these things. So he was able to participate in his master's day of celebration, dressed in wedding clothing.[112]

While Beuster was away, Stech was left in charge of the embryonic station at Ha-Tshivhase. By this stage, the missionaries had managed to make contact with Solomon. In the absence of Mutshaeni, Stech had to completely rely on Solomon in his efforts to continue mission work in the area. He described the rather long-winded process of translation that this involved:

> With much trouble I got Solomon to translate the Holy Our Father and also a small short prayer which I had already written down when I was at

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[110] C. Beuster *Johannes Motscheni*, p.12.
[111] *Ibid.* p.13. See also *BMB*, Nr. 9 u. 10, 1874, p.184 for Beuster's illness on the journey.
[112] C. Beuster *Johannes Motscheni*, p.13.

> Lekalekale [Lekgalekgale].[113] For every Sunday, I chose a passage which suited me out of the books of the New Testament and asked Solomon to come very early on a Sunday. Then I would read the relevant text to him, in Sesutho[114] and he translated it for me, word for word and sentence for sentence into Setzuetla [Tshivenda]. Then I would read it to him several times, until he was satisfied and I became more fluent in it. This then covered the first half of the church service. During the second half of the service, I read to them out of the Catechism and Solomon interpreted it to the people - sentence for sentence or paragraph for paragraph, depending on what I thought best. At my request, he added what he himself knew and what he had learnt from the text he had just interpreted.
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> So, the order of the service was as follows: A Hymn where I said the words first and Solomon interpreted, then the words were said again in Sesutho, line for line and loudly sung to the people, to the accompaniment of the violin. Then in the Name of God, the passage from the Bible was read in their language and this part was closed with the Our Father in their language. Then, for a bit of a change, another verse [from the SeSotho Hymnal] was read to them and sung. Then there followed the section of the Catechism in Sesutho, which Solomon interpreted for them and, in his way, explained and added to it. After this, a suitable closing Hymn was sung or maybe, before this, the short translated prayer was read. And the service, which lasted for about three-quarters of an hour, at the very most one hour, all-in-all is entirely long enough.[115]

Stech obviously thought that this situation was unsatisfactory. While he could not stop Solomon completely from extempore speaking, he seems to have worried about what he, as a Christian who had been without pastoral supervision for some time, said when speaking on his own behalf. Beyond the fact that he was attempting to learn Tshivenda, this would seem to be one of the reasons why he went to so much trouble to speak for himself, working out detailed Tshivenda translations with Solomon and then speaking them himself. It would have been much simpler to speak in Northern Sotho and get Solomon to translate for him, as he would later do with

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[113] Also sometimes spelt "Legalegale" in mission sources. This was the mission station at the old Makapanspoort - just north of the first town of Potgietersrust. The town was later moved to its present place and the mission station was also moved in 1891, as it served the people working in the town as well as the Mankopane's (Makapan's) people.

[114] SeSotho. In this context, Northern Sotho. There are three variants of SeSotho, namely that spoken in Lesotho, that spoken in the Northern Province (Northen Sotho), of which SiPedi is a dialect and Tswana (spoken in the Blauberg area).

[115] *BMB*, Nr. 9 u. 10, 1874, p.181.

Joseph of Matlala. In addition, Stech was no linguist. Despite having spent time at Ga-Matlala and Lekgalekgale learning Northern Sotho, this helped him little in mastering the tonal language of Tshivenda as the two languages are very different. Commenting on the Easter services on 13 April 1873, three days after his colleague, Beyer, had arrived from Blauberg, Stech noted that this was:

> One of the specially blessed Sundays for me and the people, because Brother Beyer preached here with gusto and vigour, in Sesutho [SeSotho], which almost all the men here understand fairly well. Solomon interpreted his four short parts excellently. But I was very despondent when I saw how the words of this dear faithful Witness of God just flowed out of his mouth.[116] What a bungler am I? Oh, how much one has got to complain, to tell and ask the Lord about things which one cannot express in words. Yes, the language is truly a mountain, which has to be crossed; especially this new language of our people.[117] A large crowd of people was here and ... I am absolutely convinced that his words made a lasting impression here.[118]

Beyer had come in response to an urgent plea from Stech. Shortly after his arrival in Vendaland, Stech had suffered heat exhaustion. After this, he had suffered from a variety of debilitating bouts of illness.[119] Diagnosing Stech's condition just under 130 years later, and basing this diagnosis on my translations of the missionary's descriptions of his symptoms, a local GP with long and varied experience in the area argued that he almost definitely had typhoid. Cholera is also a possibility but it was not yet common in the area, so typhoid is far more likely. He also possibly either had Amoebic dysentery or a number of bouts of food poisoning (Salmonellosis). On top of this, he also contracted malaria.[120] At what he thought was the height of his illness, Stech had written a letter of farewell to his Brothers. On 16 March 1873, he had managed to get a messenger to carry this to Beyer.[121] "In his fright," Beyer had

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[116] Beyer had come to South Africa as a missionary in 1864 and had worked amongst Sotho-speakers since 1865. By 1873 he could speak SeSotho fluently. Stech had come to South Africa in 1872, twelve years later. Here he was expressing envy at Beyer's mastery of the language which he was still struggling to learn.

[117] Tshivenda.

[118] *BMB*, Nr. 9 u. 10, 1874, pp.181-182.

[119] See especially *BMB*, Nr. 7 u. 8, 1874, pp.139-140, 142-143, 148-150 & 152.

[120] Consultation with Dr Wim de Villiers, Louis Trichardt, 28 January 2000. Note that untreated malaria is usually not prolonged and usually lasts for eight to ten days if it does not result in death.

[121] *BMB*, Nr. 7 u. 8, 1874, p.153.

immediately sent this "farewell letter" to Grützner at Matlala.[122] After this, he had left for Ha-Tshivhase, taking two Christians from Blauberg with him, to see what he could do to help Stech. The three had arrived there on 8 April 1873. Two days later, they had been joined by Joseph of Matlala. In response to Grützner having presented Stech's "distressing situation to his congregation", Joseph had immediately offered to go and help him until Beuster returned from Natal. [123]

With the arrival of Joseph of Matlala, Stech was liberated from the worst of his linguistic difficulties. He reported that Joseph soon became his "mouth and interpreter, which was urgently needed for my sake and especially for Sundays."[124] Stech also cut back drastically on using Solomon, replacing him with the thoroughly Christianised Joseph, whom he trusted much more. Not only had Joseph translated for him when was at Ga-Matlala during his period of acclimatisation and language studies, he had also for long felt the guiding hand of a white Lutheran pastor. Stech commented that:

> I managed to carry on as well as I could [with Solomon], until at last Joseph came. And now, I can talk to him through "my mouth", in the same way as we did before. I have reached to the end of the third chapter, the Holy Our Father, by reading the Catechism to them. I did not find chapters four and five suitable for heathens. I therefore read the book "*III, Stufe*" to them. I had finished the story of The creation up to man's Fall to sin, before Joseph came - the large numbers and regular attendance is proof that it can be done this way - One can imagine how anxious I was on the first few Sundays, and I certainly will not forget those Sundays.[125]

In addition, Joseph's presence enabled Stech to expand his potential target group by freeing him to preach his sermons into the so-called *Oorlamstaal* – the simplified form of Dutch used by people who had worked for whites for so long – either as *inboekelinge* taken in childhood or as the children of workers - that they no longer

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[122] Recorded as "Matlale".

[123] *BMB*, Nr. 9 u. 10, 1874, p.164.

[124] *Ibid.*

[125] *Ibid.* p.181. The Chapters of Luther's Catechism are: 1. Ten Commandments 2. The Apostolic Creed 3. The Our Father/The Lord's Prayer 4. The Sacrament of Baptism 5. The Sacrament of Holy Communion. "*III Stufe*" translates as "*The Third Step*". Presumably this was a book which

spoke their native languages. This would form one of the strands of the language which would eventually become known as Afrikaans. On 27 April, Stech recorded that:

> Since Joseph from Matlale [Matlala] was now here, I today started another way of holding the service, namely in common Dutch [*Plattholländisch*] or Oorlamstaal and Joseph interpreted.[126] At first I prepared everything in German and then translated it into Oorlamstaal. Then I wanted Joseph to translate this into Sesutho [SeSotho – Northen Sotho] and finally I wanted Solomon to translate it for the fourth time, this time into Setzuetla [Tshivenda]. But I had to give it up as my head buzzed with all the translations and it wasted far too much time. So I just made myself some very brief notes and preached directly to the people.[127]

Assisted by Joseph, Stech's message in his sermons between April and June was intensely evangelistic and revivalistic. Beyond John's call to mission (John 3: 16), he preached on the idea "If we say we have no sin, we are deceiving ourselves", and on the moving command to mission in Mark 16: 15-18:

> Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature.
> He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned.
> And these signs shall follow them that believe; In my name they shall cast out devils; they shall speak with new tongues;
> They shall take up serpents; and if they drink any deadly thing, it shall not hurt them; they shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover.

These texts were followed by sermons on Matthew 11: 28 "Come to me, all *ye* that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest"; the outpouring of the Holy Sprit on the disciples at Pentecost; the third commandment in Luther's Catechism, "Remember the Sabbath" and the rich man and the poor Lazarus (Luke 16: 19-31) and the fires of hell. In addition, he held private services and study sessions for any workers at the mission station and for Joseph, discussing each of the Ten Commandments with them over a period of ten weeks. After each of these sessions,

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the missionaries had available to work through in the catechism classes.

[126] This appeared as "Oorlamschtal" in the original. Throughout this quotation, I have translated this as "Oorlamstaal".

[127] *BMB*, Nr. 9 u. 10, 1874, p.182. Lutherans believe that people are not saved by sacrifices or deeds, but only through their faith in God.

Joseph remained behind and he and Stech went through the Gospel and the Epistle reading together.[128]

Stech seems to have been too blind to see that his joyful adoption of Joseph had alienated Solomon, who obviously felt that he had been cast aside. On 20 April, Stech recorded that: "Solomon was not here. It was a sad service; at least, I felt a great sadness in my heart. Otherwise, many people came." [129] With the benefit of hindsight, this was the first real sign that he was beginning to separate himself from the mission, a sadly disillusioned man.

One can well imagine Solomon's hurt and bitterness. A common theme running through the life histories of converts discussed in mission sources is the opprobrium they faced from their non-Christian family members and the wider community. On the one hand, this took the form of subtle (or not so subtle) pressure to conform to societal norms, such as polygyny and participation in circumcision and religious rituals, which conflicted with missionary interpretations of Christianity. On the other, it was frequently expressed in hostility or physical violence against the persons of the converts, or prospective converts.[130] Keeping his faith before the arrival of the missionaries in the face of societal disapproval, and while his fellow converts (with the exception of Mutshaeni) were abandoning or transforming theirs, must have taken considerable courage and fortitude on Solomon's part. In many ways, he must have become an outcast from society. With the arrival of the missionaries, and the central role that he played under Stech, he must have felt vindicated. Not only had his choices not been in vain but he must have acquired a new status as the right-hand of the missionary. With Joseph's arrival, he must have felt all his faith, courage and fortitude had been for nothing and that he was now being cast down and humiliated.

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[128] *BMB*, Nr. 9 u. 10, 1874, pp.182-183 & 184. Every Sunday service has a Gospel (Matthew, Mark, Luke and John) and an Epistle (the letters of the New Testament, i.e. the rest of the New Testament) reading.

[129] *BMB*, Nr. 9 u. 10, 1874, p.182.

[130] See, for example, *BMB*, Nr. 17 u. 18, 1875, pp.359 & 360; Nr. 19 u. 20, 1875, pp.403-404, 405 & 406; Nr. 21 u. 22, 1875, pp.448-449; Nr. 23 u. 24, 1877, p.485; Nr. 15 u. 16, 1878, pp.311 & 312; Nr. 21 u. 22, 1878, p.486; Nr. 11 u. 12, 1879, p.202; Nr. 21 u. 22, 1879, p.407 and Nr. 21 u. 22, 1886, pp.414-430.

Even Beuster's return from Natal with his wife, Ida, on 27 June 1873, did not improve matters for Solomon. Beuster, who was in charge of the station, used his own assistant, Johannes Mutshaeni. Basically from April, Solomon had again been cast aside.

Shortly after Joseph's arrival, Stech had recorded that:

> It was especially painful to hear that even Solomon, who almost always attends our church service, and who has always helped me so well as an interpreter, also has two wives. And that, although he does not practice witchcraft [*Zauberei*] himself, he accompanies his father [a traditional healer] when he goes out to do witchcraft, and they are earning many goats through this."[131]

While I have no direct evidence of this, I am convinced that these actions were signs of an attempt by Solomon to rebuild a sense of identity for himself in the wake of Stech's cooling towards him. In doing so, he further alienated himself from the missionary. Stech appears to have had nothing (or extremely little) more to do with him before being transferred to Blauberg to replace Beyer, who had had a nervous breakdown, in November 1843.[132] Beuster nevertheless attempted to re-establish the connection, albeit completely on terms dictated by the missionaries.

In November 1873, Beuster recorded, in a way that revealed his stereotypes about the untrustworthiness of the local people, that they "had informed me in their way, i.e. they had lied, that Solomon had gone to Natal to work." The missionary was reportedly surprised at this, because Solomon had not informed him of his intention or asked him for a travel document.[133] He nevertheless abandoned a planned visit to the convert, at which he had intended to discuss his lack of attendance at church

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[131] *BMB*, Nr. 9 u. 10, 1874, p.176: "... *wenn nicht selbst zaubere, so doch seinem Vater auf den Zaubergängen, wo viel Böcke verdient werben, begleitete.*"

[132] *BMB*, Nr. 11 u. 12, 1874 [Jahresbericht 1873], p.241 and Nr. 17 u. 18, 1875, p.359.

[133] According to the provisions of the pass law of 1866, it was an offence for any Black person to be found outside his residential district without a pass from his employer, "paramount chief", a missionary, magistrate or field-cornet. He could be detained by any citizen and handed over to the nearest field-cornet for punishment. Subsequent legislation differentiated between employed and unemployed Blacks. (D.S. Heydenrych "The Boer Republics, 1852-1881", in T. Cameron and S.B.

services, his polygyny and the fact that he was beginning to practice as a traditional healer.[134]

Again, I see these as signs that Solomon was attempting to rebuild a meaningful life outside of the mission setting. Despite this, the fact that he had been close to, and needed by, the missionaries obviously continued to exert a pull over him. A short while later, Solomon sent a messenger to Beuster to convey his greetings and inform the missionary that he was sick. Since he had not been seen at the mission station "for a long time, and [since] it would most probably be a long time till there was an opportunity to speak to him," Beuster went to visit him on 7 November. Accompanied by Johannes Mutshaeni, he found that:

> Solomon seemed somewhat frightened; his illness does not seem to be too serious, at least not serious enough to prevent him from attending church services. His child was seriously ill. Solomon's father is a very prominent doctor who has acquired a multitude of wives with his noble craft. His son has also started - he already has two wives and many goats are at his disposal. Solomon did not lie that he had sinned greatly: "I am not feeling happy; my heart is sick," he said, "I have no peace". I said to him what I had also already said to Totane: that I would pray to God that He should never let them have peace.[135] I reminded him of his responsibility which he would have towards his wife and children. I said: "Can you be happy about your children if you know that they will burn in hell?" Solomon reckoned: "It is not good, it is not good. But there is no power."[136] We spoke about Him, who is mighty in the weak ones. He promised to come to the church service next Sunday.[137]

Beuster claimed that the person that he felt the most sorry for was Solomon's first wife, who found herself:

> in a similar situation as Totane's wife. She was inclined towards the Word, but now that the leader has become blind, she will also fall into the pit.[138] But whose fault will be the greater? This woman has remained faithful to her husband during the seven years of his absence, in spite of all

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Spies (eds.) *A New Illustrated History of South Africa*, p.153.)

[134] *BMB*, Nr. 19 u. 20, 1875, p.410.

[135] Totane's story will be discussed on pp.147-151 and 152-155.

[136] In other words, "I do not have the power to resist temptation."

[137] *BMB*, Nr. 19 u. 20, 1875, p.410.

[138] Matthew 15: 14 - If a blind man leads a blind man, both will fall into a pit.

> the encouragement from others that she should take another man as Solomon would not be returning again. Solomon rewarded her faithfulness by taking a second wife.[139]

By this stage, Beuster was becoming exceedingly concerned about the defected Christians in Vendaland. Beyond any concern which the missionaries may have had for the souls of these men, and their wives, it is clear that they were becoming extremely embarrassing to the mission. Widely identified as "People of the Book" by both commoners and royalty alike, the missionaries felt that what they saw as their failings and shortcomings were broadcast about, and relished, as reflecting on all Christians, including their "teachers".[140] Re-winning them for Jesus was thus as crucial for the standing and prestige of the mission as for the state of their souls. However, they were destined to fail spectacularly in the task which they had set themselves.

This was not a new issue for the missionaries. They saw it as being symptomatic of a much deeper problem, arising from the different attitude towards mission work held by Lutherans and the Methodist missionaries who were working in Natal. They believed that the difficulties arising from this deep-seated difference were serious enough to threaten their entire credibility in Vendaland. Earlier in the year, Stech had already commented that the most serious difficulty faced by the "young station" in Tshivhase's area was "the trouble caused by the so-called Christians who were converted and baptised by the Methodists, years ago, in Natal."[141]

The way that Stech described these Christians cannot be translated directly. He referred to them as "*methodistisch Angehauchten und Getauften*".[142] Allison and his colleagues in Natal seem to have believed in the power of the Holy Spirit through baptism. In the interpretation of the Berlin Missionaries, they concentrated more on the baptism than on the Christian principles. That is why Stech called them "*Angehaucht*" – he believed that they had not heard the full words of the Gospel but

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[139] *BMB*, Nr. 19 u. 20, 1875, p.410.
[140] See, for example, *Ibid.* pp.400 & 414.
[141] *BMB*, Nr. 9 u. 10, 1874, p.174.

only got a breath of it (and, through it, the Holy Spirit), before being baptised. He and his colleagues believed that, as such, these converts did not have the resilience to withstand pressures to conform to what they saw as the snares of "heathen" practices, such as polygyny and local religious beliefs. For Lutherans, this was unacceptable – the Spirit could only be seen in the way that people lived. Only once it was apparent that they had welcomed the Holy Spirit into their hearts could they be baptised. Put simply, the conflict was between the Methodist attitude of "baptise first and the Spirit will heal you" and the Lutheran insistence on "show me that you have the Spirit before I accept you into the body of Christ."

Thus, the missionaries worried about more than the souls of the earlier converts – they were equally concerned with the way that their behaviour would impact on the credibility and standing of the mission as a whole. Beuster's concern about the situation clearly underlies his accounts of his interaction with them. Thus, on Sunday 16 November 1873, the missionary recorded that:

> Neither Solomon, nor any other Christians appeared today. That makes me very sad. When, through Johannes, I asked for an explanation, Solomon excused himself by saying that he had gone to hunt with the others. For some time now there had been lions in the area; three were killed, one escaped. For the time being, I accepted the excuse.[143]

On the next Sunday, 23 November, "neither Solomon nor any other Christians appeared again." This time, it was Totane who offered an excuse. During the following week, he stated that he had been ill.[144] Totane had re-entered missionary consciousness in April 1873, after having been contacted by the two Christians who had accompanied Beyer on his visit to Stech. He had reportedly been "just as surprised as he was happy, when he suddenly saw the Christians whom he had known from so long ago." He had nevertheless told them that he was "afraid" to go to the mission station because he had "given up his faith and [had] ... big sins on his conscience." As with many others, he raised the issues of polygyny and power as his

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[142] In other words, the Methodists had given them a breath (of Christianity) and then baptised them.
[143] *BMB*, Nr. 19 u. 20, 1875, p.412.
[144] *Ibid.*

main reason for turning aside from Christianity.[145] Although the Christians had encouraged him to go visit the station, Totane had not done so. Stech had also meant to visit him but had not managed to do this by the time that Beuster got back.[146] After his return from Natal, Beuster had paid a number of visits to Totane. Each time, he had promised to visit the mission station soon but had failed to do so.[147]

These visits to Totane demonstrated that missionary perceptions that he and other previously-baptised Christians were topics of conversation in Vendaland were not unrealistic. For example, when Beuster and Mutshaeni were on their way to visit the *gota* for the first time, in Sepetember 1873, they had stopped at Tshivhase's capital on the way. On their departure, the *khosi* had "mockingly said to Johannes: 'Tell Totane (who is a defected Believer) [*abgefallener Glaübiger*], he must pray hard.'"[148] Moreover, and more interestingly for me, Totane's replies to Beuster and Mutshaeni raise questions both about the state of his relationship with the Christian God and the motivations behind his repeated promises to visit the mission station and attend a service there when, with the benefit of hindsight, it is clear that he had no intention of doing so.

This apparent evasiveness stands in marked contrast to what Beuster had seen as Totane's forthright and honest answers to questions about the state of his soul. Even the missionary had been taken aback by Totane's statement that: "Mynheer, you have come to look for me so I will not run away. I wish to tell you that I have sinned; I have deserted my faith." As recorded by Beuster, for the *gota*, the core of this desertion had lain in his having "taken two wives." In his own words, in response to a question by Beuster: "Yes, I have two wives; I have sinned."[149]

Beuster thought that the *gota*'s broken promises stemmed from "fear of people and earthly possessions". In other words, the fear of what people would say or do and the

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[145] *BMB*, Nr. 9 u. 10, 1874, pp.174-175
[146] *Ibid.* pp.175-176.
[147] *BMB*, Nr. 19 u. 20, 1875, pp.399-402.
[148] *Ibid.* p.399.
[149] *Ibid.* p.400.

love of earthly possessions and power acting as obstacles to Totane's return to the fold of Christians. For Beuster, this boiled down to the fact that Totane was unprepared to give up his second wife and was unwilling to risk losing his position and power as a ruler. Thus, his conscience caused him to agree to come to services while the missionary was present. However, once he was gone, the *gota*'s baser instincts could take over and he could forget about his good intentions.[150]

Based on this premise, Beuster made it very clear to Totane that there was nothing that he could do to make the choice any easier for him. In response to a question from the *gota* about what he should do, he stated that:

> As long as you have two wives, I cannot regard you as a Christian; as long as this is so, you cannot partake in Holy Communion - only the Christians receive that. Through it they receive forgiveness of their sins. Therefore, as long as you cannot come to Holy Communion, your sins are not forgiven, and you cannot be blessed. You must therefore leave your second wife."[151]

In response, without expressing it directly, Totane implied that leaving one his wives and returning to the fold would result in his losing the support of his people and, through this, his status and power. He told Beuster: "That is difficult. They will despise me." In his, and his mission's, interpretation, Beuster had no choice but to reply:

> "Yes, it might be difficult for both of you, but I cannot make it easier for you.[152] God's Word says so and I know no other way. And even if it will be difficult, it is certainly not too difficult. God is mighty. He will give you the strength. Earnestly pray, then you will be able to overcome all things."[153]

In my reading, fear of losing his position may have played some role in Totane's actions. However, the situation seems more complex than this. Caught between old

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[150] *Ibid.* p.408
[151] *Ibid.* p.402.
[152] He uses "*Euch*", the plural "you", meaning both Totane and the wife he must leave.

and new ways, it is impossible to know with certainty whether or not he was seriously thinking of turning back to orthodox mission-interpreted Christianity. My own feeling is that he was not – not only did he seem to appear the prohibition on marrying more than one wife as nonsensical but, as a ruler, he had far more to lose by "repenting" and "turning back" than in continuing as he was. However, the *gota* did not want to alienate the missionaries completely in case he needed them, or their religion, in the future. Under these circumstances, the best course was to fob them off with excuses and what they wanted to hear about his visiting the mission station and coming to attend church services for as long as possible.[154] By these means, he managed to buy time so that the missionaries would leave him in peace between visits and also managed to avoid serious confrontation with the mission for a considerable period.

Support for the idea that Totane did not yet want to sever ties completely from the mission or from Christianity is provided by a description of a meeting with Beuster on 3 November 1873. Here Isaiah was also present. Beuster argued that the defected Christians were hindering others from finding "the Way of Life". He then continued by asserting that people were saying: "Where is Totane? Where is Isaiah? They have thrown away their faith. So there is nothing in this faith." He and the other Christians had nothing to say to counter to this kind of assertion. While they did not want to put Totane and Isaiah "to shame", what were they supposed to say?

Totane reportedly replied that: "You must not tell the people that we have thrown away our faith, we have defected. You must tell them: 'God's Word is still with them; they are still praying; they can turn around again.'" He then "promised to count the days and come to the church service in two weeks time." With this, Beuster and his delegation left. Totane had managed to win himself a respite of more than

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[153] *BMB*, Nr. 19 u. 20, 1875, p.402.

[154] These methods of operating fit in well with local etiquette. If one requests something that the other person cannot, or does not want to, do, it is very rare that one will receive an outright refusal. To do so would be extremely rude. Instead, there are ways of saying "yes" that actually mean "no". If one is unable to see through these, the other person will continue to find excuses about why s/he

seven months (until May 1874) without missionary interference.[155] During this time, Beuster and Mutsaheni first concerned themselves with the state of Solomon's soul.

Solomon failed to attend any services during November. As a result, Beuster and Mutshaeni visited him on Monday 8 December. At this meeting, they did all in their power to persuade him to leave his second wife and return to the Lord. They also managed to get an opportunity to speak to his elderly father, berating him for his polygyny, his practising as a *nanga* and (as they saw it) having tempted Solomon away from the Christian path by helping him to marry a second wife. "You are having such an evil time with your many wives, now you want your son to have the same experience, you have no sympathy for him", they accused.[156] Little did they realise that this was the last time that they would see Solomon alive again.

In January 1874, Beuster started to hear rumours that Solomon had died. This unexpected news reportedly came as a "real shock" to him. He also recorded that:

> Although I did not want to believe the rumour at first, I soon noticed that there could be some truth in this matter because it was spoken of everywhere. As Solomon acted as the interpreter here when we first came, he is generally known as a "Person of the Book". That is how the news of his death was passed on everywhere. "What is the use", it was said, "when we learn, when we read; here we see that the People of the Book also die, just like all people. Yes, if it could make us live!"[157]

On 27 January, Schwellnus and Beuster were due to visit Tshivhase. Taking a detour on their way to the capital, set out to find out for themselves whether or not the rumours were really true. "And, should Solomon's appointed time of reprieve on this earth be over, to speak with his wife, his mother and his infamous father." In Beuster's words, on arrival at Solomon's place: "we soon noticed that he had really died. Unnecessarily, I still asked: 'Where is Solomon?' 'He is not here', was the

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has not performed the desired action and will promise to do it soon until the message finally sinks in. To me, Totane was continually politely trying to tell Beuster to keep out of his business.

[155] *BMB*, Nr. 19 u. 20, 1875, p.409.

[156] *Ibid.* p.412.

[157] *Ibid.* pp.414-415.

reply. This of course gave me the text for a sermon."[158]

What at first sight seems to be the evasive reply that Solomon was not there flows directly from local cosmology. Even today, many local people will not immediately say that a person has "passed away". The death of a person leaves a weakness in the family, especially if it is a man, and even more so if it is the head of the family or the eldest son. For this reason, they say he is away, he has gone to visit, and so on, so that the enemy should not know that the family is vulnerable now.

Despite his concern for the family, Beuster was more concerned with the state of Solomon's soul and with admonishing his father than with expressing condolence. One gets the idea that the missionaries would have found a deathbed recantation far more useful for propaganda purposes locally and at home in Germany than the way that things had gone. Solomon had decisively and finally turned his back on the mission:

> I would have liked to speak longer there than I could have on that day; to the wife, who was receptive; to the mother, who was dead sick; to the father, the great doctor [*Doktor*]; to the children, who had already had lessons from Solomon. Oh, how sad everything looked. On all the faces one could see the hopeless misery. I tried to find out whether, in his last hours, Solomon had maybe shown signs of repentance and done penance; whether he had maybe still looked for the Lord. But no, there was nothing to be found of that. Twice he allowed the magic dice [bones] [*Zauberwürfel*] to be thrown out over him. After this he had taken medicine of the doctors *[Doctoren* – sic.]. He then spat blood. "Leave me," he had said, "the women are killing me." After they had gone away a short while, they found him dead.[159]

With Solomon beyond the reach of salvation, as they saw it, the missionaries again turned their attention to Totane. They saw this as being particularly urgent as, by May 1874, he was apparently looking for a third wife. He had also reportedly committed adultery with a woman from Isaiah's extended family. Sentenced to a fine of two beasts by Tshivhase, "he refused it and asked to fight it out with weapons." In

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[158] *Ibid.* p.415.

Beuster's opinion, "these erstwhile Christians" were setting a "deplorable" example to the unconverted. People were "pointing at them with their fingers" and saying that: "They have spat out the medicine which one has poured into them in Natal. They are now behaving worse than the others. That is why it is not good to become a Christian."[160]

Beuster recorded that, from time to time, he received reports of Totane's doings. As the *gota* occupied "no insignificant position," having about twelve villages under his supervision, his actions were "not unknown in the land." In Beuster's opinion, he had "become a public nuisance." As far as the missionary could discern, his visits to Totane had produced no beneficial result. While the *gota* had always promised to visit Ha-Tshivhase, he had not yet done so. So Beuster came to the conclusion that "it was now time to serve him with the last labour of love which I can still do for him, in that I solemnly exclude him from the congregation."[161] It seems that Beuster hoped that, by doing this, he would shock him into mending his ways, set an example to other Christians that deviations from mission-interpreted Christianity would not be tolerated and send a message to the "heathens" that the Christians were as determined to maintain order among their subjects as the *mahosi* were among theirs. He seems also to have hoped that this would replace discussion about the bad examples set by Christian converts with positive comments on what they were achieving.

Arriving at Totane's village on the evening of 6 August, Beuster became even more convinced that he was taking the correct course of action. The *gota*'s brother was taking advantage of the tension between him and Tshivhase to attempt to usurp Totane's throne. Beuster recorded that, as he approached the village:

> next to the road I saw a baboon's head as a protective remedy against the enemy, his brother; then a bone and then an old basket. I have never seen so many devices at any heathens. Even on Totane's body I noticed many

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[159] *Ibid.*
[160] *Ibid.* pp.420-421.
[161] *BMB*, Nr. 21 u. 22, 1875, p.439.

amulets.[162]

Revealing the kind of power that the missionaries saw it as their right to wield even over royal Christian converts, on the very evening that he arrived, "without any frills," Beuster told the *gota*'s:

> councillors, his wife and others who were in Totane's presence: "Your Chief has strayed from God's ways. He is causing you to also stray. You must not follow him! Everyone is accountable for his own soul. If he wants to be ruined, let him. Every-one of you has to take care of his own soul. Save yourselves!"[163]

In my reading, this was a dramatic representation of the fact that any ruler who converted to Christianity was automatically ceding a significant part of his power to the missionaries. Berating a ruler in these terms in front of his family, his councillors and his subjects was a complete breach of etiquette and a sign of complete lack of respect for his person and his office. The missionaries clearly saw a Christian *khosi* or *gota* as subservient to them and their rules. Were he to remain a Christian, he would essentially rule through their grace.[164] The alternative was to court excommunication. On the following day, 7 August, with Mutshaeni as his witness, Beuster solemnly excommunicated Totane from the congregation of the Lord and officially handed him over to Satan, to whom, in the interpretation of the missionary, the *gota* had until then "confessed allegiance."[165]

This marked the end of the road for Totane and the missionaries. In his report on conditions at Ha-Tshivhase during the second semester of 1875, based on reports sent to Berlin by Beuster, Wangemann recorded that:

> Totane, the unfortunate defector ... has opposed the warnings of the missionary with growing defiance, so that the missionary had to excommunicate him... After this, things went down-hill for the

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[162] *Ibid.* p.440.
[163] *Ibid.*
[164] This is one of the main themes of my discussion of Khosi Makwarela Mphaphuli in Chapter 8.
[165] *BMB*, Nr. 21 u. 22, 1875, p.442.

> unfortunate one; to such an extent that he annoyed his subjects worse than any heathen chief. He gave himself such a name amongst his subjects, that he had to flee from the country. The books which he had left behind created a big problem to his relatives - their superstitious fear prevented them from keeping or destroying them. Finally it was decided to hand them over to the safe keeping of the teacher.[166]

Finally, a report on events at Tshakuma during the course of the year 1878 recorded that Totane had "stated plainly that he would stay a heathen from now onwards."[167] This was the last reference to him in missionary sources.

These events left only Johannes Mutshaeni from the original Vendaland conventicle as a practising Christian. Over the time that the relationship between the other Christians was deteriorating, Beuster had increasingly come to depend on him. During the course of their journey to Natal and on their return, it was Mutshaeni who assisted the missionary to learn Tshivenda. As they progressed, Mutshaeni became "inordinately proud of the advances and achievements of his pupil." One day, after Beuster had preached, Mutshaeni said to him: "It cannot be said that the people do not believe because they do not understand. They understood very well. Today I did not hear you make even one mistake. Everything was correct."[168] Similarly, on 27 July 1873, Beuster recorded that he had held evening "hymn-practice with Johannes and my people." They had sung a number of hymns which he had translated into Tshivenda:

> They had much pleasure out of singing hymns in their own language. Johannes said: "I now see that God is at work. Before this we could only sing in Sesutho [SeSotho – Northern Sotho] and the people did not know what they were singing. I was afraid how things would work out, but this is our language and the songs are good. The people have also understood what you have preached", he continued, "Yes, they hear and they understand." This admission gave me much joy. Because with all the difficulties which the language presents, the heart feels so grateful when one sees that something has been achieved. Yet much more needs to be done, and the pleasure of the work is not missing. I have done five songs

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[166] *BMB*, Nr. 23 u. 24, 1876, p.395. Ha-Tshivhase was recorded as "Ga Shewasse (Ga Sebase, Transvaal)".

[167] *BMB*, Nr. 21 u. 22, 1879, p.408. Tshakhuma was recorded as "Tsakoma".

[168] C. Beuster *Johannes Motscheni*, p.14.

> and have derived great pleasure from them.[169] They are translations of "Great God we praise your name"; "Let me go"; "Most beautiful Lord Jesus" etc. [170]

As evidenced by frequent references to Mutshaeni accompanying Beuster to visit the defected Christians and to various local rulers, and undertaking evangelisation journeys on his own or in the company of other so-called Native Assistants, he became increasingly indispensable to Beuster in what the latter called "the real mission work".[171] For example, commenting on his and Mutshaeni's journey back from a visit to Totane on 8 and 9 September 1873, Beuster wrote that:

> On the way back, we still had some time over to proclaim God's Word. Johannes helps bravely to talk. He translates that which he hears me say, in his own words and his own special style. I do not always see the connection, but what does that matter![172] ... He [also] takes note of that which he finds specially interesting in my sermons and uses it at every opportunity. Even if I have not up to now had much success here, I have had much pleasure in him; that he has learnt so much from me already, and that he has obtained new courage and enthusiasm for the work through the teacher. He is very receptive to the Word. When I said to him: "You will find it difficult to reap maize in this area", he replied: "That doesn't matter. Don't you say it is good for a man to work."[173]

Khosi Tshivhase himself reportedly:

> enjoyed listening to Johannes and his teacher. He often called them, and then took them aside, to listen to what they had to say with amazement. But he was not ashamed to later use what he had heard, and joke about it with his councillors, while sitting around the fire. There was no sign in him of a serious yearning for salvation. In spite of this, the two confidently continued their work, hoping for blessings in the end.[174]

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[169] Beuster was well-known for the songs he wrote - especially the children's songs. They were not just translated Hymns, but also ordinary German Folksongs which were translated with much poetic licence and sometimes their words were totally different. Many of his songs - with their catchy German tunes – are still sung by local children today.

[170] *BMB*, Nr. 17 u. 18, 1875, p.360.

[171] C. Beuster *Johannes Motscheni*, p.14.

[172] Translating more freely, "I do not always see the connection between what I say and what he translates" – By this stage, Beuster understood a bit of Tshivenda so he vaguely could make out what Johannes was translating.

[173] *BMB*, Nr. 19 u. 20, 1875, p.402.

[174] C. Beuster *Johannes Motscheni*, p.15.

In summing up his feelings for Mutshaeni, in June 1874, Beuster wrote that: "The love and consideration which this old boy extends is really touching."[175] He was also particularly moved when, at the same time, Mutshaeni informed him that he had finally decided that he would "resettle at Ha-Tshivhase – if necessary against the will of his family."[176]

By being so closely associated with the missionary, Mutshaeni cut himself off from many of the local people. Beuster ascribed much of this "hatred" to the "envy [at] the better clothing which he now wore" and what he described as scapegoating.[177] By this, he meant that, since they could not get rid of him, those who opposed a missionary presence in Vendaland would get at him through Mutshaeni. For example, on 31 Ocotber 1874, Beuster recorded that:

> As they cannot get at me, Johannes will become my scapegoat. They try to make him the instigator of all my undertakings. It is generally said that he will not be able to escape the poison of the witch-doctor [*Zauberer*] for much longer. So-called friends continually advise him to take care and to keep quiet. The poor man even has to bear the guilt of my being able to speak the language; he is being scolded for teaching me the language. "When we are with the Boers [*Bauern*]," they say, "we can scold and swear at them in our own language as much as we wish. Here we cannot do it. *Mynheer* understands everything. That is all your fault!" [178]

While there may have been some truth in Beuster's assertion of scapegoating, it is clear that the causes of this clash went much deeper than this. In modern political parlance, Mutshaeni would be described as an *impimpi* or a sell-out. Not only by his actions but also by his core beliefs, he had rejected and set himself against local people and local ways. One of the accusations levelled against him was that – "You have deserted us, and have turned your love towards a foreign nation."[179] Tshivhase's senior wife was allegedly even "more hostile." She clearly regarded him

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[175] *BMB*, Nr. 19 u. 20, 1875, p.423.
[176] C. Beuster *Johannes Motscheni*, p.16.
[177] *Ibid.* p.17.
[178] *BMB*, Nr. 21 u. 22, 1875, pp.448-449. See also C. Beuster *Johannes Motscheni*, p.17.
[179] C. Beuster *Johannes Motscheni*, p.17.

as *persona non grata.* On more than one occasion, she reportedly "sent out her messengers to kill Johannes on the road." In response, Mutshaeni declared that: "I am not afraid and will go my way, in spite of this." Beuster also made it clear that he would interpret any attack on Mutshaeni as an attack upon himself. It would seem that, either out of fear of what Tshivhase would do if she caused a rupture with Beuster or out of fear of interfering with his policy regarding the missionaries, she called off her assassins.[180]

Against this tense background, after he had completed a small house at Ha-Tshivhase, Mutshaeni brought his wife and his two-year old son across from Tshakhuma. Shortly after the move, his wife gave birth to a second son. Even although his wife had not yet converted to Christianity, she raised no objections to their being baptised by Beuster.[181]

Beuster's first wife having died, he married Emma Koboldt (born Oberländer) on 22 August 1875. Accompanying her to Ha-Tshivhase were her daughter from her marriage to the late Missionary Koboldt, Maria, a foster daughter and a "kitchen maid".[182] The father of the foster-daughter was Paulus Luvhengo, a MoSotho from Waterberg and a former traditional healer [*heidnische Doktor*] who had converted to Christianity. He and his wife accompanied the party to Ha-Tshivhase to see his daughter settled in and to help Beuster in the meanwhile. Mutshaeni and Luvhengo soon formed a close friendship based on their mutual "love for the Lord." They took it "upon themselves to visit the neighbouring villages in order to gather people for the Word of God."[183]

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[180] *Ibid.* p.15.

[181] *Ibid.* pp.17-18.

[182] Acta der Berliner Missionsgesellschaft betreffend Personalia: Beuster, Carl; [Anon.] *75th Anniversary of the Berlin Mission Station Tshivhase, Tshivhase, 8 November, 1872 -1947*, Pamphlet distributed for the celebrations, No Publisher [Berlin Mission Society], n.d. [1947], filed in Ha Tschewasse: NT von 1908 bis 1956, AUFB. FRIST a; ABGEL IV, 2E, 11; Bd. 1 [Box 3], Acta der Berliner Missionsgesellschaft betreffend Missions-Station Tsewasse, Abt. IV, Fach IIE, Nr. 11, Angefangen 1908 Beendigt 1956, Band 1, pp.3 & 4; *BMB*, Nr. 11 u 12, 1876, p.184 and C. Beuster *Johannes Motscheni*, p.18. Missionary Heinrich Koboldt, the missionary at Middelfontein (Modimolle/Kranskop) had died of a nervous disorder in February 1874, two months before Beuster's wife died. This common loss brought together the two partners who were left behind.

[183] *BMB*, Nr. 23 u. 24, 1876, p.395 and C. Beuster *Johannes Motscheni*, p.18.

Luvhengo "had a compelling eloquence" when speaking in public. This arose directly from his previous training as a traditional healer. He therefore did most of the talking. Mutshaeni served as his interpreter. People reportedly:

> came from everywhere and listened, filled with amazement and wonder at what he had to say. ... "Take note of that man's words," they said, "he comes from far away. What he has to say must be important."
>
> And Johannes - who so faithfully had worked for many years without ever having reaped anything else but scorn and hatred up to now - was humble enough to be happy, without any envy, about the success of his friend.[184]

While Luvhengo was at the station, and largely persuaded by him and Mutshaeni, David Denga moved to Ha-Tshivhase. Unlike Mutshaeni, he had not made contact with the missionaries of his own accord. Beuster had sent Mutshaeni out to find him. Although he was still practising a form of Christianity, winning him back to orthodox mission-style Christianity was seen as one of Beuster, Mutshaeni and Luvhengo's great successes: "In this way a new stimulus had been given, and one was able to hope that the work would vigorously proceed, even after Paulus had left."[185]

Prior to his move to Ha-Tshivhase, Denga's relationship with his family had clearly illustrated the kinds of difficulties faced by converts in those early days. His moves away from orthodox Christianity seem to have been attempts to make some concessions towards local practices in the interests of peace with his family. Beuster's judgement that "on his return home, he had fallen back into the heathen ways, as most of the others like him do" seems excessively harsh to me.[186] Even

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[184] C. Beuster *Johannes Motscheni*, p.18.

[185] *Ibid.* Towards the end of the first semester of 1876, Paulus Luvhengo and his wife returned home. His departure was simply a return home after he was satisfied that his daughter had settled in well at the new place, rather than a result of a conflict with Beuster or Mrs Beuster, with whom he seems to have had a good relationship. In thanking him for his help in the columns of the *Missions-Berichte*, Beuster wrote: "May the Lord bless him for everything he has done here for his people." (*BMB*, Nr. 23 u. 24, 1877, p.487.)

[186] *BMB*, Nr. 23 u. 24, 1876, p.395.

given that the whole basis of the missionary presence at this stage rested on the idea that the only acceptable interpretation of Christianity was that sanctioned by them, he was well aware of the struggle that Denga was having to wage. For example, the missionary would later record that:

> Once he told me about the struggle he had had with his people [relatives]: *Mynheer*, I fought until it became bare - this means, compared to a physical struggle, he fought so long, till the grass under his feet was trodden bare.[187]

The family were convinced that Denga's commitment to Christianity was a sign of madness. Intending to protect him from the consequences of what they saw as his own deranged behaviour and folly, once he decided to move to the mission station, the family elders refused his wife and young son permission to accompany him. They hoped that this would bring him to his senses and back to the family.[188] However, they failed in these attempts and, in October 1875, he moved to Ha-Tshivhase. [189] In the absence of his wife and son, he was "lonely like a widower." He nevertheless built himself a comfortable house and was even prepared to extend it, always hoping that his wife and relatives would join him. In the meanwhile, there was one change that becoming a new person in Christ did not demand – he did not start to cook for himself. The *Missions-Berichte* noted that "Johannes's wife was very happy to prepare David's food every day."[190]

With his move to the station, Denga seemed to acquire new energy. On an eight-day evangelisation tour to various rulers beginning on 26 November 1875, he introduced Johannes Musthaeni and Paulus Luvhengo to Mphaphuli's country. He then acted as their guide to *Khosi* Makwarela Mphaphuli, *Khosi* Gondo, Queen Netshaulu of Tshaulu and *Khosi* Lambane. "They had friendly receptions at these kings." Following this, he became Beuster's guide in the same areas when he went on a

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[187] *BMB*, Nr. 15 u. 16, 1879, p.311.
[188] *Ibid.* pp.310-311.
[189] *BMB*, Nr. 23 u. 24, 1876, pp.395-396. See also *BMB*, Nr. 15 u. 16, 1879, p.31.
[190] *BMB*, Nr. 15 u. 16, 1879, pp.311-312.

follow-up visit from 13 to 15 December of the same year.[191]

Once Denga had settled on the station, after many moves, his mother joined him. Although living on the mission station, she had only moved there so that her son and other Christians could look after her. She never converted to Christianity and was extremely worried about the new cultural practices that her son had adopted. One of the things that really worried her was that he was constantly striving to do everything to the best of his ability and outshine others. I suspect that, beyond his own personal industriousness, he was trying to prove to others the difference that God had made in his life. His mother feared that he ran the risk of doing better than his neighbours and standing out from the common norm. This opened him up to the jealousy, and evil machinations, of *muloi* and other evil persons. For example, standard agricultural procedure was to hoe, rather than plough, fields. Since hoeing was often performed very shallowly, many local people tilled the top part of the soil only, chopping out the shoots of the weeds (the part above the ground) without disturbing the deeper roots. This meant that, as soon as the rains came, the underground roots start growing again, requiring more hoeing. In Beuster's summation of the situation:

> As already mentioned, David was a hard worker. He did not work like the other people of his tribe, who left the stones in their gardens [fields] and in their yards and did not pull out the weeds, roots and all. With him everything had to be cleared away and clean. This is also why his old mother scolded him, because she maintained that this was the reason why the *Zauberer* would notice him and he would therefore not be successful in his life.[192]

Denga was equally thorough, and enthusiastic in his preaching. It is clear that he had found a new niche for himself as Beuster and the Native Assistants' guide. Fulfilled in his new role, he was able to resist the pressure of his relatives, who continued to attempt to entice him to come home. Just before he left for the Synod at the end of August 1876, Beuster summed up to Denga what he meant to him: "David, you make my heart very happy and you behave just as a Christian and a man should. Persevere

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[191] *BMB*, Nr. 23 u. 24, 1876, pp.397-401 and Nr. 15 u. 16, 1879, p.312 (quotation).
[192] *BMB*, Nr. 15 u. 16, 1879, p.312.

in this way, God will bless you for it. He will not abandon you." Little did the missionary realise that, after this conversation, he would be able to "count the words [which he] ... exchanged with David in this life." On one level, this praise became his epitaph.[193]

Beuster and his wife were gone for six weeks. Demonstrating the dual role of Native Assistants as both evangelists and workers on the mission stations, during this time, both Mutshaeni and Denga thatched the new missionary residence. They also continued with the evangelisation work which would result in their deaths.[194]

On his return from the Synod, on 14 October 1876, Beuster found Denga seriously ill with smallpox. Mutshaeni was nursing him.[195] Denga had apparently caught the disease by contact with the body of a dead girl who he had personally buried on an evangelisation trip to Mphaphuli's area. It seems that other people were too scared of contracting smallpox to bury her. There was also the possibility that he had contracted it when he and Mutshaeni were preaching and visiting houses in a neighbouring village. At that stage, nobody had known that there was an outbreak of smallpox there. The normal practice was to keep outbreaks of the disease secret from strangers for as long as possible. In Beuster's words: "Nobody in the village will give away the secret that this disease is raging there. Lies are told until it become impossible to hide the fact any longer."[196] Similarly, Schwellnus pointed out that: "Should any-one get this disease, it is kept secret, ... Every death amongst the people is carefully concealed." In his view, this made it extremely difficult to "discover where there is an outbreak of this disease and how serious it is and how many people died of it."[197] This was because once it became known that a family or a village had smallpox present, they would be shunned and would be unable to get food or assistance from anywhere. So, it is hardly surprising that they kept it a secret for as

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[193] *Ibid.*
[194] *Ibid.*
[195] *BMB*, Nr. 11 u. 12 , 1877 [Jahresbericht 1876], p.217 & Nr. 23 u. 24, 1877, pp.488-489 and C. Beuster *Johannes Motscheni*, p.19.
[196] *BMB*, Nr. 15 u. 16, 1879, p.313.
[197] *BMB*, Nr. 23 u. 24, 1877, p.485. In other words, nobody spoke about the deaths from smallpox.

long as possible.

Denga's health failed rapidly. As it became clear that he was close to death, his "old mother summoned all her resources to call a traditional healer [*Doctor*] who lived far away". However, since the was certain that Beuster "would chase him away", he refused to come.[198] In a further clear example of the clash between the old and the new ways, it is also likely that Denga would have refused his treatment. Throughout his sickness, even in his last days, he refused to allow the "heathens" to treat him in the only way that then knew for this illness, namely by "washing him" by rubbing "the enormous pox off his body by means of a mixture of bark and herbs." Since he was "convinced of the uselessness of this torture", Beuster supported him in refusing the treatment. As a result, after his death, "the heathen blamed it all on the missionary and said: 'Had he allowed them to wash him, he would have been cured.'"[199]

In the early hours of the morning of 20 October 1876, Denga passed away. In order to avoid contagion, the funeral could not be put off and took place that very morning.[200] Already on the day of the burial, Mutshaeni had felt ill. The following day he was in bed with what would turn out to be smallpox.[201]

Beuster visited Mutshaeni two days before he died. He "found all the relatives and many other heathens gathered around the suffering patient." They were urging Mutshaeni to give them permission to "wash" him, reminding him of what had happened to David. "His wife also implored him to try this last cure. The patient shuddered at the thought of this shocking treatment" and Beuster also spoke strongly

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[198] *BMB*, Nr. 15 u. 16, 1879, p.313.
[199] C. Beuster *Johannes Motscheni*, p.19.
[200] *BMB*, Nr. 23 u. 24, 1877, p.489 (quotation) & Nr. 15 u. 16, 1879, p.313 and C. Beuster *Johannes Motscheni*, p.19. A congregation consists of baptised people. Beuster only had two baptised people with him at that stage, David and Johannes. The other people at the station were still attending baptism classes.
[201] *BMB*, Nr. 23 u. 24, 1877, p.489 & Nr. 15 u. 16, 1879, p.313 and C. Beuster *Johannes Motscheni*, pp.19-20.

against it.[202] However, hardly had Beuster left when Mutshaeni "declared himself ready to be subjected to the cruel torture." In Beuster's opinion, this was either because "the pleading of his wife" had "forced him to capitulate" or because it was "the last act of faithful love, which he wanted to present to his teacher". It was only in this way that he would have been able to protect "the teacher from renewed hostilities and suspicions."[203]

Because of the danger of infection, Mutshaeni had been housed in a hut in the bush during the time of his illness. As Beuster approached it on the next day:

> he already from afar heard a soft, heart-rending whimper. Frightened, he hurried to the hut and saw how the poor tortured one was squirming like a worm in the hands of his friends. "They have killed me," he breathed [whispered], sinking back onto his bed. Beuster did all he could to ease his pain, but his hope for a recovery was broken.[204]

During the course of that night, Mutshaeni passed away. Again because of fear of infection, he was buried on the following day, 4 November.[205] One can get some sense of Beuster's desolation in his statements that "My congregation lay buried in the graveyard, next to my dead wife!"[206] and:

> The cemetery was properly demarcated with trees and roses. There are already three graves next to one another. They could most probably be referred to as proof of a congregation. But they have no congregation

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[202] C. Beuster *Johannes Motscheni*, p.20.

[203] *Ibid.* p.21.

[204] *Ibid.*

[205] *Ibid.* Denga and Mushaeni had succumbed to the great outbreak of smallpox that hit the northern areas of South Africa, including the whole of Vendaland, during the latter part of 1876 and for much of the following year. This caused many deaths. (*BMB*, Nr. 23 u. 24, 1877, pp.485, 489 & 490 and Nr. 15 u. 16, 1879, pp.312-313.) Luckily, unlike the case for malaria, preventative treatments for smallpox were already well developed. The Swiss-French Misionary Paul Berthoud, from Valdezia, worked closely with the Berliners "in the fight against smallpox – through vaccination of a counter-pox, they rendered considerable service to our mission Brothers and Sisters." (*BMB*, Nr. 11 u. 12, 1878 [Jahresbericht 1877], p.251.) However, controlling the disease on the mission stations did not prevent it from running rife in other parts of Vendaland. (*BMB*, Nr. 21 u. 22, 1878, pp.482-483 and 488-489.)

[206] *BMB*, Nr. 23 u. 24, 1877, p.489. A congregation consists of baptised people. Beuster had only had two baptised people with him at that stage, David and Johannes, now both dead. The other people at the station were still attending baptism classes. The wife was Beuster's first wife of the three who would die at Ha-Tshivhase.

> behind them - they themselves are the congregation![207]

Similarly, remarkably poetically for them, the *Missions-Berichte* noted that:

> all flowers had been broken off. It looked as if the station had died out. God's arm had laid severe tests of patience on them. The two faithful believers lay under a grass-covered mound. Those who had intended to move onto the station had got such a fright, that they stayed away. The people of that nation, who had already got in the habit of attending church services, now called out: "The people of the Book also die. Faith does not help at all", and they stayed away.[208]

More Native Assistants would arise to take the place of those who had fallen. However, because of their dedication, their untimely deaths and because they were the first local Native Assistants, Johannes Mutshaeni and David Denga came to be regarded as heroes of the missionary endeavour in Vendaland. I turn now to what the Berlin Mission saw as its other heroes in the area – the missionaries themselves.

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[207] *BMB*, Nr. 21 u. 22, 1878, p.481.
[208] *Ibid.*

CHAPTER 3

THE MISSION AND ITS MISSIONARIES

THE MISSION

The arrival of the Berlin Missionaries transformed the situation in which Christians, and even followers of African religion, operated. It also raises questions about the nature of the Mission Society, the kind of people that the missionaries were and the kind of training that they received. The Berlin Mission Society (as it was known from 1908) had been founded by a group of Prussian notables on 29 February 1824 as the Society to Promote Evangelical (or Protestant) Missions among the Heathen (*Gesellschaft zur Beförderung der Evangelischen Missionen unter den Heiden*). The foundation meeting took place in the apartment of Morritz August von Bethmann-Hollweg, who would later become the Prussian Minister for Culture. Included among the founders, and subsequent committees of the organisation, were military officers, lawyers, government officials and theologians. When the society was founded, none of its founders held an official position in the hierarchy of the church. As with many other mission societies at the time of its foundation, it was thus an interdenominational, voluntary organisation tied to no established church.[1]

The control and organisation of the Society was in the hands of a selected committee which initially consisted of nine members, but, in the course of time, the number was increased to between twenty and twenty-five members. Because most of the committee-members were civil servants and army officers, the society's constitution was submitted to the Prussian King for approval. Among

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[1] H. Lehmann *150 Jahre Berliner Mission*, Stuttgart, Ev.-Luth. Mission Erlangen, 1974, p.9; U. van der Heyden "The Archives and Library of the Berlin Mission Society" pp.411-412; D.W. van der Merwe "Van Paternalisme tot Selfbeskikking", pp.1-2 and M. Wright *German Missions in Tanganyika*, p.3. In adition to these sources, the most useful general histories of the Berlin Mission Society are H. Lehmann *Zur Zeit und zur Unzeit: Geschichte der Berliner Mission, 1918 - 1972* (Drei Bande), Berlin, Berliner Missionswerk, 1989 and D.J. Richter *Geschichte der Berliner Missionsgesellschaft, 1824 - 1924*, Berlin, Buchhandlung der Berliner ev. Missionsgesellschaft, 1924. For the Transvaal, the most useful works are W. Gründler *Geschichte der Bawenda-Mission in Nord-Transvaal* and D.W. van der Merwe (a) *Die geskiedenis van die Berlynse Sendinggenootskap in Transvaal* & (b) *Die Berlynse*

other members of the conservative Prussian elite, General Leopold von Gerlach, Von Behtmann-Hollweg, Von Jacobi and Kaiser Wilhelm II were members of the committee of the society.[2] It is clear that, in addition to any religious motivations that the founders may have had, they also certainly had a Prussian nationalist one. They wanted their state to be among those establishing churches in other parts of the world.[3]

Seeing that the nature of the employment of most of the committee members meant that they were subject to possible transfer, it was decided to appoint at least one permanent committee member. This person was to ensure continuity in the functioning of the society and day-to-day management and policy decisions were to be taken by him. The post of Mission Inspector was first held by J.C. Wallmann, who served from 1857 to 1863. His successor, H.T. Wangemann (who would serve from 1865 to 1894) only accepted the position on condition that he was given extra-ordinary powers. The position of Mission Inspector was thus changed to that of Mission Director.[4] Accompanying these developments, the society had moved away from its original "non-aligned" status and anchored its mission work in the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Brandenburg. Missionaries in the service of the church obtained their *licentia concionandi* from the Royal Prussian *Konsistorium* of the church. The status of the Berlin Missionaries was equivalent to that of pastors in Prussia.[5]

In its origin, establishment and expansion, the society had its roots in early nineteenth century Pietism. The founding father of this reform movement was Philip Jacob Spener (1635-1705), whose religious significance is generally regarded by German-speaking theologians as being second only to Luther.[6] In essence, Pietism was a spiritual reaction against "the cold rationalism of the

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Sendinggenootskap en Kerkstigting in Transvaal.

[2] D.J. Richter *Geschichte der Berliner Missionsgesellschaft*, p.143 and D.W. van der Merwe "Van Paternalisme tot Selfbeskikking", pp.5-6.

[3] D.W. van der Merwe "Van Paternalisme tot Selfbeskikking", p.2 and M. Wright *German Missions in Tanganyika*, Oxford, p.3.

[4] *BMB*, Nr. 13 u. 14, 1894, p.278 and D.W. van der Merwe "Van Paternalisme tot Selfbeskikking", p5. See especially pp. 143-156 of D.J. Richter *Geschichte der Berliner Missionsgesellschaft* for Wallmann's Inspectorate and pp.176-207 for Wangemann's Directorship.

[5] D.W. van der Merwe "Van Paternalisme tot Selfbeskikking", pp.2-3.

[6] S.B. Ferguson and D.F. Wright (eds.) *New Dictionary of Theology*, p.516.

eighteenth century Aufklärung [Enlightenment]."[7] Convinced that "Protestant Scholasticism exercised a petrifying influence and thus threatened the living truths of the Reformation", as it developed, Pietistic theology emphasised "faith as 'living faith' which must bring forth 'fruits of faith'".[8] One of the ways that it was manifested was in a rejection of the orthodox Lutheran and Calvinist doctrine that rejected mission-work as human interference in the will of God.[9]

During the nineteenth century, Pietism came to play a crucial role in the mission movement. In fact, the whole concept of Christian conversion as we know it today has its roots in the Pietistic tradition. Kritzinger, Meiring and Saayman have argued that:

> Conversion for the Pietists hinged on the conscious personal decision of the individual after a fierce (one can even say cataclysmic) penitential struggle. This was considered to be a once-forever decision of such overwhelming importance that the date and time of this decision should be indelibly engraved on the heart and mind. It concerned mainly (very nearly only) the affairs of the soul, the religious sphere of life, and therefore accepted a dualistic understanding of human reality with clear compartments: (holy) church / (sinful) world, (holy) soul / (sinful) body, (holy) religion / (sinful) politics, etc.[10] ... Repentance and conversion would therefore imply a move out of the realm of sin, into the realm of holiness, and it is difficult not to interpret this move as essentially a withdrawal from the (sinful) world.[11]

They continue by arguing that, with some modification, this was the understanding of mission which "was predominant in the mission societies and churches which were the main agents of mission in the nineteenth century."[12]

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[7] D.W. van der Merwe "Van Paternalisme tot Selfbeskikking", p.2.

[8] L. Berkhof *The History of Christian Doctrines*, Edinburgh, The Banner of Truth Trust, 1969, p.30 and S.P.P. Mminele "The Berlin Missionary Enterprise at Boshabelo, p.11.

[9] S.P.P. Mminele "The Berlin Missionary Enterprise", p.1 See also D.G. Warneck (a) *Abriss einer Geschichte der protestantischen Missionen von der Reformation bis auf die Gegenwart. Ein Beitrag zur neueren Kirchengeschichte*, Siebente Auflage, Berlin, Verlag von Martin Warneck, 1901, pp.54-76 & (b) *Outline of a History of Protestant Missions from the Reformation to the Present Time: A contribution to Modern Church History*, Authorised translation from the Seventh German Edition [see above], Edinburgh and London, Oliphant Anderson & Ferrier, 1901, pp.53-73.

[10] Cf. D.J. Bosch *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission*, New York, Orbis Books, 1991, pp.253-255.

[11] J.J. Kritzinger et al. *On being Witness*, p.27.

This conception of conversion was closely bound to the classic Lutheran doctrine of the two kingdoms. As Gunther Pakendorf has argued, "though non-conformist by origin," German Protestant missions "were mostly committed to the Lutheran creed and there is no doubt that they consciously applied" this doctrine when dealing with secular authority.[13] Based on Luther's interpretation of Romans 13, this asserted that both the civil and ecclesiastical authorities had been instituted by God. The divinely-ordained task of the civil government was to provide the people under its rule with external righteousness and peace. The ecclesiastical government was similarly tasked with arranging for the preaching of the Gospel and the administration of the sacraments (Holy Baptism and Holy Communion). As a general rule, the two governments were not to interfere in each other's realms.[14]

As Kritzinger *et al.* have pointed out, this understanding of the nature of conversion and authority "left little scope for social involvement. ... Yet it was exactly this very strong concern for the salvation of souls which propelled Pietists and evangelicals into social involvement." Deeply committed to:

> winning souls, they came very close to the people, especially the outcasts, the poor, the slaves and the oppressed. ... This involvement should not be understood to mean that the importance of conversion was revitalised in any way. On the contrary, social ills were contested exactly because they hindered the conversion of the heathen.[15]

Thus, German Pietistic thinking played a major role, if not the major role, in the development of the concept of conversion and the theory underlying the practice of mission activity during the nineteenth century. This situation also prevailed for much of the twentieth century. In drawing attention to the significance of specifically German societies in this mission activity, Pakendorf has argued that "In global terms, German Protestant missions were never very significant numerically." Quoting Genischen, he stated that, in 1881, "they had a total of just

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[12] *Ibid.* p.27.

[13] Gunther Pakendorf "*For there is no power but of God": The Berlin Mission and the Challenges of Colonial South Africa* (Article originally published in *Missionalia*, the Journal of the South African Missiological Society), at http://www.geocities.com/missionalia/germiss1.htm, accessed 16 October 2000, p.3.

[14] *Ibid.* and S.P.P. Mminele "The Berlin Missionary Enterprise", p.11.

about half a thousand workers in the fields – merely one third of the non-Roman British missionary forces and no more than about 17% of all Protestant mission workers from North Atlantic counties".[16] During the nineteenth century, there were only four major German societies "in the field"- Moravian, Rhenish, Berlin and Hermannsburg. However, viewing this differently, of the total of 475 mission stations established in South Africa between 1737 and 1904, 169 – more than a quarter – belonged to German societies. In addition, "In some areas, notably in the Transvaal Republic (ZAR), where the British were viewed with great scepticism, German missions were for a long time practically the only mission societies present."[17]

Against this ideological and operational background, the initial aim was for the Berlin Mission Society to support the already established and successful missionary societies based mainly in Basel, London and Paris. However, within ten years of the foundation of the Society, they had been persuaded by the writings of missionaries from London and the Rhineland, who were working in South Africa, to send five missionaries to this country.[18] This decision could be implemented because of the great success that they had achieved in collecting funds from the Prussian church congregations.[19]

The first Berlin Mission Station to be established in South Africa was that of Bethanien in the Orange Free State, established on 24 September 1834. A station was opened at Cape Town in 1837 to work among the Khoikhoi and slaves. The same year saw the expansion of the society's mission activity into British Kaffraria, with the Bethel Mission station being established to work among the Xhosa. Work among the Zulu began in 1847 with the establishment of the Emmaus Mission Station in Natal. Work among the Pedi in the Transvaal began in 1860 with the establishment of Gerlachshoop Mission Station. From these original bases, the Mission Society spread out its operations to work in other

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[15] J.J. Kritzinger et al. *On being Witness*, pp.27-28.

[16] H-W Genischen "German Protestant Missions", in T. Christensen and W.R. Hutchinson (eds.) *Missionary Ideologies in the Imperialist Era: 1880-1920. Papers from the Durham Consultation, 1981*, Aarhus, Aros, 1982, p.181, quoted in Gunther Pakendorf "*For there is no power but of God*", pp.1-2.

[17] Gunther Pakendorf "*For there is no power but of God*", p.2.

[18] U. van der Heyden "The Archives and Library of the Berlin Mission Society", p.412.

areas and among other ethnic groups so that, in spite of closures and movings of some mission stations, there were thirty-one Berlin Mission Stations in South Africa in 1870.[20] The society and the scope of its operations continued to grow. In addition to significant expansion in South Africa, mission work expanded into Mashonaland in 1892, using the stations established in Vendaland in the 1870s (see pp.97-99) as a springboard. However, this move over-taxed the Southern African resources of the mission and this part of the mission work was handed over to the South African Mission Society in 1906. This essentially marked the end of the rapid expansion of the society's mission work in South Africa [see Map 3].[21] Outside South Africa, the Berlin Mission expanded the scope of its operations into China in 1882 and East Africa in 1884.[22]

The great influence of the Prussian elite on the committee of the society, its close links to the crown, its theological *raison d' être* and the expansion of its activities raise crucial questions about the kinds of people who became its missionaries, the training they received and how this impacted on the ways that they interpreted their experiences in the mission-field.

At first, the Berlin Mission Society did not train its own missionaries. Instead, they sent their candidates to the seminary of Pastor Johannes Jänicke. When efforts to unite this seminary with the Society failed, they were forced to establish their own seminary in 1829 [see Illustration 6][23] Some other German mission

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[19] D.W. van der Merwe "Van Paternalisme tot Selfbeskikking", p.2.

[20] *BMB*, Nr. 12 u 13, 1870 [Jahresbericht 1869], pp.217-218 & Nr. 11 u 12, 1871 [Jahresbericht 1870], pp.185-186 and U. van der Heyden "The Archives and Library of the Berlin Mission Society", p.412. The Berlin Mission Stations in South Africa in 1870 were spread as follows: three stations operating in the Orange Free State, five in the Cape Colony, five in British Kaffraria, six in Natal and twelve in the South African Republic (*BMB*, Nr. 11 u 12, 1871 [Jahresbericht 1870], pp.185-186). For Sekhukhune's changing relationship with Christian converts and the missionaries, leading to his persecution of Christians and Misisonary Alexander Merensky's flight in 1864, see P. Delius *The Land Belongs To Us*, pp.112-123 and D.W. van der Merwe *Die geskiedenis van die Berlynse Sendinggenootskap in Transvaal*, pp.34-39.

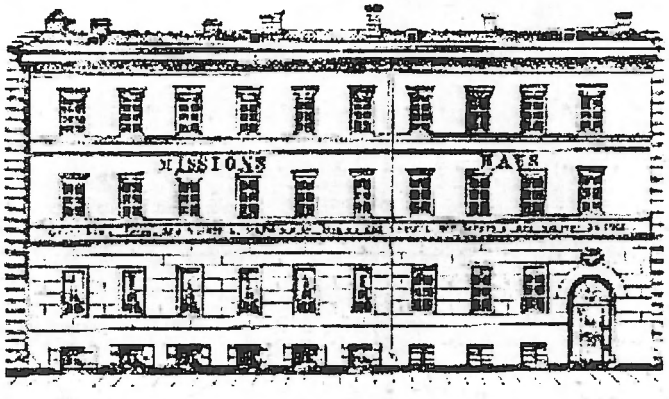
[21] U. van der Heyden "The Archives and Library of the Berlin Mission Society", pp.412-413. For the history of the Berlin Mission in South Africa from 1834 to 1914, see D.J. Richter *Geschichte der Berliner Missionsgesellschaft*, pp.91-318 & 357-418.

[22] S.P.P. Mminele, S.P.P. "The Berlin Missionary Enterprise", p.17, Footnote 26; D.J. Richter *Geschichte der Berliner Missionsgesellschaft*, pp.521- 631(China, 1882-1922) & 632-694 (East Africa, 1884-1914); U. van der Heyden "The Archives and Library of the Berlin Mission Society", p.411 and M. Wright *German Missions in Tanganyika*.

[23] D.W. van der Merwe "Van Paternalisme tot Selfbeskikking", p.2 and H.T. Wangemann *Motive und Erläuterungen zu der Missions-Ordnung der Berliner Gesellschaft zur Beförderung der*

societies, such as the Leipzig Missionary Society, insisted that only the best-trained university-trained theological students were properly equipped to present Lutheranism to the non-German peoples.[24] In marked contrast, the minimum educational qualification for admission to the seminary of the Berlin Mission Society was "a primary education from a well-established Elementary School (*Volkschule*)." The main requirement for admission was that:

> Anyone who wishes to be admitted into the Berlin Missionary Seminary must, of necessity, have a heart fully converted to the Lord Jesus Christ and must also have sufficient Christian maturity and steadfastness. He must lead a life or prayer and know sufficiently about sin and grace, contrition, faith and sanctification out of his own experience.[25]



6. "The old Mission-House in Sebastianstrasse" [26]

Because of the lack of advanced educational requirements, the Mission Society drew its candidates for mission work largely from the lower-middle class. Most candidates had only an elementary primary training (*Volkschule*). The decision to follow a missionary career often followed some kind of conversion experience - a central theme in pietism.[27] The missionaries who served in Vendaland were no

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Evangelischen Missionen unter den Heiden, Berlin, Selbstverlag des Evangel. Missionshauses, Friedenstrasse 6, 1882, p.10.

[24] D.W. van der Merwe "Van Paternalisme tot Selfbeskikking", p.3.

[25] *BMB*, Nr. 12 u 13, 1873, p.224. See Appendix for the full list of requirements for acceptance into the Seminary of the Berlin Mission.

[26] "Das alte Missionshaus in der Sebastianstrasse", in H. Petrich *Missionsvater Wangemann*, Neue Missionsschriften Nr. 46, Berlin, Buchhandlung der Berliner evangelischen Missions-Gesellschaft, n.d. [1895], p.13.

[27] D.W. van der Merwe "Van Paternalisme tot Selfbeskikking", p.3. For a similar focus on the lower-middle and artisan classes – what Stoler and Cooper describe as people on the "social margins of bourgeois Britain - in the recruitment of missionaries in Britain, see, for example, J.L. Comaroff and J. Comaroff *Of Revelation and Revolution*, Volume One, pp.75, 80-81 &

exception. I turn now to a brief discussion of their personal biographies. This lays the foundation for me to further refine my portrayal of the shaping and refining of their word-views. In turn, this assists me in illustrating how this moulding process influenced the ways that they experienced, wrote about and illustrated what they encountered in Vendaland.

THE MISSIONARIES

Only two of the ten missionaries who served in Vendaland during the nineteenth century differed from the norm as far as their background was concerend. One differed dramatically, the other only in superficial details. Klaas Koen, a Black man of South African origin, differed so dramatically that his life history was captured in a tractate by the mission to demonstrate how one could rise above all obstacles and become reborn as a new person in Christ. His story will be considered shortly.

Erdmann Schwellnus differed in that he was Lithuanian, rather than German, and his father was a relatively prosperous farmer. Thus, he was both "foreign" and from a slightly higher social class than his colleagues. Entering the seminary just before he turned 25, he was also a little older than the other candidate missionaries at the time of entering the mission seminary. Of the four whose fathers' occupations were listed in their personnel files, one father was a townsman who farmed a smallholding (as opposed to a farm), one was a shunter on the railways, one was a trader and one was a railway worker. One was 20 years old at the time that he joined the seminary, two were about to turn 21, two were already 21 years old and three were 22. In their life-stories ("*Lebenslauf*") written on joining the mission, three wrote specifically of life-altering conversion experiences.

84-85; A.E. Coombes *Reinventing Africa: Museums, Material Culture and Popular Imagination*, New Haven and London, Yale University Press, 1994, p.163; L. de Kock *Civilising Barbarians*, p.42; R. Elphick "Africans and the Christian Campaign", pp.279-280 and A.L. Stoler and F. Cooper "Between Metropole and Colony: Rethinking a Research agenda, in F. Cooper and A.L. Stoler (eds.) *Tensions of Empire: colonial cultures in a bourgeois world*, Berkeley, Los Angeles and London, University of California Press, 1997, p.27.

The remaining eight missionaries employed in Vendaland during the period under review were all German-speaking, all had an Elementary School education at the time of their entry into the mission and were all of lower-middle class background. Two were bakers at the time of their entry into the mission, one worked for a trader in glass and porcelain goods, two were locksmiths, one was a shoemaker, one was a builder and one was an office worker. Two of these missionaries, Stech and Wessmann, would be expelled from the mission for sexual peccancy. Since the circumstances of Wessmann's expulsion, and his behaviour thereafter, were deemed to be sufficiently serious as to pose a real threat to the mission, I will consider his case after the others, prior to Koen's life history. This enables me to contrast what the mission saw as its greatest failure in the training of a Vendaland missionary with the person whom they saw as their greatest success in the area.

Considering the remaining missionaries in the order of their arrival in Vendaland, **Carl Beuster** was born on 7 July 1844 in Liebenwalde.[28] The son of the townsman with the smallholding, his occupation prior to entering the mission was that of a baker. In true Pietistic mould, during a period of illness in the Charité Hospital, he had his first encounter with the Misison and with a missionary: "Christ called me, to pull for him in his field". He joined the mission in 1865 and was sent out to South Africa on 24 June 1870. He at first assisted the overworked and stressed Heinrich Koboldt at Modimol'le near Kranskop [see Map 3]. In January 1871, he was sent to Malokông to help Bruno Köhler. Following this, in September of the same year, he was sent to Thutloane for a few months to nurse the sick Robert Kühl back to health. This was followed by a short spell at Botshabelo.[29] Beuster and Stech's attempts to start a mission station in the lands of *Kgoši* Mutle in 1872, Sekhukhune's refusal to allow this to happen and the foundation of Ha-Tshivhase have already received attention.[30] So too has his first marriage, to Ida Haak, in 1873.[31]

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[28] The towns and villages where missionaries were born may all be traced on any good road map of Germany. For example, I traced all with the exception of Schwellnus' birthplace in Lithuania on *Deutschland 5-19 GK 1:700 000, Strassenkarte*, Bern, Hallwag AG, n.d.

[29] Acta betreffend Personalia: Beuster, Carl.

[30] See pp.97-98.

Beuster proved an inspired choice as head of the station at Ha-Tshivhase, where he remained until his death on 5 November 1901. From the time that he was first stationed there, he began translating the Mission Liturgy into Tshivenda. Together with Schwellnus and Koen, he also played a major role in producing a first reader for school use, Luther's Small Catechism and the rudiments of the Venda Hymnbook. In 1892, Beuster also produced a Tsivenda translation of Old and New Testament Bible stories.[32] Beuster also put together a collection of insects: "so that through this science can also profit".[33] From 14 February 1893 until his death, he was Berlin Mission Society Vice-Superintendent of the Northern Districts of the Northern Transvaal.[34]

During this time, Beuster's first wife died on 23 April 1874. She developed a fever a week after having given birth to a baby daughter, and died a few days later. The baby was taken over by the Kühls of Ga-Matlala. In spite of the best care, the baby also died, two months later.[35] Beuster received news of the death of his little daughter on his birthday. He wrote that, on 7 July:

> First there was the letter from Matlala. My heart yearned to get some news of my baby daughter. But - oh my God! The letter brought me the news of the death of my small daughter! That was a new stab into my already wounded heart. It is true, I had constantly prayed: "Thy will be done", but also: "Lord, if You want to make Your servant glad again, if You want to give mercy instead of right, then let the child live." I had again started to hope and to believe that the cup of sorrow had been emptied. Now it meant another battle. Yes, the heart has to become completely separated from everything in the world, and must rest on God alone: before this I will not be able to rest, there will be no peace. My little daughter has out-lived her mother by just two months. I had hoped to be able to keep the picture of the mother in the child, and now! - the news of her death was my birthday present.[36]

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[31] See pp.137-138.

[32] Acta betreffend Personalia: Beuster, Carl; [Anon.] *75th Anniversary of the Berlin Mission Station Tshivhase*, p.4 and *BMB*, Nr. 21 u. 22, 1881, p.356; Nr. 9 u. 10, 1882, p.152; Nr. 21 u. 22, 1882, p.425; Nr. 13 u. 14, 1886 [Jahresbericht 1885], p.218; Nr. 21 u. 22, 1886, pp.413-414; Nr. 11 u. 12, 1887, p.222 & Nr. 21 u. 22, 1889, p.535.

[33] Acta betreffend Personalia: Beuster, Carl. I have been unable to trace the subsequent fate of this collection.

[34] Acta betreffend Personalia: Beuster, Carl.

[35] *Ibid.*; [Anon.] *75th Anniversary of the Berlin Mission Station Tshivhase*, p.3 and *BMB*, Nr. 19 u. 20, 1874, p.466; Nr. 11 u 12, 1875 [Jahresbericht 1874], p.231; Nr. 17 u. 18, 1875, pp.359; Nr. 17 u. 18, 1875, pp.369 & & 370 & Nr. 19 u. 20, 1875, pp.419-420.

[36] *BMB*, Nr. 19 u 20, 1875, p.424.

On 7 April 1897, Emma Koboldt, whom Beuster had married on 22 August 1875, passed away. He was left to care for her daughter, Maria Koboldt.[37] On 17 February 1900, he married Elisabeth Brache, who died on 24 March of the same year.[38]

In summarising Beuster's contribution to the development of the mission in Vendaland, the pamphlet produced for its 75th anniversary proclaimed that:

> Mr. Beuster was the pioneer of the Venda mission, and the era from 1872 to 1901 bears the imprint of his character. Throughout the whole of Vendaland, which he so often traversed on his extensive gospel tours, his name is well known in the heathen villages. At Tshivhase it was he who laid the foundations on which his successors could go on building. In his last exhortation to his congregation he said: Whoever of you shall refuse to listen to the missionaries who will come to you after me and takes no heed of the teachings of the gospel, will be guilty before God.[39]

Carl Stech was born on 29 June 1844 in Quedlinburg. He seems to have been an illegitimate child and his mother died when he was young.[40] Before joining the mission, he worked for a trader in glass and porcelain goods.[41] Stech seems to have had a reputation for wildness and the Mission Society had its doubts about him before they sent him out. He was sent to a Christian Institute for a further year, after he had completed his studies.[42]

Sent out to South Africa on 5 March 1872, Stech was first stationed at Botshabelo and Ga-Matlala.[43] His posting to Ha-Tshivhase, his relationship with Solomon and his transfer to Blauberg in November 1873 have already been discussed.[44] In

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[37] Acta betreffend Personalia: Beuster, Carl; [Anon.] *75th Anniversary of the Berlin Mission Station Tshivhase*, pp.3 & 4 and *BMB*, Nr. 11 u 12, 1876, p.184. See also p.158 of this thesis.

[38] Acta betreffend Personalia: Beuster, Carl and [Anon.] *75th Anniversary of the Berlin Mission Station Tshivhase*, p.4.

[39] [Anon.] *75th Anniversary of the Berlin Mission Station Tshivhase*, p.5. For Beuster's life history, see also D.W. Krüger (ed. in chief) and C.J. Beyers *Dictionary of South African Biography*, Volume III, Cape Town, Published for the Human Sciences Research Council by Tafelberg Uitgewers Ltd., 1977, p.63.

[40] Acta der Berliner Missionsgesellschaft betreffend Personalia: Stech, Carl, Abt.II, Fach 3, No. 1, 1866 - 1911 (Bd.1) and *BMB*, Nr. 9 u. 10, 1874, p.167.

[41] Acta betreffend Personalia: Stech, Carl (Bd.1) and *BMB*, Nr. 7 u. 8, 1874, p.149.

[42] Acta betreffend Personalia: Stech, Carl (Bd.1).

[43] *Ibid.*

[44] See pp.97-98 and 138-144.

1875, Stech married Emile Meineke, born in 1848 in Derben bei Parey a.d. Elbe.[45] His bride had been chosen for him by the Director of the *Missionshaus* in Berlin from among women who had declared themselves willing to do mission work. Together they would have six children.[46]

The mission's early fears about Stech would ultimately prove to have been well-grounded. In 1891, while his wife was recovering from general ill-health at Port Elizabeth, and in response to meetings with Superintendent Krause, Stech produced a memorandum requesting that he be recalled to Germany, transferred from Blauberg to a more climatically-favourable place or be put on pension by the Mission Society.[47] This was because his wife's health was "very weak and he "had no doubt" that this would prevent them from returning to Blauberg.[48]

Stech was placed on pension. However, in response to complaints received, Superintendent Krause had an interview with Christine Fisher, who had formerly worked as a child-minder for the Stech family, on 27 July 1892. During the course of this interview, it emerged that she had had an affair with Stech. When she became pregnant, he had bound a horse girth tightly around her, either to hide the fact that she was pregnant or in an unsuccessful attempt to induce an abortion. When the baby was born, Fisher drowned it. Stech had been away at Synod at the time of the birth. Upon his return, he and his wife sent Fisher away. The missionary also told her to lie about the paternity of the child.[49] As a result of this investigation, Stech was expelled from the mission on 11 November 1892.[50] Since he was already back in Germany at this time, since Fisher was white or so-called "coloured" and not a person local to Vendaland or Blauberg, and since Stech's actions do not seem to have been widely commented on locally, this case did not pose much of a threat to the mission and did not really require any attention

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[45] Acta betreffend Personalia: Stech, Carl (Bd.1) and *BMB*, Nr. 11 u. 12, 1876, p.183.

[46] Acta betreffend Personalia: Stech, Carl (Bd.1).

[47] In. No. 114, written on 26 August 1891 and received in Berlin 20 September 1891, in Acta der Berliner Missionsgesellschaft betreffend Personalia: Stech, Carl, Acta betreffend die Disciplinare-Untersuchung gegen dem Missionar Carl Stech, 1892, Abt.II, Fach 3, No. 1 (Bd. 2).

[48] In. No. 158, pp.3-3A, 29/12/1891 - 3 pages, in Acta betreffend die Disciplinare-Untersuchung gegen dem Missionar Carl Stech, 1892 (Bd. 2).

[49] Beilage A zu Krauses Brief, 10. August 1892, In. No. 175, pp.56 - 58 (5 pages - back pages are not numbered), in Acta betreffend die Disciplinare-Untersuchung gegen dem Missionar Carl Stech, 1892 (Bd. 2).

subsequent to the missionary's expulsion.

Erdmann Schwellnus was born on 2 December 1841 at Lutkomanscheit bei bei Schakuhnen (near today's Tilsit) in Lithuania. His father was a farmer. Schwellnus and his brother helped on the family farm. Believing that he "had a calling," and because he "hated drunkenness and card gambling", he joined the mission in 1866. His brother remained behind on the farm.[51]

Schwellnus only learned to speak and write German while he was at the Mission Seminary. Impressed by the speed with which he managed this, the *Missions-Berichte* would later comment that "Despite the surprising way in which he mastered this language, the well disposed readers will gladly pardon some words, which appear every now and again, which have remained in the way our Brother expresses himself."[52] The editors did not show the same sensitivity towards the Lithuanian spelling of Schwellnus and "Germanised" it to Schwellnuss until the 1875 reports.[53]

Leaving Germany for South Africa at the end of 1872, Schwellnus spent his first months in South Africa at Botshabelo, learning Northern Sotho while teaching at the school there. Confirming his previously-demonstrated flair for languages, by September 1872 he was proficient enough in Northern Sotho to be left alone at Thutloane. He moved to Ha-Tshivhase in November 1873 and was with Beuster for about six months before starting the new mission station at Tshakhuma on 14 May 1874. Again, his obvious talent for languages and his ability to speak Northern Sotho had helped him to pick up quite a bit of Tshivenda in the first six months of his stay here. He did not need an interpreter when he preached for the first time at Tshakhuma.[54]

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[50] Acta betreffend Personalia: Stech, Carl (Bd.1).

[51] Acta der Berliner Missionsgesellschaft betreffend Personalia: Schwellnus, Erdmann and H. Giesekke "The History of Erdmann Schwellnus in Venda", circular letter and sheet seeking more information from family members [15 typed A4 pages] in the possession of Ms. Helga Giesekke, p.1.

[52] *BMB*, Nr. 17 u. 18, 1875, p.368.

[53] The first correct spelling was in *BMB*, Nr. 19 u. 20, 1875, p.415.

[54] Acta betreffend Personalia: Schwellnus, Erdmann; *BMB*, Nr. 11 u. 12, 1875 [Jahresbericht 1874], pp.231-232 and H. Giesekke "The History of Erdmann Schwellnus in Venda", pp.1-2.

Schwellnus had been engaged to a Lithuanian girl, Dorothea Manz, who was born in Stendal on 6 August 1846, before he came out to South Africa. In the spring of 1874, with the house at Tshakhuma complete, he left for Natal to marry her. Having married at Christianenburg, the couple returned to Tshakhuma on 24 December. They would have four sons and two daughters, all born at Tshakhuma. All of the sons became missionaries.[55]

Called home to Germany for a period of home service, largely arising from Dorothea Schwellnus' poor nervous and physical health, the family took their leave from Tshakhuma at the end of May 1894. In 1904, at his own request, Erdmann Schwellnus and his wife returned to South Africa, leaving their sons Georg and Hans behind in the Mission Seminary. They were first temporarily stationed at Waterberg (Middelfontein). From here, Erdmann requested a transfer back to Vendaland. Later in the year, Otto Klatt, Beuster's successor at Ha-Tshivhase was transferred to Gertrudsburg. Schwellnus was then made missionary in charge at Ha-Tshivhase, working with his son Theodor. One of their first tasks was to re-build the mission station further up the hill. In doing so, they re-named it Beuster.[56]

On 21 August 1904 Dorothea Schwellnus died at Beuster. She is buried there, next to the graves of Beuster and his three wives. After the death of his wife, Erdmann's health and interest steadily declined and he left more and more of the work to his son. He retired in 1907 and spent his last years alternately living with his children. In April 1910, while suffering one of his high fevered malarial attacks, he left his bed and went outside to watch Haley's Comet. This led to a serious cold and pneumonia. Even the dedicated nursing of his daughter could not save him and he died at Georgenholtz, visiting his daughter and son-in-law on 6 May 1910. He is buried next to his wife at Beuster.[57]

Dietrich Baumhöfner was born on 7 November 1855 at Bielefeld. His father

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[55] Acta betreffend Personalia: Schwellnus, Erdmann; *BMB*, Nr. 23 u. 24, 1876, p.391 and H. Giesekke "The History of Erdmann Schwellnus in Venda", p.2.

[56] Acta betreffend Personalia: Schwellnus, Erdmann and H. Giesekke "The History of Erdmann Schwellnus in Venda", pp.12, 13 & 14.

was a shunter on the railways.[58] While attending Elementary School, he reportedly had a teacher who "first awakened the love of the Lord Jesus Christ in his heart". The tractate about his life would state that, despite the fact that he would later be tempted by evil, the message that this "teacher had engraved on his heart in his earliest years remained with him from then and wakened in him the desire to take the Word of the Lord Jesus Christ to others."[59] In his own description of these events, Baumhöfner would recount that he left school at the age of 7 years and performed "hard labour" for his uncle until the age of 12 years. He then was apprenticed as, and succeeded in becoming, a baker. His brother also qualified as a baker. He and his brother worked together. While working as a baker, he often worked on Sundays and "ignored God". However, he had a conversion experience and then asked for time off to attend church. He eventually felt a strong calling to work among the "poor heathens". While preparing to become a missionary, he worked with epileptics.[60] He completed his compulsory national military service in Bielefeld.[61] He left Germany for South Africa in October 1881, arriving in Port Natal on 1 December.[62] Leaving on the following day, he finally arrived at Botshabelo after a nine-week journey. Here he studied Northern Sotho. After "five months, he gave his first sermon in the native language" on 28 May 1882. He was then transferred to Mp'home.[63] From here, he was transferred to Old Georgenholtz to assist the seriously-ill Koen on 1 August 1882.[64] With Koen's death on 10 February 1883, Baumhöfner was left in charge of the station. In the opinion of the mission, not only did he have "all the keenness of youth" but he was also "highly talented".[65] Against this background:

> Glowing with the love of God and burning with enthusiasm, he very soon mastered the language. He had already made considerable inroads

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[57] Acta betreffend Personalia: Schwellnus, Erdmann and H. Giesekke "The History of Erdmann Schwellnus in Venda", pp.14 & 15.

[58] *"Lebenslauf"* in Acta der Berliner Missionsgesellschaft betreffend Personalia: Baumhöfener, Dietrich, Abt.II, Fach 3, Nr. 9, 1875 - 1883.

[59] [Anon.] *Dietrich Baumhöfner*, p.1.

[60] *"Lebenslauf"* in Acta betreffend Personalia: Baumhöfener, Dietrich.

[61] Acta betreffend Personalia: Baumhöfener, Dietrich.

[62] [Anon.] *Dietrich Baumhöfner*, pp.7 & 9.

[63] Acta betreffend Personalia: Baumhöfener, Dietrich and [Anon.] *Dietrich Baumhöfner*, p.13 (quotation).

[64] Acta betreffend Personalia: Baumhöfener; *BMB*, Nr. 19 u. 20, 1883, p.364 and Stationschronik von Georgenholtz, pp.1 & 2.

[65] *BMB*, Nr. 11 u. 12 1884 [Jahresbericht 1883], p.222 and G. Sauberzweig-Schmidt *Klaas Kuhn*, p.30. See also *Bawenda-Freund*, Nr. 54, 2 Quartal 1896, 14 Jahrgang, p.294.

> amongst the heathens, when suddenly, a few months after Brother Koen, he also passed away due to fever. Much to our deep sorrow, we cannot keep silent about the fact that, speaking in human terms, his enormous over-enthusiasm became the cause of his early death. This enthusiasm made him ignore the warnings of those who know this country: that he should save his energy for the sake of his health; and the suggested precautions he should take.[66] ... He would only work until Easter. ... Then he became sick. Beuster took him to Ha Tschewasse [Ha-Tshivhase], where his young life came to an end on 26 April 1883.[67] ... The ways of the Lord are unfathomable - he so often calls away the best and most indispensable people.[68]

Johann Meister's life provides a clear illustration the Pietistic ideal of a gradual process of turning to God, followed by a conversion experience and then a growing in the Ways of God. He was born on 28 February 1864 in Königshütte, Kreis Beuthen (today in Poland). His father, also named Johann, had been born on 7 March 1823 in Kreutzburg. His occupation is not recorded in Meister's personnel file. Meister had two sisters and four brothers.[69]

In the summary of his life (*"Lebenslauf"*) which he wrote on joining the mission seminary, Meister stated that his parents were "strong Christians" and he was brought up in an extremely religious family. At an early age, he learned "to know the Lord Jesus in my [his] heart". His mother passed away when he was twelve. On 21 April 1851, his father remarried. His second wife was a widow named Karoline Jaunich, born Breit-Scheidel.

Meister attended Elementary School between 1871 and 1878. His final grading was that of "Satisfactory" (Mark 3).[70] After school, he was apprenticed as a locksmith (*Schlosser*). He also explained that the other apprentices set a bad

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[66] *BMB*, Nr. 11 u. 12 1884 [Jahresbericht 1883], p.222.

[67] *Bawenda-Freund*, Nr. 54, 2 Quartal 1896, 14 Jahrgang, p.295.

[68] *BMB*, Nr. 11 u. 12 1884 [Jahresbericht 1883], p.223. See also Acta betreffend Personalia: Baumhöfener, Dietrich; *Bawenda-Freund*, Nr. 54, 2 Quartal 1896, 14 Jahrgang, pp.294-295; *BMB*, Nr. 11 u. 12, 1884 [Jahresbericht 1883], pp.222-223 & 13 u. 14, 1884, p.30; G. Sauberzweig-Schmidt *Klaas Kuhn*, pp.30-31 and Stationschronik von Georgenholtz, p. 1. For an overview of Baumhöfner's time at Georgenholtz, see *BMB*, Nr. 19 u. 20, 1883, pp.364-374.

[69] Acta der Berliner Missionsgesellschaft betreffend Personalia: Meister, Johann, Abt.II, Fach 3, No. 6, 1884 - 1892.

[70] The grading system went from Mark 1 - Very good, Mark 2, Good, Mark 3, Satisfactory, through to Mark 6. Thanks to Dr. Jürgen Becher of the Afrika Seminar at Humboldt

example to him of how to behave and he became less religious. Because of a shortage of work, his master moved to Eastern Poland, on the Russian border. Meister went with him. He was then aged fifteen years. Moving away from the control of his parents at this age was not good for his spiritual and moral development. He fell "deeper and deeper into the hands of Satan." From time to time, he attempted to turn back to God but "it is very heavy [difficult] to come out of the influence of Satan and back to God."

After his apprenticeship, he went back home and worked for one-and-a-half years in a machine factory. He testified: "My father recognised my character and ways and demanded that I return to God. ... My father was crying about me and this made a deep impression on me, my heart became soft and I took my first steps back to God. ... In my fight against sin, sin was sometimes the winner". This made him "depressed".

In the spring of 1883, he left home again because of "wanderlust". He went to Breslau and then to Liegnitz. He worked for a time at Liegnitz and then went on to Görlitz. He worked in a machine factory at Görlitz. Here he began to feel that he could turn his spiritual life around and that forgiveness was possible. A missionary from the "Berlin Town Mission" held evangelisation meetings there. He went along one evening and was deeply moved by what he heard. He explained, "My heart changed". After the end of the meeting, he went to speak to the missionary. It was not possible to speak to him for long, and the missionary suggested that he come back the following day. This he did. After the missionary had asked him a lot of things, he said that his heart was broken and he felt like the worst kind of person. However, the missionary comforted him and told him that only Jesus could help him. He wanted to follow the advice to turn to Jesus and left for Berlin eight days later.

"Sometimes I fell into bad ways again", he explained, saying that this was because of friends from home who he met and who led him into temptation. But he knew that he could not continue like this and "broke with them and went back to God". He joined the YMCA, which he described as "the tool with which I

Universität zu Berlin for this information.

came nearer and nearer to God and Jesus' Kingdom."[71]

After some time, he started to work in this Association. On Sundays and Wednesdays, he went into the streets and asked young men to join the Association. Through these works, he became more and more interested in mission work and he testified that he felt within himself a strong demand to join the Mission. He went to the Mission House and became a member of the candidate's circle for a year. Then he joined the Mission Seminary. He ended by expressing the wish that "God will give me his grace and assistance to let me become a tool for him."[72]

On 18 April 1890, Meister joined Schwellnus at Tshakhuma as a non-ordained probationary missionary. He served there until 6 July 1891, when he was sent to assist Beuster at Ha-Tshivhase.[73] Before this, he had already accompanied Beuster on a mission journey from 14 to 29 July 1890 and had also been sent to help Wessmann at Georgenholtz when needed.[74] Serving as Beuster's assistant, beyond the normal tasks on the station and accompanying Beuster on his journeys, he assisted the missionary in his attempts to negotiate peace in the wars involving Makwarela Mphaphuli and *Khosi* Tshivhase, in treating the injured in these battles and in attempting to secure better treatment for prisoners.[75] He was also sent out with Native Assistants on preaching journeys and assisted Wessmann at Georgenholtz from time to time.[76]

At the beginning of the fourth quarter of 1891, Meister left for Botshabelo to wait for his bride, Luise Stärke, there. He arrived on 24 October 1891and was married on 11 November. While he was on honeymoon, Johannes Wedepohl took his place.[77]

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[71] The YMCA had been founded in the 1850s by the same people who founded the Swiss Mission.

[72] Acta betreffend Personalia: Meister, Johann.

[73] *Ibid.* and *BMB*, Nr. 11 u. 12, 1891, pp.222, 240 & 245; Nr. 19 u. 20, 1891, pp.451-452 and Nr. 21 u. 22, 1892, p.554.

[74] *BMB*, Nr. 19 u. 20, 1881, pp.455-456 & Nr. 21 u. 22, 1881, p.487.

[75] See, for example, *BMB*, Nr. 11 u. 12, 1892, pp.271-272 and 21 u. 22, 1892, pp.552-554. See also p.472.

[76] See, for example, *BMB*, Nr. 19 u. 20, 1892, pp.522-524.

Meister and Johannes Wedepohl were delegated to start the new mission station at Gutu in Mashonaland [see Map 3]. Wedepohl had been sent out to South Africa at the end of 1889. He spent some time at Adamshoop and Waterberg before moving to Ha-Tshivhase in 1891. After passing his probationer's exam in 1892, he was a fully-fledged missionary.[78] Accompanied by Beuster, Meister and Wedepohl and their two assistants, Johannes Madima and Matthaus (Mattthew) Maluma set off for Zimbabwe on 23 May 1892. The two sons of the deceased Missionary Posselt, who had started mission work in Natal, accompanied them as guides. Beyond the task of establishing the station, the Brothers took the trip as an opportunity for spreading the Gospel in the northern parts of South Africa and over wide stretches of Mashonaland. The station of Gutu, near Fort Victoria, was finally founded on 10 August 1892. Beuster and the Posselt Brothers remained with them until 15 August, when they began their journey home. Beuster arrived back at Ha-Tshivhase on 19 September.[79] By the end of the year, both Luise and Johannes Meister were dead of "fever", having passed away on 28 October and 8 December respectively.[80] This left Wedepohl, Madima and Maluma at the station. Wedepohl himself was ill with fever and was admitted to the Victoria Hospital in January 1893, leaving the assistants in charge at Gutu. He only returned in mid-May. Due to personnel shortages in Germany, Johannes Neitz only arrived to help them in August. Wedepohl married Therese Franke in November.[81] After the hand-over of the mission's operations in Zimbabwe to the Dutch Reformed Church, Wedepohl moved to the Eastern Cape in 1907. He subsequently served at Kreuzburg and Pietersburg. He died in Johannesburg on 13 June 1956.[82]

Carl Gernecke was born on 4 June 1856 in Schwarzenholz. His father died when he was two years old and he "did not know" him or his occupation. His mother was Elizabeth, born Lindeke in Walsleben, who died in 1896. Having obtained Mark 4 (below average) results at school, his occupation prior to joining the

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[77] *BMB*, Nr. 21 u. 22, 1892, p.554.
[78] *BMB*, Nr. 11 u. 12, 1892 [Jahresbericht 1891], pp.293 & 297; Nr. 21 u. 22, 1892, p.554 and Nr. 17 u. 18, 1893, p.448.
[79] *BMB*, Nr. 3 u. 4, 1893, pp.75, 76 & 86-88; Nr. 5 u. 6, 1893, pp.98-111 and Nr. 17 u. 18, 1893, pp.448-449.
[80] Acta betreffend Personalia: Meister, Johann and *BMB*, Nr. 11 u. 12, 1894 [Jahresbericht 1893], p.202.
[81] *BMB*, Nr. 11 u. 12, 1894 [Jahresbericht 1893], p.202 and Nr. 17 u. 18, 1894, pp.380-381.
[82] M.I. Bressani (Comp.) *Im Dienst der Mission*, p.60.

mission was that of shoemaker. He did not do military service and joined the mission in September 1878. Gernecke's wife was Paula Bertha Heese, born at Riversdale in the Cape Colony on 9 June 1868. Her father was the missionary Daniel Heese, who died in 1906 and her brother was Paul Heese, Missionary in East Africa. They had twelve children between 1887 and 1907.[83]

Gernecke was stationed at various places in the Cape between 1883 and 1894. He moved to Georgenholtz in September 1894 and remained there until July 1898. Gernecke had lost his Prussian citizenship in October 1894 through having been in a foreign country for more than ten years. After spending a period back in Germany (July 1898 to September 1899), he was stationed at Cape Town (1899 to June 1902) and then at Ladysmith from June 1902 until he retired from the mission on 1 October 1927. He died on 22 March 1932.[84]

Ernst Friedrich Gottschling was born on 10 June 1856 in Adelsdorf. He had an older sister. His father was a trader and he was a builder prior to joining the mission in 1877. Postings recorded in his personnel file are: Amalienstein [1882 to 1883, 1884 - two periods and 1886 to 1888], Herbertsdale [1883], Riversdale [1884 - two periods], Laingsburg [1884 to 1886 and 1888 to 1894], Mossel Bay [1894 to 1897], a period back in Germany [1897], [Old] Georgenholtz [1897 to 1899], Gertrudsburg [1899 to 1904], Johannesburg [1904 to 1905 and 1907] and Botshabelo [1905 to 1907]. After his transfer from Botshabelo to Johannesburg in 1907, no further details are recorded on the relevant form in his personnel file. Gottschling married Wilhelmine Elfert in Pietersburg on 12 January 1886. She had been born at Amalienstein in the Cape Colony on 29 October 1866. Her father, Ferdinand A. Elfert, was a trader. She had two sisters and three brothers. They had five children. Friedrich, Wilhelm Ferdinand was born at Amalienstein on 26 November 1886.[85]

Carl August Otto Klatt was born on 3 May 1874 in Berlin. He was the oldest of

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[83] Acta der Berliner Missionsgesellschaft betreffend Personalia: Gernecke, Carl, Abt. II, Fach 3, No. 28, 1856 - 1948.

[84] Acta betreffend Personalia: Gernecke.

[85] Acta der Berliner Missionsgesellschaft betreffend Personalia: Gottschling, Ernst, Abt.II, Fach 3, No.27, Band 1 1877 - 1956.

four children. His father was a railway worker and he was an office worker before joining the mission in 1894. Postings recorded in his personnel file are: Pietersburg [November to December 1899], Gertrudsburg [December 1899 to 31 August 1900 and 1 August 1904 to 14 April 1914], Tshakhuma [1. September 1900 to 4 November 1901], Ha-Tshivhase [5 November 1901 to 30 July 1904]. He married Auguste Louise Helene Auerbach at Christianenburg, Natal, on 10 September 1902. Helene had been born on 27 July 1873 in Berlin. Her father was a craftsman. Otto and Helene Klatt had three children. Otto died on 17 October 1943.[86]

Spiritual drive and the desire to win souls for Jesus obviously played a major role (if not the major role) in the choice of a missionary career. This is demonstrated in the summary of Beuster and Baumhöfner's lives and even more dramatically in the case of Meister. On a more secular level, one may also presume that, despite the high death rate of missionaries in the field from malaria and other tropical infections, the desire for adventure also influenced candidates to make this choice. However, in my reading, it is clear that here was also a far more material force at work and that this exerted an extremely powerful influence. These brief life histories of missionaries who served in Vendaland clearly reveal that missionary service provided a form of upward social mobility for the missionaries.[87] This point has also been made for mission service in South Africa as a whole by Daniel van der Merwe, who argued in a thesis completed in 1980 that:

> In the mission-field, the social status of the missionary was remarkably different to the status that he had in Germany. As a missionary on his mission-station, he was responsible for the spiritual and material welfare of a great number of inhabitants. In some cases, he even fulfilled the functions of a traditional chief. All in all, the status of the missionary in the mission-field was comparable to that enjoyed by the majority of Prussian *Junkers* - a status that no member of the lower-

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[86] Acta der Berliner Missionsgesellschaft betreffend Personalia: Klatt, Carl Otto, Abt.II, Fach 3K, No.42, 1891 - 1943.

[87] I have made similar assertions for a wider period elsewhere. See A. Kirkaldy "Makoarele's return to 'the darkness of heathenism': *Khosi* Makwarela and the Berlin Missionaries in Vendaland, C. 1876 - 1897", Unpublished paper presented to the Second CSSALL Interdisciplinary Conference, University of Durban-Westville, 26 September 1997, p.7. (See especially endnote 33 on pp.75-78.

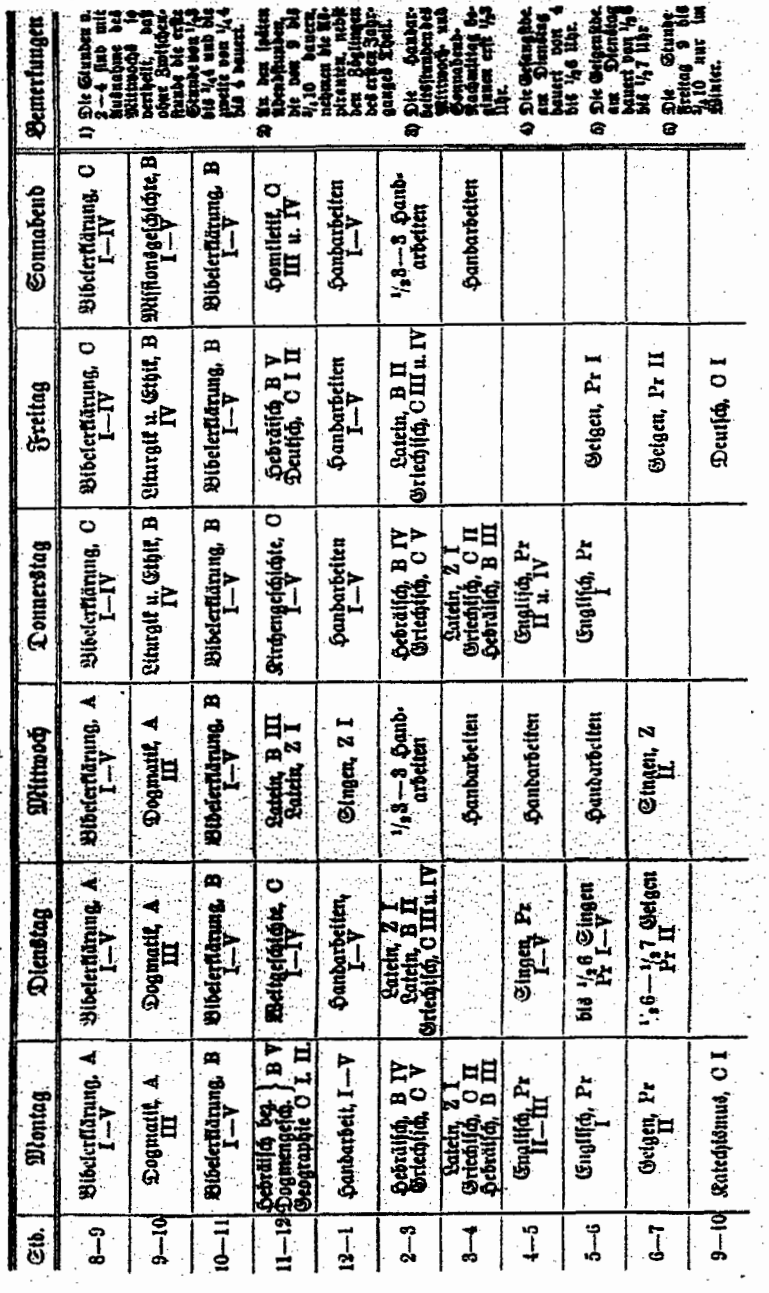
middle class could aspire to in Germany.[88]

I would argue that, whatever their spiritual motivations, the opportunity for social advancement offered to candidate missionaries must have been a powerful force not only in motivating their choice of a mission career but also in pressurising them to assimilate the training and ideologies of the Mission Society to the greatest possible degree. Seminarians "found unfit as" pupils could "be dismissed from among the complement of pupils at any time without compensation", thus throwing away their opportunity for social advancement.[89] By throwing himself wholeheartedly into the regimen of the Seminary, and accepting and internalising its teachings, both theological and social, a student was able to demonstrate his suitability for the calling of a missionary. Offered a chance at a new and seemingly better life at the relatively impressionable age of between twenty and twenty-five years of age, with some years of hard work in relatively menial jobs behind them, students tended to grasp the opportunity offered to them with both hands. Moreover, the whole structure of the curriculum in the Seminary and the intensive nature of the teaching, coupled with the autocratic and conservative nature of society outside its walls, would have moulded seminarians to internalise both the stated and hidden ideologies and guiding principles of the committee and their instructors.

Indeed, to ensure this kind of success, the mission ensured that its study plan at the seminary kept students extremely busy and assisted in driving these ideologies deep into their conscious and unconscious minds. The ideas that they so inculcated reinforced the early socialisation that the students had received as members of German society, ensuing that they became rigidly Germanic - more particularly, rigidly Prussian - in outlook. This was accompanied by the development of extreme loyalty to the mission - the kind of loyalty that *Junkers* would have shown to the *Kaiser* - and the wholesale adoption of bourgeois nineteenth-century mindsets.

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[88] D.W. van der Merwe "Van Paternalisme tot Selfbeskikking", p.4.



Allgemeiner Lektionsplan.

Uhr	Montag	Dienstag	Mittwoch	Donnerstag	Freitag	Sonnabend	Bemerkungen
8—9	Bibelerklärung, A I—V	Bibelerklärung, A I—V	Bibelerklärung, A I—V	Bibelerklärung, C I—IV	Bibelerklärung, C I—IV	Bibelerklärung, C I—IV	1) Die Stunden a. 2—4 sind mit Ausnahme der Mittwochs 10 berheilt, und ohne Zwischenräume die erste Stunde von ½8 bis ¼9 und die zweite von ¼9 bis ½10 dauert.
9—10	Dogmatik, A III	Dogmatik, A III	Dogmatik, A III	Liturgik u. Ethik, B IV	Liturgik u. Ethik, B IV	Missionsgeschichte, B I—V	
10—11	Bibelerklärung, B I—V	Bibelerklärung, B I—V	Bibelerklärung, B I—V	Bibelerklärung, B I—V	Bibelerklärung, B I—V	Bibelerklärung, B I—V	2) Die Stunden von ½11 bis ½12 dauern.
11—12	Hebräisch bez. Dogmengesch. B V Geographie C I, II	Kirchengeschichte, C I—V	Latein, B III Latein, Z I	Kirchengeschichte, C I—V	Hebräisch, B V Deutsch, C I II	Homiletik, C III u. IV	3) Die Katechismusstunden finden Mittwoch- und Sonnabend-Nachmittag 2 Uhr statt.
12—1	Handarbeit, I—V	Handarbeiten, I—V	Singen, Z I	Handarbeiten I—V	Handarbeiten I—V	Handarbeiten I—V	
2—3	Hebräisch, B IV Griechisch, C V	Latein, Z I Latein, B II Griechisch, C III u. IV	½3—5 Handarbeiten	Hebräisch, B IV Griechisch, C V	Latein, B II Griechisch, C III u. IV	½3—5 Handarbeiten	4) Die Gesangstunde am Dienstag dauert von 4 bis ½5 Uhr.
3—4	Latein, Z I Griechisch, C II Hebräisch, B III		Handarbeiten	Latein, Z I Griechisch, C II Hebräisch, B III		Handarbeiten	5) Die Gesangstunde am Dienstag dauert von ½5 bis ½7 Uhr.
4—5	Englisch, Pr II—III	Singen, Pr I—V	Handarbeiten	Englisch, Pr II u. IV			6) Die Stunde Freitag 9 bis ½10 nur im Winter.
5—6	Englisch, Pr I	bis ½6 Singen Pr I—V	Handarbeiten	Englisch, Pr I	Geigen, Pr I		
6—7	Geigen, Pr II	½6—½7 Geigen Pr II	Singen, Z II		Geigen, Pr II		
9—10	Katechismus, C I				Deutsch, C I		

7. General Timetable of the Berlin Mission Society Seminary[90]

The curriculum that candidate missionaries were exposed to in the Seminary focused on the fundamentals of Lutheran Christianity - knowledge of the Bible and Lutheran dogmatics. This was accompanied by training in practical theology - putting the theoretical training into practice in the mission-field. Seminarians

[89] *BMB*, Nr. 12 u 13, 1873, p.225. (See also Appendix.)

[90] "Allgemeine Lektionsplan", in T. Wangemann *Unterrichtsordnung*, p.19.

were also equipped with a knowledge of modern and ancient languages - German, English, Dutch, Hebrew, Latin and Greek being compulsory - and were also given a limited knowledge of "heathen languages".[91] General knowledge courses included instruction in history, geography and accounting and bookkeeping.[92] Even prior to acceptance into the Seminary, candidates were encouraged to become teachers or receive training in practical professions [see Appendix]. Once at the Mission House, they received instruction in, and were also strongly encouraged to equip themselves with, practical skills such as building, carpentry, agriculture, handicrafts and general ability in all forms of manual work. This was because missionaries often had to build mission-stations from scratch. They also had to be able to feed themselves and their congregations from the produce of their fields.[93] Each student also had to follow a short but intensive course in medical and surgical science. This course was taught by well-known Professors in Berlin. It was only during the first decade of the twentieth century that a course in the most important tropical diseases was also offered.[94] Lastly, the candidate missionaries also received instruction in music and singing.[95]

The training, which lasted for six years,[96] was thorough. While in training, with the exception of breaks for meals, students were kept busy with formal instruction from eight o'clock in the morning until ten o'clock at night [see Illustration 7].[97] The degree to which the lives of the pupils was regulated is clearly illustrated by the following extract from the Seminary Instruction Plan:

> The gardening component begins at 5 minutes past 12 o'clock in the store where the gardening equipment is kept and, after receiving instructions and being issued with the necessary equipment, they [the

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[91] S.P.P. Mminele "The Berlin Lutheran Missionary Enterprise", p.19; D.W. van der Merwe "Van Paternalisme tot Selfbeskikking", pp.2 & 5 and T. Wangemann *Unterrichtsordnung*, pp.16 [summary of curriculum], 25-27 [Bible], 28-31 [Language], 32-34 [theological-scientific instruction, including dogmatics], 32-34 & 35-36 [practical theology]. Note that detailed schemes of courses taught and lecturing timetables are given on pp.18-24 of Wangemann.

[92] T. Wangemann *Unterrichtsordnung*, pp.16 & 36-38.

[93] S.P.P. Mminele "The Berlin Lutheran Missionary Enterprise", p.19; D.W. van der Merwe "Van Paternalisme tot Selfbeskikking", p.5 and T. Wangemann *Unterrichtsordnung*, pp. 38-45.

[94] S.P.P. Mminele "The Berlin Lutheran Missionary Enterprise", p.19; D.W. van der Merwe "Van Paternalisme tot Selfbeskikking", pp.2 & 5 and D.J. Richter *Geschichte der Berliner Missionsgesellschaft*, p.356.

[95] T. Wangemann *Unterrichtsordnung*, pp. 31-32.

[96] The introductory year when candidates had to base themselves in Belin and be in frequent contact with the authorities of the Mission house, followed by five years of study.

[97] T. Wangemann *Unterrichtsordnung*, p.19.

> pupils] move to the garden with spades, shovels, hoes, pickaxes, [and] garden hoses, and five minutes later they are at their work, which lasts until 3 minutes before 1 o'clock so that they are left with time to wash their hands, remove their overalls and take their place before the well-filled soup plates to enjoy a hearty lunch, their appetites having been doubled by the preceding labour.[98]

Van der Merwe has argued that the Mission Society "would have rejected the criticism of the liberal theologian Ersnst Langhans that 'The Seminary was cloistered and despotic and bound to turn out pharisaic missionaries.'" However, in the Seminary, in its daily management and in the management of the missionaries in the field: "The Society fully supported the autocratic and conservative character of Prussian and, after 1870, German social and political life." [99] Similarly, Marcia Wright has argued that: "In describing the Berlin Mission, the word paternalism must come to the fore"[100] and that:

> The regime of the Seminary, with its stress on obedience and humility easily became the regime of the mission-field, with the missionaries assuming the role of the paternalists over converts. Even the Superintendents, however, were never allowed to forget the superiority of the authorities at home whom they addressed as 'Hochverehrte Herrn und Väter' (Most Reverend Masters and Fathers). The contrast between the formal brotherhood of the Moravians and the hierarchical paternalism of the Berliners symbolised a world of difference in social values and concepts of authority.[101]

Similarly, in commenting on their "typically conservative" world view, Pakendorf has argued that:

> German missionaries ... shared with their counterparts from other countries, by and large, the petty bourgeois worldview that shaped their thinking and which they sought to impart to their converts in Africa. It was the manifestation of an individualism that had developed in Europe in the post-medieval period; theologically, it revolved around concepts of sin, redemption and salvation, economically it expressed itself in terms of the work ethic, that is, high productivity based on an internalised self-discipline, and ideologically it consisted

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[98] *Ibid.* pp.38-39.
[99] D.W. van der Merwe "Van Paternalisme tot Selfbeskikking", p.6.
[100] M. Wright *German Missions in Tanganyika*, p.13.
[101] *Ibid.* p.16.

of values such as orderliness, diligence, cleanliness, frugality.[102]

In common with their fellow seminarians, this was the kind of training that the missionaries who would serve in Vendaland received, and these were the kinds of ideologies and authority structures that they experienced and internalised. Admittedly, as was the case with Carl Stech, the Berlin Mission sometimes failed to produce the kinds of missionaries they set out to mould. This was even more dramatically demonstrated in the case of Reinhold Wessmann, whose career and trial will be considered next. However, despite these failures, in the majority of cases, they succeeded. The degree to which close contact with missionaries in general, and a seminary training in particular, could transform what the missionaries saw as a descendant of the "contemptible Hottentots" into the product that the Berlin Mission desired is clearly illustrated by the life of Klaas Koen.

REINHOLD WESSMANN AND THE HEART OF DARKNESS

Reinhold Wessmann was born in Guben on 23 December 1859. Before joining the Berlin Mission in 1880, he was a locksmith.[103] After the completion of his training at the seminary, he was delegated to the Northern Transvaal Synod to "be initiated into the mission service there." He arrived at Mp'hôme just before Christmas 1885.[104] On 28.May 1886, he joined Beuster at Ha-Tshivhase to begin his period of orientation into the "Bawenda [Vhavenda] Mission".[105] Having married Maria van der Goltz, he was stationed at Old Georgenholtz from 21 July 1887 to October 1894 and at Tshakhuma from then until his expulsion from the mission on 22 July 1905.[106] This expulsion was for various cases of sexual

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[102] Gunther Pakendorf "*For there is no power but of God*", p.2. For a discussion of this in regard to British missions, see J.L. Comaroff and J. Comaroff *Of Revelation and Revolution*, Volume One, pp.54-85.

[103] Acta der Berliner Missionsgesellschaft betreffend Personalia: Wessmann, Reinhold, Abt.II, Fach 3W, No.16, 1880 - 1907; *BMB*, Nr. 11 u. 12, 1881 [Jahresbericht 1880], p.165 and M.I. Bressani (Comp.) *Im Dienst der Mission*, p.57.

[104] *BMB*, Nr. 13 u. 14, 1886 [Jahresbericht 1885], p.216.

[105] Acta betreffend Personalia: Wessmann, Reinhold and *BMB*, Nr. 21 u. 22, 1887, p.48.

[106] Acta betreffend Personalia: Wessmann, Reinhold; M.I. Bressani (Comp.) *Im Dienst der Mission*, p.57 and Stationschronik von Georgenholtz, pp.1 & 2.

harassment of local African women, at least one of which turned into a prolonged extra-marital affair.[107]



8. Reinhold Wessmann[108]

Significantly, the charges against Wessmann had been brought by local Christians from Tshakhuma. Two letters complaining about the missionary had been received by the Mission. One was anonymous and the other had been signed by eight people.[109] In response, a hearing to consider the evidence against Wessmann was convened on 3 and 4 February 1905. It was alleged that five women; namely Ruth, Maria Moafé, Johanna, Grita and Magdalena; had refused to work for the missionary because of his behaviour towards them.[110] His actions included showing Maria a book with pictures of women giving birth,[111] fondling

[107] Protokoll [3 - 4 Februar 1905]; Letter from Missionsdirektor Martin D. Genischen tc Sup. Krause, Berlin, 25 März 1905; Report of Kommission [Reuter, Jensen, Sonntag], Tschakoma. 27. Mai 1905; Letter from Wessmann, Tsakoma, 23. Mai 1905 to Gesellschaft zur Beförderung der evangelischen Missionen unter den Heiden zu Berlin; Letter from Missionsinspektor [Karl] Axenfeld to Herrn Pastor Dietrich, 22. August 1905 and Letter from Missionsdirektor Martin D. Genischen to Herrn Sup. Matthes, Hochwürden, Kolberg, Berlin 30/6/1907 all in Acta der Berliner Missionsgesellschaft betreffend Personalia: Wessmann, Reinhold.

[108] Originally titled "The Author, R. Wessmann. Formerly a Missionary in the Northern Transvaal", in R. Wessmann *The Bawenda of the Spelonken (Transvaal): A contribution towards the psychology and folk-lore of African peoples*, translated from the German original text by L. Weinthal, London, 'The African World' Ltd., 1908, facing p.7.

[109] Protokoll [3 - 4 Februar 1905], pp.11 & 12 (3 Februar).

[110] *Ibid.* pp.15-16 (3 Februar).

[111] *Ibid.* p.17 (3 Februar).

Grita's breasts when she went to him for Holy Communion,[112] and showing Ruth pictures of sexual acts and discussing "a lot of sexual things" with her. He had also reportedly told Ruth that "he was sleeping with a woman from Makoarele's [Makwarela's] Land without any consequences."[113] A second group of complaints presented to the same hearing revolved around the fact that Wessmann's son, Günter, had "written a letter to obtain girls for white policemen."[114] Instead of punishing him according to church law, as would have been the fate of other (Black) Christians, his parents had punished him.[115] As Jeremiah Dombu, one of the complainants, pointed out, Wessmann had "strongly spoken against the drinking of beer" by Christians. This he had done in spite of the fact that "whites were sinning in his house. Günter Wessmann had procured girls for the police."[116]

The previous chapter clearly demonstrates that the relationship between the missionaries and the local converts was an extremely paternalistic one. This paternalism became even more intense when dealing with the authority structures of the mission standing above the missionary in the field. The mission consciously strove to imbue these structures with a sense of awe and power. Even the missionaries were supposed to feel this and obey. One can imagine how much more intense this was once it reached the level of the ordinary converts. Beyond these ideological dimensions, the missionaries also wielded the very real power to excommunicate Christians and expel them from the mission station.

Against this background, it is easy to understand why the authors of the first letter were too afraid to append their names to it. Those who signed the second letter showed considerable courage. They clearly hoped that these complaints would be acted upon. However, it is clear that the action that they got was not what they expected. It would seem that they expected a hearing where they could meet with a representative, or representatives, of the mission as a group and have their complaints against Wessmann heard and discussed in his presence. Instead, they were put in front of an inquisition. The panel was chaired by Superintendent

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[112] *Ibid.* p.22 (3 Februar).
[113] *Ibid* p.23 (3 Februar). This could either mean that she had not become pregnant or that nobody was taking any action against him because of this.
[114] *Ibid.* p.12 (3 Februar).
[115] *Ibid.* p.19 (3 Februar).

Oswald Krause. Additional members were Friedrich Reuter, Rasmus Jensen, Otto Klatt and Theodor Schwellnus, all missionaries from the Northern Transvaal and peers of Wessmann's.[117] One at a time, instead of as a group, the complainants were called in front of a panel consisting only of white missionaries and cross-examined. It will become clear that this was not only unexpected but also seriously disorientated the witnesses. In addition, Wessmann's race, occupation and ability to cross-examine witnesses clearly identified him as a part of this group. Where was the complainants' champion? Even those who did not crumble before this were treated with what they would have interpreted as hostility. It was almost as if they, rather than Wessmann, were on trial.

Clearly intimidated by the presence of the missionaries and the nature of the proceedings, Martha stated that "I know nothing about all of this ... and do not know why my name has been mentioned." Similarly Margaretha stated that she did not know why her name appeared: "I have no guilt."[118] Magdalena simply refused to answer questions: "I do not want to say anything."[119]

Wessmann's defensive strategy focused on simply denying the charges, attacking the character of the witnesses and using their lack of knowledge of western judicial procedure as a means of confusing them, setting them against each other and discrediting their testimony. The panel also gave him considerable leeway in attempting to do this.[120] It is difficult to interpret the panel's actions in this regard as reflecting anything other than their bias in favour of their brother missionary and against the local informants.

Local judicial proceedings were held in public in the *khoro*. All present had the opportunity to hear evidence presented and to take part in proceedings. The plaintiff presented his case first. The defendant then addressed the court. After this, the witnesses were called to give evidence. Any man was then free to ask questions. It was nevertheless usually the older men, who had the most prestige

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[116] *Ibid.* pp.18-19 (3 Februar). Dombu was recorded as "Domboe".
[117] *Ibid.* p.11 (3 Februar).
[118] *Ibid.* p.17 (3 Februar).
[119] *Ibid.* p.22 (3 Februar).
[120] *Ibid.* p.12, 13, 14, 15, 20, 21, 22 & 23 (3 Februar).

and the most experience, who availed themselves of this opportunity. Beyond interjections by a single designated important councillor to keep order, should these prove necessary, nobody had the right to interrupt speakers. The plaintiff and defendant had the right to argue privately over any matter. Official proceedings were suspended while this took place. When the whole case had been thrashed out to the satisfaction of those present, the *khosi* or judge summed up, declared the customary law and delivered judgement and sentence. The possibility also existed for the case to be postponed for further evidence.[121] Colleagues and friends who have taken part in trials at the *khoro* emphasise that, in most cases, the emphasis was on restoring harmony and consensus rather than merely punishing the offender.

Wessmann's manipulation of the western system and the panel's sanctioning of this was totally foreign to this concept of justice. This was most eloquently put by the complainant Nicholas, who "complained" to the panel: "Why do you call us one at a time, instead of all together, we are becoming confused in our heads."[122]

On the second group of complaints, Superintendent Krause himself, the person in charge of the region and the chair of the inquiry, jumped to the defense of his Brother. He argued that he had a feeling that, with time, the blame that should have attached to the boy was being transferred to the father.[123] Similarly, Reuter pointed out that Günter had been punished by his parents and not by church law because he was still "a young boy".[124]

Given the fact that Günter's role in organising women of the policeman seems to have been uncontested, it would seem that only bias on the part of the panel can explain their lack of probing reaction to Wessmann's attempts to place the blame on local women and also to completely distance himself from these events. The misionary stated that a Police-corporal had come and asked permission to spend the night at the mission. Since he "knew nothing bad about him", he had given him a guest room. "The next morning, we found the clean bed dirty with red

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[121] H.A. Stayt *The Bavenda*, pp.219-220.
[122] Protokoll [3 - 4 Februar 1905], p.23 (3 Februar).
[123] *Ibid.* p.12 (3 Februar).
[124] *Ibid.* p.19 (3 Februar).

earth." Upon inquiry, he was told "The two girls Abigail and Ella had been there with the policemen" and that "they had a long friendship with the policemen on the hill".[125]

Wessmann continued these tactics on the second day of the hearing. In an act clearly designed both to demonstrate innocence and to enlist the support of his brethren, before any witnesses had been called, he made a plea that his wife be allowed to attend that day. She would be able to help him in places where his memory was unclear. He was suffering "great stress". He then swung straight into defensive mode, attempting to discredit the testimony and witnesses of the previous day. He asserted that he had only discussed "sexual matters" with men and not with women. Women had perhaps overheard or been told of such discussions. The missionary concluded by stating that one of the Christians at Tshakhuma, Timotheus, had told him: "*Mynheer*, if you make promises to the Bawenda they will give false witness for you." Wessmann felt that this was happening.[126]

The panel were clearly predisposed to accept the word of their brother missionary against the Black Christians. Superintendent Krause stated that there was no need for Sister Wessmann to be present. The authors of the first letter were unknown. There was no real evidence in the second letter. Witnesses had given incoherent and conflicting testimony and were "lying".[127] Supporting this interpretation, Reuter stated that: "We heard so many lies yesterday that we do not need to hear those who were to have been called today repeat these lies again." He continued by arguing that it was possible that Wessmann may have shown pictures of a woman giving birth from a book in talking about childbirth for instructional purposes and touched a woman's breast to illustrate a point he was making about childbirth or breast-feeding. While this was "thoughtless ... the evidence is that he is clean."[128] The final finding of the Committee was that there was "no evidence" to support the complaints. The complainants had gone about matters "in the wrong way and could not do this again." They were also told that "Their

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[125] *Ibid.* pp.14-15 (3 Februar).
[126] *Ibid.* pp.24-25 (4 Februar).
[127] *Ibid.* p.26 (4 Februar).
[128] *Ibid.* p.27 (4 Februar).

complaints would be sent to the high-ups [*grossen*] in Berlin for their answer."[129]

Presented with the findings of the panel, the Committee in Berlin were faced with what they saw as a "difficult situation". In their opinion, if they asked Wessmann to take a break from his station, his "enemies" would think that the accusations against him were true. They did not want this situation to develop as they wanted to give him a job at another "Bawendaland" station. Worried that rumours about Wessmann's sinfulness were continuing to circulate and that the matter had not been finally and decisively laid to rest, they requested Krause to prepare a new commission and make a new examination to finalise the matter.[130]

This time, the panel took the form of a proper commission. Frederich Reuter and Rasmus Jensen were again members, this time as Commissioners. They were joined by Christoph Sonntag. This time, the Commissioners were much more exhaustive in their inquiries, which began in April with the collection of evidence. In the face of testimony by Dorka Rammba (Dorkus Rambau? - illegible) that she was involved in a sexual relationship with Wessmann, he finally broke down and confessed.[131] Admitting that he had been "overcome" by the "evil enemy", he begged forgiveness. He knew that he would be expelled as a missionary. However, noting that he had spent many years working for the mission and for God and that this was his life, he stated that he longed to continue in their service, even "at a low level".[132] This was to no avail and he was expelled from the mission.

Wessmann's expulsion was not discussed in the *Missions-Berichte* or *Bawenda-Freund*, which simply stop referring to him except when discussing earlier events. Indeed, after his expulsion, all reference to him in public documents of the Mission Society in anything but the past tense, disappears. That this was deliberate policy is illustrated by Mission Inspector Karl Axenfeld's reply to a

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[129] *Ibid.* pp.28-29 (4 Februar).

[130] Letter from Missionsdirektor Martin D. Genischen to Sup. Krause, Berlin, 25 März 1905, in Acta betreffend Personalia: Wessmann, Reinhold.

[131] Commission Reuter, Jensen, Sonntag, pp.8-9 and Letter from Wessmann, Tsakoma [Tshakhuma] 23. Mai 1905 to Gesellschaft zur Beförderung der evangelischen Missionen unter den Heiden zu Berlin, in Acta betreffend Personalia: Wessmann, Reinhold.

[132] Letter, Wessmann, Tsakoma [Tshakhuma] 23. Mai 1905.

communication from Pastor Dietrich, from Wessmann's home area in Germany, requesting information on what had happened to him. In this communication, he requests the Pastor to handle his report on the reasons for Wessmann's expulsion "with the greatest possible discretion", both in mission circles and in the wider community, because "It is a Satanic humiliation for the labourers in such Holy Service when one of them falls into such great sin." Not only the local congregants and "heathens" but also their fellow missionaries could be affected by this.[133] Indeed, so strong was their feeling against Wessmann that they did everything in their power to drive him out of the area. With his expulsion from the mission, Wessmann moved to the farm Lastgeronden. Having failed to persuade the owner to evict him, the mission bought the farm with the express purpose of doing so themselves. This was specifically so that his bad example would be removed from the sight and consciousness of his colleagues, the local converts and the local "heathens".[134] Wessmann subsequently settled in the territory of *Khosi* Masia south of the Levuvhu River, near Davhana at Mpheni. His affairs with local women continued. He died on 20 March 1928.[135] Just how successful the missionaries were in suppressing memories of their fallen brother's actions is demonstrated by the fact that the seals on the records of his disciplinary inquiry (the so-called *Protokoll*) remained inviolate for nearly a hundred years until I broke them while doing research in the archives of the Berlin Mission in 1996.

The fear of contagion by Wessmann and the extreme measures taken to prevent this strongly suggest that his fall was viewed as being more than a lapse into sin.[136] While the mission did not directly state this, it is clear that they saw him as *Tropenkollered*, as suffering from tropical madness or having "gone native". Drawing on the descriptions of Marlow's journey up the river towards the horror in portrayal of the figure of Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*, Harries has argued that, for the Swiss Missionary and ethnographer Henri-Alexandre Junod, and for

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[133] Letter from Missionsinspektor [Karl] Axenfeld to Herrn Pastor Dietrich, 22. August 1905.
[134] Letter from Missinsdirektor Martin D. Genischen to Herrn Sup. Matthes, Hochwürden, Kolberg, Berlin 30/6/1907.
[135] C.J. Conerly "The Surrendering of the Lands", p.34 and Stationschronik von Georgenholtz, p.37 [161 of file].
[136] For missionary fears of contagion by the "darkness" of Africa in other parts of the continent, see B.V. Street *The Savage in Literature*, p.24.

middle- and upper-class Europeans in the nineteenth century, "Africa was a place of rediscovery, a place where 'our own ancient history surges up before our eyes'".[137] This imagined encounter between Europeans and their origins, or genesis, in Edenic Africa has also been commented on by Brantlinger and White.[138] However, Brantlinger has traced, and White has commented on, the Victorian creation and development of an opposing myth of Africa, that of the "dark continent".[139] In this world-view, which became the dominant one as imperialism and the colonisation of Africa gained momentum, "going native" was the "ultimate atrocity" that the traveller, settler or missionary could commit. It represented the betrayal of the ideals of civilisation that he was supposedly bringing from Europe and the triumph of the darkness of Africa over the light of Europe.[140]

This point is well illustrated by the figure of Kurtz in *Heart of Darkness*. Echoing Brantlinger, Hampson has argued that in, in this work: "The narrative carries the implication that Kurtz's 'evil' is signalled by his 'going native', and that 'evil, in short, is African'."[141] Similarly, there is a strong theme in the work that Kurtz had been a man of great potential, destined to go far. He is variously described as "a first class agent", "a very remarkable person", "an exceptional man, of the greatest importance to the Company", "a prodigy ... an emissary of pity, and science, and progress and devil knows what else ... a special being" and "a 'universal genius'".[142] Explaining the triumph of "darkness", Conrad argued that "there was something wanting in" Kurtz. While this deficiency would only

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[137] P. Harries "Through the Eyes of the Beholder", p.3. For the image of travelling up the river as going back to the earliest beginnings of the world, see J. Conrad *Heart of Darkness*, Harmondsworth, Penguin Books, 1995, p.59.

[138] P. Brantlinger "Victorians and Africans", p.170 and A. White *Joseph Conrad and the Adventure Tradition: Constructing and deconstructing the imperial subject*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1993, p.23.

[139] P. Brantlinger "Victorians and Africans", pp.166-203 and A. White *Joseph Conrad*, p.29.

[140] P. Brantlinger "Victorians and Africans", pp.193 (quotation), 194 & 196 and A. White *Joseph Conrad*, p.24. In comparative perspective, Street has noted that: "The Englishman who 'went native' in Kipling's tales always pays the penalty." (B.V. Street *The Savage in Literature*, p.34.) For discussion of perceptions of the roots of the *Bounty* mutineer Peter Heywood's "deviance" as lying in his having "gone native" in Tahiti, see G. Denning *Mr Bligh's Bad Language: Passion, Power and Theatre on the Bounty*, Cambridge and New York, Canto (Cambridge University Press), 1994, pp.257-262.

[141] P. Brantlinger *Rule of Darkness: British Literature and Imperialism, 1830-1914*, Ithaca Cornell University Press, 1988, p.262 and R. Hampson "Introduction", in J. Conrad *Heart of Darkness*, p.xxxiv.

[142] J. Conrad *Heart of Darkness*, pp.37, 43, 47 & 51.

become apparent to him much later on, the African wilderness "found him out early" and wreaked "a terrible vengeance" on him.[143] Thus, while Kurtz had originally had "immense plans", Africa had corrupted him.[144]

In my reading, from the perspective of the missionaries, this is exactly what had happened to Wessmann. In his fall and his degradation, he had betrayed the image of the missionary as hero and servant of God. This suggested, and his continuing sinfulness confirmed, the image of the missionary as servant of Satan. In the view of the mission, they had not alternative but to protect others from corruption. Purchase of a farm with the express purpose of evicting Wessmann and attempting to expunge him from public consciousness were small prices to pay when souls were at stake.

The career of Klaas Koen stands in marked contrast to that of Wessmann. Far from being forgotten about, the mission celebrated his life and "blessed" death, portraying him as exemplifying the degree to which one could be reborn, become a new man, in Christ. In conformity with the idea of the written word as a challenge that leads to conversion as discussed in the introductory chapter to this thesis (p.39), Koen's re-fashioning of his body and soul to become as "German" as any native of Germany, the painful suffering which wracked his body and his ultimate supreme sacrifice were celebrated in *Bawenda-Freund*, the *Missions-Berichte* and a tractate about his life.

KLAAS KOEN – THE IDEAL MISSIONARY

Klaas Koen was born at Haarlem in the Cape Colony on 22 May 1852, the son of Piet Koen, first an elder and later the verger of the small Christian community there.[145] His father had been instrumental in getting Missionary Friedrich Prietsch

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[143] *Ibid.* p.95. See also R. Ambrosini *Conrad's Fiction as Critical Discourse*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1991, pp.107-108; I. Watt (a) *Conrad in the Nineteenth Century*, London, Chatto and Windus, 1980, pp.144-145 & (b) *Essays on Conrad*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2000, pp.90-91 and A. White *Joseph Conrad*, pp.171 & 174.

[144] J. Conrad *Heart of Darkness*, p.106.

[145] Letter: Missionar F. Prietsch an Missionsinspektor X in Berlin, 24.4.1883, also reproduced in "Aus dem Leben des Missionars Niklaus Koen", both in Acta der Berliner missionsgesellschaft betreffend Personalia: Koen, and G. Sauberzweig-Schmidt *Klaas Kuhn*, p.8. For a short biography of Koen, see also D.W. van der Merwe "Niklaas Theunissen Koen,

to go to Haarlem in 1860 and establish the mission station of Anhalt-Schmidt. In time he became "a friend of the house". Always prepared to offer advice and help, he became a favourite of Prietsch's wife. "Klaas was the 6th child of his numerous swarm of children."[146]

Hans Heese has argued that Klaas Koen was a direct descendant of Johannes Casparus Koen van Roeksem, the Koen progenitor from Germany, who arrived at the Cape in 1741. His mother was Christina Catharina Leeu or Leen (also named De Laine). On the Koen side, his grandmother was Betje Oosthuizen, from the Cape. His great-grandmother on this side was Maria Geertruy Beyers.[147]

The Berlin Mission seem to have been unaware of Koen's distant German roots. Although they noted that he himself spelt his name as Klaas Koen, they did not find this Germanic enough. Instead, in mission writings, his name was usually "Germanised" to Klaus Kuhn or Klaas Kuhn.[148] Moreover, it suited them to emphasise the fact that he was a South African of mixed descent. On a practical level, when they assigned him "to the high, hot northern area where he would work," they "hoped that, as a born Hottentot and an African, he more than anybody else would have the constitution which could resist the hot climate there."[149] On a more abstract, ideological, level, in their terms, as a "Hottentot", Klaas was descended from people who had gone around "half-naked ... [living] in appalling filth and still more wicked foolishness and in all sorts of heathen sins and disgraces." In time, this "weak and very lazy" people had adopted the Dutch language and:

> replaced their skin clothing with European cast-offs. Because nobody was teaching them, they remained wretched heathens, going to neglect in their bottomless foolishness, especially through the vice of drunkenness. Some became even more wicked when the English, into

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1852-1883, Lewensskets van 'n pioniersendeling onder die Bawenda", in *Kleio*, Deel IX, 1&2, Junie 1977, pp.22-30. This is not as comprehensive as that which I present here.

[146] Letter: Missionar F. Prietsch an Missionsinspektor X in Berlin, 24.4.1883 and "Aus dem Leben des Missionars Niklaus Koen".

[147] H. Heese "Diakonie en Digitalisering: Sendingrekords en geskiedenis in die 21 ste eeu", in *Historia: Journal of the South African Historical Association*, Vol. 43. No. 2, November 1988, p.32, footnote 11.

[148] See, for example, Letter: Missionar F. Prietsch an Missionsinspektor X in Berlin, 24.4.1883, "Aus dem Leben des Missionars Niklas Koen" and G. Sauberzweig-Schmidt *Klaas Kuhn*, p.5.

[149] *BMB*, Nr. 19 u. 20, 1882, p.358.

> whose possession the Cape had come, gave them unconditional freedom.[150]

However, the Berlin Missionaries believed that their "patient" work among these "degenerate heathens" demonstrated that even they could be "awakened to a new life" in Christ. Piet Koen had been one of their earliest successes.[151] In their opinion, their success with his son would be even greater. Although descended from the "contemptible Hottentots", he would go on to "work more than others whose forebears were so-called Christians" and provide a shining light for others to follow.[152] While not directly stated, the strong implication was that the Vhavenda, among whom he would spend his mission career and offer his life as a sacrifice, could also break away from their dark present and experience such a rebirth. This situation had come about by a combination of piety and good fortune.

Koen's path to ordination began with one of his father's offers of help to the Prietsch family. One of the first things that Missionary Prietsch did after his founding of the station was to establish a garden in which peach trees flourished. A great deal of the produce of these trees was dried, so that it would not go to waste. The fruit was laid out to sun-dry in front of the house. Piet Koen noticed that the chickens often ate the drying fruit. He told the missionary:

> You cannot carry on like this, you must have somebody to chase the chickens away, otherwise they will destroy everything. I will give you my Klaas, if this is OK with you. I want to give my son Klaas to you, he will keep the chickens away. [153]

So, the nine-year old Klaas came to live in the Prietsch's house. When the last of the peaches had been dried, Mrs. Prietsch asked the old man:

> "Piet, what now? The fruit is ready, what shall now become of Klaas?" Piet scratched his head in a somewhat embarrassed manner and eventually said ... "I do not know what to do with Klaas at home. He

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[150] G. Sauberzweig-Schmidt *Klaas Kuhn*, pp.7-8.
[151] *Ibid.*
[152] *Ibid.* p.30.
[153] Letter: Missionar F. Prietsch an Missionsinspektor X in Berlin, 24.4. 1883; "Aus dem leben des Missionars Niklas Koen" (quotation) and G. Sauberzweig-Schmidt *Klaas Kuhn*, p.8.

> is not like my other children. When I say to them: Do this or that! ... they understand me and do it but Klaas, when I have said a lot to them, then he looks in the clouds and has not understood anything. The boy is extremely stupid! Do you not want to keep him here?" [154]

The answer from the Prietsch family was:

> Good, Klaas can stay with us and we want to keep him. But then we must do this in writing and you and your wife have to sign the contract.[155]

This was done, and Klaas became their stepson. In time, they also took other children into their home, giving them a "good upbringing" and sending them to school. It soon became apparent to them that, far from being stupid, Klaas in fact far outshone his peers and had the capability to become a teacher or minister one day. The problem was finding funds to finance his training.[156]

This money was eventually provided by "a distinguished benefactress in Germany", Frau von Kröcher, who had "lost her only son and heir in an accident. Because she no longer had her son to care for, she decided to do some good for a heathen boy." Hearing from her sister that, at that time, the Prietschs had a "couple of girls and three boys" living in their house, she contacted Mrs. Prietsch through her sister. Having received written reports about, and letters from, these children, she selected Klaas and offered him financial support for private lessons in English, German and the violin.[157]

When Frau von Kröcher died, her will made provision for Klaas to study in

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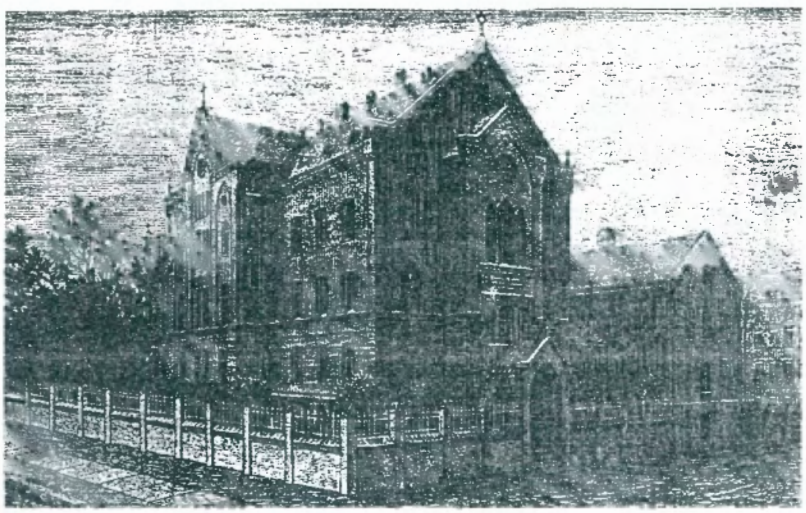
[154] Letter: Missionar F. Prietsch an Missionsinspektor X in Berlin, 24.4.1883 and "Aus dem leben des Missionars Niklas Koen". See also G. Sauberzweig-Schmidt *Klaas Kuhn*, pp.8-9.

[155] Letter: Missionar F. Prietsch an Missionsinspektor X in Berlin, 24.4.1883 and "Aus dem leben des Missionars Niklas Koen".

[156] Ibid. and G. Sauberzweig-Schmidt *Klaas Kuhn*, p.9 (quotation). Piet Koen would later die of consumption, at approximately fifty years of age. A sketch by Mission Director Wangemann of five people at Haarlem in 1866 includes Koen and one of his sisters. An extremely grainy reproduction of this appears in H. Heese "Diakonie en digitalisering", p.32. Compare Prietsch's actions in taking the children into his home with those of Allison, discussed on p.114, footnote 36 of this thesis.

[157] *Ibid.* (quotations mixed among sources).

Germany to become either a teacher or a missionary.[158] The seventeen-year-old boy took the opportunity offered to him. For two years, he studied in a preparatory institution in Ducherow in Pomerania. He then moved over to the Mission House in Berlin to study in the seminary there. For his first year, this was still the old Mission House in Sebastianstrasse. However, after this it moved to the site that it still occupies in Georgenkirchstrasse [see Illustration 9]. There, he studied hard with the other candidate missionaries. Through his strenuous efforts, "this Hottentot Christian of heathen ancestry made such progress as to be an example to others." He even made better progress "in Greek and Hebrew than many other candidates."[159]



9. "The New Mission House after its compietion"[160]

As he progressed in his training, Koen began to attend and preach at Mission revival meetings. He proved to be extremely popular and made many friends among the clergy and the laity, rich and poor alike. "Above all, ... he won the friendship of the God-fearing Verger and teacher Bröse, and the heart of his daughter Maria, who was prepared to brave all dangers to join him in his homeland to preach the gospel to the heathens." However, they decided that they would only marry after he had spent a year back in Africa as a missionary.[161]

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[158] Letter: Missionar F. Prietsch an Missionsinspektor X in Berlin, 24.4.1883; "Aus dem leben des Missionars Niklas Koen" and G. Sauberzweig-Schmidt *Klaas Kuhn*, p.9.
[159] G. Sauberzweig-Schmidt *Klaas Kuhn*, pp.9-10 (quotations, p.10).
[160] *BMB*, Nr. 11 u. 12, 1883, p.169.
[161] *Ibid.* p.10.

References to Koen's popularity and his success in winning the heart of a girl from "God-fearing" solid German stock demonstrate that the Berlin Missionaries, and their wider church circle, accepted this "Hottentot" as a being who had been transformed by Christ and by his exposure to the "civilising" influence of German culture and a German Seminary education. The extent to which he had become "white", or "German", through this process is also clearly demonstrated in the account of his farewell sermon given in the tractate about his life and in the photograph of him used as an illustration in the tractate *Neu-Georgenholtz im Wenda-Lande* [see Illustration 10].[162]



10. Klaas Koen[163]

After six years of study in the Mission-House, on 29 August 1875, Koen preached his farewell sermon in the Bartholomäuskirche, the church which served as the home-church for the Mission Society [see Illustration 11]. The man who entered the pulpit "was scarcely darker than any of our own when he has been really burned by the sun. That his hair, crinkled in small bushes, stands a little

[162] P. Heimbach *Neu-Georgenholtz*.
[163] Appears as "Klaas Kuhn" in original, P. Heimbach *Neu-Georgenholtz*, p.18.

curly on the head, one does not see from a distance.". In addition, his face was drawn into a "sensible and serious expression. He preached about the parable of the talents (Matt. 25, 14-21)."[164] Ending his sermon with thanks, "the stranger took his leave from the Christian congregation with which he had been tied in the worship of God for seven years."[165]

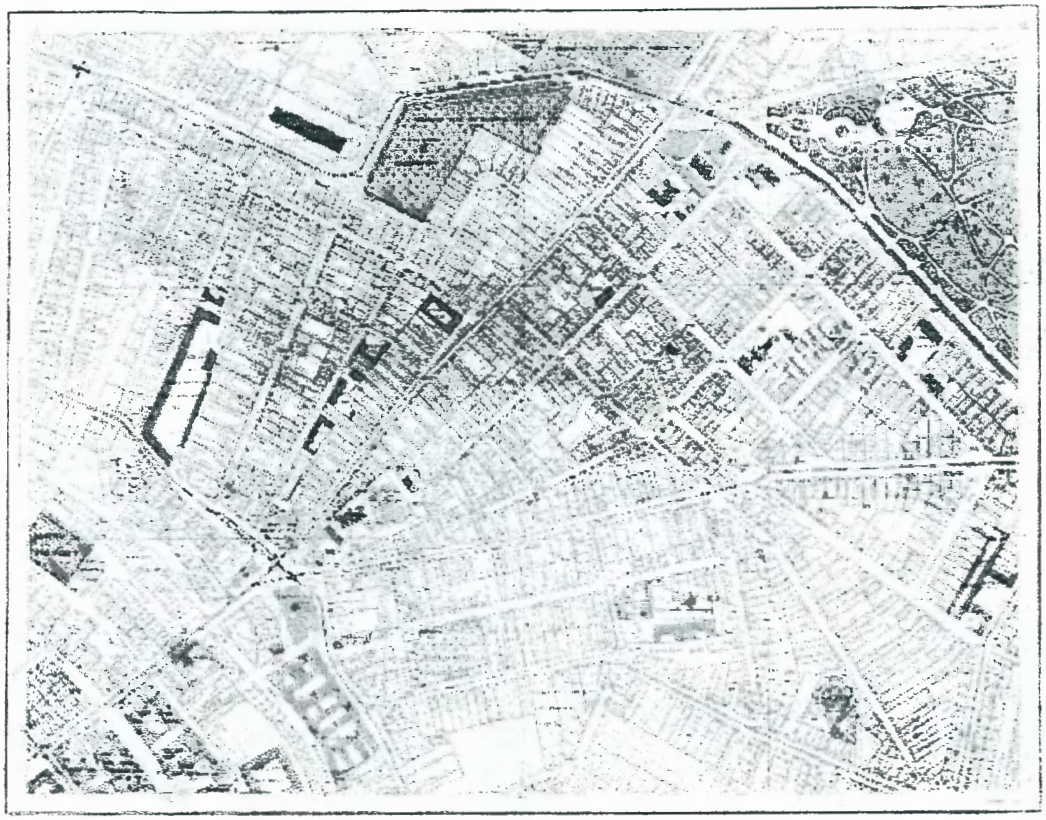
In the photograph, Koen wears the standard high-necked and dog-collared uniform of the Berlin Missionary. His hair has been combed in such a way that it indeed appears curly but not "crinkled". The photograph has also been exposed or re-touched so that his skin does not appear to be dark. He has indeed become "white" or "German" in looks as well as in ideology.



11. Bartholomäus-Kirche[166]

[164] G. Sauberzweig-Schmidt *Klaas Kuhn*, p. 6.
[165] *Ibid.* p.7.
[166] Märkisches Museum Berlin, Photographic Collection: Georgenkirche [Max Missmann], 1904, no number.

MAP 4: Friedrichshain
[Märkishes Museum Berlin, Map Collection:
Plan von Berlin, Blatt IA, 1894 - 1903, N63/3437R.]



Having completed his examinations, Koen set sail for Africa on 1 January 1876.[167] As with his fellow missionaries, in taking his leave, Koen was not only leaving his German brothers and sisters in Christ and the highly-structured learning environment of the Mission House. He was also taking his leave from the highly-structured physical environment of the church and the Seminary. Friedrichshain, the district in which the seminary was situated, was a highly ordered, densely built-up area [see Map 4]. Buildings from three- to six-stories high were common [see Illustrations 11 to 14]. The only open space of significant size was the Friedrichshain Park, opened on 18 July 1847 [see Map 4]. Here, beneath carefully planted trees, and amidst fountains, nature was vigorously pruned and clipped into aesthetically-pleasing straight lines. Outside the park, nature was represented by straight rows of evenly-spaced trees [see Illustration 14].[168] Even Koen, who had spent his childhood in the Cape Colony, was

[167] Ergänzungen aus den Stationsakten in Acta betreffend Personalia: Koen, Klaas.
[168] Notice-board, Volkspark, Friederichshain and J. Feustel *Spaziergänge in Friederichshain*,

unfamiliar with the kind of country that he was going to. This was the region on the Tropic of Capricorn where nature, and the inhabitants, had not as yet been brought under what he and his colleagues would have seen as "civilised" control.



12. "Georgenkirche Square (abutting Bartholomäus-Kirche)"[169]



13. "Landsberger Gate and Street"[170]

Berlinsche Reminiszenzen No. 64, Berlin, Haude + Spener, 1994.

[169] Märkishes Museum, Berlin, Photographic Collection, Georgenkircheplatz 8-9, no date, N65/556V.

[170] Märkisches Museum Berlin, Photographic Collection, Landsberger Tor & Strasse [Max Missmann], 1906, N67/138V.



14. "Greifswalderstrasse with Bartholomäus-Kirche, 1910"[171]

Koen eventually arrived "In the lands of the Bawenda" in April 1876.[172] His first posting was to Tshakhuma. As was customary for new missionaries, he was to be stationed here for a year to "be initiated into his calling and to study the language and customs of the Bawenda." He did this under the direction of Missionary Erdmann Schwellnus and his wife.[173]

On 10 May 1876, Koen wrote to mission Director Wangemann:

> ... I am writing to you for the first time from the Northern Transvaal. I am really entering the proper mission work now. ... Learning the Language. I have taken the preparatory classes over from Br. Schwellnus and am teaching the people reading, writing and singing. Polygamy is part of the consciousness of the people. Those who are not married are regarded as children here and very little attention is paid to them. They love me but it is offensive to them that I am not a married man. Therefore I wish to ask, if it is possible, that my bride (Miss Maria Bröse) can come together with Sister Grützner next year. I am certain that as long as one remains unmarried, one cannot be a missionary here.[174]

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[171] Märkisches Museum Berlin, Post-Card Collection: No title, N61/3885V.

[172] G. Sauberzweig-Schmidt *Klaas Kuhn*, p. 11.

[173] *Bawenda-Freund*, Nr. 54, 2 Quartal 1896, 14 Jahrgang, p.292; *BMB*, Nr. 11 u. 12, 1877 [Jahresbericht 1876], p.216 and G. Sauberzweig-Schmidt *Klaas Kuhn*, p.12.

[174] Letter: Missionar Koen an Direktor Wangemann aus Tshakoma [Tshakhuma], 10.5.1876, also reproduced in "Aus dem Leben des Missionars Niklas Koen", both in Acta betreffend

His progress was reasonably rapid. On November of the same year, he wrote to Director Wangemann: "Now that I have been here for five months, I am able to preach in the local language here."[175]

On 13 July 1877, Koen, then twenty-five years old, visited the Vhavenda *Khosi* Makwarela at his capital village of Tshikwarakwara to make final arrangements with him for the establishment of a mission station in his territory.[176] His journey from the existing Vendaland mission station at Tshakhuma was described as "extremely arduous. It went up hill and down dale, down and up mountains, often over dangerous cliffs." As he neared his destination, "there was a pelting rainstorm, so that [he] ... was thoroughly drenched by the time that he reached the capital, which lay on a steep mountain."[177]

Having negotiated the details of the founding of the station, Koen returned to Tshakhuma. On 26 July, he returned to Makwarela's area, this time to stay.[178] Demonstrating the energy expected of a German Missionary, Koen wasted no time in starting work on the establishment of Georgenholtz. His first task was to build a small house on the side of the mountain. The costs for this and later buildings were borne by a faithful friend of the Mission, Georg Holtz, Lord of the Manor of Manow in Pomerania, hence the new station was named after him.

> Kuhn immediately began to preach to the people. Because he had no bell, he called the heathens together by beating on a pot or a piece of

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Personalia: Koen, Klaas.

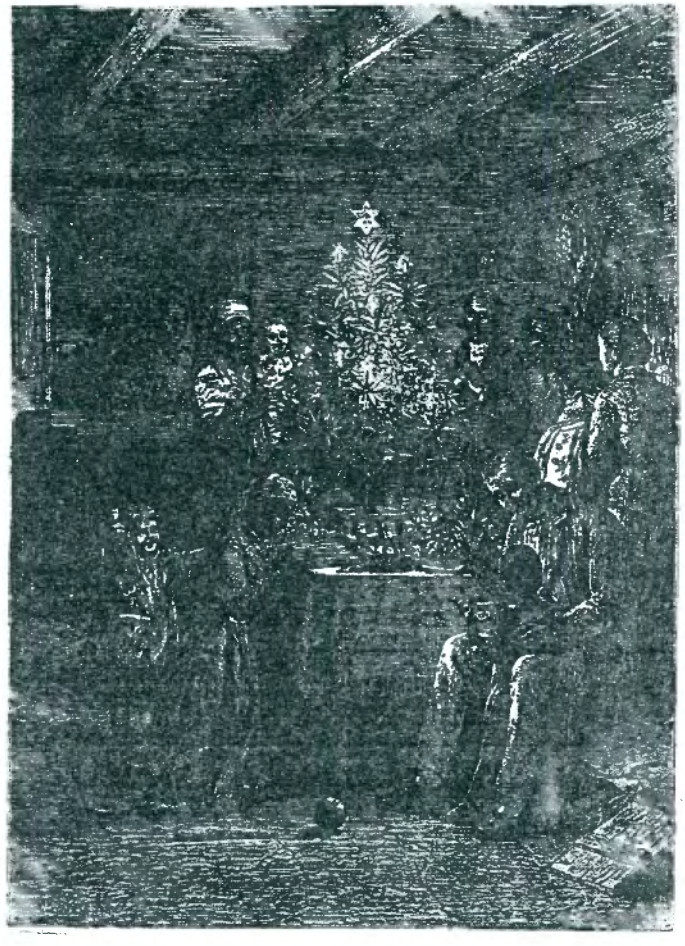
[175] Letter: Missionar Koen an Direktor Wangemann aus Tshakoma [Tshakhuma], 1.11.1876, also reproduced in "Aus dem Leben des Missionars Niklas Koen") in Acta betreffend Personalia: Koen, Klaas.

[176] Tshikwarakwara was recorded as "Schibngarragarra" in mission sources at this time. The first meeting between the missionary and the *khosi* is discussed in more detail on pp.437-438.

[177] Tagebuch der Station bei Ha Makoarela (Nicolaus Koen), 13 Juli 1877, in Berlin Mission Archives, Berlin, Acta der Berliner Missionsgesellschaft betreffend Missionsstationen: Tagebücher der Missionare auf Makoarela (Georgenholtz), Abt. III, Fach 5, No. 16, (I) [Box 1]; *BMB*, No. 21 u 22, 1878, p.490 and G. Sauberzweig-Schmidt *Klaas Kuhn*, p.14.

[178] Ergänzungen aus den Stationsakten: Koen, Klaas; Stationschronik von Georgenholtz, p. 1; Tagebuch der Station bei Ha Makoarela (Nicolaus Koen), 26 Juli 1877; *Bawenda-Freund*, Nr. 54, 2 Quartal 1896, 14 Jahrgang, pp.292-293; *BMB*, Nr. 11 u 12, 1878 [Jahresbericht 1877], p.256 & No. 21 u 22 1878, pp.491-492; *Mitteilungen des Vereins „Heidenfreund"*, Nr. 19, 1 Oktober 1887, V Jahrgang, n.p. (p.2-3) and G. Sauberzweig-Schmidt *Klaas Kuhn*, p.14.

iron. They came also - sometimes only 10, although often up to 500.[179]



15. Christmas Scene from South Africa[180]

Although he received a great deal of support from Makwarela, it took some time before the preaching of the Gospel made any real impact on the local people.[181] Also, in spite of the fact that Koen enjoyed and deeply appreciated the companionship and support of Makwarela, the latter was still a "heathen". This meant that he could not fulfil all of the missionary's needs for companionship and support. These needs could also only partially be met by the African converts. Koen's first Christmas at Georgenholtz demonstrated just how "white" - just how enculturated by German culture, he had become:

Kuhn would have felt very lonely among these people had he not had

[179] G. Sauberzweig-Schmidt *Klaas Kuhn*, p.15.
[180] *BMB*, Nr. 23 u 24, 1884, pp.440-441 (untitled in original).
[181] *Bawenda-Freund*, Nr. 54, 2 Quartal 1896, 14 Jahrgang, p.293 and G. Sauberzweig-Schmidt *Klaas Kuhn*, pp.15-16.

> at least one Christian with him. He was one of the converts from Tsakoma (Johannes, later [joined by] one other called Samuel), who supported him faithfully. In spite of this, he was extremely lonely on his first Christmas [there]. On Christmas Eve, he sat next to a gum tree decorated with quite a few candles (the spruce tree is not found there). His heart was so heavy that this carried over to his eyes [and he cried]. Then Brother Schwellnus came riding over bringing comfort. He also brought hearty greetings and a Christmas cake from Brother Beuster, decorating the small [Christmas] tree with this. On the next day, he could again stand before the heathens full of joyfulness and give testimony about the greatest Christmas present given by the Heavenly Father.[182]

Having been revitalised by his German brothers, Koen would work hard to save souls.[183] However, his mission career would continue to be plagued by illness. Already in March 1877, Koen had written to Mission Director Wangemann that: "I have been ill with climate-fever [*Klimafieber*] and still feel sick more often than healthy."[184] Again, in February 1878, Koen was confined to his bed with a severe fever.[185] He was at first nursed by Makwarela himself.[186] When it became clear that the missionary was not improving, Makwarela sent messengers to Missionary Beuster. He came and fetched Koen and took him back to his mission station. After several weeks, he was well enough to return to Georgenholtz. His recovery from what had appeared to the local people to be an almost-certainly fatal illness reportedly led to an increase in those attending church services and seeking conversion.[187] The mission took pride in the fact that Koen was, and continued to be:

> driven by his enthusiasm for God's Word. Untiringly he strained all his bodily and spiritual strength - yes, he even went beyond his strength - to serve his Saviour. He did not spare himself, even it if meant visiting the villages in the hottest heat of the sun. Then, in this overheated condition, he was surprised by drenching bouts of rain, or had to ride

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[182] G. Sauberzweig-Schmidt *Klaas Kuhn*, p.16.

[183] *Bawenda-Freund*, Nr. 54, 2 Quartal 1896, 14 Jahrgang, pp.293- 294.

[184] Letter: Missionar Koen an Direktor Wangemann aus Tshakoma [Tshakhuma], 28.3.1877, also reproduced in "Aus dem Leben des Missionars Niklas Koen", both in Acta betreffend Personalia, Koen, Klaas.

[185] Tagebuch der Station bei Ha Makoarela (Nicolaus Koen), 11. März 1878, pp.9-10 & 17 März 1888, pp.10-11; *Bawenda-Freund*, Nr. 54, 2 Quartal 1896, 14 Jahrgang, p. 294; *BMB*, Nr. 21 u 22, 1878, pp.496-497 and G. Sauberzweig-Schmidt *Klaas Kuhn*, p.17-18.

[186] Tagebuch der Station bei Ha Makoarela (Nicolaus Koen), 17 März 1888, p.10; *Bawenda-Freund*, Nr. 54, 2 Quartal 1896, 14 Jahrgang, p. 294; *BMB*, Nr. 21 u 22, 1878, p.497 and G. Sauberzweig-Schmidt *Klaas Kuhn*, p.17.

[187] *BMB*, Nr. 21 u. 22, 1879, pp.410-411 and G. Sauberzweig-Schmidt *Klaas Kuhn*, p.18.

> or swim through swollen rivers. These surely were contributing factors which caused the nagging illness within him to lead him to an early end.[188]

In addition to continuing his mission work, Kuhn also built the "first solid dwelling-house at Georgenholtz to replace the "small hut" that he had lived in until then. This was completed in September 1878. Revealing the idea of the missionaries as imposing order on nature, the mission recorded that this had "a delightful small garden, laid out as prettily as possible, in front."[189]

Once this was done, on 1 October, Koen left for Natal to marry his fiancee. Since he expected to be away for some months, he appointed one of his pupils, the as yet unbaptised Nathaniel Lalumbe, to run services as he could in his absence.[190]

Not only Koen but also Missionary Mars from Botshabelo, who had travelled together with him, were waiting for their brides to arrive at Königsberg Mission Station from Germany. They had to wait for five weeks before they arrived. Koen and Maria Bröse were eventually married on 30 December 1878. "The black Christians also celebrated together with them. A goat had been slaughtered for them and a large urn of coffee prepared."[191]

After their lengthy return journey, the couple arrived back at Georgenholtz on 21 February 1879:

> When the wagon was sighted from Makoarele's village, and it was noticed that it contained two "school people", people came out to meet them with great jubilation. A huge crowd of joyful people, accompanied by many drawn out of curiosity, came shouting and dancing and made noise.[192]

The situation that they found gave them great hope for the future. Not only had

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[188] *BMB*, Nr. 19 u. 20, 1883, pp.358-359.

[189] Stationschronik von Georgenholtz, p. 1 and G. Sauberzweig-Schmidt *Klaas Kuhn*, p.18 (quotation).

[190] *BMB*, Nr. 21 u. 22, 1879, p.413; Ergänzungen aus den Stationsakten: Koen, Klaas and G. Sauberzweig-Schmidt *Klaas Kuhn*, pp.18-19.

[191] Ergänzungen aus den Stationsakten: Koen, Klaas and G. Sauberzweig-Schmidt *Klaas Kuhn*, p.19 (quotation).

regular Sunday Services been held in Koen's absence but the congregation had also made progress in their learning. Nine new pupils, including an uncle of Makwarela had joined those receiving instruction.[193] To top all of this off:

> The mission work was going well. There were still large numbers of attentive people coming to attend the church services and Makoarele [Makwarela] was still ... [among the most regular attendees]. Many of the pupils were also asking to be baptised and were being prepared for this.[194]

However, on earth, in the face of joy, we still have our "cross" to bear. Koen's "young wife had to fight against severe attacks of fever." Georgenholtz lay:

> right in the feverlands. Also Kuhn himself periodically became very ill, so that Beuster had to come over from Ha-Tshivhase to nurse them both. With God's help, they withstood these tests.[195]

On 27 July 1879, the new bell at Georgenholtz, donated by children at the Sunday school in Fürstenwalde, was rung for the first time. "Its first ringing called Makoarele's people to a real celebration. The first four [adult] converts would be accepted into the Christian Church through baptism."[196] It will be seen in Chapter 8 that in the interpretation of the missionaries, the fact that Makwarela was not among those baptised led to tensions between him and them. They also believed that, because of this, there was a great increase in hostility towards them shown by all of Makwarela's people.[197] In addition to the situation at the capital, the spreading of the Gospel in surrounding areas also "came to a halt."[198] However, Nathanael Lalumbe, who had been appointed as the Native Assistant [*Nationalhelfer*] of Georgenholtz on 1 January 1880, "went quickly to the surrounding kraals" to attempt to defuse the situation. He reportedly had to

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[192] G. Sauberzweig-Schmidt *Klaas Kuhn*, p.19.
[193] *Ibid.* p.20. See also *BMB*, Nr. 21 u. 22, 1880, pp.413-414.
[194] G. Sauberzweig-Schmidt *Klaas Kuhn*, p.21.
[195] *Ibid.* See also *BMB*, Nr. 21 u. 22, 1880, p.414.
[196] G. Sauberzweig-Schmidt *Klaas Kuhn*, p.21. See also: Stationschronik von Georgenholtz, p. 1; *Mitteilungen des Vereins „Heidenfreund"*, Nr. 19, 1 Oktober 1887, V. Jahrgang, n.p. (p.3); *Bawenda-Freund*, Nr. 54, 2 Quartal 1896, 14 Jahrgang, p.294 and *BMB*, Nr. 11 u 12, 1880 [Jahresbericht 1879], p.211.
[197] See pp.448-449.
[198] *Bawenda-Freund*, Nr. 54, 2 Quartal 1896, 14 Jahrgang, p.294 and G. Sauberzweig-Schmidt *Klaas Kuhn*, p.23.

"endure ridicule and scorn" because of this.[199]

In spite of these setbacks, the Christian congregation grew gradually. Although "a few were baptised" every year, "many pupils also turned away again".[200] Klaas and Maria Koen would have two children, a son named Gerhard August Peter born on 4 January 1881 and a daughter named Hedwig, born on 18 July 1882.[201] The year 1882 also saw the completion of a new house at Georgenholtz. The old dwelling became a church.[202] At this stage, "there were but 28 Christians at the station who held faithfully to God's Word."[203] Also, in time, the relationship between Koen and Makwarela was partly restored.[204]

In the interpretation of the mission: "Heavier for the progress of Christianity at Georgenholtz than the hostility of the heathens was the illness of the missionary. It became increasingly clear that he was beginning to fade away."[205] I have already mentioned Koen's illness while still at Tshakhuma, his serious illness during his first year at Georgenholtz and his and his wife's periodic bouts of fever. In December 1881, Koen wrote to Mission Director Wangemann that:

> It has become difficult for me to carry out my duties, and I am very worried that in the future I will become a spectacle. ... I suffer from [a] sore throat and pain in the chest, the sore throat comes and goes but the chest pain remains, and the coughing of blood becomes ever more serious. ... Speaking has become difficult for me.[206]

By the beginning of 1882, "he was really deteriorating" and spent long periods confined to his sick-bed.[207]

His wife also suffered from fever again, so she could not offer a hand,

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[199] Stationschronik von Georgenholtz, p. 1 and G. Sauberzweig-Schmidt *Klaas Kuhn*, p.24 (quotation). See also *BMB*, Nr. 21 u. 22, 1880, p.417 and Nr. 21 u. 22, 1881, p.360.

[200] G. Sauberzweig-Schmidt *Klaas Kuhn*, p.24.

[201] Letter: aus Georgenholtz von Missionar Koen an Missions-Direktor Wangemann in Berlin, 26.5.1881, also reproduced in "Aus dem Leben des Missionars Niklas Koen" and Ergänzungen aus den Stationsakten, all in Acta betreffend Personalia, Koen, Klaas.

[202] Stationschronik von Georgenholtz, p. 1.

[203] G. Sauberzweig-Schmidt *Klaas Kuhn*, p.24.

[204] *Bawenda-Freund*, Nr. 54, 2 Quartal 1896, 14 Jahrgang, p.294.

[205] *Ibid.*

[206] Letter: aus Georgenholtz von Missionar Koen an Missions-Direktor Wangemann in Berlin, 30.12.1881, also reproduced in "Aus dem Leben des Missionars Niklas Koen", both in Acta betreffend Personalia, Koen, Klaas.

[207] G. Sauberzweig-Schmidt *Klaas Kuhn*, p.25.

> and also their one-year-old little son was without the necessary care and supervision, which made the hearts of the parents even more heavy.[208]

In spite of the serious condition that he found himself in, Koen set an impressive example of devotion to duty and paternal care for his congregation:

> However, also this time of trial passed. After fourteen days, *Frau* Kuhn could get up again and her husband also recovered so that he could take up his work again. On the fourth Sunday after Easter, the little church could be officially opened. Kuhn faithfully preached although speaking had become very difficult for him. He taught the school pupils daily; but, so that he did not have to talk too much, he had to let one of the black Christians help him. He regularly assembled those who had made progress and gave them instruction, so that they could spread the gospel in the surrounding kraals. Out of spiritual care for the congregation, he appointed a congregation-guardian ... [to take over the work that he was no longer strong enough to do himself]. But he himself admonished and comforted as far as his strength allowed. In particular, he had to severely punish the members of the congregation on account of the old lethargy. The words of their sick teacher, who they all loved, had a great effect. The Christians set themselves apart from the heathens by their diligence. For the most part, they walked well, only some women with their quarrelsomeness and gossipmongering made the missionary's heart heavy.- Above all other work in the community, he also used many free hours working on the translation of the Gospel of John into the language of the Bawenda. He did not fail in moving devotion to his calling.[209]

However, after this period of slight remission, his old illness returned in its full severity. In June 1882 he wrote to the Committee of the Berlin Mission Society:

> Because, due to my illness, I feel as if I am incapable, I beg you to relieve me of my duties and send another missionary to Georgenholtz. ... During the 7 years of my duty, I have done as much as has lain in my weak strength.[210]

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[208] *Ibid.* p.26.
[209] *Ibid.* pp.26-27.
[210] Letter: aus Georgenholtz von Missionar Koen an Komitee in Berlin, 23.6. 1882, also reproduced in Ergänzungen aus den Stationsakten, both in Acta betreffend Personalia, Koen, Klaas.

In response to Koen's declining health, the young [as yet, not ordained] missionary Dietrich Baumhöfner was sent out from Berlin and arrived at Georgenholtz on 1 August 1882. He also received an extremely warm welcome from Makwarela.[211]

Baumhöfner found Koen "so changed that he did not recognise him." However, at times when he felt strong enough to force himself out of bed, "he did not relent from his work." In October, he was again confined to his bed, often in such great pain that he begged to be released from it. In spite of his suffering, in times of lucidity he concerned himself with the "poor Bawenda" and the "Poor Makoarele".[212]

Baumhöfner reported that:

> On the 16.October [1882], the dear patient suffered great pains. He called out: "Oh please give me a cloth and tie my body together, because everything seems to be falling apart." Half an hour later he shouted: "Oh my heart, my heart! It is breaking! My Saviour, free me." Even he now thought his hour had come. He gave instructions about guardianship,[213] and sent greetings to the Brothers Beuster and Schwellnus. Then he lamented about the misery of the poor Bawenda [Vhavenda] nation: "Oh, these poor Bawenda people, the poor people! Oh, poor Makoarela [Makwarela]! I have loved him so much and would have so liked to see him again up there!"[214] When his wife then asked him: "My dear husband, do you not also have a word for me?" he replied: "Mama, I feel I am still staying with you. I'll tell you that I am going Home, before I go." From then on he improved and he could sleep a little.[215]

Towards the end of the year, Koen had a slight remission of the fever. At this time:

> a severe famine prevailed in the lands of the Bawenda. Many even cooked and ate their own skin clothing. With great difficulty, Kuhn

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[211] *Bawenda-Freund*, Nr. 20, 1 Januar 1888, VI Jahrgang, p.54; *BMB*, Nr. 19 u 20, 1883, p.364; *Mitteilungen des Vereins „Heidenfreund"*, Nr. 19, 1 Oktober 1887, V Jahrgang, n.p. (p.4) and Stationschronik von Georgenholtz, p. 1.

[212] G. Sauberzweig-Schmidt *Klaas Kuhn*, p.27.

[213] Presumably the guardianship of his children or of the station.

[214] A reference to Heaven. Koen would have believed that, since Makwarela was not baptised, they would not meet in the hereafter.

[215] *BMB*, Nr. 19 u. 20, 1883, pp.359-360.

> managed to have maize fetched from outside [Vendaland] and shared this with the starving [people], until he himself was also suffering privation.[216]

Even as his life drew to a close:

> His mercy was also seen in the adoption of a poor boy, who had been picked up along the way by Makoarele [Makwarela], when he wanted to be free of him, because he was causing so much trouble through his stealing. Kuhn took him as his step-son, in faithful memory of the good deed that he himself had received from Missionary Prietsch. He had the satisfaction of being able to baptise the young lad himself [on 21 January 1883].[217]

Again revealing what the missionaries saw as his great devotion to duty, and his care for the Vhavenda, shortly before Christmas:

> Kuhn had once again been able to deliver a sermon. But the old pain attacked him more strongly again after this. In spite of this, he led the Christmas celebrations. Under the decorated tree, the Christian children told the Christmas story and sang Christmas carols. Baumhöfner was an accomplished blower and accompanied them on his horn. "Perhaps the Lord will give me another year so that I can spread his word wider among the Bawenda!", Kuhn said at that time; however, shortly thereafter, when the pain became worse, Kuhn said to his wife: "Do not pray any more for my life, the Lord is coming shortly."[218]

Koen carried out his last official duty - the marriage of Paulus and Mavhungo, a daughter of Khosi Ranwedzi Mphaphuli - on 29 January 1883. "He had to sit at this, Baumhöfner had made him a pair of crutches, with their help he could slowly take a few steps. His last hour was coming and he was fully prepared for this."[219]

Despite Koen's weak physical state, and his sense of his impending death, he was

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[216] G. Sauberzweig-Schmidt *Klaas Kuhn*, p.27. See also *BMB*, Nr. 19 u. 20, 1883, p.360.
[217] G. Sauberzweig-Schmidt *Klaas Kuhn*, pp.27-28. See also *BMB*, Nr. 19 u. 20, 1883, p.360.
[218] G. Sauberzweig-Schmidt *Klaas Kuhn*, p.28. See also Letter: Brief vom 12.2.1883 aus Georgenholtz von Frau Koen, also reproduced in "Aus dem Leben des Missionars Niklas Koen", both in Acta betreffend Personalia, Koen, Klaas and *BMB*, Nr. 19 u. 20, 1883, pp.360 & 362.
[219] *BMB*, Nr. 19 u. 20, 1883, p.362 and G. Sauberzweig-Schmidt *Klaas Kuhn*, p.28 (quotation).

not prepared to give an inch on dogma. It would seem that Paulus had impregnated Mavhungo before marrying her. Koen would only allow the marriage to go ahead after Paulus had done penance in church.[220] Normal practice in such cases, and that which was followed in this particular case, was that the guilty parties had to attend special penance classes for a set period of time. After this they were made to express their regret (do penance) in front of the congregation, before they were again regarded as true members of the congregation, in other words before they were allowed to again partake in Holy Communion or allowed to be married in church. In the text, the penance is only mentioned in conjunction with Paulus. This suggests that Mphaphuli's daughter was not yet a Christian - she might have attended classes but she had not yet been baptised. As she was not yet part of the congregation, she did not have to do penance!

Even with his crutches, Koen was so weak that he could only take a few steps at a time. From time to time:

> he cried out: "Is my Saviour not coming soon?" To his wife he said: "Do not pray that I get better. The Lord's will be done. May the Lord soon have pity on me and change things soon!" Then again he asked her: "Is it not wrong to wish for the end so ardently?" He bore his suffering patiently and never complained. He was not at all afraid of death, because he was assured of the forgiveness of his sins. Once he said to his wife : "Death is almost a good friend to me!"[221]

Koen's last days are movingly described in a letter written by his wife two days after his death and in the tractate about his life:

> It has pleased the Almighty God to take my beloved husband, the father of my small children. After long and heavy suffering, he passed away on 10.2. at one o'clock in the afternoon.[222] ...
>
> On Invocative Sunday, Missionary Beuster from Ha Tschewasse was due to hold the service at Georgenholtz. As a result of an unexplained

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[220] *BMB*, Nr. 19 u. 20, 1883, p.362.
[221] *Ibid.*
[222] Letter: Brief vom 12.2.1883 aus Georgenholtz von Frau Koen. For Beuster's account of the events which follow and Koen's official obituary, see *BMB*, Nr. 9 u. 10, 1883, pp.139-140. Koen's life and death are also discussed in *BMB*, Nr. 19 u. 20, 1883, pp.358-364.

> uneasiness, he made the journey on Friday.[223] When Br. Beuster bent over him to greet him, he embraced him with both arms and called out Loudly: See, now he is here! Then tears came to his eyes. ... Br. Beuster was shocked to find him so emaciated and suffering. In the last days, his voice was only a quiet whisper. The terrible pain also sometimes made him terribly listless. When Br. Beuster asked him in the evening if he still had anything on his heart, he said: Yes, I still have one matter, there is an area where I really wanted to put an evangelist, there are some people there who want to learn.[224]

What he wished for was an out-station to be established at Paulus' homestead and for Franz (another convert) to live there as an evangelist. "So, until the end, he looked after the mission-work."[225] His wife wrote that:

> Once I had told Br. Beuster everything about this matter, he was satisfied. On Sunday morning, he often asked: Has my saviour not yet come? Oh, I still trust [in him]. He was often so [wracked by] suffering and so sick and had always recovered. ... He often said to me: Do not pray for healing, the Lord's will be done, and may the Lord soon show his mercy! Then he also wished, if it was not wrongful, for the end to come. ... Only one week before his death, when his throat had become a little better, he wanted to travel to Synod. ... He really wanted his sins to be forgiven and also did not fear death at all. He once expressed the wish: If only I could live and work for this year. Still, he was later completely satisfied [to accept] how the Lord wanted to end it.[226]

The end was very near:

> Early on Saturday, he wished for Holy Communion, to make ready for his last passing. Beuster had brought a medicine-bottle of wine along. So the sacrament could be celebrated.- Thereafter, he lay for some hours with half-opened eyes in slumber. Many times he sighed in deep pain, but his folded hands showed that he was looking for support in the right place in his last struggle. Once more, he asked to stand up from his chair, but he sank back. It moved towards the end. As the breath became shorter, his wife thought of a promise that she had given her husband earlier and said to him: "Jesus' blood and justice."[227]

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[223] G. Sauberzweig-Schmidt *Klaas Kuhn*, pp.28-29.

[224] Letter: Brief vom 12.2.1883 aus Georgenholtz von Frau Koen. See also *BMB*, Nr. 19 u. 20, 1883, p.362 and G. Sauberzweig-Schmidt *Klaas Kuhn*, p.29.

[225] G. Sauberzweig-Schmidt *Klaas Kuhn*, p.29.

[226] Letter: Brief vom 12.2.1883 aus Georgenholtz von Frau Koen.

[227] This is a verse from a hymn:
"Christi Blut und Gerechtigkeit
Das ist mein Schmuck und Ehrenkleid
Damit will ich vor Gott bestehn
Wenn ich zum Himmel werd eingehn"
Christ's blood and justice
These will be my jewellery and festive clothing

> Thereafter, those gathered there sang the last three verses of *„O Haupt voll Blut und Wunden"* ["Oh Head full of Blood and Wounds"]. The dying [man] attempted to say some of the words together with them.- Shortly before the end of the hymn, he took his last breath.[228]

Shortly after Koen breathed his last, at about 13h00, Beuster and Baumhöfner made a coffin for him from planks which he had already put aside for this purpose. Earlier, when Baumhöfner had been making a coffin for a congregation member who had passed away, "Koen had said to him: 'Please leave two for me.'"[229] These proved to be insufficient and they had to chop up a door as well. The selection of planks for his coffin was not the only thing that Koen had done to prepare for his death: "He had prepared most things for his death. In his last days, he had put the station books [records] and accounts into the best order. Even in this, he was diligent."[230]

Due to the summer heat, the funeral could not be delayed. It would take place on the very next day, Sunday 11 February 1882. Messengers were sent to Makwarela and to Schwellnus but there was not enough time for them to get there before the funeral. At Lutheran funerals, there is usually a church service, followed by a shorter service at the graveside – the actual burial. Beuster preached from John 11:3 in the church. After a pause, during which the congregation dug the grave, Beuster preached about the Revelation of John 7:13-14 at the graveside.[231] Not only was Koen's wife distraught and Beuster deeply saddened but reportedly

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With which I will stand before God
When I go to heaven.
Koen had told his wife earlier that "he would like to die while the verse: 'Christ's blood and justice' was being prayed, and if he could not speak any longer, she should pray it for him." (*BMB*, Nr. 19 u. 20, 1883, p.363.)

[228] G. Sauberzweig-Schmidt *Klaas Kuhn*, p.29. See also also *BMB*, Nr. 19 u. 20, 1883, pp.362-363. The well-known Passion-tide hymn *„O Haupt voll Blut und Wunden"* was composed by Paul Gerhardt. He preached through his hymns, which usually have many verses. This one has ten verses. They only read the last three verses, which deal with death and us leaving this earth. It is Hymn 54 in the Venda Hymnal (*Nyimbo dza VhaTendi*) – *"Naa vho U ita hani?"*

[229] *BMB*, Nr. 19 u. 20, 1883, p.364 (quotation) and G. Sauberzweig-Schmidt *Klaas Kuhn*, p.29.

[230] G. Sauberzweig-Schmidt *Klaas Kuhn*, pp.29-30 (quotations, p.30). See also *BMB*, Nr. 19 u. 20, 1883, p.364.

[231] John 11 : 3 comes from the story of Lazarus whom Jesus called back from the dead – "The sisters sent to Jesus saying : Lord, the one whom you love is ill."
Revelation 7: 13-14 : "Then one of the elders said: 'Who are these, clothed in white robes and whence have they come?' I said to him: 'Sir, you know.' And he said to me: 'These are they who have come out of great tribulation: they have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.'"

"many of the Christians and heathens were weeping." As the body was conveyed to its final resting place, the funeral hymn "*Kha ri yeni!*" ("Let me Go") was sung:

> Let me go, let me go
> That I may see my
> Jesus
> My heart is filled with
> Longing
> To hold onto him in
> Eternity
> And to stand before
> His throne.[232]



16. Klaas Koen's Grave, Luvhimbi, Northern Province, South Africa[233]

Harking back to the parable of the talents about which he preached before leaving for South Africa, the tractate about Koen's life commented that:

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[232] Ergänzungen aus den Stationsakten: Koen, Klaas; *BMB*, Nr. 19 u. 20, 1883, p.364 and G. Sauberzweig-Schmidt *Klaas Kuhn*, p.30.

[233] Photograph by the author, 5 September 1997.

> So rests under a large wild fig tree the first missionary in his far-away land. The faithfulness, about which he first preached to the congregation of the Bartholomäuskirche, he had himself achieved. Although he was descended from the contemptible Hottentots, he worked more than many whose forebears were so-called Christians. It is certain that God's words: "You are a pure and faithful servant, you have been among the few who have been really faithful. I wish to place you above many. Go forth to the peace of your Lord" apply to him.[234]

In a similar vein, Beuster commented that:

> He is resting next to a fig tree on the Station Georgenholtz, the most northerly of all our stations – right next to the border of the Transvaal Republic. Amid the heathen darkness, he remains a good grain of wheat until the resurrection of the righteous.[235]

Against the background of its history, the dominant ideologies of those who determined mission policy, the officials and the raw material that it had to work with in its candidates for delegation and ordination, Koen was the both the ideal Christian and the ideal missionary that the Berlin Mission were attempting to produce. During the late nineteenth century, most of his colleagues in Vendaland certainly rose above Stech and Wessmann. The others, I would argue, either came close to matching or equalled the standards set by Koen for fortitude and zeal. Having focused on their background and training in Germany, the question remains as to how they viewed the landscape of the area that they were sent to in South Africa and how they depicted this, and its inhabitants, textually and iconographically.

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[234] G. Sauberzweig-Schmidt *Klaas Kuhn*, p.30. With her husband's death, Koen's widow first moved to Ha-Tshivhase with her two children. Here she taught the mission children. Later, on 9 December 1884, she would marry Missionary Jensen, who was training the evangelists at the Mphome seminary (*BMB*, Nr. 19 u. 20, 1883, p.364 & Nr. 5 u. 6, 1885, p.75 and G. Sauberzweig-Schmidt *Klaas Kuhn*, p.30).

[235] *BMB*, Nr. 9 u. 10, 1883, p.140.

CHAPTER 4

ENVIRONMENT AND LANDSCAPE

In exploring some of the ways that the missionaries experienced, and attempted to make sense of the land and its inhabitants, I begin with a discussion of the environment of the area which was known as Vendaland. This enables me to consider the landscape – how the missionaries experienced, reacted to and constructed meaning around key elements of the local environment.

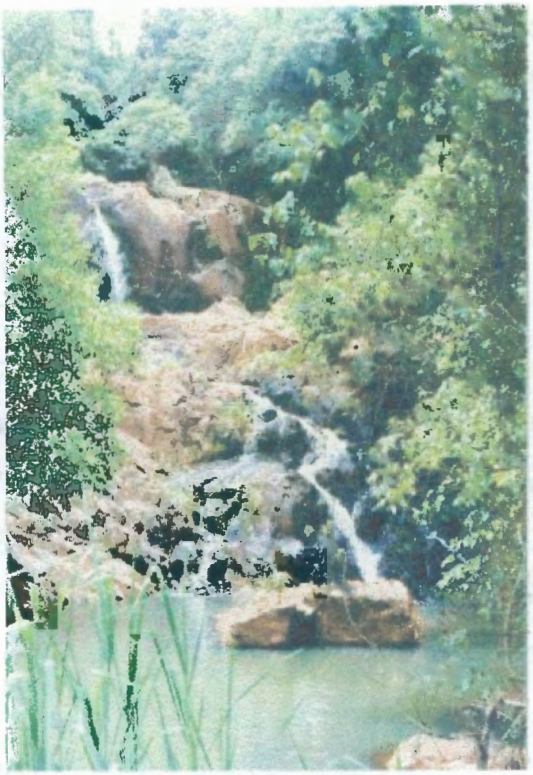
ECOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

The most evocative nineteenth century description of the environment of Vendaland that I have come across is that by Johannes Flygare in his booklet *De Zoutpansbergen en de Bawenda Natie* (1899).[1] Introducing his readers to the area, Flygare wrote that:

> Between the Limpopo River and her right-hand tributary, the Luvuvu [Luvuvhu], in the high north of the Republic lying from the S.W. to the N.E., lies a chain of mountains that rises to more than 4000 feet above the surrounding plains. These are the Zoutpansbergen, which take their name from the salt pan at the western end of the chain. In the east, this chain ends in a lower series of mountains and rolling plateaus, out of which rise here and there rise sheer and rocky peaks [which also serve] as native castles. Gradually the land gives way to lowveld and reaches

[1] J. Flygare *De Zoutpansbergen en de Bawenda Natie*. Johannes Flygare (born Johan Carl Axel Flygare) was born in Zululand on 30 October 1868, the son of the Swedish Missionary Carl Ludvig Flygare and Henrietta Wilhelmina Ida Löwenthal. Having received his primary education from his parents, for his post-primary education, between 1882 and 1888, he was first sent to Germany and then to Uppsala. He then studied engineering and surveying in Germany for three years. Following his return to South Africa, he was employed a surveyor and engineer in the ZAR by various railway companies. In true African Adventure style, while in the Northern areas working for the Pretoria-Pietersburg Railway Company (1894-1898), he hunted big game at the request of the Transvaal Museum in Pretoria. In 1898, he took part in the Boer-Mphephu War as a volunteer. Immediately after the campaign was over, he made a tour through Vendaland. Arising from these experiences, he prepared the booklet (which was dedicated to Kommandant-General Piet Joubert) to draw the attention of the Transvaal government and potential white settlers to the agricultural potential of Vendaland for white farmers. He also requested the government to lease him 10 000 morgen of land in the area for the cultivation of tobacco. Due to the outbreak of the South African War, these schemes came to nothing. On 11 December 1899, as a Captain in the volunteer corps of Scandinavians attached to the Boer forces, Flygare was killed in action at Magersfontein. See C. de Jongh "Flygare, Johannes", in C.J. Beyers (Editor in Chief) Dictionary of South African Biography, Volume IV, Published for the Human Sciences Research Council by Butterworth + Co (SA) (PTY) Ltd., Durban and Pretoria, 1981, pp.158-159.

the river banks with sudden steep precipices. The mountains are cut through by deep *vleis* which are enriched by their picturesque rock formations and exuberant vegetation. Through these *vleis* cut uncountable rivers and streams, whose sparkling waterfalls pour their water into the Limpopo or the Luvuvu.[2]



17. Idyllic Scene in Vendaland[3]
Reminiscent of the kinds of scene described by Flygare, this is the kind of image still used to portray the area in tourist material.

Most of the area lies at a height of 240 to 1 400 metres above sea level.[4] The two highest peaks in the area are Letjuma, at 1 748 metres, to the west of the Soutpansberg Mountains, and Hanglip, at 1 719 metres.[5] Temperatures and humidity are high in summer. The period from October to February (the rainy season) is the hottest. The dry season is from April to August. These are the

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[2] J. Flygare *De Zoutpansbergen en de Bawenda Natie*, p.5.
[3] Untitled illustration appearing in Anon. "Venda – Land of Legend" at http://www.adventures.co.za/ tales2.htm, accessed 17 November 2000.
[4] Benso *The Independent Venda*, p.13.
[5] N. Hahn *Tree list of the Soutpansberg*, Hatfield, Fantique Publishers under the auspices of the Western Soutpansberg Conservation Working Group, n.d., p.6.

coolest months. However, on the whole, winters are temperate to warm and frost free.[6]

As a part of the river catchment areas of the Limpopo and Letaba River systems, Vendaland is well-supplied with rivers. The most important of those in the Limpopo River System are the Nzhelele, the Mutale, the Luvuvhu (Levubu – a tributary of the Mutale) and the Nwanedi.[7] In Vendaland, the Letaba River System is represented by the Klein Letaba (a tributary of the Letaba) and a number of smaller rivers. Covering both systems, there are also numerous small perennial and seasonal streams [see Maps 1 and 9].[8]

The Zoutpansberg Mountains run through the more central and southern parts, dividing the area into three distinct geographical regions, namely the Limpopo Valley, the Zoutpansberg and the Pietersburg Highland.[9] About 40 kilometres to the west of the Zoutpansberg lies another mountain range, the Blouberg. Having an altitude of 2 020 metres above sea level, this belongs to the same geological system as the Zoutpansberg. They are nevertheless referred to as separate geological entities.[10]

Lying north of the Zoutpansberg, the Limpopo Valley forms part of the Limpopo-Sabie depression. The main part of this area is known as the Malogna Flats. Gently undulating, situated between 240 to 500 metres above sea level and, for more than a century, sparsely populated, the region has a hot, fairly dry climate. Annual rainfall generally ranges today from 300 to 600 mm, with the lower end of the scale being the more common. The mean maximum temperature for January is approximately 31°C. During July, the mean minimum temperature is approximately 8°C. Almost all the tributaries of the Limpopo flow through this region. While this allows irrigation farming in places, the region is generally only

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[6] Benso *The Independent Venda*, pp.13 & 15.
[7] *Ibid.* p.15 and N. Hahn *Tree list of the Soutpansberg*, p.7.
[8] Benso *The Independent Venda*, pp.15 & 16.
[9] *Ibid.* p.13.
[10] N. Hahn *Tree list of the Soutpansberg*, p.6.

suitable for extensive stock farming. The main vegetation types are Mopaneveld and savannah.[11]

The Zoutpansberg area lies at a higher elevation than the remainder of Vendaland, ranging between about 400 and 1 400 meters. Rainfall is extremely high, varying today between about 800 mm to 2 000 mm per annum. Most of the rivers in Vendaland originate in the mountains, are fed by this high rainfall and flow northwards to the Limpopo. North and north-eastward flowing tributaries of the Limpopo have carved deep valleys into these mountains. The deep, fertile soils of the wider valleys, coupled with the abundant water resources, make them ideal for irrigation farming. The slopes of the hills and mountains provide good grazing for goats and other livestock. A combination of these factors has made this the most densely populated part of Vendaland. A mean January maximum temperature of 28°C has been recorded. So too has a mean July minimum of 11°C. Temperatures in this region nevertheless vary greatly with elevation. The dominant vegetation is the Interior Tropical Forest type of north-eastern mountain sour veld, with the Tropical and Savannah types of fairly sour mixed Bushveld in the north and east.[12] Commenting on the vegetation and fauna of this, the heartland of Vendaland, Flygare became almost rhapsodic. Many of the themes which he raised were also engaged by the missionaries. Flygare wrote that:

> The land forms a picture of ever-changing beauty. Its greatest treasure lies in its luxuriant vegetation that reminds the traveller that he is here in the tropics. Vast forests of gigantic trees and impenetrable thickets cover the slopes of the mountains. Here and there rests a majestic baobab tree, more than 1000 foot in circumference.
>
> The low koppies are covered with innumerably many sorts of wild fruits, among which the wild plum, the sand apple, the maroela, the wild fig, the plantain, the wild grape and the matungulu are especially deserving of notice. Around these trees, there is a dense growth of underbrush, brambles and bracken, whereof the lastmentioned often reaches a height of 15 feet, and in between all of this dangle lianas, creeping-thorns [*kruipdoorn*] and weeds, so that one can only force a passage through by the liberal use of an axe and choppers [pangas]. And still your path is difficult and subject to many delays, but it is not worth worrying about this. There is so much to see and to wonder

[11] Benso *The Independent Venda*, pp.13-14.
[12] *Ibid.* p.14.

> about in this wilderness that every now and then one has to stand still and enjoy the spectacle. The wild bananas raised above the underbrush attract attention, their leaves sparkling and gleaming in the sunshine. One finds an innumerable variety of palms and ferns, of whose beauty and natural perfection one can only form a weak picture from the examples in our hot-houses. The quality of wood from the trees varies from the greatest softness and flexibility to the hardness and rigidity of iron. Where forest and underbrush have left an opening, the ground is covered by plants and flowers of widely-differing colours and forms which fill the air with their scent and balm, while in other places the tambotie-grass grows to such a height that it is above the head of a rider on horseback.
>
> A lot of birds with the most glorious plumage live in the forests and flutter from tree to tree and the woods resound with the sweet music of their cheeping and chirping, while the screaming and whistling apes complete the forest concert. Bright butterflies dance in the sunlight and settle now and then on one or other of the different kinds of orchids or *papillio* to breathe in their intoxicating perfume or to suck in sweet honey out of their chalices.
>
> In the night, the quiet of the bush is broken by the cry and roar of wild beasts, the chirrups of crickets, the croaking of frogs and, now and then, the melancholy '*Oehoe*' of the giant owl, while multitudinous fireflies fly through the darkness like so many sparks.[13]

Moving to the last region, only a portion of the Pietersburg highland falls into Vendaland. Lying east and south of the Zoutpansberg, this region has an elevation of 400 to 600 metres. There are pronounced extremes of temperature, with a mean January maximum of 27°C and a mean July minimum of 4°C. While this region shares many of the characteristics of the Zoutpansberg region, it has a much lower rainfall, ranging today from 400 to 1 000 mm. It is particularly suited to mixed farming. Both sub-tropical and citrus fruit do well, as do vegetables and maize. It is also good cattle country. In the higher-lying regions at the mountain foothills, the Interior Tropical Forest type of lower sour Bushveld gives way to the Tropical Forest and Savannah types as the dominant vegetation.[14]

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[13] J. Flygare *De Zoutpansbergen en de Bawenda Natie*, pp.5-6.
[14] Benso *The Independent Venda*, pp.14-15.

AESTHETICS OF ENVIRONMENT

Although some of their descriptions of Vendaland engage environmental issues such as these, there were much more complex influences at work on the perceptions of the area held by the Berlin Missionaries. Landscapes are exceptionally complex and powerful creations. On the one hand, they are an aesthetic product that is culturally created and defined. On the other, they are created, and re-created, by people through their experience of, and interaction with, the world around them.

In tracing the etymology of the term, Barbara Bender has noted that, in its early Anglo-Saxon usage, the term landscape corresponded closely to the German word *Lanschaft* - "a patch of cultivated ground, something small-scale that corresponded to a peasant's perception, a mere fragment of a feudal estate, an inset in a Breugel landscape." By the eleventh-century, this usage had largely fallen away. Instead, it was replaced by words such as *territoire*, *pays* and *domain* - words that engaged the larger political spaces dominated by those with power. It subsequently re-emerged in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, when it came to be tightly bound "to a particular 'way of seeing', a particular experience, whether in pictures, extolling nature, or landscaping an estate."[15] As she, and others such as Küchler, Thomas and Mitchell have pointed out, during the nineteenth century, and under the influence of capitalist development, this developed into the western conception of landscape as involving only the surface of the land, in other words, landscape as an inscribed surface from which one is able to read off social and cultural relations. In this "way of seeing, ... we are the point from which the seeing occurs. It is thus an ego-centred landscape, a perspectival landscape, a landscape of views and vistas." The "observer is always outside and above the action." In other parts of the world (as in pre-modern Europe), what lay above or below the surface was often perceived as being of equal, or even of more, importance. The visual was frequently also not the most

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[15] B. Bender "Introduction: Landscape- Meaning and Action", in B. Bender (ed.) *Landscape: Politics and Perspectives*, Oxford, Berg, 1993, p.2, footnote 3. See also J.B. Jackson *Discovering the Vernacular*, New Haven, Yale University Press, 1985 and K. Olwig "Sexual Cosmology: Nation and Landscape at the Conceptual Interstices of Nature and Culture; or What does Landscape really Mean?", in B. Bender (ed.) *Landscape: Politics and Perspectives*,

significant aspect, and the conception of the land was often also not ego-centred. Particularly in a colonial setting, westerners have been so concerned with breaking up the inscribed landscape that they have failed to recognise the "other" landscape.[16]

Against this background, it is clear that landscape has to be contextualised. The way that people see and engage with their world depends upon the specific time, place and historical conditions in which they are operating. Similarly, their age, gender, class, caste, social and economic situation will also play a significant role. These forces may operate at a conscious, a partly-conscious or an unconscious level. Depending on changing situations, they may also be reformulated over time and place. In the words of Bender, "Each individual holds many landscapes in tension" and "Landscapes are ... polysemic, and not so much artefact as in a process of construction and reconstruction."[17] Thus, far from being inert, landscapes are re-worked, appropriated and contested.

Patrick Harries has analysed the kinds of psychological displacement occasioned by contact with unfamiliar landscapes (and their peoples) and the kind of coping strategies which may be adopted. In discussing various influences on the field of vision of the anthropologist and Swiss Mission Society missionary Henri-Alexandre Junod, he argued that, on their first arrival in Africa, Junod and his wife:

> were cut off from the institutions, conventions and illusions that provide everyday life with sense and security and Henri-Alexandre

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pp.307-343.

[16] B. Bender "Introduction", pp.1, 9 & 11 (quotations pp.1 & 9); S. Kügler "Landscape as Memory: The Mapping of process and its Representation in a Melanesian Society", in B. Bender (ed.) *Landscape: Politics and Perspectives*, pp.85-106 (see especially pp.85-86); J. Thomas "The Politics of Vision and the Archaeologies of Landscape", in B. Bender (ed.) *Landscape: Politics and Perspectives*, pp.19-48 and T. Mitchell "The world as exhibition", in *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, 31, 1989, pp.217-236. See also G. Finley *Landscapes of Memory: Turner as Illustrator to Scott*, Berkeley, University of California Press, 1980; H. Morphy (a) "From dull to brilliant: the aesthetics of spiritual power among the Yolngu", in *Man* (N.S.), 24 (1), 1989, pp.21-41; (b) *Ancestral Connections: Art and an Aboriginal System of Knowledge*, Chicago, Chicago University Press. 1991 & (c) "Colonialism, History and the Construction of Place: The Politics of Landscape in Northern Australia", in B. Bender (ed.) *Landscape: Politics and Perspectives*, pp.205-243; N. Munn *Walbiri Iconography*, Ithaca, Cornell University Press, 1973 and P. Sutton *Dreamings: the Art of Aboriginal Australia*, Asia Society Galleries, New York, George Braziller, 1988.

[17] B. Bender "Introduction", pp.2-3.

> initially drew on a number of familiar themes to domesticate the chaos and confusion of Africa. Junod was not a cultural cypher or blank slate upon which the reality of Africa would be inscribed. Nor was he, to overextend the use of metaphor, a mirror that would present a true reflection of Africa. Junod's vision of Africa was the product of the "dominant conventions and suppositions" (Q. Skinner) of his age through which he interpreted what he saw and experienced, and a "prior textutalisation" which allowed him to organize his writing in such a way that, ultimately, he could assert a control over the unknown.[18]

The manner in which this kind of process impacted on conceptions of the environment has been analysed by Rod Giblett of the Curtin Institute of Technology. For Giblett:

> colonization is as much about the colonization of "nature" or "the natural environment" as it is about the colonization of the "natives" or indigenes. Colonization of nature gives rise, in turn, to what Alfred Crosby calls "ecological imperialism," or what could simply be called nature as empire.[19]

This premise rests on the argument of Franz Fanon, the pioneer theorist of decolonisation, that:

> hostile nature, obstinate and fundamentally rebellious, is in fact represented in the colonies by the bush, by mosquitoes [from swamps], natives and fever [from mosquito bites], and colonization is a success when all this indocile nature has finally been tamed. Railways across the bush, the draining of swamps and a native population which is non-existent politically and economically are in fact one and the same thing.[20]

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[18] P.A.L. Harries "European Ideas, African Identities: H.A. Junod and the Notion of Tribe", paper presented as a public lecture in the Senate Chamber of the University of Venda, Thohoyandou, 14 October 1993, pp.2-3. Cf. P. Harries "Through the Eyes of the Beholder:", p.2. See also F. Jameson *The Political Unconscious: Narratives as a Socially Symbolic Art*, Ithaca, Cornell University Press, 1975, p.129 ("prior textualisation") and Q. Skinner "Hermeneutics and the role of history", in *New Literary History*, Vol. 7, No. 1, 1975, pp.216. Junod's first posting in Africa was at Rikatla, a small mission station some 25 kilometres north of Lourenço Marques, in the latter part of 1889.

[19] Rod Giblett "Cities and Swamp Settling: decolonizing wetlands", in Michèle Drouart (ed.) *Postcolonial Fictions*, SPAN: Journal of the South Pacific Association for Commonwealth Literature and Language Studies Number 36 (1993), electronic edition at http://humpc61.murdoc.edu.au/cntinuum/ltserv/SPAN/36/giblett.html, p.1, accessed 10 February 1999. See also A. Crosby, *Ecological Imperialism: The Biological Expansion of Europe 900-1900*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986.

[20] F. Fanon *The Wretched of the Earth*, translated by Constance Farrington, Harmondsworth, Penguin, 1967, p.201, quoted in Rod Giblett "Cities and Swamp Settling", p.1.

Arising from this, for Giblett:

> The map itself is a powerful instrument of colonization. Indeed, Michel de Certeau goes as far as to argue that "the map colonizes space."[21] Or put more simply and bluntly in the words of the title of a course at Deakin University, "maps are territories."[22] Maps are territories and maps colonize space because, in Paul Carter's words, the map is "an instrument for performing geometrical divisions ... [which] reconciles all viewpoints into one unifying cause-and-effect perspective."[23] The map records in the scalar grid of longitude and latitude and accords the map reader a God-like position to see and know everything simultaneously unlike perspective which centres everything on an eye/I. Everything is laid open to the gaze, every place becomes space, and every time, eternal.[24]

It is with issues and thought processes such as these, and what Denis Cosgrove calls the "archetypal landscapes of wilderness, garden and city" that this chapter is concerned.[25]

THE LANDSCAPE OF VENDALAND

Obviously, the Berlin Missionaries physically established and inscribed themselves on the land by opening mission stations and out-stations. Once they established a station in an area, the missionaries constructed a road or wagon track linking it to the main transport routes and to the other mission stations in Vendaland. While, in practice, they continued to be responsible for the maintenance of these roads, some of them even became recognised as

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[21] M. de Certeau *The Practice of Everyday Life*, translated by Stephen F. Rendall, Berkeley, University of California Press, 1984, p.121, quoted in Rod Giblett "Cities and Swamp Settling", p.1. See also J.L. Comaroff and J. Comaroff *Of Revelation and Revolution*, Volume One, pp.89-90 & 95 and M.L. Pratt *Imperial Eyes*, pp.29-30.

[22] D. Turnbull *Maps are Territories, Science is an Atlas: A Portfolio of Exhibits*, HUS 203/204 Nature and Human Nature, Geelong, Deakin University Press, 1989, quoted in Rod Giblett "Cities and Swamp Settling", p.2.

[23] P. Carter *The Road to Botany Bay: An Essay in Spatial History*, London, Faber, 1987, p.204, quoted in Rod Giblett "Cities and Swamp Settling", p.2.

[24] Rod Giblett "Cities and Swamp Settling", pp.1-2. See also F. Jameson, "Postmodernism, or The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism" in *New Left Review*, 146 (1984), pp.89 & 90, quoted in R. Giblett. Jameson refers to "the meaningless materiality of the body and nature" on p.59.

[25] D. Cosgrove "Landscapes and Myths, Gods and Humans", in B. Bender (ed.) *Landscape: Politics and Perspectives*, pp.281-305, see especially p.282.

government roads.[26] This was obviously a fairly direct method of marking their presence on the environment. For example, In commenting on events at Ha-Tshivhase (recorded as Ha Shewasse) during the course of the year 1877, the *Missions-Berichte* noted that:

> The Commission of Englishmen who came to subject Tshivhase to British rule, were amazed to find such a well-constructed road in the midst of such an advanced wilderness. The gentlemen promised to bring it to the attention of the Queen [Victoria] that the missionaries are the pioneers of culture here, in the far North. They declared the road to be a government road; a road which would be maintained by the government. Admittedly, for the time being, this declaration will most probably mean nothing else than that the missionary will continue to maintain the road with his own effort and at his own costs, and that the government has the use of it, should it be necessary to do so.[27]

In addition to this, mapping the area, textual descriptions and illustrative material, including etchings and photographs, served as tools employed by the missionaries to familiarise themselves with and make sense of their surroundings. They were also called into service to justify their presence in the area for themselves, their colleagues and superiors, and the wider circle of friends of, and potential contributors to, the mission. I examine each of these in turn.

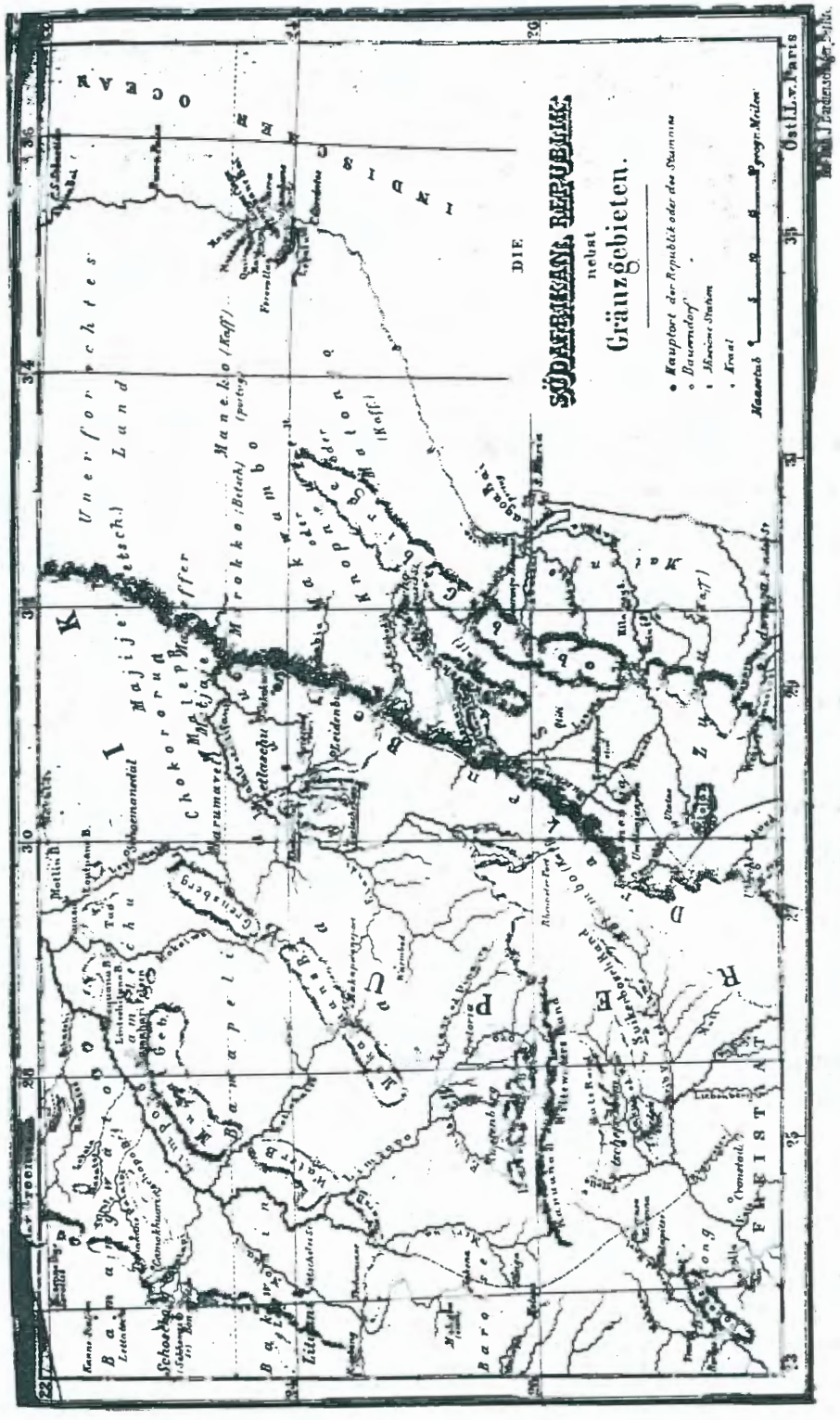
In a map of the South African Republic and its surrounding border areas published by the Berlin Mission Society in 1862, before they moved into the area, Schoemansdal and the Zoutpansberg are marked, as is the Lephulala (Dorps) River [see Map 5]. However, the amount of blank space surrounding these features strongly evokes feelings of unexplored terrain, a feeling which is strengthened by the area marked as "Impenetrable [Unexplored] Terrain" to the East of the areas of Boer settlement. Moreover, while a number of the local groups such as the "Makwamba [Magwamba] or Knopneuzen" [Tsonga-Shangaan] have their territories marked, only the Boers of Schoemansdal are visible in Vendaland.

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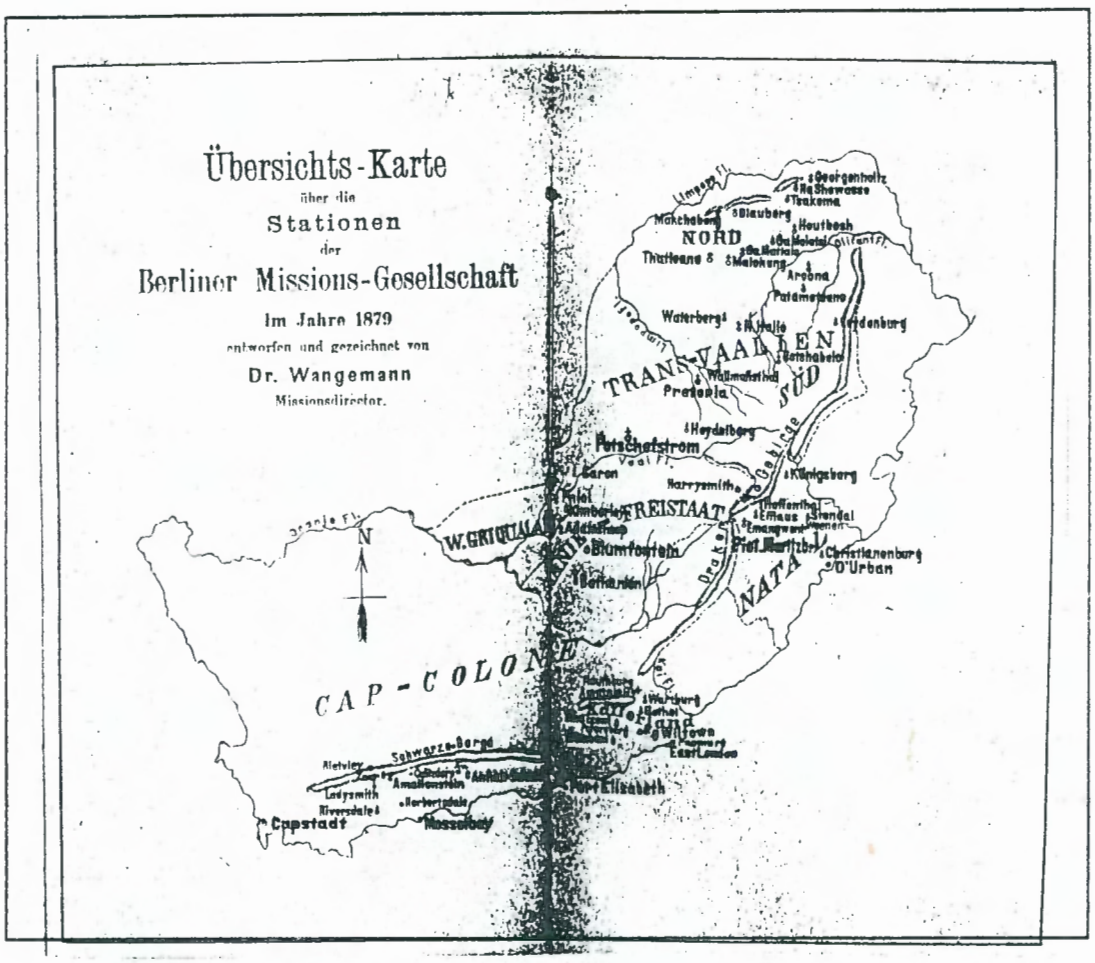
[26] *BMB*, Nr, 17 u. 18, 1875, pp.369 & 372; Nr. 23 u. 24, 1876, p.391; Nr. 21 u. 22, 1878, p.483; Nr. 23 u. 24, 1879, pp.440-441; Nr. 17 u. 18, 1880, pp.346-347; Nr. 21 u. 22, 1881, p.356 and Nr. 23 u. 24, 1888, p.533.

[27] *BMB*, Nr. 21 u. 22, 1878, p.483.

MAP 5: "South African Republic and Surrounding Border Areas"
[*BMB*, No. 10 u 11, 1862, n.p. (inside back cover).]


DIE
SÜDAFRIKANISCHE REPUBLIK
nebst
Gränzgebieten.
Hauptort der Republik oder des Stammes
Bauernstaat
Missions-Station
Kraal
Maassstab
geogr. Meilen
Ost L. v. Paris
OCEAN
Limpopo
Marumaveti
Majiji
Unerforschtes Land
Mankoboland
Mankoboberge
Mankoboquellen
Mankoboebene
Mankoboquellen
Mankoboebene
Mankoboberge
Mankoboquellen
Mankoboebene
Mankoboberge
Mankoboquellen
Mankoboebene
Mankoboberge

MAP 6: "Stations of the Berlin Mission Society in South Africa in 1879"
[*BMB*, Nr. 11 u 12, 1880 [Jahresbericht 1879], pp.200-201]

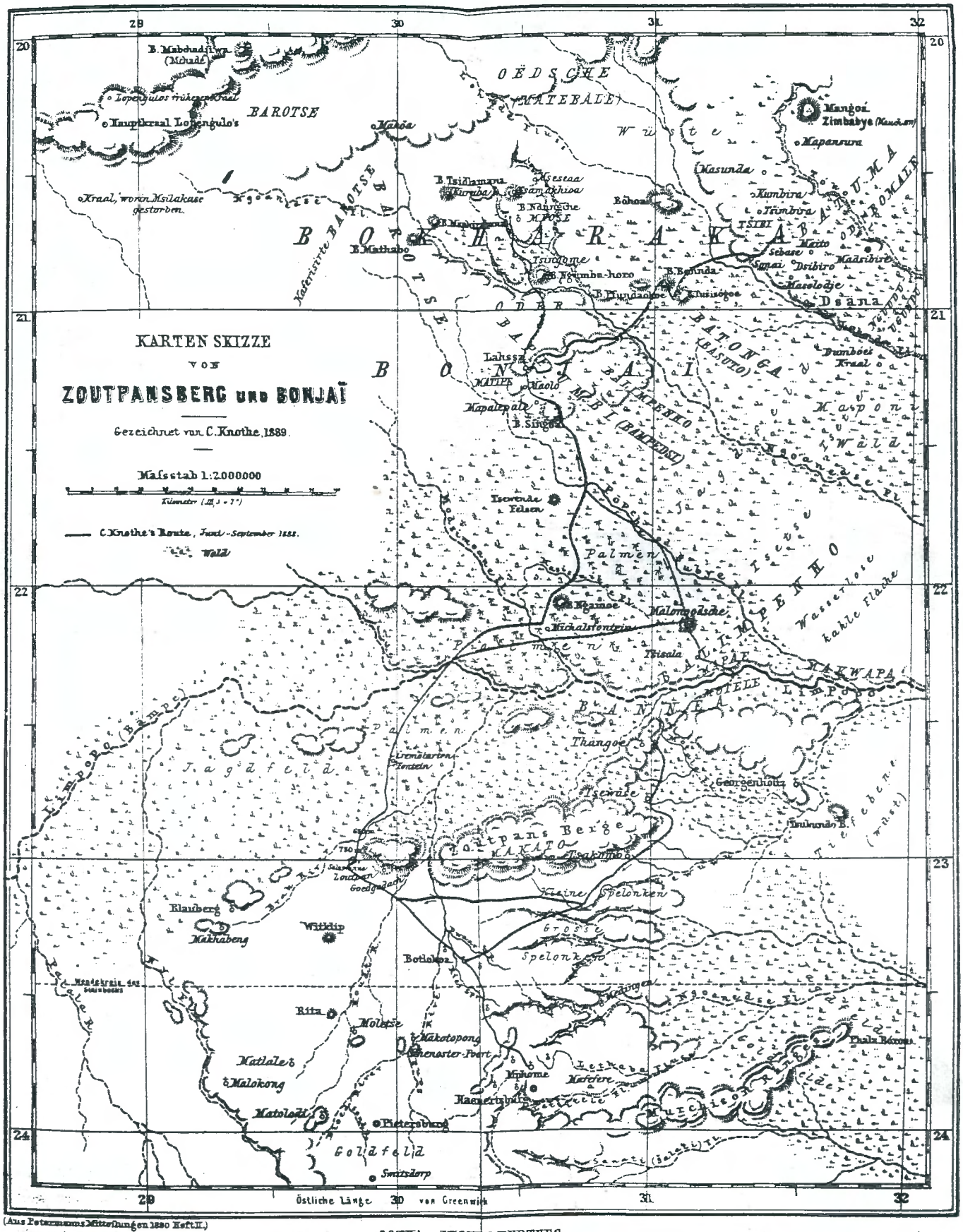


While they did not have as much detail, maps of the Berlin Mission Stations in South Africa published by the society from the late 1870s at least showed the position of the stations in Vendaland [see Map 6].

By 1890, the Berlin Missionaries were producing maps which showed the positioning of the major rulers in Vendaland and had filled in some of the surrounding detail [see Map 7] Very shortly thereafter, they were producing maps which not only showed some of the subordinate rulers as well but also filled in a considerable amount of local detail. [see Map 8] These maps considerably fleshed out the limited detail of the maps of the Berlin Mission Stations in South Africa.

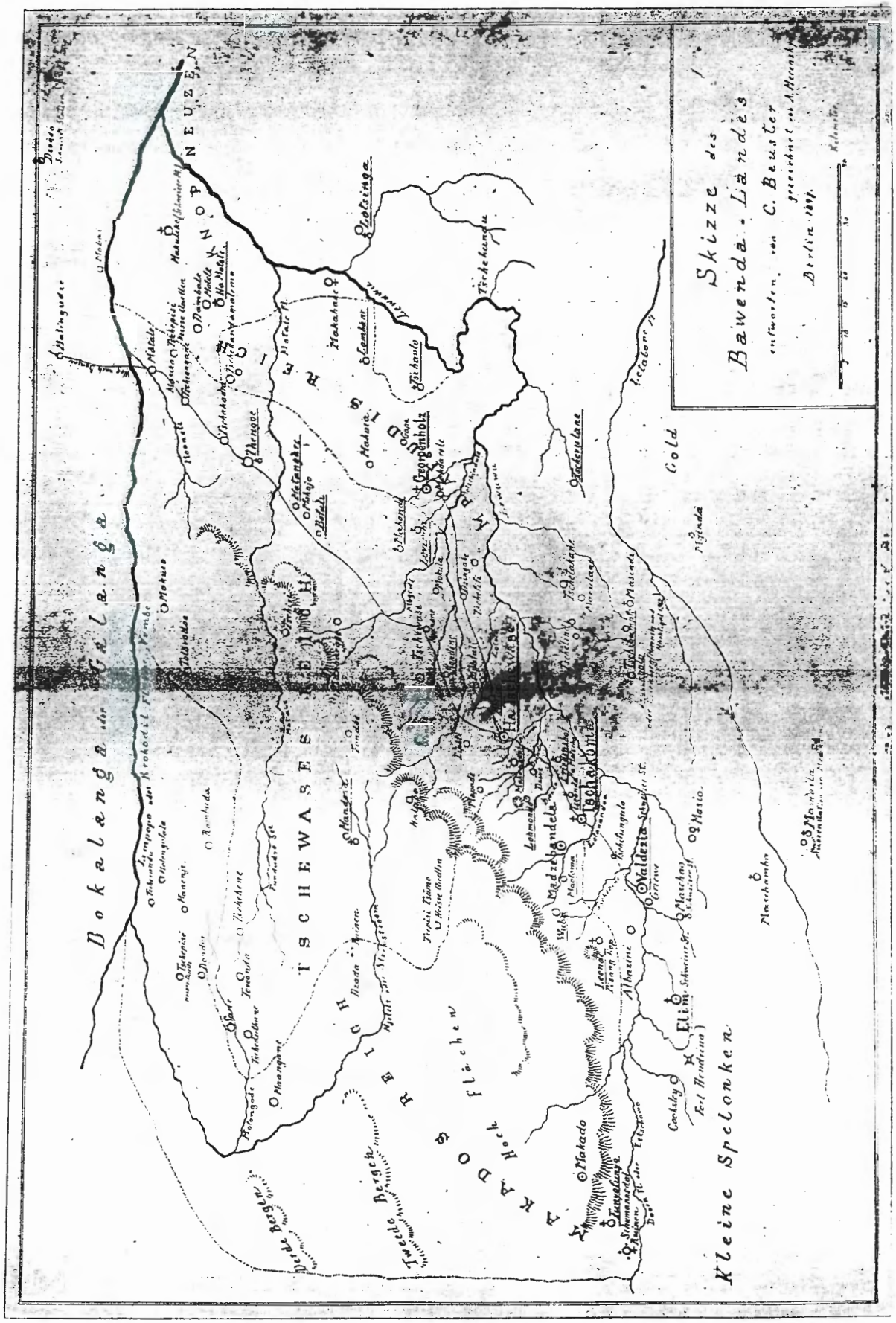
Map 7: "Zoutpansberg and Bonjay"

[*BMB.* Nr. 11 u 12, 1890 [Jahresbericht 1889], pp.220-221.]



(Aus Petermanns Mitteilungen 1890 Heft II.)

MAP 8: Nineteenth Century Vendaland
[W. Gründler *Geschichte der Bawenda-Mission in Nord-Transvaal*, n.p. (back inside cover).]



However, at a deeper level, maps – and even writing - could not completely domesticate the African environment for the missionaries.

The relationship between the Berlin Missionaries, the landscape of Vendaland and the Vhavenda was an extremely complex one. Obviously, it varied over time and between individuals. Even with individuals, it varied both over time and with influences such as mood, the particular circumstance prevailing at any given time, and similar intangibles which are extremely difficult, sometimes impossible, to recapture over a hundred years later. Even more so than with other facets of historical inquiry, there are very few "blacks" and "whites", and even the shades of grey morph and change. However, I believe that it is possible to identify and deconstruct certain tendencies, even if definite trends are too chimerical to permit reconstruction.

In extremely broad outline, what remained constant in missionary thinking and writing in Vendaland during the late nineteenth century was a sense of the land and its people as being inextricably bound. Whether the particular interpretation being placed on this relationship was predominantly positive, negative, or – as was frequently the case – contained mixed elements of both of these absolutes, the "heathen Bawenda [Vhavenda]", as the missionaries called them, were portrayed as blending into, or being created by, the landscape which nurtured, succoured and concealed them.

At one end of the scale, the missionaries celebrated the natural beauty of Vendaland and praised its fecundity and its ability to support and feed its inhabitants. In attempting to create meaning, and a sense of belonging, by relating the strange to the familiar, both for their authors and for their intended audiences, these accounts tended to draw favourable comparisons with scenic spots and resorts in Germany and other parts of Europe. They also compared conditions in Vendaland with those at other pre-existing Berlin Mission stations and areas of operation in South Africa. These accounts tend to focus on light, open vistas, running water, the breaking of the forest by rolling fields and meadows and the successful mastery of the challenges posed by the environment to the missionaries. While the forests are present here, and while their darkness and

hidden dangers are mentioned, the emphasis is on the biodiversity of shrubs, creepers and flowers within them, on their beauty rather than their menacing nature. In general, the earliest missionary descriptions of the area fell into this category.

At the other end of the scale, well-versed as they were in Biblical semiotics, and viewing the landscape through highly-German eyes, the missionaries saw the physical environment of Vendaland with its mountain ranges, rivers and forests as being threatening and as conspiring with the local inhabitants to hinder their work in the region. These accounts tend to focus on "darkness", concealment, impenetrability, dangers, fears, swamps or marshes and other manifestations of wild landscape, wild animals and "wild" people. "Fever" (malaria) recurs as a deadly enemy and the challenges of the environment are seen more as stumbling-blocks to be gradually overcome, than as mere irritations to be swept aside.

As the missionaries began to establish themselves in Vendaland, the challenges posed by the environment (and its inhabitants) began to assume greater importance in their perceptions. As it dawned on them that their whole task would be much more difficult than they had envisaged, the environment became more of a foe to be overcome than a pleasing backdrop against which the missionaries operated. This does not mean that they became completely blind to its beauties. In missionary thinking, the "pleasant", friendly and peaceful exterior (or persona) of the inhabitants of Vendaland often masked a far "darker" hidden "heart". Similarly, for them, the external beauty of the landscape co-existed with, and tended to mask, a far more sinister core. Moreover, due to the prevalence of malaria, this dark core could, and often did, prove to be fatal. For me, it is this which provides the key to understanding the shift in the way that the missionaries constructed, and related to, the landscape of Vendaland. I illustrate this first by looking at early textual accounts and how they reveal the changing relationship between the missionaries and the environment. This then leads into a discussion of the core elements of their experience of the landscape.

Thus, the earliest descriptions of the landscape of Vendaland by Berlin missionaries, prior to their having established themselves there, focused on

describing the area both for themselves and for their readers. This was done in a way which enabled them to situate themselves on the land and plan for the future. Starting from known landmarks, they went on to describe the unknown. The beauty concealed difficulties, hardships and dangers. However, due to the excitement of entering and exploring what for them was new terrain, and given their hopes for a bright future, no obstacle seemed too great to be overcome and the great beauty of the landscape lay exposed to the eye of the beholder (and the reader).

When Missionaries Grützner, Beyer and Beuster visited Makhado on 18 May 1871, they left their campsite at the ruins of Schoemansdal. "We saddled our horses and rode for about an hour eastwards", wrote Grützner:

> Then we climbed up the mountains for a further 1½ hours, till we finally reached the kraal of the chief near the top of the mountain. The village lies under the last and highest cliffs of the mountain and truly presents a grandiose view when one looks up at the 200 to 300 feet high bare rock-face with only the few crevices covered in green. Except for the sometimes very steep road, it is quite pleasant to undertake such climbing expeditions like today.[28]

The report continued by comparing the (for their colleagues and readers) unknown landscape and resources of Vendaland to that of the Blouberg area. Beyer was very familiar with this area as he was stationed there. It was also well-known to the other missionaries and wider circle of friends of the mission from the frequent reports emanating from the station of Blauberg, established in 1868:

> Like in the Blouberg, as soon as one has climbed to a certain height up the mountain, a different vegetation greets the wanderer and here and there fresh mountain streams bubble forth. Here it is much more the case. It is clearly visible that the further east one goes along the Blouberg-Soutpansberg mountain-chain, the more springs and water there are - the fairly significant Dorpsrivier originates from several branches which flow from the mountain we climbed today - and the richer the rain which descends from heaven. Here at Makchato [Makhado], for example, there is so much rain that the people cannot plant any sorghum [*Kafferkorn*]. They just plant maize which, although the gardens are mostly on steep mountain slopes, grows very well. A further four to five hours on horse-back, east of the so-called

[28] *BMB*, Nr. 9 u. 10, 1872, p.159. This visit is also discussed on p.97.

> Spelonken, at Sewasse,[29] there is so much water that, during the rainy season, great surfaces of water, similar to lakes, restrict communication almost totally. Brother Beyer, who in October last year undertook an investigative journey to Sewasse [Tshivhase], had to give up his attempt due to the large amount of deep water.[30]

From here, the party continued to Makhado's capital:

> It was just after midday when we arrived at Makchato's [Makhado's]. In front of the actual kraal [village], there are quite a number of big rocks, which are connected to one another by a six to nine-feet wall, so forming a reasonable fortress for these conditions. From the other side, the already-mentioned high rock-face protects the village. These make it difficult to capture the village. In the background, behind the houses, the beautiful dense forest of mostly yellow-wood trees rests easy on the eyes.[31]

Commenting on the March 1872 visits by Beyer and Baumbach to Makhado and Tshivhase, the *Missions-Berichte* reported that:

> Already on the first day of the trip, on 11 March, the Brothers entered the kingdom of the wild animals; the many spoors, as well as a few quaggas [zebra?] who harmlessly grazed close by, were clear proof of this. On the second day, the shortage of water caused them great trouble: then suddenly they reached a wall of Marula trees (a type of wild nut tree) whose fruit, which have a pleasant wine-like juice, lay scattered on the ground. On the third day, they reached the western ranges of the Soutpansberg and found enough water there. On the fourth day, shortly before sun-set, they reached the ruins of the town, Schoemansdal. In the gardens they still found quinces and apples.[32]

Because of the visit of the previous year, the area from Schoemansdal into Makhado's kingdom was now viewed as familiar territory and was not described in any great depth. It was merely reported that, on their arrival in "the area where the great number of people of Makchato [Makhado] lived ... the mountains prevented them from riding on and the journey had to be continued on foot."

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[29] Tshivhase's area.

[30] *BMB*, Nr. 9 u. 10, 1872, p.159. For earlier reports from Blauberg, see, for example, *BMB*, Nr. 7, 1869, pp.100-107; Nr. 2, 1870, p.23; Nr. 9, 1870, pp.136-138; Nr. 10, 1870, pp.147-155; Nr. 11, 1870, pp.163-167; Nr. 12 u. 13, 1870 [Jahresbericht 1869], pp.214-215 & Nr. 11 u. 12, 1871 [Jahresbericht 1870], pp.183-184.

[31] *BMB*, Nr. 9 u. 10, 1872, p.160.

[32] *BMB*, Nr. 7 u. 8, 1873, p.133. These visits and Makhado's supplying them with the Christian guide Samuel are also discussed on pp.97 and 132-134.

However, on their departure from Makhado's capital, with Samuel as their guide, the group were again entering areas unexplored by Berlin Missionaries. Arising from this, the landscape and its people were described in much greater detail. In reporting on this for his superiors, his colleagues and the friends of the mission, Beyer clearly attempted to present his companions' experiences in a manner which, while "factual", also captured some of the beauty of the countryside. He also clearly set out to illustrate the ways in which (in his view and that of his colleagues) the landscape and its inhabitants flowed seamlessly into each other:

> At about eight o'clock, the small caravan, consisting of six men and two pack-horses which would carry our baggage and provisions, was ready for the journey and we set out in God's name. Our fellow-travellers were in a happy mood and eager to get going as all of us, except our guide, were going into an unknown land with strange people who had strange customs. But our hearts were lifted as the beauty of the mountainous nature unfolded before our eyes; the ravines densely forested at places, and the evergreen cover of lush grasses, mixed with thousands of different kinds of beautiful flowers. The low-lying sun cast a magnificent light on the round, pointed, jagged mountains and the millions of dew drops sparkled in the rays like diamonds. That reminded us of the words of the Psalmist: "Lord, how great are Thy works and how plentiful; You have arranged them all wisely and the earth is full of Your goodness." But oh, in these beautiful mountains God is only praised by His non-thinking creation and not by His human children; instead of prayers and songs of praise and thanks, the wild frenzy of the daily-drunken heathen mix with the lovely songs of the birds; the raw songs of their dances and initiation schools resound in the bright moonlit night.
>
> Soaked in sweat, we reached the road which went past the steep road which led up to the chief's village. Samuel, our guide, had to fetch something in the chief's village; in the meantime we rested and marvelled at the beautiful view into the distance. In the south-west lay the flat-topped mountain of Makchabeng [Makgabêng]; in the south the pointed mountains of Moletsche [Moletshe] stuck out of the plain - this is where Missionary Hofmyer had previously lived; behind that, slightly to the left of the granite-black mountains of Matlale [Matlala] arose and even further back were the mountains of Makapanspoort. In the south-west [sic.] were the mountains of Maune, Metle [Mutle] and Sekukuni [Sekhukhune]. One even had a beautiful view of the old town. In the villages everywhere, people were busy grinding [stamping] maize and cooking; the shepherds blew their horns, which the animals in the kraals seemed to understand well, as the cattle, sheep and goats all lowed and bleated together. Yes, if it were not for the bee-hive-shaped houses and the almost naked Black people before us, one could have thought one was in a mountain village in the

Sudeten Mountains or Harz Mountains.[33]

The account erroneously placed the mountains of Mutle and Sekhukhune in the south-west. Viewing from Hanglip (the *khosi*'s village), they actually lie in the south-east. The mountains are named from the centre eastwards - Mutle's area was east of Chuniespoort river but west of the Olifants river; Sekhukhune's area was south and east of the Olifants river. In addition, locally, maize was (and is still) usually stamped in a stamping block, rather than ground. The description of the houses as "bee-hive-shaped" was also fanciful, perhaps being designed to resonate with what German readers already knew about Zulu architectural patterns. Archaeological remains in the area, and illustrations and descriptions which will follow, demonstrate that houses were round with cone-shaped roofs.

Journeying on into areas where no Berlin missionary had been before, the landscape and its inhabitants blended together harmoniously in the vision of their observers. As with the comparisons with the Sudenten and Hartz Mountians in Germany, in an effort to ground himself in the landscape, and interpret it for the intended readers of his report, Beyer looked for similarities in birdsong between African and German birds. His description of meadows and cultivated lands is also extremely evocative of the German countryside:

> Our path led us into a beautiful dark forest which stretched along the steep rock cliffs; a charming setting, intoxicating to both the eye and the heart. The silence and coolness of the forest, the smell of the forest flowers; the mighty, tall, thin and stunted trees whose roots make the pathway uneven, the sun-rays piercing the forest darkness, the magnificent songs of the red, blue, green and yellow birds, of which some sang like the German quail [*Wachtel*]; yes, even the shrieks of the monkeys [baboons][34] on the cliffs - all of these move the heart to praise God.
>
> Then we reached the top of the mountain with a view over gorges stretching out to the left and the right and beautiful meadows and cultivated fields; as far as the eye could see, village upon village, field

[33] *BMB*, Nr. 7 u. 8, 1874, pp.127-128.

[34] Monkeys are not usually found on rocks, but in trees. Baboons are usually on the rocks. As the word "*Affe*" is used, I translated it as monkey. A baboon in German is a "*Pavian*". I think that Beyer got the two confused here.

upon field stretched out along the edges of the gorges.[35]

As explained by Samuel and other local people whom the travellers met on their journey, the mountain range stretched "out for a journey of about five days on foot." To the north, one could "see to way beyond the Limpopo". According to the local people, every mountain or range which could be seen from the Zoutpansberg was inhabited.[36] One presumes that Beyer either misunderstood his informants or recorded his own preconceptions, arising from the fact that the Berlin Mission Society (and he himself) were already working among the Basotho, when he noted that:

> All the tribes in the north belong to the big notation of the Bakchalaka [Karanga], pure Basutho [Basotho]. According to the description given by the Basutho, this tribe is indisputably the biggest of them all. Oh, how much more work there is in Africa; because all these people in the north of Blauberg and the Soutpansberg have not yet heard anything of the Gospels.[37]

As they continued in the direction of Tshivhase's country, "The path became more mountainous and uneven". The local people that they met seem to have thought that they were traders "as only traders occasionally come into these mountains." Crossing "a beautiful big river, the border between Makchato and Sebase's [Makhado and Tshivhase's] kingdoms", that night they "camped under Marula trees where thousands of fruit lay on the ground."[38] In Beyer's description:

> The closer we came to our destination, the more lush the vegetation became; we saw bananas with leaves measuring over 12 feet; giant palm-like ferns, over 15 feet high.[39] At places we had to force our way through grass and bush which grew as high as a rider, but which was

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[35] *BMB*, Nr. 7 u. 8, 1874, p.128. For Wangemann's version, see *BMB*, Nr. 7 u. 8, 1873, pp.133-134. For discussion of incorporating alien landscapes by finding (or creating) links between them and the familiar European landscape, see B.V. Street *The savage in literature*, p.26.

[36] *BMB*, Nr. 7 u. 8, 1874, p.129.

[37] *Ibid.* For Wangemann's version, see *BMB*, Nr. 7 u. 8, 1873, p.134.

[38] *BMB*, Nr. 7 u. 8, 1874, p.129. At that time, the Tshivhase clan still laid claim to Ha-Vhulaudzi (when Raluswielo Tshivhase had left the Nzhelele Valley, he had left his *Makhadzi* behind to look after the royal cattle). Vuwa, to the south, and the Nzhelele valley north of Ha-Vhulaudzi, belonged to Makhado's kingdom. So, in today's geographical terms, this must have been the river in the valley at Ha-Vhulaudzi, as one travels down the Witvlag road – from his description, this must have been a bigger and more impressive river in those days!

[39] Note etching of Missionary Schwellnus (from a later date) on p.270.

> also the favourite haunt of wild pigs and tigers [leopards], as the many spoors indicated. Or else we marched through beautiful mealie fields in which the mealies grew well, because of the moisture in the ground. Besides maize, the natives also plant sweet-potatoes, pumpkins [*Kürbise*], beans and peanuts. The usual sorghum [*Kafferkorn*] is seldom planted here - mainly just to brew beer.[40]

Having worked in the lands of the Basotho, the missionaries were used to seeing extensive cultivation of sorghum, since it was planted in the drier regions. This is why Beyer, stationed in an area where sorghum was extensively grown, expressed surprise at seeing only a little sorghum in the mountainous and wetter, Vendaland.

From there, their path took them onto the plateau again – like Makhado, Tshivhase lived "high up, under a mountain cliff." In Beyer's interpretation:

> Here the large plains and hills were more in character to the highveld in the vicinity of the Drakensberg - bare, but covered with a green carpet; only in the river valleys and the mountain crevices and ravines and along the bottom of the cliffs the thick impenetrable forest grows abundantly. Many mountain buffalo live in these forests. These buffalo are smaller than those living in the plains.[41]

From the plain "the actual view into the vast Batschuëtlaland" (Vendaland) lay exposed.[42] This provided Samuel with an opportunity to further educate the missionaries about the landscape, inhabitants and etiquette of Vendaland. In interpreting the landscape and its inhabitants for his superiors and a wider German audience, Beyer was serving the same function as an ecological and cultural interpreter as Samuel had done for him and his companions. Overlooking large sections of the countryside, Samuel "named eleven big independent chiefs, including Makchato and Sebase [Makhado and Tshivhase]," and explained the borders of their territories to the missionaries. Beyer reacted by bemoaning what he saw as the sorry situation of these rulers who all had "to live without the Word of Life" and posing the question:

> When will the hour of salvation of these people strike? Oh, Africa is

[40] *BMB*, Nr. 7 u. 8, 1874, p.129. Cf. *BMB*, Nr. 7 u. 8, 1873, p.134.
[41] *Ibid.*
[42] This is the name given to the Vhavenda by the Basotho.

> big and richly populated, more than any-one would believe, and all these people are still caught up in the bonds of darkness. Here, where one can only view one or two degrees, one is more shocked than when one glances at the many longitudinal and latitudinal degrees of heathendom on a map, because here one can see the misery; oh, and the heathendom here is stronger than in all other countries, because these heathen gods are not wooden, or made of stone, or any other dead creatures - they are their kings. [43]

From their vantage point, Samuel also pointed out the mountain which was their end destination. They reached this within one-and-a-half hours. However, since Tshivhase's capital village was concealed "in the middle of a thicket", they "could not see the village of this great king before" they got to it. They could nevertheless clearly hear "the sounds and shouts" emanating from it. [44]

Samuel must again have acted as a cultural interpreter since, following correct etiquette, the missionaries remained outside the village while sending a messenger to announce their arrival. He soon returned, inviting them to appear before Tshivhase. In describing their first impressions of the village of this powerful *khosi*, Beyer drew heavily on comparisons with his homeland:

> So we climbed down into a dark forest of tall yellow-wood trees. At first the path was stony and uneven but then the road became a beautiful avenue which reminded us of the sacred Halls of Tharant in Saxony, because above us the branches grew together, forming a ceiling. After twenty minutes we reached the village of the feared chief Sebase [Tshivhase].
>
> The view of the village came as a surprise; imagine a village at the top of a mountain, below cliffs, in the middle of a forest of trees which are as tall as the majestic German Beeches and Oaks, overgrown and entwined by masses of climbers and creepers, so forming big natural arbours, more beautiful than those found in the botanical gardens in Germany. Steep cliffs form the backdrop of the village; the foreground (facing south) presents a view over vast domains. Yes, I admit, this place is the most romantic which I have yet seen in Africa. The village itself was surrounded closely with banana plants. [45]

In order to locate and ground himself and his intended readers, Beyer also drew

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[43] *BMB*, Nr. 7 u. 8, 1874, p.130. Cf. *BMB*, Nr. 7 u. 8, 1873, p.134.
[44] *Ibid.*
[45] *Ibid.* Cf. *BMB*, Nr. 7 u. 8, 1873, pp.134-135.

comparisons with the architecture of his station at Blauberg:

> While everybody was staring at us, we stepped into the village. The only difference between these houses and those of the people at Blauberg is their size. The doors are also higher, so that one need only stoop when entering them, compared to Blauberg, where one has to crawl into them.[46]

Tshivhase was obviously a man of great astuteness and ability. Not only was he multi-lingual, speaking Tshivenda, Northern Sotho and Tswana fluently, he was also an accomplished gunsmith. While they admitted this, the mission also portrayed him very much as we would expect of the savage *cum* slightly clown-like king of the jungle people of African adventure literature. Thus, on the one hand, the views of the editors of the *Missions-Berichte*, (and hence the official position of the mission) were that:

> Sebase is a clever and judicious, friendly and energetic man. He also does not like to spend his time being idle, as most other chiefs do. He would rather be industrious and active, and the veranda of his house, his favourite place, is at the same time his work-room. This is where his vice, hammer and files are found and where he repairs his guns. He speaks the language of Blauberg and Maklchabêng [Makgabêng] [SeSotho] as he does his own rather different language [Tshivenda]. The Brothers therefore did not need a translator which, understandably, they preferred.[47]

However, on the other hand, in missionary consciousness, the *khosi* was also a creature of his environment – a lion. Although he also acknowledged Tshivhase's skills, in a view with which the mission authorities concurred, he pointed out that:

> When we entered the courtyard, it was filled with people, who were almost all lying on their knees in the direction of a house with a railed veranda. Behind the railings of the house, a miss-shaped thick figure was moving. That was Sebase [Tshivhase], who was constantly saluted: "Big Lion, Almighty Ruler, Lord of the Heavens and the earth". As a matter of fact, the enormous gentleman in his cage looked like a lion in a zoo...
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> This 38 year-old man might have been big and clumsy, but he had an

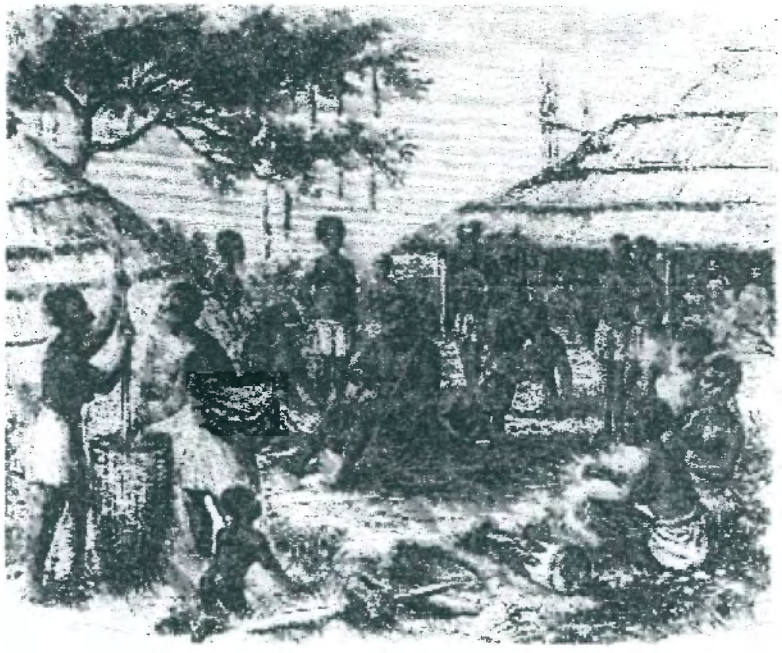
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[46] *BMB*, Nr. 7 u. 8, 1874, p.131.

[47] *BMB*, Nr. 7 u. 8, 1873, p.135. For discussion of the adventure literature trope of "despotic" and "buffoon-like" rulers of "primitive" societies, see B.V. Street *The savage in literature*, p.133.

intelligent look, not sinister but friendly, and especially talkative with his people. In his eyes one saw cleverness and liveliness, and that this enormous lion can also occasionally show his teeth is shown by the way his people cower before him in dog-like submission. Almost every word, even every movement of the king is accompanied by shouts of commendation and praise, so much so that any listener is soon irritated by the whole affair.

The women and girls may not pass before him without his permission; already from afar, they throw themselves to the ground before him, and when he has granted his permission, they do not go about their work walking, but crawling. As a support and a backrest, he has the services of a grown-up girl, who kneels behind him, while he sits.[48]



18. "Marenga in the circle of his wives. (After Young.)"[49]

Beyond Beyer's eyewitness account, Livingstone's various works were available (both in English and in German) in the Berlin Mission Library during the nineteenth century. It is likely that many of Beyer's colleagues would have thought of this etching when reading his account.

The next meeting with Tshivhase was that in October 1872 associated with the

[48] *BMB*, Nr. 7 u. 8, 1874, p.131.

[49] D. Livingstone "Marenga im Kreise seiner Frauen. (Nach Young)", in *Livingstone, der Missionär,II*, Leipzig, Spamer, 1869, appearing as L594 in R.F. Kennedy (comp.) *Catalogue of Prints in the Africana Museum and in books in the Strange Collection of Africana in the Johannesburg Public Library up to 1870, Volume Two: L-Z and Index*, Johannesburg, Africana Museum, 1976.

founding of Ha-Tshivhase Mission Station.[50] The hope for the future which this engendered is clearly discernible in the report presented in the *Missions-Berichte* and in Grützner's eyewitness description of the landscape.

The *Missions-Berichte* noted that, riding ahead of the wagon carrying their equipment and provisions on horseback, the four Brothers travelled:

> through the most magnificent land with lush vegetation; excellent country where the high mountains alternate with beautiful green patches [valleys]; and large rivers with ample water roar along; at the top of the mountains there are beautiful meadows where the cattle graze, and there are forests which are so cool and homely that the travellers felt as if they were journeying through the Harz mountains or Sudeten Mountains.[51]

Grützner's impressions were that:

> The country there is really tropical. Since the numerous mountains have much rain and mist, the vegetation can truly develop to its full potential. The grass often reaches above the heads of the riders. Because of this, there is less good grazing for cattle, but there are enough other places where there is abundant grazing, enough for thousand of head of cattle. Otherwise, as mentioned before, a large part of the ground is covered with all sorts of bushes and shrubs. Each shrub which is big enough to carry it, is in turn covered by climbers and creepers of many kinds - some as thick as a string, others as thick as an arm. To my amazement the latter are found growing in the tree tops 30 feet above the ground, having reached that height without any hold on the tree.[52]

Beyond its potential for grazing, the land was also bountiful in what it supplied for the sustenance of its inhabitants, who were prepared to share nature's bounty with the missionaries:

> On the top of the mountain, over which we had to climb in order to get to Sewásse [Tshivhase] (Sewásse lives just below the highest peak of another mountain which has the same conditions), there were beautiful alpine meadows - just as beautiful as those in the German mountains. Up to now I have not seen such beautiful grassland in Africa. Although it was the end of October, that means spring-time here, many of the

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[50] See pp.97-98.
[51] *BMB*, Nr. 7 u. 8, 1874, p.136. For meadows, one could also read open countryside.
[52] *BMB*, Nr. 5 u. 6, 1874, p.67.

> wild trees were covered with ripe and semi-ripe fruit. And right next to the fruit, on the same branch, there were bunches of new blooms. The people carried away baskets full of these ripe fruit which have the structure of a big plum [greengage] and looked like a rough-skinned potato. At our request, they gave us some to taste - the taste is not unpleasant. We also gathered fruit freely. [53]

However, being true men of their times, the glories of nature were not enough for the missionaries. Nature had to be perfected through agriculture. Pastoralism and subsistence agriculture were not enough – the land had to be irrigated and worked in similar ways to the emerging capitalist agricultural concerns of Natal. By implication, this transformation of the agricultural economy would transform the African inhabitants of the land. There was also the hidden implication that Africans would not be able to achieve this by themselves. Presumably Grützner felt that the missionaries would lead them part of the way. However, much as he would have felt that this kind of transformation was an essential component of becoming a new person in Christ, he would also have felt that the as the primary aim of the new station was to preach the Gospel. Thus, he would presumably have felt that, in the long term, once the local converts had been given the resilience to withstand the temptations of the world, total transformation would have to rely on the establishment of white farms in the area, utilising African labour:

> The whole country of Sewásse - in diameter about five to seven German miles - would also be excellent for White farming, as it could be watered without the irrigation schemes which are so indispensable in Africa. It could be cultivated like the coastal stretch of Natal. Admittedly there are many more ravines in the coastal stretch of Natal.[54]

But that was all for the future. In the meanwhile, there were smaller beginnings to make. From discussing the landscape, Grützner's report flowed seamlessly into discussing its inhabitants:

> We crossed two mountain ranges and on each peak, the Brothers discussed whether these peaks were higher than those of the Harz. As already mentioned, Sewásse lives on the third range, close to the

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[53] *Ibid.* pp.67-68.
[54] *Ibid.* p.68.

> highest peak. I was pleased to experience that I can still walk well, and even climb well. Outwardly the people seem friendly; the language is very different from that of the Basutho or Matabele [Basotho or Ndebele]. Our mission will again be entering a new language area! and Brother Beuster, who has just learned to speak the language of the Basutho, has the work, as well as the pleasure, to start at the beginning for a second time.[55]

Now that they were entering the area to stay, rather than to reconnoitre possible areas for the expansion of mission work, it began to dawn on the travellers that the environment would pose serious difficulties to be overcome before mission work could even begin. Having left their wagon with their equipment and provisions at Albasini's place while going ahead to complete the final negotiations for the establishment of the mission station, the missionaries returned there early in November to fetch this:

> On 3 November two guides came from Schewahsse [Tshivhase], but only on 6 November could the move from Albasini with the wagon begin; because, on the advice of Albasini, an experienced Boer had to be employed as wagon-driver for the extremely inhospitable road through the wilds. An old English *Schmaus* (trader), Mr Wards [Ward], gave us six fresh oxen as the leading team [fore-span], free of charge. The prudence of the old Portuguese [Albasini] soon proved to be correct; it did not take long before picks, crowbars, spades and axes were needed to open up a passable track. People with axes ran ahead, to remove trees and bushes [from the path]. Eventually the boundary-river of Schewasse's land was reached, and it took several days of effort, during which the Brothers often stood in water up to their chests, to first remove the biggest boulders and make a passable ford, before a load could be brought through the same. It was thanks to the skilfulness of the labourers that another difficult ford was crossed on the next day, and the place where, according to Tshivhase's wishes, the Brothers could make their first halt, was already reached by Friday, 8 November... And now there was one rainy day after another.[56]

Just how difficult life could become in the incessant rain, and with the accompanying "fever" (malaria) soon became clear to the missionaries. Beuster and Stech were hard at work on the construction of the first mission-station at Ha-Tshivhase in November and December 1872. Due to the fact that *Khosi*

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[55] *Ibid.*

[56] *BMB*, Nr. 7 u. 8, 1874, pp.137-138. Since the group came from the South – Albasini's homeestead at Goedewensch – the river border to Tshivhase's territory was that of the Dzindi

Tshivhase did not send labour in the quantities which the Brothers felt that the work demanded, and due to local perceptions that the missionaries did not pay adequately (or at all) for work done, they had to do much of the early work, such as the cutting of trees and the actual building, themselves. All of this labour was occurring at the height of the rainy season during a particularly wet year. In the opinion of the editors of the *Misisons-Berichte*: "The rain alone made the work doubly difficult and finally the Brothers' strength collapsed under the enormous strain."[57] Stech was the first to succumb to a variety of tropical infections, culminating in a bout of malaria.[58] Within a month, Beuster had followed him.[59]

Some idea of the feelings of dread that illness could evoke in the missionaries is revealed in a letter from Stech to Mission Director Wangemann, written on 1 December 1872 and subsequently published. Describing events over the preceding week, he wrote that reference to his and Beuster's medical books had indicated that his symptoms could be those of enteritis. "Oh what a wretched time lies ahead!" To make matters worse, there was no western doctor in the area. Botshabelo was at least fourteen days away and Matlala at least nine. In addition, there were no messengers available. Stech also felt that travelling back on his own was:

> out of the question as the wagon is also our home and the fords across the rivers have all been washed out and are impassable. So, with the fear that fever [malaria] could also set in, of which the signs are there already, I handed myself over to the mercy of my Saviour, towards the evening of last Monday (25 November). That was a terrible struggle. Over and over again the heart with all its youthful courage shied away from death. Over and over again, my words of prayer became almost without exception: "Oh Lord, do not take me while half my days are done. I have not yet achieved anything which I could present to you as payment for the pain you suffered for the sins of the whole world." It took a long time until I could willingly and with my whole heart say: Lord, but not my will, but Thy will be done. At last the quiet handing over to the will of God took place. As difficult as the punishment was before, when all my sins appeared before my soul, I could now throw it all onto the forgiveness of the blood of my Saviour. After all, he is my Saviour. By the end of the week my condition improved visibly, so

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River. The difficult ford seems to have been the river-crossing at the present-day low-water bridge on the way to Maungani (Beuster).

[57] *BMB*, Nr. 7 u. 8, 1874, pp.138-139 (quotation, p.139).

[58] See p.140.

[59] *BMB*, Nr. 7 u. 8, 1874, p.143.

> that I could again do some light work. The door was done and I almost felt strong again, although I was a long way off from healthy. But today, on 1 Advent ... I am quite strong.[60]

For me, the suffering and debility caused by, and the very real danger of death through, malaria and other tropical diseases, played a crucial role in transforming missionary attitudes towards the landscape – in exposing the darkness within the light.[61] This was compounded by the difficulties they encountered in establishing themselves in, and operating in, what for them was an alien and alienating, inhospitable, as well as harsh and unforgiving, environment with few support structures from fellow whites. To compound this even further, since medical science had not yet identified the mosquitoes and amoeba that carried malaria and the other tropical fevers, they did not even understand the aetiology of the diseases that were making their lives a misery and, later, killing them, their wives and their children. In Beuster's words on burying "his faithful servant Nako", who had died of malaria on 22 March 1878: "I have now already buried five people here. Must I be an undertaker here amongst the heathen? And yet I should be one who raises people from the dead!"[62]

Even before they moved into the Zoutpansberg area, the missionaries were aware of the problems of fever (malaria) there. As early as 1860, Merensky noted that many Boers living in the villages of the Zoutpansberg area died of fever each year. In his opinion, "no white man" was able to "live in the northern parts of the lands of the Swazi and the lands of the Knobneusen" because of fever.[63]

Knowing that there was fever and knowing how to combat it were two entirely different matters. On 2 October 1874, Beuster noted that he had been visited by "A German man from the neighbourhood ... in the company of a German Jew." Since his fellow-countryman had lived in the area for a long time, and knew "the nature of the land", Beuster saw his advice as invaluable. At that stage, the

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[60] *Ibid.* p.141. The four Sundays before Christmas are the Sundays of Advent.

[61] For the role played by malaria in the "darkening" of Africa, see also P. Brantlinger "Victorians and Africans", p.174.

[62] *BMB*, Nr. 23 u. 24, 1879, p.435. Over the preceding four years, he had already buried his wife who had died of malaria, his first two Native Assistants who had died of smallpox and another local Christian who had died of malaria.

[63] *BMB*, No. 4, 1860, p.63.

mission station lay to the west of the river. Beuster noted that the German:

> was the first person to suggest that we move the station away from the fever-ridden area to a mountain which was east of the river ... which is at present east of the station. In this wet and marshy country it is important that one builds firstly high and secondly, east of any water. Almost all the winds blow from the East, from the sea,[64] and these winds bring the fever-ridden air to the homes and the people if they have built in the west. That is how it was here. What we new-comers did not at first know and what we did not immediately notice at that time, because of the bush and the rain, that has now become visible: An extensive marsh lies to the east of the station. From there, with every wind, the fever-ridden air (*miasma*) is blown over the station; sickness and death is therefore inevitable. To re-arrange the flow of the river, i.e. to drain all the springs and puddles of the marsh into one river would, after much hard work, only partly reduce the danger. This is why a quick decision and firm resolve were taken. The life of a missionary is worth more than a few houses which will in any case not stand there for much longer.[65] A start must be made on the new house ... I went to Schewase [Tshivhase] on Monday to report the matter to him. ... Lord my God, please help again. Give new courage and strength! [66]

Not yet realising that malaria was carried by a mosquito, they thought that it was the miasma – the bad air from the marshes – which caused the disease.[67] However, moving the station away from the marsh where the mosquito larvae bred would certainly have reduced exposure to the disease. The move higher up the mountain would have had a similar effect. As September is the beginning of the pre-rainy season showers, the German visitor must have advised Beuster to move as soon as possible before the next malaria season. After the first spring rains in September, October and November are usually dry. The real rainy season, when it rains for months on end, usually starts in mid-December. The malaria season usually started in mid-January, February. So Beuster had October and November to move the station up the hill. In an effort to provide some kind of

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[64] In other words, from the Indian Ocean side.

[65] The houses were built of mud bricks and plastered with mud. In the rainy season even sun-dried mud bricks do not last long - the moisture makes them soft and the mud walls have to be re-plastered every winter (the dry season).

[66] Tagebuch der Station bei Schewase (Carl Beuster), 2 Oktober 1874, in Berlin Mission Archives, Berlin, Acta der Berliner Missionsgesellschaft betreffend Missionsstationen: Acta: Tagebücher der Missionare auf der Station Ga Sebase, 1872 - 1891, (I), Abt. III, Fach 5, No. 14 [Box 1]. See also *BMB*, Nr. 21 u. 22, 1875, pp.446-447.

[67] The root of the term is the Latin "bad air" (mal-aria). Malaria was also commonly known as "marsh fever".

protection against malaria, over the first sixteen years of the presence of the mission in Vendaland, the missionaries constructed summer houses in the mountains and each of the three mission stations would be moved from their original sites to higher ground.[68] Other control measures included clearing bush and forest from around the mission stations to let in fresh air and planting Eucalyptus trees in the cleared space. The missionaries believed that "The lush vegetation prevented the wind from blowing fresh air over the country-side." They also reported about Eucalyptus trees that "it is said that they keep the air clean and prevent the fever."[69] There was actually some truth to this as the trees require a tremendous amount of water and hence dry out the soil. At a later date, they were used in malaria eradication programs in the area since they dried up swampy and marshy areas, the breeding places of the mosquito larvae. In a desperate attempt to control the malaria which "raged violently amongst the people" in March and April 1880, Beuster also took:

> all the important precautions to ensure that his people did not come into contact with the water. Because one washing of clothing at the river, one walk through the man-high, dew-drenched grass, or over-exertion while working, would surely result in an outbreak of fever.[70]

Again, while he still did not understand the causative process, there was some sense in these measures. The mosquitoes were at the river and in the wet grass. Also, over-exertion breaks down the resistance of the body, giving the parasites in the blood a chance to multiply, resulting in a fever attack.

Despite these precautions, through the nineteenth century and beyond, not only the local converts but also the missionaries and their wives and children, were subject to recurrent bouts of malaria and other tropical diseases, which frequently proved to be fatal. Every Berlin Missionary who served in Vendaland suffered from fever at some stage in his career, as did their wives and children.[71] We have

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[68] *BMB*, Nr. 11 u. 12, 1878 [Jahresbericht 1877], p.256; Nr. 11 u. 12, 1887 [Jahresbericht, 1886], pp.210-211; Nr. 19 u. 20, 1886, pp.360-361; Nr. 11 u. 12, 1887, pp.222 & 223; Nr. 21 u. 22, 1887, pp.481, 485 & 486; Nr. 21 u. 22, 1888, pp.507 & 508; Nr. 23 u. 24, 1888, pp.533-534; Nr. 11 u. 12, 1889 [Jahresbericht 1888], p.249 and Nr. 21 u. 22, 1889, p.530.

[69] *BMB*, Nr. 21 u. 22, 1878, p.483; Nr. 23 u. 24, 1879, pp.434-435 (quotations) & Nr. 5 u. 6, 1885, p.182.

[70] *BMB*, Nr. 21 u. 22, 1880, p.405.

[71] See, for example, *Bawenda-Freund*, Nr. 26, Juli 1889, VII Jahrgang, p.82; Nr. 30, Juli 1890, 8

already seen that Carl Beuster lost three wives and his infant daughter to malaria between 1874 and 1900 and died himself, also of general debility caused by repeated bouts of malaria, in 1901.[72] Commenting on his situation and appearance in 1877, the *Missions-Berichte* noted that:

> he often enough has to experience that he lives in a fever-ridden country. Time and again he has been forced to lie low by this illness. The illness had so weakened him that one of the Brothers, who visited him, hardly recognised the previously strong, cheerful Brother in the almost senile figure which came towards him. And those living with him also became ill. His first, faithful loving wife has already been taken by the fever. But the Lord again filled this gap. And now, almost without any hope, he again saw his only companion in his work and suffering, on the verge of death. Oh, what days those were! The Lord took away the bitter cup, but for weeks Brother Beuster's chief task was to take care of the patient. When Brother and Sister Schwellnus came for a visit once, they had to, within two days, take over the care of the patients and they stayed there for a full month nursing them.[73] Then again, when Brother Beuster is well, Brother Koen in the neighbouring area, becomes ill.[74]

Koen and Baumhöfner's battles with, and subsequent death from, malaria have also received attention, as have Koen's wife's bouts of fever.[75] Only two of Carl

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Jahrgang, p.98; Nr. 51, Juli 1895, 13 Jahrgang, p.246; Nr. 42, Juli 1893, 11 Jahrgang, p.158; Nr. 43, Oktober 1893, 11 Jahrgang, p.166; Nr. 44, Januar 1894, pp.174-175 & Nr. 59, 3 Quartal 1897, 15 Jahrgang, p.363 and *BMB*, No. 9 bis 12, 1866, p.199; Nr. 7 u 8, 1874, pp.125-126, 143 & 152; Nr. 11 u 12, 1874 [Jahresbericht 1873], p.241; Nr. 19 u 20, 1875, p.419; Nr. 21 u 22, 1875, pp.446-447; Nr. 23 u 24, 1876, pp.390-391; Nr. 23 u 24, 1877, pp.485. 488-489 & 490; Nr. 11 u 12, 1878 [Jahresbericht 1877], p.251; Nr. 21 u 22, 1878, pp.480, 481, 482-483, 488-489 & 494; Nr. 11 u 12, 1879 [Jahresbericht 1878], p.203; Nr. 21 u 22, 1879, p.411; Nr 23 u 24, 1879, pp.434-435; Nr. 21 u 22, 1880, p.405; Nr. 19 u 20, 1883, pp.372 & 374; Nr. 23 u 24, 1882, pp.434-435; Nr. 5 u 6, 1885, pp.71 & 74; Nr. 11 u 12, 1885, p.182; Nr. 21 u 22, 1887, pp.481, 485 & 486; Nr. 11 u 12, 1888 [Jahresbericht 1887], pp.222 & 223; Nr. 21 u 22, 1888, p.507; Nr. 11 u 12, 1889 [Jahresbericht 1888], p.249; Nr. 21 u 22, 1889, p.238; Nr. 21 u 22, 1890, pp.463, 465 & 488; Nr. 11 u 12, 1891 [Jahresbericht 1890], p.221; Nr. 19 u 20, 1891, p.449; Nr. 19 u 20, 1893, p.460; Nr. 11 u 12, 1894 [Jahresbericht 1893], pp.200 & 201; Nr. 17 u 18, 1894, pp.367 & 373-375; Februar 1897, p.107; Januar 1898, p.8; Juni 1898 [Jahresbericht 1897], pp.314 & 318; Oktober 1898, p.593; September 1898, p.519; März 1899, p.93; Juni 1900 [Jahresbericht 1899], pp.305 & 306 & November 1900, pp.691, 692 & 694. In addition, the letters of missionaries contained in their personal files frequently discuss fever among themselves, their immediate family members, members of their congregation and/or the "heathens". See Acta betreffend Personalia: Baumhöfner, Dietrich; Beuster, Carl; Endemann, Christian; Giesekke, Ludwig; Gottschling, Ernst; Klatt, Carl Otto; Koen, Klaas; Meister, Johannes; Schwellnus, Erdmann; Sonntag, Christoph; Stork, Hellmuth; Wessmann, Reinhold and Westphal, Gotthardt.

[72] See pp.175-176.

[73] When help at last came in the form of the Schwellnuses, Beuster himself collapsed of fever and exhaustion, so that the Schwellnuses had to take over looking after them.

[74] *BMB*, Nr. 21 u. 22, 1878, p.482.

[75] See pp. 180-181, 212-213, 214 and 215-221.

Gernecke and his wife's twelve children were born at Georgenholtz. Both of these died as infants, one at just under twenty-three months and the other at just over eight months old. With the exception of one other child, who was born at Ladysmith and died in her sixteenth year, the others all lived to adulthood.[76] As late as the 1930s, the Giesekke family were suffering from a variety of Amoeba, and other, infections resulting from the tropical climate.[77] This suffering was borne in the name of the Lord. The victims were seen as "sacrifices" and fondly remembered in tractates and the pages of the *Missions-Berichte* and *Bawenda Freund* as pioneers of Christianity in "heathen Bawendaland".[78] This did not make it any easier to bear. During the time that Beuster was away in Natal to get married, Stech's accounts of life at Ha-Tshivhase dealt more with his suffering from malaria and other illnesses and fear of death than with events at the station.[79] Dietrich Baumhöfner's descriptions of Klaas Koen's final illness and death in letters sent back to the Mission Director in Berlin are extremely moving accounts.[80] Wessmann likened suffering from malaria to experiencing the effects of "a slow-acting deadly poison".[81] Beuster was prostrated with grief when fever took his family members.[82] Missionaries at home on their sickbeds or in the Swiss Mission Hospital at Elim were unable to work for the period of their illness, sometimes for months at a time.[83]

These very real uncertainties, dangers, fears and stumbling-blocks to the missionary endeavour in turn influenced, and interacted with, missionary attitudes to other core features of the local environment.

Numerous reports in the *Missions-Berichte* and the reports for friends of the

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[76] Acta betreffend Personalia: Gernecke, Carl. See also p.185.

[77] See numerous medical reports contained in Acta der Berliner Missions-Gesellschaft betreffend Personalia: Giesekke, Ludwig.

[78] See, for example, *BMB*, Nr. 11 u 12, 1875 [Jahresbericht 1874], p.232; Nr. 9 u 10, 1883, pp.139-140 & Nr. 19 u 20, 1883, p.358; [Anon.] *Dietrich Baumhöfner* and G. Sauberzweig-Schmidt, *Klaas Kuhn*.

[79] See especially *BMB*, Nr.7 u. 8, 1874, pp.143 and 150-153.

[80] Letters, D. Baumhöfner to Mission Director, Berlin Mission Society, 3 August 1882; 7 Januar 1883 and 13 Februar 1883, in Acta betreffend Personalia: Baumhöfner, Dietrich.

[81] *Bawenda-Freund*, Nr. 44, Januar 1894, 12 Jahrgang, p.175.

[82] For the most moving account, see Berichte der Station bei Schewase (Carl Beuster), 7 Juli 1874, pp.15-16 (also in *BMB*, Nr. 19 u 20, 1875, pp.423-424).

[83] See, for example, *Bawenda-Freund*, Nr. 42, Juli 1893, 11 Jahrgang, p.158; Nr. 43, Oktober 1893, 11 Jahrgang, pp.166-167; Nr. 44 and Januar 1894, 12 Jahrgang, pp.174-175 which

Bawenda Mission contained in Der *Bawenda Freund* refer to the mountainous nature of the landscape of Vendaland.[84] At first, the mountains provided a scenic background to the mission stations, established on land obtained from the *mahosi* in lower-lying areas. However, this scenic backdrop was not without its hidden dangers and evils. In the heights of the mountains, with their entrances well-hidden among a maze of footpaths and dead-ends through the lush vegetation lay the villages of what the missionaries called the "heathen Bawenda".[85] At the crudest level of analysis, the missionaries often could not reach the mountain villages on horseback. Evangelising the people there often meant undertaking a strenuous and time-consuming climb.[86] At a deeper level, in the perception of the missionaries, from their mountain strongholds the local people could see the approach of strangers for miles, while themselves remaining unseen.[87] There they lived under what the missionaries saw as the (often) tyrannical rule of the *mahosi*,[88] ruled by superstition and *Zauberei*.[89] A whole way of life was being

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discuss Reinhold Wessmann's "months of illness".

[84] See, for example, *Bawenda-Freund*, Nr. 21, 1 Juli 1888, VI Jahrgang, p.63; Nr. 23, Oktober 1888, VI Jahrgang, p.67; Nr. 25, April 1889, VII Jahrgang, p.80; Nr. 36, Januar 1892, 10 Jahrgang, pp.121 & 122; Nr. 40, Januar 1892 (*sic*. - corrected by hand on volume to 1893), 11 Jahrgang, p.146; Nr. 52, Oktober 1895, 13 Jahrgang, p.267; Nr. 56, 4 Quartal 1896, 14 Jahrgang, p.329 & Nr. 57, 1 Quartal 1897, 15 Jahrgang, p.343 and *BMB*, Nr. 5 u 6, 1874, p.68; Nr. 7 u 8, 1874, pp.125, 128, 133, 135 & 136; Nr. 17 u 18, 1875, p.369; Nr. 21 u 22, 1875, p.446; Nr. 23 u 24, 1876, p.390; Nr. 21 u 22, 1878, pp.481 & 490-491; Nr. 23 u 24, 1879, 435, 438, 441 & 442; Nr. 21 u 22, 1882, 428, 431 & 432; Nr. 5 u 6, 1885, pp.72, 74 & 77; Nr. 21 u 22, 1888, p.515; Nr. 21 u 22, 1889, p.530; Nr. 21 u 22, 1890, pp.466, 470, 471 & 476; Nr. 23 u 24, 1890, p.500; Nr. 17 u 18, 1894, p.376; Nr. 11 u 12, 1895 [Jahresbericht 1894], p.191; Februar 1897, p.107; Januar 1898, p.18; März 1899, pp.93 & 94; September 1899, p.564; Oktober 1899, p.643 & November 1900, pp.692 & 694. As with the other environmental features discussed here, the sheer number of references indicates the degree to which these influenced the lives and work of the missionaries.

[85] See, for example, *BMB*, Nr. 21 u. 22, 1872, pp.432 & 433; Nr. 7 u 8, 1873, pp.134 & 135; Nr. 5 u 6, 1874, p.67; Nr. 7 u 8, 1874, pp.130 & 131; Nr. 17 u 18, 1875, p.365 & Nr. 21 u 22, 1878, pp.497 & 498 and R. Wessmann *Philippus Thai*, pp.3 & 5.

[86] *BMB*, Nr. 7 u. 8, 1873, p.133 & Nr. 7 u. 8, 1874, p.126.

[87] *BMB*, Nr. 7 u. 8, 1874, pp.126 & 129.

[88] *Mitteilungen des Vereins „Heidenfreund"*, Nr. 16, 1 April 1887, V Jahrgang, n.p. (pp.3-4) & Nr. 18, 1 Juli 1887, V Jahrgang, n.p. (pp.2-3); *Bawenda-Freund*, Nr. 24, Januar 1889, VII Jahrgang, pp.73-75; Nr. 26, Juli 1889, VII Jahrgang, p.83; Nr. 30, Juli 1890, 8 Jahrgang, p.98; Nr. 36, Januar 1892, 10 Jahrgang, pp.121-123; Nr. 39, Oktober 1892, 10 Jahrgang, pp.139-140; Nr. 50, Juni 1895, 13 Jahrgang, pp.223-224 & Nr. 55, 3 Quartal 1896, 14 Jahrgang, pp.308-310 and *BMB*, Nr. 9 u 10, 1872, pp.158-160; Nr. 7 u 8, 1873, pp.132-137; Nr. 9 u 10, 1872, p.160; Nr. 5 u 6, 1874, p.68; Nr. 7 u 8, 1874, pp.126-127 & 130-135; Nr. 17 u 18, 1875, p.369; Nr. 21 u 22, 1878, pp.291-292 & 490; & Nr. 5 u 6, 1885, pp.75-76.

[89] *Mitteilungen des Vereins „Heidenfreund"*, Nr. 18, 1 Juli 1887, V Jahrgang, n.p. (p.4); *Bawenda-Freund*, Nr. 30, 8 Juli 1890, 8 Jahrgang, p.99; Nr. 36, Januar 1892, 10 Jahrgang, p.123; Nr. 39, Oktober 1892, 10 Jahrgang, pp.136-191; Nr. 40, Januar 1892 (*sic*. - corrected by hand to 1893), 11 Jahrgang, p.144; Nr. 52, Oktober 1895, 13 Jahrgang, pp.258-259, 262-263 & 267; Nr. 53, 1 Quartal 1896, 14 Jahrgang, pp.278-279; Nr. 59, 3 Quartal 1897, 15 Jahrgang,

lived out hidden from the eyes and the direct influence of the missionaries.

The mountain strongholds of the Vhavenda were not the only hindrance to the work of the missionaries. The land was criss-crossed by rivers and streams.[90] While these could be narrow, or even dry, in the dry season, in the rainy season they could become raging torrents. As late as the 1920s, parts of Vendaland were cut off in the rainy season because of the lack of bridges over rivers and streams.[91] Even a report on the then so-called independent state of Venda in 1979 stated that "Venda has many other streams, perennial and seasonal, most of which join one or other of ... [the] major rivers. Owing to the seasonality of the rainfall, small streams can become raging torrents which are often impassable in summer."[92] When rivers were in flood, those attempting to cross them faced great danger of drowning and a number of missionaries and local people had narrow escapes from a watery grave.[93] At times, wagons carrying equipment for the missionaries or missionary personnel either became stuck or capsized in

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pp.360-361; Nr. 3, Juli 1913, 30 Jahrgang, p.36 & Nr. 1, Januar 1914, 31 Jahrgang, p.8 and *Berliner Missions-Berichte*, Nr. 17, 1870, p.332; Nr. 9 u 10, 1872, pp.154-155; Nr. 9 u 10, 1874, pp.179-180; Nr. 19 u 20, 1875, p.401; Nr. 23 u 24, 1876, pp.392-393; Nr. 23 u 24, 1877, p.485; Nr. 19 u 20, 1878, p.455; Nr. 21 u 22, 1878, pp.484-486, 492-494 & 495; Nr. 15 u 16, 1879, p.312; Nr. 23 u 24, 1879, p.435; Nr. 1 u 2, 1880, pp.3-4; Nr. 17 u 18, 1880, p.344; Nr. 21 u 22, 1880, pp.403, 408 & 414; Nr. 23 u 24, 1883, pp.443-444; Nr. 21 u 22, 1886, pp.416-417 & 420; Nr. 21 u 22, 1887, pp.485 & 488; Nr. 21 u 22, 1888, p.515; Nr. 21 u 22, 1889, pp.547-548; Nr. 11 u 12, 1890 [Jahresbericht 1889], p.239; Nr. 21 u 22, 1890, p.484; Nr. 23 u 24, 1890, pp 500-501; Nr. 19 u 20, 1893, pp.469-470; Nr. 17 u 18, 1894, pp.369-370, Februar 1897, pp.87-89; Dezember 1897, pp.728 & 735; September 1899, pp.603-604; November 1899, p.699; Juli 1900, p.448 & November 1900, pp.683-685, 688-689 & 692. The German word *Zauberei* can be translated as magic, conjuring, witchcraft and sorcery. The missionaries used it to refer to witchcraft beliefs, the activities of traditional healers and diviners and Vhavenda beliefs in the supernatural in general. Sometimes they also described beliefs of this nature as *Aberglaube* [superstition]. Similarly, the word "*Zauberer*" [same in plural] may be translated as magician, sorcerer, wizard or conjurer. The missionaries used it to refer to all categories of traditional healers and witch-finders and, less frequently, to those who were accused by others of practising witchcraft. For the trope of the lives of Africans or "primitives" being completely dominated by "superstition", see also L. de Kock *Civilising Barbarians*, p.101 and B.V. Street *The savage in literature*, pp.137 & 163.

[90] These are referred to almost as often in reports as mountains. See, for example, *Bawenda-Freund*, Nr. 23, Oktober 1888, p.67; Nr. 36, Januar 1892, 10 Jahrgang, pp.121, 122 & 123; Nr. 40, Januar 1892 (*sic.* - corrected by hand on volume to 1893), 11 Jahrgang, pp.145-148; Nr. 54, 2 Quartal 1896, 14 Jahrgang, p.297 & Nr. 57, 1 Quartal 1897, 15 Jahrgang, p.344 and *BMB*, Nr. 7 u 8, 1874, pp.129, 136, 144 & 145; Nr. 17 u 18, 1875, pp.369 & 373; Nr. 19 u 20, 1875, pp.409-410, 416, 417 & 418; Nr. 21 u 22, 1875, p.446; Nr. 23 u 24, 1876, p.390; Nr. 21 u 22, 1878, pp.491, 496 & 498; Nr. 5 u 6, 1885, pp.74 & 78; Nr. 21 u 22, 1890, p.463; Nr. 17 u 18, 1894, p.375; Dezember 1897, p.726 & Oktober 1899, p.643.

[91] D. McDonald "Vendaland", Vol. X, No. 110, February 1933, p.12.

[92] Benso *The Independent Venda*, p.16.

[93] D. McDonald "Vendaland", Vol. X, No. 110, February 1933, p.12 and *BMB*, Nr. 19 u 20, 1892, p.524.

rivers. Freeing them and salvaging equipment often took some time. Equipment and provisions were sometimes also lost or damaged beyond repair.[94] Any academic must feel a wrench of sympathy at Stech's description of his attempts to salvage his and Beuster's equipment after a wagon coming to them from Matlala capsised in a river in February 1873. As he went through the chests, he discovered that some his possessions had been damaged by water. However, in his words:

> As far as damages go, the dear Brother Beuster is worse off than I am because his box of books was on the wagon. When at last I got to it, the contents looked very bad; the whole inside of the box looked a mess. I spent five days on that box alone, carefully separating each page and then spreading out the books in the sun, etc. In spite of this, I do not think that I saved anything of significance. I am very sorry that the dear Brother will have to face such a sorry sight when he finally returns. All the other things that had been sent were in a similar state. A whole bag of rice, which we had looked forward to for such a long time, was totally ruined. When it was cooked, not even the dogs ate it. It was very lucky that the flour was still all right.[95]

Given the wasted hours and losses involved in wagons either getting bogged down or stuck, the missionaries were forced to devote considerable time and effort to constructing bridges and crossing places over rivers.[96] This was one more way in which they inscribed themselves on the landscape. In doing so, they also unintentionally created sites of tension with local communities. During the early years of Ha-Tshivhase Mission Station in particular, Beuster referred disputes over the ownership, use and treatment of these bridges and crossing places to *Khosi* Tshivhase for arbitration. He also made allegations that local people deliberately vandalized both them and the furrows supplying water to the mission station. Inhabitants of areas adjacent to the mission stations occasionally damaged these structures by using them as crossing and drinking-places for cattle. Sometimes they also removed conveniently-sized stones from them for the building of terraces, courtyard walls and other structures. The missionaries believed that these tensions and disputes led to their having to waste a great deal

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[94] See, for example, *BMB*, Nr. 7 u. 8, 1874, pp.145-148; Nr. 9 u. 10, 1874, p.184 & Nr. 17 u. 18, 1875, p.373.

[95] *BMB*, Nr. 7 u. 8, 1874, p.149.

[96] See, for example, *BMB*, Nr. 17 u. 18, 1875, p.360; Nr. 19 u. 20, 1875, pp.418-419 & 421 and Nr. 21 u. 22, 1875, p.448.

of time and energy in repairing damage and attempting to obtain redress from local rulers. As such, they saw them as having a strong negative impact on their mission work in the area.[97]

Rivers also hampered mission work as they often formed the boundaries between the lands of the different *mahosi*. While he allowed missionaries to cross his boundary river and preach on occasion, Makhado consistently forbade them to do so to establish a mission station in his territory.[98] In this sense, the river formed a symbolic, impassable barrier. More concretely, because of their role as boundaries, from the point of view of the missionaries, crossing a river often meant entering into a new set of time-consuming polite meetings with yet another *khosi* in order to gain permission to preach in his area.[99] The missionaries experienced rivers and streams as but further dangerous and time-consuming obstacles to be overcome in the important work of spreading the gospel.

These dangers were compounded by the fact that, rivers and streams served as further graphic reminders of the wildness of the area for the missionaries. On a practical level, they teemed with crocodiles and hippopotami, posing dangers to those who attempted to cross them.[100] Some of the trepidation which this engendered is amply reflected in the Georgenholtz missionary Brother Koen's diary entry of 7 March 1882, when he recorded that:

> I could only return very late last night. On my journey to Tsakoma [Tshakhuma], I was in great mortal danger. When we had outspanned at Leloti,[101] it was already a beautifully moon-lit evening. I took out

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[97] See, for example, *BMB*, Nr. 19 u. 20, 1875, p.425; Nr. 21 u. 22, 1875, pp.438-439, 443, 448 & 453; Nr. 23 u. 24, 1876, p.394 and Nr. 21 u. 22, 1878, p.483

[98] See, for example, *BMB*, Nr. 7 u. 8, 1874, pp.126-127; Nr. 23 u. 24, 1877, pp.482-483 & 484; Nr. 21 u. 22, 1882, p.423; Nr. 23 u. 24, 1885, p.410; Nr. 13 u. 14, 1886 [Jahresbericht 1885], p.217; Nr. 21 u. 22, 1887, p.481; Nr. 21 u. 22, 1888, p.507; Nr. 11 u. 12, 1889 [Jahresbericht 1888], p.249; Nr. 21 u. 22, 1889, p.529; Nr. 11 u. 12, 1891 [Jahresbericht 1890], p.221; Nr. 19 u. 20, 1891, pp.450 & 451; Nr. 19 u. 20, 1891, pp.455 & 456; Nr. 11 u. 12, 1892 [Jahresbericht 1891], p.270; Nr. 19 u. 20, 1892, p.520; Nr. 11 u. 12, 1894 [Jahresbericht 1893], p.200; Nr. 17 u. 18, 1894, p.366 and Nr. 17 u. 18, 1895, p.350.

[99] Tagebuch der Station Ha Tsevase (Carl Beuster), 12 Mai 1889, pp.50-51 and *BMB*, Nr. 7 u 8, 1874, pp.129-130 & 137; Nr. 17 u 18, 1875, pp.365-366 & 369; Nr. 21 u 22, 1878, p.498; Nr. 21 u 22, 1882, pp.433-434 & Nr. 21 u 22, 1890, p.478.

[100] *Bawenda-Freund*, Nr. 25, April 1889, VII Jahrgang, p.80; Nr. 36, Januar 1892, 10 Jahrgang, p.122 and Nr. 40, Januar 1892 (*sic.* - corrected by hand to 1893), 11 Jahrgang, pp.145-146.

[101] "beim Leloti" – it is not clear whether Leloti was a man, a place or a river. As he outspanned there and describes the veld scenery and fishing, I take it to be a river, but have been unable to trace such a river in Venda. It would seem that he was confused about the name.

> my fishing tackle in order to fish a bit, while supper was being prepared at the wagon. I stood there for a long time, but no fish would bite - it was as if here, where there are usually so many fish, there were no fish to be had. Suddenly [the Native Assistant] Solomon, whom I had taken with me, tapped me lightly on the shoulder and ran away. At that same moment, I saw the enormity of the danger. A crocodile lay in the water in front of me, ready to leap at me. I quickly jumped to one side, but my fishing line was stuck. I gave a sharp tug; the strong fishing line snapped and I followed Solomon, just as speedily, to the wagon. I got such a fright, that I feel a cold shiver run through me, every time I think of the danger - I had seen that monstrosity so close to me. It had got hold of the hook, then followed the line till it almost reached me. Thanks be to God for having protected me so mercifully.[102]

More abstractly, as with mountains and forests, this wildness was reinforced for the missionaries by the fact that Africans viewed some rivers, pools, waterfalls and lakes as being sacred.[103] In missionary discourse, these "lying gods of the Bawenda" were another great obstacle to be overcome in the spreading of the gospel.[104] Moreover, on at least one occasion, the sacred beings of the rivers fought back against the missionaries. On 17 August 1873, Beuster recorded that his assistant, Johannes (Mutshaeni), had assured him that:

> Schewase [Tshivhase] is not at all such a bad person. It is the old councillors who constantly encourage him to beg; who want to incite him to despise the Word. They are the ones who see the gods in the Moschindote [Mutshindudi River] and who speak to them. The gods have seen white people going through the river.[105] So they asked:

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[102] *BMB*, Nr. 23 u. 24, 1882, p.451.

[103] For sacred rivers, river spirits/sprites and sacred river stones, see *Bawenda-Freund*, Nr. 27, Oktober 1899, VII Jahrgang, p.86 and *BMB*, Nr. 17 u 18, 1874, p.375; Nr. 17 u 18, 1875, pp.361, 371 & 374; Nr. 23 u. 24, 1879, p.444; Nr. 21 u 22, 1889, p.546 & Nr. 17 u 18, 1894, p.375. For sacred mountains and mountain Gods, see *Bawenda-Freund*, Nr. 27, Oktober 1889, VII Jahrgang, p.87 & Nr. 25, April 1899, pp.79-80 and *BMB*, Nr. 23 u 24, 1879, pp.441-442. For sacred forests and forest spirits, see *Bawenda-Freund*, Nr. 27, Oktober 1899, VII Jahrgang, p.88 and *BMB*, Nr. 17 u 18, 1875, pp.371-372, 373 & 374; Nr. 19 u. 20, 1875, p.417; Nr. 21 u 22, 1878, p.498; Nr. 23 u 24, 1879, p.443 & Februar 1897, p.84. These categories of sacred beings, ancestral beings, objects and features of the landscape are also discussed on pp.317-330 and 339-340.

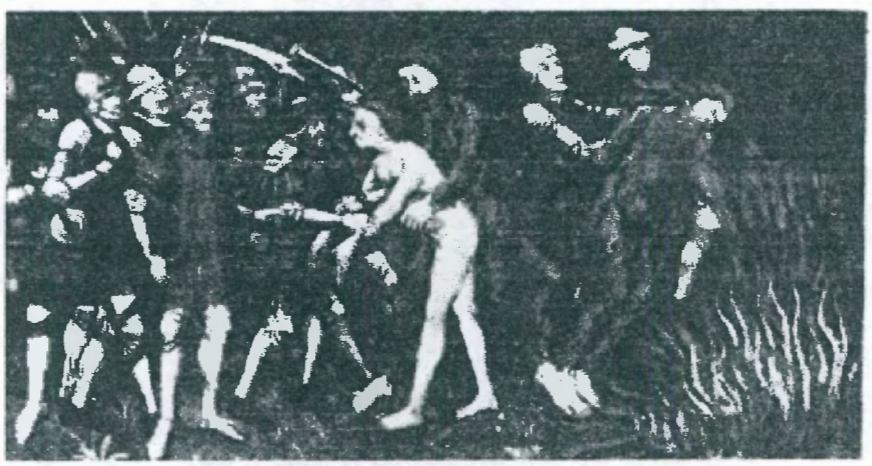
[104] *BMB*, Nr. 21 u 22, 1878, p.496.

[105] When Tshivhase left the Nzhelele valley with the breakup of the empire, he first settled at Phiphidi. There were people living here who venerated their ancestors and other spirits in the Mutshindudi river. Although these were not Singo spirits, Tshivhase's people also adopted the custom and belief of spirits in the river. If one goes from Maungani (Ha-Tshivhase) to Tshivhase's village, one has to cross the Mutshindudi river near Phiphidi. This is where the spirits, who live in the indigenous forest around the Phiphidi waterfall and in the pool at its base, saw them cross the river. See pp.324-325 for a discussion of these spirits, the *zwidudwane*.

> "Who are those people?" "Those are teachers", they answered. "Teachers? What do they do? They destroy the land! It is not good that you let them into the land!" that is what the gods called out." [106]

This accusation obviously touched a nerve in Beuster. On a number of occasions, he again referred to, and refuted, it.[107]

For the missionaries, the danger and wildness of the environment was especially reflected in the forests which surrounded, and covered the slopes of, the mountains and through which the rivers and streams flowed. Indeed, forests, in particular, came to serve as icons of the fears and tensions - many of which were unconscious or only partly conscious - that they faced. [108]



19. "Alexander the Great ordering wild man and woman thrown into fire"[109]

This tied in with core notions of contemporary European environmental thinking. Since classical times, forests and mountains had served to signify a liminal space of wilderness in European thought, whether Christian or not, of a life outside humanity and an animal existence as symbolised by the wild-man of the woods of

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[106] *BMB*, Nr. 17 u. 18, 1875, p.361. These themes are discussed in more detail in Chapter 6.

[107] *Ibid.* pp.364 & 371-372 and Nr. 19 u. 20, 1875, pp.419 & 443.

[108] See, for example, *Bawenda-Freund*, Nr. 52, Oktober 1895, 13 Jahrgang, p.267; Nr. 54, 2 Quartal 1896, 14 Jahrgang, p.288 & Nr. 57, 1 Quartal 1897, 15 Jahrgang, p.343 and *BMB*, Nr. 7 u 8, 1873, pp.133-134; Nr. 7 u 8, 1874, pp.128 & 130-131; Nr. 17 u 18, 1875, pp.371, 373 & 374; Nr. 23 u 24, 1879, pp.435 & 443; Nr. 21 u 22, 1882, pp.429 & 430; Nr. 5 u 6, 1885, pp.72 & 77; Februar 1897, 84 & Oktober 1899, p.643.

[109] M.J. Taussig *Shamanism, Colonialism and the Wild Man: A Study of Terror and Healing*, Chicago, Chicago University Press, 1987, p.214 (originally from T. Husband *The Wild Man: Medieval Myth and Symbolism*, New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1980, p.55).

medieval imagination, a naked hairy figure with both human and animal traits, and a club as his only tool.[110] Carl Ritter, the father of modern geography, and Friedrich Ratzel (his disciple), who together dominated scientific geographical thought in much of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, did their best to move away from old stereotypes of ancient and Biblical versions of the world. They thought that environment and society were closely related in a way that reduced the power of the creator. But they also took the degree to which a landscape had been transformed as a yardstick for cultural development. Hence people living in an area with dense forests were imagined as people without "culture" and "civilisation". The forest remained an icon of wilderness and savagery even for the *maître penseurs* in modern science.[111]

For the Berlin Missionaries, the forests of Vendaland teemed with game, which could be hunted and eaten. On the other hand, lions and "tigers" (leopards) abounded.[112] A number of cases where missionaries had narrow escapes from lions are reported in their journals.[113] In addition, they provided a constant threat to man's divinely-ordained dominance of nature by taking cattle and other livestock. Attempting to control them could result in serious injury for humans. For example, in commenting on events at Georgenholtz on Sunday, 5 February 1882, Koen wrote that:

> This morning battle cries were heard coming from Schecundo [Tshikundu].[114] It later turned out that the noise was because of a

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[110] S. Moser *Ancestral Images. The Iconography of Human origins*, Stroud, Sutton Publishing, 1998. Thanks to Prof. Albert Wirz for drawing my attention to this source and that which follows in the next note.

[111] M. Koriman *Quand l'Allemange pensait le monde. Grandeur et décadence de la géopolitique*, Paris, 1990.

[112] See, for example, *Bawenda-Freund*, Nr. 25, April 1889, VII Jahrgang, p.80 (duck shooting and hyenas); Nr. 27, Oktober 1889, VII Jahrgang, p.87 (lions); Nr. 36, Januar 1892, 10 Jahrgang, pp.121-122 (unspecified wild animals and lions) & Nr. 40, Januar 1892 (*sic.* - corrected by hand to 1893), p.145 (lions) and *BMB*, Nr. 9 u 10, 1872, pp.159 & 160 (lions); Nr. 13 u 14, 1872, p.252 (lions); Nr. 7 u 8, 1873, pp.133-134 ("quaggas" (zebra?), wild pigs and "tigers"); Nr. 7 u 8, 1874, pp.124 (lions and "quagga"), 125 (wild pigs and hyenas), 129 (wild pigs and "tigers") & 130 (buffalo); Nr. 19 u 20, 1875, pp.417 (lions) & 423 ("tigers"); Nr. 21 u 22, 1878, p.492 (buffalo, elephants, lions and "wolves" (wild dogs or hyenas?)); Nr. 23 u 24, 1879, p.442 (lions); Nr. 21 u 22, 1880, p.412 (lions and "tigers"); Nr. 5 u. 6, 1885, p.75 (buffaloes, giraffe, hippopotamus and rhinoceros); Nr. 17 u 18, 1894, p.373 (lions) & Nr. 19 u 20, 1894, pp.410-411 (lions).

[113] See, for example, *Bawenda-Freund*, Nr. 33, April 1891, 9 Jahrgang, 109 and Nr. 46, Juli 1894, 12 Jahrgang, 192-194.

[114] This is the predominantly Tsonga-Shangaan area next to Mingha, near Punda Milia; the most eastern part of the Soutpansberg mountain range. Makwarela claimed the *hosi* here as a vassal.

> mighty lion which had broken into a goat pen during the night. The pen was situated between the huts of the people. They had come out when they had been woken up by the noise. The animal was very wild. They could not kill it, but they managed to get a shot at it and wounded it. After the lion had, before their eyes, torn nine goats to pieces and eaten one, it escaped so quickly, that nobody thought of doing anything to it - they just stared after it as it vanished in the bushes. While the people were still standing there, observing their dead goats, the lion returned. He grabbed an old man from their midst, crushed his leg and inflicted several more serious wounds on him, almost as if he was taking revenge for the shot that had wounded him - which most probably was also causing him serious pain. While he was still venting his anger like this on the old man, another person killed him with an assegai [*Assagai*].[115]

Even more insidious were the serpents which were met with in the field or invaded the houses of the missionaries, even being found under the beds of their sleeping children. Missionary accounts of encounters with snakes display an almost hysterical fear of these reptiles (the Christian icon of Satan), and treat the ultimate victory of the missionary - armed with a poker or some other heavy object - as being divinely-assisted.[116] For example (in one of the less-hysterical accounts), in reporting on events at Tshakhuma[117] during the first half of the year 1877, the *Missions-Berichte* reported that:

> Besides the continual illnesses, Brother Schwellnus also had to go through several life-threatening dangers. Once a branch from a flash of lightning hit his house, while the main flash hit the ground nearby. Unfortunately this fright caused a relapse in his wife's condition.[118] Many a time he has also had to ward off poisonous snakes. One crept under his feet into his house, when he opened the door. He killed it with an iron wash-basin. Another which was just on its way to the house, was killed with a spade. A third one which was making its way straight for his wife, was hunted by the people, but it managed to escape. A fourth one was beaten to death right next to the front door, where the children were playing. So Brother Schwellnus has often enough had the opportunity to thank his Lord for merciful

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[115] *BMB*, Nr. 23 u. 24, 1882, pp.450-451.

[116] See, for example, *Bawenda-Freund*, Nr. 24, Januar 1889, VII Jahrgang, pp.75-76 and Nr. 53, 1 Quartal 1896, 14 Jahrgang, pp.281-282. For discussion of the snake as "Satan (alias the African as other)", see M.L. Pratt *Imperial Eyes*, pp.209-211.

[117] Recorded as "Tschakoma".

[118] Schwellnus' wife suffered from a nervous condition which included attacks of dizziness and convulsions and which got worse after the birth of each of her five children. See, for example, *BMB*, Nr. 13 u. 14, 1886 [Jahresbericht 1885], p.218; Nr. 19 u. 20, 1886, pp.360-361; Nr. 11 u. 12, 1887 [Jahresbericht 1886], p.222; Nr. 21 u. 22, 1887, p.481 and Nr. 21 u. 22, 1888, pp.507-508.

protection.[119]

Even when humans were not in danger, they sometimes suffered losses because of the activities of wild animals. For example, reporting on events at Georgenholtz during the year 1889, Wessmann reported that:

> We are often plagued by wild animals here at our new station. As soon as the sun has gone down and darkness sets in, the hyenas start their work. In one night they fetched no less than five pigs at once. The bigger pigs are bitten by them and are seriously wounded. They also attack dogs and even old hides [skins] are not despised by them. Unfortunately we have no gun and it would be difficult to obtain one here. A tiger [leopard] killed a calf on our station the day before yesterday. Even one of the lions worried us - they are nowadays active here in the area, yet without really getting up to anything serious. A few days ago a giraffe was also shot here. We were also given part of the spoils, but we did not like the taste of the meat - it has a very sweet taste.[120]

Against this background, what the missionaries saw as the dark and dangerous forests were perceived as surrounding and threatening the mission stations[121] - which they saw as "God's gardens in the heathen wilderness."[122] They argued that the mission stations in Vendaland had been "created out of the wild" and there was an ever-present danger of them reverting to this state.[123] Moreover, for the missionaries, the hidden menace and darkness of the forests were also reflected in the character of their inhabitants, who were obscured and sustained by them. As late as 1912, an article in *Bawenda Freund* referred to "the dark forests of Bawendaland and the dark hearts of the heathen Bawenda".[124]

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[119] *BMB*, Nr. 21 u. 22, 1888, p.508.

[120] *BMB*, Nr. 21 u. 22, 1889, p.545.

[121] See in particular *BMB*, Nr. 7 u 8, 1873, pp.133-134; Nr. 7 u 8, 1874, p.128 & Nr. 23 u 24, 1879, p.435.

[122] *Mitteilungen des Vereins „Heidenfreund"*, Nr. 16, 1 April 1887, V Jahrgang, n.p. (p.3). For mission stations as "God's gardens", horticultural imagery and the idea of "cultivating the heathens" in other parts of South Africa, see L. de Kock *Civilising Barbarians*, p.149 and J.L. Comaroff and J. Comaroff *Of Revelation and Revolution*, Volume One, pp.80, 88, 120 (Africa as a "wasted garden"), 121, 170, 175 & 243. For missionary imagery of "the re-creation of the spoiled English garden in Africa's 'vast moral wastes'", see J.L. Comaroff "Images of Empire, Contents of Conscience: Models of Colonial Domination in South Africa", in F. Cooper and A.L. Stoler (eds.) *Tensions of empire*, p.175

[123] *Bawenda-Freund*, Nr. 1, Januar 1915, 32 Jahrgang, 13.

[124] *Bawenda-Freund*, Nr. 1, Januar 1912, 29 Jahrgang, p.1. For the idea of wild landscapes as harbouring "wild" people, see also L. de Kock *Civilising Barbarians*, p.147 and J.L. Comaroff and J. Comaroff *Of Revelation and Revolution*, Volume One, pp.173 & 174.

To counteract this, they clearly believed that their task was in the service of the only true God and that it was his will that they convert the people of Vendaland. The "darkness" of the environment was a trial to be overcome to bring the "light" of Christianity. They also had a very clear perception that, in opposition to the darkness and wildness of Africa, the "light" that they were bringing was the light of "civilisation" - more particularly, "German culture".[125] The Berlin Missionaries saw themselves as the "pioneers of culture" in Vendaland.[126] In missionary texts such as the *Missions-Berichte*, *Bawenda Freund* and various tractates, "heathenism" was frequently referred to in terms of darkness and the progression to Christianity was seen as a progression to light.[127]

These were the major trends which emerged in the missionary interpretation of the landscape of Vendaland over time. I turn now to look at the problems faced by the missionaries in illustrating what they saw as the hardships, dangers and "darkness" of the environment, and the "light" of Christianity, for their readers. Due to the missionary identification of the local people with their environment, their treatment of the human inhabitants of the area forms a core element of my analysis.

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[125] *Bawenda-Freund*, Nr. 3, Juli 1915, 32 Jahrgang, p.17 and *BMB*, Nr. 21 u 22, 1878, p.483; Nr. 17 u 18, 1880, pp.346-348 & 19 u 20, 1886, pp.361-362.

[126] *BMB*, Nr. 21 u 22, 1878, p.483.

[127] See, for example, *BMB* Nr. 11 u. 12, 1875 [Jahresbericht 1874], p.232; Nr. 17 u. 18, 1875, p.369; 19 u. 20, 1875, p.401; Nr. 23 u. 24, 1877, p.484; Nr. 21 u. 22, 1882, pp.434 & 435; Nr. 9 u. 10, 1883, p.140 & Nr. 11 u. 12, 1884, p.216 and R. Wessmann (a) *Der Häuptling August Makhahane*, pp.1, 10 & 16 & (b) *Philippus Thai*, pp.2 & 8-9. In comparative perspective, for discussion of the whole imagery of light and darkness and missionaries as bearers of "light" and "civilisation", see P. Brantlinger "Victorians and Africans", especially pp.176, 178 & 183; L. de Kock *Civilising Barbarians*, pp.46-47 & 84 and B.V. Street *The Savage in Literature*, pp.23-24.

CHAPTER 5

MISSIONARY IMAGES[1]

Following from my discussion of landscape, I now examine some of the ways in which the missionaries used pictures and photographs to give their supporters back home an idea of the land and the people with whom they were dealing in Vendaland. More importantly, I show how they presented the pictorial record in order to make it fit their preconceived ideas of paganism, savagery and Christianity.

To talk about photographs in an historical context is not all that original anymore. Social anthropologists have discovered the photographic record of yesteryears as a major tool to generate new stories and thereby new insights into the societies they study. Historians of Empire use pictures to document the colonial discourse and the processes of "othering" which are inherent in the colonial situation. And in the footsteps of Michel Foucault, they have started to look at the photographic practice as a major instrument of knowledge and power in disciplinary societies, used by colonial agencies as soon as it became available in the nineteenth century. Thanks to the efforts of Christraud Geary, Paul Jenkins and others, we have also learnt to read missionary photographs as mirrors of missionary ideology, to use them as guides to missionary ideas of what is right and what is wrong, proofs of their ambivalence towards African cultures and - more recently - as a privileged source for the study of material culture in African societies.[2]

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[1] This chapter draws on A. Kirkaldy "'Dark Forests and Dark Hearts': Berlin Missionary Constructions of Vendaland, c.1870-1900", in *Psychology Bulletin* Vol. 9, No. 2, December 1999, pp.75-105 [see also http://www.geocities.com/psybul99_2] and A. Kirkaldy and A. Wirz (a) "Picturing the soul: missionary encounters in late 19th and early 20th century South Africa", in *Working Papers on African Socieites*, Nr. 44, Berlin, Das Arabische Buch, 2000 & (b) "Writing the soul in light: missionary encounters in late-nineteenth century Vendaland, Blouberg and Beyond", *SHS Monograph Series*, Vol. 1, No. 1, Thohoyandou, School of Human Sciences, University of Venda for Science and Technology, October 2000.

[2] C.M. Geary (a) "Photographs as Materials for African History: Some Methodological Considerations, in *History in Africa*, 13 (1986), pp.89-116; (b) *Images from Bamum. German Colonial Photography at the Court of King Njoya, Cameroon, West Africa, 1902-1915*, Washington DC, Smithsonial Institution Press, 1988; (c) "Impressions of the African Past: Interpreting Ethnographic Photographs from Cameroon", in *Visual Anthropology*, 3/2-2 (1990), pp.289-315 & (d) "Missionary Photography. Private and Public Readings", in *African Arts*, 24/4

As a result of the methodological and epistemological problems raised by the study of historical photographs, even historians without formal training in art history have familiarised themselves with different conventions of representation, not the least with the pictorial traditions which inform and direct the photographer's eye. In short: we have learnt to read pictures as attentively and as critically as we used to read texts. An increasing number of publications testify to the tremendous progress made in this field of study in the last fifteen years or so.

CONSTRUCTING VENDALAND AND THE VHAVENDA

Against this background, for me, the photographic image that captures the way that the Berlin Missionaries felt about Vendaland and the "Bawenda" (Vhavenda) most effectively was that of "Missionary Schwellnus" which appeared in the *Berliner Missions-Berichte* in 1893 [see Illustration 20]. It would appear that the Mission Society felt the same way as they also used this image for the cover and frontispiece of their published history of the mission in Vendaland (1897).[3] In the last-mentioned position, it is more suitably titled "Forest-stream in Bawendaland. Missionary Schwellnus and natives."

The carefully-composed image uses trees, ferns, creepers and other riverine bush to give the impression of a suitably dense jungle, lush, uncontrolled and untamed. There is no clearing - the missionary stands impressively in the undergrowth of the river bank and the three young black boys who accompany him are perched on the rocks which surround a tiny waterfall. While the caption makes no reference to this being the source of the river (and, indeed, this was not so in "reality" either), the idea of a source is strongly evoked. This suggests the idea of the missionary as a source of knowledge - both about the world and about God and the road to salvation.

(1991), pp.48-59 & 98-100 and P. Jenkins "In the Eye of the Beholder: An Exercise in the Interpretation of Two photographs Taken in Cameroon Early in This Century", in D. Henige and T.C. Mc Caskie (eds.) *West African Economic and Social History. Studies in memoriam of Marion Johnson*, Madison, University of Wisconsin Press, 1990, pp.93-103.

[3] W. Gründler *Geschichte der Bawenda-Mission in Nord-Transvaal*.



Miſſionar Schwellnus.

20. "Missionary Schwellnus"[4]

The subjects are positioned around a banana tree - a sign of cultivation. On one level, this draws the viewer's eye away from the background forest and towards those grouped around it. Viewed differently, the grouping serves to separate the missionary from the African other. Separation and othering is also linked to dominance and subordination - Schwellnus is standing on the left-hand side,

[4] *BMB*, Nr. 17 u 18 1893, p.433.

slightly elevated above the young boys, two of whom are seated and one squatting slightly lower down on the right. The missionary's head and shoulders protrude into the upper left-hand quadrant of the photograph (the strongest part), while the boys are clustered in the lower right-hand quadrant (the weakest part). This serves both to balance the picture and to accentuate his dominance over them.[5] Moreover, his dominance extends to nature. While the jungle stretching out behind the missionary is clearly extremely dense, his positioning in the foreground, and the fact that he has his back to it, lead us to suppose that he knows the paths through the darkness to the light and is able to safely avoid the dangers of the forest. While the jungle is much more massive than him, it is clear that he is not swallowed by it. The idea of a lush, dense, hostile and (to the uninitiated) impenetrable jungle is enhanced by careful cropping of the image and shading and enhancing of the original photograph so that it acquires many of the characteristics of an etching.

Missionary Schwellnus' hat is his only concession to the climate - he wears a high collar, frock coat, waistcoat and long trousers. While we cannot see his feet, we may safely presume that they are encased in suitably well-made German leather shoes or short boots. The three young boys with him are obviously converts as they wear jackets, one of them a rather impressively tailored and well-fitting one, and long pants. Two of them wear hats. However, they are all barefoot.

I believe that this photograph stands apart from all the others from Vendaland in its ability to capture the feelings that the missionaries were attempting to convey to their readers. It would appear that, given the technological constraints of photographic equipment at the time and the limited abilities of most of the Vendaland missionaries as photographers, one of the main difficulties that they

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[5] I would like to thank the Johannesburg-based photographer Mike Goldblatt for clarifying issues of composition here for me. In the original print which I had made from the photograph, the negative became "flipped" and Missionary Schwellnus appeared in the upper right hand part. I had a gut feeling that this weakened its impact - and the missionary's dominance over the boys - considerably but were unable to explain this. In an informal lecture on composition, sketched on a restaurant table-cloth in Cape Town, Mike explained that, perhaps because we are used to reading from left to right, the upper left is widely considered to be the strongest part of the

faced was the ability to visually illustrate the metaphors of darkness and light used in their texts. This is partly illustrated by the enhancements made to the image just discussed. It is also clearly illustrated by a photograph entitled "Crossing a river in Bowenda" [see Illustration 21] which appears in the photographic albums of the Berlin Mission but never appears to have been published, apparently because it was not adjudged to be of sufficiently high quality. In addition, the presence of a disembodied African arm (belonging to a person standing behind the missionary out of the view of the camera) subverts the ruggedly macho scene which the picture seeks to create.



21. "Crossing a River in Bowenda"[6]

This image is undated. However, photographs from the same album appear in M. Wilde *Schwarz und Weiss: Bilder von einer Reise durch das Arbeitsgebiet der Berliner Mission in Südafrika*, Berlin, Buchhandlung der Berliner Missionsgesellschaft in Berlin, 1913. It may be presumed that this image dates from around this time.

For me, the image gives a clear sense of the kind of gung-ho sense of adventure that the missionaries needed in order to survive in Vendaland. Positioned slightly to the left of the centre-line of the photograph with his head, shoulders and chest

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photograph and the lower right both a weaker and a balancing point.

protruding into the dominant upper left quadrant, the missionary immediately draws the eye of the viewer and clearly dominates the photograph. This dominance is reinforced by the sense of movement, the patch of light on the water in the vicinity of the punting missionary, his reflection in the water and the fact that his white underclothing and the darkness of the craft upon which he is standing contrast fairly strongly with the rest of the photograph. While he has stripped to his long underclothing to cross the river, he still wears his pith helmet, boots and gun-belt with revolver. Using a long branch to punt the rather Heath-Robinson looking craft across the wide river (apparently the Luvhuvhu), the missionary displays obvious bravery and resourcefulness. While we cannot see them, we know there are (at least potentially) crocodiles lurking somewhere in the vicinity.

While (for me anyway), the image does manage to generate a sense of excitement and adventure, it does not clearly convey a sense of hidden menace in the lush riverine bush in the background. While wild animals and wild people may possibly lurk there, it is far too brightly lit by the sun to evoke any kind of eerily-chilling feeling in the spine. Shading and enhancements would also not work to instil a feeling of menace or a contrast between light and darkness here.

To capture these deeper emotions equating forests, darkness and heathenism, the Mission Society used etchings. For example, from July 1916, the masthead of *Bawenda Freund* [see Illustration 22] depicted a missionary clad in jacket, tie, waistcoat and hat standing with a group of two scantily-clad men and a child. The direct gaze of the missionary suggests his earnestness, trustworthiness and strength. His manner of dress strengthens this impression. As the men wear only loincloths and the child only a singlet, they are obviously "heathens". This is further reinforced by the fact that they stand in front of the edge of the luxuriant tropical forest. Their facial features are rather coarse, suggesting a race not as well evolved as that from which the missionary comes - perhaps even suggesting a closer link with creatures of the forest than with their European missionary.

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[6] Berlin Mission Archives, Berlin: Album Nr. XXIX, Nord-Transvaal, Nr. 15197.

Support for this interpretation is also provided by the broad, muscular and naked backs and arms of the two African men. Due to the contrast provided by their facial features, their exposure to the viewer is not homo-erotic, instead it emphasises the physical strength and virility of these "creatures of the forest", a strength which, in the interpretation of the mission, is far more "earthy" than, and hence not nearly as powerful as, that given to the missionary by his faith and his culture.



22. Masthead of *Bawenda Freund*[7]

The Africans look across a mountain valley, which contains a settlement, to a full sun rising over the mountains on the other side which contains a cross. The settlement is obviously a Christian one as it lies exposed and unconcealed at the foot of the mountains. Were it a "heathen" one, it would be concealed in mountain forest.[8] This village is protected by the Lord and needs no such crude defensive measures. With an expansive gesture, the missionary points the way to salvation. Despite the fact that it is he, rather than the Africans, who should be the "outsider", in the eyes of the mission and its friends, his position as the agent of Christ puts him in the dominant role of guide to the Africans in their own country. This position of dominance, and what the Europeans saw as his superiority, is reinforced by his hand resting paternally on the naked shoulder of the African man nearest to the viewer. One can imagine what his reaction would

[7] *Bawenda-Freund*, Nr. 3, Juli 1916.
[8] See A. Kirkaldy "Makoarele's return to 'the darkness of heathenism'", p.132.

be if the African man dared to do the same to him! Once again, we are left with an extremely clear idea of missionary beliefs about their superiority, and eventual victory, over the African other.



23. "The Missionary in the Palm-forest"[9]

The equation of heathenism and the dark and dangerous forest is also seen in illustrations in the *Missions-Berichte*. A picture entitled "*Der Missionar im Palmenwalde*" (The Missionary in the Palm-forest) [see Illustration 23] appeared amongst the reports from Vendaland in the *Berliner Missions-Berichte* for 1880. This depicts a missionary and what appears to be a local evangelist walking on a path through a dense forest. They are clearly separated from the "other" - the remaining people in the illustration. Trees, some straight and some crooked, are randomly arranged under a dense tropical canopy. With the exception of the narrow path through the forest, the undergrowth is lush. This is no forest planted or tamed by the hand of "man" - it is primordial forest, dark and "pregnant" with fecundity and, presumably, hidden danger. It is also peopled with hidden

indigenes. Their dress makes it clear that they are "heathens". Those in front of the missionary and his assistant, who both wear European clothing and carry bibles, hide themselves from view. They either peer round trees or hang from vines and branches like apes, or, in the case of the figure on the left, cherubs or angels in Renaissance paintings, seeing but attempting to remain unseen. Seen as apes, they represent the creatures of the forest. If they may indeed be seen as angels, they represent what (in missionary discourse) the creatures of the forest are capable of becoming if they accept the Gospel and the teachings of the missionary and his assistant.

The people behind the missionary and his companion are not as well concealed, apparently since there is less danger of their being seen. A few move away to the right quickly, possibly to find better hiding places or possibly out of fear of these men and the message that they bring. The child running onto the path is being pulled back, presumably as it runs the risk of being too exposed. In spite of their slightly greater visibility, one gains the impression that, should either the missionary or his companion turn around, those behind them would be able to disappear from view quickly enough to remain undetected or to be merely glimpsed. They are unarmed and thus do not appear to present any immediate danger to either of the bearers of the Gospel. However, their concealing themselves could possibly be interpreted as threatening in itself. If not threatening, from the point of view of missionary discourse, it certainly demonstrates the cunning nature and resistance to the adoption of the teachings of Christianity exhibited by these creatures of the forest. On a more symbolic level, what is needed is for them to follow the missionary and his companion on the narrow path out of the dark and gloomy forest to light and salvation. However, in missionary thinking, at present, their misplaced fear or their clinging to the shallow and misleading security offered by the forest - the "darkness" and "superstition" of "heathenism" - is preventing them from doing so.

This picture may also be read as a powerful allegory for the power of the gaze.

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[9] *BMB*, Nr. 21 u 22 1880, p.409.

The missionary and his companion are depicted in a situation akin to the prisoner's dilemma. Just as the inmates of modern prisons are submitted to the one-way gaze of panoptic surveillance, so the bearers of the gospel are closely watched from all sides, but cannot see who is watching them. It is true that they do not seem to be embarrassed by this. Others, however, experienced similar situations in the forests of Africa as the most frightening thing that they had ever gone through. Highlighting what the missionary in the palm forest does not see, the picture shows that the gaze is an instrument of power. Seeing is knowing. Hence, there are no innocent eyes.[10]

Interestingly, this illustration of "*Der Missionar im Palmenwalde*" was not specified as relating to Vendaland. It may nevertheless be argued that its placement amongst reports emanating from that area would have created this link in the minds of readers. Moreover, the kind of dense tropical forest depicted is evocative of that described in many reports emanating from Vendaland and in the photograph of Missionary Schwellnus in this area first published in 1893.

The failure to source this picture, and others, to a specific area is significant. On one level, in many cases, the artists who drew them had never been to the areas that they drew. For illustrations of specific mission stations, which are often recognisable from structures, or other features, still existing today, they presumably relied on drawings, descriptions or photographs made by missionaries from these areas. For less specific background features, and illustrations of general themes, such as missionaries in the palm forest or the arrival of a missionary in a "kraal" (village) [see Illustration 24], they would presumably have relied on their imagination to a greater extent. This imagination saw "heathen lands" as areas of dense tropical forest with all of the hidden dangers and the darkness described above. It made no real difference where these forests were, or which "tribe" of "heathens" lived in them. Forests, "darkness",

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[10] A. Kirkaldy and A. Wirz "Picturing the soul", p.9. For a dissenting view about the power of the Western gaze, see P.S. Landau *Photography and Colonial Vision*, (redacted, short exerpt from a draft of Paul S. Landau, "The Visual Image in Africa: an Introduction," 19 May 1999, essay for the [then] forthcoming anthology, *Images and Empires: Visuality in Colonial and Post-Colonial Africa*, edited by Paul S. Landau and Deborah Kaspin), published by h-Africa at

"superstition" and "dark practices" were common features of "heathen" life in all parts of Africa and, indeed, in other "heathen lands" as well.



24. "Arrival of a Missionary in a Kraal"[11]

The etching of the missionary arriving in the 'kraal' depicts this individual arriving in a settlement which is clearly surrounded by extremely dense and 'dark' jungle. Shading and the use of blacks, greys and whites clearly evoke the idea of the missionary as a figure of light banishing the darkness. His separation from the local African people is emphasised by the fact that he is portrayed in much lighter colours than the people, chickens, structures and forest depicted in the rest of the illustration. It is only where light illuminates parts of the centre space of the village, and one of the paths out of it, that we see other areas of white. Chickens and children flee in fear - they do not know any better. Of the young ones, only the two who are purposefully involved with the cooking pot and

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http://hnet2.msu.edu/~africa/africaforum/Landau.html, accessed 17 June 1999, p.7.

[11] *BMB*, Nr. 15 u 16 1881, pp.264-265.

kettle in the centre of the etching do not flee as they have not yet noticed his arrival. While apparently not completely at ease, the women on the left of the photograph offer protection to some of the children and seem to be greeting the missionary - albeit from the protection offered by the rondavel and its veranda. The arm and hand of the woman on the left appear to be raised in greeting, rather than in terror. Two indistinct figures on the veranda of the rondavel on the right perhaps represent men - who are otherwise absent, presumably either because they are involved in some other activity or because they have run away from the missionary. For the children and the men, the dark forest offers what the missionaries would have seen as the illusion of the safety of the known. This is reinforced by the faint outlines of the roofs of other dwellings hidden in the gloomy forest to the left and right of the centre-line of the etching. While still hesitant, the women are depicted as beginning to realize that the missionary provides no real threat - indeed the light and safety that only he can offer is no illusion and represents what the missionaries saw as the only real truth.

Arising from the multi-purpose nature of these less-specific illustrations, they could also be re-used in, and utilised to meet the needs of, a variety of different situations. Perhaps the most versatile example is a vignette by the artist C. Roux. This began its published life in 1859 as "Guerrier mossouto"in the French Edition E. Casalis' Les Bassoutos and appeared as "A Mosuto Warrior" in the English edition two years later.[12] In 1895, the heroic warrior's picture was titled "*Menschenfresser*" (Cannibal) in Merensky's *Die Menschenfresserei in Afrika*, the guise in which it is discussed in chapter 8 of this thesis.[13]

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[12] E. Casalis Les Bassoutos, Paris, Ch. Meyrueis, 1859, p.66 and The Basutos, London, James Nisbet, 1861, p.63. See R.F. Kennedy (comp.) *Catalogue of Prints in the Africana Museum and in books in the Strange Collection of Africana in the Johannesburg Public Library up to 1870, Volume One: A-K*, Johannesburg, Africana Museum, 1975, C48.

[13] See pp.434-435. A. Merensky *Die Menschenfresserei in Afrika*, Missionsschriften für Kinder Nr.25, Berlin, Buchhandlung der Berliner evangelischen Missionsgesellschaft, n.d. (1895), back cover. In discussing the same picture in 1983, Delius argued that it probably was initially intended to depict a southern Sotho warrior. However, in the same way that the missionaries used a drawing of Tswana society to depict Pedi people working the land, they frequently used the "Warrior ... to depict Pedi society." (See etchings entitled "Working the land" and "Warrior" between pages 180 and 181 of P. Delius *The Land Belongs To Us*.) More recently, in the *Reader's Digest Illustrated History of South Africa*, it is captioned: "An Engraving of a Sotho armed with club, spear and shield. In fact, warriors preferred more than one spear." (C. Saunders (ed.) *Reader's Digest Illustrated History of South Africa*, p.90.)

Less dramatically, the wood engraving entitled "*Tanzende Heiden*" ("Dancing Heathens") discussed later in this chapter (which appeared in Theodor Wangemann's *Geschichte der Berliner Missionsgesellschaft in Südafrika*, published in 1877[14]) originally appeared in Dutch and German versions of Livingstone's *Narrative of an Expedition to the Zambezi*, published in various forms in 1865 and 1866. Here, the dancers were described as "Landeens, or Zulus, who lift tribute of the Portuguese at Senna exhibiting war exercises."[15]

GOD'S GARDENS IN THE HEATHEN WILDERNESS

Moreover, just as sketches or engravings – or their titles - could be utilised to capture "primitiveness", they could also be called into service to fulfil the opposite function. Just as the forest of Vendaland was not wild enough, so the mission stations were not controlled enough. Here too drawings were used to convey ideas that photographing "reality" could not.

In the illustration of "Ha Tschewasse" [Ha-Tshivhase/Beuster/Maungani], two neat lines of trees (which still exist) border the road to the mission-station [see Illustration 25]. In a manner reminiscent of German meadows, the ground is covered in low-growing grasses and ground-cover Missionary Beuster, in hat and frock-coat, walks down the road towards the viewer. Behind him walk two Africans, a man (in front) and a woman. Judging by their dress, they are "heathens" (perhaps following Beuster to conversion). The mission buildings stand neatly behind them. Behind all of this lies rather neat-looking forest and the impressively high and rocky Soutpansberg. The whole idea that is conveyed to the reader is one of neatness, control and tranquillity. Similar emotions are evoked by illustrations of "Tchakoma" (Tshakhuma) and "Georgenholtz"[see Illustrations 26 and 27.]

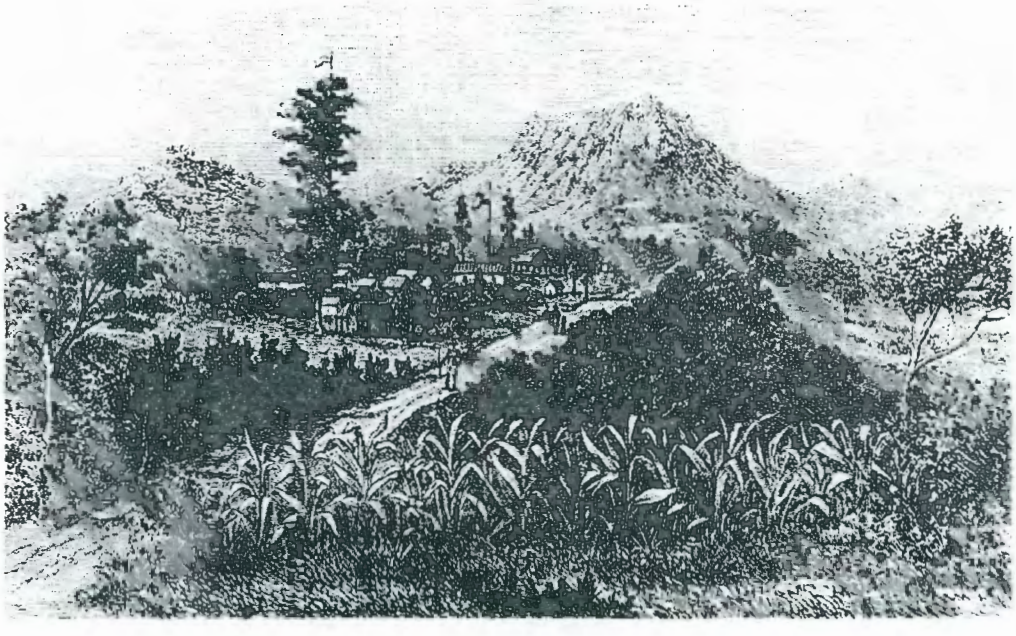
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[14] T. Wangemann *Geschichte der Berliner Missionsgesellschaft in Südafrika*, Berlin, 1877.

[15] David and Charles Livingstone (a) *Narrative of an Expedition to the Zambezi*, London, Murray 1865, p.36; (b) (same title), New York, Harper & Brothers, 1866, p.153 and (c) *Neue Missionsreisen in Sud-Afrika*, Two volumes in one, Jena und Leipzig, Hermann Gostenoble 1866, Volume 2, p.38. See R.F. Kennedy, R.F. (comp.) *Catalogue of Prints in the Africana Museum, Volume Two*, L603.



25. "Ha Tschewasse" [Ha-Tshivhase/Beuster/Maungani] [16]

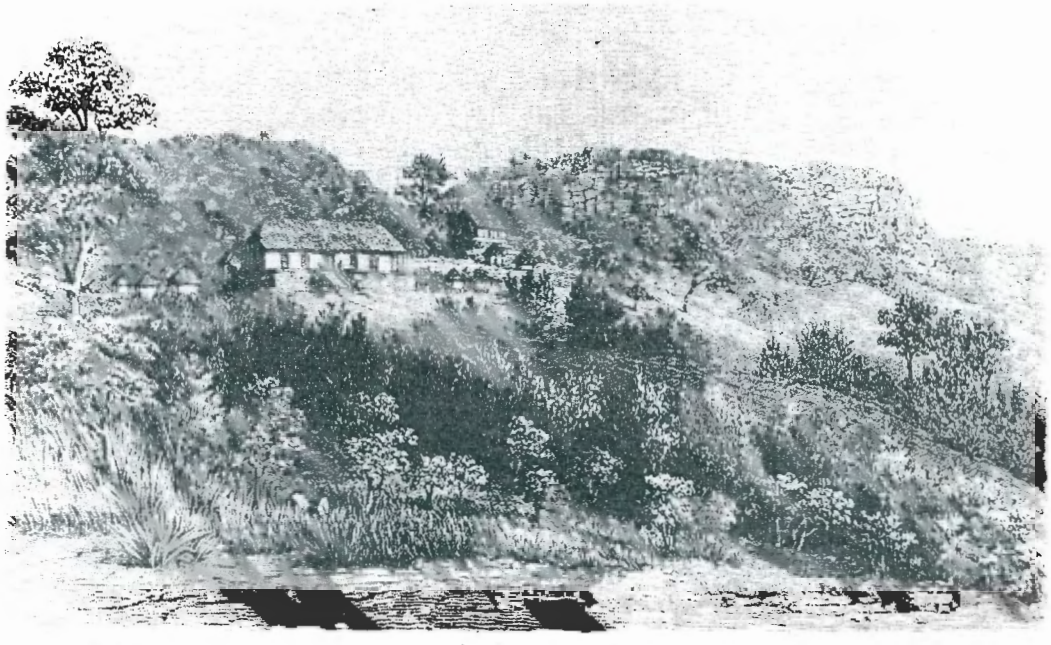


26. "Tchakoma" [Tshakhuma][17]

[16] *BMB*, Nr. 21 u 22, 1886, p.401.
[17] *BMB*, Nr. 11 u 12, 1887, p.201.

Thus, for the missionaries, Africans had to choose between the "darkness of the forest" and the light of "God's gardens in the heathen wilderness". As illustrated by textual comments about "the dark forests of Bawendaland and the dark hearts of the heathen Bawenda" and my comments on the illustration "Der Missionar im Palmenwalde", Africans were very much seen as an integral part of the forest which concealed and succoured them. This point is also clearly made in descriptions of Missionary Koen's first sight of Vendaland on his arrival in April 1876. In missionary description, upon entering this area, he found himself in:

> a completely different area. A wonderful view from heavily-forested mountain ranges lay before them. In between were to be seen light-green mounds surrounded by meadows as fine as those in the Alps, and many crystal-clear streams and magnificent rivers rushing through the valleys. Here and there could be seen reddish-green spots - these were gardens, and not far from them could be seen the pale, pointed grass roofs of the villages set between the great plantations of bananas. Here and there, a herd of cattle grazed in the long grass.[18]



27. "Georgenholtz" [19]

Because of Koen's "Germanised" world-view, and because the tractate from which this description is taken was intended for a German audience, this

[18] G. Sauberzweig-Schmidt *Klaas Kuhn*, p.11.
[19] *BMB*, Nr. 17 u 18, 1894, p.365.

description of his first impressions of the environment draws on Alpine imagery familiar to Germans. Viewed from high in the mountains, and at first sight, the panoramic view that lay exposed before him was very beautiful, clear and filled with varying hues of colour - the "darkness" of the forest of missionary stereotypes is not visible from above, to experience it, one has to descend from the light and live in it. Also, even danger can have its beauty.

In the continuation of the missionary description of what Koen saw on his first contact with the Vhavenda, the people themselves in turn merge into the environment. In the eyes of the missionaries, as "primitive" people of the land, they are only revealed once their environment has been revealed. The first sighting of the Vhavenda occurs when they are engaged in *dzunde*, communal labour for the *khosi*. They are at work in the gardens. Although the comparison is not drawn directly, there is a strong implicit suggestion that these people are very different to German peasants. German peasants would have been seen as imposing order on the environment and working hard to make a living from it. The Vhavenda are portrayed as being much more dominated by the environment than their European counterparts. Rather than imposing order on it, they are its products. Because of the demands that the environment makes on them, they are strong. They wear only the minimum of clothing, made of skin, thus displaying another core item of "primitive" life according to European thought. Skin garments, in European eyes, indicated an absence of cultural skills such as sewing and weaving:

> In one of these gardens, they saw for the first time the people of the tribe among whom ... [he] was to preach the gospel. There, black-brown men, handsome, strong figures, only clothed with a small piece of skin around the hips were hard at work with their broad hoes, while others were making music with their drums, pipes [flutes] and other instruments. Some were dancing, jumping together in time. A large group was also standing with the beer, valiantly drinking. After a while, some of the workers left the musicians and took hold of the hoes. Conspicuous were their shaved heads, on them only a patch of woolly hair was left standing.- In such gardens, maize and so-called

> kaffir-corn, a variety of tall-growing millet, are grown, also pumpkins and beans. Usually it is the women who do most of the work.[20]

In less complimentary vein, Beuster also drew parallels between local people and their environment, and described their bodies. On 24 August 1881, Beuster, two Native Evangelists and two catechists set out on a reconnaissance journey to the northern parts of the country. This would take them up to the banks of the Limpopo River and would last until 1 September 1881.[21] Commenting on their journey northwards from the capital village of Thengwe[22] on 27 August 1881, Beuster noted that:

> As soon as we left the capital village, we were continually presented with ever changing interesting sights. Here we found the first fruit-bearing Baobab and many Mahogany trees.[23] A shower of rain drove us into a village along the road. This village distinguished itself by its excessive dirt and disorder. The cattle kraal was in the middle of the people's huts. Because of the rain, the wet manure flowed from the kraal everywhere - through everything, into everything; one could hardly walk through there. The people living there were also not unlike their surroundings - they were rough, unobliging, dirty youths [*Burschen*]. In order to get space around the fire for my companions, I had to downright call upon one after the other to make some space. Yet, when we left again, after the rain had let up somewhat, they had, at least in part, become a bit more agreeable - some of them even informed us that they were prepared to show us the way. It was certainly the first time that the Word of God has been heard in this village. The men of the village were all gathered. In such places, I have to abstain from insisting that the women also attend, as these people are still too suspicious and their trust can only be won gradually.[24]

The missionaries clearly had a special interest in people's bodies – whether "handsome" or "dirty" - because, for Christians, the body is God's temple. David Livingstone had set the tone when he hailed Commerce, Christianity and

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[20] G. Sauberzweig-Schmidt *Klaas Kuhn*, pp.11-12.
[21] *BMB*, Nr. 21 u. 22, 1882, pp.427-436.
[22] Recorded as "Tengoe".
[23] These trees are still there. The scenery he is describing can be seen when one takes the tar road from Thengwe to the Sagola Spa (Klein Tshipise) - the tar road ends half way there, but it is a good main gravel road.
[24] *BMB*, Nr. 21 u. 22, 1882, p.429.

Civilisation as the true trinity of progress.[25] The Berliners may have been less enthusiastic supporters of commerce than Livingstone but they too were convinced that industrious labour and, to a lesser extent, trade in the products of this labour, lay at the heart of rebirth in Christ. Building on this foundation, they also shared the Scottish missionary's conviction that Christianity was a way of life and that the Gospel asked for deep-reaching changes - changes which demanded that the body and mind of each individual be re-formulated according to contemporary European notions of propriety and moderation. Hence they entered into a war against nakedness or what they considered improper dress. Transformation had to be total – the ecology, the economy, social relationships and the people themselves.

Thus, when Beuster wrote an overview "The Mission and Culture" in 1879, he felt that:

> Everything has its own time. Before a campaign can begin, preparations have to be made. It was like that here. Such works with culture and endeavours into civilisations[26] are inseparably tied up with mission work - yes, the mission is without any doubt, a pioneer in these matters. ... When we came here seven years ago - working our way through the bush to here with hoe, axe and spade - a wagon was regarded with astonishment as a miraculous object by all local residents who had not yet been away from here. They came to see how the oxen carried the wagon because they imagined that the wagon had been carried to here on the backs of the oxen. Let us now take a step over the great troubles we had in constructing a road [wagon-trail] in such a water-rich country - where in five hours riding, one has to cross over no fewer than eighteen smaller streams and bigger rivers and several marshes. Let us merely mention that for a long time this road could only be travelled on at the risk of one's life. Let us think of the fact that at that time one [of the "heathens'] still threatened to chop our wagon into pieces because of its oddity. Let us now see what it looks

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[25] For Livingstone's main aims as the cessation of the slave trade and the opening up of Africa to Christianity and Commerce, see, for example, P. Brantlinger "Victorians and Africans", p.178; J.L. Comaroff, J.L. and J. Comaroff *Of Revelation and Revolution*, Volume One, p.80; R. Mackenzie *David Livingstone: The Truth behind the Legend*, Chinhoyi, Fig Tree Publications Zimbabwe, Fourth Edition, 1997, pp.17, 29, 47, 143, 188, 190, 196, 291, 293 and A. White *Joseph Conrad*, pp.35-36.

[26] He uses the terms "*Kulturarbeiten und Civilisationsbestrebungen*". Translated literally, "*Kulturarbeiten*" means "cultural works", in other words working with a(nother) culture. "*Civilisationsbestrebungen*" translates literally as eforts/endeavours into civilisations. Put into simpler terms, this means that the missionaries worked and influenced the cultures and civilisations of the people they worked with.

> like on our return, seven years later.[27] On this, now well constructed and well used road, a procession of eight wagons, all heavily laden with produce from this country [land] and, mealies [*Mielis*],*) pass us.[28] Let us also consider that already many wagons with the same cargo have left this country and that soon others will follow to transport out of this country, the maize which lies stored in enormous heaps in the open fields. We then have to admit that much has changed here in seven years. Where, long ago we experienced difficulties in following the tracks where the wagon had passed some months before and we often lost the way, one can now no longer lose one's way even on a dark night.[29]

In Beuster's opinion, the road constructed by the missionaries had brought direct advantages to the local people in stimulating both trade and industrious labour.[30]

> What a source of income has opened up for the people of this area in that they can now sell the surplus of their crops - a short while ago these surpluses were as good as worthless. Now they can trade the surplus for valuable articles like salt, clothing, beads. By obtaining a market for the produce, the people are stimulated to greater industry and more diligence. It will be no exaggeration, if we estimate the amount of maize exported along this road in the year 1879 as 6000 bushels.[31] If we calculate further, the seller receives an amount of goods to the value of 4 Marks for each bushel, we get to a sum of 24000 Marks worth of goods which were imported here and which were of benefit to the local population.[32]

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[27] They had obviously gone somewhere and were returning either on horseback or by wagon.

*) "Maize."

[28] They must have come across these traders who had come to Vendaland to buy maize - a crop which does well in this fertile and wet country.

[29] *BMB*, Nr. 17 u. 18, 1880, pp.346-347.

[30] In claiming credit for the construction of the road, the missionaries neglected the contribution made by African labour to the project. However, it must be admitted that local people withheld their labour due to a combination of dissatisfaction about the pay offered, rumours that they would not be paid and the fact that they seem to have seen no need to work for the missionaries. Why surrender their independence, even temporarily, to work for these new white inhabitants? Why add yet other tasks to the communal labour they already had to perform for the *mahosi*? Even if they wanted to work for payment, there were a wider range of options available in migrant labour. Although terribly paid, they would still be able to earn more than the missionaries were inclined, or able, to pay. Against this background, Beuster, Stech (for the time that he was there), Schwellnus and, later, Koen did far more of the hard physical work themselves than they would otherwise have been inclined to do. They were, however, continually assisted by their Native Assistants, especially Johannes (Mutshaeni) and Paulus (Luvhengo). See, for example, *BMB*, Nr. 7 u. 8, 1874, pp.138 & 150-151; Nr. 9 u. 10, 1874, pp.162-163 & 180; Nr. 17 u. 18, 1875, pp.370 & 371; Nr. 19 u. 20, 1875, p.418; Nr. 21 u. 22, 1875, p.452 and Nr. 23 u. 24, 1876, pp.391 & 394-395.

[31] One bushel is about 36,5 dry litres - one big bucket.

[32] *BMB*, Nr. 17 u. 18, 1880, p.347.

According to this argument, it was also not only the local African population who benefited, directly or indirectly, from the road. White traders, especially English-speaking traders, and the producers of trade goods also benefited tremendously:

> And the exact same sum of money can be calculated if we look at it from the side of the traders in these goods (most of the maize is bought by traders) if we accept that a trader makes a nett gain of 100% - which is not too high for the conditions here. So the value gained by the trader through the use of the road would not be inconsiderable - especially if one adds to this that, besides the trade in maize, substantial amounts of other goods are traded for money and other products. ... What a significant gain to the English traders, and through them, the English producers of these goods through the colonies. The English products go far beyond the boundaries of the British colonies, for the benefit of the colonies and back, to the mother-land. It is a wonder that the German missionary does not heave a sigh at the general complaint about the lack of business in the Fatherland. Why can the Fatherland not reap the fruit of the preliminary work done by its own children! Germany has no colonies and it is also not well equipped for the colonial trade.[33]

Lastly, in Beuster's opinion, white inhabitants of the northern areas and even the British administration of the Transvaal had benefited from these developments:

> The opening of this grain-storage-room, has also been of significant advantage for the White population within a radius of five to six days travel. They had often found it necessary to go hungry. I wonder whether these White inhabitants have ever had thoughts about how it has happened that they now can annually obtain a good proportion of their food requirements from this country? ... I wonder whether the Government will at last realize that it, at least in part, has to thank the German missionaries, that it was able to fill its warehouses for the approaching campaign against Sekhukhuni [Sekhukhune]? (because the biggest proportion of the maize which is bought here is delivered there). This is also doubtful. It might not be an exceptional work of culture, which I occasionally allow myself to represent. But in the face of the facts that this all has been brought about in a short space of time, through the work of a few missionaries, it could be regarded as proof that the missionaries are not just loafers - but that, by the sweat of their brows, they can lay claim to have the honour of being the champions of culture here.[34]

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[33] *Ibid.* pp.347-348.
[34] *Ibid.* p.348.

A further element of this "culture" which the missionaries saw themselves as introducing and fostering lay in a shift in focus away from pastorialism to agriculture or, were this to prove impossible, onto some other form of labour. Thus, writing on 24 October 1885, Beuster stated that:

> It has already often saddened and depressed me that, of the close to 100 labourers who have already worked here for some time since my arrival in this country, so few of them should have received any spiritual stimulation or good intention. As these young people have all left their homes and now have to see to their clothing and food by themselves, I want to give them all work here. As I already have three school boys and one adult Christian in my service, this raises a problem. This would best be overcome if some industry could be developed here - because there is no market for all sorts of products from the veld.[35] The one possible source of income, the coffee industry, is rendered as good as impossible by a worm which eats up the roots till the trees die. Yet, for the moment, they have been employed and God will help us further.[36]

Moreover, the missionaries hoped to transform agriculture not only on the mission stations but also in the surrounding "heathen" communities. On 25 October 1887, the first plough which the mission had purchased for use in Vendaland was put into use at Ha-Tshivhase.[37] This was in conformity with normal mission practice whereby the missionaries bought equipment - like wagons, mills, ploughs, crowbars, spades, and so on. The local communities could then also use these, but like the Christians, they also had to pay for the use. For example, they had to pay to have a certain amount of grain passed through the mill; to have their fields ploughed; to have their goods transported by wagon and so on. However, at Ha-Tshivhase the local people resisted paying the full amount that the missionaries asked from them. Commenting on this, the *Missions-Berichte* reported that, despite this setback: "So, civilisation marches forward hand in hand with the mission, also in this far away region."[38]

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[35] In other words, they cannot obtain money by growing things in the fields or by getting wood or hides from the veld - the people all grow their own food and get what they need from the veld.

[36] *BMB*, Nr. 21 u. 22, 1886, pp.421-422.

[37] Recorded as "Ha Tschewasse".

[38] *BMB*, Nr. 21 u. 22, 1888, p.517.

I have devoted so much attention to missionary ideas about transformation of the environment and economic life due to the importance which the Berlin Missionaries attached to this as a prerequisite for other changes which they saw as being equally important, if not more important, stepping stones towards the ultimate aim of total transformation of the believer in Christ. In the missionary ideal, building on this foundation, changes in architecture in turn reflected changes in the covering of the body and the body itself. In turn, all of this reflected spiritual turning and spiritual change.

FASHIONING THE COLONIAL SUBJECT

Thus, building rectangular houses was not enough if they were still "built of poles like a hut".[39] Instead, when family finances allowed, they had to be built of stone and bricks, which could be collected or produced, and nails and other iron equipment, which had to be purchased (previously, all building materials could be collected or manufactured locally). Some of the difficulties involved in this are illustrated by Schwellnus' reports on building operations at Tshakhuma Mission station during July 1885.[40] At this stage, one house had just been rebuilt and five others were in the process of reconstruction. They had reportedly collapsed because of damage to their pole frames by termites. Schwellnus commented that:

> Because so many MaGwamba [Tsonga-Shangaan] have moved to here almost all the wood in this area, which can be used to build, has been chopped down. That is why these people formed bricks (they have learnt this craft here, from me) and tried to burn them with too little wood - this however did not work very well. They gathered stones from the veld for the foundations and started to build - I had to measure off the building sites for them. But the building of rectangular shaped houses with bricks was by no means a success. That is when I had to jump in to help them through this cultural battle - using my own hands. As I was helping the one, it was not good to desert the second; and the same went for the third, right up to the fifth. When the walls had been done, I had to instruct them on how to make rafters, one after

[39] *BMB*, Nr. 19 u. 20, 1886, p.361.

[40] Recorded as "Tshakoma", the more accurate spelling. In a number of the reports which preceded this, it was "Tschakoma". This could perhaps have been because Wangemann was then back at HQ in Berlin after his journey to the South African stations.

> the other. There was a shortage of nails needed for the rafters and more iron materials for the doors and more things like this - unfortunately this boiled down to money, which was needed to buy these things. That is when they had to be helped again, so that each would still experience the joy of putting a roof over the building. One brought eggs, the other coffee beans to trade with. Others did not even have these and asked for credit in this difficult cultural battle.[41]

Despite these difficulties and expenses, the converts were obviously extremely proud of their new dwellings. In August, Schwellnus described the house-warming party given by Moses, the first to complete his house. This consisted of two rooms, each about twelve foot (four meters) square. Moses baked bread, reaped coffee beans and slaughtered a pig in honour of the occasion. The feast was held in the evening by lamplight. All Christians present in the area were invited to attend. Hymns were sung, Schwellnus read Psalm 127 and preached about the assistance, protection and blessings which the Lord provides to those who believe in Him. After payers and the main meal, a number of the visitors spoke in honour of the occasion. Speeches were also made for the benefit of the "heathens" who had gatecrashed the party. These were followed by hymns and sacred music. Following Moses' party, Solomon and Daniel (Moses' future son-in-law) held similar celebrations when moving into their homes. Others "were too poor to follow their example."[42]

In addition to the joy that the converts showed in their new, square homes, singing sacred songs and playing sacred music on western instruments were two more ways in which converts demonstrated their new life in Christ. This is demonstrated in the second ever report of a Native Evangelist from Vendaland to be published in the *Missions-Berichte*.[43] Reporting on events surrounding his founding of an out-station at Thengwe on 26 October 1877, Stefanus Makhado wrote that:

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[41] *BMB*, Nr. 19 u. 20, 1886, pp.361-362. The missionaries must have showed the people how to plant coffee trees and reap coffee beans since coffee is not a "traditional" local brew. Coffee trees grow very well at Tshakhuma.

[42] *BMB*, Nr. 19 u. 20, 1886, p.362.

[43] The first report by, rather than about, a Native Evangelist was Johannes Madima's report from Malongodse covering the period from September 1888 to March 1889, published in the *BMB*, Nr. 21 u. 22, 1889, pp.530-532.

> On the day of our arrival, there were many people gathered at my house. They had heard me playing the violin and they said: "We would like to see the thing which sings." I showed it to them, as many of them had not yet seen nor heard it when it is played. I played the violin and we sang the songs of God [hymns] - because I also had children from the school with me, who had accompanied me to Théngoe [Thengwe]. ... When we had finished, they said: "Sing some more, we will accompany you." ... After [we had sung more hymns] ... I still told them God's Word.[44]

A further crucial element of being reborn in Christ was the adoption of western dress. We have seen Mutshaeni's shame at being dressed in skins when he accompanied Beuster to Natal and the trouble that his fellow-Christians went to in clothing him in what they saw as the appropriate manner.[45] At the other end of the scale, one of the recurring themes of Makwarela Mphaphuli's story, discussed in Chapter 8, is his sophisticated wearing of western dress, his possessing a square house and his use of other items of western material culture. These are interpreted as setting him apart from the mass of his subjects, and even his royal contemporaries. Before his "fall", he is seen as being "half-civilised" ["semi-civilised"]. Even more commendable from the point of view of the missionaries, he masters "the art of tailoring", presents "well-made European clothing" to catechists, and teaches others how to learns how to sew "decent clothes for themselves."[46] Some of the importance which the missionaries attached to the covering of the body with cloth clothing is also revealed by Frau Schwellnus' report to the wife of Mission Director Wangemann on her sewing club at Tshakhuma[47] during the course of the year 1880:

> Our congregation is developing more and more. Nobody is walking about without clothing any longer. They work and so earn their clothing. I have my sewing classes every afternoon - for women, girls and also boys. Sometimes men also come to sew their trousers and coats. I have to help them with these. Our small congregation gives me great joy. Of the fifty members of the congregation, only one old grey-haired man, Nosa, goes about without clothes - he covers himself with a blanket only. All of them have to sew. I found that the traditional garments which they have sewn for themselves with great effort, are

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[44] *Ibid.* pp.539-540.
[45] See p.138.
[46] See especially pp.438 and 440.
[47] Recorded as "Tschakoma".

> much more appreciated by them. I have now given up my sewing classes, because the people often had to work in the fields on those days assigned to sewing classes.[48] Everyone now comes at his or her own time, whenever he or she is free. Admittedly, only the evenings remained for my own work, so I no longer do very much for myself. I am very grateful to you, Frau Director, for the pretty children's socks and shirts you sent. You will not believe how much you have helped me by sending these. Could I dare to ask you, just this once, for some sewing needles, cotton and thimbles - and maybe also a few pairs of scissors. One can buy all these things at Botshabelo, and I do get them from there.[49] But they are very expensive and I cannot expect the people to pay for them. They can hardly believe that such a small thing like a thimble, cost 1 Mark at the traders who travel around here. So they rather sew without them. Should you once again have some sewing material in your store-room, please also send some to Tschakoma [Tshakhuma]. Here in our isolation from the civilised world, that is of exceptionally great value.[50] This year, several of our people have made big wheat [grain] fields, so that they will be able to sell the wheat [grain] later on to obtain money for clothing.[51] On the whole, the people are industrious. The heathens are amazed at their big gardens [fields] - they can hardly understand it, that one can work so much.[52] They say, the Christians have suddenly become rich people. But they will not admit [see] it, that the Christians are not sitting about and loafing like they are - they reckon, *Mynheer* has made the people rich.[53]

As we have already seen, the Comaroffs call this whole process of transformation the fashioning of the colonial subject.[54] This is well put. But it is important to stress that converts actually wanted to live in square houses and to wear western dress since this set them apart from the "heathens". This not only gave them a

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[48] Beyond the work in their own fields, the people would not have known the days on which they would be called to work on the *khosi*'s fields. When the kudu-horn (the "*phalaphala*") was blown, the people would have been expected to bring their hoes and work in his fields, regardless of whether there were sewing lessons or not. This was most probably why the sewing lessons were stopped for a while - until they had finished working in the *khosi*'s and their own fields.

[49] There was a well-stocked shop at Botshabelo, where the missionaries could get all their stocks. Some of the goods came from Germany and they were therefore very expensive.

[50] In other words, the fact that someone thinks of sending material is greatly appreciated.

[51] She used the word "*Weizen*" [wheat]. However, wheat does not do well in Vendaland. I am sure she meant maize fields. But as most of the people in Germany would not have known maize, she used the more familiar word "*Weizen*" for the staple diet of the people.

[52] In subsistence living, one just works enough to live – excess produce beyond that in private and royal grain-storage bins will just rot or be stolen. As everybody had enough to live on, nobody thought of selling off the excesses - who would buy if he already had? Buying was only done in times of drought, and then everybody in the area was in the same position. It was then a fairly recent development that the traders regularly came to buy and take to other areas.

[53] *BMB*, Nr. 7 u. 8, 1881, pp.121-122.

new sense of identity, and a sense of community related to this identity, but also enabled them to recognize each other. If a Christian entered a strange area, he or she would be able to use signifiers such as this to find fellow-believers who would offer help, shelter and food. To me, this adds another dimension to, rather than contradicts, our understanding of what the missionaries were setting out to do. In many cases, there was a co-incidence, rather than a conflict, of desires. Problems would only come in if the convert or, perhaps, the pastor, wished to break the conventional mould.

It is also important to see that the missionary project did not only involve the clothing of the "heathen" but also the refashioning of their very bodies. Missionaries did not only fight nakedness, they also wanted people to do away with their habit of greasing and tattooing the skin, they wanted them to adopt new hair styles, they made them walk and sit in a different way, they taught them to differentiate between leisure and work, the public and the private and they imposed new time schedules.[55]

In the present thesis, in missionary terms, the refashioning of bodies is seen as occurring on two main levels. On the first, there is maintaining the sanctity of the body by reserving it for only one partner through abandoning polygamy, refraining from taking part in war and the rituals surrounding warfare, protecting the bodies of twins who would otherwise have been killed, (for Africans but not for the missionaries) refraining from polluting it through the drinking of alcohol and refraining from "heathen practices" in general. At a deeper level, not mutilating male genitals through circumcision, avoiding mutilating or excessively punishing the female body through initiation rituals are revealed as core elements of this process.[56] In addition, I would argue that the touchstone of all these techniques of the body, to use a term coined by Marcel Mauss, was the face, more particularly the eyes and their gaze.[57]

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[54] See pp.17, 31 & 35.
[55] A. Kirkaldy and A. Wirz (a) "Picturing the soul", p.25 & (b) "Writing the soul in light", p.30.
[56] See Chapter 7.
[57] M. Mauss "Les techniques du corps", in *Journal de psychologie normale et pathologique*, Vol. 32, 1935, pp.271-293. Thanks to Prof. Albert Wirz for this reference.

The reason for this stress put on the eyes lies in the fact that the missionaries thought as Europeans had thought for centuries: that the eyes are a mirror of the soul, expressing "man's" inner self. This idea has a long tradition going back to the Romans and Greeks at least, but it gained prominence only in the early modern period.[58] And it fitted well with the Berliners' Pietist convictions. It is thus not surprising that they held on to this idea even though in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, scientific thought moved away from it. The Berliners experience of these matters came from various sources, ranging from medieval sacred art to the *Physiognomische Fragmente zur Beförderung der Menschenkenntnis und Menschenliebe* of the Zurich cleric Johann Caspar Lavater, published in several volumes in 1775 and after. Lavater had developed an intricate way, full of contradictions yet eagerly taken up by his contemporaries, of how to read a person's character and disposition from his or her external features. And, true to his calling as a man of universal knowledge, he also tried to develop what he called national physiognomies to better differentiate between members of different nations. His books were best-sellers throughout Europe up to the end of the nineteenth century, more particularly so in Germany where Goethe and Herder, amongst others, popularized his ideas. They eventually became part of the discourse about the body of even those people who had never seen a copy of his books.[59]

Thus, a crucial part of re-making the convert was the re-making of his or her gaze. Eyes are prominent in most pictures in which people appear, more especially so in portraits, be they of individuals, families or other groups. But although eyes and the gaze of people have clearly, and for a long time, captured the attention of photographers, they are hardly taken note of in the literature dealing with photography - a short remark or two at best before the authors move

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[58] Cf. Jean-Jaques Courtine and C. Haroche *Histoire du visage, XVIe-début XIXe siècle*, Paris, Rivage/Histoire, 1988, for a succinct overview. Again, thanks to Professor Albert Wirz for this reference.

[59] See A. Kirkaldy and A. Wirz "Picturing the soul", pp.25-26 and "Writing the soul in light", p.31.

on to what they consider to be more important matters.[60] Missionaries, on the other hand, had quite distinct ideas about how people should look. These ideas are deeply rooted in the European history of the body and they add up to a stunted yet complex grammar of facial expressions, gestures and postures. Photographs, we may assume, were choreographed accordingly within the bounds set by the technical means available.

The gaze of most people in early photographs is stern and staring, rare are the pictures with people smiling and laughing. This is first and foremost a product of technology - in the early days of photography, people had to hold still for quite a while in front of the camera and look fixedly with eyes wide open before they could relax again. No wonder then that they got this stern or even anxious expression on their face. Studio photographers knew about the problem. One response that they adopted was that of pointing their cameras at other parts of the body than the eyes - the bust if the person to be photographed was a woman or, if it was a man, the hands, often holding some paraphernalia or tool as symbol of his profession and social status. Alternatively, they tried to soften the expression of those photographed by means of carefully retouching the prints.

I think, however, that there is more to the stern gaze than a simple technical problem. For me, this is clearly demonstrated by the fact that it is carried over in sketches and other forms of illustration during the period. A good example from Vendaland is the "Sketch of Bawenda [Vhavenda] Children" appearing in Gründler's *Geschichte der Bawenda-Mission in Nord-Transvaal* [see Illustration 28]. The four children are suitably demure in dress and demeanour. All are smartly, but conservatively, dressed. The eldest boy seated in front wears a sedate jacket and tie. His compatriots wear demure jackets or tops influenced by Prussian clerical and children's dress (today we may be tempted to call them Maoist!). Despite their humble and devout expressions, it is their eyes which dominate the picture and draw the attention of the viewer. In marked contrast, viewing the photograph of a (non-Christian) "Transvaal Native Belle" appearing

[60] An exception is C. Pinney *Camera Indica: The Social Life of Indian Photographs*, Chicago, The University of Chicago Press, 1997.

in Wessmann's *The Bawenda of the Spelonken*, it is her naked breasts, rather than her eyes, which attract the viewer. In fact, here eyes are almost closed and look away to the side of the viewer [See Illustration 29].



28. "Sketch of Bawenda [Vhavenda] Children" [61]

So, rather than focusing on the technical difficulties involved in taking the photographs, I would like to argue that these eyes in photographs and other illustrations of Christians partly document certain contemporary ideas about what a decent person had to look like. Also, although they may misrepresent the feelings and identities of those pictured, they nonetheless had an influence on their self-image, and that of their peers as well. Establishing a new convention of self-representation, these portraits helped to form people. Thus, photography and other forms of portraiture developed into an agent of change, in Africa no less than in Europe. They were helping to personalise men and women, giving each of them what only royals and other members of the elite had formerly had a right to, namely the right to a unique body and a face of their own. In democratising the

[61] W. Gründler *Geschichte der Bawenda-Mission in Nord-Transvaal*, p.83.

face, portraiture was helping to create individuals.[62] In marked contrast, images of "heathens" continued to objectify them, depriving them of individual personality and portraying them as representing specific "types" – one may say, almost as specimens.



29. "A Northern Transvaal Native Belle" [63]

"HEATHENS"

Against this ideological background, returning to the description of Koen's first impressions of Vendaland and the Vhavenda on pages 283 to 284, while the missionaries were able to appreciate the beauty of the people they encountered in the fields, they could not help but be surprised that the hoeing went hand in hand

[62] Cf. D. Le Breton *Des Visages. Essai d'anthropologie*, Paris, Èditions A.M. Métaillié, 1992, pp.45-52.
[63] R. Wessmann *The Bawenda of the Spelonken*, facing p.11.

with music, dancing and drinking, turning a pastoral idyll into a festival. Since daily life looked so peaceful, tempting and arcadian, the missionaries had to look elsewhere to better construct the African "heathens" as dangerous and depraved people. As is vividly demonstrated in Chapter 8, and other descriptions of warfare in this thesis, what they looked for they found in Vhavenda warfare and the festivities and rituals with which the end of a raid was celebrated. Describing in graphic detail what they saw of these occasions, the missionaries focused all their attention on what people did with their own bodies and with those of their enemies, including hearsay and moral judgements in their texts. Quite obviously, they missed out on the political meaning and the spiritual aspects of these events. Nonetheless, their texts are more than mere mirrors of cultural misunderstandings. They show, if that is necessary, that there are no wars without victims. To the extent that they relate what the missionaries observed, these texts also open a window on the body politics of the Vhavenda with its diverse aural, gustatory and proxemic practices. They give an idea, at least, of how music and dance were used to communicate political ideas, and how, more generally, ideas and values were inscribed into the bodies of people, not the least by way of taking *muti*. They also show the use of feasting to create community, and the role of bodily enactments of what is right and what is wrong. They even hint at the integration of the spiritual realm into politics which is central to Vhavenda cosmology. Hence we are dealing with complex texts where different discourses about the body interlock.

Thus, in describing Vhavenda warfare, Missionary Reinhold Wessmann noted that:

> A war is never finished until the enemy's capital has been destroyed and the chief been killed, or has taken flight from the country; for the conclusion of peace is unknown to the Bawenda. The raids mostly take place in moonlight nights after midnight, when the enemy have grown tired and are in deep sleep. Has a raid succeeded? The victors celebrate their victory on returning; on these occasions the big war-drum is audible throughout the country. Occasionally a killed enemy is taken home by the victors and used as medicine, as they think that tasting his flesh will make them strong and give them advantages. Usually the flesh is mixed with beef. Cowardly as they are, they are also cruel, and

often helpless women and children are their only targets; and when their wild nature has been awakened they allow their evil passions to run loose. A spectacularly brave warrior who succeeds in doing some deed of valour, such as murder, receives as a reward a small dignity, such as ruler over some villages, or the chief presents him with a woman.[64]



30. Warrior[65]

[64] R. Wessmann *The Bawenda of the Spelonken*, p.112.

[65] (Untitled in original) Berlin Mission Archives, Berlin: Album, Vendaland von Missionar G. Westphal, Nr. 8632. The only photographs dated in the Westphal album are dated to 1922, 1924, 1927 and 1928. Among the travel stops and postings listed in his personnel file were: Tshakhuma, 24 August 1912, to Ha-Tshivhase, 31 August 1912 and from there to the labour at Khalavha [out-station in Vendaland]. War was declared on 1 August 1914. On the following day, he left Khalavha and travelled to Georgenholtz, where he remained until 23 December 1914. On that day, he returned to Ha-Tshivhase. From 9 February 1915 to 16 February 1915, he was stationed at Gertrudsburg. He was ordained on 9 January 1916. From 6 March 1916 to 19 September 1919, he was stationed at Khalavha. He was married on 2 June 1916. From 19 September 1919, he was stationed at Georgenholtz. [Acta der Berliner Missions-Gesellschaft betreffend Personalia: Westphal, Gotthardt, Abt.II, Fach II 20, Nr.5A, Angefangen 1902, Beendigt 1929.]

However, as with the landscape, it was difficult to capture these scenes – and the emotions that they engendered – photographically. The photograph of a warrior which appears in the albums of Missionary Westphal [see Illustration 30] is obviously posed and is far from terrifying. An apparently amused crowd of onlookers dressed in items of western clothing peep into the photograph from the bushes on the right. I also strongly suspect that the subject was a Christian convert who dressed up specially for the shoot. Perhaps because this photograph was very obviously staged, it does not appear to have been published at any stage.

Although wearing the *tshiala*, the distinctive leopard or goat skin emblem of his age-set even Stayt's "old warrior", NeKungula, does not look particularly martial and appears to have refused to have dressed up for the occasion [see Illustration 31]. Perhaps this is partly explainable by the fact that warfare was no longer practised in Vendaland during the second and third decades of the twentieth century.



31. "Old Warrior, showing Tshiala"[66]

Moving to dancing, apparently because of the difficulties in capturing movement on photographic plates during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries and the amateur status of the missionary photographers, the photograph of a *domba* dance appearing in Wessmann's (1908) work *The Bawenda of the*

Spelonken looks remarkably static and fails to capture the sinuous and sensual python-like movements of the dance [see Illustration 32].



32. "THEN: A Native Dance in Vendaland some years ago"[67]



33. Domba[68]

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[66] H.A. Stayt *The Bavenda*, p.71 (text) and facing p.71 (photograph).

[67] R. Wessmann, *The Bawenda of the Spelonken*, facing p.33. Also in the private collection of Dr. U. van der Heyden.

[68] Copy of a photograph of the Domba, photographed by the author at the Schoemansdal Museum, February 2001.

This dance, first illustrated by the missionaries, has become an icon for the Vhavenda appearing in tourist brochures, posters, academic works and in the display on the Vhavenda at the Schoemansdal Musuem [see Illustration 33].[69] More recently, it has been illustrated in Peter Magubane's *Vanishing Cultures*.[70] It was also performed at the first Soweto Awards ceremony in February 2001, at which achievers who had their roots in Soweto were honoured. A photograph captioned the "Snake Dance" illustrated the newspaper report.[71] Similarly, the *tshikona* dance performed on solemn and special occasions - in particular for royalty - involves the combined music of reed flutes, and *ngoma*, *thungwa* and *mirumba* drums and is extremely noisy.[72] However, the photograph appearing as "Tshikona Dance in Ngovela at Ha Tschewasse" in the Berlin Mission Northern Transvaal albums and "Tshikona dance" in M. Wilde's *Schwarz und Weiss* is extremely static and fails to capture the circling, advancing and retreating movements of the dancer-musicians [see Illustration 34]. Indeed, while clearly photographed and pleasing to the eye, due to the limited photographic technology, the dancers are arranged as stiffly as Prussian soldiers on parade!

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[69] For tourist brochures, see, for example, B. Johnson Barker, G. Maclay and A. Steyn *Off the Beaten Track: Selected Day Drives in Southern Africa*, Cape Town, AA The Motorist Publications, 1996, p.16; Republic of Venda *Venda Land Of Legend*, Sibasa, Venda Tourism, n.d., p.3 and Republic of Venda *Venda Travelogue*, p.3. For academic works, see, for example, John Blacking (a) *The Initiation Cycle: vhusha, tshikanda and Domba*, at http://era.anthropology.ac.uk/Era_R...aGirls/Introduction/I_GIS_Text.html, accessed 29 September 2000 (follow through links) & (b) *Domba*, at http://era.anthropology.ac.uk/Era_R...Girls/Domba.School/D_00_Opening.html, accessed 21 September 2000 (follow through links); W.D. Hammond-Tooke (ed.) *The Bantu-Speaking Peoples of Southern Africa*, London, Routledge & Kegan Paul, Second Edition, 1974, facing p.235 and H.A. Stayt *The Bavenda*, facing p.114.

[70] P. Magubane *Vanishing Cultures*, Cape Town, Struik, 1998. See especially pp.83 & 85.

[71] *The Star* 26 February 2001, p.3 (includes photograph captioned "Snake Dance" by Alf Kumalo).

[72] Personal experience and N.J. van Warmelo *Venda Dictionary*, p.406.



34: "Tshikona Dance in Ngovela at Ha Tschewasse [Ha-Tshivhase]" [73]



35. "Dancing Heathens"[74]

[73] Berlin Mission Archives, Berlin: Album Nr. XXIX, Nord-Transvaal, Nr. 15188 and M. Wilde *Schwarz und Weiss: Bilder von einer Reise durch das Arbeitsgebiet der Berliner Mission in Südafrika von M. Wilde, Missionsinspektor*, Berlin, Buchhandlung der Berliner evangelischen Missionsgesellschaft, 1913, p.113.

[74] T. Wangemann *Geschichte der Berliner Missionsgesellschaft in Südafrika*.

Faced with this "tameness" of the "heathens" in photographs such as these, in order to show what they saw as the "wildness" and "satanic" nature of their dancing, the editors of the *Missions-Berichte* appropriated an image which they titled "*Tanzende Heiden*" ("Dancing Heathens"). We have already seen how this had its origins in Livingstone's *Narrative of an Expedition to the Zambezi* and also appeared in Wangemann's *Geschichte der Berliner Missionsgesellschaft in Südafrika* [see Illustration 35].

Village scenes were much easier to stage for photographs. An image entitled "Bawenda Huts" appeared in the Berlin Mission Society's history of its activities in Vendaland published in 1897 [see Illustration 36].[75] Two years later, the same picture was published as "Natives (Heathens) in [the] Transvaal" in the *Missions-Berichte*.[76] In this publication, it was annotated. Unfortunately, the surviving copy of the reports was not in good condition and I could not copy this. Instead I used the copy from Gründler. In the *Missions-Berichte*, the woman kneeling on the left is labelled as "woman". Moving across to the right, labels are "house", "grinding-stone", "women", "baskets", "water-pot", "women and children", "men" and "house".

The image, and its annotations, could have appeared in any of the standard ethnographic works of the time (or, indeed, for most of the following century). Draped in blankets and beads, the women are dressed suitably "traditionally". While some are bare-breasted, they are less noticeably so than in many non-missionary sources. The children wear little more than beads and coverings for their genitalia. The "huts" and household implements seen in the photograph are also suitably "traditional". However, much as this "tradition" could be staged, modernity still crept in - as with the concealed onlookers in the photograph of the warrior, the men who are so far in the background as to be almost unnoticeable are wearing items of Western clothing .

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[75] W. Gründler *Geschichte der Bawenda-Mission in Nord-Transvaal*, p.63.
[76] *BMB*, Oktober 1899, p.657.



36. "Bawenda Huts"[77]

Images discussed thus far were viewed by the missionaries as being "public" - capable of being disseminated to the friends and supporters of the mission and the wider public, if they were of sufficiently high artistic merit. However, the missionaries' deep interest in aspects of "heathen" life and tradition led to a situation where some images were deemed as "private" - not suitable for consumption outside of the controlled environment of the missionary's home or the mission seminary. These presumably fulfilled the exoticist longings of individual missionaries or were used for instructional purposes - as a kind of "know your enemy" exercise. Thus, an illustration about the use of a hoe to symbolise a bride from the out-station Ha-Bengwa which appeared in the album of Missionary Westphal was, to the best of my knowledge, not published anywhere in missionary sources [see Illustration 37].

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[77] W. Gründler *Geschichte der Bawenda-Mission in Nord-Transvaal*, p.63. Also appears in the private collection of Dr. U. van der Heyden and in *BMB*, Oktober 1899, p.657.



37. "OUT-STATION HA-BEGWA
Offering the bride (hoe-handle) by the Makhadzi (head-woman of the extended family) for a deceased young man, because he had not yet looked for a bride"[78]

The missionaries nevertheless appear to have decided that it was acceptable for "private" images to be published in "scientific" anthropological sources and made it available to Stayt for use in his (1931) work *The Bavenda*. His explanation began with a reference to the Tshivenda expression *u lubumbukavha* ("Are you daft?" or "Are you all there?"). According to Stayt, the word *lubumbukavha* (simpleton) was also used to refer to any young man over the age of puberty who died before being given a wife – "he is a poor foolish fellow, having left the world ignorant of the all-important subject of sex and parenthood, and dying before he has fulfilled the purpose for which he was born." Unless pacified, it was possible that he would "become a source of endless trouble to his lineage." So he was provided with an old hoe handle, *gulelwa*. A cotton string was tied near the hole. This represented the waistband of a wife, while the hole represented her vagina. The handle was then fixed by means of four pegs in a well-cleared open space at a fork in a path approaching the village where the young man's spirit could clearly see it. The handle faced towards the spirit as it

[78] Berlin Mission Archives, Berlin: Album, Vendaland von Missionar G. Westphal, Nr. 8616.

approached the village, while the pegs were made of the *tshiralala* (from the verb "*u ralala*, to wander about") or the *tshilivhalo* (from the verb "*u livhala, to forget*") trees. These were then tied to the head by means of a string made of wild cotton "treated with a mixture made from the roots of the *vhulivhadza* (from *u livhadza*, to make forget) and the *mpeta* (to dissolve or tie up), with powder from the hedgehog quill, *thoni* (bashfulness)." According to Stayt, these preparations were "all used to confuse the young man's spirit so that it" would "forget its anger, become bashful and ashamed, and run away before it reached the village." The hoe was fixed by a "girl , never his sister". After this, a woman from the lineage of the deceased, generally the *makhadzi*, poured "beer into the hole in the hoe, saying: 'To-day we have found you a wife; the wife is here. Do not worry us any more. If you are annoyed with us, come here.'" This reportedly satisfied the young man's spirit for ever.[79]

While similar in many ways, the explanation that I was given by a member of the Mphephu royal family, *Vho* Lettie Mphephu-Nengudza, was far more sexually explicit. She explained that the photograph depicted the *makhadzi* pouring the viscous white residue obtained from grinding grass (*Mufhoho*). The hoe-handle represents the woman, the slot where the hoe would normally go through the vagina and the peg the penis of the deceased man. The white residue represents the sperm.[80]

Both of these explanations are sufficient to explain why the missionaries do not appear to have published the photographs in mission publications but saw them as acceptable for publication in Stayt's work.

CHRISTIANS

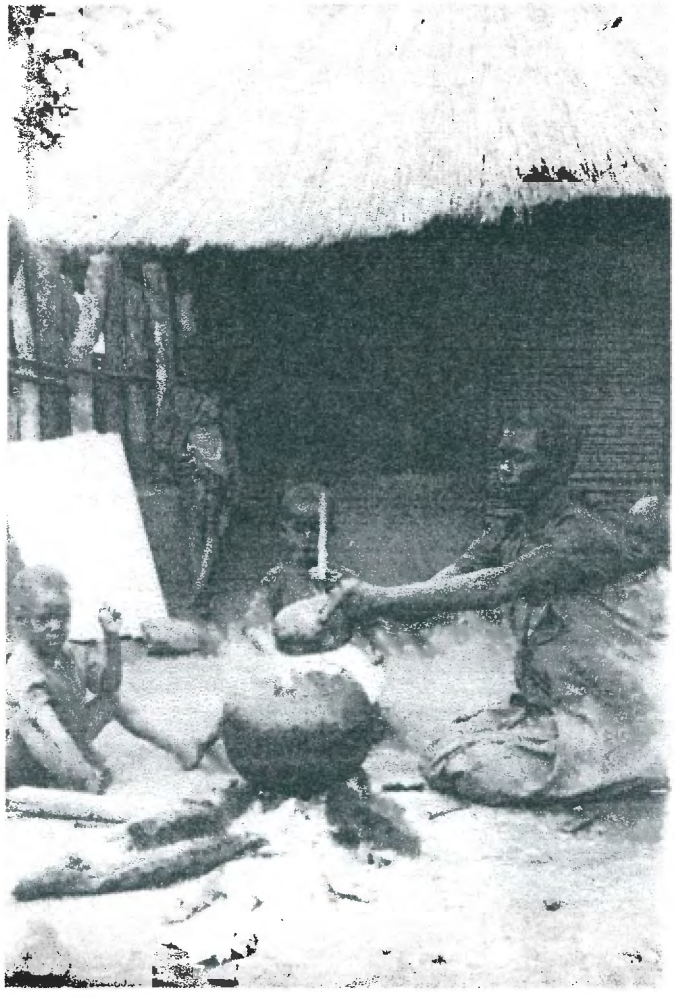
In opposition to what the missionaries saw as these secret customs, Christians could be shown involved in their daily task and trades, preparing to set out to

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[79] H.A. Stayt *The Bavenda*, pp.241-242 and facing p.242 (illustration).

[80] Personal communication, *Vho* Lettie Mphephu-Nengudza (sister of the late *Khosi* P.R. Mphephu), 23 June 1999.

spread the Gospel, or at high-points in their lives and the lives of their communities.



38. Miryam, wife of Nathaniel, cooking (Untitled in original)[81]

Miryam, the wife of the Evangelist Nathanael, one of the first and best-loved assistants to the missionaries in Vendaland, is hard at work in the photograph of her which appears in Westphal's album [see Illustration 38]. As a Christian, she does not wear the bracelets and anklets (*vhukunda tshotshane* and *vhukunda ha mulenzhe*), given to a bride and wife by her husband's family to mark significant events, that a married "heathen" woman would usually wear with pride.[82] Her

[81] Berlin Mission Archives, Berlin: Album, Vendaland von Missionar G. Westphal, Nr. 8620.

[82] *Ibid.* See also photographs and captions on pp. 88 and 89 of P. Magubane *Vanishing Cultures*. As the consultant for the section on the Vhavenda in this work, I requested that Ms Lettie Mphephu-Nengudza be credited for the captions since she collaborated in writing them.

children are all dressed in at least cast-off Western clothing. Perhaps she and the children are not dressed in their best because this is no special occasion - she is involved in cooking maize porridge. Unlike the case with non-royal "heathens", all people appearing in the photograph are individually named, attributing to each of them a history and a personal identity. The inscription in the album reads: "Miryam with the young Nathanael on her back cooks for the builder of the chapel of Old-Georgenholtz. Mashudu, next to her, holds the flour-basket [basket of maize]. Petrus, with his hand below his knee. In the background, Asaf, the oldest son."[83]



39. "The Village-Taylor of Beuster" [84]

The photograph of "The Village-Tailor of Beuster" appearing in Westphal's album, clearly reveals what the missionaries would have perceived to be the diligence and self-reliance of the converts. In the inscription accompanying the image, we are told that he "... uses his artistically put-together trousers as a

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Unfortunately, possibly because of design factors, this was not done in the version finally published.

[83] Berlin Mission Archives, Berlin: Album, Vendaland von Missionar G. Westphal, Nr. 8620.

[84] *Ibid.* Nr. 8530.

recommendation for his art that he learned in Johannesburg" [see Illustration 39].[85]



40. "The Helpers [Native Evangelists] at Tschakoma [Tshakhuma]"[86]

Also ready for anything are the so-called "Native Evangelists" of Tshakhuma, pictured in the Northern Transvaal albums of the Berlin Mission and M. Wilde's *Schwarz und Weiss* grouped in front of a paw-paw tree [see Illustration 40]. As we have already seen, people grew food and fruit-crops close to their houses prior to the extension of white settlement into Vendaland. However, friends and colleagues of mine who grew up on mission stations, or who were born into second-or third-generation Christian families, state that they always plant fruit

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[85] *Ibid.*

[86] M. Wilde *Schwarz und Weiss*, p.188. Also appears in Berlin Mission Archives, Berlin: Album XXIX, Nord-Transvaal 1, Nr.27.

trees wherever they stay and that this is a habit learned from their parents or grandparents who, in turn, learned it from missionaries. The idea behind this was to assist in making people self-sufficient. Paw-paws are also tropical fruits and, by their shape and the exuberance of their seeds, could be said to call to mind tropical fecundity.

Because of the grouping of people around it, the tree is very much a part of this photograph, almost like a ninth person. It emphasises the tropical setting while the usefulness of its fruits echoes the usefulness of the Evangelists. As with their counterparts at Gertrudsburg [see Illustration 41], they are neatly dressed in western suits and (in the latter case) hats of varying degrees of shabbiness. In the first photograph, at least one of the men is bare-footed. In the second, all are.



41. "Helpers [Native Evangelists] of Gertrudsburg"[87]

[87] Berlin Mission Archives, Berlin: Album Nr. XXIX, Nord-Transvaal, Nr. 15164.

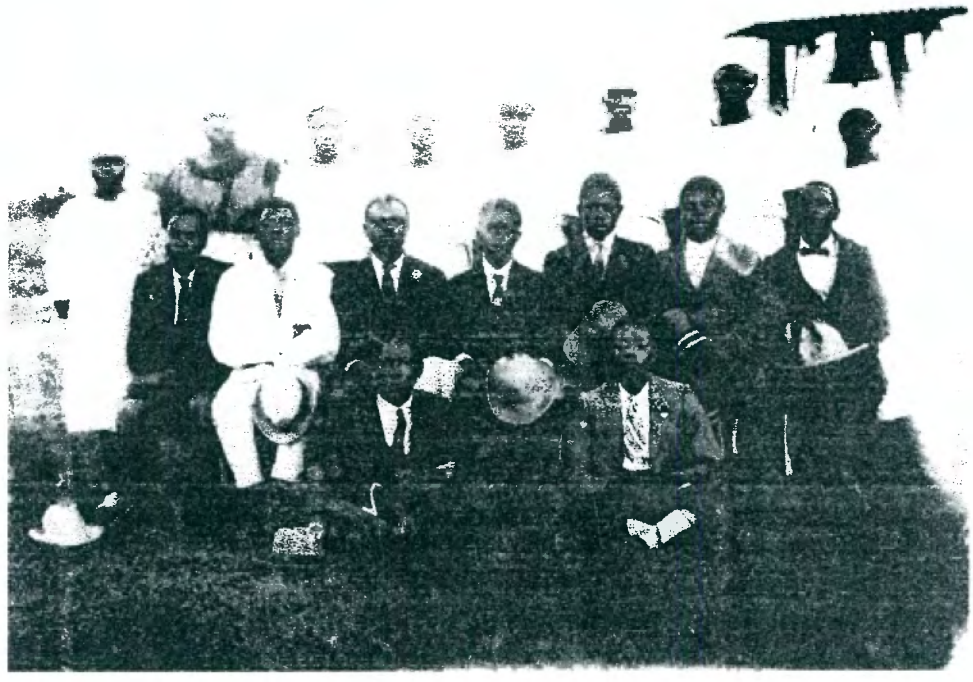


42. "AND NOW: Converts to Civilization in Zoutpansberg"[88]

In Wessman's *The Bawenda of the Spelonken* and a file of photographs from Gertrudsburg in the archives of the Berlin Mission, two photographs are labelled "AND NOW: Converts to Civilization in the Zoutpansberg" and "Gertrudsburg, 1926, Candidates for Confirmation, Pentecost, 1925" respectively [see Illustrations 42 and 43]. These clearly illustrate the kind of men and women that the missionaries were setting out to create. The first of these, appears below the picture of the "THEN: Native Dance in Bawendaland some years ago" [see Illustration 32]. The picture is dominated by two rows of women, one seated on the ground and the other seated on chairs behind them. All of them wear head-coverings and eight out of the eleven wear white dresses symbolic of purity and humility. The three who do not wear white are nevertheless soberly dressed. Slightly in front of, but next to, the front row of women sit four young children and an older boy. A child's head also peeps out from behind the row of women sitting on the ground. Female children wear white and male children wear small suits or other items of western clothing. The women are clearly identified as the chaste mothers and nurturers of the children, as they were supposed to be in missionary thinking, which was strictly gendered in agreement with contemporary European bourgeois values. Two rows of largely sombre men,

[88] R. Wessmann *The Bawenda of the Spelonken*, facing p.33.

obviously clad in their Sunday and high-holiday best stand protectively behind the women. The man in their middle is the most distinguished looking of the men, drawing the gaze of the viewer to him. He in particular, and the men in general, draw the viewer to their eyes.



43. "Gertrudsburg 1926. Candidates for Confirmation. Pentecost 1925"[89]

Similar feelings are evoked, but even more powerfully, by the photograph of the "Candidates for confirmation." Seen through missionary eyes, the women are suitably demure in dress and posture, the well-dressed young men exude confidence in the clear focused gaze of the convert and in their clothing and accessories, their sitting positions and the way that they hold their hats, some with their arms crossed, others with joined hands. Both of these photographs leave the viewer in no doubt that these people have been completely re-made as Christians. To put it differently: the camera eye furthered the development of the Christian eye/I.

Re-making converts - and the environment that they lived in - lay at the heart of

[89] Berlin Mission Archives, Berlin: Unlabelled File [Gertrudsburg], Nr.1134.

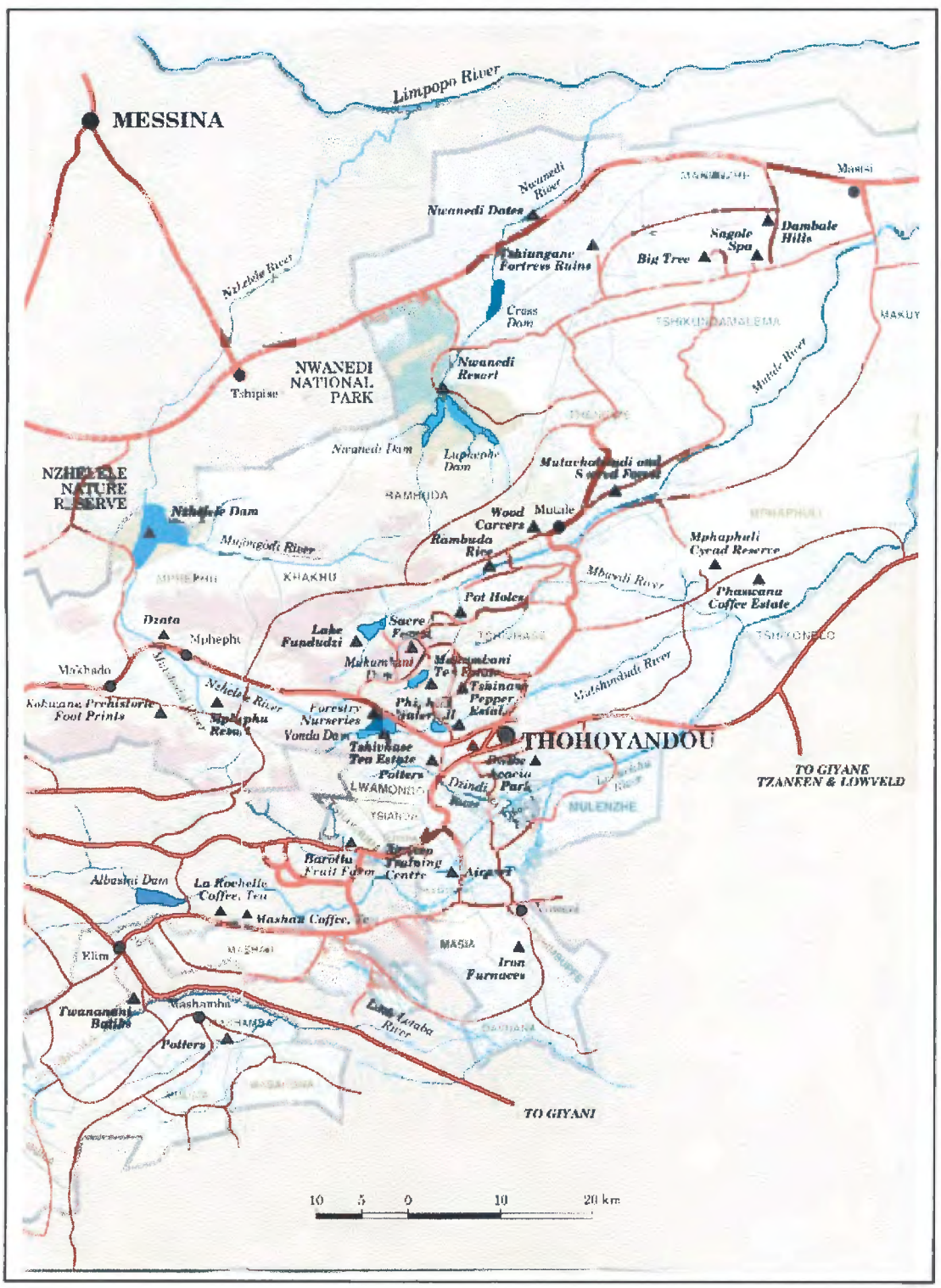
the missionary endeavour. To appropriate one of Rod Giblett's phrases, the "dark and dank ... 'nether regions'"[90] of the Vhavenda and Vendaland had to be brought under control - by being hidden beneath neatly-cut western clothing or cut and pruned into submission by the shears of diligent missionaries and eager converts. Just as skin clothing - symbols of nature and "heathensim/barbarism" - would give way to neat dresses and suits, so the "dark forests" would have to be transformed into "God's gardens". In order to make all of this possible, the upper-echelons of the mission Society, and the wider circle of friends of the mission in Germany, had to be convinced that the labour was desperately needed. Wealthy patrons had to be persuaded to give bountifully. Parishioners in the smallest parishes had to be persuaded to put their spare change (or their widow's mites) into the mission collection boxes (suitably embellished with mechanised models of small black boys who knodded their heads submissively in thanks when coins were given to them).[91] While this could be achieved easily in written texts, it frequently needed to be either embellished or pruned if suitable illustrations were to be called into service. Moreover, by attempting to remake Africa and Africans in their own image, and with their own gaze, the missionaries were enabling themselves to exert control over the unknown, to carve a niche for themselves in what they saw as the dangers and uncertainties of late nineteenth-century Vendaland.

In doing this, the missionaries were not operating in a vacuum. Their power to bring about the changes that they desired was severely constrained by the fact that they were operating in an area which had not yet been brought under colonial domination. Although under pressure from the expanding authority of the ZAR/Transvaal regime, power in the area was vested in the local deity, other supernatural beings, the local rulers and local medico-religious practitioners. In their terms, if missionaries were to succeed, they had to wean people away from the authority and influence of these. In order to do so, they had to understand the nature of the society which they were seeking to transform. I turn now to their attempts to do this.

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[90] R. Giblett "Cities and Swamp Settling; decolonizing wetlands", p.5.
[91] In GDR times, the remaining examples of these collection boxes were collected and crushed.

MAP 9: Tourist Map of Vendaland
[Republic of Venda *Venda Land Of Legend, Visitors' Map*, Sibasa, Venda Tourism, n.d.]



CHAPTER 6
ETHNOGRAPHIES OF POWER

The missionaries recorded a surprising amount about local belief structures and the nature of local society in Vendaland. On the one hand, this was used to show their principals in Germany, and the wider community of friends of the mission, just how desperately important it was (in their terms) to save the "heathens", both for Christ and from themselves. However, in my reading, it is also clear that they treated this collection of information as a form of intelligence gathering in their fight to win people away from "tradition" (many elements of which they saw as synonymous with "darkness" and "superstition") and re-model them as Christians. In modern military terms, what they were attempting to do was build up a corpus of "know your enemy" literature to assist them in their struggle against local ideologies, local social and political structures and what they interpreted as the power of Satan.

Coming from a different ideological background (and a different era) to the missionaries, it took me some time to realise that they viewed Satan as a very real, and an extremely active, enemy. This first occurred to me when reading Missionary Karl Endemann's account of "the Religion of the Bassuto [Basotho – Pedi]", written from the newly-founded mission station of Phatametsane in 1863. The Berlin Missionary argued that:

> A principal question is that of the religion of a people. Also the Bassuto are not without religion, even though they have no religious community or religious instruction. Their religion is a religion of the Devil, their priests are the *Zauberer* (*Baloi* = villains).-[1] Of God they know nothing. ... Yes, *Zauberei* and all the associated superstitions are the main work of Satan against which we are working here in the fields. ... The source of the *Zauberei* is superstition, which rules all over where the faith in the Living God is lacking. It is human nature to need faith. They must have something supernatural upon which they can hang their hearts; and if it is not Jehovah, then it is Satan and all the forces of darkness. And our poor people have been firmly captured in the chains of superstition; and oh!

[1] "*Baloi*" should read *vhaloi* (single, *muloi*) – "witches".

> they do not feel it! do not want to be freed by the Son; who really sets us free! ... The Lord wants to free the captive, hear the dove, give the speechless speech, the blind sight, cause the lame to walk, make the lepers pure and reawaken the dead to life! Yes, all strength to the arm of the Lord![2]

It will become clear that the attitudes of these pioneers of the Berlin Mission in the northern areas were carried over into Vendaland by those who followed them. At various times, the *malombo*, the *thondo* and various forms of female and male initiation and circumcision were all described as being Satanically-inspired. In contrast to this, there were also elements of local belief structures which the missionaries felt that they could use as laying a foundation for conversion. For example, they saw local conceptions of a supreme being and the local belief that a founding ancestor would return to bring peace to the world as an ideal starting point for attempts to wean the local people away from their existing beliefs to the Christian God. However, even in engaging with beliefs such as these, the missionaries still believed that they would first have to attack the religious foundations of society. In their analysis, only then would it be possible to activate and build on their potential.

THE SUPREME BEING AND OTHER SUPERNATURAL ENTITIES

In a report compiled in 1878 and published in the following year, Beuster recorded that the supreme deity in Vendaland was Raluvhimba, the Father of Holiness or the Holy Father. He was "the active, all-creating and maintaining god through whom the trees, shrubs and everything were created and are maintained even now." His dwelling lay at Mubvumela Mountain in the lands of the Khalanga people in Zimbabwe. He was also known as *Muhali-muhulu* or *Mudzimu muhulu* (in other words, the Great God). His praise-names were "*Muhali-muhulu! Phanda ha ndou; Mukokoto o nga lutombo*", in other words *Muhali-muhulu* "Bigger, stronger and mightier than any elephant! Indestructible like a rock!"[3]

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[2] *BMB*, No. 7, 1864, pp.108 & 110-111.

[3] *BMB*, Nr. 23 u. 24, 1879, pp.441-442 (quotation, p.441). Raluvhimba was recorded as Ralowimba; Mubvumela as Mowumela, Khalanga as Bakalanga (in the modern orthography, they are known in Tshivenda as the VhaKalanga); "*Muhali-muhulu*" as "*Moadi-mokolo*"; "*Mudzimu muhulu*" as "*Modimo umkulu*", "*Muhali-muhulu! Phanda ha ndou; Mukokoto o nga lutombo*" as "*Moadimokolo*

The missionary seems to have been unaware that there was no "real" or "pure" Vhavenda religion which was identical for all the groups living in Vendaland. Rather, as Dederen has emphasised, just like any religion, it was "a combination, an amalgam of contributions from a variety of groups."[4] Thus, Beuster did not mention that Raluvhimba was called Mwali by some groups. Raluvhimba was the name given to this God by the people of the eastern parts (the VhaMbedzi), who had come down in small groups before the VhaSenzi and settled in Vhumbedzi. This was the area where Beuster was working. The VhaSenzi groups (the Ramabulanas, Tshivhases and Mphaphulis) knew him as Mwali. In addition, Beuster was not yet able to comment on the fact that Mubvumela, "the place of the white seringa [*Kirkia acuminata*]", is in the Belingwe province of Zimbabwe – apparently Mount Belingwe. Groups of VhaLemba still have a yearly pilgrimage to this place to worship there.[5] There His linguistic abilities also seem not yet to have extended to

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mpada na ndou mokokoto o nga lotombo!" and *Muhali-muhulu* as "*Moadimokulo*". For further discussion of local conceptions of Raluvhimba which draw very heavily on Beuster's report, see J. Flygare *De Zoutpansbergen en de Bawenda Natie*, p.7 and E. Gottschling "The Bawenda", p.211. For Stayt's perspective on Raluvhimba / Mwari (Mwali), see *The Bavenda*, pp.43, 201, 225, 226, 230-236, 240, 310, 313 and 360. See also *BMB*, Nr. 21 u. 22, 1888, p.511; J.M. Dederen "Venda for the inquistive tourist", Tourist Workshop, Department of Anthropology, University of Venda, 1986, pp.2-4; H.A. Junod "Some Features of the Religion of the Ba-Venda", in *South African Journal of Science*, Vol. 17, 1920, pp.208-211; D. Mcdonald "Vendaland", in *The Blythswood Review: A South African Journal Review: A South African Journal of Religious, Social and Economic Work*, Vol. X, No. 112, April 1933, p.28 and R. Wessmann *The Bawenda of the Spelonken*, p.80.

[4] J.M. Dederen "Venda for the inquistive tourist", p.2.

[5] Discussing the VhaLemba is opening a can of worms which I was hoping to be able to avoid doing in a thesis which already has enough of these lying around! However, a further reference to a VhaLemba family towards the end of this chapter, and details of their participation in the *murundu* discussed in Chapter 7, makes it essential for me to say something about them. The Lemba live among other groups in the Northern Province (particularly the Vhavenda) and in Southern Zimbabwe. An endogamous clan, they migrated into the Northern Province with the VhaSenzi clans and play a major role in the *Ngoma Lungundu* founding myth. The men were skilled metal-workers, while their women were famed as potters. Religious and other cultural practices related to endogamy, circumcision rites, animal sacrifice, ritual slaughter and food taboos, as well as their physical features, have led to a lively debate about possible Semitic ancestry. Beuster argued (as we will see in the next chapter, questionably or at least over-simplistically,) that the Vhalemba were responsible for introducing the *murumundu* to the Vhavenda. Coupling this with the fact that they came "from beyond the Zambesi [Zambezi]", this led him to conclude "that circumcision has infiltrated into the Black tribes from the Mohammedans rather than from the Jews. The Balemba call themselves 'slams' (in the Cape, the Mohammedans are called '*slamsi*', from the word 'Islam') - in any case, not an African word. As the Arabian traders and slave-merchants have already plied their trade north of the Zambezi for hundreds of years, it is not impossible that from them, circumcision has found an outlet into isolated African tribes [*Kafferstämme*]." (*BMB*, Nr. 23 u. 24, 1879, p.447.) Since then, various authors have been divided on the issue of whether or not the

understanding that "*Muhali*" is the name of respect given to a *khosi*; "*muhulu*" means "great one". So "*Muhali-muhulu*" means "Great chief". In addition, in informal discussions, the Reverend Martin Moremi (Department of Religious Studies, UNIVEN) emphasised that the existence of Raluvhimba demonstrates the existence of a local belief in a unitary supreme being. From the same starting point, and based on her family's experience, Helga Giesekke argued that the fact that both the VhaMbedzi and the VhaSenzi worshipped a single Deity, caused great confusion when the missionaries spoke of the One God, the Creator of the Universe. While the missionaries preached about God (the God of the Bible), the Vhavenda were thinking of God (Raluvhimba / Mwali) and for years they talked past one another without even realising it. This was even more complicated by the fact that the story of the VhaSenzi migration was so similar to that of the Exodus of the Israelites (see the story of the Ngoma-Lungundu on p.61).

Lemba are indeed the descendants of (or the inheritors of a "tradition" rising from cultural contact with) Muslim traders, Black Jews or developed these beliefs and rites independently. Today, in the Northern Province, Lemba themselves – under the guidance of the Lemba Cultural Association and its fervent President, Professor M.E. Mathiva – express the conviction that they are Israelites who migrated to Africa after the Babylonian exile. On one occasion, I deeply hurt and offended Professor Mathiva, a man for whom I have great respect, by mentioning possible links to Muslim traders. Without wishing for this to sound like a cop-out, for me, the question of the "real" origins of the Lemba is not nearly as interesting as the ways that oral history and custom have been used in the construction of identity (see especially G.Buijs "Black Jews in the Northern Province: a study of ethnic identity in South Africa", in *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, Vol. 21, No. 4, July 1998, pp.661-682). Among numerous sources on the Lemba, see L. Frobenius "Die Waremba, Träger einer fossilen Kultur", in *Zeitschrift für Ethnologie*, Vol. 70, 1938, pp.159-175 (article first written in 1929); B. Hendrickx "The Ancient Origin of the Lemba (Mwenye): A critical overview of existing theories", in *Journal of Oriental and African Studies*, (Athens) Vol. 3, 1991, pp.172-193; H.A. Junod "The Balemba of the Zoutpansberg (Transvaal)", in *Folk-Lore: A Quarterly Review of Myth, Tradition, Institution and Custom*, Vol. 19, No. 3, London, 1908, pp.276-287; M. le Roux African 'Jews' for Jesus: A preliminary investigation into the Semitic origins and missionary initiatives of some Lemba communities in southern Africa, in *Missionalia*, Vol. 24, No. 4, December 1997, pp.493-510 (also at http://www.geocities.com/missionalia/jews4j1.htm, accessed 16 October 2000 – note that this has a useful bibliography); K. Magardie "Oy vey, but they don't look Jewish", in *Mail & Guardian*, 22-28 September 2000, p.16; M.M. Motenda "History of the Western Venda and of the Lemba", pp.51-70; E. Mudau "Ngoma lungundu and the early invaders of Venda", pp.10-32; [H.D.] Schlömann "die Malepa in Transvaal", in *Zeitschrift für Ethnologie*, Vol. 26, 1894, pp.64-70; T. Schwellnus "Die Valemba", in *Mission und Pfarramt: Herausgegeben im Auftrage der Berliner Missionsgesellschaft vom Missionsinspektor M. Wilde*, 5. Jahrgang 1912, pp.116-120; H.A. Stayt "Notes on the Balemba: An Arabic-Bantu tribe living among the Ba Venda and other Bantu tribes in the Northern Transvaal and Southern Rhodesia", in *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute*, Vol. 61, 1931, pp.231-238 and L.C. Thompson "The Ba-Lemba of Southern Rhodesia", in *NADA: Southern Rhodesia Native Affairs Department Annual*, 19, 1942, pp.72-86.

Beuster also noted that many local people falsely identified Raluvhimba as Satan.[6] While he did not comment on this, this situation seems to have arisen from the local idea of God as something to be feared (in a similar sense to the Old Testament concept of fearing God). The missionaries brought with them a new concept - a God who could be loved by his subjects. As a counter to this, they brought the idea of Satan, the evil one; the one who sought to harm and destroy people; the one whom people feared. In my reading, for local people, respect was synonymous to fear - Raluvhimba had to be respected, in other words, he was feared. He provided everything good to those who feared him, but he destroyed those who did not please him (the same relationship that the Jews had with God in the Old Testament - Christ showed the loving side of God). So when the missionaries spoke about Satan, the one who was able to destroy everyone, the local people immediately related him to Raluvhimba.[7]

In the interests of getting to know this competing power more deeply, Beuster also recorded some of the "stories of wonders" surrounding the God. He described how he had been told that pilgrims to the mountain where Raluvhimba lived heard "much whistling and roaring, many shouts and screams and noises which sound like pieces of metal being beaten together or like the rattling of chains." This was often interspersed with (mostly unintelligible) words and phrases. According to the missionary's informants, Raluvhimba sometimes also moved around, settling on the mountain behind the capital village of the Tshivhases. Then one heard the same noises as were heard at the Mubvumela mountain. It was reportedly said that: "one hears him talk inside the house and yet one does not see him" or "he speaks from a tree or from a post and yet he is never seen." When the pilgrims to his mountain asked him for sustenance for their return journey, he reportedly told them exactly where they would find the game which would serve them as food. "Up to now, they

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[6] *BMB*, Nr. 23 u. 24, 1879, pp.441.

[7] Local people also had an interesting attitude to Biblical names. Reporting on events at Georgenholtz during the course of the year 1888, the *Missions-Berichte* noted that: "The heathens continue to remain fairly closed [reserved] towards the preaching of the Gospel; although they manage to remember Biblical names, often memorising them in most amazing ways. There are people amongst

have always found the game at the designated place - it does not run away and they club it to death with a stick." In the case of accidents on the return journey, for example if the pilgrims were attacked by a lion, Raluvhimba reportedly said: "My dog broke free from his collar."[8]

Given his western rationalist background, and the fact that he was describing a competitor for power, Beuster could not afford to even give the impression that he was attaching any truth to these accounts. Instead, he described how, in "reality", people were being deceived and exploited. Noting that these were "the stories the people generally tell", his report continued by stating that the people who had actually been sent by Tshivhase to take the annual offerings to the sacred mountain usually denied that they had ever seen anything miraculous:

> They report that they went to the foot of a mountain where there is a big village. The son of Ralowimba [Raluvhimba] lives there and there they handed over the offerings sent by Tschewase [Tshivhase]. Sometimes a man named Govo comes to Tschewase - he is called "the son of Ralowimba" and he accepts this honour. When one removes all the myths which have enshrouded this god for a long time, it seems to me that ... there is something tangible hidden behind this god - a reality in the form of a person who is called "the Son of Ralowimba", who knows how to use the ignorance of the heathens for his benefit. It would of course be possible for him to perform this or that trick every now and again, to maintain his credibility and to keep up appearances.[9]

Understandably, allegations of chicanery were not enough to wean people away from their God. Even before the establishment of a missionary presence in Vendaland, *Khosi* Makhado had made it clear that he and his people viewed the white God with great suspicion. In reporting on his meeting with Makhado in October 1870, Beyer

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them with the name Satan, Matthew, Jerusalem; a pair of brothers chose the names Sodom and Gomorra." (*BMB*, Nr. 21 u. 22, 1889, p.544.)

[8] *BMB*, Nr. 23 u. 24, 1879, p.442. For accounts of Raluvhimba passing through Vendaland or visiting the cave at Luvhimbi, see also H.A. Junod "Some Features of the Religion of the Ba-Venda", pp.209-210 and H.A. Stayt *The Bavenda*, pp.231-232. The statement about the lions tallies with the Ngoma Lungundu tradition, where these animals were called "the dogs of the king" and roared "in a terrifying way, praising their master" whenever the drum was played (E. Mudau "Ngoma Lungundu", p.11).

[9] *BMB*, Nr. 23 u. 24, 1879, p.442.

had noted that:

> What I like especially about this nation is that it is not indifferent to the Word of God like the people of Blauberg and elsewhere, instead it contradicts or agrees. Several times during the sermon, there on the mountain, the king himself, or others, voiced contradictions. Once the king said: "Yes, if we could see that one of our people, a Black person like us, came down from heaven and brought us the message, then we would all agree and believe; why should we accept the Word of God from a White man?" [10]

A crucial question indeed!

Similarly, in reporting on events during the year 1889, Wessmann recorded that he had visited *Khosi* Mutele, one of the lesser *mahosi*, at his mountain capital. Here he had found Daniel, one of the congregation members from Georgenholtz, who was preaching in the area. In reporting on his preaching journey, Daniel had informed the missionary that:

> A chief, called Maschiki [Matsheke] stood up excitedly during his [Daniel's] sermon and said: "Our God is Ralowimba [Raluvhimba] (the God of the Bakhalanga [VhaKhalanga]). Should you despise our God, I will kill you here, on this spot." Filled with anger, he had already raised his spear, and now threatened to stab Daniel. "I am not afraid of your threats," Daniel said. "You will be able to kill my body, but you will not be able to kill my soul - that goes to God." But the Chief could not be pacified, he continued with his threats and finally robbed our Daniel of a he-goat [as a fine]. [11]

The fact that people saw no need to move away from Raluvhimba to Christ is also well illustrated by events surrounding a drought and locust-plague which struck the northern parts of the country in 1896. Beuster reported that, during the famine which followed:

> The heathen Bawenda [Vhavenda] at first hoped that their god Ralowimba [Raluvhimba] – who had once upon a time given the animals [locusts] to them as food – would now take them away again. Of course, when this

[10] *BMB*, Nr. 7 u. 8, 1874, pp.135-136.
[11] *BMB*, Nr. 23 u. 24, 1889, pp.564-565.

> hope of theirs was not fulfiled, it in no way led them to believe in the God of the Christians. Because: "Are your gardens [fields] not also destroyed by the locusts?" – that is how they prove their point.[12]

In addition to the supreme being, local people either remembered or showed respect to a variety of other supernatural beings. Beuster also engaged a number of these in his report. While he referred to them all as "gods", only one of them seems to have held a form of divine status. This was Khuswane, whom Beuster described as "the father of Ralowimba", the creator of "everything that is pleasant and beautiful" and the original source of knowledge about "all the vital crafts". Once he had completed his task, "he withdrew himself – he has no abode amongst the people and has become an unknown god." [13] In my reading, it is difficult to comment more fully on Khuswane as he retired after fulfilling his vaguely-defined role in creation. He then committed the ruling of the world, and further acts of creation, into the hands of Raluvhimba. In the scantly information available, no mention is made of any form of worship being offered to him. Since he did not interfere in the lives of mortals, he was neither feared nor respected. The only trace that remains of him are the fossilised footprints which he left at Kokwane (Nzhelele) and elsewhere [see Map 9].[14]

Thovhela, a founding ancestor incorrectly identified by Beuster as a God, caught the interest of the missionaries more than many other divine, supernatural or ancestral beings. This eponymous hero was extremely venerated and said to be very sympathetic to humankind. He was said to have made a covenant with the people that he would return and bring peace to the world. This promise seems to have been captured in the phrase *"Thovhela u a da; u a da lini?; nwana o bebwa; o vuwa o tshimbila!"* ("Thovhela is coming; when is he coming?; The child is born and learns to walk [but Thovhela has not yet come]!") By this, a longing was expressed for

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[12] *BMB*, Juni 1897 [Jahresbericht 1896], p.336.
[13] *BMB*, Nr. 23 u. 24, 1879, p.442. Note that Beuster recorded Khuswane as Kozane.
[14] *BMB*, Nr. 23 u. 24, 1890, pp.499-500; J..M. Dederen "Venda for the inquistive tourist", p.2; E. Gottschling "The Bawenda", p.211; D. Mcdonald "Vendaland", Vol. X, No. 112, p.28; H.A. Stayt *The Bavenda*, p.236 and R. Wessmann *The Bawenda of the Spelonken*, p.80.

someone who was expected. Thovhela was also (and has remained) a synonym for the word *khosi*, and the phrase "*Thovhela; Thovhela wa vhatu*" ("King; King of the people") has continued to be used as a salutation for royalty. Similarly, Thovhela was (and still is) used as a respectful greeting to people in higher office and was used as a praise-name by emissaries to Mwali at Mubvumela Mountain. The phrase "*mutu wa Thovhela*" is a respectful reference to a pregnant woman. This is related to his function of protecting marital happiness and the unborn child (in addition to visitors and travellers).[15] Thovhela's rivalry with another *khosi*, by the name of Tshilonge, over sexual jealousy, kingship and power also forms the subject of a drama performed as part of the *tshikanda* initiation for girls in some areas of Vendaland and the *domba* initiation in others.[16] The missionary interest in this figure arose from the "longing for someone who should be coming". As Beuster pointed out, this could easily be incorporated "in a sermon, to bear testimony to them of the longing for a Saviour through repentance."[17]

More controversial from the perspective of the missionaries were the *zwidudwane*, the water-spirits or sprites which Beuster again incorrectly identified as Gods, and various other spiritual beings associated with Holy Forests. The *zwidudzwane* were of pre-Singo origin and were described as being of human shape but as being divided vertically. Thus, they had only one visible leg, one arm and one eye. (Possibly the other half of the body was invisible or spiritual.) Residing in Lake Fundudzi, nearby waterfalls and pools, such as Maneledzi and Gunhuvkuvhu (the pool below Phiphidi waterfall) [see Illustration 44], and the forests surrounding these, they expected tribute in the form of beer, a potsherd, a stone, a bangle, a tuft of hair or a branch from anyone passing by their residence [see Map 9]. Residents of the nearest

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[15] Personal Communication, *Vho* Lettie Mphephu-Nengudza; *BMB*, Nr. 23 u. 24, 1879, p.443; J..M. Dederen "Venda for the inquistive tourist", p.4; E. Gottschling "The Bawenda", p.211; N.M.N. Ralushai "Conflicting Accounts of Venda History", pp.159-160; H.A. Stayt The Bavenda, pp.85, 112-113 & 236 and R. Wessmann *The Bawenda of the Spelonken*, pp.80-81. Note that the phrase was recorded as "*Thovele ndi ma* (or *oa da*) *ea da line*) *moana o bebõa o vuea a tsimbela"* by Beuster.

[16] John Blacking "The Drama of Thovhela and Tshishonge", at http://era.anthropology.ac.uk/Era_R...a/VendaGirls/Tshikanda/T_Text2.html (and following links), accessed 29 September 2000; N.M.N. Ralushai "Conflicting Accounts of Venda History", pp.160-161 and H.A. Stayt *The Bavenda*, pp.112-113.

settlement – usually of Mbedzi, Thavhatsinde and Ngona origin – were exempted from these pacification offerings and served as guardians of their sacred places. It was believed that the zwidudzwane of neighbouring areas (such as Phiphidi and Fundudzi) visited each other. They travelled along invisible paths, setting alight or stoning nearby homesteads. Some idea of the way that the missionaries viewed these beliefs is given by the fact that Gottschling included discussion on them under "superstitious customs", the implication being that the people were shackled or exploited by these.[18]



44. "Phiphidi Falls"[19]

The so-called "Holy Forests" were sites of far more direct confrontation between missionaries and local rulers. These sacred forests (*tshifho*, *tshiozwi* or *tshiendeulu*) served (and continue to serve) as the burial-grounds of members of the royal families. In the case of the more powerful *mahosi* and *magota*, they covered a

[17] *BMB*, Nr. 23 u. 24, 1879, p.443.

[18] *BMB*, Nr. 23 u. 24, 1879, p.443 J..M. Dederen "Venda for the inquistive tourist", p.6; E. Gottschling "The Bawenda", p.214; N.M.N. Ralushai "Conflicting Accounts of Venda History", pp.84 & 94 and H.A. Stayt The Bavenda, pp.237-239. Beuster refers to the *zwidudwane* as " *Isidodoane*", while Stayt calls them "*Zwidhadyani*".

significant area. Lesser *mahosi* or *magota* had smaller groves which served the same purpose. Entering these forests and groves was (and remains) strictly prohibited for non-royals and was enforced both supernaturally and by guardians of the royal graves. For example, the Thathe Vondo Holy Forest, sacred to the Netshitongani *magota* of Tshivhase, was believed to be inhabited and protected by a huge supernatural lion, the reincarnation either of the ancestral ruler *Khosi* Nethathe or of the successive *magota* [see Map 9, area marked as "Sacred Forest"]. At the same time, any collection of the wood of these groves was (and remains) prohibited [see Illustration 45].[20]



45. Entrance to the Holy Forest[21]

During the first month of the existence of the Tshakhuma Mission Station, the proposed utilization of wood from the forest for building purposes at the new mission station became an issue between Missionary Schwellnus and *Khosi*

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[19] H.A. Stayt The Bavenda, facing p.2.

[20] *BMB*, Nr. 17 u. 18, 1875, p.371; Nr. 19 u. 20, 1875, p.417; Nr. 23 u. 24, 1879, p.443 & Dezember 1897, p.728; N.M.N. Ralushai "Conflicting Accounts of Venda History", pp.861-63, 89-90, 92, 93-94, 98, 99 & 144-145; Republic of Venda *Venda Travelogue*, pp.16 & 18; H.A. Stayt The Bavenda, pp.212-213 and N.J. van Warmelo (ed.) *Contributions Towards Venda History*, pp.151, 153, 160, 161, 167 & 173-174.

[21] Untitled in original, *Luvhone*, Department of Education & Culture, Venda, Vol. 3, No. 1, April 1994, p.3.

Madzivhandila. One of the local people had been contracted by Schwellnus to build a house for the workers at Tshakhuma in return for the payment of a blanket. Before finishing the work, he had stated that he had done enough and demanded his payment. Schwellnus and Beuster had called in *Khosi* Mdzivhandila to hear the case. On 4 June 1874, the latter had delivered judgement in favour of the mission, stating that the worker had to finish the work completely to the satisfaction of the missionary. Only then would he be eligible for payment. In the general conversation which followed the hearing of the case, Johannes Madima (Johannes Mutshaeni's brother) let slip that the two missionaries intended to chop down trees in the Holy Forest at Tshakhuma and use the wood for building purposes.[22] It is unclear whether he let this slip out by mistake or was letting his *khosi* know out of a sense of concern or duty (and hiding this from the missionaries).

Schwellnus wrote that Madzivhandila was extremely displeased by this:

> He refused to give us permission to do so; we would make him very sad if we did that. At the same time he showed me a tree (*mofula*) whose fruit I should please not eat before he had sacrificed some of the fruit to the gods [ancestral spirits].[23] Brother Beuster told him: we did not come to serve their gods; also not to learn their customs, but we serve the true God and we are here to teach them.[24]

In the face of this insensitivity and arrogance, and in a statement which clearly reveals the intimate relationship between the *khosi* and the land, "He replied if we did these things, we would spoil his land and he would become ill e.g. his feet would swell up etc."[25]

Again the accusation that the missionaries were destroyers of the land, which had stung them so much when thrown by Tshivhase's councillor on behalf of the spirits of the Mutshindudi River (see pp.262-263), had been levelled against them. The only

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[22] *BMB*, Nr. 17 u. 18, 1875, p.371.

[23] The Maroela tree, *Mufula* in Tshivenda. The fruit of the Maroela tree usually starts ripening around January. So this was still a long way away. For tabus surrounding this fruit, see N.J. van Warmelo (ed.) *Contributions Towards Venda History*, p.184.

[24] *BMB*, Nr. 17 u. 18, 1875, p.371.

defence that they could offer against this was that:

> If the teachers will spoil the land, why had he called them. We have not come to spoil the land but to bring it blessings, and he would also like to admit it later. We both stuck to our convictions; he would show us somewhere else where we could chop wood. He went home, thinking deeply because he is faithful towards his god.[26]

From the missionary side, there was no modification in their attitude towards African religion. They do not seem to have defied Madzivhandila by cutting trees in his Holy Forest before he later gave them permission. However, early in July 1874, a wagon bringing goods from Matlala to Schwellnus broke its axle. Schwellnus and Beuster did not hesitate to fashion an emergency axle from a tree, in Schwellnus' own words: "Out of the holy forest which was dedicated to the gods, at the Bawenda Chief Tsetongulo [Tshitungulu]".[27]

The issue was again raised in a meeting between Madzivhandila and Schwellnus on 13 July. Visiting Schwellnus and finding him busy building a rectangular house, the *khosi* asked him if he would consider building a similar structure for him. Instead of agreeing outright, Schwellnus stated that, if Madzivhandila would send him his best craftsmen when he was building a wagon shed at his station, he would "teach them how to build". After that, he would come and advise them when they were building the house for the *khosi*. He had "not come to do this work here, but ... to teach them." Schwellnus also took the opportunity to remind Madzivhandila:

> how he had refused to allow me to take wood from that forest ... where the gods are supposed to live. I said to him, God does not stay in the forest or in a river, but His home is in heaven; but He can be everywhere and longs to live in the hearts of people who believe in Him and love Him, when they love Him above all things and receive Him. I would also like to believe that he, the King, will later see this and be convinced of it that his opinion about the gods is false, because their gods are just lies of people,

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[25] *Ibid.*

[26] *Ibid.* p.372.

[27] *Ibid.* p.373. They must have been stuck in the Tshipene river (the river which is at the Kirkcohen fruit stall. The old road went below the dam there, south of the tar road). Tshitungulo was near the guava farm there, along the Luvuvhu River.

which the devil has fed them.[28]

Schwellnus was not prepared to drop this matter. He raised it again on the following Sunday, 20 July 1874. Reporting on this, he wrote that he had:

> preached about the Creation; that Jehovah, the living God, *mosika-vhato* (the creator of the people), gave the people everything to rule over; he also gave them all the fruits, which were healthy for them, as food; this is why we can use the wood in the forests, as well as eat all the fruit from the trees. What kind of customs do they have that they do not permit this? I serve only the True God and cannot follow their customs. In the conversation afterwards, he gave me permission to do both; I should now do as I please.[29]

I am not certain why Madzivhandila granted this permission. Nobody that I have spoken to locally has felt that they can explain it adequately either. I am certain that the *khosi* had not been convinced by Schwellnus' arguments. Reverend Moremi stated that the closest that he could come to an explanation was that Madzivhandila had informed the ancestors that he had done his best to explain the taboos to the missionary. However, the white man was simply refusing to listen to him. In the interests of living in peace with this person whom he had given permission to live in the area, and who was also the representative of spiritual beings, he was now giving him permission to break the taboos which affected local people. In any case, the missionary was not an African, so should these taboos affect him? This was a matter which was too deep for him, the *khosi*, to deal with alone. If the ancestors were unhappy with this solution, it was up to them to resolve this issue with Schwellnus' ancestors, the God whom he represented or the missionary himself. I feel that this explanation is plausible. In addition, I also believe that it is extremely likely that (instructed to do so by Madzivhandila), the guardians of the graves would have made certain that Schwellnus only collected wood in forest areas adjoining the Holy Forest proper, or on its periphery. He would not have been allowed near the graves themselves. Madzivhandila may also have thought that if he avoided continuing to make an issue out of the collection of wood, the missionary would be convinced that

[28] *BMB*, Nr. 17 u. 18, 1875, p.374.

he had made his point and would no longer be so keen to do so. Instead, he would concentrate his efforts on areas other than the Holy Forest which were actually more convenient to exploit. This in fact seems to have been what occurred and the issue does not feature in missionary sources after this.

The missionaries found the beliefs sketched thus far interesting, able to be portrayed as a pale reflection of the "truth" contained in the Christian message and a starting point for conversion, merely "superstitious", or worthy of opposition. What they really found blasphemous and horrible was the etiquette surrounding the greeting of *mahosi*, a variety of religious practices under the ultimate control of the rulers, and various ways in which their power was displayed using the bodies of their subjects.

THE *MAHOSI*

I have already discussed the first meeting between Berlin Missionaries and *Khosi* Tshivhase in March 1872. In describing this, the missionaries commented on the praises with which people lauded Tshivhase, the subservient positions which they assumed in his presence, their affirmation of his every action and his using a "grown-up girl" as a backrest.[30] These missionary attitudes did not change significantly over time during the nineteenth century. Thus, even after his expulsion from the mission for a very *khosi*-like attitude to sexual liaisons with women, in describing what he depicted as a typical meeting with Tshivhase, Wessmann wrote that *mahosi* usually kept "their visitors waiting for a lengthy time" before appearing in person. Just before their anticipated arrival:

> A large beer-pot is carried along by a woman and deposited in the centre of the assembly. Suddenly the animated chatter is interrupted by the chief's rather thick voice in close proximity. All eyes are turned upon him, and his large, smiling, full-moon-shaped face fits the chequered company exactly. Very slowly, leaning on every prop of the veranda of the houses, he approaches, finally stopping at the entrance to the hall, partly in order to shake hands with us, partly to regain his breath; for every movement,

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[29] *Ibid.*
[30] See pp.246-248.

> even the shortest, has proved a great strain for him, in consequence of his enormous obesity. He is clad in trousers and a shirt, the uppermost button of which stands, on account of his fat neck, immediately below his chin. Slowly he settles down on a mat spread for him on the veranda before the entrance of the hall. He is thus able to watch the proceedings both inside and outside the hall. The moment he squats ... the assembly shows a dog-like submission. Everybody bows low, heads nearly touching the floor, and with hands clasped in front they shout in unison and for several minutes such salutes of "God of heaven and earth," "handsome man with four eyes," "Lion," "beast," "goat stable," "cattle-kraal," "ox," "light of the world," "beast of prey," and other similar flattering expressions commenting on the chief's great wealth or splendid qualities, real or imaginary. Well pleased and glowing with satisfaction he lets his eyes muster on the assembly, and makes some jocular remarks, which, regardless of their merit, have, needless to mention, the desired effect. Soon, however, the conversation moves on the news of the day, which takes the place of a newspaper with the natives. In the meantime the chief cup-bearer has filled the large cups and handed them to this or that native without any special selection. The chief has meanwhile made himself very comfortable on his mat. In order, however, that he may not overbalance himself, a nearly nude maiden supports him on her back, whilst another girl serves as his footstool. Still another lady sits in front of him, almost like a wax-statue, holding up a tin tray with his own always filled cup, so that he may take a drink in comfort whenever he pleases. On his left another girl holds his silver snuff-box, from which he now and then allows somebody else to take a pinch. Now and then he takes a long draught from his cup, always closing his bulging eyes as he does so, and every draught being accompanied by enthusiastic shouts from the assembly... [Similarly,] ... any coughing or clearing of his throat is accompanied by ... praises and flatteries from his loyal admirers.[31]

The praise-names mentioned in the text indicate that the Vhavenda, contrary to Europeans, looked to the animal kingdom for metaphors to describe their ruler's valour and virtues, thereby incorporating nature to a certain extent in the realm of society. But they also made use of the figurative power of the eyes and the gaze, attributing four eyes to their *khosi* as an indication of his ability to see further than common men and his ability to communicate with the ancestral spirits and the world beyond.

As in the earlier descriptions of the 1872 meeting by Beyer and the editors of the

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[31] R. Wessmann *The Bawenda of the Spelonken*, pp.15-17.

Missions-Berichte, Wessmann had a different agenda: denigration, not praise. And in order to achieve this, as with his predecessors, he also focused on the *khosi*'s body, his eyes and his gaze, his drinking and snuffing habits, his stride and, more generally, the shape of his body, using corpulence as a signifier of a life of passion, "savagery" and "despotism". The result was a portrait of a "savage" ruler as a powerful yet gluttonous, and therefore grossly overweight, man, self-absorbed, comical in his exercise of power, and unpredictable in his behaviour, switching from laughter to fury in no time. In brief, he transgressed again and again the limits of so-called civilised behaviour. This was the kind of ruler who, in missionary discourse, had to be outmanoeuvred to clear the way for the spreading of the Gospel. This was not only because he was a competing secular power but, equally importantly, because of the religious dimensions of his power. As with his fellow-royals, here too the missionaries saw him as transgressing in many ways, firstly because of what they saw as his vain and blasphemous adoption of divine titles and secondly because of other sacred dimensions of his office and what the missionaries saw as his use of "superstition" as a source of power. That they viewed this as an affront to the Christian God and to the norms of "civilised" society, not only from Tshivhase but also from other *mahosi*, is clearly indicated by an entry in Wessmann's diary at Georgenholtz for 13 March 1889, subsequently published in the *Missions-Berichte* under the title "Heathen Superstitions". This stated that:

> What darkness reigns amongst the Bawenda [Vhavenda] nation: we spoke of this today in the baptism [catechism] lesson, while we were dealing with the First Commandment. The Bawenda [Vhavenda] do not only venerate their Chiefs like gods - from afar already they fall down before them and call out: "The God of heaven and of earth!" - but they also venerate and pray to their ancestors like gods. The weapons of the deceased are passed down from generation to generation ... Stones are also taken from the holy river and then carried to the village, to venerate them there. Even goats and oxen are specially selected, to be regarded as holy and to be called "God". The people from Téngoe [Thengwe] venerate a big snake. Those from Tsaulu [Tshaulu], venerate [*verehren*] a big river. They cheer and sing while they march to the river to pour beer into the river. When the Chief of Lambane dies, he is burnt [cremated] and his ashes are strewn into the holy river - his cattle also, as well as all his

> possessions, are burnt and strewn into the holy river. All these things happen here in the Georgenholtz area.[32]

As the supreme secular and religious authority, the representative of his people and the channel of communication between the natural and the supernatural, the *khosi* was indeed shown great respect. Building on the sources already cited, a strong body of missionary and anthropological writings have argued that this expressed itself in the existence of the institution of divine kingship among the Vhavenda (a conclusion with which I disagree). For example, writing in 1905, the Reverend E. Gottschling noted that so sacred was the personage of the *khosi* and, through him, the entire royal family that dangerous princes were strangled. "This is the manner of doing away with dangerous princes among the Bawenda, for the blood of the 'royal' house may not be shed."[33] Van Warmelo's royal informant Tshamaano, used in writing his *Contributions Towards Venda History* (1932), and contributors to his *Copper Miners of Musina* (1940) made frequent reference to cases where this reportedly happened or was threatened to both princes and *mahosi*, particularly in the case of succession disputes.[34] The bodies of members of the royal family killed in this manner were believed to make extremely powerful *muti*.[35]

Similarly, Wessmann commented in 1908 that the *mahosi* were "so to say regarded as gods".[36] From an anthropological perspective, in an article published in 1930, Lestrade noted that:

> Among the Venda tribes, however, the chief may be said to be an absolute lord and master over his people. This may be partly due to the fact that here greater stress is laid on the sacred as opposed to the secular character of the chief's person, which, while it exists among other tribes, does not come to the fore so markedly as here. He is for many purposes high-priest

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[32] *BMB*, Nr. 21 u. 22, 1889, p.546.
[33] E. Gottschling "The Bawenda", p.197.
[34] S.M. Dzivhani "The Chiefs of Venda", p.46; M.M. Motenda "History of the Western Venda and of the Lemba", p.56; E. Mudau (a) "Ngoma lungundu", p.25 & (b) "The Dau of Tshakhuma", p.75 and N.J. van Warmelo (ed.) *Contributions Towards Venda History*, pp.6, 14 & 20-22.
[35] S.M. Dzivhani "The Chiefs of Venda", p.46 and E. Mudau "The Dau of Tshakhuma", p.77. See discussion of ritual homicide in Chapter 7 and rituals surrounding warfare in Chapter 8 for discussion of the ritual utilisation of human body parts.
[36] R. Wessmann *The Bawenda of the Spelonken*, p.80.

> as well as secular head of his people. When the villages have to be inured against the attacks of enemies or evil spirits, when warriors have to be made invincible, when taboos have to be imposed or withdrawn, it is he who administers the treatment required.[37] His very person is sacred: he must be approached on hands and knees, and addresses everyone with the condescending second person singular (*iwe*), whereas every one must address him with the polite third person plural (*vhone*). The chief's language is different from that of the others, and the names of objects and actions associated with the chief's functions are different from the names of these same objects and actions of the common people.[38] ... The chief's person is so sacred that it is no rare thing to see people rub on their own bodies sweat and mucus of which the chief has got rid of by way of a strengthening drug. All the chief's actions are highly lauded: when he drinks beer, or takes snuff, or coughs, or expectorates, there is always an adulatory chorus: *Ndau yau nduna* (male lion); *Ngwenyama* (meat-eater, i.e. beast of prey); *Mbolomo* (great bull); *Tshivhanda tshihulu* (great wild beast); *Nemashango* (prince of the lands), and so forth, all uttered in the reverential position of *u losha*, i.e. prostrate salutation.[39] But not only is the chief thus regarded as semi-divine during the greater part of his life; towards the end of it, or sometimes long before, he actually confers godhead upon himself, when after abjuring all contact with women, and putting away his wives, he performs a solemn solitary dance (*u pembela*) which makes him in very truth a god (*Mudzimu*).[40]

Again, in an article published in the following year, van Warmelo, the Government Ethnologist, noted that, while the *mahosi* often "quarrelled" among themselves they nevertheless maintained "a feeling of solidarity against their subjects." He continued by arguing that the *khosi*:

> is feared and honoured by the Venda like nowhere else in the South of the Continent. This unusually strong position is shared by the nobility. By contrast, in their eyes, the ordinary people are but livestock [*is maar vee in hulle oë*], and until today are indebted to perform all sorts of services at

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[37] See also E. Gottschling "The Bawenda", pp.209 & 213-214; H.A. Junod "Some Features of the Religion of the Ba-Venda", pp.216-218 and R. Wessmann *The Bawenda of the Spelonken*, pp.13 & 53-54.

[38] For discussion of the *Musanda* language of royalty, see A.E. Khuba (a) "The significance of the Musanda language in Venda: a diglossia", PhD dissertation, Pretoria, University of South Africa, 1993 & (b) "The significance of the Musanda Language in Venda", in *Luvhone*, Department of Education and Culture, Venda, Vol. 3, No. 4, April 1994, pp.29-31 and N.J. van Warmelo "Courts and Court Speech in Venda", in *African Studies*, Vol. 30, No. 3-4, 1971, pp.355-370 and *Venda Dictionary*, p.07.

[39] See also D. Mcdonald "Vendaland", Vol. X, No.110, p.13.

[40] G.P. Lestrade "Some notes on the political Organisation of the Venda-Speaking Tribes", pp.311-312.

> the capital village (from where they are ruled), that can only be explained through an earlier servitude.[41]

As late as 1994, in an article which I otherwise found extremely useful, Hanisch also traced the development of what he called "divine kingship" amongst various proto-Venda groups and how this was eventually adopted by the Singo and carried by them to Dzata.[42]

In my reading, scholars arguing that Vhavenda rulers were divine or semi-divine are falling into the same trap as the early missionaries in equating profound respect with veneration or worship. I have an uneasy feeling that this rests upon a racist or paternalist approach to African societies which sees them as being incapable of social complexity. My own reading is influenced by numerous informal conversations locally and by Kantorowicz's seminal work *The King's Two Bodies* (1957), in which he explored the medieval separation of the King's two bodies, namely his "Body natural" and his "Body politic", and the metamorphosis of the idea of the crown into a term of political theology. This process, Kantorowicz argued, resulted in an understanding of social institutions as legal fictions and metaphors, and intensified the awareness of the mortality of the ordinary mortals who devised and represented these institutions at any given moment.[43] Against this background, at the simplest level, I see the evidence surrounding the position of Raluvhimba as the supreme being (and, effectively, the only God) as being extremely strong. Similarly, in common with many other African groups, the ancestors were not worshipped but rather asked for protection, assistance and guidance. The sacrifices offered to them were not acts of worship. Instead, they were designed to keep them happy and content, thus ensuring their protection, assistance and good guidance. Against this background, in my reading, during the early years of his reign, the *khosi* should be seen as the link between his people and the ancestors, between the ephemeral present

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[41] N.J. van Warmelo "Volksgebruike van die Venda", in *South African Railways and Harbours Magazine*, Vol. 25, No.7, July 1931, pp.998-999.

[42] E.O.M. Hanisch "Legends, Oral Traditions and Archaeology", see especially pp.71 & 75.

[43] E.H. Kantorowicz *The King's Two Bodies: A Study in Medieval Political Theology*, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1957.

and the idealized past, and not as a God. The strength of this link, and the closeness of the ruler to the ancestors, gradually grew until, towards the end of his life, when he had danced the *u pembela* dance, he acquired the status of a living ancestor. His next stage was to join the ancestors themselves. The degree to which these links were viewed literally or symbolically by the various segments of society, or whether these views changed in different contexts or over time, is not recoverable from the historical record.

In addition to these objections and alternative interpretations, I also believe that the conventional interpretation of the power and status of *mahosi* in Vendaland does not adequately take into account the strong checks and balances on their powers that were built into the social fabric. Lestrade mentions these but does not seem to realize the degree to which they undermine his earlier argument:

> It may be imagined that in all the political sphere the word of such a sacred person is law to an extent not met with among other South African tribes except in extreme cases such as that of Shaka among the Zulu-speaking peoples. At the same time he is not so much of an absolute tyrant as a mere consideration of the ceremony with which he is surrounded might lead one to suppose. He is in the first place bound by law and custom to act in certain well-defined ways and along certain well-defined lines, and cannot except with extreme difficulty make any alterations in these age-old laws and customs and methods of procedure, even in the purely political sphere; while in the religious sphere of ceremonial taboo, ritual, and what not, he is absolutely powerless to make any alteration whatever except in the most judicious manner and by following rather than trying to lead tribal opinion on to the point. In the political sphere too, not only is he hemmed in with restrictions, but the powerful effect of personal and other influences on him plays a very great part indeed in regulating his actions. In order to get anything done, he must first assure himself of the co-operation of his *magota* [headmen] and *dzinduna* [sub-headmen], of his *khoro*, and in fact of every one of real importance in the tribe.[44] He cannot drive his will through without such co-operation, and if he attempts to do so, he will fail, and in olden days would run severe risk of dying by poisoning.[45]

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[44] See also E. Gottschling "The Bawenda", p.208.

[45] G.P. Lestrade "Some notes on the political Organisation of the Venda-Speaking Tribes", pp.312-313. In support of the idea of restrictions on the power of *mahosi*, to this day it is locally rumoured that the death of *Khosi* P.R. Mphephu, Life President of the Venda Bantustan, in April 1988 was

However, this kind of interpretation did not yet feature in missionary thinking. Instead, in dealing with those from whom they would have to win the hearts and minds of the people, they generally emphasised that the *mahosi* were all-powerful and (often) tyrannical.[46]

THE ANCESTORS

Returning to the other practices surrounding the showing of respect to, and propitiation of, the ancestors mentioned in Beuster's 1878 report and Wessmann's March 1889 diary entry, Stayt has argued that the shades could be represented collectively by cattle, goats or river pebbles and individually by spears or small iron or copper rings. Between them, the missionaries covered all of these possibilities, Beuster far more "ethnographically" than Wessmann's already-quoted discourse on "darkness". In addition, although he was sometimes extremely accurate in his observations, beyond using the term "God" far too freely, Beuster sometimes misinterpreted what his informants were telling him. Thus, he recorded (apparently accurately) that a person who could afford it would "consecrate a bull to his dead father." However, since a bull was far too valuable an animal for most individuals to be able to do this, "this honour usually just befalls a chief." In arguing this, he neglected the fact that lineages were sometimes able to do what individuals could not and dedicate a bull for this purpose. He also seems to have begun to become inaccurate when he argued that:

> The bull is given the name of the dead person and is regarded as a god – he is the dead person himself who has now become a god. A cow is consecrated for a dead mother. If there is no bull available, but there is a

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the result of poisoning. Opinion is divided as to whether he was poisoned by the wider circle of the royal family or whether they told him that he had to poison himself. Supporters of the latter interpretation state that he was called to a meeting of the Royal Council. Here he was informed of his failures as President and of the failure of the whole system which he had helped to put in place. When the councillors left the room, there was a container of poison on the table. He knew what to do next. For an account of Mphephu's death and the allegations of poisoning, see also N.M. Makhari "A Biography of President Patrick Ramaano Mphephu", Unpublished B.A. Honours dissertation, University of Venda, 1991, pp.67-68.

[46] See p.258, footnote 88.

cow, a cow can probably be consecrated as the god of the father.[47]



46. "Sacrifice of beer on black calf which symbolizes the shades of the chief's clan"[48]

Stayt's much later version was apparently more accurate. He argued that the various royal families, as well as many important lineages, kept a sacred black bull which was seen as embodying all the ancestral spirits of the father's lineage [see Illustration 46]. Arising from the belief that no male was complete without a mate, a cow was associated with the sacred bull. This did not represent the spirits of the mother's lineage, this role being filled by a goat. The most important role played by the bull came during the harvest festival, when the ancestors were thanked collectively. For more individual requests, such as pleas for protection at the commencement of a dangerous journey, the ancestors of the mother's lineage were approached. The thinking seems to have been that the tie between the mother and her children was seen as being more intimate than that between them and their father. The woman, who had only a limited number of children, was less likely to forget them than the father, who may have had several wives and many children.[49]

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[47] *BMB*, Nr. 23 u. 24, 1897, p.444.
[48] W.D. Hammond-Tooke (ed.) *The Bantu-Speaking Peoples of Southern Africa*, facing p.298.

Despite his intolerance over Holy Forests, Beuster seems to have been exceptional in showing the kind of tolerance that he did over this issue. Even Koen, the missionary for whom I have come to develop a strong feeling, seems to have found his encounter with the practice more amusing than informative. Describing events at Georgenholtz during the year 1878 and during the first six months of 1879, the *Missions-Berichte* reported that:

> On another occasion he came to a small boy who was herding his cattle. But the cattle gave him so much trouble, that the little boy was beside himself and he tearfully complained to the missionary, that the gods would not listen to him. "But who are your gods?" He: "That bull and this cow." Koen had to laugh at this. But in most of the villages of this nation, there is the notion that an ox or a cow in the herd is a god. This village headman [*Kraalhäuptling*], a wealthy cattle owner, had turned two of his beasts into gods - a male and a female god. These animals may not be sold nor slaughtered; should one die, it is replaced by another.[50]



47 "Tshikobakoba's Sacred Stones"[51]

Not every lineage possessed a sacred bull. According to Stayt, in some cases, the functions of this animal were performed by sacred stones instead [see Illustration 47]. These highly-polished, cylindrical stones had to be taken from a river bed. They were replaced by other stones of the same size. The bull was represented by a smaller stone than the cow. They were embedded side by side near the lineage head's

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[49] H.A. Stayt *The Bavenda*, pp.242-243 & 245-246. See also N.J. van Warmelo (ed.) *Contributions Towards Venda History*, pp.169, 177-178 & 180.

[50] *BMB*, Nr. 21 u. 22, 1879, p.411.

[51] H.A. Stayt *The Bavenda*, facing p.243.

dwelling. Offerings were made to them in a similar manner to those made to the sacred bull. There were a number of variations on this basic theme. For example, some groups possessed three sacred stones. In some cases, it would appear that the poorer lineages substituted stones for cattle for economic reasons. However, it seems that others had always shown respect to their ancestors in this form.[52] Here Stayt's version did not contradict Beuster's earlier analysis. In addition, Beuster argued that the stones were also used to represent members of the family who had been killed in wars where they could not be buried at home by their own relatives.[53]

Ancestral spears were kept by members of the royal family as a link with the ancestors and, through this, as symbols of the transmission of authority. During the *u pembela* dance, the *khosi* danced with a miniature spear that he had made for himself and with those made by his ancestors. In both the royal family and the wider community, beyond being collectively absorbed into the sacred bull after death, male members of the lineage could also be represented individually by a spear. It was the duty of the dead man's son by his great wife to provide this spear. He usually did not do this immediately after his father's death. Instead, he waited until illness or disaster overtook the family and a diviner discovered that this was because the dead man's spirit was troubled because his spear had not been put up. After the new spear had been made by a smith, the family were called. The head of the lineage brought out all of the family spears. The new spear was placed next to them and was introduced of each of them. They, in turn, were requested to accept their "grandchild". The new spear was then told to join its relatives and enjoined not to trouble the living any more. Beer was poured over each of the spears in turn. The newly-consecrated spear was then put away with those who had preceded it. Commoners also carried their sacred spears to the first-fruits ceremony [see Illustration 48]. Each married male member of the lineage had the right to be represented by a spear.[54] Young men who

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[52] *Ibid.* pp.243-245. See also H.A. Junod "Some Features of the Religion of the Ba-Venda", pp.214-215.

[53] *BMB*, Nr. 23 u. 24, 1879, p.444.

[54] H.A. Junod "Some Features of the Religion of the Ba-Venda", p.213; H.A. Stayt *The Bavenda*, pp.211, 246-247 & 256; N.J. van Warmelo (ed.) *Contributions Towards Venda History*, pp.169, 174, 179, 185 & 186-187 and R. Wessmann *The Bawenda of the Spelonken*, p.81.

had died unmarried were represented by the rite of the hoe-handle, discussed earlier.[55]



48. "Sacrificing beer to the spirits of the ancestors (represented by spears). Venda *thevhula* (first-fruits rite)"[56]

As a male ancestor was represented by a spear, after her death, a woman had a small iron ring dedicated to her. This was made from an old Vhavenda-made hoe, preferably one which had been used by the deceased woman herself. Again, these were generally only made after a diviner had indicated that an illness or misfortune had been caused by a female ancestor spirit who desired her *dzembe* (hoe – plural *malembe*) to be put up. These were worn around the neck on a piece of string made from wild cotton.[57] Wessmann did not mention these. Beuster was non-judgemental in stating that: "Another custom [is that] ... whereby they carry round their necks their dead relatives, represented by small longish bits of iron which have been forged from old used-up axes and hoes. Each bit of iron represents the name of one of the family members who has died."[58]

One of the clear indications that Tshivenda-speakers did not form a homogenous

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[55] See pp.306-307.
[56] W.D. Hammond-Tooke (ed.) *The Bantu-Speaking Peoples of Southern Africa*, facing p.298.
[57] H.A. Stayt *The Bavenda*, pp.247-248 and N.J. van Warmelo (ed.) *Contributions Towards Venda History*, pp.186 & 187-190.

group was the variation in mortuary practices for rulers among the various sections. It is here that the reference to the cremation of *Khosi* Lambane in Wessmann's March 1889 diary entry (see pp.332-333) fits in. In extremely broad outline, the Thavhatsindi, Famadi and Nogona of Tshivhale exhumed the bones of their dead rulers after a number of years, cremated them and then disposed of the ash in their sacred river pools. Sometimes the bones were broken or ground before burning. In other cases, any bones which survived the burning process were broken and ground. The Mbedzi disposed of the bones in their sacred river pool without having burnt them. On the other hand, the various Singo groups either exhumed the bones of their mahosi after a number of years of burial or allowed the body of the deceased ruler to decompose above ground in a sealed chamber. In either case, after a number of years, the bones were then re-buried in the group's Holy Forest.[59] The one common theme among all Tsivhenda-speaking groups was that the death of the *khosi* was kept secret from his people for a considerable period – often a year or more. During this period, the *makhadzi* and the *khotsi-munene* continued the government, giving some of the tensions surrounding succession and possible attempts at usurpation of power time to work themselves out before the heir was installed.[60] Also, work was forbidden during the time of mourning. If not properly managed, cessation from work by the people could lead to famine. So, the timing of the announcement of the death of the *khosi* was crucial. This would only be announced after the harvest.[61]

THE *MALOMBO*

A further practice related to pacifying troubled spirits which was viewed in an extremely negative light by the missionaries was the *malombo*. As with his encounters with Holy Forests, Beuster lost his ethnographic detachment when writing about this practice. On 18 September 1874, he recorded that:

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[58] *BMB*, Nr. 23 u. 24, 1879, p.443.

[59] *BMB*, Nr. 21 u. 22, 1890, p.484; S.M. Dzivhani "The Chiefs of Venda", pp.35-36; A. Jaques "Les coutumes funéraires", pp. 256-258; N.M.N. Ralushai "Conflicting Accounts of Venda History", especially pp.47, 65, 73-74, 87-88, 89-90, 92, 95, 110 & 118 and H.A. Stayt *The Bavenda*, pp.206-208 & 210-213. Thanks to Pippa Davis for translating the Jaques article for me.

[60] *Bawenda-Freund*, Nr. 54, 2 Quartal 1896, 14 Jahrgang, p.289 and H.A. Stayt *The Bavenda*, p.207.

> For several days now, by day and by night, I heard the racket of drums, flutes and bells and the yodelling of people coming from a village. I heard that an idol-worshipping feast was being celebrated there. Today I made my way to the village. I found many people gathered there. They formed a circle around several dancing women. Four of these women were specially decorated with ostrich plumes and coloured cloths. They were the instigators of the feast. Their forefathers, who were now gods, had come to them, had spoken to them and had taught them all sorts of wonderful things, like: to heal sicknesses, to cast spells [*Zaubern*] etc. I was told they find the cause of the illness through smell and in the same way they find the correct remedy for the illness. There was a frightful din in the yard. From a distance, the drums had sounded deceptively like the rattling of a mill; nearby one also heard the sounds made by the other instruments. One did not only beat on the skin of the drum, but also on the wood of which the drum is made. The drummers raced across their drums with frightful fury, at the same time pulling their faces into the most abhorrent grimaces; their sweat poured down and mingled with the swirling dust. In this way these people experienced a truly devilish spectacle ... The actual idols [the four dancing women] tried to maintain a certain amount of dignity; but the dancing of the others, especially that of an old woman, was too terrible to observe. I could only speak with the people by shouting. After I had spoken with individuals for a while, I noticed that they did not treat me with hostility, as I had expected at the beginning. I used a moment of silence to walk into the circle and to speak to the crowd - I said something like: "I have come to experience your customs. But what do I see? I see people who are lost, who have left the correct path." I pointed at the idolised-people and said to them that they were impostors and that the people were deceived by them. etc. The idolised-people had withdrawn a bit; a woman was lying down; she had danced herself sick. I spoke especially to them, but they did not feel like listening.[62]

Beuster continued describing what he saw as the fraudulent practices involved here by recording that he had "heard that these dancing people pretend that they don't eat anything on the day of the dance - they are cared for by the gods. They only accept water." However, on asking a "clever boy" what the dancers had eaten besides their staple food, and how many goats they had slaughtered, he had been rewarded with the answer: "They haven't slaughtered any goats yet. But they have other food which they eat with their mealie-pap. This they only eat at night." Lastly, in the

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[61] A. Jaques "Les coutumes funéraires", p.256.

[62] Tagebuch der Station bei Schewase (Carl Beuster), 18 September 1874. See also *BMB*, Nr. 21 u. 22, 1875, pp.445-446.

missionary's opinion, the practice of *malombo* had been imposed on the local people by outsiders from the north. The intended implication seems to have been that it was not deeply-rooted in local culture and should be dispensed with as quickly as possible:

> These idolised-people are not originally from this nation; they have come into this country from far away. At the beginning the people did not like them, but they have forced their way in. Now the people are afraid of them and for this reason, one permits them to attend the feasts and when one looks for their assistance in sickness.[63]

On 25 March 1878, Koen also described a *malombo* dance at Goergenholtz (still called "the new station at Makoarele [Makwarela]". He wrote that:

> Since yesterday, they have been dancing non-stop at a big village here in the neighbourhood. Even at night, there was no pause. This dance is in honour of the gods [ancestors]. They have a lead-dancer (man or woman) who is in a state of ecstasy.[64] While dancing, the lead-dancer sings in the higher language of the gods, which no-one else can understand. Suddenly he falls down as if dead, not stirring or moving (he is now with the gods in spirit). He is carried in a house where he is watched over by men and women, while the youth continue to dance. There are two such heathen somnambulists here close to me , a man and a woman.[65]

Beyond the information that they convey, these accounts are particularly interesting in that they strongly suggest that the *malombo* was already well-established in Vendaland by the 1870's. Further evidence is supplied by Koen's reference to another *malombo* dance at Georgenholtz on 5 October 1879 (see p.449). These descriptions challenge Stayt's assertion that the practice "was rare among the BaVenda until about 1914."[66] Other interesting themes raised by these accounts are the fact that the dancing took place over several days and nights and was accompanied by its own special music. The participants were possessed and in a state

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[63] Tagebuch der Station bei Schewase (Carl Beuster), 18 September 1874. See also *BMB*, Nr. 21 u. 22, 1875, p.446.

[64] This is meant in the old sense - a religious state in which the soul leaves the body to be united with God/the gods.

[65] Tagebuch der Station bei Ha Makoarela (Nicolaus Koen), 25 März 1878, p.12. See also *BMB*, Nr. 21 u. 22, 1878, p.494.

of ecstasy. Beyond communion with spiritual beings, the activity was associated with healing and other supernatural activities. The participants were clothed in garments and accessories which differed from the norm. They suffered great bodily discomfort and exhaustion, resulting in collapse, as a result of their participation. While all dancers in the performance discussed by Beuster were female, both men and women took part in that witnessed by Koen. The rite was carried out openly in the village and attracted an audience who felt free to comment on aspects of what was occurring, sometimes even critically. Even outsiders Beuster and Koen were not prevented from witnessing the spectacle. Beuster was even allowed to publicly denigrate both the participants and the onlookers. The practice was described as being of foreign origin. The participants spoke in an unintelligible language. These are classic features of the twentieth-century *malombo* as described by Stayt and Dederen, and as I have witnessed myself on one occasion.

Stayt and Dederen argued that the cult was of Karanga origin. The spirit, *tshilombo* (plural *zwilombo*), which entered the host was either that of an offended ancestor, sometimes extremely remote, or a troublesome homeless spirit with no genealogical connection with the person whom it entered. In the latter case, it was often extremely ill-intentioned and had been cut off from further contact with its own kin with the help of a *nanga*. Such banished spirits wandered around searching for a host within whom they could seek refuge. In some cases, they could even be the *tshilombo* of foreigners. Although it was generally women who were possessed, on rare occasions men could also suffer this fate.[67]

Possession by a *tshilombo* was often indicated by the afflicted person suffering a prolonged or serious illness. Once this had been diagnosed by a *nanga*, a *malombo* ritual specialist, called a *mainė a tshele*, was called in. Treatment was divided into two phases. During the first, the *maine a tshele* visited the afflicted person in her homestead. A drummer who knew the *malombo* beat was summoned and word was sent out to the extended family, especially the woman's relations, and the wider

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[66] H.A. Stayt *The Bavenda*, p.302.

community, stating that she needed their help. When the drumming began, any people in the district who had previously been possessed would arrive to take an active part in the proceedings. Their new comrade was brought into a trance by the *maine a tshele* and made to dance, accompanied by the *maine a tshele* and the other previously possessed people in the district in relays, until she collapsed. Attempts were made to get the *tshilombo* to identify itself and to state its needs. If it refused to do this, after a short pause, during which she was rubbed with various magical substances, the woman was made to dance to the point of collapse again. This process was repeated, sometimes over a period of a number of days, until the *tshilombo* finally co-operated. It then spoke in Tshikaranga, Tshivenda, a mixture of the two or a language intelligible only to the initiated. If it proved to be a malicious homeless sprit, it was then exorcised, trapped in a stick and thrown into a tree in the forest. It would remain there unless some unfortunate individual touched the stick, releasing it and becoming possessed in the process. However, in the case of an ancestral spirit, the aim was not to exorcise the *tshilombo* but to persuade it to periodically occupy the body of the afflicted person and dance in a manner which was not injurious to her health – expressed differently, to transform her status from that of victim to that of medium.[68]

Items identified by Stayt as being among those demanded by *tshilombo* included clothes, ornaments, ancestral spears or axes [male ritual objects], or various types of cloth. Sometimes these items could not be supplied immediately but a promise was made and they were supplied later. Dederen echoed this, referring to imitation assegais or axes and male garments (a waistcoat, a tie and/or a hat). In the dance I witnessed, a woman who had previously been possessed was dressed in a white shirt, black trousers, a gold waistcoat and a grey felt hat. The spirit could also demand sacrifices of fowls or a goat. While a woman was possessed by the *tshilombo*, her husband and relations had to treat her with great consideration and respect, saluting her as if she were a *khosi*. Once possessed, a woman was never the same again. From

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[67] J.M. Dederen "Venda for the inquisitive tourist", p.7 and H.A. Stayt The *Bavenda*, pp.202-203.

[68] J.M. Dederen "Venda for the inquisitive tourist", p.7 and H.A. Stayt The *Bavenda*, pp.202 & 203-206. See also N.J. van Warmelo (ed.) *Contributions Towards Venda History*, pp.141-150.

then on, the spirit would possess her from time to time when it had requests which it wished to be fulfilled or required propitiatory gifts. Hearing the *malombo* beat played on the drums was also enough to call the spirit to re-enter her and take part in the dancing. In this, the second phase, the medium joined a society of *malombo* dancers. This consisted of previously-treated patients. In addition to assisting the newly-possessed, they danced at intervals (annually at least) at the homestead of the eldest *maine a tshele* in the district or in the royal *khoro*. In the latter case, the *khosi* loaned the society some of his royal objects .[69]

In his pioneering study of spirit possession and shamanism, Lewis argued that, in many societies, this:

> form of possession, which is regarded initially as an illness, is ... virtually restricted to women. Such women's possession 'afflictions' are regularly treated not by permanently expelling the possessing agency, but by reaching a viable accommodation with it. The spirit is tamed and domesticated, rather than exorcized. This treatment is usually accomplished by the induction of the affected women into a female cult group which regularly promotes possession experiences among its members. Within the secluded cult group, possession has thus lost its malign significance.[70]

Thus, according to Lewis, "what men consider a demoniacal sickness, women convert into a clandestine ecstasy." Against this background, he interprets cults of this nature as "thinly disguised protest movements directed against the dominant sex" and as offering "an effective vehicle for manipulating husbands and male relatives" in societies where women are not otherwise effectively protected from the exactions of men. Responsibility and, through this, blame for the women's affliction, and the annoyance and cost which its treatment involves, does not lie with them but rather with (male) spirits. Their husbands and male relatives thus have no choice but to submit graciously to the demands for respect and gifts which these spirits demand. Moreover, as Lewis continues by arguing, possession of this nature is not "a secure

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[69] J.M. Dederen "Venda for the inquisitive tourist", p.7 and H.A. Stayt The *Bavenda*, pp.204-205 & 206.

female monopoly" – it also commonly embraces "downtrodden categories of men who are subject to strong discrimination in rigidly stratified societies." Thus, cults of this type "work to help the interests of the weak and downtrodden who have otherwise few effective means to press their claims for attention and respect."[71]

Being men of the nineteenth century, and representatives of the competing Christian God, the Berlin Missionaries did not develop explanations of this nature. However, given the dominant position of men, and of rulers, in nineteenth-century Vhavenda society, I find Lewis' explanation of the *malombo* a particularly appealing one. As with the other manifestations of the supernatural, and its interaction with the natural order, already discussed, the *malombo* also raises questions about the mediating role of rulers and ritual specialists in these processes of interaction.



49. *Thangu*[72]

[70] I.M. Lewis *Ecstatic Religion: An Anthropological Study of Spirit Possession and Shamanism*, Harmondsworth, Penguin Books, 1971, p.30. See also especially Chapter 3.

[71] *Ibid.* pp.31 & 32. See also especially Chapter 4.

[72] Excavated at Dzata by Edwin Hanisch, photographed by the author, Levubu, 1996.

"WITCHERY AND WITCHDOCTORS" – *ZAUBEREI, MAHOSI* AND *DZINANGA*

In general, the Berlin Missionaries in Vendaland believed that the *mahosi* and the *dzinanga* worked together extremely closely. On the one hand, this was to regulate society and relations between the natural and the supernatural. On the other, missionary discourse portrayed the rulers and what they called the *Zauberer* as colluding with each other to mislead and exploit the people. While they believed that this was sometimes conscious, the missionaries were nevertheless prepared to concede that (as they saw it) the rulers and (apparently to a lesser extent) the *dzinanga* believed in many of the "lies" and "superstitions" of African Religion just as much as their people. They were thus unaware, or only partly-conscious, of their role in "deceiving" their people. The missionaries also found it impossible to conceal their delight on occasions when what they saw as the scheming of the *dzinanga* backfired on them with unexpected results. Similarly, on a number of occasions, the missionaries felt able to discern the hand of God in causing the *dzinanga* to fail spectacularly in their efforts to control nature by supernatural means. Their own failures, of course, generally did not feature in this analysis.

Describing events in the vicinity of Georgenholtz on 9 and 10 January 1878, Koen was clearly dealing with actions which even the missionaries conceded were performed in good faith by the participants. He wrote that on these two days, the lands of the Mphaphulis in the vicinity of Georgenholtz had been "doctored" [*Landesdoktorei*]. Other parts of the realm had been "doctored" on the preceding days. This was an annual ceremony designed to protect the area against enemy attack from outside. It was also performed once it became known that an enemy force was on its way. Once the boundaries had been protected in this manner, the legs of any enemy crossing the sticks and entering the country would swell up. They would also lose all their power and fighting-spirit. In order to achieve this end, a "witch-doctor [*Zauberdoktor*]" had prepared a mixture of various herbs. This had then been taken to the capital. *Khosi* Ranwedzi Mphaphuli had then smeared this "medicine" on small sticks, each about two inches long, taken from a special tree. These sticks were

then carried to all the borders of the realm by young men who buried them under the soil at cross-roads. While performing these tasks, they had to be completely naked – nobody who was dressed in any way was allowed to touch the sticks. Those carrying the sticks had to be "greeted most respectfully" by all who met them on the way. They also had the right to requisition food, drink or anything else that they needed on their journey. Over the two days that this ceremony took place, nobody was allowed to work, for fear of heavy punishment. A few days previously, people from three villages near to Mphaphuli's capital had ignored this prohibition and had hoed their fields. The *khosi* had punished them by seizing all of their goats. Koen reported that he had unsuccessfully attempted to convince Makwarela Mphaphuli and others about what he saw as "the foolishness of these beliefs". They strongly believed that failure to perform these rituals would result in defeat and disaster at the hands of their enemies.[73]

During the same year, Beuster reported on a case that he clearly delighted in portraying as a *nanga* being caught out by his own attempts to be too clever for his own good, and please both the Christian and the "Heathen" communities. The editors of the *Missions-Berichte* clearly shared his views, and it was published under the title "Caught in your own trap". According to Beuster's report of 12 June 1878, for quite a while, "a heathen, named Mangale" had had a reasonably close relationship with the mission station at Ha-Tshivhase. "He had lived amongst the Boers [*Bauern*] for a long time, and experienced much there - he has a crippled arm, thanks to the malice of a burgher [*Bauer*]." Apparently utilizing skills he had learned from the Boers, upon his return to Vendaland, he had planted apple and peach trees. The missionaries had got to know him when he had arrived at Ha-Tshivahse attempting to trade peaches and apples from his trees for other goods. "For a while, he almost regularly attended church services and he understood God's Word well."[74]

[73] Tagebuch der Station bei Ha Makoarela (Nicolaus Koen), 10 Januar 1878, pp.1-3. See also *BMB*, Nr. 21 u. 22, 1878, pp.493-494.

[74] Tagebuch der Station bei Tschewase (Carl Beuster), 12 Juni 1878, p.25. See also *BMB*, Nr. 1 u. 2, 1880, p.3.

Some time previously, Mangale had been extremely ill with malaria. After he had recovered, his two children died within a short time of each other. In response, the bereaved man summoned a *mungome* or *nanga* to ascertain who was responsible for the deaths.[75] Mangale was a *nanga* himself. Beuster was convinced that this meant that he knew that the whole process of throwing the bones was a fraudulent one. The missionary therefore explained the action of calling for a diviner in cynical terms:

> He himself is a doctor [*Doctor – sic.*] and he therefore does not act out of ignorance, but he knows very well what is involved in casting the bones [*Würfeln*].[76] Rather than stand the risk of being regarded as a loveless

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[75] The text describes him as a "doctor" without specifying anymore than this. The missionaries either had not yet realised, or were not yet interested in noting, that there were different categories of specialist supernatural practitioners. I have already discussed the *maine wa tsehle*, who dealt with spirit possession. Moving to other categories, the *nanga* came closest to the commonly-held picture of a medicine-man, healer or African Doctor. One of the tools that he used in diagnosing illness was the *thangu* – the so-called "bones" or "divining dice" [see Illustrations 49 and 50]. An exceptionally successful *nanga* was referred to as *dzololwe*. The term *mungome* (plural, *mingome*), describing a second kind of specialist, was of Tsonga-Shangaan origin and usually indicated a person involved in divination activities, particularly surrounding accusations of *vhuloi*. In addition to the *thangu* and other witch-funding aids such as extendable concertina-like wooden arms which could point out the *muloi*, these specialists frequently used the *ndilo*, or divining bowl, to identify *muloi* [see Illustration 51]. They worked in close co-operation with *dzinanga*. Once the *mungome* had identified the source of evil, he would often direct his clients to a *nanga* for further treatment of the problem. I strongly suspect that the specialist called by Mangale was a *mungome* since the allegation was one of *vhuloi*. In my reading, it is also likely that Mangale was a general practitioner, rather than a specialist. It is unlikely that he would have developed such a close relationship with the mission station were he a *mungome*. In addition to these, there were other specialists, each with his or her own title, who were concerned with doctoring of the seeds, circumcision, protection of the army, rainmaking, lighting of sacred fires and so on. The *tshifhe* officiated at sacrifices and offerings, led fertility rituals, approached Raluvhimba and acted as intermediaries with the ancestors. The last-mentioned category were often not full-time specialists or "priests" – these functions were often served by homestead or lineage heads, *magota* or *mahosi*. See especially M. Bartels "Der Würfelzauber südafrikanischer Völker". in *Zeitschrift für Ethnologie*, Vol. 35, 1903, pp.338-379; P.J. Coertze "Dolosgooiery in Suid-Afrika", in *Annale van Die Universiteit van Stellenbosch*, Vol. IX, Series B, Part 2, April 1931, pp.1-48; E. Giesekke "Wahrsagerei bei den Venda". in *Zeitschrift für Eingeborenen Sprachen*, Vol. XXI, No. 4, 1931, pp.257-310; E. Gottschling "The Bawenda", p.212; W.D. Hammond-Tooke "World-view II A System of Action", in W.D. Hammond-Tooke (ed.) *The Bantu-Speaking Peoples of Southern Africa*, pp.350& 357; J. Loubser "The Venda Divining Bowl in the Museum", in *National Museum News*, No. 36, April 1989, pp.18-19; A.C.E. Nettleton "The Traditional Figurative Woodcarving of the Shona and Venda", Ph.D. thesis, University of the Witwatersrand, 1984 (3 Volumes), Volume 1, pp.304-366; I. Plug "An Analysis of Witchdoctor Divining Sets", in *Research Natco Museum*, Vol. 1, No. 3, 1987, pp.48-67; H.A. Stayt *The Bavenda*, especially pp.31-32, 101-102, 114, 162-165, 207, 220, 246-249, 265-266, 268, 274-302, 307 & 311-314; N.J. van Warmelo (ed.) *Contributions Towards Venda History*, especially pp.53, 60-61, 62, 68, 70, 154-155, 182 & 197-200 and R. Wessmann *The Bawenda of the Spelonken*, pp.84-86 & 90-96.

[76] "*Würfeln*" should actually be translated as "dice". However, the term "throwing the bones" is much more familiar locally. I therefore translate "casting" and "throwing the [divining] dice" as "throwing the bones" throughout.

> father who does not care for his children, or as one who has adopted the ways of the Boers [*Bauern*] and has thrown away the ways of the ancestors, he thought it would be better to perform a clearly visible deed to counter any suspicions - a deed which would prove that he had not yet been contaminated with the ways of the teacher; but that he was still faithful to the ways of the ancestors.[77]

I am convinced that this cynical explanation misinterprets and misrepresents Mangale's motivations and actions. Admittedly, as a *nanga*, he would have been aware of some of the techniques used to impress clients. However, to extrapolate from this that he and his colleagues saw themselves as frauds preying on a gullible public is extremely Eurocentric.[78] In numerous informal conversations locally, I have been told that even powerful *dzinanaga* and *mingome* have to resort to "trickery" on occasion either to make their clients' minds receptive or to distract their attention so that the genuine power of the ancestors and the herbs is able to operate. Not only does this argument seem extremely logical but I am convinced that nineteenth century *dzinanaga* would have thought in the same way – yes, there was illusion but this illusion allowed the real power to operate. In addition, turning to Mangale himself, he had only been attending church services and developing a cordial relationship with Beuster and the Christians at Ha-Tshivhase. He had not yet been converted to Christianity and been baptised. As such, he had no reason to turn his back on local religious beliefs and practices. Moreover, even if he had converted, there was a strong chance that he would have turned to the beliefs that he had grown up with at this traumatic time. Still today, many local people who are strong Christians in the non-indigenous churches turn to *dzinanga* and other African medico-religious practitioners in times of misfortune, illness or death which are not

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[77] Tagebuch der Station bei Tschewase (Carl Beuster), 12 Juni 1878, pp.25-26. See also *BMB*, Nr. 1 u. 2, 1880, p.3.

[78] Interestingly, some of the later missionaries had a different attitude. In a discussion of Beuster's report, Helga Giesekke informed me that: "Beuster seems to imply that the man, who himself practices witchcraft, should know that there is not truth in throwing the dice - a lot of hocus-pocus. In those days witchdoctors did not have bought certificates. They were people who had had a long apprenticeship of more than twenty years. They knew their herbs and they knew how to communicate with the spiritual world. My Grandmother [Erdmuthe Dorothea Giesekke], who went into this, and who learnt how to read the bones, assured us that this was not trickery. When she realised that she was expected to further into the realm of spiritualism, she withdrew from any further studies of witchraft."

adequately explained by western versions of Christianity or (in the case of illness) which do not seem to be responding to western medicine. In some cases, the same applies to the showing of respect for the ancestors. I personally have attended a ceremony where a respected elder in the Tsonga Presbyterian Church – a deputy headmaster of a large secondary school - poured beer onto the ground for the ancestors, summoned them and addressed them and saw no contradiction between this and his otherwise extremely mainstream Christian beliefs. African Initiated Churches, such as the Zion Christian Church [ZCC], have prophets and other religious healers within their hierarchy who are able to fulfil this need. Members are also specifically taught to show respect to the ancestors.[79] Against this background, I am certain that Mangale was convinced that he was acting in the only responsible manner in attempting to ascertain who had been responsible for the death of his children.

The *nanga* identified a man from the village as the *muloi*. When he heard this, the man who had been pointed out fled to one of Tshivhase's wives for protection. People in the area reportedly were convinced that this action demonstrated his guilt: "You see, that is the murderer! ... Why else has he run away? He is afraid!" However, the accused *muloi* had another explanation. Anyone accused of *vhuloi* had the right to defend themselves before the council and the right to demand a second opinion from another *mungome*.[80] He seems to have thought that he had a better

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[79] See especially A. Anderson and G. Pillay "The Segregated Spirit: The Pentecostals", in R. Elphick and R. Davenport (eds.) *Christianity in South Africa*, pp.227-241; Stephen Hayes *Christian Reponses to Witchcraft and Sorcery* (Article originally published in *Missionalia*, the Journal of the South African Missiological Society. in November 1995), at http://www.geocities.com/Athens/7734/witch1.htm, accessed 30 July 1999 and at http://www.geocities.com/missionalia/witch1.htm, accessed 16 October 2000; B.A. Pauw "The Influence of Christianity", in W.D. Hammond-Tooke (ed.) *The Bantu-Speaking Peoples of Southern Africa*, pp. 415-440; H. Pretorius and L. Jafta "A Branch Springs Out", pp.211-226 and A.L. Vilakazi "Magic and Seperatist or Independent Churches", in G.C. Oosthuizen and I. Hexham (eds.) *Afro-Christian Religion at the grassroots in Southern Africa*, African Studies, Volume 19, Lewiston, Edwin Mellen Press, 1991, pp.164-170. See also J.L. Comaroff and J. Comaroff *Of Revelation and Revolution*, Volume One, especially Chapter 6 & Volume Two, especially Chapter 2 and p.4, footnote 7 of this thesis.

[80] One of my final-year undergraduate students argued in an assignment that, should the accused request it, he and the plaintiff were given permission to consult a *mungome* in the presence of the *khosi*'s witnesses. If the *mungome* found the accused innocent, the accuser had to pay a number of cattle for defamation of character. This was called *u fhomolola* (to cleanse). If the accused was found guilty, her or his head was partly shaved to prove to those who had remained behind that

chance if he took the second option rather than the first. To do this, he needed the protection of the queen. The accused thus reportedly argued that: "I am no murderer. I had nothing to do with the death of the children. But I did flee because I wanted to defend myself - that would be impossible amongst you. I will also call a doctor and then it will be seen whether I am guilty."[81]

Another "doctor" (again, presumably a *mungome*) was called from far away. This was (and remains) normal practice as he or she was believed to be unbiased because of being a stranger. In addition, apparently on the principle of a prophet never being acknowledged at home, the most powerful *mingome* and *dzinanga* were always believed to live far away. Again revealing his cynicism, Beuster reported that this specialist was "given a very friendly reception. While he eats and recovers his strength for this important task, he drops hints that he expects to be paid a substantial fee for settling the matter favourably."[82]

Following normal practice, the queen sent along a representative to report back to her on the judgement. He and the accused (presumably accompanied by the accuser and his witnesses) went to the place where the bones would be thrown:

> The doctor throws the bones; and then he throws them again. And verily, the bones clearly contradict those of the first doctor. The man is truly no murderer! Then finally it is decided - there is no doubt about it - the parents themselves, the own mothers, have killed the children![83] Many

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(s)he had been found to be a *muloi*. On arrival back home, the now-convicted witch was expected to pay a heavy fine in cattle. Their possessions and homes were burned and they were then either driven away or killed (S.A. Nemaorani "Why, and with what effects for the community, there have been a spate of witch-hunts in Venda in recent years", History 300 Assignment, University of Venda, 10 June 1991, pp.4-5). It will be seen that this was basically the procedure followed in this case, where the accused was found not-guilty on this appeal.

[81] Tagebuch der Station bei Tschewase (Carl Beuster), 12 Juni 1878, p.26. See also *BMB*, Nr. 1 u. 2, 1880, p.3.

[82] *Ibid.*

[83] It seems that the children had different mothers. Jealousy and tensions between co-wives is one of the classic causes of witchcraft accusations in a number of African societies. Beuster seems to have misunderstood the accusation here - it is most likely that the women were accused of bewitching each other's children. For witchcraft accusations between co-wives among Tshivenda speakers, see N.J. van Warmelo in collaboration with W.M.D. Phophi *Venda Law: Part 2, Married life*, p.307 (754). Among other groups, see, for example, M. Gluckman *Custom and Conflict in Africa*, Oxford, Basil Blackwell, 1973, pp.98-100; W.D. Hammond-Tooke "World-view II", p.358; L. Mair *An Introduction to Social Anthropology*, Second Edition, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1972,

> friends and relatives had stood around the accused, showing their support, and they had exercised their influence on the doctor. When now, the last decisive judgement is pronounced, shouts of joy and cheers are heard. The men grab their guns and shoot into the sky - so that we at home thought the shots were fired to welcome workers from foreign places who had returned home. Now, on top of this, the accused explains that he can not just forget about such a serious insult - he is entitled to a fee for his suffering; the one who had started it all, Mangale, should at least pay him a beast [*ein Stück Vieh*].[84] It seems he will also receive the beast. And how will it continue, as the accusation has been turned back onto his own house? This is how things go with this man who, because of his great care for earthly advantages, turned his back on Jesus and chose instead, the services of Satan. How he revealed himself at that time, that he has been a liar right from the beginning. Could it have been worse for him, in the material sense only, if he had confessed Jesus as his Lord? Even with serious suffering, he would have been able to experience the sweet peace of the soul with Jesus; but the Godless have no peace.[85]

For the missionaries, these cases surrounding attempts to trace the *vhaloi* responsible for deaths within families typified the work of *dzinanga* and *mingome*. Except possibly in the case of extremely old people, local belief structures reportedly did not allow for cases of natural death – a *muloi* had to be responsible.[86] The missionaries

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pp.249-250; P. Mayer "Witches", Inaugural Lecture, Rhodes University, 1954, in M. Marwick (ed.) *Witchcraft & Sorcery*, Harmondsworth, Penguin Books, 1970, p.55; A.R. Radcliffe-Brown and D. Forde *African Systems of Kinship and Marriage*, London, International African Institute, Oxford University Press, 1950, pp.94, 113, 258 & 275

84 A bull, an ox or a cow.

85 Tagebuch der Station bei Tschewase (Carl Beuster), 12 Juni 1878, pp.26-27. See also *BMB*, Nr. 1 u. 2, 1880, p.4.

86 E. Gottschling "The Bawenda", p.207; H.A. Stayt *The Bavenda*, pp.280 & 291 and R. Wessmann *The Bawenda of the Spelonken*, pp.84-85. In confirming this assertion, a number of my third-year undergraduate students noted that today *vhaloi* are believed to be the main cause of unnatural or unexpected deaths, such as those of young children (those least expected to die by the community) or those resulting from car accidents. The sudden onset of a serious illness, the development of a life-threatening disease in a young person, or a run of bad luck faced by an individual or family may also awaken fears of *vhuloi* (T.A. Khomunala "Why, and with what effects for the community, there have been a spate of witch-hunts in Venda in recent years", History 300 Assignment, University of Venda, 10 June 1991, p.6; R.R. Letshokota "Why, and with what effects for the community, there have been a spate of witch-hunts in Venda in recent years", History 300 Assignment, University of Venda, 10 June 1991, p.1; T.L. Mukwevho "The causes and effects of witch hunting in the Sibasa area of Venda in recent years", History 300 Assignment, University of Venda, 10 June 1991, p.2; S.A. Nemaorani "Why, and with what effects for the community, there have been a spate of witch-hunts in Venda in recent years", p.6; M.G Phuriwa "Why, and with what effects for the community, there have been a spate of witch-hunts in Venda in recent years", History 300 Assignment, University of Venda, 10 June 1991, pp.3 & 5; R.S. Ramovha "Why, and with what effects for the community, there have been a spate of witch-hunts in Venda in recent years", History 300 Assignment, University of Venda, 10 June 1991, p.2; and S.R. Ramukhuba

occasionally commented (disparagingly) on attempts by supernatural practitioners to heal the sick or bring rain. However, their focus was definitely on what they saw as the injustices brought about by the so-called witch- hunts. Thus, in an overview of news from Tshakhuma for the first semester of 1880, the *Missions-Berichte* noted that one of Khosi Madzivhandila's daughters had died. The family had then gone to a *mungome* [*Zauberer*], who had identified the culprit who had brought about her death. Unidentified relatives (presumably acting under the orders or at least with the consent of the *khosi* had then killed the alleged *muloi.* Schwellnus and the *Missions-Berichte* bemoaned the fact that, despite his having been re-appointed as the Commissioner for Native Affairs in the Zoutpansberg area by the British administration of the Transvaal, Albasini had done nothing to bring these vengeance-seekers to book. This despite the fact that he had "surrounded himself with a crowd of Knopneusen policemen and ... built a prison and fort on his property."[87]

In April 1885, during the time when Beuster was overseeing the running of the Georgenholtz Mission Station, he wrote of a case which he saw both as divine punishment for a person who denied the Christian God and an issue manipulated by the *khosi* [apparently Makwarela Mphaphuli]. Beuster wrote that August Tshimange and Paulus Raknopa, two Christians from Georgenholtz, had informed him that they had been discussing "the existence of God with some heathens, in the presence of Makoarăla [Makwarela]" at the latter's capital-village. Among those taking part in the discussion, there "was an old grey-haired man who, with utter impudence, denied the existence of God. 'If there is a God, He can prove His existence by killing me, an old man. You young ones can remain alive. He can use me to show His might.'" *Khosi* Makwarela reportedly warned the old man not to talk like this. Three days later, the old man was dead.[88]

"Why, and with what effects for the community, there have been a spate of witch-hunts in Venda in recent years", History 300 Assignment, University of Venda, 10 June 1991, p.2).

[87] *BMB*, Nr. 21 u. 22, 1880, p.403.

[88] *BMB*, Nr. 23 u. 24, 1885, pp.407-408.

However, while the Christians viewed this as being the result of divine retribution, the local people had other ideas. Although it was believed that *vhaloi* sometimes used an innate evil power to kill their victims, they could allegedly also use poisons (either in the context of sympathetic magic or directly), familiars or other means.[89] In this case, a whole family were suspected of having used poison to kill the old man. Beuster was horrified by what he saw as the outright manipulation of the case in order to secure income for the *khosi*:

> Already on the day after his blasphemy, the old man had become ill and by the third day he had died. Although the matter had become public knowledge, all those concerned with it kept quiet. But so that the ruler of the country should not have his income sources cut, the old man had to have been killed by a poison mixture. This is why the family of six was immediately arrested and taken to the capital village. How quickly all the excitement was calmed when it was said: "Several guilty people could buy their freedom, if two to three head of cattle were paid for each guilty person." So the auction started and after a few days we heard that it was over. The girls had been sold as wives; the boys had been bought by relatives, but some of them fled. So this death brought the chief an income of about 12 - 15 head of cattle.[90]

These themes of what the missionaries interpreted to be divine retribution against blasphemers or uses of alternative power and the manipulation of evidence in accusations of *vhuloi* continued to surface in reports from the mission stations. Thus, in commenting on events at Ha Tshivhase during February 1885, in a report subsequently published under the title of "A Judgment from God", Beuster wrote there had been an extremely dramatic storm:

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[89] H.A. Stayt *The Bavenda*, pp.273-279. See also S. Balic "Change brings muti murders", p.33. A number of my final-year undergraduate students also commented on this (T.A. Khomunala "Why, and with what effects for the community, there have been a spate of witch-hunts in Venda in recent years", pp.3-4 & 6; R.R. Letshokota "Why, and with what effects for the community, there have been a spate of witch-hunts in Venda in recent years", p.7; T.L. Mukwevho "The causes and effects of witch hunting in the Sibasa area of Venda in recent years", p.2; S.A. Nemaorani "Why, and with what effects for the community, there have been a spate of witch-hunts in Venda in recent years", p.6; R.S. Ramovha "Why, and with what effects for the community, there have been a spate of witch-hunts in Venda in recent years", pp.2 & 3 and T.J. Ravele "Why, and with what effects for the community, there have been a spate of witch-hunts in Venda in recent years", History 300 Assignment, University of Venda, 10 June 1991, p.5).

[90] *BMB*, Nr. 23 u. 24, 1885, p.408.

> - a storm as none of the inhabitants here can remember ever having experienced before. Lightning lit up the night, often to daylight intensity; thunder rumbled, crack upon crack, in close proximity of the houses. Here and there people and animals are supposed to have been killed. Declaring this to be the truth, they say that at Lwamondo, a doctor [*Doktor*] called Mbada, together with his son, went out of his house at the height of the storm. He took some medicine from the witch-doctor [*Zauberer*] into his mouth. Spitting this medicine up into the air, he called out: "Ha-a-a-ai!" - which more or less means: What is this! or Stop it! He thought he could command the storm, just like most of these witch-doctors [*Zauberer*] claim to have the power over the rain in their hands. But they were immediately killed by a bolt of lightning - the man, together with his son, who undertook to behave so outrageously against God the Lord.[91]

On 12 May of the same year, Beuster reported that he had visited Khosi Tshivhase. He provided a vivid description of what he saw as the antics of a famous diviner (apparently a *mungome*) who had been summoned by Tshivhase to clear his country of *vhaloi*:

> Presently a famous witch-doctor [*Zauberdoktor*] is living in the open space in the beautiful forest in front of the capital village. This man has been ordered to come here by Tshewasse [Tshivhase], to establish the high court in his country. For this reason the witch-doctor has been equipped with all the protection and might from Tshewasse. He is dressed in all sorts of trinkets like ostrich feathers, tiger [leopard] and snake-skins - a fantastically adorned man. He is now working daily on all sorts of murder [*vhuloi*] and theft cases, and the gaping masses regard the hocus-pocus which is so well presented to them in this way with clear amusement for days on end. In order that he may not be accused of receiving good remuneration for nothing, he really works by the sweat of his brow. He stamps his feet like a buffalo; he jumps and flings his hands about, like an ostrich does with its wings; he rolls his eyes like a chameleon, and froths at the mouth and sprays spittle far around him with his mouth; with his long knife, he mysteriously points in this or that direction as if he smells the culprit he is looking for there.[92]

Here again Beuster leveled accusations that judgements against *vhaloi* were used to enrich the *khosi* and that those found guilty by other practitioners were able to buy a

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[91] *BMB*, Nr. 21 u. 22, 1886, p.414.

[92] Tagebuch der Station Ha Tsĕvase (Carl Beuster), 12 Mai 1885, pp.19-20. See also *BMB*, Nr. 21 u. 22, 1886, p.416 .

reversal of this judgement if they were wealthy enough to be able to afford the required discrete bribes:

> Tshewasse is now reaping a good harvest. His servants sit in the background. As soon as the name of the guilty one has been pronounced, they rush to his place to get hold of him, or his wife and children, or his animals. Speed is essential as friends or relatives of the condemned person could be amongst the crowd; they could inform him of the impending danger. If the wife or children have been arrested, they can be bought back by means of cattle. Nowadays the punishment is almost always paid more in belongings and goods than also with a life. So in this case, the cruelty has been reduced. But not only condemnations are passed here; those who have been declared as guilty by other witch-doctors are also pardoned here. Even though in such cases, the capital village does not reap any benefit from this, the witch-doctor always profits from such an act, as such a pardon cannot be obtained without a good greasing of the palm. One evening we heard clear yodelling [ululation] and jubilation coming from a neighbouring village, as is usually heard on especially happy occasions. The reason for this was that the sister of the chief of that village had been acquitted by the witch-doctor of the murder she had been accused of. With her honour now restored, she could again return to her home. Her brother had done his share in order to attain the favourable result. I spoke some words to the gathered crowd, while sitting on my horse. I found it very interesting to notice how so many of that crowd listened intently when I told them of their confusion and exposed the impotence of the witch-doctor in these matters. Yes, even the witch-doctor gave a friendly, smiling nod when I departed, as if he wanted to say: "In spite of this, let there not be hostility."[93]

During the course of the following year, 1886, there was a far more serious case of *vhuloi* at Ha-Tshivhase. Malaria was particularly bad in the area that year and many local people died as a result of this. Among their number was *Khosi* Tshivhase's second-most-important wife, Kowâla. The *Missions-Berichte* recorded that: "Amongst the heathens, every death is referred back to witch-doctors and poison-mixers [*Zauberer und Giftmischer*]." An old, grey-haired woman and her daughter were immediately pointed out as having been responsible for the queen's death and were executed. One version of the story doing the rounds at the time was that this was the end of the matter. However, there was a strong rumour that the situation was

[93] Tagebuch der Station Ha Tsĕvase (Carl Beuster), 12 Mai 1885, pp.20-21. See also *BMB*, Nr. 21 u. 22, 1886, pp.416-417.

actually far more complicated. According to this version, the story that they were the *vhaloi* responsible for the death was merely a cover-up. Instead:

> an important woman like the Queen, must have a mat on which to rest (that is the old woman) and a blanket to cover her (that is the younger woman); the real murderers would still be discovered by the throwing of the bones [*Würfel*] - they will soon enough follow these two people to their graves.[94]

Beuster was not the only Berlin Missionary to encounter cases such as these. Thus, on 5 April 1889, Wessmann reported from Gerorgernholtz that:

> Towards mid-day I heard of a large crowd of people who had gathered at the foot of our mountain.[95] They were looking for the so-called murderers of three children who had died close by a few days ago. Should one of the Bawenda [Vhavenda] nation die, then, according to the superstitions of this nation, another person has killed him. This murderer may from then onwards no longer live amongst them.[96] The search for the culprit soon gets under way. When he is found, he is secretly attacked and killed - if he does not succeed in fleeing away in time. The women and children of such an alleged murderer are sold, or are bought back by the relatives for cattle. All other property - like the cattle of the murderer - is taken to the king in the capital village. As this is a profitable business for the king, even the murderers of relatives who work in the diamond-fields - or those of any other people living in distant lands - are hunted down here as soon as the message of their death reaches here. Because of this, as a rule, only rich people are selected as murderers - people from whom one stands to gain very much. It has also already happened that people have returned from distant places, after they have been pronounced dead and their murderers have long since been killed. These poor people are indescribably blind, not to recognise such palpable deceit, and also do not want to admit its existence.[97]

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[94] *BMB*, Nr. 21 u. 22, 1887, p.485. Allegations about the provision of a human "mat" and "blanket" for deceased royals are discussed in the next chapter (see pp.393-394).

[95] The Mavhola Mountain on which Wessmann had built the new Georgenholtz mission station. In other words, the people must have gathered somewhere near the old mission station of Koen.

[96] By killing one of them, the "murderer" has proven himself to be an enemy of the clan and he must be chased out of the clan (or "eliminated") so that he will not be able to kill any more of them.

[97] *BMB*, Nr. 21 u. 22, 1889, p.547.

On the day in question, three *vhaloi* were being sought. As soon as he heard to the gathering, Wessmann had his horse saddled and rode over to where it was taking place. As the missionary described it:

> Men, women and many old grey-haired people sat closely huddled together, shivering [shaking], waiting to see what would happen. In the middle of the gathering, sat the witch-doctor [*Zauberdoktor*] with a container filled with water in which he performed his sinister intentions. In the water there were all sorts of little stones which he moved backwards and forwards in the water, with his right hand. While doing this, he uttered inarticulate sounds which reminded one of the ravings [senseless talk] of a drunkard. He held a small piece of rag [cloth] which had belonged to the deceased person in his hand. This was thrown into the water with the stones and, depending on how the cloth settles, it will point out the alleged murderer - he is found in the stones which represent the names of various people.[98]

Khosi Makwarela's mother was sitting near to the *mungome*. She and other important councillors from the capital village had originally been discussing other

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[98] *Ibid.* This seems to be a variation of the "ideal" method of use of the *ndilo* described by van Warmelo, Stayt and Loubser. According to these authors, first the *thangu* (made of ivory, bone or wood) and associated bones and objects were thrown [see Illustration 50]. The main dice – the old man, old woman, old woman and young woman – gave information about the *mutupo* (clan name, totem group and tabus) of the *muloi* or *vhaloi* involved. The astalagus bones and objects gave supplementary information. This gave a preliminary reading and identified the likely parties involved. The *thangu* could be thrown a number of times until there was clarity on the issue. The *ndilo*, which had been filled with water, was then consulted in the presence of all involved parties and (ideally) representatives of the *khosi* or *gota*. Before any of the parties could look at the bowl, they had to rub their eyes with kingfisher droppings as a protective measure against blindness caused by the power of the bowl. Scraps collected from the corpse were mixed with four seeds from the *muruthu* tree (*Croton megalobotrys* - these seeds are extremely light). These seeds were then set afloat on the water. They drifted around, occasionally remaining stationary for a while and then beginning to move again. Carvings on the inside of the bowl assisted in reconstructing events. There was a small protuberance in the centre of the bowl which had a cowry shell embedded in it. The mound represented either the umbilicus or the *khosi*'s capital, the cowry the female genitals. Eventually, the seeds came to rest alongside the symbols carved on the rim of the bowl [see Illustration 51]. During all this time, the *mungome* was carefully watching their movements and interpreting them as they occurred. The first seed to touch the side indicated the *mutupo* of the *muloi*, the second and third the *mitupo* of the mother and grandmother of the *muloi* and the fourth provided extra information. The seeds were then removed with a small spoon or some similar object and placed on the symbols on the rim where they came to rest. The *thangu* were then thrown into the *ndilo*. They were also fished out with a spoon and the information which they revealed was read in conjunction with that provided by the seeds. This whole process could be repeated a number of times until the *mungome* and the majority of the participants (although presumably not the convicted *muloi* or *vhaloi*) were satisfied that finality had been reached. (J. Loubser "The Venda Divining Bowl in the Museum", pp.18-19; H.A. Stayt *The Bavenda*, pp.279-300 and N.J. van Warmelo (ed.) *Contributions Towards Venda History*, pp.197-200.)

matters. However, they appeared to have taken control over the witch-hunting gathering. In Wessmann's interpretation, his sudden arrival was quite unexpected. The councillors were uncertain of how they should handle this intrusion. Some gave the missionary "a friendly nod of the head", others seemed not to "know whether they should interrupt this activity immediately by speaking up." In an apparent bid to politely get rid of him, Makwarela's mother asked Wessmann to go to the capital village to see her son, who would undoubtedly be very glad to see him. The missionary was nevertheless not to be deflected in his purpose:

> "I am coming here to you," this is how I introduced my conversation. "The whole nation is gathered here today. What are you looking for?" The old lady answered in a shaking [quivering], soft voice: "We are looking for our things." Everybody listened most attentively and at this moment, my appearance was truly no unwelcome sight for the shivering figures. I continued: "Are you not looking for a murderer?" The gathering agreed to this, and it gave me the opportunity to speak of the Living God, who will in turn demand payment for the innocent blood which is crying out to heaven.[99] The gathering listened to this in absolute silence, without any interruption. The horse was the pulpit.[100] The murderers were not found during this gathering. Makoarele's [Makwarela's] mother tried to make light of the impression which my words left. As I was later told, she had said soon after my departure: "Mynheer is only cross because we are performing our rituals near his place."[101]

On another occasion, Wessmann intervened far more directly to save the lives of convicted *vhaloi*. Reporting on events at Georgenholtz in 1892, the *Missions-Berichte* stated that "Brother Wessmann strides bravely into the middle of the environment of heathen abominations, and saves many an innocent person." During the course of the year, he had heard that a man and his sister in a neighbouring village had been identified by a *mungome* as the *vhaloi* responsible for the death of a distant relative. They were reportedly about to be executed by poisoning or strangulation. Rushing there on horseback, he had found the two accused cowering in

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[99] See the story of Cain and Abel : Genesis 4 : 10.

[100] In other words, he sat on his horse while he spoke, so that all could see him clearly - the preacher usually stands on the raised pulpit while preaching.

[101] *BMB*, Nr. 21 u. 22, 1889, pp.547-548.

the corner of a rondavel. Having untied them, he had asked the people in the vicinity and the *gota*:

> "What do you intend doing?" - "Yes, it is true. We want to kill this old man and his sister, and we are not afraid to even do it in front of your eyes!" - " I have no doubt that you intend doing this, because you are totally foolish in what you do. You as a new Chief [*gota*], now want to show your power. But you do not consider that you are loading a burden [of guilt] on yourself." - "How can that be? Are they not murderers? The witch-doctor [*Zauberer*] has said so!" - "Why does the witch-doctor not say that you are the murderer?" - "So, don't you White people also lock up the sinners [guilty ones] in prison?" - "Yes we do. And murderers are even hanged. But mark my words, should the White government official come into this country and hear that you have murdered an innocent person, you will also be hanged." These words seemed to make him somewhat doubtful, and he finally promised not to do anything to the two accused.[102]

Wessmann then left the village, taking the rope which had been used to bind the two along with him as a precaution against their being tied up again immediately after his back was turned. The *gota* nevertheless ran after him and demanded that he give it back. He was forced to do this in order to avoid an accusation of theft. Wessmann nevertheless extracted a further promise from the *gota* that nothing would be done to the prisoners. He also learned that the whole affair had allegedly been engineered by *Khosi* Makwarela Mphaphuli. The two prisoners took the opportunity to flee out of the lands of the Mphaphulis. As a result, their extended family were stripped of many cattle. The *Misisons-Berichte* cynically noted that: "Since then the heathens prefer holding their council meetings on a Sunday, when it comes to investigating a so-called murder, because they are then safe that the missionary will not appear."[103]

Cases where *dzinanga* attempted to cure the sick received far less attention in missionary diaries and reports and in the columns of the *Missions-Berichte*. Even here, at this stage, the missionaries could not accept that local pharmaceutical knowledge could have any beneficial properties. In their opinion, it could only be based on deception. Thus, Wessmann had recorded on 18 September 1889 that:

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[102] *BMB*, Nr. 19 u. 20, 1873, p.469. See also *BMB*, Nr. 11 u. 12, 1893 [Jahresbericht 1892], p.270.
[103] *BMB*, Nr. 19 u. 20, 1873, pp.469-470 (quotation, p.470).

> Today I was able to experience in which way the heathen doctors [*heidnische Doktoren*] try to deceive the people and how they make their profits. Our neighbouring Chief had a doctor [*Doktor*] called from a distant place, who should cure the illness of one of his wives. After he had made several small cuts at various places on her body, he took out a piece of a dismembered ox-horn. This served as a tube - by putting the ox-horn on the ear and at other places, he tried to draw the sickness out of her body. On this occasion, the Chief also asked the reason for the illness which his son had recently had. The boy was called and questioned by the doctor as follows: "While you were herding the cattle, you saw a snake with two heads!" The boy replied: "No!". The witch-doctor continued: "Did you not once see a leopard [*Tiger*]?" The boy again replied: "No!" The witch-doctor continued: "Did you not have nightmares one night?" The boy again said: "No!" After the boy was asked even more questions and the questions were always answered with "No!", he was sent away by the doctor, who accused him of ignorance. For this work the father paid a he-goat.[104]

Thus, the missionaries saw local religious beliefs, conceptions about *vhuloi* and beliefs in the power of *dzinanga, mingome* and other specialists as being manifestations of the power of Satan or as arising from superstition and duplicity. In their interpretation, a great deal of the blame for the persistence of these beliefs and practices had to be shouldered by the *mahosi*. In missionary analysis, it was only by weakening the power of these living "idols" of the people that any significant progress could be made in weaning people away from enslavement to "darkness" to rebirth in the "light" of Christianity. This kind of thinking had clearly underlain the *Missions-Berichte* report on the visit of Mission-Director Wangemann to Vendaland. Describing his and his missionaries' travels on 8 December 1884, the editors wrote that:

> The land is richly populated by Knopnösen [Knopneusen] and Bawända [Vhavenda]. The Knopnösen no longer have any chiefs - they regard Albasini as their big chief. This is why they are more open to the Gospel. But the Bawända still have their chiefs and their well developed witchcraft customs [*Zaubereisitten*]. For this reason they are more closed and less accessible to the Gospels. Now, after 10 years of work and suffering, the ice has finally been broken. The people now care for and trust the missionaries and the mission is slowly but surely going forward. At Tschakoma [Tshakhuma] Director Wangemann found over 70 people who

[104] *BMB*, Nr. 23 u. 24, 1889, p.570.

> had been baptised; At Tschewasse [Ha-Tshivhase] he found about 50 people who had been baptised and 15 adults waiting to be baptised.[105]

Despite the distorting effect of their ethnographic lens, the missionaries nevertheless recorded a great deal about these beliefs and practices during the nineteenth century. Much of what they recorded is in conformity with the picture painted by Stayt and van Warmelo. On the one hand, this reflects the degree to which Stayt relied on published sources by Beuster, Gottschling, Grũndler and Wessmann (a debt reflected in his bibliography as well as in the text).[106] On the other, the missionary records provide us with a contemporary source against which to compare later descriptions. In one case in particular, that of the *malombo*, they also provide strong evidence to refute later explanations of the purported origins of spirit possession cults.

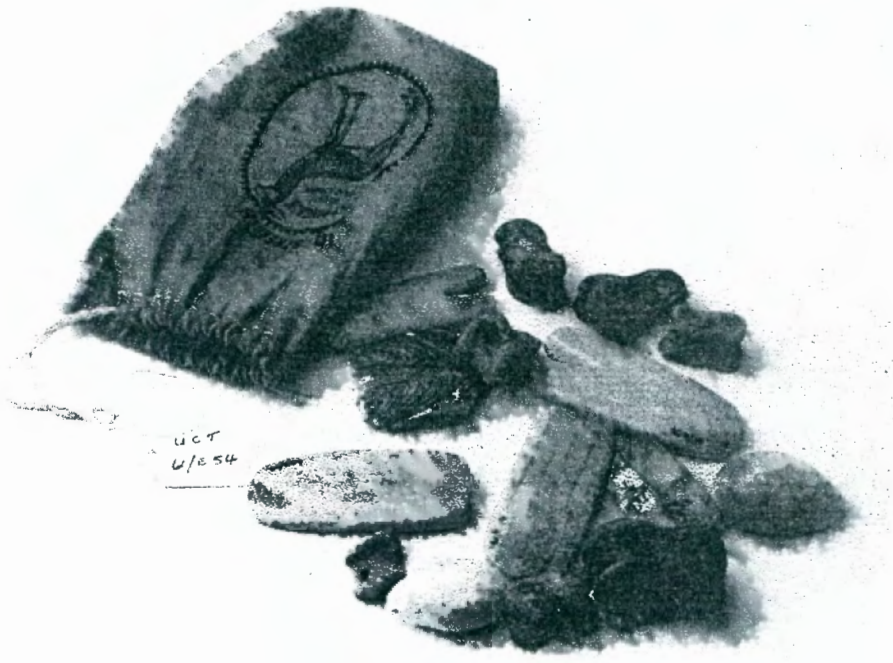
This chapter has revealed that local rulers and their people did not simply passively accept these attempts to draw them away from their deeply-held beliefs about the nature of the world and local ways of interacting with it. Makhado clearly stated that he was deeply suspicious of the idea of a white God. Matsheke threatened Daniel, the Christian from Georgenholtz, with violence and fined him because of his preachings. Holy Forests were sites of tensions and culture clashes. One of Thishvase's councillors argued that the spirits of the Mutshindudi River had accused the missionaries of being destroyers of the land. In addition, "heathen" resistance to conversion to Christianity and hostility against those who took this step, is a recurring theme of this thesis. The struggle by Makwarela Mphaphuli to come to terms with, exert some kind of control over and retain power in the face of the new God and his representatives forms one of the main sub-themes of Chapter 8. Not all of these struggles were as overtly dramatic. Beuster recorded, on 20 September 1885, that the parents of a young MuLemba man, Poroa, had been trying to win their son back from Ha-Tshivhase Mission station. In attempting to describe the situation that they found themselves in, he wrote that they:

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[105] *BMB*, Nr. 5 u. 6, 1885, p.74. In today's terms, on this day, from Tsianda, they went straight east - across the mountain near Rembander farm, across the Dzindi river and then across the flat plains to Ha-Tshivhase.

[106] Van Warmelo drew extremely heavily on oral sources.

> are now greatly worried and very uneasy. They and all their relatives are exerting themselves, to get as much sympathy as possible. All the divining dice [*Zauberwürfel*] have been employed, and everybody rushes to wherever these point. In spite of all their disappointments they are still hopeful [that they will persuade him to come back] and they comfort themselves with the oracle-like pronouncements of the witch-doctors [*Zauberdoktoren*].[107]



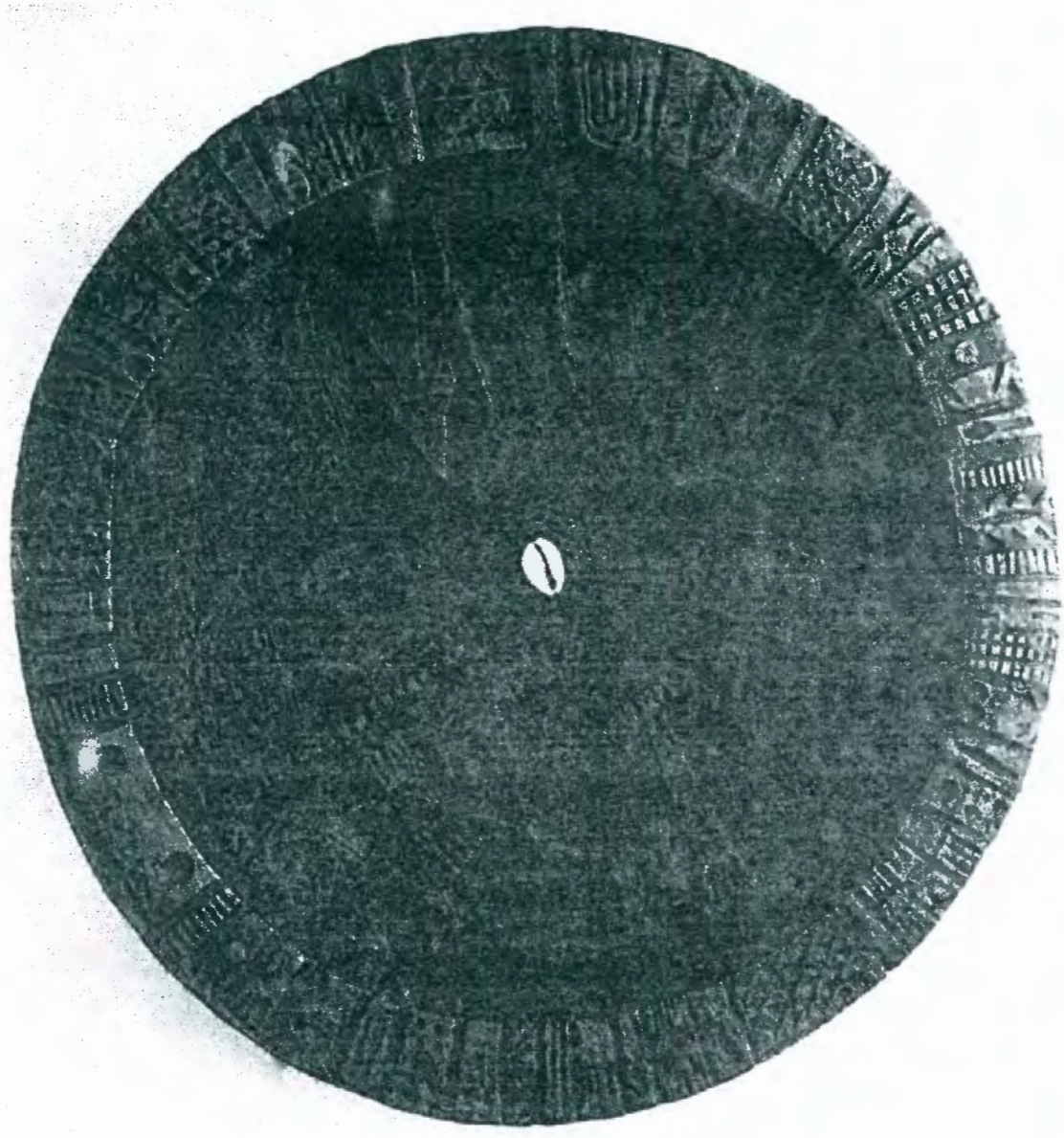
50. Diviner's bones and bag accompanying Divining bowl[108]

Before moving to the case study of the Mphaphuli royal family which raises many of these themes (and what I see as the most important themes from the preceding chapters), it is necessary to discuss one more group of related beliefs and practices. These are those surrounding the inscription of power on the African body and the use of the body as a source of power.

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[107] *BMB*, Nr. 21 u. 22, 1886, pp.422-423.

[108] South African Museum, thanks to Lindsay Cooper, Collections manager, Human Sciences, South African Museum for photographing this for me.



51. *Ndilo* [Divining bowl][109]

[109] South African Museum, thanks to Lindsay Cooper for photographing this for me.

CHAPTER 7
THE AFRICAN BODY

The missionaries reserved their greatest disapproval for ritual practices which reflected the power of society, and its hierarchies, through its power to command and appropriate the bodies of its subjects. In *vhutuka*, *murundu* and *vhusha*, the organisers of the schools inflicted pain on the bodies of the participants as a means of enforcing discipline and obedience not only to them but to society as a whole, as a test of fortitude and courage and as a learning-aid to heighten perceptions and assist in the retention of knowledge. In addition to secret knowledge and formulae acquired during these rites of passage, in the *murundu* and *vhusha*, the changed status of the initiate was inscribed on his or her body through circumcision (in the case of men) or lengthening of the labia minora (in that of women). In addition, scars acquired at all three schools would be borne proudly for life as marks of having graduated. Similarly, it would seem that the *espirit de corps* and sense of place in the community which developed through initiation into the *thondo* was as least as great as – if not greater than - the camaraderie developed between age-mates in the other three schools. The missionaries saw initiation into this military school as an even greater obstacle to conversion to Christianity and westernisation than the other forms of initiation.

The missionaries seriously disapproved of all of these practices. Even greater was their disapproval for the killing of twins, which they saw as murder. Surprisingly, beyond brief references, they did not take up the issue of the killing of close associates and relatives to accompany members of the royal families in death. They also neglected other forms of ritual homicide. I strongly suspect that that this omission resulted from a lack of knowledge of allegations about these practices, rather than reticence to discuss them. The fact that they were prepared to uncritically accept tales of the allegedly cannibalistic nature of the Vhavenda, and participated in spreading these, provides support for this interpretation. So too do missionary accounts of the ritual consumption of parts of the bodies of slain enemies, which form one of the main sub-themes of the concluding chapter.

VHUTUKA, MURUNDU AND *VHUSHA*

The missionaries arrived at a particularly interesting time as far as puberty and circumcision rites for boys were concerned. Prior to the widespread adoption of circumcision, participation in the *vhutuka* puberty rite was the norm for local boys. However, at the time that the missionaries were beginning to establish themselves in Vendaland, the mahosi were beginning to force their subjects to attend the *murundu*, or circumcision school.

In the *vhutuka*, once a year, the boys who had attained puberty were collected together in the *thondo*. Here they would stay for several days and nights being taught *milayo* – formulae encapsulating the rules and knowledge which the rites sought to impart. At various stages, they were forced to endure pain. Pieces of wood (later, gun ramrods – which were harder than wood) were placed between the fingers. These were then pressed together, causing excruciating pain. This was a test of manhood, as they boys were supposed to endure the pain stoically. The climax of the school came when the boys were driven to a river under blows. After spending the night sitting in the water up to their necks (*u kama*), they returned as men. The newly-initiated men then danced *matangwa* - where they marched round in a circle playing on reed flutes and dancing, while girls beat an accompaniment on the drums - with women and girls being present.[1] In commenting on the beginnings of his new station "at Makoarele [Georgenholtz]" in 1877, Koen recorded that:

> The men are not circumcised like the Valemba [Vhalemba] and Bassutho [Basotho], but they also have a kind of washing. They are woken from their sleep at night by young men with sticks. Under a shower of heavy blows, they are driven to the river where they have to sit in the water for about an hour. After this they return, again being beaten all the way. That completes the ceremony. But they sometimes beat them so badly that some boys have already died from the blows.[2]

Individuals seem to have attended *murundu* from about the 1840s. However, circumcision appears only to have become widespread during the last decade or

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[1] N.J. van Warmelo (ed.) *Contributions Towards Venda History*, pp.104-108 & 192-196 & *Venda Dictionary*, pp.222 & 474. See also H.A. Stayt *The Bavenda*, pp.105-106 & 124-125.

[2] Tagebuch der Station bei Ha Makoarela (Nicolaus Koen), 24 August 1877, p.10. See also *BMB*, Nr. 21 u. 22, 1878, p.493.

decade-and-a-half of the nineteenth century. Its prevalence spread as a direct result of pressure from the *mahosi*. Force was also increasingly used as a means of ensuring participation.

Basing his argument on oral evidence collected during the 1920s, van Warmelo argued that the first Tshivenda-speakers to be circumcised were individuals on their way southwards as migrant labourers. On their journey, they had to pass through Sotho-speaking areas. A number of these migrants were forcibly circumcised there. In order to evade this forced circumcision *en route*, Tshivenda-speakers began to voluntarily undergo circumcision. While they first went to Sotho-speaking areas, gradually, lodges began to be opened in Vendaland itself to meet the demand.[3]

At this stage, the practice seems to have had no official sanction from the *mahosi* in Vendaland. However, in about 1854, Makhado entered a circumcision lodge at Tshamatangwi in the lands of *Khosi* Mashau. It would appear that, in doing so, he was attempting to lay claim to the support of "initiates of the circumcision tradition" in any possible future succession struggle. By this act, he became the first member of the Ramabulana royal family to be circumcised. As Nemudzivhadi has pointed out, this meant that, when he ascended the throne about ten years later, he became "the first circumcised prince of the Singo royal house to ascend the throne." Nemudzivhadi has also dismissed the commonly-held beliefs that Makhado entered the circumcision lodge as a result the influence of the Lemba and "that he was the first Muvenda to be circumcised." Instead, he has argued that Makhado was circumcised at the suggestion of "his maternal uncles, whose descendants even today, are known as 'circumcisors.' They were themselves circumcised before Makhado was born." In addition, in Nemudzivhadi's opinion: "Had Makhado not become *Thovhele*, his circumcision would have remained unknown. In fact it would have carried no historical significance in the over-all picture of the time."[4] In fact, as van Warmelo pointed

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[3] N.J. van Warmelo (ed.) *Contributions Towards Venda History*, p.125.

[4] S.M. Dzivhani "The Chiefs of Venda", p.39; W. Grant "Magato and his Tribe", in *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute*, Vol. 35, London, 1905, pp.267-268; M.H. Nemudzivhadi "The attempts by Makhado to revive the Venda kingdom", pp.17 & 22-23 (quotations); N.J. van Warmelo (ed.) *Contributions Towards Venda History*, p.25 (see also pp.125-133 for discussion

out, for many years after this, the more culturally conservative regarded those who had been circumcised as "renegades to true Venda custom and tradition". They were "not allowed to be present at sacrifice to the spirits of their ancestors, who would only be angered by the sight of impious converts to strange and foreign ways."[5]

Details on the *murundu*, and forced participation in the school, began to appear in missionary reports from the late 1870s. Reporting on events at Tshakuma during the closing months of the year 1878, the *Berliner Missions-Berichte* noted that:

> At last the war unrest died down as another subject occupied all their minds - circumcision. It is true that circumcision is not a custom generally practised amongst the Bawenda [Vhavenda] - Chief Madzebandela [Madzivhandila] even prohibited it outright. But now, some of his people and the Batonga (Knopneusen) go to neighbouring chiefs [*Capitänen*] to participate in this atrocity. In spite of the horrors associated with the practice - which often deter the youths - this practice on the whole possesses a very great power of attraction amongst the heathen.[6]

Already, many people were also being "forced to participate through surprise attacks." The report continued by stating that, despite the fact that members of the royal families were exempted from participation, some of the relatives of *Khosi* Maphuphe of Lwamondo had been abducted and taken to the *murundu*.[7] The

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of the *murundu*) and R. Wagner "Zoutpansberg", p.336. For discussion of the *murundu*, see also H.A. Stayt *The Bavenda*, pp.125-138.

[5] N.J. van Warmelo (ed.) *Contributions Towards Venda History*, p.125.

[6] *BMB*, Nr. 21 u. 22, 1879, p.409.

[7] This exemption was presumably introduced because participation in the *murundu* would (in theory) have precluded royals from taking part in some of the ritual activities associated with their position in society. However, as we have seen, Makhado, arguably one of the most powerful Vhavenda *mahosi* in the remembered history of Vendaland, was circumcised. I have come across no evidence that he was prevented from fulfilling his religious and ritual duties because of this. The issue is in fact an extremely complex one. Stayt argued that the spread of circumcision was at first very slow. Its staunchest supporters, Mphephu and his chief councillors, were out of the country for some years after the Boer-Mphephu War. The practice reportedly "stagnated" during this period. It was only after Mphephu's return from exile in 1904 that the numbers of people attending the circumcision lodge increased dramatically. Stayt also argued that, by the late 1920s, there was no fixed time for holding the *murundu*. It was held at intervals of about five years. One of the main criteria in selecting the period when the school would take place was whether or not the *khosi* had at least one son who was ready to participate. There should also have been a good harvest. The anthropologist nevertheless also conceded that "In the eastern areas of Vendaland, where the influence of the conservative Tshivhase and Mphaphuli are most felt, the *murundu* is still disliked and discouraged." (H.A. Stayt *The Bavenda*, p.127.) In addition, to this day, many members of the royal families are discouraged from attending *murundu* if they are in the likely line of succession. If they do so,

khosi mobilized troops, who "attacked the kidnappers and brought back the victims by force."[8]

The missionaries forbade Christians to take part in the *murundu* as they saw it as a "heathen" institution.[9] As a result, Schwellnus did not allow his workers to go out and perform their tasks without protection. He feared that they would be attacked and kidnapped while working in the fields or away from the immediate mission surroundings - if they resisted too strongly, they would most probably be killed. The mission cattle were also withdrawn from the best grazing fields, since these fields were near the villages where the circumcision lodge was. It was likely that those participating would either steal the cattle (acceptable behaviour for participants in the *murundu* or *thondo*) or kidnap the herdsmen. The missionary also found that the thatching grass, which he wanted to use for a building, had been burnt down by participants in the school. This was apparently an act of hostility against the mission.[10]

During the course of the following year, *murundu* were held in the vicinity of both Georgenholtz and Ha-Tshivhase. Koen reported that *Khosi* Makwarela Mphaphuli had been against the holding of the school but had been overruled by his father, *Khosi* Ranwedzi Mphaphuli. In the interpretation of the missionaries, the only reason that Ranwedzi had agreed to allow the organisers to hold the school was because he would make a profit out of it – the families of participants had to pay the organisers in hoes (which were used as a form of currency) or livestock and a percentage of the profits was given to the *khosi*.[11] According to Koen, this was only the third time that the lodge had been held in Mphaphuli territory – showing what they felt about this, the *Missions-Berichte* expressed the hope that "May God let it also be the last time." In an action which earned the

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they do so on their individual resolve, rather than by order of the family. This has, on occasion, been used to disqualify candidates for the throne. Basically, a great deal depends on the attitudes and opinions of the *khosi* and his *makhadzi* and *khotsi-munene*. (Personal communication, Dr Nelson Musehane, Department of Tshivenda, UNIVEN.)

[8] *BMB*, Nr. 21 u. 22, 1879, p.409.

[9] Even today, many pastors send their young sons to relatives in the cities during the winter months, for fear of their being kidnapped by circumcision candidates and forced to participate in the *murundu*.

[10] *BMB*, Nr. 21 u. 22, 1879, p.409.

thankfulness of the mission, Makwarela nevertheless saw to it that no Christians were forced to attend against their will. This must have taken considerable commitment and fortitude on his part since all boys of the required age were expected to attend. Failure to do so was punishable by a heavy fine. The *Missions-Berichte* reported that:

> The importance of the circumcision rites can be shown by the fact that even Pafudi [Ranwedzi Mphaphuli], as well as Makoarele [Makwarela] (even though they are exempted from circumcision by reason of their position as rulers) have to, on occasions, pay at least a fine to the "chief" [*Häuptling*] of the circumcision lodge. They will certainly be paid back a hundredfold, but the principle is upheld and assured.[12]

The *murundu* in the vicinity of Ha-Tshivhase began on 7 April 1879. Beuster reported that this was the first time that it had been held in Tshivhase's lands in fifteen years:

> Messengers were sent in all directions to announce the approaching celebration. Crowds of men gathered in the plain. In their heathen way, they howled for a while and then they scattered in groups, throughout the kingdom. And then the whole devilish apparition of heathendom, which flourished in this ceremony, came to light. Certainly, not in such a way that the people realised what the intention was. On the contrary, the participants threw such a dense veil over what was happening there that any uninitiated who had had information passed on to them, together with the informer, were immediately killed.[13]

Beuster reiterated that the whole undertaking rested upon "speculation and avarice." The organisers stood to make substantial gains. They would share these with *Khosi* Tshivhase who, in turn, would share his profit with his *magota*. This ensured that nobody prevented their people from attending the school and also compensated them for the absence of their subjects from their area for about four months. The parents of each child to be circumcised had to pay two hoes or one goat. Interestingly, Beuster also noted that: "Amongst the Bawenda [Vhavenda], the leader of this ritual is not the king *[König]* himself, but another person from

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[11] Van Warmelo and Stayt attribute the spread and continued existence of the *murundu* to the profit motive on the part of the organisers and the rulers (H.A. Stayt *The Bavenda*, p.127 and N.J. van Warmelo (ed.) *Contributions Towards Venda History*, p.125).

[12] *BMB*, Nr. 21 u. 22, 1879, p.413.

[13] *BMB*, Nr. 23 u. 24, 1879, p.444.

the Bapedi [BaPedi] nation - from this it seems as if the tradition is only now in the process of infiltrating into the Bawenda culture." This assertion is in conformity with van Warmelo's assertions about the local origins of the *murundu* in migrant labourers passing through Sotho-speaking areas discussed earlier. However, in the opinion of the missionary, nothing was too depraved for the person running the school or for the ritual itself. He reported that: "It is said that this leader and his assistants also do not scorn human flesh."[14]

As Koen had done previously, Beuster emphasised that, previously, circumcision had "by no means been general tradition amongst the Bawenda." Because of this, members of the *khosi*'s family were "automatically excluded".[15] Also arising from the fairly recent adoption of the practice, there was officially "no obligation on boys to have themselves circumcised;" in Beuster's opinion, neither was "there any wish to do so." He reported that, fearing "the cruel pain and shameful treatment during the ritual," many boys ran away. Others were nevertheless forced to attend. So too were boys, adult men and even some old men who were "caught unawares in surprise attacks, and then forced to participate." Any uncircumcised man accidentally coming into contact with a circumcision lodge was forced to participate, without any right of refusal. Women in the same predicament were reportedly put to death.[16] Extremely interestingly, Native Assistants sent out from Ha-Tshivhase to the *murundu* "to bear witness of the

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[14] *Ibid.* pp.444 –445. I have been able to find no evidence of the consumption of human flesh at the *murundu*. Van Warmelo recorded that the severed foreskins were collected and roasted. From this, a medicine called *lutala* and *muuluso* was made for protection against shadows. He explained that, when a woman had a new-born infant, she always had to have a small pouch of this medicine with her to protect the child against the shadows of paramours and its parents. Before the umbilical cord had dropped off, the child was kept inside the rondavel. It was made to swallow a little of the medicine. Otherwise, if someone who had committed adultery with the child's father or mother were to come along, the child would die (N.J. van Warmelo (ed.) *Contributions Towards Venda History*, p.127). Rumors of a ritual killings to open and close some *murundu* were rife in the 1990s. However, no such cases were brought to court. While I am prepared to accept that some of these ritual killings may have occurred, I seriously doubt that anthropophagous rituals or cannibalistic feasts have ever formed a part of the ritual. I return to cannibalism and anthropophagy at the end of this chapter. The reported consumption of the flesh of fallen (or butchered) enemies also forms one of the main sub-themes of Chapter 8.

[15] This provides further support for my assertions in Footnote 7. The *khosi* was the intermediary between the ancestral spirits and the people. The ancestors would not have approved of his children deviating from local orthodoxy.

[16] During bantustan times, forced attendance at initiation schools occurred on numerous occasions. There were also cases where people caught in the vicinity of schools were then forced to attend. Girls or women who stumbled on the initiates were sometimes severely beaten.

Lord Jesus" did so "without any fear" and came to no harm. This was because they had been circumcised earlier and had the right to attend any *murundu*.[17]

Beuster continued by describing what he saw us the conditions of uncertainty which prevailed during the time that the school was in operation:

> The people tremble and shake with fear during the time of the morundo [*murundu*], because there is then total anarchy. Many of them flee to foreign areas. No-one dares to go out unarmed. The women have to do all the work in the field because the men are afraid of surprise attacks. During this time no debt may be claimed, no dance or war may be practised. Transgressors are punished [fined] by the organisers of the morundo. The chiefs, who stand to benefit from this, let such acts of violence go unpunished. Not only the lust for gain drives them to capture people, but also satanic cruelty. The people say: We had to suffer these pains, so now we want to take pleasure in the pains of the young ones.[18]

Judging by the accounts of Stayt and van Warmelo, the missionary's account of the proceedings and methods of instruction of the *murundu* seems to have been accurate.[19] The school of 1878 at Ha-Tshivhase was established on the plain, away from the houses of the people, at the confluence of two rivers. Presumably because of the fifteen-year gap from the previous initiation, it seems to have been a particularly large one. Beuster described it as "a second village ... unlike any other village in the country". Entry to any uninitiated person was forbidden. After having been circumcised, the candidates were forced into the water, where they had to remain for a considerable length of time. Instruction at the school included learning the dances, songs and *milayo* of the *murundu*. Candidates were beaten with sticks, sometimes until their backs were bleeding, for minor infractions, to teach them to endure pain and to assist them in remembering and internalising the lessons that they were being taught. They had to eat the extremely stiff pap

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[17] *BMB*, Nr. 23 u. 24, 1879, p.445. With the death of Mutshaeni and Denga, Beuster was finding the shortage of suitable Native Assistants at Ha-Tshivhase at this stage seriously problematic. During the course of the year 1878, he received assistance from Native Assistants from Tshakhuma, Waterberg and Matlala (*BMB*, Nr. 11 u. 12, 1880 [Jahresbericht 1879], p.210). It is possible that some of the Christians at Tshakhuma had been circumcised before their conversion. It is extremely likely that this was the case with the Assistants from Sotho-speaking areas.

[18] *BMB*, Nr. 23 u. 24, 1879, p.445.

[19] H.A. Stayt *The Bavenda*, especially pp.128-135 and N.J. van Warmelo (ed.) *Contributions Towards Venda History*, pp.126-133.

supplied hurriedly while crouching, choking it down non-stop without the usual accompanying vegetables or meat (*shevha*), until it was all finished. They were not allowed to use their hands to transfer the food to their mouths, as they usually did. Instead, they had to form the food into a pyramid and eat it directly with their mouths.[20] They also ate mice, which did not normally form part of their diet. The food was cooked by women who had set up shelters near to, but not in sight of, the initiation village. If they did not cook enough food, they were "beaten unmercifully." Revealing his Victorian sensibilities, Beuster recorded with horror that: "Throughout the whole duration of this ritual, nobody may cover himself with even the smallest piece of clothing - fathers and children mix like this, without any shame." The ritual was held in winter, to aid in the healing of the circumcision wound. Because of the dangers of infection of the circumcision cut, the hardships that the candidates had to endure, and their naked state in the winter cold, a number of the candidates became ill and some died. This was kept secret from those not taking part in the proceedings. In Beuster's summation:

> The parents have to bring food along for their children, and have no idea that their children have died long ago. Afterwards, when the circumcision celebrations are over, is soon enough to hear about it. For them the words of 1 John 5 : 3 translate as: "That is the fear of Satan, that we keep his commandments and his commandments are frightfully difficult."[21]

Towards the end of the school, the candidates were smeared with fat, to aid in the healing of the scars from their beatings. The closing of *murundu* was marked by the burning of the village and all the equipment which had been used. This symbolic purifying ritual also ensured that nothing which had been used during the school could be used for any other purpose. Those who had "stayed healthy and alive" returned home.[22]

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[20] There is an interesting parallel here with anthrophophagaous rituals described later, where participants allegedly had to eat a mixture ox-meat and human flesh without using their hands. See pp.433 and 473.

[21] *BMB*, Nr. 23 u. 24, 1879, pp.445-446 (quotation, p.446). The Biblical text which Beuster was transforming to capture what he thought of these proceedings by replacing the name of Satan for that of God read: "For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments. And his commandments are not burdensome."

[22] *BMB*, Nr. 23 u. 24, 1879, p.446. The burning of the school obviously also represents the return from the sacred to the profane.

Beuster concluded his discussion of the 1878 *murumudu* by arguing that most of those who had taken part had been Vhalemba, living among the Vhavenda, rather than the Vhavenda themselves. There had nevertheless been a significant number of Vhavenda and "Knopneusen" [Tsonga-Shangaan] among the candidates. Beuster viewed this situation with considerable alarm:

> Most certainly this custom, corresponding so much to the innermost being of heathendom, will also soon become part of the Bawenda tradition, unless it is blocked by the mission and the English [British] government. The circumcision protagonists have already overcome one barrier: that people from among the Bawenda are prepared to participate at all. The second barrier: that those belonging to the king's family [royalty] are not circumcised, has been successfully defended this time - and not without help of the missionary. Those belonging to the king's family form a state within a state - the term Bawenda has its own its own special meaning when applied to them. If one says: He is a Mowenda [Muvenda], every-one thinks he belongs to the royal family.[23]

By this time, the wider Tshivhase royal family were divided on the issue of circumcision. Some of their number had taken part in the *murundu*, as had some of the local *magota*. Apparently under the influence of Luvhengo Tshivhase, one the *khosi*'s brothers, there had been attempts to force individual members of the royal family, as well as some of the people who lived on the mission station, to be circumcised. Secretly supported by Luvhengo, the organisers of the school had set out to kidnap several youths from the mission station, in direct contradiction to Khosi Tsivhase's orders. However, they met with such fierce resistance from the missionary and his converts that they were forced to withdraw. Luvhengo was reportedly extremely angry at this and ordered his son and his grandchild, both of whom were attending classes at the mission, to return home immediately. They refused to do so, declaring "that they would flee to another country if Lowengo were to prevent them from learning." Beuster had nevertheless learned something about local methods of diplomacy by this stage. He persuaded the boys to obey their father's orders. If they refused to do so, Luvhengo would be forced to act against them. On the other hand, if they obeyed his orders, this would convince him that his children were not being taught to be disobedient at the mission station. He would then have no reason to prevent them form learning. He would

thus have been presented with a face-saving way of re-establishing good relations with them and with Beuster, and for allowing them to continue with their education.[24]

This plan worked out as Beuster had intended. He also got help from an unexpected source. While these intrigues were continuing, Luvhengo and Khosi Tshivhase had paid a visit to Khosi Makhado. On their return, Luvhengo:

> found that the circumcision people had created so much havoc, that he himself, as well as Tshewasse [Tshivhase], became hostile towards them - they cut off the supply of food to the lodge, causing great difficulties and distress there. Missionary Beuster gave Tshewasse the advice - advice which was certainly not acceptable to him - he should immediately shoot every circumcised person who forced his way into his house.[25]

One can only presume that Beuster was joking! ??

From May to July of the following year, 1880, it was again the turn of Tshakhuma. Schwellnus reported that the mission station was specifically targeted by the organisers of the *murundu*. Describing the opening of the school and the threats faced by the Christians, the *Missions-Berichte* reported that:

> The horns were blown at the same as the war cries were heard. The chosen ones entered into their specially built lodge amid great noise, carrying long rods in their hands. All those who did not want to participate, fled out of the country, to another area where the circumcision rites had already taken place in the past year. Strong patrols from the lodge moved through the whole country, to capture any person who had not yet been circumcised, and to carry him off to the lodge. They especially targeted our mission station. They surrounded it like an enclave...[26]

The station reportedly "looked like a fortress under siege." Groups of armed men patrolled around the outside of the station waiting the chance to grab people who showed a lapse in vigilance and drag them off to the circumcision lodge. In order to defend themselves, the station inhabitants armed themselves and only moved

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[23] *BMB*, Nr. 23 u. 24, 1879, p.446.
[24] *Ibid.* pp.446-447.
[25] *Ibid.* p.447.

about in groups. They also had to protect the newly-planted young trees in the station orchard as the organisers of the school reportedly wished to strip these for the young, flexible branches. These could be used as canes to lash the initiates.[27] In the end, Madzivhandila reportedly:

> ordered the circumcision people not to trouble our station and instructed the residents of the station to immediately beat to death any intruders. Although, after this, the heathens then kept themselves more to the boundaries, the terrible cries which the commandos utter when they catch (often with a sling which is thrown out) an uncircumcised person, were often still heard - this noise is raised in order to drown out the cries of help from the victim. Up to now the nobility have still been excluded from the circumcision rites, but Makhato [Makhado] has already expressed the wish that all should participate.[28]

The *murundu* ended on 10 July. The initiates returned "amid much noise, singing and horn blowing." In welcoming their men and their sons home, "the women uttered great shouts of joy", overjoyed that they had "not been eaten up by the *Koma* [*ngoma*]."[29] All those returning had to walk past the *khosi*. He then formally returned them to their parents, receiving a hoe for each in return. Repeating earlier assertions, the *Missions-Berichte* reported that: "This is why the chiefs are keen to introduce this custom which has, until a few decades ago, been totally strange to the Bawenda nation." For a short period immediately surrounding their return and the ceremonial handover to their families, normal patters of behaviour were overturned and the initiates wandered around amongst the people singing and blowing on their reed flutes. They were entitled to take something – a snuff box, a knife, a spear or some similar object form everybody that they met on their way[30]

The missionaries were not to be granted their wish that the *murundu* be abandoned in Vendaland before it ever really caught on. During the period under review, they continued to view the practice in an extremely negative light and had to continue to be vigilant that people living on the mission station were not

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[26] *BMB*, Nr. 21 u. 22, 1881, pp.358-359.
[27] *BMB*, Nr. 21 u. 22, 1880, p.403(quotation) and Nr. 21 u. 22, 1881, p.359 .
[28] *BMB*, Nr. 21 u. 22, 1881, p.359.
[29] In other words, they were extremely pleased that their menfolk had not died during the course of the *murundu*.
[30] *BMB*, Nr. 21 u. 22, 1881, p.359.

forcibly taken for circumcision.[31] They nevertheless managed (in theory anyway) to retain some kind of agreement with Tshivhase, Makwarela Mphaphuli and Madzivhandila (the *mahosi* in whose lands the mission stations were situated) that they would at least discourage the organisers of schools from forcing those form the mission stations to attend. This situation could sometimes result in a fair amount of tension. For example, during the circumcision season of 1888, Beuster was on an evangelisation journey when he passed by a place where a *murundu* was being held. "The men leading his oxen were immediately surrounded by raving heathens, who insisted that they should be forced into circumcision." Beuster refused to allow this, not only because of the clash with his interpretation of Christianity but also because they would then be missing for several months. He reportedly tried in vain "to get amongst the raving men. They did not harm him personally in any way, but they became more and more heated in their efforts to catch the drivers of the oxen." Eventually, the missionary decided to use a different tactic. Ordering that the oxen be out-spanned, he mounted his horse. "'You can now do what-ever you want with my wagon, but you will face the consequences,' he shouted to them and hurried away." Fearing that he would go straight to *Khosi* Tshivhase and that he would act against them for harassing the missionary, a group of the "heathens" ran after Beuster as he rode away. He allowed them to catch up with him. They pleaded with him to return and to take his wagon and his people with him. In order to discourage similar situations in the future, "he pretended to resist for quite a long time, until he finally gave in." In doing so, he managed both to save his wagon and to get the handlers of the oxen away without their having been harmed in any way.[32]

The missionaries were equally horrified about the *vhusha* puberty rites for girls. These were the first of the three initiations marking the passage from childhood to womanhood, the other two being *tshikanda* and *domba*. The *vhusha* took place as soon as possible after a girl's first menstruation but was often delayed for a short time until at least three or four girls were ready. Marking the transition from childhood to adolescence, the rite was used to impart knowledge about local laws and customs which the girls would have to follow as women and, especially, to

[31] See, for example, *BMB*, Nr. 11 u. 12, 1895 [Jahresbericht 1894], p.191.
[32] *BMB*, Nr. 21 u. 22, 1889, p.534.

provide sex education. In addition, the rite was preceded by the lengthening of the labia minora through manipulation from the age of about ten or twelve years. This practice was continued at he *vhusha*, where a significant part of the time was spent on this. Initiates were subject to humiliations and the infliction of pain. They were also forced to immerse themselves in cold river water, sometimes for lengthy periods. This was designed to teach stoicism, humility and perseverance, and to drive the lessons of the school home to the initiates.[33] Possibly as a result of the nature of the curriculum, the missionaries did not write about the *vhusha* as often as about the *murundu*. Even women who had converted to Christianity would have been unlikely to discuss such private matters with male missionaries. Moreover, given the Victorian sensibilities of the missionaries, it is unlikely that their wives would have discussed these matters with them even if details had been revealed to them by female converts. Also, in addition to being kept secret from the uninitiated in general, these matters were particularly not discussed with men.

The first to comment on the *vhusha* was Beuster. On 19 July 1874, he noted that the sound of a drum playing next to the small river near to the mission station had attracted him to go and investigate what was happening. Accompanied by Johannes Mutshaeni, he discovered several girls immersed in the ice-cold water (there had been frost that morning). Under normal conditions, any man coming across this scene would have been driven away violently by the women. However, they appear to have made an exception for the missionary and his assistant. Beuster was even allowed to address the girls, telling the young women who were assisting that they were participating in the murder of their friends. He informed them that he knew of cases where girls had died of exposure during the rites. On one occasion, he had come across initiates who had collapsed in the river and had had to be carried out. In his opinion, in their callous disregard for the lives of their fellows, they were worse than beasts of prey. He, a white man, had more sympathy for their friends than they themselves had – he felt sorry for the initiates, while those who were assisting appeared to feel no pity. The young

[33] See John Blacking (a) "The Initiation Cycle: vhusha, tshikanda and Domba", & (b) "Vhusha", at http://era.anthropology.ac.uk/Era_R...ra/VendaGirls/Vhusha/V_Opening.html, accessed 29 September 2000; H.A. Stayt *The Bavenda*, pp.106-110 and N.J. van Warmelo (ed.) *Contributions Towards Venda History*, pp.37-51.

women reportedly replied that: "We can't do anything else, the old people will torment us if we don't do it." Feeling powerless to intervene in any meaningful way, Beuster attempted, apparently with some degree of success, to persuade Tshivhase and his *magota* to forbid any *vhusha* rites in the immediate vicinity of the station.[34]

Koen also commented on the institution. Returning from working on the wagon track to Georgenholtz on 24 August 1877, he heard "a row, singing, screaming, drums and whistles" As had been the case at Ha-Tshivhase, the noise came from the river flowing past the mission station. Apparently having been told about the rite by Beuster during his period of acclimatisation, he realised that this:

> was the washing of the young maidens. Amongst these people, it is customary that, on puberty, young girls must lie in the cold water for a week, from dawn to dusk. Old and young women stand about and work, as hard as they physically can, with their throats, feet and hands i.e. they jump and dance like a herd of young calves. But it is not difficult to imagine the stress which those poor naked girls have to endure by staying for so long in the cold water. Men are not allowed to go near them or they will be greeted with stones thrown by the women. The young girls do not have to do any work during these days; they merely dance. I saw that they decorate themselves with green twigs.[35]

Thus, the missionaries opposed *vhutuka*, *murundu* and *vhusha* on what they saw as a combination of humanitarian grounds and resistance against "heathen" or superstitious practices. However, their opposition to the *thondo* seems to have arisen from much more pragmatic considerations. At stake here was the role that this institution played in building up the military might of the local groups and, through this, their ability to maintain their independence and resist change. The *thondo* was also very closely tied to the power and prestige of the *mahosi* and was seen as a real impediment to weaning people away from their religious and temporal authority to the authority of the Lutheran God and His missionaries.

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[34] Berichte der Station bei Schewase (Carl Beuster), 19 Juli 1874, p.16. See also *BMB*, Nr. 19 u. 20, 1875, pp.424-425.

[35] Tagebuch der Station bei Ha Makoarela (Nicolaus Koen), 24 August 1877, pp.9-10. See also *BMB*, Nr. 21 u. 22, 1878, pp.492-493.

THE *THONDO*

As a social institution, the *thondo* was a system of military conscription for all young men capable of handling weapons. In concrete terms, this was the name given to an enclosed space in the *khosi*'s capital village with a hut in its centre. Its main function was to provide a meeting-place and barracks for the warriors, *vhadlinda*, who regularly spent the night in the *khosi*'s capital as a garrison, and to instruct recruits in the art of war. It was occupied every night, so that the capital was never without defenders. Secrecy as to what took place inside this *thondo* was rigidly enforced. It was surrounded by high walls and the entrance was built in a zig-zag form to stop the inquisitive from glancing inside. Non-initiates were forbidden to enter the area.[36]

Initiation into the *thondo* took place when a group of boys were considered old enough to handle weapons. Sent there not only from the *khosi*'s village but from the outlying villages as well, they had to crawl through the gate on their knees, following one of the initiated who went in front. Upon entering the walled enclosure, they were lead around this a number of times, at times on their knees and at times flat on their stomachs. At every veranda pole of the central hut, they had to *losha* (greet humbly). While this was happening, they were repeatedly "being pinched, and not only for ceremony, but hard." They did not dare to shout out in pain, for this would have brought severe punishment and ridicule. At every pinch, the rules of the *thondo* were "repeated, to let them penetrate well." These included admonitions such as: "'You may not betray anything.' 'You must honour and obey your superiors.' 'Do everything that you are commanded.' 'Do not dare to tell anything to uninitiated (people).'"[37]

Instruction in the *thondo* was supervised by the oldest and wisest of the *khosi*'s councillors. In the central hut were stored "all the fetishes of the tribe" and a "wood-carved image of their totem and others of a man and woman about 2 feet

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[36] Berlin Mission Archives, Berlin: Album, Vendaland von Missionar G. Westphal, Nr. 8541 "Eine 'Thondo' Mauer" and accompanying text; E. Gottschling "The Bawenda", p.203; H.A. Stayt *The Bavenda*, pp.101-102 and N.J. van Warmelo (a) "Volksgebruike van die Venda", p.999 & (b) (ed.) *Contributions Towards Venda History*, p.109.

[37] E. Gottschling "The Bawenda", p.204; H.A. Stayt *The Bavenda*, pp.102-104 and N.J. van

in height". These were used for instructional purposes. According to Missionary Gottschling:

> The young people in the *tondo* are shown all these sacred things of the tribe and acquainted with their meaning and use .... The pupils of the *tondo* are also taught the full range of etiquette in the intercourse with their superiors and chiefs. They are taught to be brave in war, cunning in stealing and true to their special form of heathenism, *i.e.* to their ancestors. They are taught to bear pain without showing it, and are thus practised in self-restraint. Those who have undergone the discipline of the *tondo* in the same year form a special brotherhood (*morole*), and will not betray one another nor give evidence against each other.[38]

Completion of the training in the *thondo* conferred the status of adulthood on the initiate. After this, in addition to the times he was forced to spend there for defensive purposes, an initiate was free to use it as a place for socialising with his peers. Men frequently met there to barbecue meat and socialise together. "This service, *vhudinda*, is therefore a regular tribal institution, and clearly is also intended to foster the qualities of manhood and to engender a certain espirit de corps." It was also very much tied up with the power and prestige of the *khosi*. According to van Warmelo:

> It would appear that the *thondo* is in essence or in origin a kind of sanctum of the ruling house. Some *thondos* are so small that they cannot possibly hold one-tenth of the chief's *vhadinda*. Yet it is never dispensed with. Every chief must build his own *thondo*, and the status of the different *thondos* in the country depends entirely on that of their owners, this status determining the right of all members of a certain *thondo* to be granted or refused admission to the *thondo* of another.[39]

Beuster regarded the *thondo* as "one of the most significant obstacles which stand in the way of the conversion of the heathens" and a "bulwark of Satan", while Wessmann called it "a kind of Devil's school [*Teufelsschule*]".[40] The leaders of the *thondo* did not use their troops to interfere directly in the work of the mission. However, they obviously acted to prevent their troops from deserting to the

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Warmelo "Volksgebruike van die Venda", pp.999 (quotation).

[38] E. Gottschling "The Bawenda", pp.203-204 (quotation, p.204). See also H.A. Stayt *The Bavenda*, pp.104-105.

[39] E. Gottschling "The Bawenda", p.204 and N.J. van Warmelo "Volksgebruike van die Venda", p.109 (quotation). See also H.A. Stayt *The Bavenda*, p.105.

mission stations. The logic was obvious – if the troops were at the mission stations, they would not be available for their military and bodyguarding duties. Unable to concede this point, the missionaries nevertheless portrayed the military leaders in a far more sinister light:

> As soon as we make known our intentions to proclaim God's Word at a village where such a Thondo is found - as a rule these are usually the most respected and most populated villages - all the men of the village usually disappear at the given sign of the leader of the Thondo. They usually go behind the fence which surrounds the Thondo and nobody may follow them there. As the leaders of these Thondos are usually the biggest villains and enemies of the Gospel, it is very difficult to get to those under them - at least not at home, before their eyes. These Thondo leaders, as well as the doctors [*Doktoren*] and the rulers of the country, are the main enemies and obstacles to the Gospel."[41]

In missionary interpretation, another great obstacle to the spread of the Gospel in Vendaland was the practice of killing twins. We have already seen that, for the missionaries, it was *Gota* Totane's acquiescence to the killing of his second-born twin child which marked his "real defection from the faith" which he had been converted to in Natal. Beuster reported that, despite the fact that the first of the pair of twins had been born dead, the family had insisted that, following normal practice, the second-born be killed.

TWINS

It seems that the practice in fact varied from place to place in Vendaland. During the nineteenth century, three accounts state that only the second twin was killed – the other missionary reports stated that both twins were killed.[42] Stayt also noted that; unlike most other southern African groups, who only killed one twin; in

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[40] *BMB*, Nr. 21 u. 22, 1888, pp.515 & 516 (Beuster) and Nr. 23 u. 24, 1889, p.566 (Wessmann).
[41] *BMB*, Nr. 21 u. 22, 1888, p.516.
[42] See especially *BMB*, Nr. 1 u. 2, 1880, p.4; Nr. 17 u. 18, 1880, p.344 & Nr. 23 u. 24, 1888, p.533; G. Fischer "Die Bawenda, ein neues Bild in der Mission", in *Der Missions-Freund: Ein Volksblatt, die Liebe zur Mission im deutschen Volke zu wecken und zu erhalten*, XXXII. Jahrgang, No. 4, 1877, p.60 (one twin only); E. Gottschling "The Bawenda", p.203 and G. Sauberzweig-Schmidt *Klaas Kuhn*, p.13 (second twin only). In 1936, Mission-Inspector Siegfried Schoene stated that both children were killed (S.Schoene "Zwillingskinder! Von Heidenelend und Christenglück in Südafrika", in *Der Missions-Freund*, 88. Jahrgang, 1936, p.68).

Vendaland, both were put to death.[43] The birth of twins at Ha-Tshivhase mission station in 1878 took the matter from one of humanitarian intervention to save the lives of the newborns to an issue right at the heart of the position of the mission in Vendaland.

Soon after their arrival in the area, the missionaries had heard about the Christian convert Andries. Although "still praying", he proved to be extremely elusive. Beuster and Johannes Mutsaheni made a number of unsuccessful attempts to meet with him and persuade him to attend services at Ha-Tshivhase.[44] Finally, during the latter part of 1875, Johannes Mutshaeni managed not only to contact Andries but also to persuade him to attend a church service.[45] Early the following year, he agreed to move to Ha-Tshivhase. However, after this he became seriously ill and did not carry out his intention.[46] It was only on 21 November 1878, a year after the death of Johannes Mutshaeni, that he finally moved to the station. This time, he had been persuaded by David Fuzane, another MuVenda Christian convert who had been baptised while working as a migrant labourer in Natal.[47] Commenting on this, Beuster expressed the hope that this would be a turning point both for Andries and for the station.[48]

Andries' arrival would indeed involve the mission in dramatic events – far more dramatic than they would have wished. These involved saving the lives of a pair

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[43] H.A. Stayt *The Bavenda*, p.91. See also S.S. Dornan Some Beliefs and Ceremonies connected with the Birth and Death of Twins among the South African Natives", in *South African Journal of Science*, Vol. XXIX, October 1932, pp.690-700 (especially pp.693-694).

[44] *BMB*, Nr. 19 u. 20, 1875, p.409 & Nr. 21 u. 22, 1875, pp.439-440. I use the Afrikaaans/Dutch version of his name as this is probably the name by which he was known. However, in missionary sources, his name appears as "Andreas" – the German version of Andrew/Andries.

[45] *BMB*, Nr. 23 u. 24, 1876, p.395.

[46] *BMB*, Nr. 23 u. 24, 1877, p.487.

[47] Recorded as "Funzane" here. Later, it also appears as "Fanzane" (see, for example, *BMB*, Nr. 1 u. 2, 1880, p.4). David Fuzane and his family settled at Tshakhuma in June 1876. Beyond the fact that he was a strong Christian, his decision to move to the station was sparked by the fact that his wife, who was not yet a Christian, wanted to attend catechism classes and convert. Her brother took the opportunity to do the same. (*BMB*, Nr. 23 u. 24, 1877, p.481.) Early the following year, their two children were batpised. Th elder was four years old. (*BMB*, Nr. 23 u. 24, 1877, p.484.) In the Annual Report for 1878, David was described as a "talented Native Assistant" who "faithfully stood at Brother Schwellnus' side". In order to keep his large extended family, he thought that he would have to go to the diamond fields. However, determined not to lose his assistance, Schwellnus managed to obtain a salary of 15 Mark a month for him. This meant that he was required to do extra evangelists duties for Beuster at Ha-Tshivhase and also to preach in Maluma and Matidze's areas. The Annual Report also recorded that "The people have high respect and great regard for him." (*BMB*, Nr. 11 u. 12, 1879 [Jahresbericht 1878], pp.202 (quotations) & 408.)

of twins and served to establish an important point about conflicts between local law and missionary law on mission stations with Tshivhase. The missionaries were nevertheless able to see the hand and saving Grace of God in these developments.

Shortly after Andries, his wife and their child arrived at the station, his wife gave birth to twins. From the point of view of the missionaries, God had ordained that the move took place just in time:

> Both would most certainly have been strangled - according to the heathen custom - had they not been saved under the protection of the missionary. And how easily the murder of these children could have been the cause for the total regression into heathendom for these unfortunates. After the birth of these twins, the family first experienced a tremendous shock. The old grandmother was all for immediately killing the children, and she had to be closely watched that she did not commit the murders. But she was finally pacified and Andries also agreed; the mother said: "I have received the children from God, so I will also keep them."[49]

By taking this step, the parents had committed a serious offence, endangering not only themselves but the whole community. Beuster well realised that "According to the laws of this country, this was a severely punishable act" and that Tshivhase "would eventually have to pronounce a sentence over their actions".[50] He thus decided to pre-empt this by visiting the khosi. Having lived in the area for six years, and presumably having been advised by the Christians and his assistants, by this time he realised that he would have to approach the matter extremely carefully if he was to stand any chance of success.

In keeping with local ways, he did not take any of the people directly involved in the problem with him. Showing a degree of insight unusual in the case of the missionaries, he also did not take the Native Assistant David Fuzane with him. In my reading, he realised that, had a MuVenda Assistant been present, Tshivhase would have been forced to draw attention to the fact that this Assistant well knew the law and should have seen to it that that it was enforced. The *khosi* himself

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[48] *BMB*, Nr. 23 u. 24, 1879, p.438.
[49] *BMB*, Nr. 1 u. 2, 1880, p.4 .
[50] *Ibid.*

would then have been forced to insist that the law was rigidly implemented. Instead, Beuster took along Stoffel and Franz, the two Native Assistants who had finally come from Waterberg-Modimulle to assist him after a difficult period which lasted for more than a year after the death of David Denga and Johannes Mutshaeni.[51] In a similar way to which I will argue that Paulus Luvhengo could be excused for not knowing local customs in the first meeting with Ranwedzi Mphaphuli, while Johannes Mutshaeni could not, I am convinced that Beuster did this deliberately so as to allow Tshivhase as much freedom of action as possible.[52]

In describing his course of action, Beuster wrote:

> I approached the topic in a round-about way. I told Tshewase [Tshivhase] that I had something that worried me and that my heart was aching very much because of an evil thing. The matter concerned an evil custom practised amongst his people. Because I am a messenger of God, I cannot cover up evil but have to speak out directly and warn people against evil. So I will speak out openly: The thing which pains my heart, is the matter that every year many children in his country are killed - those that are born as twins and those whose teeth develop first in their upper jaw.[53]

In Beuster's interpretation, Tshivhase "was visibly astonished at this speech and needed a moment to compose himself." Once he had done so, an exchange recorded by Beuster reveals that he clearly viewed allowing children of this nature to live as an abomination:

> He then answered: '*Mynheer, zi a elã*'[54] i.e. they are impure. I answered: "What is impure. Will they do any harm?" He: "It is not our custom to let such children live." "Are they then not also people?" "Yes, they are people." "So the person who kills them, is he not a murderer?" "But they are impure!" "They are not impure! Why do we

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[51] After the death of his two assistants, Beuster had tried for months to get an African assistant from another mission station. Paulus Luvhengo had been prepared to come. However, on the way, he broke his leg so badly that he was forced to return home (*BMB*, Nr. 23 u. 24, 1879, pp.436-437). Admittedly David Funzane from Tshakhuma "was willing to do evangelisation visitations for weeks and months on end." However his primary commitments were to Schwellnus and to his preaching in Maluma and Matidze's areas. Beuster needed a full-time assistant (*Ibid.* p.437). It was only with the arrival of Stoffel and Franz from Waterberg-Modimulle in March 1879 that he managed to achieve this (*Ibid.* p.438).

[52] See p.432.

[53] *BMB*, Nr. 1 u. 2, 1880, p.5.

[54] "*Mynheer, zwi a elã*".

> [Whites] not kill twins and other nations also don't do it and it does not harm us? Look at our kitchen maid who comes from Waterberg- you know her, don't you remember - isn't she also a twin?[55] Yet she and her sister are both alive and they live well." "So she is a twin and both are still alive?" "Yes, both are still alive." "That is a miracle. But we will continue to kill them."[56]

It was then that the wisdom of bringing Stoffel and Franz became apparent. Since they were outsiders, he could see them as appendages of Beuster's. While ultimately subject to his authority, he could choose to view them as being subject to Beuster's immediate authority. Had they been Vhavenda, as a *khosi*, the overlord of the area in which they were living, he would have been forced to protect the law and local tradition. He would thus have been unable to enter into the following dialogue with them:

> Turning to the evangelists: "What do you do? Do you let them live?" They: "Oh Sire [*O Herr*], we do not kill them! We say: God has given them to us so we cannot kill them." Tshewase: "Oh I know very well that those who have learned do not kill. You are different people." Then Stoffel suddenly interrupted (to my mind a bit too early): "But Sire, if something like this were to happen to us, who stay with *Mynheer*, do we have to kill the children?" He: "Absolutely not! You will rear them! You will certainly bring them up!" We in unison: "So that is all right, Your Majesty [*König*]."[57]

With some justification, Beuster chose to interpret this pronouncement as setting a crucial precedent for relations between the *khosi* and the mission station. It would seem that he was not exaggerating when he stated that, had Tshivhase decided differently, they would have been forced to close the mission station in his area. From their point of view, being forced to kill the twins on the mission station would have rendered their presence in the area untenable:

> I continued and said: "My heart is now calm, because it depended on these words, whether I could remain in this country and stay with you as a teacher. If you would have forced us to kill the children, we could no longer have stayed here." I then addressed the people (there were three of them): "Have you now all heard the words of the king?" They: "Yes, we heard what he said!" "Remember these words. You all

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[55] Waterberg was the mission station where Mrs Beuster had lived before her then-husband, Rev. Koboldt, had died.

[56] *BMB*, Nr. 1 u. 2, 1880, p.5.

[57] *Ibid.*

> have to be witnesses in this matter." And then I grasped the hand of my king and spoke with a joyful heart and sincerely (because I must admit, I love my Tshewase as much as a teacher can love his heathen ruler) saying: "Now I would like to inform you about something, King: we already have twins on our station." He, very surprised about it: 'So they are there! Whose children are they?" This was explained to him and the king stuck to his original pronouncement: "Let the children live. Do not kill them but bring them up!" I again grasped the King's hand and expressed my satisfaction. Automatically the other Christians followed my example and expressed their joy over this verdict before the king.[58]

Tshivhase obviously realised the importance of this ruling just as much as the missionaries did. However, just as he was left with no option but to make the decision that he did if he wished to keep the missionaries, so he had no option but to stick to the law as far as the wider community was concerned. I am convinced that he believed that failure to do so would expose his people to great dangers and cost him his throne.[59]

> Now all our worries concerning these children were suddenly lifted. Yet, I once more acted as spokesman and said to the king that, although I have been satisfied as regards our twins, I would like to speak out once more, for the sake of the many poor and innocent children of his subjects who will be continued to be killed. Tshewase [Tshivhase] replied: "But they say that they are unclean and should not be allowed to live." I: "It may be permitted, but it is a cruel deed. You are more cruel than the wild animals because these animals do not kill their young." Tshewase gave an evasive reply. But I once again said: "I cannot help it. As a messenger of God, I have to say to you, that the blood of the innocent children will make you guilty before God. God sees all that we human-beings do." Tshewase became restless - he tried to change the topic.[60]

He did this successfully by bringing up the matter of a subject who had asked Beuster to be his spokesperson. It was resolved that the matter would be brought to trial.[61] This continues to be the local way of diplomacy. Generally one does not apologise or bring a case before authority. Instead, a spokesperson is sent to do the job. In this way, the fury of the injured party cannot be directly vented onto

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[58] *Ibid.* pp.5-6.

[59] The whole question of the power of *mahosi*, the limitations on their power and sanctions for the abuse of power has been considered on pp.333-336.

[60] *BMB*, Nr. 1 u. 2, 1880, p.6.

the guilty party. At the same time, the spokesperson takes on the responsibility of seeing to the future behaviour of the guilty party.

During the course of the following year, a second set of twins was born at Ha-Tshivhase. Since the legal precedent that twins born on the mission station did not have to be put to death had already been established, this time, the case was not even taken to Tshivhase. The twins were allowed to live.[62] In fact, both sets of twins became matters of local curiosity. For example, the mother of the *gota* whose territory neighboured Ha-Tshivhase visited Beuster in the company of some of her ladies-in-waiting on 28 April 1885. Beuster recorded that:

> During the pleasant conversation on all sorts of topics, one can amid the friendly words spoken, also here and there, add a drop of bitters, which will then be accepted into the bargain with serenity, without being cross with me. So, as a result of our conversation, this heathen lady even expressed the wish to be introduced to our twin children - which is quite daring for a woman who is still so deeply steeped in heathen traditions. It is generally feared that the sight of such children, yes even to talk about such things, or to touch the parents of such children, must bring bad luck to the person concerned. "Truth still remains truth - it hurts if it is rubbed in well." This lady could now even speak about people who had lost several children, because they always had twins which were killed in the traditional heathen way. So they could not deny it that they were more cruel than the lions, who do not kill their young.[63]

Outside the mission station, these token actions nevertheless had little effect. Moreover, nobody was exempted from carrying out these acts. For example, on 26 June 1865, Beuster reported that *Khosi* Tshikalange had come to speak to him "about his earthly affairs - he is still fairly inaccessible towards God's Word."[64] A few days previously, one of his wives had given birth to twins. Had agreed to their being put to death. In the discussion which followed, the Native Assistant Stoffel stated that he knew about four other pairs of twins in the area who had been killed. Beuster reported that, in response, Tshikalange:

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[61] *Ibid.*

[62] *BMB*, Nr. 17 u. 18, 1880, p.344.

[63] Tagebuch der Station Ha Tsĕvase (Carl Beuster), 28 April 1885, pp.17-18. See also *BMB*, Nr. 21 u. 22, 1886, p.415.

[64] Tshikalange, son of Ranwedzi Mphaphuli and the brother of Makwarela Mphaphuli is one of the major actors in Chapter 8. As with his brother, Tshiklanage's *de jure* position was that of a

> calmly recounted no less than ten such cases, where the twins were murdered. He had as good as no answer to my sad request and earnest warning that he order the cessation of these atrocities as God would not for ever keep silent about them. It is the old women; it is not us - that is the usual excuse of these Chiefs. If one could statistically show the yearly number of children who are killed, because of heathen superstitions - be it because of the births of twins or deformed children, or for other reasons - what a frightfully dark picture of heathendom would come to light. Through the intervention of the Christian powers many heathen atrocities and many a stain on humanity have already been exterminated or mitigated. ... But when will that day come when a stop is also put to this heathen nuisance? Oh that the voice of this innocent blood will come to the attention of God. May He descend to deliver this poor nation from the hand that drives it.[65]

Under the influence of the missionaries, Makwarela Mphaphuli seems to have acted to curb the killing of twins in 1887.[66] One is not certain of how energetically he pursued this. However, on 4 October 1888, Beuster batpsied what was reportedly the first pair of twins not put to death in the lands of the Mphaphulis. They were two great-grandchildren of *Khosi* Ranwedzi Mphaphuli himself. Reporting on the baptismal feast, Beuster stated that the "heathens" had also been invited:

> I heard them negotiating, whether they should take the risk of attending this feast and whether they could eat the food which would be served there.[67] One of them boldly said: "Come on, here with us nothing is unclean!" After this they had all started eating until they were satisfied. In this way heathendom has received another blow here. If one realises with what enormous fear the heathens are prejudiced in this regard - how they take care not to bring upon themselves the same evil, through avoiding any contact whatsoever with such twin children or their parents - then one has to marvel at these decisions and the changes in attitudes, even if at first they are of a purely external nature only. If heathen parents should experience such misfortune, the next thing to do would be to kill and get rid of the children in a wet [moist] spot, as soon as possible - these twin children are mostly buried in pots along the river banks. Then the doctor [*Doktor*] is called in who, through all kinds of medicine [*muti*] and good payment, has to work

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gota. However, for similar reasons to those discussed for Makwarela, I refer to him here as *khosi*.

[65] Tagebuch der Station Ha Tsĕvase (Carl Beuster), 24 Juni 1885, pp.25-26. See also *BMB*, Nr. 21 u. 22, 1886, pp.417-418.

[66] See p.464.

[67] Having abandoned local tabus concerning food, it was conceivable that the Christians would have served "unclean" food. On top of this, this was the home of twins – who knew what kind of forces their continued survival would unleash! In this way of thinking, eating the food could have been dangerous.

> against the recurrence of this evil. The doctor takes with him all the clothes of the man and the woman, because they could hold the seeds of the recurrence of such an evil. One does not leave such a home through the door, but through an opening which has been broken into the wall on the back [rear] side of the house.[68]

Despite the missionary optimism here, the practice of killing twins was certainly common in Vendaland until at least the 1930s. It would seem that it only began to die out once it began to be prosecuted as murder in western courts.[69]

BURIAL PRACTICES AND RITUAL HOMICIDE

I find the absence of missionary comment on the alleged ritual killing of retainers or others to accompany members of the royal family into the grave extremely strange. In the previous chapter, reference was made to the human "mat" and "blanket" allegedly provided for *Khosi* Tshivhase's second-most-important wife, Kowâla.[70] The only other case of a similar nature which I have been able to trace in nineteenth century missionary literature from Vendaland concerned the Tsonga-Shangaan *Hosi* Njamande. An "old grey-haired woman, a young boy, a girl and a black dog were [allegedly] buried alive with him".[71]

The only explanation that I can find for this apparent reticence to expose practices which would have been perfect for accounts to gather support from Germany for the mission endeavour was that neither their local converts nor the local people discussed the matter with the missionaries. Burial (or the first burial) of *mahosi* and members of the royal family was conducted in great secrecy. Only selected members of the royal family were present and they were sworn to

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[68] Tagebuch der Station Ha Tsĕvase (Carl Beuster), 4 Oktober 1888, pp.56-57. See also *BMB*, Nr. 21 u. 22, 1889, pp.537-538.

[69] C. Hoffmann "Die Sünde der Welt im Heidentum", in *Mission und Unterricht: Missions-Pädagogische Handreichung der Berliner Missionsgesellschaft*, 24. Jahrgang, 1936, Heft 1, p.26; D. Mcdonald "Vendaland", in *The Blythswood Review: A South African Journal Review: A South African Journal of Religious, Social and Economic Work*, Vol. X, No. 111, March 1933, p.28; W.L. Spreight "Human Sacrifice in South Africa", in *The Nongqai*, February 1935, p.152 and H.A. Stayt The Bavenda, p.93. Note that Hoffmann and Spreight refer to the same case. This is one of the areas with great potential for future research. I hope to do this by utilising court records as my next project.

[70] See p.360.

[71] Tagebuch der Station Ha Tsĕvase (Carl Beuster), 10 Januar 1885, pp.2-3 (quotation, p.3). See also *BMB*, Nr. 21 u. 22, 1885, pp.396-397 (quotation, p.397).

secrecy.[72] It was tabu to refer directly to the death of a khosi – instead euphemisms such as "the pool has dried up", "the *khosi* has vanished", "the *khosi* has gone away" or "we see him no longer" were used.[73] Matters surrounding the death of *mahosi* were simply not spoken about. Commoners would not have known the details while members of the royal families would have refused to discuss them with the missionaries.

It was only much later that S.M. Dzivhani, a Christian convert, made accusations about ritual homicide in the context of the burial of *mahosi* in an essay published in N.J. van Warmelo's *The Copper Miners of Musina and the Early History of the Zoutpansberg* (1940).[74] Dzivhani noted that, among some Vhavenda groups:

> The corpse of a chief is not buried in the ground and covered with earth. For him they slaughter a black bull and skin it, and sew the corpse in the hide in the evening. A small hut is built and plastered with mud inside and outside, and even inside the roof. A platform is erected inside. They then summon those who used to live in close contact with the chief, who waited on him and ate with him, and these are killed by strangling with a girdle. They are tied hand and foot with the creeper bopa-vha-fu and placed upon the platform. They are called the mat of the chief. Then the corpse, sewn up in the hide, is bent up and placed upon the corpses of the retainers, and others are placed over it. Under the platform they make a hole into which the moisture from the rotting corpses runs. A retainer who wants to save his life when he sees that the chief is about to die and there is no hope, will immediately go on a visit very far away in another country, for there is no other means of escape. A retainer who they fear might show fright, is enticed into the thondo and strangled there. Another they might send on a distant errand with others who are to strangle him on the road, and nobody will ever hear where he went, for the stranglers will return and say "We became separated on the road and thought he had returned home."[75]

During the period that the death was kept secret from the people, the corpses were left to decompose in the sealed hut. On an appointed day, the royal servants

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[72] See especially E. Gottschling "The Bawenda", p.208; H.A. Stayt The Bavenda, pp.206 & 207 and N.J. van Warmelo (ed.) *Contributions Towards Venda History*, pp134-140.

[73] C.J. Conerly "The Surrendering of the Lands", p.xviii; S.M. Dzivhani "The Chiefs of Venda", p.35; T.N. Huffman "Snakes and birds: expressive space at Great Zimbabwe", in *African Studies*, Vol. 40, No. 2, 1981, p.133; H.A. Stayt, *The Bavenda*, p.207 and N.J. van Warmelo (ed.) *Contributions Towards Venda History*, p.14.

[74] S.M. Dzivhani "The Chiefs of Venda", pp.33-50.

[75] *Ibid.* p.35.

blew *tshikona* in a way known as *tshikumo*. This was a clear sign to the initiated that the *khosi* had passed away. However, this was still not publicly acknowledged – cases were still brought to court and settled in the name of the khosi and orders were still given in his name. Things continued in this manner until the day was fixed for the installation of the new ruler. According to Dzivhani, at first, the new ruler would not decide cases on his own. Instead, he would:

> listen to those who are his elders, until the time is come for the little hut to be broken down and the royal bones to be sewn up in the hide of another bull. In the cavity underneath the platform there will remain the bones of the retainers who formed the mat of the dead chief, and a branch of the mubvumela tree is planted there, earth is cast over all and a wall built around it. Then the bones of the chief are taken to the sacred grove of his ancestors, where they bury the dead. ... In this place they hold their annual rite of sacrifice, and the chief has no power to decide cases until the bones of his predecessor have been taken there.[76]

Because of his core position in the life of his group, the installation of the new *khosi* necessitated rebuilding the supernatural defences of his village. Related to the rituals for the supernatural protection of the borders discussed in Chapter 6 (see pp.349-350), Wessmann drew attention to similar protective devices for villages:

> In times of distress and war the Bawenda try to protect themselves by witchcraft, and medicine which they lay across the roads in order to make the country strong, so that the enemy cannot enter their land. In the same manner they protect themselves against illnesses, and put a pail with medicine across the entrance of their village, by which they believe they will exclude even death.[77]

Again, during the nineteenth century, Wessmann and the other Berlin Missionaries did not describe the role of ritual homicide in this process. Presumably, they had not yet been able to penetrate the veil of secrecy which surrounded it. However, the anthropologist H. Du Plessis, writing in 1945, recorded that:

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[76] *Ibid.* pp.35 & 36.
[77] R. Wessmann *The Bawenda of the Spelonken*, p.83.

> At the village of a chief, where every time when a new chief succeeds [to power] a new entrance is built, besides these different things, skulls of people who are killed on this occasion are also buried under both gates. In addition, at the back-side of the village, outside the surrounding fence, pegs are driven into the ground after they have been smeared with medicines.[78]

In a footnote on the same page, he explained further that:

> For three chiefs following each other, a certain family is appointed and the head of this family then, at such an occasion, has to kill an old man and two children and the skulls of these three are then buried in the entrances. These persons' skin is removed and is stretched over the sacred drum(s) of the chief. A cattle-hide was [placed] over this human skin.[79]

In a number of descriptions, the institution of chieftainship was thus closely linked to the appropriation and use of the bodies of subjects of the *mahosi* through ritual homicide. Changes in leadership were marked by rituals to safeguard the village which involved the use of human bodies, or body parts. One of my final year undergraduate students also argued in an assignment that, from time to time, the *khosi* (or his close relatives acting in his interest) would order a ritual homicide to strengthen his power and vitality.[80] However, beyond the ritual use of body parts in the context of warfare (which will be discussed in Chapter 8), during the course of the nineteenth century, much of this seems to have escaped the scrutiny of the missionaries. At this stage, they also seem to have been unaware of the alleged role of ritual homicide in ensuring a bountiful harvest for the community.

As agro-pastoralist communities, the Vhavenda were dependent on an adequate supply of rainfall for grazing-lands and fields. Moreover, since the harvest provided both food for the months ahead and the seeds for the following season's planting, hardy seed which would store well and survive variable weather

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[78] H. Du Plessis "Die Territoriale Organisasie van die Venda", in *African Studies* (Formerly *Bantu Studies*), Vol4, No.3, September 1945, p.126. For the construction of a new entrance to the *khosi*'s village on his accession to power, see also T.N. Huffman and E.O.M. Hanisch "Settlement Hierachies in the Northern Transvaal", *African Studies Journal*, Vol. 46, No. 1, 1987, p.110 and N.J. van Warmelo (ed.) *Contributions Towards Venda History*, p.14.

[79] H. Du Plessis "Die Territoriale Organisasie van die Venda", p.126 (footnote).

[80] M.P. Nemadodzi "Main themes in the history of Venda over the past twenty-five years", unpublished History 300 Assignment, university of Venda, 10 June 1991, p.7.

conditions after its planting was of crucial importance. Once these elements had been satisfied, it was primarily the labour of the community that ensured success in farming. As the central guardian of the community, it was the *khosi*'s task to ensure that these requirements were met. Since success or failure depended largely on human initiative, it was reportedly to the human body that he turned in order to attempt to gain control over the fickle forces of nature. All the community would bring seeds to the *khosi*'s capital. In great secrecy, these seeds would then reportedly be mixed with others which had been treated with medicines containing a mixture of herbs and human body parts. The people would then take seeds from the common stock to plant in their own fields. This ensured a good harvest.[81]

Support for my argument that the missionaries did not engage themes of this nature because they did not know about them is provided by the fact that, in other contexts, they offered a complex reading of what they saw as local people's perceptions of the power contained in human flesh. This is clearly revealed in their analysis of some of the events surrounding the burial of David Denga (whose life history I discussed in Chapter 2), in their tales of cannibalism and in their discussions of anthropophagous rituals in warfare.

At the funeral of his comrade, David Denga, Johannes Mutshaeni had said that he would like to guard the grave for a few nights, as he was afraid that the body would be stolen. He dismissed Beuster's counter-argument that nobody was likely to disinter the body of a man who had died of small-pox. Instead, he argued "that David had been a hard-working man, so one could ascribe very special characteristics to his flesh, and therefore his flesh would be much sought after." Unlike the case in local burials, the cemetery was not near to people's homes and it would be relatively easy to rob the grave at night. However, since he was feeling so sick with what would turn out to be his own fatal bout of smallpox, Mutshaeni was unable to guard the grave. Instead, he and the missionaries:

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[81] P.J. S[ampson] "'Fertilising The Corn.' Being the true story of the weird and terrible Bawenda special rite of 'Mokuku wa mabeli' whereby the seed corn is made fertile and brings forth abundant crops", in *The Nongqai*, 12, January 1921, pp.18-19 and H.A. Stayt *The Bavenda*, pp.314-315. See also S. Balic "Change brings muti murders", p.33 and E. Koch and E. Ritchken "The political economy of witchcraft", in *Weekly Mail*, 23-29 March 1990, p.10.

> took the precaution of putting many pieces of broken glass into the soil when we filled up the grave, in this way hoping to prevent the grave-robbers - who scrape the soil of out the grave with their hands - from invading the grave. (Human flesh is especially used by these heathens, when making hoes. The iron is improved and more effective if human flesh is first mixed with the ore, before it is smelted. This flesh is much sought after, because such a high value is laid on this flesh. For this reason, those who remain behind try to protect their dead from these hyenas in human form. They do this by burying their dead near their homes and they usually guard the graves for a few nights.) [82]

Beyond these explanations of fears of sinister happenings, it is also likely that Mutshaeni was scared that David's "heathen" relatives would attempt to recover his body for burial according to Vhavenda rites. However, the fact that he had died of smallpox seems to militate against this interpretation. As indicated by the secrecy surrounding smallpox cases, and the fact that people had been too scared to bury the child whose dead body possibly infected Denga in the first place, people were well aware of how infectious the disease was. It is unlikely that they would have dug him up to re-bury him. By a similar argument, even if freshly-buried corpses were on occasion dug up so that body-parts could be used in *muti* or iron-smelting, it is likely that people would have been disinclined to exhume Johannes because of the manner of his death.

Similarly, without denying the possibility that fresh graves were situated near people's homes and guarded for a few days for the reasons stated in the text, there were also less sinister explanations. A dead person is an ancestral spirit. If you disturb him, you disturb the ancestral spirits. There is always the possibility that an enemy, or somebody who is ill-disposed towards you, will disturb or desecrate the grave. On the other hand, to this day, when families celebrate important occasions, such as marriages, or need assistance in times of trouble, rituals are performed at the ancestral graves. Only senior members of the immediate family participate in these. Having the graves situated at the houses makes it easier to keep these occasions private.

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[82] *BMB*, Nr. 15 u. 16, 1879, p.314. For the reported use of human flesh in iron-smelting, see J.B. de Vaal "Yster vir Assegaai se Lem", in *Die Brandwag*, 14 June 1946, p.12 (see also pp.13 & 56 for the continuation of the description of iron smelting and smithing). See also E.D. Giesekke "Der Eisenindustrie der Bawenda", in *Die Brücke*, 7, July 1930, pp.5-9.

Thus, without dismissing the sinister reasons given in the text, there are also other possible explanations. One should also not forget that the missionaries constantly had their principals in Berlin, and the wider mission community in Germany, in mind when writing their reports. The wider public which expected such things to happen. It was also important to impress upon them just how important mission work among these "raw" and "dark" "heathens" really was, so that more donations would be made. Thus, even if they did not blatantly falsify their reports, they had reason, on occasion, to emphasise the dramatic, the unusual and the bloodthirsty. This was clearly revealed in their descriptions of the allegedly cannibalistic habits of the Vhavenda.

TALES OF CANNIBALISM

The missionary texts about the African body which I found it most difficult to deconstruct were their accounts of the consumption of the flesh of others. My whole training in African history and social anthropology rebelled against accepting the veracity of descriptions such as these. Stories about cannibalism were arguably the most extreme form of "othering" perpetuated by Europeans against Africans. In their racist obsession with cultural evolutionism, they dichotomised what they saw as their own developed "civilisations" and African "savagery" or "barbarism"; the "light of civilisation" and the "darkness of heathenism".

I nevertheless considered it important to go deeper than this in my attempts to make sense of the sources. In conformity with one of the conventional strategies to demonise strangers or enemies, other African groups seem to have portrayed Tshivenda-speakers as being cannibals. This impression, in turn, was uncritically accepted by explorers and the Berlin Missionaries. Both of these groups had been pre-conditioned by their European upbringing to accept the "reality" and prevalence of African cannibalism. The missionaries had been further influenced by what they had been told by their Pedi converts before coming to Vendaland. The Berliners soon came to be seen as the resident experts on "the Bawenda" and their ways. Their pronouncements about the supposedly cannibalistic habits of the inhabitants of Vendaland were repeated and re-hashed by others. In

discussing this, I begin with an account by the German explorer Carl Mauch which pre-dated the establishment of Berlin Mission stations in Vendaland. I then look at two later missionary accounts which drew both on testimony from African informants and on the comments of Missionary Carl Beuster. This leads me back to the Berlin Missionaries, their pre-conceptions about cannibalism and how they wrote about the consumption of the flesh of others. I conclude by arguing that these practices only make sense if one differentiates between cannibalism and anthropophagy and that it makes the most sense to do this in the context of a detailed case-study. This, in turn, leads me into the concluding chapter. There, cannibalism and anthopophagy, and the treatment of the African body, are major sub-themes.

Carl Mauch provided the first textual description of Tshivenda-speaking groups as cannibals in July 1871. Describing his visit to *Khosi* Lwamondo, he stated that:

> Lomondo [Lwamondo] himself is of an uncouth appearance and his face is almost animal-like. While his devouring tools, behind extremely everted lips, have grown to perfection, the lids partly hide the small, cruel eyes and a once red-coloured piece of cloth makes the forehead appear still lower by the manner in which it is tied around the head. His behaviour matches fully one's expectations; crude talk in a shrill voice. I believe he would make a perfect character to portray a cannibal, and I can hardly doubt the pronouncement of one of my companions to the effect that he actually is one. In fact all the Berg Kaffirs [Vhavenda[83]] are still such.[84]

It is easy to dismiss this kind of description as resting on hearsay evidence and as being a reflection of the prejudices of nineteenth-century Europeans, rather than any kind of African "reality". Indeed, Mauch's description is a good example of the kinds of descriptions that Brian Street was thinking of when he discussed cannibalism in his work on representations of "primitive" society in English

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[83] According to Gottschling, writing as late as 1905: "Among Europeans very few know the real name of the Bawenda; either they mix them up with the Basotho or simply call them 'Mountian Kaffirs,' because they live in the Zoutpansberg mountain range." (E. Gottschling "The Bawenda", p.195.)

[84] E.E. Burke (ed.) *The Journals of Carl Mauch : His travels in the Transvaal and Rhodesia 1869-1872*, Transcribed from the original by Mrs. E. Bernhard and translated by F.O. Bernhard, Salisbury, National Archives of Rhodesia, 1969, pp.120-121. (For the original German text of Lwamondo as a cannibal, see "Carl Mauch's Reisen im Inneren von Süd-Afrika 1865-1872", in *Petermann's Mitteilungen Ergänzungsheffte*, 37, 1874, p.31.)

fiction between 1858 and 1950. In this discussion, Street noted that:

> If ... cultural differences can be put down to racial heritage, then even cannibalism, supposedly one of the greatest distinctions between a gentleman and a savage, can be cited as a hereditary characteristic of inferior races. The Englishman, it is assumed, doesn't practise it because his instincts, passed down to him through his race, revolt against it. Thus Tarzan, with no cultural training in an English environment, nevertheless has inherited the instinct which tells him that the cannibal breaks a natural law... The natives, of course, have no such inhibitions and proceed to break natural law with relish, reveling in meals of human flesh... That cannibalism is natural to primitive people is implied by Gilson in a description that links it with their physical appearance. They are 'bestial, gorilla-like creatures, with exceptionally powerful jaws and teeth like fangs, hunting human flesh'.[85]

Thus, in deconstructing Mauch's account (and others like it), one is provided with a window into the unconscious forces which shaped the way that explorers and missionaries interpreted and made sense of the world - both physical and psychological - that they found themselves inhabiting in Africa. It may be argued that Mauch's description of Lwamondo tells us more about his prior-conditioning which made him see an independent African ruler, whose lands had not yet been colonised by European settlers, as a cannibal, than about Lwamondo himself. Even the description of the *khosi*'s physical features and dress was shaped by European stereotypes.[86]

Similarly, I have no difficulty in rejecting the account of the Reverend D. Fred. Ellenberger of the Paris Evangelical Mission Society mission to the Basotho which appeared in his book *History of the Basuto*.[87] In writing his account of the travels of the semi-legendary Batebang King Mohlomi before his accession to power, Ellenberger used oral tradition describing events during the 1780s as his

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[85] B.V. Street *The savage in literature*,pp.75-76. See also A. Kirkaldy "Images of savagery", pp.5-7. Sources cited or quoted by Street in this section include E.R. Burroughs (1917) *Tarzan of the Apes* and C. Gilson (1919) *In the Power of the Pygmies*.

[86] This description was clearly a product of the kinds of influences on the field of vision of Henri-Alexandre Junod and his wife identified by Patrick Harries – see pp.230-231.

[87] D.F. Ellenberger *History of the Basuto: Ancient and Modern*, London, Caxton Publishing Company, 1912 (Translation from French by J.C. Macgregor). The Paris Evangelical Mission Society began working among the Basotho in 1833.

main source.[88] The description of the prince's encounter with the Vhavenda could easily have come from the pages of Rider Haggard or one of the other African adventure writers and it portrayed them as cannibals in stereotypical terms:

> Far away in the North Mohlomi arrived at the abode of some cannibal tribes, but they did him no hurt, perceiving that he was a man of peace, though Segoaela, one of his companions, who was rather quarrelsome, nearly served as a meal for these hungry people. Mohlomi arrived at one of their villages unexpectedly about noon. The sun was very hot, and everyone in the village slept. Nothing was seen but the cattle lying in the shade, and one heard no sound but the barking of the dogs and the buzzing of the flies. But little by little the inhabitants came out of their huts and the chief appeared and invited Mohlomi to sit down in the shade with his people. To their great horror, he offered the travellers some human flesh to eat; but they excused themselves, saying that this kind of food was strange to them, and they dared not partake of it, whereupon an ox was killed for them. They and the cannibals conversed together, asking and answering questions. These cannibals (*Ma-ya-batho*) were black and stout, resembling Bechuana in speech and appearance. Their hair was long and frizzled, and they kept it greased with human fat. Their bodies were smeared with red ochre; their huts were covered with reeds and thatching grass; their villages were large and built in a circle. They drank much thick milk, and ate the flesh of their fellows as a delicacy. They even seem to have devoured the flesh of those who died. They were at one time well known by reputation to the Basuto, who called them Bamahlabaneng ("people of the antipodes"), because they lived so far away.[89]

In Ellenberger's terms, these people practised cannibalism because they lusted after the taste of human flesh, rather than because they had no other food. This was evidenced by the fact that they had cattle, drank milk and also owned dogs for hunting. He identified them as:

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[88] According to tradition, Mohlomi was born at Fothane, near present-day Foriesburg, in about 1720. His father, Monyane, was the King of the Bamonaheng, who were a branch of the Bakwena. He was famed as a doctor, a rain maker, a thinker, a judge, a prophet and a traveller. His benevolence was also legendary. In time, he became King of the Batebang (which is what the Bamonaheng were called by this time). His capital was at Ngoliloe, near the present-day town of Ficksburg. He died in about 1814. (See J. Bevan, R. Bevan, S. Kikine and K. Tsabedze *Lula in the Land of Ghosts and other stories*, Rainbow Yellow Reader, London, Longman, 1986, pp.78-83; D.F. Ellenberger *History of the Basuto*, pp.90-97 and L. Thompson "Co-operation and Conflict: The High Veld", in M. Wilson and L. Thompson (eds.) *The Oxford History of South Africa, Volume I. South Africa to 1870*, London, Oxford University Press, 1969, p.399.)

[89] D.F. Ellenberger *History of the Basuto*, pp.94-95. For discussion of cannibalism in the African adventure tradition, see especially P. Brantlinger "Victorians and Africans", pp.175, 176, 184, 185, 190 & 196; M.L Pratt *Imperial Eyes*, pp.83, 208 & 218 and B.V. Street *The Savage in Literature*, pp.17, 70, 75-76 & 159.

> descendants of the Bavenda [Vhavenda], or Matsuetla, who came from the south-west of the Congo Basin about three centuries ago ... After long peregrination they arrived in South Africa at Zoutpansberg during the early part of the sixteenth century, having already acquired the habit of eating the prisoners which they took in war.[90]

and continued by arguing that:

> It would have been about 1782 that Mohlomi visited the Bavenda: he reported that they were cannibals then; and according to the missionary Beuster they remained such, until finally subjugated by the Government of the South African Republic at the recent date of 1898.[91]

According to Ellenberger, at the time of Mohlomi's travels, there was no cannibalism amongst the Basotho. However, he detailed numerous cases of this practice among them during the first three decades of the nineteenth century.[92] These he ascribed largely to what he saw as the holocaust of wars set in motion by the rise and growth of the Zulu kingdom, the so-called *mfecane* or *Difaqane*. He argued that groups were driven into cannibalism by starvation as a result of their having lost their cattle and crops to raiders or by their defeat in battle. People either ate their own dead or consumed those they managed to kill.[93] Cannibals and robbers infested the country and one of the reasons for state formation among the Basotho was the protection offered against these conditions.[94] Cannibalism and lawlessness were eventually largely brought under control by the efforts of Mosheshwe.[95] In attempting to explain this "aberration", he laid the original blame directly at the door of the Vhavenda, the people who saw human flesh as "a delicacy":[96]

> For all that it is improbable that the idea of eating their fellow-men would have occurred to the South African Bantu had the example not been set by strangers from the north. ... [We have seen that] the Bavenda, who came from the sources of the Kassai, practised the custom of eating prisoners of war. They kept up this horrid practice until quite recently, and news of it, no doubt, filtered through to the cis-Vaal tribes, through the Bakhatla, who ... had intermarried with them, and through ... Mohlomi ... No doubt Mohlomi, who was a great

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[90] D.F. Ellenberger *History of the Basuto*, p.95.
[91] *Ibid.*
[92] *Ibid.*, pp.32, 54, 89, 122, 137, 144, 146, 150, 158, 161-163, 190, 191, 192, 203, 217-226 & 233.
[93] *Ibid.* pp.34, 54, 89, 122, 137, 144, 150, 158, 191, 218 & 222.
[94] *Ibid.* pp.150, 190, 217 & 221.
[95] *Ibid.* pp.192 & 203.
[96] *Ibid.* p.224.

raconteur, often related what he saw on that memorable journey.[97]

I would like to argue that, even though he himself had seen no real evidence of cannibalism, Ellenberger had been pre-conditioned by his upbringing in Europe to accept the idea of Africans as savages and cannibals. He was thus prepared uncritically to accept the testimony of his informants and Beuster's tales about Vhavenda cannibalism. Moreover, the account that they gave him, and which Beuster's evidence could be used to support, enabled him partly to excuse "his Africans" for their aberration as they had learned it from others and only been driven into it by necessity. In turn, his informants had no scruples about portraying another group, who were conveniently far away and with whom there was a history of warfare in the nineteenth century, as cannibals. Distant people and enemies alone were seen as being capable of eating people for pleasure, local people first resorted to it only out of dire need. Related to this, Ellenberger's account also fails to engage the idea that, as David Coplan has pointed out: "The image of the cannibal, the human being who prospers by devouring his own kind in an ultimate zero-sum game, is a resonant and fearful symbol in Basotho historical consciousness". Cannibalism, continues Coplan, "thus has a long career as an unsavory emblem of social pathology, parasitism and disintegration in Sesotho."[98] Thus, there was no "hard" evidence of cannibalism in Ellenberger's account - merely a clear example of the interaction of European and African preconceptions of the Other, and a failure to understand the local linguistic symbolism of "cannibalism".

The second missionary account that I would like to consider comes from the Swiss Missionary Auguste Jaques of the Mission station at Elim and was written on 18 April 1887. In writing of the then current fears of war between the Boers and the Vhavenda, Jaques chose to draw attention to the possible "scenes of savagery" which would result. Significantly, although still extremely paternalistic and heavily influenced by ideas of the superiority of western Christianity and "civilization", his analysis attempted to be sympathetic. He moved beyond the

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[97] *Ibid.*, pp.217-218.

[98] D.B. Coplan *In the Time of Cannibals: The Word Music of South Africa's Basotho Migrants*, Johannesburg, Witwatersrand University Press, 1994, pp.1 & 3.

idea that people were eaten out of a "revolting taste for the flesh of warriors." Instead, he looked to the "superstition" which enslaved the local people as the root cause of the practice. This, he argued, was slowly being dispelled by the "light" brought by the missionaries:

> there is an opinion, that if war sparks out, there is the prospect of scenes of savagery which will give little reason to be cheerful. During summer, the people of Mpafouri [*Khosi* Ranwedzi (Masindi) Mphaphuli] ate their prisoners of war, and Mr. Beuster himself was witness to all preparations of the feast. Our neighbour Ndjabane, of Tsofim, also ate one of his brothers who offended him about fifteen years ago, and it can be supposed that he would do this again, if a good occasion arose. This eating of people should not be attributed to a revolting taste for the flesh of warriors. A few people actually only attend these horrors because they have been pressed by their chiefs or the relatives of those who are being sent into battle. It is just that there exists amongst our Bavenda [Vhavenda] and amongst many Africans the inveterate belief that whoever tastes human flesh is invulnerable in battle. Of all medicines, this one is the most effective to repel the blows of the enemy and to give victory. So it is more superstition and not cruelty or a depraved taste that leads these unfortunates to the exercise of such horrible practices.
>
> The need for protection is a feeling that is so natural to us, that it seems that nothing is spared to assure us of it. Let us then feel sorry for these eaters of men, their misery is extreme. ... But ... the Lord is dissipating shadows and making his evangelism of peace shine brightly![99]

Thus, Jaques "made sense" of the practice. In other words, he did not label it as diabolical but as rational (within another way of thinking). However, his German colleague seems to have been less subtle. Again, we have Beuster, the first white missionary in the heart of Vendaland, asserting that the local people were "cannibals". As the longest-serving missionary in Vendaland, he could claim to be the "expert" and speak with authority. However, reading deeper into what we are told, again there is no evidence that he actually witnessed any kind of cannibalistic act – he merely allegedly watched the (unspecified) preparations for the feast.

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[99] Auguste Jaques "Craintes de guerre", in *Bulletin Missionnaire des Églises Libres de la Suisse Romande*, Vol.6, No.73, Lausanne, August 1887, pp.281-282. Thanks to Pippa Davis for translating this from French for me.

Moving on to the second part of the account, Jaques was not yet in South Africa at the time that Ndjabane's allegedly ate his brother. In addition, his account was based on hearsay evidence from an unidentified informant (or group of informants). We should thus be skeptical of viewing it as an "accurate" description of any "real" events.

With this account, we have nevertheless moved one step further. In drawing attention to the idea that eating a part of the body of an enemy would transfer invulnerability in battle to the person who ate it, Jaques moved beyond mere "superstition" and introduced the concept of the human body as a source of power. His position as a missionary of the Swiss Mission Society, and his view of African societies, seems to have prevented him from pursuing this line of inquiry any further.

Considering all of these cases together, it is clear that none of the authors or their informants quoted had actually witnessed an act of anthropophagy or the consumption of human flesh in any form. They either recounted the tales of others (who had not actually witnessed the act itself) or witnessed what were allegedly the preparations for the feast, but not the actual feast itself. In addition, in these accounts, cannibals usually look, and always act, the part. Lwamondo's "uncouth appearance", "almost animal-like" face, large teeth, "everted lips" and red bandanna serve to set him apart from others. His "crude talk in a shrill voice" completes the picture of the savage cannibal ruler. Ellenberger's Bamahlabaneng (had they actually ever gone around like this) would have looked extremely ferocious with their "stout" bodies "smeared with red ochre" (presumably, the colour of blood, danger and death) and their "long and frizzled" hair "greased with human fat." In addition, even when he portrayed them as following common African custom by offering their guests food, Ellenberger still had the Bamahlabaneng behaving like cannibals – the meat offered was not beef but human flesh. Moreover, eating even troublesome guests (although they allegedly only nearly did this) presumably would have offended all African groups' customs of hospitality. If this did not set them apart, their lust for human flesh and their consumption of their dead, certainly did.

In Jaques' account, Ranwedzi Mphaphuli was not described in enough detail to comment on his appearance or his actions, except to note his peoples' (and, presumably, his) consumption of their prisoners. However, descriptions of his person and actions discussed in the next chapter more than make up for this. In addition, colonial authors would have taken it for granted that African rulers would torture, maim or otherwise commit atrocities upon, their prisoners. Although Ndjabane has only one sentence devoted to him, he eats his brother in this – an act which strikes at the very core of the family and, through this, of society in general.

These descriptions fall squarely into the kinds of accounts analysed by the anthropologist William Arens - probably the scholar most vociferous in his attempt to debunk the notion that cannibalism has been a characteristic feature of any society.[100] Arens' analysis covered most societies which have been accused of cannibalism, including - amongst others - prehistoric humans, the Aztecs, North American, New Guinean and African societies. In attempting to find credible witnesses who had actually witnessed the acts that they were describing, he found rather that these so-called witnesses were merely recounting what they had been told. In dismissing these "second-hand" accounts of explorers, missionaries and anthropologists, he noted that they fortuitously seemed to enter areas just after the inhabitants, or - more usually - their neighbours had given up cannibalism. Only a handful of the masses of second-hand accounts purported to be by direct witnesses of cannibalism. In each of these cases, and in the case of modern anthropologists who claimed to have witnessed cannibalistic rituals, he found reasons to throw doubt on either the credibility of the witness or on the accuracy of their observation.

Similarly, in discussing what he calls "the myth of cannibalism", the sociologist Agner Fog has argued that:

> The belief that primitive peoples habitually eat one another for nutrition, leads to such a high degree of psychological excitation that

[100] W. Arens *The Man-eating Myth: Anthropology and Anthropophagy*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1979. See also the review of this work at by Ian A. York, 22 May 1996, AFU and Urban Legend Archive *cannibalism*, at http://www.urbanlegends.com/deathcannibalism.html, accessed 6 March 1999.

> this myth has been told and retold for centuries and until recently has been believed by even the most reputable scientists, despite the fact that no anthropologist or ethnographer ever has seen the alleged cannibalistic act.[101] Most tales about cannibalism can be traced back to demonizing images that a people have created in order to bring disgrace upon their enemy, just like accusations of witchcraft, etc. These accusations have often been used to justify war, slavery, and colonialism...
>
> The prohibition against cannibalism is one of the strongest taboos we know, and the very thought of eating somebody, as well as the thought of being eaten oneself, evokes extreme horror in every human being. The individual works through his fear of cannibalism by listening to and carrying on these stories. The imaginary cannibal is not only a bogey but a perfect model for how not to behave - a prototype on barbarism and wickedness. Humans need such negative identification models, and therefore the myth is kept alive.[102]

In attempting to explain how these myths work, Richard Buckhorn has dismissed accounts of Australian Aboriginal consumption of either Europeans or Chinese people (for whose flesh, the white popular imagination of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries argued, they had a particular fondness).[103] In Buckhorn's words:

> we still lack even one credible account of either a European or a Chinese person having been eaten by Aboriginal people, let alone evidence for any preference...
>
> In the era of colonisation, "They are cannibals" could be loosely translated, "We want their land". The perception of indigenous peoples as primitive, savage and inferior helped justify both the process and its brutality.
>
> The myth still functions to impede the process of owning our history in this land. The allegation is not made about Aboriginal people living today, but the myth enables 'us' to take pride in the success of our

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[101] For attempts at producing a cultural materialist account of cannibalism/anthropophagy based on nutritional requirements and available food resources, see M. Harris (a) *Cannibals and Kings: The Origins of Cultures*, Glasgow, Fontana/Collins, 1978, especially pp.110-125 & 134-136 & (b) *Cultural Materialism: The Struggle for a Science of Culture*, New York, Vintage Books, 1980, especially pp.188-190 & 333-341.

[102] Agner Fog *Cultural selection © 1996*, chapter 8: Sociology of deviance, at http://announce.com/agner/cultsel/chap8.html, accessed 25 November 1997, pp.4-5.

[103] Richard Buchhorn *A Taste for Chinese*, (first appeared in *the Skeptic* Vol 14, No 1), at http://www. skeptics.com.au/journal/canib-chinese.htm, accessed 15 February 1999, pp.1-3.

> effort to civilise/Christianise 'them', liberating them from barbarous practices...
>
> It also serves to dissociate Aboriginal people of today from those who supposedly indulged in the practice, undermining claims to continuing sovereignty and land rights. Indeed, Hugh Morgan of Western Mining has argued that to recognise Aboriginal cultural affiliation with land would be to legitimise cannibalism. [104]

Also deconstructing the idea of cannibalism, the post-colonialist scholar Peter Hulme has examined the linguistic morphology and raised some questions about the use of the very term "cannibal". In doing so, he has exposed its strong ideological dimension.[105] Identifying Columbus' use of the term to describe the warlike Carib or Caribes of the West Indies as "beginning text", he has argued that:

> far from being an observation that those people called "canibales" ate other people, is a report of other people's words; moreover, words spoken in a language of which he had no prior knowledge and, at best, six weeks' practice in trying to understand.[106]

Joan Smith also raised issues such as these in an essay in *Granta*. Here she argued that, for most Europeans during the nineteenth century, cannibalism was "an index of savagery" and that the belief in "the widespread existence of cannibal tribes in the non-European, 'uncivilized' areas of the world" was shared by a range of authors.[107] Thus:

> Cannibal narratives ... are one of the ways in which colonial cultures differentiate themselves from other races - particularly ones they regard as troublesome or unwilling to accept their subject status... This is not to argue that cannibalism does not exist but to suggest that its unacknowledged function in supporting an otherwise dubious hierarchy of racial superiority has predisposed too many commentators to believe almost any anecdote, no matter how vague or unlikely the

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[104] *Ibid.* pp.3-4.

[105] P. Hulme "Columbus and the Cannibals", in B. Ashcroft, G. Griffiths and H. Tiffin *The post-colonial studies reader*, London and New York, Routledge, 1995, pp.365-369. Cf. M. Holdenried "Das Kannibalische Dreieck: Ikonen des Fremden", in *kultuRRevolution: zeitschrift für angewandte diskurstheorie*, nr.32/33, dez.1995, pp.39-44.

[106] P. Hulme "Columbus and the Cannibals", p.366.

[107] J. Smith "People Eaters", in *Granta*, 52, Winter 1995, Food: The Vital Stuff, p.73.

details.[108]

Moreover, for Smith, these "credulous and strikingly similar narratives" reveal far more about "a prurient curiosity within *developed* cultures about cannibalism than of its widespread practice outside them."[109]

Smith's comments about the suspension of normal critical facilities when it comes to accounts of cannibalism are particularly clearly borne out in the South African context. Here, the debate about cannibalism has focused largely around the so-called *mfecane/Difaqane*. With varying degrees of bloodthirstiness, and underlying racism, accounts of skeletons littering the veld and cannibalism have been a recurring theme in discussions of the presumed holocaust of wars and destruction. Thus even the liberal historian Leonard Thompson in writing about the *Difaqane* and its aftermath, between about 1822 and 1836, stated that, due to the competition between Sotho peoples and Nguni invaders "for diminishing supplies of grain and cattle ... there was widespread chaos".[110] In addition:

> In most of the Vaal-Orange area itself the old settlements were abandoned, the stock was destroyed, the fields ceased to be cultivated, and in several places the landscape was littered with human bones. Demoralized survivors wandered round singly or in small groups, contriving to live on game or veld plants. Even cannibalism was widespread.[111]

For Thompson, this was indicative of the "extent of the collapse of the social and moral order", an assertion that he illustrated by means of the graphic recollections of a Hlubi survivor of the Difaqane. He also discussed the role that Mosheshwe allegedly played in stamping out cannibalism.[112] Similar statements were also made by John Omer-Cooper, while Curtin *et al* also supported the idea of Mosheshwe acting to stop cannibalism.[113]

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[108] *Ibid.* p.76.
[109] *Ibid.* p.78.
[110] L. Thompson "Co-operation and Conflict", pp.391-405 (quotation, p.391).
[111] *Ibid.* pp.394-395. See also F.Ellenberger *History of the Basuto*, pp.217-226.
[112] *Ibid.* pp.395 (quotation) & 399.
[113] J.D. Omer-Cooper *The Zulu Aftermath: A Nineteenth-Century Revolution in Bantu Africa*, London, Longman, 1966, pp.96, 100 & 102 and P. Curtin, S. Feierman, L. Thompson and J. Vansina *African History*, London, Longman, 1978, p.325. In dismissing the whole concept of "The 'mfecane'", Julian Cobbing has argued that allegations of cannibalism played an

Three tractates produced by the Berlin Mission Society give reasonably detailed biographies of a number of people who claimed to have been forced into "cannibalism" at this time. The first two (originally published in 1871) were the products of interviews with sixteen self-confessed former cannibals, who had subsequently converted to Christianity and were living at Botshabelo, by Missionary Alexander Merensky. These interviews were then re-worked by Hermann Theodor Wangemann, Director of the Berlin Mission Society. He also carried out follow-up interviews of his own.[114] The third tractate, this time authored by Merensky, drew both on these interviews and on missionary and travellers' accounts from other parts of Africa.[115] They are crucial texts providing windows into the missionaries' thinking. In addition, the first two were published the year before Ha-Tshivhase was established. Beuster, Stech, Schwellnus and Baumhöfner were all stationed at Botshabelo (at different times) prior to their posting to Vendaland. They would certainly have heard these stories (possibly from the informants themselves) and it is extremely likely that they had read the published works before their move. In addition to other influences on their thinking, in my reading, these (extremely far-fetched) accounts contributed to the ways that they thought, spoke and wrote about their experiences in Vendaland.

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important role in building up the alibi which was used "to legitimate South Africa's racially unequal land division." In particular, cannibalism was used in the construction of the concept of the Mantatees – "a word deliberately used to convey at once the idea of terror, and that of the black man as *Untermensch*." Through the use of this stereotype: "Genuine refugees from the slave raids were converted into marauding bands of semi-demonic women and children, as well as men, who ravaged the countryside like locusts and threatened the entire colonial civilization." As cannibals, "Mantatee hordes had to be subject to laws of behaviour and motion completely mysterious to rational people... Black 'irrationality' became 'truer' with each repetition, and the impression was to be reinforced by the need for later alibis." (J. Cobbing "The Mfecane as Alibi", pp.487, 499-500 & 519.) Later, he argued that "Many of the cannibal stories belong to the genre of European fairy tales and represent the export into Africa of fantasies historically embedded in the collective European unconscious." After examining African tales about white slave-hunters as cannibals, he concluded by arguing that it was extremely likely that local accounts of cannibals were, for the most part, records of the raiding for "labourers" and slaves which he saw as the driving force of the destruction and devastation. (J. Cobbing "Grasping the Nettle", p.15.) Also casting doubt on may accounts of cannibalism at this time, John Wright has argued that many of the so-called cannibal bands "were probably bandits". (J. Wright "Political Transformations in the Thukela-Mzimkhulu Region in the Late Eighteenth and Early nineteenth Centuries", in C. Hamilton (ed.) *The Mfecane Aftermath*, p.176.)

[114] H.T. Wangemann, *Die Menschenfresser im Bapedilande*, Berliner Missionstraktate, Neue Folge, Nr. V, Dritte Auflage, Berlin, Selbstverlag des Missionhauses, 1883 [1. Auflage, 1871, 2. Auflage, 1876] and *Gerettete Menschenfresser in Botshabelo*, Berliner Missionstraktate, Neue Folge, Nr. VI, Dritte Auflage, Berlin, Selbstverlag des Missionhauses, 1883 [1. Auflage, 1871].

They would also have influenced the way that they taught the probationary missionaries, such as Koen, Meister and Wessmann, who served under them in the area.

According to Merensky and Wangemann, as a result of the wars of Shaka and Mzilikazi during the first decades of the nineteenth century, many "tribes" were broken up. Starting in the south, the disruption and devastation moved further northwards. The scattered refugees living in mountains and other places of refuge were forced into cannibalism in order to survive. As the dislocation spread further northwards, so did cannibalism. In the lands of the Pedi, cannibals were referred to as "*Makchema*", that is, "biters". They formed raiding bands who usually captured people who were alone but, when they felt strong enough, also attacked villages, taking captives who were subsequently either eaten or incorporated into their bands.[116] In making "human flesh their food, ...what they first did out of need, they later did out of enjoyment."[117] To make matters worse, in the lands of the BaPedi, another "band of blacks", the "*Makchalakana a masoanya*", came from the north. Armed with firearms, which they had possibly obtained from the Portuguese, they "robbed, murdered and plundered", adding "new horrors" to the hardships already suffered by the remaining people.[118]

In a description that was obviously influenced as much (if not mostly) by European pre-conceptions about the nature of cannibal bands as by whatever his informants told him, Wangemann described the *Makchema* in considerable detail. Right from the outset, it is clear that this was to be no dispassionate, academic account. Instead, he argued that the tales that were told about the life of the *Makchema* illustrated "that once Satan has begun his work, there is no stopping it, so that Man, the mirror of God, sinks deep, deep into the bestiality of the beast."[119] This, he asserted, was illustrated by the reports of his informants that "for a time, the Makchema did not bury their dead, they ate them." They did not regard their captives as "people - they were their cattle, sheep and goats, from

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[115] A. Merensky *Die Menschenfresserei in Afrika*.
[116] *Ibid.* pp.5-6 and H.T. Wangemann *Die Menschenfresser im Bapedilande*, pp.2-3 & 12-13.
[117] H.T. Wangemann, *Die Menschenfresser im Bapedilande*, p.3.
[118] *Ibid.* p. 12.
[119] *Ibid.* pp.13-14.

whom they lived." People who fell prey to these raiders were either strangled with a *riem* or had a sharpened stake pushed through their body from the rectum. They were then cooked and eaten.[120]

In describing what he saw as their nasty, brutish and, often, short lives, he completely de-humanised and brutalised them. Paternal bonds were depicted as being non-existent, with children in danger of being eaten by their own fathers. Skulls and other remains of their victims were treated as utilitarian objects, such as drinking bowls and children's toys. In a statement which would later be echoed Ellenberger's account, human fat was used as an unguent. Human flesh was ranked on a scale of preference for its taste, both by "cut" and by the ethnic origin of the victim. Normal social relations were either absent or distorted and captives were treated like domestic animals.[121] For years, the *Makchema* inspired terror in their neighbours. People were too scared to go out in the rainy periods to plant crops in case they were tracked and hunted down by the cannibals. However, even living together in villages did not provide much protection. Often, entire villages were attacked and plundered, and their inhabitants slaughtered or carried away as victims.[122] This only stopped once they were crushed by Sekwati, Sekhukhune and other rulers.[123]

All of the life histories in the tractates followed the same basic pattern. Informants claimed that they had been captured by "cannibal" bands. They then gave horrific tales of the life-style of the "cannibals", the terrible deeds that they were forced to perform and the horrors that they were forced to witness in order to avoid being eaten themselves. They reported that, in time, and to varying degrees, they came to accept this way of life. Many made mention of the suppression of cannibalism by Sekwati, Sekhukhune and other rulers. They stated that, while this prevented them from continuing to enjoy the "terrible meals" of human flesh, it did not remove the deep craving. However, in true Pietist fashion, the informants were gradually exposed to the Word of God. They then had a conversion experience. It is only with their conversion to Christianity that they

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[120] *Ibid.* p.12.
[121] *Ibid.* pp.14-15.
[122] *Ibid.* p.15.
[123] *Ibid.* pp.10 & 15 and A. Merensky *Die Menschenfresserei in Afrika*, pp.9-10.

completely broke with their terrible past and became "new beings in Christ". The depth of this change was demonstrated by the fact that, when persecuted by Sekhukhune, who had turned against the Christians, they chose their new faith over their people and their families and fled to Botshabelo.

In the eyes of the mission, the horrific tales of life among the *Makchema* provided ample justification for the occupation of Sekhukhuneland by settlers. Coupled with this, the transformation of the "cannibals" by life in Christ was a powerful testimony for the need for continued, and extended, mission work among the Pedi and other "heathen" nations. Even although local rulers had managed to suppress "cannibalism", it was only colonial rule and the "light" of the Gospel that would eradicate the practice totally.[124]

To come to the conclusions that they did, it is obvious that the missionaries interpreted the testimony of their informants in the worst possible light and were prepared to believe whatever they told them. Leaving aside the possibility that the missionaries completely invented the material, we have to ask ourselves why their informants told them the kinds of things that they did. While, as suggested by Wangemann, they may have been reluctant at first, they certainly became extremely loquacious once they got going.

Delius has argued that accounts of cannibalism in the lands of the Pedi at this time should be approached with caution. The practice was used in traditions as "a way of showing the dire consequences of the destruction of properly constituted authority." Missionaries used talk about cannibalism as "evidence which confirmed their suspicions that these societies teetered on the edge of barbarism." In marked contrast to the picture painted by these traditions and, particularly, the missionary accounts: "A close examination of the evidence suggests that it was restricted to relatively few groups who were principally distinguished by the fact that they secured their subsistence almost exclusively through raiding, and were thus seen as living on their fellows."[125] This convincing argument seems to explain the hidden messages behind many of the tales prevalent at the time.

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[124] See especially A. Merensky *Die Menschenfresserei in Afrika*, pp.10-11.
[125] P. Delius *The Land Belongs To Us*, p.24.

However, for me, it does not adequately account for what Merensky and Wangemann's informants told them. In my reading, there is a big difference between saying that "people were eaten" and testifying that: "I ate people." While the first statement may be interpreted as a comment on social dislocation, and missionary prejudice, the second is far more complicated.

The most obvious answer, and one that seems plausible, is that the informants simply told the missionaries what they thought that they wanted to hear. Asked to tell tales about "cannibalism" by white missionaries who stood in a paternalistic relationship to them, they presumably did just this, inventing and embellishing where necessary. Moreover, it is likely that they would have played on the horror and excitement of the missionaries and shaped their tales to get the best reactions from listeners who wanted to hear – and believe - the worst that they could tell them.

A second, less obvious, influence on the content of the tales would presumably have been the desire of converts to show just how far they had been transformed by Christ. One just has to think of pentecostalist revival meetings today. In presenting their testimonies of how they came to the Lord, few, if any, speakers will say that they were actually very nice people, living fulfilled lives, before they saw the light. In the overwhelming majority of cases, they had to defeat the demons of drink, drugs, violence, sexual perversion, Satanism or other self-destructive behaviour through the power of God. A few years ago, a student of mine who is a staunch member of a pentecostalist church told me in great excitement about the testimony of a former *muloi* which he had heard the previous night. This woman told a packed tent how she had flown to Johannesburg on a loaf of bread to strike her victims. Partly as a result of testimonies like this, membership of the church soared and they now occupy a huge hall instead of their former tent. They are even talking about starting their own television station. For me, one is as likely to confess to indulging in a *braaivleis* ball of human flesh as flying to Johannesburg on a loaf of bread. Similarly, if the audience wants to believe it, they will.

Added to this, a corpus of adventure literature prepared the missionaries to believe the accounts that they heard. These kinds of tales were also reflected in instructional material housed in the library of the Mission Seminary. H.J. Meyer's *Neues Konversations-Lexikon* was available there at the time that the missionaries who would record the case studies of "cannibalism" were studying in the seminary. It is thus extremely likely that they would have consulted it when studying. Here, early Greek accounts were treated with some scepticism. Nineteenth-century accounts of cannibalism in Africa were nevertheless portrayed as being "truthful":

> **Anthropophagi** (from Greek), cannibals, generally raw and wild, from the lowest levels of civilisation, who out of vindictiveness consume the flesh of their enemies. The lack of knowledge of the ancients about the geographical conditions and customs of the people of distant lands, combined with their searching after fables and what was seen as being marvelous in the lives of the people, led them to describe these lands as being populated by monsters and other strange hyena-like creatures... [So, the ancient Greeks] described the inhabitants of distant areas, including southern Ethiopia and half of Africa and Asia as anthropophagi. In recent times, one identifies the places where cannibals are found as the South-Sea islands, and also in Africa. According to [Paul Belloni du] Chaillu (*Explorations and Adventures in Equatorial Africa*, London, 1861), among the Fan ... human flesh is their main foodstuff and, because of this, even forms an article of trade; they do not only eat those they have killed and their captured enemies but also eat their own fellows who have died, yes, they even dig up bodies from graves to eat them... [The Caribbeans of the West Indies and some American Indian groups also used to eat people before their pacification.] Sometimes even in civilised states one finds people who, because of illness, have an inherited uncontrollable craving for human flesh. This is almost like the strong cravings that attack pregnant women. In the time of Cortez, ... the Spaniards witnessed Indian groups turning to cannibalism in times of defeat and retreat... Perhaps the most terrible example of widespread cannibalism comes from the great famine of 1200 and 1201 in Egypt, when thousands of people were scattered and eaten by cannibals... In the wars between the Ashante and the British, the captured officers and general Mac-Carthy were torn apart while still alive and their hearts were eaten by the king and his most senior officials... The last conclusively-documented case in Germany where somebody was killed as a result of a taste for human flesh was a shepherd in Berka in Weimar in 1770.[126]

The same kind of uncritical approach that the editors of the Lexicon showed to the material about the supposedly-cannibalistic Africans was reflected in

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[126] H.J. Meyer (ed.) *Neues Konversations-Lexikon*, 15 Bänden, Zweite Auflage, Hildburghausen,

Merensky and Wangemann's treatment of the tales of their informants. One should also not under-estimate the probable impact of the tractates. Wangemann's *Die Menschenfresser im Bapedilande* and *Gerettete Menschenfresser in Botshabelo* ran to three editions each – a sign of great success. Presumably his position as Director also ensured him a wider readership than that commanded by some of his subordinates. Similarly, Merensky's position as Superintendent would probably have increased his potential readership. In both cases, their position would also have lent credibility to their work. I have already discussed the large print runs of the tractates and the probability that they were used as instructional materials and consulted by missionaries before they went to an area. Merensky's specific target audience was Sunday-school children, the group most likely to internalise the bloodthirsty tales of African depravity and rebirth in Christ. Moreover, much as I hesitate in saying this, the tractates were written in an extremely gripping and lucid style and are difficult to put down once one starts reading them.

Against this background, I came to the conclusion that the only way of attempting to make sense of missionary (or any other) accounts of cannibalism was to contextualise them in a detailed case study which engaged far wider issues than the alleged consumption of human flesh. Moreover, for me, the most crucial task is not that of deciding whether or not the Vhavenda "really" ate bits of their enemies. In my reading, what is important is the fact that the explorers and missionaries said that they did. So too did at least some of their African informants. Rather than trying to look at which of the cases "actually" occurred and which did not, one may spend one's time far more usefully in deconstructing the missionary accounts and seeing what they tell us about the missionaries, the Vhavenda and their interaction. In a similar way to Luise White, one may set out to see the unexpected aspects of their interaction, not beneath, but through, tales about anthropophagy.[127] I have attempted to achieve this through the case study and what may be termed a strategy of close reading – a process whereby first

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1869, Band 1, p.833 (*Anthropophagen*).

[127] L. White (a) "Cars out of place: vampires, technology and labor in East and Central Africa", in F. Cooper and A.L. Stoler (eds.) *Tensions of Empire*, pp.436-460 & (b) *Speaking with vampires: rumor and history in colonial Africa*, Berkeley, Los Angeles and London, University of California Press, 2000.

readings are often counter-posed with second readings. In addition, following the lead of Gananath Obeysekere, I differentiate between cannibalism and anthropophagy, the former indicating "cannibal talk" in the wider context of contact and othering, the latter a complex ritual practice.[128] I turn now to this case study of the relationship between the Mphaphuli royal family and the Berlin Missionaries.

[128] See G. Obeysekere "'British Cannibals': Contemplation of an Event in the Death and Resurrection of James Cook, Explorer", in K.A. Appiah and H.L. Gates (eds.) *Identities*, Chicago, Chicago University Press, 1995, pp.7-32.

CHAPTER 8

THE MPHAPHULIS

The missionaries in Vendaland faced many setbacks in their attempt to win the hearts and minds of the local people and to wean them away from their culture and their ancestors. Due to the great difficulties that they were experiencing in making, and keeping, a significant number of converts, from very early on, they saw it as essential that they convert a *khosi*. They believed that only this would make conversion acceptable to society-at-large. Due to the ruler's central position in the life of his people, if they succeeded in doing so, his followers would follow.[1]

None of the Vhavenda *mahosi* of any significance converted to Christianity during the nineteenth century. Because of this, the missionaries did not go to any trouble to reconstruct the personal histories of the rulers before the establishment of mission stations in any great detail. However, Makwarela Mphaphuli was "the person whose understanding the gospel has come the closest to penetrating". Arising from this, the missionaries recorded a great deal more about his life than they did for other *mahosi*. They also collected oral testimony about his life from him and from his subjects.

BEFORE THE MISISON – MAKWARELA MPHAPHULI

According to missionary accounts, this "curious man" was born in "the large village of Meloane [Miluwani]" in about 1850. This village lay "in the vicinity of Georgenholtz ... on the summit of a thickly-wooded hill, hidden in a thicket and [was] approachable only by footpaths cut out" of the dense forest. His father was Masindi (Ranwedzi), "the son and sub-chief of the mighty Chief Pafudi [Ratsibi Mphaphuli]" and his mother was Matshekeketsheke, Masindi's "'great' (that is, respected) wife".[2] At the time of his birth, Masindi already had three sons by other

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[1] *Bawenda-Freund*, Nr. 54, 2 Quartal 1896, 14 Jahrgang, p.296 and *BMB*, Nr. 11 u. 12, 1880 [Jahresbericht 1879], p.211; Nr. 21 u. 22, 1880, p.413 & Nr. 23 u. 24, 1888, p.532.

[2] Before his accession to the throne, missionary sources refer to Ranwedzi as Masindi, his birth name. Ranwedzi and Mphaphuli were his name and title respectively after he ascended to the throne. From

wives. However, "as the first son of the 'great' wife, he was from birth destined to be the heir to the throne." As was (and still is) common for members of the royal family, Makwarela:

> spent his youth simply and it did not differ visibly from that of his age-mates. Dressed only in a goat-skin, he looked after the cattle with the other boys and took part in their many games, in which they practised for hunting and warfare. There he already outshone the others in his strength, skill and courage, so that none could compete with him. Because of this, his grandfather loved him very much and gave him preferential treatment, and it really was a special day for the young boy when he was allowed to visit his grandfather at his capital village.[3]

In this description, the missionaries clearly set out to demonstrate that Makwarela was superior to his contemporaries. In doing so, they presumably accepted at face value the oral evidence that they collected from his people. To this day, powerful *mahosi* are portrayed in such terms in oral evidence.[4] The missionaries were probably prepared to accept this version of Makwarela's childhood because it supported their argument that it was his superiority that made him the most likely candidate to lead his people in converting to Christianity.

However, as the account of Makwarela's early life continues, it becomes clear that the missionaries were not prepared to accept that his skills and intelligence were of purely African origin - they introduce the idea that Makwarela learned a great deal from whites.[5] Since these whites were not missionaries, the missionaries believed

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here on, mission sources refer to him as Mpafudi, Pafuli or Pafudi. I refer to him as Masindi before his accession and *Khosi* Ranwedzi Mphaphuli, or simply Mphaphuli, after he became the ruler. The missionaries record Matshekeketsheke as Matseketseke.

[3] *Bawenda-Freund*, Nr. 54, 2 Quartal 1896, 14 Jahrgang, p.288.

[4] For example, two years after the death of Khosi Mphephu, Life President of the Venda bantustan in 1988, one of my postgraduate students wrote a biography of him based largely on oral sources. His first draft portrayed Mphephu as having grown up in a way that did not differ outwardly from that of his age-mates. He was also described as having been a far better, and more conscientious, herd-boy than his peers, an able fighter and as having outshone them in his intelligence, understanding of life in general and feats of bravery. While I persuaded him to "tone this down" considerably, this kind of interpretation was still strong in the final (and successful) version (N.M. Makhari "A Biography of President Patrick Ramaano Mphephu").

[5] This account is reminiscent of the attempts by other authors to explain the ideas adopted by

that what he learned was both positive and negative. According to this account, Makwarela's grandfather died when he was about twelve years old.[6] Masindi (Ranwedzi) assumed the throne and took the name Mphaphuli. He appointed Makwarela "as the sub-chief of Meloane, giving him Nyamasindi, one of his wives, to cook porridge for him ... and to help him to rule."[7]

While ruler of Miluwani, Makwarela "learned to know the first whites." A farmer by the name of Thomas "visited the people frequently, taking a number of wives and living like a native." Mphaphuli "established relationships with him and gave him a daughter as a wife." He did not stay among the people all the time, and went back to live among the whites from time to time. Although he sometimes took Mphaphuli's daughter with him, she could not stand to be away from her own people for long and "ached to live a kaffir-life." Her husband would then "release her" to go back to her own people. Her nephew, Makwarela, was very fond of her and visited her both when she was living among her own people and among the whites. On these visits, he "learned a great deal from the whites, especially the use of firearms. He also managed to acquire a number of guns for himself."[8]

When he was about eighteen years old, Makwarela's father "gave him the mighty province of Nagabe" to rule:

> Here he built a large capital-village, took many wives and ruled as an independent prince. He depended on his father with the love of a child, while his older brother Tschekalanga [Tshikalange] hated his father out of jealousy.[9]

Dingiswayo in restructuring the Mthethwa as having been derived from whites. (See, for example, E.A. Ritter *Shaka Zulu: The Rise of the Zulu Empire*, London, Longmans Green and Company, 1955, pp.21-22 and J.D. Omer-Cooper *The Zulu Aftermath*, p.28. Cf. R. Edgecombe "The Mfecane or Difaqane", in T. Cameron and S.B. Spies *A New Illustrated History of South Africa*, p.116.) I was also extremely surprised to discover that, in his otherwise extremely Venda-nationalistic thesis, Nemudzivhadi raised the possibility that Makhado had learned the principles of military organisation from whites (M.H. Nemudzivhadi "The attempts by Makhado to revive the Venda kingdom", pp.22 & 50). So, this really looks like a topos.

[6] *Bawenda-Freund*, Nr. 54, 2 Quartal 1896, 14 Jahrgang, p.288.

[7] *Ibid.* p.289.

[8] *Ibid.*

[9] *Ibid.*

This introduces the theme of conflict between Makwarela and his brother which pre-dated the arrival of the missionaries.[10] Over time, it would play an extremely important role in influencing the relationship between him and the missionaries:

> One day when Pafudi [Ranwedzi Mphaphuli] was on one of his regular visits to Makoarele [Makwarela], he became sick and could not leave his bed for half a year. A rumour spread that Pafudi had died. ... in Bawenda custom the death of a chief is kept secret for a long time. Tschekalanga believed this rumour and thought that Makoarele did not want the death of his father to become known so that he could ensure that he became the ruler. Tschekalanga hurriedly seized hold of the capital village and through complicated trickery sought to win the support of the people for him and turn their hearts away from his brother. However, Pafudi was not dead. For a long time, he was treated by the most famous doctors from all of the neighbouring tribes. The one bled the "Great Lion", the other provided the "Clouds of the Heavens" with an emetic, the third provided yet another treatment for the "Light of the Earth".[11] The sick man continued to deteriorate, until he drove the doctors away.[12]

Both missionary and anthropological literature draw attention to the fact that the death of a *khosi* was usually followed by a succession dispute among two or more of his sons. These conflicts frequently resulted in warfare between the different contending factions.[13] However, in this case, reports about Mphaphuli's death were rumours. The account continues by stating that:

> All of a sudden, he appeared among the people again and kept up the following refrain: "See, see, see, here is Pafudi! He was dead and now he lives! And when he dies three times, he will still live again. You thought

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[10] For other accounts of the hostility between Makwarela and Tshikalange and their father's role in fomenting this (apparently to stop them from competing for his throne while he was still alive), see S.M. Dzivhani "The Chiefs of Venda", p.49 and J.R. Mudau "A Short History of the Mphaphuli Dynasty, 1689-1990", unpublished B.A. Honours thesis, University of Venda, 1990, pp.29-30.

[11] These were all praise-names of Mphaphuli's. See R. Wessmann *Philippus Thai*, p.3.

[12] *Bawenda-Freund*, Nr. 54, 2 Quartal 1896, 14 Jahrgang, p.289.

[13] See, for example, S.M. Dzivhani "The Chiefs of Venda", pp.37-40, 42, 44-46 & 49-50; E. Gottschling "The Bawenda", pp.195-221; M.M. Motenda "History of the Western Venda and the Lemba", pp.54-57 & 59-60; E. Mudau "The Dau of Tshakhuma", in N.J. van Warmelo (ed.) *The Copper Miners of Musina*, pp.75-76 & 78-79; H.A. Stayt *The Bavenda*, pp.17, 208-209 & 210 and N.J. van Warmelo (ed.) *Contributions towards Venda History*, pp.6, 12-15, 15-16, 20-22, 24-32 & 35-36.

> that Pafudi was old and had been vanquished by death. But you lied. Yes, he is young. But you will die and Pafudi will be young, even when your children and your children's children have become old. You wanted me dead and made Tschekalanga, the disgraceful, your king and ate my wives, children and cattle. Now, go to him, I want to remain with my son Makoarele.[14]

Makwarela has clearly been presented as the loyal son, deserving to succeed his father when the time comes. With right on his side, he and his father have countered the first serious threat posed by Tshikalange without resorting to the use of arms. As the account continues, Mphaphuli's temperament leads people to fear possible reprisals. In contrast, Makwarela's handling of the situation shows great tact and diplomacy and succeeds in achieving a temporary cessation of hostilities by all parties concerned:

> This sudden resurgence of the old [man] led to a great fear throughout the land. Tschekalanga [Tshikalange] fled with his followers and Pafudi and Makoarele entered the capital again. They allowed Tschekalanga to appear before them. After a long acrimonious discussion, Pafudi gathered his people together and gave them the following address: "You held me for dead because I wanted to be dead.[15] My heart grieves me that my people forgot me and my children fought for my kingdom while I was still alive, let me see who has been victorious and won my kingdom." A period of complete silence followed. Eventually, Makoarele said: "I do not fight with my brother, if he also does not hate me." Then, as a sign of peace, the old [man] slaughtered an ox which the two brothers shared as a sign of reconciliation. Tschekalanga received no further punishment. But the disagreement between father and son was only outwardly removed.[16]

Having demonstrated his filial devotion and skills of diplomacy, this account goes on to talk about a number of Makwarela's military campaigns, especially against the "Mabonja [*Mabunyu*], a tribe of the Kaalkaffirs" (Zulu, Swazi or Ndebele raiders). These descriptions reinforce the idea that Makwarela's courage and grasp of military strategy were far greater than that not only of his subjects but also than that of all the

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[14] *Bawenda-Freund*, Nr. 54, 2 Quartal 1896, 14 Jahrgang, p.289.
[15] In other words: "... I wanted it to appear as if I was dead."

other *mahosi* in Vendaland, including his father. In the interpretation of the missionaries, he was indeed an exceptional man among his people and was rapidly making a name for himself as a force to be reckoned with in Vendaland.

For example, shortly after the first round of the conflict with Tshikalange:

> came times of severe oppression. The Mabonja ... burst into the land plundering, murdering and scorching. The powerful Makato [Makhado] was defeated, one chief after the other suffered heavy losses until at the end they arrived at the village of Makoarele [Makwarela]. All lost their courage, the council members offered the advice [either that] the enemy be bought off with 100 head of cattle, or [that they] flee into the forests. Makoarele replied proudly: "Take my cattle, eat them and then flee." He armed himself and two of his most courageous comrades with firearms and barricaded themselves in a maize-garden. From there, he called to the Mabonja that he had been sent from the very terrified Makoarele as a messenger, to beg for peace with 300 [head of] cattle. By talking, he succeeded in luring the leader of the Mabonja towards them. He shot him down while his comrades in the heathen crowd were celebrating. The enemies had not yet seen a firearm, so they were gripped with great fear and fled.[17]

This courage inspired others. "In the meanwhile, the men in the village had plucked up courage and had shouted the Mokoschi [*mukosi*] (war-cry)." Within ten minutes, "all the men trained in the use of arms" had "gathered around Makoarele and engaged the terrified enemy, who fled, leaving behind 50 dead." Here he again demonstrated his great command of battle strategy. Makwarela realised that, in spite of the losses inflicted on them and their flight from the battlefield, they would possibly regroup and then attack again. So:

> at about midnight, Makoarele returned to his village from another direction, taking the enemy by surprise and once again putting them to flight. Then they could celebrate the victory feast and say to the old [people]: "Do you see, you wanted us to give the cattle to the Mabonja; is

[16] *Bawenda-Freund*, Nr. 54, 2 Quartal 1896, 14 Jahrgang, pp.289-290.
[17] *Ibid.* p.290.

it not now better, you are eating them yourselves."[18]

However, the victory-feast was destined to be disrupted by a messenger from Ranwedzi Mphaphuli. As the missionaries saw it, unlike his son, he did not have enough courage and enough of an understanding of military strategy to meet the threat posed by the *Mabunyu* honourably. Instead, he had made a cowardly agreement to save himself and his people. He attempted to force his son to support the enemy against other Tshivenda-speakers. However, even here, Makwarela's sense of honour and military strategy saved the situation:

> Left alone by Makoarele, the Kaalkaffirs threw themselves at Pafudi [Ranwedzi Mphaphuli], and he genuinely bought peace from them. One of the conditions of the peace was that he provide them with auxiliaries to attack the brave chief Lamondo [Lwamondo]. So fell into Makoarele's victory celebration the command of Pafudi that his son was to attack Lamondo together with the Mabonja. This he and his men were not happy with, so they secretly let Lamondo know that they would load no bullets into their guns, he only had to bravely attack the Kaalkaffirs and they would help him. So it happened. Decisively defeated and pursued by Lamondo and Makoarele, the defeated enemy fled.[19]

After detailing further brave actions undertaken by him, the account states that Makwarela's growing reputation for bravery and his repeated demonstrations of loyalty to Mphaphuli led to his father's sending him as an envoy "to the land of the mighty Matabele [Ndebele] king Lobengulu [Lobengula], on the other side of the Limpopo" in about 1874. In so doing, he was attempting to "renew the old friendship which had existed between Moselekazzi [Mzilikazi], Lobengulu's father and Pafudi."[20] Here, Makwarela "was received with all honour and entertained with feasts. He was astonished by much that he had not previously seen", including the "immense armies of cattle" in the royal herd and the large numbers of elephant tusks

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[18] *Ibid.*
[19] *Ibid.* pp.290-291.
[20] *Ibid.* pp.291-292. Mzilikazi died in 1868 (J.D. Omer-Cooper *History of Southern Africa*, Claremeont, David Philip, 1987, p.78).

in the king's possession. "Ten to twelve oxen were slaughtered daily" and the king "had so many elephant tusks that when their bearers formed a closely-packed chain, they covered fully half a mile."[21]

> But above all Makoarele was amazed by the whites who lived freely in the lands in subordination to the king and over all the equipment that the same possessed or manufactured, for example, the large, beautiful state carriage of the king, driven by a white coachman, and the beautiful harnesses of the horses. All these things that he saw made a deep impression on the young ruler and awakened in him a longing for similar power and regard. At Lobengulu's court, he also found an English missionary and this urged him to get a missionary for himself and for his own people. He may well have thought that a missionary was just the right man to give him all that he needed to be equal to Lobengulu. With a longing for a missionary, Makoarele returned to his kingdom.[22]

It is clear that the Berlin Missionaries saw this experience as a crucial one in shaping his desire to have the trappings of "European civilisation" and a missionary at his capital.[23] He was soon to be presented with an opportunity to bring this wish to fruition.

HOPES, "HOSTILITES" AND POWER

In an effort to test the ground for expansion of mission activity into areas that had as yet to see a missionary, Beuster sent Evangelists Paulus Luvhengo and Johannes Mutshaeni out on a preaching journey from Ha-Tshivhase in November 1875. They were accompanied by David Denga, who acted as their guide.[24] Yet again, it was Africans, rather than a white missionary, who would act as heralds of the new religion. *Khosi* Makwarela Mphaphuli "received them in a very friendly manner and asked them to send him a teacher." Spurred on by this encouragement, Beuster entered into discussions with Makwarela about the possibility of establishing a third station in his lands. The man that he found was not at all what he expected. With his

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[21] *Bawenda-Freund*, Nr. 54, 2 Quartal 1896, 14 Jahrgang, p.292.
[22] *Ibid.*
[23] See, for example, G. Sauberzweig-Schmidt *Klaas Kuhn*, p.14.
[24] Johannes Mutshaeni and David Denge's life histories are discussed in detail in Chapter 2. A short biography of Paulus Luvhengo is given on pp.158-159.

neat western dress and his keen intellect, he could not easily be fitted into any existing stereotype. "Makoarele himself was very obliging and friendly, and Bro. Beuster was astonished to find a more or less decently-clothed man, well-mannered and intelligent, with keen perception, in the middle of the wilds."[25] The *Khosi* stated that he was extremely keen to have a "teacher" for his people. He could nevertheless not permit this to happen without the permission of Ranwedzi (Masindi) Mphaphuli, his father and overlord.[26]

Already at this first meeting, it became clear that gaining access to the power of the Bible was locally viewed as being an important accomplishment. While Makwarela and Beuster were talking, one of the bystanders (presumably a councillor):

> reported that a Knopneuse [Tsonga-Shangaan] was living nearby - he could read the book and he gathered the children to teach them. Messengers went to fetch him. Makoareke [Makwarela] was surprised: "These people," he called out, "take up a (despised) Knopneusen into their community!" The Knopneusen tried to hide himself. But then he came forward with a beautiful Evangelical Bible and read out of it, in inarticulate tones as he tried to somehow imitate the sound of the English language. This book, he declared, he would not give up for anything. He regards owning a Bible as the equivalent of "faith".[27]

Prompted by Makwarela's expressed desire to have a missionary in his area, the first face-to face meeting between Beuster and Ranwedzi Mphaphuli took place at the *khosi*'s royal capital on 13 December 1875. In the following section, I want to analyse two published accounts of this meeting, both of which drew on Missionary Beuster's diary entry describing what occurred. The first of these was published in the *Missions-Berichte* for 1876. Due to the fact that there was some delay between information being received at headquarters in Germany and its publication, this may

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[25] *Bawenda-Freund*, Nr. 54, 2 Quartal 1896, 14 Jahrgang, p.292. (quotation) and *BMB*, Nr. 23 u 24, 1876, pp.397 & 400. Note that Makwarela, his dress and Beuster's surprise are expressed in identical terms in both sources.

[26] *Mitteilungen des Vereins „Heidenfreund"*, Nr. 18, 1 Juli 1887, V Jahrgang, n.p. (p.2) and *BMB*, Nr. 23 u 24, 1876, p.400.

[27] *BMB*, Nr. 23 u. 24, 1876, p.400. For Khoisan conceptions of the Bible as a source of authority and, through this, a way of gaining increased social status, see E. Elbourne "To Colonize the Mind", pp.247-248.

in fact be viewed as the contemporaneous account. The second, which could draw on hindsight, was published in *Mitteilungen des Vereins «Heidenfreund"* [which became *Bawenda-Freund*] in 1896. Since these two accounts differ very slightly, but in important ways, I would like to discuss both of them in some detail. My reading of Mphaphuli's actions and possible intentions at this meeting was influenced by Greg Denning's *Mr Bligh's Bad Language* (1994), his exploration of what he sees as the theatrical nature of the power-play and passion underlying the story of Captain Bligh and the mutiny on the *Bounty*. Denning argues that part of the key to unlock the paradox of why one of the least violent disciplinarians in the British Navy has come to represent the extravagant and violent abuse of power lies in Mr Bligh's "bad language". This term encompasses his vivid, abusive, ungentlemanly language, and un-officerlike conduct, arising largely from his "rage at how distant the wooden world of the Bounty was from what he ambitioned it to be."[28] In a similar manner, I deconstruct Ranwedzi Mphaphuli's "bad language" – his abuse, cursing and swearing, his extremely dramatic and stylised behaviour. Through this, I attempt to reveal some of the ways that the missionaries interpreted the performance, some of the message that I see him as attempting to convey and some of the ways that this reflected and commented on power, power relations and power-play.

The first account of the meeting with Ranwedzi Mphaphuli states that Beuster was accompanied by Paulus, Johannes and David, the three Christian converts who had visited Makwarela earlier.[29] The second refers only to Johannes.[30] I believe that this omission was deliberate. Johannes Mutshaeni was the evangelist whom Beuster came to trust and depend on the most, even writing a tractate about his life.[31] So, it would make sense that his role was emphasised the most. However, much of the more dramatic behaviour of the *khosi* was directed towards Johannes. In my opinion, this focus on Mutshaeni, and the *khosi*'s behaviour towards him, assisted in creating a strong impression that Ranwedzi Mphaphuli was a savage ruler, quick to take

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[28] G. Denning *Mr Bligh's Bad Language*. See especially pp.57 (quotation) & 59-60.
[29] *BMB*, Nr. 23 u 24, 1876, p.398.
[30] *Mitteilungen des Vereins «Heidenfreund"*, Nr. 18, 1 Juli 1887, V Jahrgang, n.p. (p.2).
[31] C Beuster *Johannes Motscheni*. See Chapter 2.

offence at the slightest provocation and not entirely in control of his actions. While this is suggested in the first account, explanations given there serve to mitigate this impression of the *khosi*. The later description was carefully crafted to leave no such room for understanding open.

The first account continues by stating that Ranwedzi Mphaphuli:

> was an odd person. Beuster and his companions had hardly sat down when ... [he] started shouting at Johannes. At first Brother Beuster did not take much notice of this, and he thought that it was just the way of the old heathen. But he continued scolding Johannes over and over again, becoming more vehement: his scolding became the most vulgar insults. The red eyes of the old man sparkled in a most sinister way, the spittle shot out of his mouth: he looked like a Satan. Eventually he jumped up, took a stick and lifted his arm to beat Johannes. Johannes warded off the stick. But this just infuriated the king more. "How dare you touch my stick!" With this he lifted his arm again; this time the caning was averted by some court attendants, who sprang between them and begged for mercy. This all happened within a few seconds.[32]

While the information given is basically the same, the more terse style of writing, and the more extreme language, used in the later account gives a much more dramatic picture of the behaviour of the *khosi*:

> Hardly had they sat down when ... [he] began to abuse Johannes. His words of abuse became even stronger until they were mostly cursing and swearing. The red eyes of the old man sparkled sinisterly; the spittle shot out of his mouth: he looked like a Satan. Eventually he jumped up, took a stick and careered around with this, although luckily turning the blows away [and not hitting anyone]. And the reason for this fit of rage? By keeping his jacket on, Johannes had not presented himself properly before the king.[33]

Both accounts continue by stating that the missionary felt that he could not tolerate this, and started to leave. The first account has him commenting: "What have you done? You are hitting my child! By doing that you have driven me away!" before

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[32] *BMB*, Nr. 23 u 24, 1876, p.398.
[33] *Mitteilungen des Vereins «Heidenfreund"*, Nr. 18, 1 Juli 1887, V Jahrgang, n.p. (p.2).

walking away. In response to this:

> When he had gone, the king and his attendants ran around the house to prevent them from leaving. The king stood in front of the missionary and shouted: "Don't go, *Mynheer*. *Mynheer* must not go! It is all just a prank! You do not know Mpafudi!"[34] His accomplices tried their best to make excuses for the king. With this, Beuster decided to return.[35]

Mphaphuli then engaged in a series of acts which he obviously intended to be read as performances making a point about power, power relations and power-plays. Since (in spite of being related to each other) Mphaphuli and Tshivhase were old enemies,[36] they were also obviously designed to comment on this. The first account continues by describing that:

> The king ordered food to be brought. Then he played on his *mbila*; when he had done, he got up and pushed it over so that it broke. After this, he sat down and, in his usual way, he started shouting. Beuster said: "King, my ears are hurting when they hear such words." The king answered, annoyed: "May they always remain sore. This is nothing!" He claimed not to be drunk - that was supposed to be a lie. But he had his dagga-pipe brought to him, and with the smoking he began raving again: "Schewasse! Schewasse! [Tshivhase! Tshivhase!] I am coming for you! I will smash you into pieces! Today, this very night, I will set your villages alight! Then he ordered Beuster to relate all kinds of compliments like these to Schewasse - Beuster politely declined to do so.[37]

In an argument which obviously reflected the fact that Mphaphuli did not trust Beuster because he was Tshivhase's missionary, the first argument then quotes him

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[34] Ranwedzi Mphaphuli was well-known as a prankster. According to Dzivhani's informants: "He once had a huge grain pit dug in which a whole complete orchestra of tshikona blowers could dance and walk around." At that time, Maphophe, the *Khosi* of Lwamondo, was a frequent visitor the Mphaphuli capital. On one of his visits, Ranwedzi cajoled him into climbing down the ladder into this pit, allegedly to inspect it. They both climbed down. However, without any warning, "Ranwedzi suddenly dashed up the ladder and leaped outside", leaving his friend below. He then hauled up the ladder with the words: "Today I have dug up a great medicine from the mountain. I shall simply march up Lwamondo mountain and occupy it. Whom shall I fight with?" Maphophe was not amused by this. When Ranwedzi eventually let him out, "He went away and never again set foot in Mbilwi." (S.M. Dzivhani "The Chiefs of Venda", pp.48-49.)

[35] *BMB*, Nr. 23 u 24, 1876, p.399.

[36] *Mitteilungen des Vereins „Heidenfreund"*, Nr. 18, 1. Juli 1887, V. Jahrgang, n.p. (pp.3-4).

[37] *BMB*, Nr. 23 u 24, 1876, p.399.

as saying: "Schewasse kills my children! You are living with him! Why don't you ask him not to do it?"[38]

Both accounts then have Mphaphuli accompanying Beuster out of the capital village and telling him that:

> You people say that we blacks will burn in fire! Nonsense, do you not see my black skin? This is not burned, it is black, but you are white, you will be burned!"[39] At the same time, the king made all sorts of gymnastic jumps and assumed all sorts of warrior-positions, pouring scorn on the horses of the whites, [and] singing the praises of his axe against these. He would take this in his hand and, with his speedy feet, catch up the fleeing rider and then with his strong arm cut the horse in two under its body. With this, to the delight of his subjects [who had accompanied him], he acted out the movement of chopping and the crashing down of the horse. The capital village already lay some distance behind the travellers, who had strode through a long, thick thorn-forest, the king was still with them; then he wanted to show them his pigs and see his workers.[40]

It was only once he felt that Mphaphuli had calmed down that Beuster was able to broach with him the issue about which he had come. This was the request of his son that he be permitted to have a "teacher" in his lands.

Mphaphuli would not countenance opening a station at his own capital. He nevertheless gave permission for the missionaries to open a station in the lands of his son: "Between us there is no conflict, you can teach when and where you want to [in his lands]; you can also tell my son that I have nothing against it, if he wants to believe in Jesus."[41]

What the second account omits totally is the explanation offered by Johannes of the

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[38] *Ibid.*

[39] In other words, a black skin is already black - it cannot be charred any blacker. A white skin can be charred black when it burns.

[40] *BMB*, Nr. 23 u 24, 1876, p.399 and *Mitteilungen des Vereins „Heidenfreund"*, Nr. 18, 1. Juli 1887, V. Jahrgang, n.p. (pp.2-3).

[41] *BMB*, Nr. 23 u 24, 1876, p.399 and *Mitteilungen des Vereins „Heidenfreund"*, Nr. 18, 1. Juli 1887, V. Jahrgang, n.p. (p.3). Also quoted in *Bawenda-Freund*, Nr. 54, 2 Quartal 1896, 14 Jahrgang, p.292.

khosi's behaviour later when the travellers were alone. This explained his actions in perfectly rational terms. Johannes pointed out that, particularly amongst the three great *mahosi*, there was a continual jockeying for power, status and prestige. On one level, he believed that: "the cause of it was most probably nothing other than proof that Mpafudi had wanted to show what a very big king he was; a king who should receive the necessary respect." Secondly, jackets or coats could be used to conceal weapons. It was customary to remove these in the presence of *mahosi* to show that the visitor or petitioner was unarmed. Johannes himself pointed out that Mphaphuli's "wrath against [him] ... was most probably because he had neglected to take off his coat when he had been granted an audience with the king". Paulus, who was a MoSotho from the Waterberg area, could be excused for this lack of manners as he did not know the customs here. But Johannes should have know the etiquette of the king's court.[42]

Showing Beuster's bias in favour of "his" *khosi*, Tshivhase, the *Missions-Berichte* recorded that "Tshivhase does not demand this recognition - everybody knows of him that he is a powerful, legitimate king who does not have to demand respect through swearing." More perceptive was Johannes' comment that:

> As for the insults which are meant for Schewasse, they were just a pretence. If Beuster passed on the messages, it would only result in the two kings re-affirming their friendship and the missionary would be the guilty one - he would be accused of fanning the flames of enmity between the chiefs, like all whites usually do.

However, in a phrase which could be read either as veiled criticism of the missionaries or as playing into the stereotypes which would be developed about Mphaphuli, he continued: "Besides, there are enough rumours about Mphaphuli's atrocities - that he tears out the intestines of his enemies while they are still alive, and other stories like this."[43]

With the benefit of hindsight, and a different ideological starting point, it is also clear

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[42] *BMB*, Nr. 23 u 24, 1876, p.400.
[43] *Ibid.*.

that Mphaphuli's decision to allow the missionaries to operate in the lands of his son was an extremely shrewd political move - it gave him access to the missionaries without allowing them to encroach into his area of authority. However, such subtleties escaped the missionaries as they did not fit in with their preconceptions about "heathen" rulers. Instead, in 1876, when there was still the remotest possibility that Ranwedzi Mphaphuli would change his attitude to the mission, the rational explanations for his behaviour were still given. By the late 1880s, when it was clear that he would continue to allow a missionary presence but would act to prevent any significant expansion of their activity in his area, he was portrayed as a savage, unstable cannibal king. Explanations of his behaviour were edited out or dropped and the stereotype was further developed to portray him as:

> a really cruel man, who took pleasure in a great deal of bloodshed and was often the instigator of battles between his two sons and their followers. He often had the bodies of fallen enemies bought to the capital village, where he defiled them and allowed them to lie unburied in the open country. Out of the bones of the same, he had war pipes [musical instruments] manufactured. From time to time, by his command, at great celebrations, human flesh was cooked together with the meat of oxen. Individual pieces were then placed in the thorn-bushes; from there his people had to take the pieces of flesh with their mouths and eat them, without touching them with their hands.[44]

According to the missionaries, because of the "gruesome events" which took place in this "heathen" capital village, it "was a really dark area." It lay concealed in the "midst of a huge, impenetrable" forest of bushes and thorn-bushes. There were many paths which entered into this but most ended in dead-ends. "Every visitor had to take a guide with him to show him the way." This was a defensive measure and ensured that visitors could not arrive uninvited or unexpectedly in the capital. It also obscured events in the capital from outside eyes. Beyond the consumption of human flesh:

> From time to time, huge dance performances took place in the capital village. Only respected men could dance, that is those who had killed many people in their lives. So one often saw how, to the thudding tones of the large war drum, old men and women turned round in the circle and

[44] R. Wessmann *Philippus Thai*, pp.1-2.

praised their dark deeds before the chief in song.[45]

Thus, in the missionary descriptions, Ranwedzi Mphaphuli's taking offence at a slight provocation, and his many transgressions - the spittle, the (symbolic) blood in his eyes, the jumping, the verbal abuse – over time, came to be highlighted and read as signs of cruelty, something that may not have been intended by Mphaphuli himself. Yet what he clearly used as a negotiating ploy, the missionaries essentialised. Turning a blind eye to the intricacies of court etiquette which still shone through in the first account, using hearsay against him to better construct Mphaphuli increasingly as "a really cruel man", a warmonger, and, worse still, as a "cannibal" – the quintessential savage ruler - was a deliberate ploy. In the missionary descriptions, the eyes give way to the mouth, reason to emotions and verbal communication to destructive action, until finally the *Khosi* is but a grotesque body, devoid of any humanity. On a symbolical level, the missionaries did to Ranwedzi Mphaphuli what they accused him of doing to others.

I have not been able to trace any photographs of Ranwedzi (Masindi) Mphaphuli in the published sources, albums or archives of the Berlin Mission. Regular readers of mission society publications would nevertheless have had a mental picture of the kind of person who devoured his fellows. An illustration of a "Cannibal" appearing on the back cover of Merensky's *Die Menschenfresserei in Afrika*, first published in 1895, clearly depicted the kind of skin-clad, muscular and fierce warrior that they could imagine sinking to these depths [see Illustration 52].[46]

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[45] *Ibid.* p.2.

[46] The remarkable resilience of this vignette by the artist C. Roux, and its successive incarnations in various guises, is discussed on p.279. While the Berlin Misisonaries were prepared to describe the alleged depradations and degredations of "cannibals" textually in great detail, they at least did not sink to the level of their Australian Methodist colleagues in the Solomon Islands at the beginning of the twentieth century. The later group staged photographs of warfare and cannibalism for the readers of their tracts. In Nicholas Thomas' interpretation, the viewer was "not supposed to be titillated by the actuality of these horrific practices but instead interested in the work to abolish them." (N. Thomas "Colonial Conversions", p.373.)



52. "Cannibal"[47]

Whatever they thought of Ranwedzi Mphaphuli, the missionaries were nevertheless able to act upon the permission that he had given them to open a station in Makwarela's lands. Klaas Koen, the missionary who would found this station, and whose life history was discussed in Chapter 2, was already in Vendaland preparing for his task.

Missionary descriptions of Koen's training under the direction of Schwellnus and his wife clearly reveal the stereotypes that they held about unconverted Africans in general and the Vhavenda in particular. They note that he "diligently and quickly learned the pleasant-sounding Bawenda language and studied the people and their

[47] A. Merensky *Die Menschenfresserei in Afrika*, back cover.

habits" of life. Koen "often crouched with the half-naked black people in their low, round living-huts and spoke with them about God and salvation." In these meetings, he learned more about:

> the depraved heathen nature. The first thing that they tried with him was shameless begging; also knaveishness was tried against him. With repugnance, he learned about polygamy - where, for the price of a beast and a goat (sometimes hoes, guns and so on are also used), even a nine-year old girl can become the third wife of an old man - or where the nobility use one of their young wives, kneeling behind them, as a back-rest.- Occasionally, war-cries emerge. But the rattling of spears, bows and arrows, and the shooting of guns, which have mainly been earned [from wages] at the diamond fields are always the main thing. But terrible atrocities are perpetrated by the chiefs. Some [subjects] who are found guilty of a misdemeanour are wiped out with their entire family and their possessions are confiscated. When twins are born, the second one is always killed, even when the first was born dead; ... All of these silly customs are fostered by the *Zauberer*, or priests, who pretend that they are in contact with the spirits of the ancestors. The ... [ancestors] take up their dwellings in animals or in other objects, and these are venerated like gods. Among one nearby tribe, a few apes are the gods, which are worshipped by the chief and his subjects.[48]

> At the same time, the disposition of the Bawenda is earthy through and through. They long after eating and drinking, jewellery [bodily adornment], cattle and wives; of spiritual matters they know and understand nothing.[49]

Thus, in missionary discourse, the "pleasant-sounding" language of the people was undermined by their "half-naked" state. This, in turn, was interpreted as a reflection of their "depraved heathen nature". This stereotype of a "pleasant" exterior masking a deeper "depraved heathen nature" would be expressed, and developed, particularly strongly in missionary experiences of, and writings about, the relationship between Koen, his colleagues and successors, and *Khosi* Makwarela. It is very clearly present in the descriptions of Koen's first meeting with Makwarela, and his first impressions

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[48] The so-called "sacred baboons" of Lwamondo.

[49] G. Sauberzweig-Schmidt *Klaas Kuhn*, pp.12-14. See also Letter: Missionar Koen an Direktor Wangemann aus Tshakoma, 10.5. 1876, also reproduced in "Aus dem Leben des Missionars Niklas Koen".

of him.

MAKWARELA – THE GREAT HOPE

Koen's diary and other mission reports of the first meeting between him and Makwarela on 13 July 1877 state that he received an extremely warm and "merry" welcome from the *khosi* and his people. An ox had been slaughtered in honour of Makwarela's MoSotho brother-in-law, *Kgoši* Magoro, who was visiting at the time. Koen was received "In the royal kitchen, which serves at the same time as the council-chamber, next to the fire on which huge pieces of meat were roasting."[50]

The fact that the meeting took place there, rather than in the *khoro*, the usual public space for such meetings, requires comment. On one level, it may be interpreted as a sign of the importance which Makwarela attached to the meeting and the trust which he was exhibiting in his future missionary. This is the interpretation suggested by Koen's account and the various renderings of this in mission publications. Similarly, at an earlier date, the first Berlin Mission Society delegation to *Khosi* Makhado, in May 1871, had "regarded it as a special sign of trust" when they were "led ... to the inner parts of the village, to the chief's house, where he and about 20 men were seated on the ground".[51] However, in both of these cases, it is also possible that the apparent sign of trust signified exactly the opposite -- that the *khosi* wished to keep these strangers away from his people until he knew more about them. This would also prevent their strange ideas from contaminating his people. The men with Makhado had presumably been trusted councillors and members of the royal family who were safe from corruption and also provided enough protection for him, should this prove to be necessary. In the case of Makwarela, this role was filled by his brother-in-law and, presumably, by other unnamed attendants and councillors.

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[50] Tagebuch der Station bei Ha Makoarela (Nicolaus Koen), 13 Juli 1877; *BMB*, No. 21 u 22, 1878, p.490; *BMB*, No. 21 u 22 1878, p.490 and G. Sauberzweig-Schmidt *Klaas Kuhn*, p.14. Note that Sauberzweig-Schmidt omits any mention of Magoro and erroneously states that the ox had been slaughtered in Koen's honour.

[51] *BMB*, Nr. 9 u. 10, 1872, p.160. This delegation had consisted of Missionaries Grützner, Beyer and Beuster.

Whichever view is more accurate, at this meeting Makwarela held lengthy discussions with Koen, during the course of which they fixed the boundaries of the station. The *khosi* also promised to build the missionary a house in the capital village.[52] Again, it is possible to read this as a sign that he wished to keep an eye on him. Koen was certainly doing this to Makwarela. Based on this meeting, and several which followed, Koen soon developed the following impression of the *khosi*:

> Makoarele [Makwarela] is a half-civilised Mowenda [MuVenda], he goes around neatly dressed in the European manner, has all sorts of household goods, some [of which] he himself skilfully manufactured, plays [the] concertina, possesses horses and learns to read and write quickly. He is intelligent, quick-witted, skilful and is interested in everything. One can have a far better conversation with him than with any of his people. He does not beg; yet he has many wives and is still buying more.[53]

For the missionaries, this "half-civilised" exterior masked a far darker personality:

> That he was nevertheless a raw heathen was attested to by two human heads placed on top of poles. Recently he had attacked a certain chief and killed him, together with his son. The heads were signs of his victory. Kuhn [Koen] argued that this was wrong and pleaded with him for them to be removed.[54]

Modern historians have managed to explain practices such as the display of the severed heads and the destruction of the corpses of enemies in more complex ways. For example, in the context of Shaka and the Zulu kingdom, Carolyn Hamilton has drawn attention to E.V. Walters' argument that Shaka's autocratic and harsh rule - frequently seen as a sign of his madness – can be interpreted differently as "the effective use of terror as a principal means of government."[55] In another intriguing, but at the same time profoundly disturbing, argument, in her study of the Aztecs,

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[52] Tagebuch der Station bei Ha Makoarela (Nicolaus Koen), 13 Juli 1877; *BMB*, No. 21 u 22, 1878, p.490; *BMB*, No. 21 u 22 1878, p.490 and G. Sauberzweig-Schmidt *Klaas Kuhn*, p.14.

[53] *BMB*, No. 21 u 22 1878, p.490 (quotation) and G. Sauberzweig Schmidt *Klaas Kuhn*, p.14.

[54] G. Sauberzweig-Schmidt *Klaas Kuhn*, p.14.

[55] C. Hamilton *Terrific Majesty*, p.18, discussing E.V. Walters *Terror and Resistance: A Study of Political Violence with Case Studies of Some Primitive African Communities*, New York, Oxford

Inga Clendinnen has looked at warfare, anthropophagy and the violence of ritual killings as forms of performance art intricately bound to the creation, maintenance and expansion of the state and social existence.[56]

Arising from the nineteenth century middle-class self-consciousness they were moulded to absorb in their training in the seminary, the early missionaries in Vendaland were unable to exercise these kinds of explanations. It was by attacking, not understanding and explaining, practices such as these that the mission would make advances. The picture of Makwarela's "pleasant" exterior masking a far "darker" hidden core was drawn from Koen's own contemporary writings and from other sources which used these as their primary source. They were not written later with the benefit of hindsight. Against this background, I feel safe in arguing that it reflected a pre-existing stereotype which was refined, rather than dramatically changed, over time. What changed over time was the missionary interpretation of whether or not Makwarela, like Koen, would be able to rise above his background.

In the first years of their sustained interaction with Makwarela, the missionaries believed that this would, indeed, be the case. In discussions with Koen after the missionary had permanently settled in his lands, Makwarela clearly showed his mastery of strategy and diplomacy. The *khosi* stated that he was not yet ready to become a Christian. To do so while many of his subjects remained unconverted would diminish his position as their ruler. He nevertheless had no objection to his people converting. Should they do so, he would have no objection to becoming the Christian King of a Christian people.[57]

As with the picture that the missionaries painted of Makwarela's life before their arrival, their accounts of the early development of Georgenholtz again depicted the *khosi* as an exceptional character - a leader of the people who outshone his subjects, his peers and his superiors in ability and application. In the perception of the

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University Press, 1969.

[56] I. Clendinnen *Aztecs: an interpretation*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1991.

[57] *Mitteilungen des Vereins „Heidenfreund"*, Nr. 19, 1 Oktober 1887, V Jahrgang, n.p. (p.3).

missionaries, he clearly continued to strive after acquiring the benefits of "European civilisation", as symbolised by literacy and the manufacture of "well-made European clothing". He was also perceived to be taking the first steps towards converting to Christianity. In contrast, while they sought after the same benefits, his people were not perceived as having the same capacity for application:

> The chief maintained his good opinion of the missionary and aided him whenever he could. He left his people in no doubt that he found it pleasing when many of them went to learn - and himself was the most regular at hearing the preaching and at learning in the school.[58] ... With great determination, he also learned to read and write. He also mastered the art of tailoring which, at that time, was unknown to his people.[59] ... To those who were enrolled as catechists under the instruction of the missionary, he presented well-made European clothing [which he had made himself].[60] ... Later, when other people were also taught by the missionary, he helped to show them how to cut and sew decent clothes for themselves.[61]

However, the strenuous efforts of Koen were often met with resistance. Despite the enthusiastic support of Makwarela, the spread of Christianity was an uphill task:

> at first, the preaching of the Gospel brought none into line. If the Gospel brought wealth and a life of luxury, all of the Bawenda would have fallen for it. But none of them had the desire to take up the cross. ... One day, one man in particular was extremely angry about the sermon and exhorted the others not to move away from the old customs. He frequently stated: "We are the children of Satan and want to remain so." That they listened to this "liar from the beginning" also shows that they often tell the missionary what he wants to hear, but without acting accordingly afterwards.[62]

In spite of these difficulties, by the time of Koen's first Christmas at Georgenholtz, the missionaries felt that there were strong signs that his work was beginning to produce an element of success. It even seemed probable to them that Makwarela himself was ready to convert to Christianity:

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[58] *Bawenda-Freund*, Nr. 54, 2 Quartal 1896, 14 Jahrgang, p.293.
[59] G. Sauberzweig-Schmidt *Klaas Kuhn*, p.15.
[60] *Bawenda-Freund*, Nr. 54, 2 Quartal 1896, 14 Jahrgang, p.293.
[61] G. Sauberzweig-Schmidt *Klaas Kuhn*, p.15.
[62] *Ibid.* pp.15-16. See also *BMB*, Nr. 21 u. 22, 1879, p.412.

> The Word of God ... found others who wanted to be taught [together] with Makoarele and receive baptism. The Lord assisted here by sending signs (Mark 16, 20).[63] Sick people, to whom Kuhn gave homeopathic medicines, were healed. When, in time of a drought against which the rain-makers had no remedies, he prayed for rain, the Lord sent rain. Through this, the missionary won the love and attention of the people from far and wide, and deeply dented the faith in the arts of the *Zauberer*. Makoarele still believed that the *Zauberer* could do something[64] but the power of the Word of God was also clear to him. Kuhn had to visit him in his home in the morning and in the evening, and even in dreams he occupied himself with the question of salvation.[65]

In December 1877, Makwarela related to Koen that, in a dream, he had seen:

> a terribly big fire filled with people in front of me. They were screaming and complaining piteously. On the other side, many people were sitting. All of them were extremely cheerful, praying, reading God's word and singing. I was standing entirely alone. The flames appeared to want to engulf me. I shivered in terrible fear. Then my father, Pafuli [Ranwedzi Mphaphuli], came running, screaming in his fear: "Save my son! Save my son!" Eventually, I discovered a small gap near the fire, fled through this and ran to those praying, pleading with them in my fear: "Help me, help me, in my thirst for knowledge I have merely learned how to read and write, I have often not heard God's word with a heart longing to praise him. Now I seek refuge with you, pray with me." They did this and I awoke. All people that I saw in my dream were blacks.[66]

Makwarela's dream demonstrates the kinds of tensions that the presence of the missionaries in his lands had brought to him and to his people. The pressure that Makwarela was under to convert is evidenced by the twice-daily visits that Koen paid to him. His regular attendance at instruction classes and church services would

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[63] "And they went forth and preached every where, the Lord working with *them*, and confirming the word with signs following. Amen."

[64] In other words, Makwarela still believed that the *Zauberer* had some power.

[65] G. Sauberzweig-Schmidt *Klaas Kuhn*, pp.16-17. See also *Bawenda-Freund*, Nr. 54, 2 Quartal 1896, 14 Jahrgang, p.293 and *BMB*, Nr. 21 u. 22, 1878, p.495.

[66] Tagebuch der Station bei Ha Makoarela (Nicolaus Koen), 23 Dezember 1877, p.28, in Berlin Mission Archives, Berlin, Acta der Berliner Missionsgesellschaft betreffend Missionsstationen: Tagebücher der Missionare auf Makoarela (Georgenholtz), Abt. III, Fach 5, No. 16, (I) [Box 1]. See also *Bawenda-Freund*, Nr. 27, Oktober 1889, VII Jahrgang, p.86 & Nr. 54, 2 Quartal 1896, 14 Jahrgang, p.293; *BMB*, No. 21 u 22, 1878, pp.495-496; G. Sauberzweig-Schmidt *Klaas Kuhn*, p.17 and G. Sauberzweig-Schmidt *Georgenholtz im Lande der Bawenda*, Neue Missionsschriften Nr. 33, Berlin, Buchhandlung der evangelischen Missionsgesellschaft, 1891, p.8.

have increased this pressure significantly. As shown by Mphaphuli's comments to Beuster at their first meeting about blacks being "burned in fire", the local people clearly associated the missionaries with their teachings about the fires of hell. Indeed, the missionaries taught that this was the fate of "heathens" and the godless in general [see Illustration 53].[67]



53. "Khathulo ya Muita-Zwivhi"[68]
["Judgement of a Sinner"]
The idea of the fires of hell is a recurrent theme in evangelical preaching to this day. The picture of the "Judgment of a Sinner" shows that the way to the light of heaven lies through following the ten commandments. The way to the fires of hell lies through strong drink and love of earthly riches.

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[67] *BMB*, Nr. 11 u 12, 1899 [Jahresbericht 1898], p.249.

[68] J.R. Gshwend *Mbilu ya Muthu*, Pretoria, All Nations Gospel Publishers, n.d., p.28. Note that the picture in the English version, *The Heart of Man*, contains the same elements as this but the fires of hell are less dramatically depicted. The figures of the dying sinner and his grieving friends are also white, rather than Africans. The tract has been distributed in Vendaland by All nations Gospel Publishers since 1936. While it is possible that it was used locally by other missionaries before this, I have as yet been unable to find evidence of this. Having its origins in a booklet first published in France in 1732, this tract was also produced by J. Gossner as *Das Herz des Menschen, ein Tempel oder Werkstätte Satans. In zehn Sinnbilder*, Bielefeld, Evangelisch-Lutherische Gebets-Gemeinschaften, 52nd edition, 1999 and *The Mirror of the Heart, Commonly called the Heart Book*, translated from the Canarese, Mangalore, Basel Mission Press, 3rd. edition, 1870. For a discussion of this work, see A. Kirkaldy and A. Wirz "Picturing the soul", pp.26-29.

Moving to the content of the dream itself, not only was Makwarela in fear of damnation but his father was already lost. This consigning of his father to the fires of hell struck at the very root of the religious charter which supported Vhavenda society. The position of the *mahosi* as the religious leaders of their people, the rites and ceremonies attached to their office, the *musanda* language used in royal circles and the patterns of behaviour adopted by subjects in their presence set them apart from ordinary mortals. Moreover, their role as protectors of their communities and final arbiters of the fate of their subjects did not stop with death.[69] Consigning Mphaphuli to the fires of hell thus affected his whole community, not just those of the existing generation but also those of the generations still to come.

From the perspective of the dream, the only solution lay in the wholehearted acceptance of Christianity. Learning the new ways of the whites - as exemplified by reading and writing - was not enough. Makwarela, and his people, would have to leave this past and accept life in Christ and the prayers, support and assistance of those who had already converted. In the view of the missionaries, Koen's successes in treating illness and his successes where the *Zauberer* had failed, reinforced this interpretation. Under such conditions, the dream reveals the great trauma that operation of the Berlin Missionaries in his area of authority against a background of increasing white penetration had engendered in *Khosi* Makwarela. The time was not far off when he would have to make far-reaching decisions about his own fate, and the fate of his people.

One is safe in arguing that Makwarela would have had little reason not to at least consider the possibility that his dream should be taken as a serious message from the ancestors or from God. As in other African societies, in local cosmologies dreams have been (and, in many cases, still are) seen as potential messages from supernatural forces or as omens portending good or evil to the dreamer and his or her

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[69] See p.334.

family or (in the case of *mahosi*) people.[70] Similarly, given Koen's background, he too would have had reason to analyse the content of the dream. In an extremely interesting argument, Elizabeth Elbourne has asserted that in Khosian spiritual practice, dreams and omens were seen as imparting messages from the supernatural to the natural world. Many converts to Christianity incorporated this idea into their new cosmology, seeing dreams as validating their adoption of the new religion or as a form of direct communication between the dreamer and God or Jesus. Moreover, this was an interpretation which was shared by many Evangelical Christians.[71] Irving Hexham and Karla Poewe have also pointed out that, in general, the Berliners "did not question the reality of dreams and visions in African conversion and Christian life." On the contrary, they saw "such experiences as genuine expressions of the work of the Holy Spirit, and encouraged their converts to report such phenomena."[72] Thus, even although I have argued that Koen had become thoroughly "Germanised", there was still room in his theology and in his world-view for taking dreams seriously.[73] It is also possible that, whether consciously or unconsciously, this may have resonated with various childhood experiences. He certainly took the dream seriously, asking Makwarela if he understood it, arguing that God was using this to "say the same things" that he had "already preached to him." In a similar vein, Makwarela's "brother Masiti [Masithi] also told him that the dream is very clear, all can see that it is the voice of God that is calling him." While Makwarela acknowledged that this may have been true, he also allowed for the possibility "that perhaps it was just a dream."[74] It was nevertheless very clear that the dream had

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[70] H.A. Stayt *The Bavenda*, p.362. Cf. J.S. Mbiti *African Religions and Philosophy*, Second Edition, Oxford, Heinemann International, 1990, numerous references.

[71] E. Elbourne (a) "To Colonize the Mind", pp.124-125 & (b) "Early Khoisan Uses of Missionary Christianity", pp.76-78.

[72] I. Hexham and K. Poewe "The Spread of Christianity among Whites and Blacks in Transorangia", in R. Elphick and R. Davenport (eds.) *Christianity in South Africa*, p.132.

[73] See pp.211-212.

[74] *Bawenda-Freund*, Nr. 54, 2 Quartal 1896, 14 Jahrgang, p.293. Masithi was an elder brother of Makwarela's. The missionaries recorded that he had come into contact with Christianity – and been "stimulated" by this - while working as a migrant labourer in the Cape Colony. For a while, Koen had hoped "that he would maybe be the first one of his people to be baptised." However, in the interpretation of the missionaries "the old man [Ranwedzi Mphaphuli] must have noticed this." In order both to tempt him away from Christianity and to make any possible conversion much more difficult, he appointed Masithi as a *gota* and, at the same time, gave him a second wife. The missionaries felt that: "The unfortunate one could not stand up against this temptation as well as the

"made a deep impression on him".[75]

The missionaries believed that it was clear that Makwarela "was caught in an inner conflict." This was clear not only from the dream but also by the fact that, at this stage:

> he often acknowledged in conversation that he no longer believed at all in the lying gods of the Bawenda; they [the Vhavenda] had merely been deceived and believed so strongly in these lies because they had been passed down from their great-great grandfathers and were tradition. He had learned enough of God's word to say that they were only fables.[76]

In the interpretation of the missionaries, Makwarela felt the truth of the Word of God deeply and seriously" but "the fear of diminishing his power and prestige as a chief" and his worries about "his many wives, the number of which he was always increasing, prevented him from seriously moving to convert" to Christianity.[77] He was also "not completely free from believing in" the "lies" of African Religion himself. For example, shortly after telling Br. Koen about his dream, "he told him that the rain doctor of Lowimbi [Luvhimbi] could really make rain."[78] However, in spite of these stumbling-blocks, the dream and the discussions which followed it gave the missionaries a great deal of hope that *Khosi* Makwarela was finally ready to convert to Christianity and become baptised.[79]

These missionary interpretations may also be read in a different light. An alternative explanation could be that Makwarela was in the early stages of formulating a

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fear of the rage of his very cruel father – he chose the world and seems to be lost for Christendom." (*BMB*, Nr. 21 u. 22, 1878, p.495.)

[75] G. Sauberzweig-Schmidt *Klaas Kuhn*, p.17.

[76] *Bawenda-Freund*, Nr. 54, 2 Quartal 1896, 14 Jahrgang, p.293. See also *BMB*, Nr. 21 u. 22, 1888, p.495 and G. Sauberzweig-Schmidt *Klaas Kuhn*, p.17.

[77] *Bawenda-Freund*, Nr. 54, 2 Quartal 1896, 14 Jahrgang, p.293 (quotation) and *BMB*, Nr. 21 u. 22, 1888, p.495.

[78] *Bawenda-Freund*, Nr. 54, 2 Quartal 1896, 14 Jahrgang, p.293. To varying degrees, all *mahosi* were regarded as having the power to intercede with the ancestors for, or make, rain. However, Khosi Luvhimbi was regareded as the greates rain-doctor of all (BMB, Nr. 21 u. 22, 1882, p.437).

[79] Tagebuch der Station bei Ha Makoarela (Nicolaus Koen), 23 Dezember 1877, p.29; *Bawenda-Freund*, Nr. 27, Oktober 1889, VII Jahrgang, p.86 & Nr. 54, 2 Quartal 1896, 14 Jahrgang, p.293 and *BMB*, No. 21 u 22, 1878, pp.495-496.

strategy which would enable him to attempt to solve the dilemma posed by his liminal position somewhere between "tradition" and the new order held out by the missionaries by bridging the two extremes in his person.

Whether or not Makwarela believed that the "truth" that Christianity taught was the only truth, he appears to have realised that abandoning "tradition" and African Religion completely would have shaken his society to the core. It would also have been an act of political suicide. I have already argued that "Heathens" often showed considerable "animosity" to those that converted to Christianity.[80] This "animosity" would have been greater in the case of a converted *khosi* than with ordinary commoners. Not only would his father not have accepted his conversion but the overwhelming majority of his people still followed African Religion. They would have demanded of him that he rule according to established traditions and beliefs. At best, his conversion would have divided his people; at worst, he would have lost his throne and possibly his life. Moreover, even if he had managed to retain power, or a degree of power, his continued rule would have been subject to conditions and constraints imposed by the missionaries.

One solution to this dilemma would be that of taking elements from both traditions and blending them together in a similar way to that which was later to be adopted by African Initiated Churches.[81] By the time that the first four adult baptisms took place at Georgenholtz on 27 July 1879, Makwarela apparently wanted both to be baptised and to rule as a "traditional" chief - to blend elements of Christianity with elements of "tradition".[82]

Missionary accounts of these baptisms record that, in spite of the great joy that they brought, Makwarela:

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[80] See p.143.

[81] See p.4, footnote 7 and p.353.

[82] G. Sauberzweig-Schmidt *Klaas Kuhn*, p.21. See also: Stationschronik von Georgenholtz, p. 1; *Mitteilungen des Vereins „Heidenfreund"*, Nr. 19, 1 Oktober 1887, V. Jahrgang, n.p. (p.3); *Bawenda-Freund*, Nr. 54, 2 Quartal 1896, 14 Jahrgang, p.294 and *BMB*, Nr. 11 u 12, 1880 [Jahresbericht 1879], p.211.

> was deeply saddened by these events ... He very much wanted to be baptised also [and had even chosen the name Elias/Elijah as a baptismal name]. He had begged to be baptised ... [with the words] "See, there is water; what is stopping me from being baptised?" However, Klaas Kuhn could not grant him his pleas as he would not leave his many wives and live with only one wife as a Christian. The missionary could make no exception ... [of the rule] for him.[83]

The Berlin Mission had even been unable to accept the more liberal attitude towards baptism held by Allison and the Methodists in Natal.[84] They were even more unable to accept the idea that one could be both a polygamist and a baptised Christian. As a man of his times and his calling, Koen had no choice but to take the stand that he did. Viewed in one way, this refusal to baptise Makwarela must rate as one of the significant missed opportunities for real intercultural exchange in the history of Christian mission in Southern Africa.[85] On the other hand, it may be argued that the

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[83] G. Sauberzweig-Schmidt *Klaas Kuhn*, p.22. See also Stationschronik von Georgenholtz, p. 1; *BMB*, Nr. 11 u. 12, 1880 [Jahresbericht 1879], p.211 and *Bawenda-Freund*, Nr. 54, 2 Quartal 1896, 14 Jahrgang, p.294. For Makwarela's choosing of the name Elias/Elijah at this time (a name he would never use because he was never baptised) see *BMB*, Nr. 23 u. 24, 1890, p.501. Elijah has come to be one of the best-loved of the prophets of Israel. Biblically, he is particularly remembered for his raising of the son of a poor widow from the dead, his challenge to the prophets of Baal to produce fire from heaven to consume their offerings, his condemnation of King Ahab because of his actions over Naboth's Vineyard, the consumption of soldiers sent to arrest him by fire from heaven and his ascent to heaven in a fiery chariot (1 Kings 17-22 and II Kings 1-2). The personality ascribed to him in Jewish tradition is partly human, partly divine. At cup is set for Elijah at the Passover meal and Jewish tradition states that he visits every Jewish home on the night of the Seder. At many Seders, the children and one or both of their parents perform a ritual of opening the door to admit the prophet. According to an ancient folk belief, retained in some versions of the Haggadah, Elijah will appear shortly before the coming of the Messiah and resolve all doubts and disputes. There are also many Jewish folktales where Elijah appears in a vision to impart momentous information or deep spiritual advice; appears disguised as a beggar to test people's generosity of spirit; or counsels, protects and gives material assistance to the common people in times of trouble (N. Ausubel (ed.) *A Treasury of Jewish Folklore: Stories, Traditions, Legends, Humor, Wisdom and Folk Songs of the Jewish People*, New York, Crown Publishers, 1948, pp.40, 47, 116, 158, 193-194, 209-210, 447-448 & 475-476 and E.D. Goldschmidt and N.N. Glatzer (commentator and ed.) *The Passover Haggadah*, New York, Schocken Books, 1953, see especially p.11). Significantly from the perspective of the local situation in Vendaland, Elijah also had the power to bring rain through prayer (N. Ausubel (ed.) *A Treasury of Jewish Folklore*, p.158). We have seen that not only did *mahosi* and some *dzinanga* reputedly possess this power but Koen also successfully prayed for rain on a number of occasions. Reading this is conjunction with some of the comments on African Religion ascribed to Makwarela, it is very likely a combination of this and Elijah's proving to the people of Israel that the God of Israel was the only True God through the acceptance of his sacrifice and the rejection of those offered by the Prophets of Baal that led Makwarela to chose this as his proposed baptismal name.

[84] See pp.146-147.

[85] See H.M Hofmeyr "Christian Mission and Colonialism in Southern Africa and African Responses:

missionaries believed that they were in Vendaland to teach and not to learn. They were thus not in a position to perceive their situation of contact with Makwarela as any kind of opportunity for cultural exchange. If one accepts this argument, then there was actually no opportunity to be missed.

However one interprets this, there were also much more immediate effects. In rejecting Makwarela in the name of what he saw as the One and Only Way, Koen brought into the open a tension between the leadership of the mission and the leadership of the people which had previously been hidden beneath the cordiality of their relationship on the surface. He also fomented a tension between him and Makwarela which had not existed previously and which would result in a clearer division between "Christians" and "heathens". In the interpretation of the missionaries:

> There followed difficult times for the young Christians at Georgenholtz. Makoarele took offence that he had not been allowed to be baptised. One should not be surprised that he was hostile to Kuhn; because as a chief he was not used to any dissent. He became a little cooler towards Kuhn; only attending church services infrequently. He nevertheless still claimed to be Kuhn's good friend. Nevertheless, he came more and more under the influence of his mother, who was a bitter enemy of the Gospel. She had become extremely wild when she had heard that her son wanted to become a Christian. On the day of the baptisms, she had said that she wanted to dance at the celebration and then, when Makoarele was also baptised, she would take her own life. Now she was very satisfied that he was for the present remaining with the customs of his father and requested him - not without success - to hinder [the spreading of] the Gospel.[86]

The missionaries argued strongly that, because of the pivotal role that the *khosi* played in the life of his community, this new tension was not restricted to him alone. In the interpretation of the missionaries:

> Many of those who had learned now remained distant because they saw

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Some case studies", in *Emory International Law Review*, Vol. 14, No. 2 (Special Edition), 2000, p.1056.

[86] G. Sauberzweig-Schmidt *Klaas Kuhn*, p.23. See also *Bawenda-Freund*, Nr. 54, 2 Quartal 1896, 14 Jahrgang, p.294 and *BMB*, Nr. 11 u. 12, 1880 [Jahresbericht 1879], p.211.

> that Makoarele had become half-hearted [about Christianity]. They started to work on Sundays again and all sorts of terrible heathen practices which had been allowed to fall into disuse were again practised.[87]

Because of this atmosphere of tension, the missionaries believed that "The difference between the Christians and the heathens became increasingly clear." In a vivid statement of what Koen saw as the wild, uncontrolled passions of the "heathens" as opposed to the controlled study, self-improvement and spirituality of his converts, on Sunday 5 October 1879, he wrote:

> Here at the station there is Sunday rest, over there at the heathens there is noise and wild shouting. There, from that kraal, a woman jumps wildly around to the monotonous music of their drums and pipes [flutes]; she dances and shouts until she can [do so] no longer and is completely exhausted. Then she becomes possessed by spirits and becomes the irrational lute for the expressing of what they see as a higher wisdom;[88] In contrast to this, the converts sit and read. Gathered in groups, they read their Testaments [Bibles] and exercise books, while here and there a spiritual song rings out. What contrast [between] here and there![89]

To Koen's dismay, in January 1880, Makwarela:

> celebrated, in heathen fashion, the festival at which the beer is consecrated. The beer which is brewed first (mokumbi [*mukumbi*][90]) is poured into a big wooden bowl. The chief puts some medicine (made of certain herbs which are first burnt and then ground) into the bowl. Then they all take a long, sharp needle and stab into the beer, and then they kneel around the bowl and drink of the beer. The chief and his mighty ones [councillors] start the ritual; they are followed by the men who during the past year have married widows; then the women who in the same period have lost children; then the rest of the people.[91]

In addition to this, the missionaries reported that the *khosi*: "was not satisfied with

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[87] G. Sauberzweig-Schmidt *Klaas Kuhn*, p.23.

[88] What is being described here is the *malombo* dance of possession by ancestral spirits – see pp.342-348.

[89] *BMB*, Nr. 21 u. 22, 1880, p.414 and G. Sauberzweig-Schmidt *Klaas Kuhn*, p.24. See Illustration 35, "Dancing Heathens" on p.303.

[90] This is the beer usually made from the marula fruit (*mafula*) . The fruit of the marula tree usually ripens round about late January or early February, long before the maize is reaped in April-May.

[91] *BMB*, Nr.21 u. 22, 1880, p.416.

pulling away from Koen. He already started to keep his people back - yes, he even frightened away those who were already baptised." Twenty-four of the twenty-five people who had requested baptism after the first baptisms at Georgenholtz were intimidated into withdrawing from their classes. Aware of the fact that one of his councillors, Mapatha was seeking baptism, Makwarela began to send him and others away on special errands on Sundays. He also "presented another candidate with a second wife, in order to keep him away from his faith." On top of this, he "no longer stopped his people from persecuting the Christians."[92] In missionary analysis: "Many heathens cut ties with the believers, hindered them and threatened them in bitter enmity."[93]

In the interpretation of the missionaries, Makwarela was no longer interested in "the Gospel". Instead "he was busy with different plans." Not content to make "himself miserable by sitting idly on the chief's throne," towards the end of the year 1881, he decided to "go and work on the diamond fields, even though he was a chief, and so earn himself an ox-wagon." Commenting on his decision to Koen, he reportedly exclaimed: "Why must I sit here? I am called a chief, but I am nothing. I just sit, drink beer and try to kill time. I want to see the world!"[94]

Hearing "of his son's brain-wave," Ranwedzi Mphaphuli sent a messenger to "report back the exact details, so that he could close that avenue if necessary." Makwarela had just left in the company of fifty of his subjects when the messenger arrived. His mother "knew how to keep the messenger occupied with much good food and other tricks – just long enough to get Makoarele [Makwarela] safely over the border." He and his party reached the diamond fields safely and would later be joined by three-hundred more of his subjects.[95]

Some months later, on 2 January 1882, Makwarela returned with a wagon drawn by

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[92] *Bawenda-Freund*, Nr. 54, 2 Quartal 1896, 14 Jahrgang, p.294.
[93] G. Sauberzweig-Schmidt *Klaas Kuhn*, p.23.
[94] *BMB*, 21 u. 22, 1882, p.436 and G. Sauberzweig-Schmidt *Klaas Kuhn*, p.24.
[95] *BMB*, 21 u. 22, 1882, p.436.

sixteen oxen. Although he had left many of his party behind to work, he was still accompanied by an impressive retinue on his return. As he drew closer to his capital, "hundreds" of his subjects joined the royal procession, ululating in welcome. Makwarela stopped at the mission station on his way, staying there until the completion of the afternoon service. Only then did he leave "to greet his mother and his wives." The *Missions-Berichte* reported that: ""The joy amongst his people at his return was exceptionally great. The old women danced and licked his hands and face."[96] Koen was also extremely pleased to have him back again as the *khosi* "greeted the missionary again as his old friend."[97] In the interpretation of the mission, he at least maintained "an outwardly friendly appearance towards the missionary", protecting him "against the torments of his people who, during the period of his absence, had often become really troublesome."[98]

Other events were also leading to the rebuilding of the friendship between the two men, for:

> at that time there was a great drought in the land. The *Zauberer* tried all their arts to make it rain - but in vain. Then the chief requested the missionary to pray for rain with the Christians. They did this and then, the very next night, came the long-awaited rain. This made a deep impression on the people. However, none converted because of this.[99]

The missionaries argued that it nevertheless did have an effect on Makwarela:

> At night, Makoarele [Makwarela] came to the church service again. Klaas Kuhn [Koen] preached about the "lost son" so powerfully that it went deep into his heart. However, he wanted to make excuses. He said [that] he wanted to accuse his mother and [his] council for turning him away from the Word of God.[100]

This thawing of relations apparently did not go unnoticed by some of the local

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[96] *Ibid.*
[97] G. Sauberzweig-Schmidt *Klaas Kuhn*, p.25.
[98] *BMB*, 21 u. 22, 1882, p.437.
[99] G. Sauberzweig-Schmidt *Klaas Kuhn*, p.25.
[100] *Ibid.*

notables. On hearing Makwarela say that there was still a possibility that he would be baptised one day, one of Mphaphuli's oldest councillors reportedly said to him:

> "Don't talk like this. We all know that one is easily overcome by God's Word if one starts to listen. This is why I don't want to hear any of it. But consider this: you cannot be chief if you are a believer ..."[101]

The councillor need nevertheless not have feared. While there would still be many times when friendly relations would prevail between Makwarela and the missionaries, things would never return to the way that they had been in the early days.[102]

With Koen's death in February 1883, Dietrich Baumhöfner "tackled the labour on the soul of the chief", which his predecessor had been forced by his illness to cut back on, "with fresh effort." From the paternalistic perspective of the missionaries, it was clear that, removed from the regular influence of Koen, Makwarela had begun to slip back from the position on the road towards conversion and salvation that he had reached. In so doing, he was again not prepared to stand up to his father and was prepared to use Mphaphuli's hostility as an excuse for his own backsliding. However, the missionaries still held out hope that Baumhöfner would lead him to convert to Christianity:

> First, Makoarele came to him to ask for medicine for one of his wives. Br. Baumhöfner showed him the punishing hand of God in the illness of his wife. Because he had recently taken this wife against Br. Kuhn's objection - he had told him that it was a sin to take more than one wife. By this deed, he had shown the heathens that he did not want to learn. Then he came with many excuses. His father Pafudi had said to him: "You must only dare to learn to read, but when I hear that you have become baptised and have to leave your wives, I will exile you from the lands; then [also] think that you have the children of the greatest in the lands as your wives." About the Sunday labour that he had caused to be performed in his garden the previous day, he willingly said that he would put a stop to this [and] said also that he had had pain in his heart about this matter all day, and would no longer have the people called for labour in the garden on a Sunday. When asked for permission for the children of the capital to be

[101] *BMB*, Nr. 21 u. 22, 1882, p.437.
[102] *Bawenda-Freund*, Nr. 54, 2 Quartal 1896, 14 Jahrgang, p.294.

> given an hour of singing twice a week, he did not do so. But he also did not forbid it. And he visibly took pleasure in the singing of the children and in the great honour shared by him when the young *Mynheer* came to him twice a week, also he heard when Br. Baumhöfner coupled preaching with the singing-hour.[103]

"So Baumhöfner gradually began to touch him." However, with his death in April 1883, missionary hopes for the conversion of Makwarela again receded. For the missionaries, the great worry remained what would happen to the *khosi*? Revealing the paternalistic importance which they placed on having German-trained missionaries, rather than native evangelists, in charge of stations, *Bawenda-Freund* recorded that, with the death of Baumhöfner "the congregation in Georgenholtz was orphaned, and also Makoarele was deprived of the direct and regular influence of the Word of God." Instead, they and he had to rely on visits "every now and then" from Br. Beuster.[104] They stated this despite the fact that, subject to the overriding authority of Beuster, leadership of the congregation had been transferred to Franz Maluleke, one of the Native Assistants who had been trained by Koen.[105]

Despite their fears about Makwarela's possible backsliding, the missionaries had to concede that he was "still as well disposed to the mission and to our Franz as he always was."[106] In their opinion, the *khosi's* strength of character and apparent commitment to conversion was also manifested in other ways. During the time of the station's "abandonment" from April 1883 to July 1887, Dr. Theodor Wangemann, the Director of the Berlin Mission Society from 1865 to 1894, paid his second and final visit to the stations of the Society in South Africa.[107] He also visited Georgenholtz on 11 December 1884 and had a lengthy meeting with Makwarela.[108]

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[103] *Ibid.* pp.294-295.
[104] *Ibid.* p.295.
[105] Stationschronik von Georgenholtz, p. 1; *BMB*, Nr. 11 u. 12, 1884 [Jahresbericht 1883], p.223 and G. Sauberzweig-Schmidt *Klaas Kuhn*, p.31.
[106] *BMB*, Nr. 11 u. 12, 1884 [Jahresbericht 1883], p.223 (quotation) and G. Sauberzweig-Schmidt *Klaas Kuhn*, p.31.
[107] Wangemann visited South Africa in 1866-1867 and 1884-1885 (M.I. Bressani (comp.) *Im Dienst der Mission*, p.63).
[108] Stationschronik von Georgenholtz, p. 1; *Bawenda-Freund*, Nr. 54, 2 Quartal 1896, 14 Jahrgang, p.295 (quotation) and G. Sauberzweig-Schmidt *Klaas Kuhn*, p.31.

In commenting on this meeting, *Bawenda-Freund* stated that:

> Dr. Wangemann was so surprised by his intelligence and distinguished appearance that at first he thought that he was a native evangelist, rather than a heathen. In this meeting, he showed himself to be very well disposed towards Christianity and was overjoyed when the re-founding of the station was suggested.[109]

However, even in Makwarela's strength, in their paternalism the missionaries saw signs that his commitment was beginning to weaken because of insufficient contact with a white missionary. It would be some time before the missionary spoken about in the meeting with Wangemann could be transferred to the station. In the meantime, Br. Beuster continued to visit "every now and then." It is clear that Makwarela did not count himself among the saved, or amongst those about to be saved at the time of one of Beuster's visits in the second semester of 1885. As the missionary left, accompanied by:

> the festively-attired, singing small congregation, Makoarele said to his heathen crowd: "hear people, in the days to come, the believers will be with their King Jesus, but we will stand there ashamed; I know all of this because I read God's Word."[110]

A relief missionary would come. However, for the missionaries, the question was whether or not this would be in time to save Makwarela. On 28 May 1886, Missionary Reinhold Wessmann arrived at Ha-Tshivhase and began the customary one-year's orientation with Missionary Beuster.[111] It would be just over a year before he and his wife would move to Georgenholtz to re-establish the station on 23 July 1887.[112]

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[109] *Bawenda-Freund*, Nr. 54, 2 Quartal 1896, 14 Jahrgang, p.295. See also *BMB*, Nr. 5 u. 6, 1885, p.76.

[110] *Bawenda-Freund*, Nr. 54, 2 Quartal 1896, 14 Jahrgang, pp.295-296. See also *BMB*, Nr. 21 u. 22, 1886, p.413.

[111] *Bawenda-Freund*, Nr. 22, 1 Juli 1888, VI Jahrgang, p.62 and *BMB*, Nr. 21 u 22, 1887, p.485.

[112] Stationschronik von Georgenholtz, p. 1; Tagebuch der Station Georgenholtz (Reinholdt Wessmann) 24 Juli 1887; *Bawenda-Freund*, Nr. 22, 1 Juli 1888, VI Jahrgang, p.62; Nr. 26, Juli 1889, VII Jahrgang, pp.84-85 & Nr. 54, 2 Quartal 1896, 14 Jahrgang, p.296 and *BMB*, Nr. 11 u 12,

While Wessmann was still at Ha-Tshivhase, as had happened in the past prior to the arrival of the missionaries in Vendaland, the tensions and periodic skirmishes between Tshivhase and Mphaphuli yet again "erupted" into open warfare. For the missionaries, events during this war would confirm their previous unflattering stereotypes of Ranwedzi Mphaphuli. However, despite the fact that Makwarela was an active participant in the fighting, the missionaries did not witness his direct participation in any of the other rituals surrounding warfare. This meant that, while extremely distressed by the violent nature of the conflict, they were able to avoid grappling with the question of whether or not Makwarela had any characteristics in common with his father. It was only later that they would engage issues such as this.

The first inkling that the missionaries had of events to come came when Beuster and Wessmann were visiting Makwarela and Georgenholtz on 24 August 1886. While with the *khosi*, they heard that Tshikalange had launched a night-time raid into Tshivhase's territory, "killing two men and two women, and stealing fifteen head of cattle." These cattle having been brought to the capital, Mphaphuli "accepted them with pleasure [joy] - the war drums resounded and the victory dance began." However, the celebratory mood "was slightly dampened" by the arrival of messengers who reported that, in retaliation for the raid, a member of Tshivhase's "commando had gone out and killed two of Mphaphuli's boys - not realising the danger, these boys had entered into Tschewasse's territory. The commando had also caught a third boy and taken him along with them."[113]

According to Beuster, it was commonly believed that there was worse to come and that Tshivhase himself would not leave the attack on his territory unpunished. The missionary's informants stated that Tshivhase had said: "Only fifteen head of cattle and four people dead - those are the games children play! Mpafuli's [Mphaphuli's] children are playing. I also have children; they also want to play." It also very soon became apparent that this was more than mere talk and that Tshivhase or his sons

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1888 [Jahresbericht 1887], p.223; Nr. 23 u 24, 1888, pp.530-531 & Nr. 21 u 22, 1889, p.543.

[113] *BMB*, Nr. 21 u. 22, 1887, p.486.

would put threats into action and launch a revenge attack. [114]

Three days after the attack by Tshikalange's commando, when Beuster and Wessman were on their way back to Ha-Tshivhase from Georgenholtz, they heard that Tshivhase's son Mahwasane, whose territory bordered Mphaphuli's, had launched a raid into the latter's territory. First reports were that five people had been killed and seven captured. As more details emerged during the next couple of days, it became clear that one of the men killed had been the *gota* [*Kraalhäuptlings*] of the village attacked. Other dead included three women and a number of children. Among those captured was at least one wounded child. This child had been carried as far as the boundary between Mphaphuli and Tshivhase territory. "That was when several scoundrels expressed the opinion that this child of the enemy would find no-one to take care of it; it would be better if one were to bludgeon it to death. And that is what was then also done."[115] In Beuster's opinion, this "dog-like cowardice" on the part of the raiders was also illustrated when the brother of the slain *gota*:

> chased away the whole commando. Even, when he shouted after them "cowards!" - a dreadful insult to them - not one of them dared to confront this one solitary man. It was only not so long ago, on the way to Tschilindi [Tshilindi], that I had come to know the man who had been killed during this raid. "We will most probably now see one another more often," those were my last words to this man.[116]

Faced with the escalating conflict, the missionaries attempted to negotiate, if not peace, at least some lessening of the degree of violence. Visiting Mphaphuli's[117] capital village at the beginning of November 1886, Beuster and Wessmann "were shown a dead man who had already been left lying in the bushes for two days, so that the smell from the body reached the area where we had our meeting." After the raid, he had been carried back to Mphaphuli, as proof of the victory. Beuster asked that the man be buried. However, it was explained to him "that one could not give an

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[114] *Ibid.*
[115] *Ibid.*
[116] *Ibid.* p.487.

honourable funeral to one of the enemy." Moreover, while the person killed lived in Tshivhase's area, his father lived in Mphaphuli's territory. Although he "longed for the body of his dead son", this was not handed over to him. Nevertheless, in what Beuster saw as an attempt by Mphaphuli to mollify him, the body was not hung "up in a tree, as one usually does". Instead, it was "thrown into a hole which had earlier served as a storage pit for maize."[118]

While Beuster focused on what he saw as the horror of the events which followed, without minimising the feelings that they engender, I would like to argue that they were also deeply symbolic. Participation in the most dramatic roles of the ritual performance was not open to anyone. The central role was played by the *khosi*, ruler of the people and the link between the living and the ancestors. His main assistants were people who had gained respect by their age, and (either directly or implicitly) their courage and their prowess in warfare. It seems that having killed an enemy in warfare was a prerequisite for taking part. At the very least, judging by the age of the participants, one had to have considerable experience of warfare:

> In the meantime, the war drums resounded. The chief and an old, abominable-looking and even more abominably gesticulating woman - who was supposed to have once stoned to death two of the enemy, during a war - these two, together with several old men, danced a wild war-dance. We heard people singing war songs approaching from the distance. [119]

The big war drum which played a central role in the drama is reminiscent of *Ngoma-lungundu* (the drum of Mwali), the legendary sacred object, protective force and secret weapon of the VhaSenzi during their migration southwards into the Nzhelele Valley.[120] Since the Mphaphulis traced their origins to this lineage, it is likely that the symbolism was deliberate. In addition, the actions performed with the severed

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[117] Recorded both as as "Pafudi" and "Mpafuli" in the same description. "Mpafuli" predominates, so it is likely that this is the version that Beuster and the *Missions-Berichte* were attempting to use but they sometimes slipped into the earlier version.

[118] Tagebuch der Station Ha Tsĕvase (Carl Beuster), 13 November 1886, pp.46-47. See also *BMB*, Nr. 21 u. 22, 1887, p.487.

[119] Tagebuch der Station Ha Tsĕvase (Carl Beuster), 13 November 1886, p.47. See also *BMB*, Nr. 21 u. 22, 1887, p.487.

[120] See p.61.

hand of the dead enemy warrior may be interpreted as an allusion to the origins of the name Mphaphuli - "the hacker off of hands" – adopted after the founding ancestor of the group saved himself from being killed in a plot by hacking off the hand of his intended assassin.[121] The purportedly less concealed symbolism of the actions performed was explained by Beuster:

> The big war-drum immediately resounded and, with our own eyes, we had to see how a wild [savage] warrior jumped about in front of the war-drum. In the one hand he had his weapon and in the other, tied to a long stick, he had the hand of a slain enemy; the hand of the wounded person who had been murdered the previous day. The body itself, tied to stakes, was brought into the court-yard. The big war-drum was dragged to where the body was and wild [savage] dances were performed there. Mpafuli [Mphaphuli] himself, stepped over his conquered [dead] foe and sat down on his chest, while the dancing warriors surrounded him. Then he suddenly shot up, tearing through the yard with enormous leaps; he pointed his bow and arrow in various directions, as a sign that his foes in

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[121] According to oral evidence collected by Dzivhani in the 1930s and Ralushai in the 1960s and 1970s, the name and title of Mphaphuli originated in the intrigues of local politics and sporadic warfare surrounding the disintegration of the Dzata empire during the second half of the eighteenth century. During the late 1850s or early 1860s, one of the claimants to the throne of the disintegrating Dzata emipre was Ragavheli. In an effort to obtain supernatural protection against seizure of the throne by either his brother, Rasituu [also written as Rasithu], or Tshivhase, he was sent to Ha-Kekana accompanied by Tshilala, Ramugondo and a Lemba. On their arrival at Kekana's settlement, Ragavheli, Tshilala and Ramugondo remained outside. The Lemba man was sent inside to state their purported business. Since their real aim was to kill Kekana and use parts of his body to make the necessary medicine, he was supposed to concoct a story about what they wanted. Instead, Kekana became suspicious and promised the Lemba man a beast if he would tell him the truth. After some cross-questioning, he told the whole story to Kekana. The latter then plotted to have Ragavheli, Tshilala and Ramugondo killed. They were given mats to sit on. In doing so, they put down their arms. On the *khosi*'s order, the group was attacked. Ragavheli, whose physical features had been described by the Lemba, was killed. Ramugondo was stabbed in the shoulder, but managed to escape. He then praised himself by stating: "I am the news amongst the tribes, The child that returns with the spear in its shoulders." In the continuing confusion, Tshilala grabbed a battle axe, hacked off a man's hand and fled with the remaining people. He chanted the praises:
I am Mr. Dodge-hither-and-thither
The bird that has escaped from the lime-rod
Who hacked off the hand of a person.

This is how the name Mphaphuli, which means "Hacker off [of a man's hand]", originated. (S.M. Dzivhani "The Chiefs of Venda", pp.38 (quotation) & 39 and N.M.N. Ralushai "Conflicting Accounts of Venda History", p.164. See also H. Giesekke *History of the Western Soutpansberg*, Privately printed by the author and Norbert Hahn, Louis Trichardt, August 1988, p.9 and E.K. Lukhaimane "A short history of the Venda", p.13.) Dzivhani and Lukhaimane argue that Tshilala, Ragavheli and Ramugondo were brothers. Ralushai merely gives their names but does not state that they were brothers. Giesekke argues that Tshilala was Ragavheli's uncle and Ramugondo was his bodyguard.

> that direction would quickly meet with the same fate. In all the time that I have been missionary amongst these heathens, I have never before experienced such a horrible, awful sight as this. Who would have thought that such conditions would once again return to here. [122]

The majority of the local people clearly did not share Beuster's revulsion at the events that were taking place. Following normal custom, they offered their visitors food to eat. However, Beuster and Wessmann declined this "because one cannot eat when the heart aches so much!" While no accompanying Native Assistants were mentioned in the text, one presumes that the two missionaries were accompanied by at least one assistant, who similarly declined the proffered meal. The only local opposition appears to have come from "An old grey-haired woman, who was almost bent over double, but who had clear beautiful eyes," who "dared to scold the men who stood around; they were bad-mannered and cruel." When Beuster "agreed with her", he was "contradicted".[123] His response was to tell them what he clearly saw as a few home truths about their character. In his opinion, not only were they taking part in these terrible events but they had no real loyalty to their rulers either. For the moment, they were prepared to support Mphaphuli. However, Tshivhase was the more powerful of the two leaders. When it came to the real power crunch, people would save themselves by shifting their allegiance to the most likely victor. Thus, in his interpretation, many of Mphaphuli's people would walk over to Tshivhase. Beuster recorded that he:

> told them straight to their faces that they were frauds [*Augendiener*]; [124] that they were overcome with fear for people; at the next opportunity, as deserters who walked over to Tschewasse [Tshivhase], they would say the same thing against Mpafuli [Mphaphuli] - those things which they have today shouted out against Tschewasse, with their big mouths, declaring it to be the absolute truth. This did not seem to make them feel very ashamed, but they felt that it was the truth. The First Lady of the Chief,

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[122] Tagebuch der Station Ha Tsĕvase (Carl Beuster), 13 November 1886, pp.47-48. See also *BMB*, Nr. 21 u. 22, 1887, p.487.

[123] Tagebuch der Station Ha Tsĕvase (Carl Beuster), 13 November 1886, p.48. See also *BMB*, Nr. 21 u. 22, 1887, p.488.

[124] In other words, people who put on a front for others to see - window-dressers.

> Ndûnge [Denga?], wanted to maintain that Tschewasse was the disturber of the peace, but I did not agree with her, and she remained silent.[125]

Mphaphuli and Makwarela were clearly not too disturbed by these statements, probably seeing them as the kind of talk that could be expected from the missionary. As recorded by Beuster, when he and Wessmann departed, in the company of Makwarela, the prince told them that:

> we would not be able to say goodbye to his father: as a result of the strenuous dancing, he [Mphaphuli] was once again experiencing great pain in the arm which has for quite some time now already been sore. He asked for medicine and said he still wanted to send me a special message through the messenger who would be bringing the medicine back to him. On the return journey, we still bandaged up a wounded baby [*Säugling*][126] who had been stabbed through the arm and who had an additional wound on the back. We are hopeful that this child will survive. We arrived home at three clock [15H00], where I held the second church service.[127] After this service we celebrated Holy Communion in quiet peace. Never before in my life, have I experienced so vividly, so palpably, the contrast between the delusion and lack of peace of the godless, and the divine peace of God's children in this temporal [earthly] life.[128]

This was reportedly not the end of the matter. The *Missions-Berichte* reported that "Beuster later heard that all sorts of wanton things were done to the body of the dead person in spite of his request." Updating his original diary entry, the published version contained Beuster's addition that:

> It is said that after my departure, Mphaphuli had disfigured and smashed the corpse which I had asked to be buried. He had constructed pipes [flutes] from the bones of this victim, which will drive away and destroy the enemy, when they are blown during the war. They had heard that this man who had been killed had been a respected man, an artist in all sorts of iron crafts. Because of this, his body was valuable as it had been attributed with special powers and abilities; an opportunity too good to be missed. Moreover, the witch-doctor, Magoro, is ardently hoping that during a fresh

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[125] Tagebuch der Station Ha Tsĕvase (Carl Beuster), 13 November 1886, p.48. See also *BMB*, Nr. 21 u. 22, 1887, p.488.

[126] A child who has not yet been weaned , in other words, a child who is below two years of age.

[127] In other words, the evening church service.

[128] Tagebuch der Station Ha Tsĕvase (Carl Beuster), 13 November 1886, pp.48-49. See also *BMB*, Nr. 21 u. 22, 1887, p.488.

> attack, a warrior of royal blood will fall into his hands, so that he can make a piece of clothing for himself from this person's skin; clothing which would protect him from all danger and which would endow him with supernatural powers. In the end he had to return to his home-land, without having fulfilled this wish.[129]

Having failed in his endeavour to talk Mphaphuli and Makwarela into accepting the need for peace, Beuster decided to go to Tshivhase and use the accusations that they had levelled against the latter as a starting point for talking about peace. In the missionary's interpretation, Makwarela and Mphaphuli had: "tried to justify the atrocities they had committed by putting the blame for the whole disaster onto Schewasse [Tshivhase] - it was only as a result of Schewasse not sparing the women and children, that they had been driven to killing the wounded of Schewasse's people". So, riding to Tshivhase on 16 November 1886, he used "these accusations to also draw Schewasse's attention to the sins he had committed.[130]

Beuster recorded that Tshivhase:

> listened to me without interruption and calmly discussed my counter-proposals, but he reckoned (and I had to silently agree with him) that Mpafuli [Mphaphuli] could truly not reproach him (Schewasse) for any greater atrocities than they themselves had committed. For example, up to now he has never trashed the body of an enemy, be he alive or dead, nor made medicine from his flesh, nor eaten any part of him, as is generally known Mpafuli does. [131]

While Beuster did not specify exactly which exclusions he had requested for women and children, it seems that he also asked Tshivhase that they be excluded from the war altogether and that there be no capture, killing, assault or rape of women and children. He recorded that:

> Schewasse [Tshivhase] did not want to unconditionally grant me my request concerning the women and children. He maintained he could not

[129] *BMB*, Nr. 21 u. 22, 1887, p.488.
[130] Tagebuch der Station Ha Tsĕvase (Carl Beuster), 16 November 1886, pp.49-50. See also *BMB*, Nr. 21 u. 22, 1887, p.489.
[131] Tagebuch der Station Ha Tsĕvase (Carl Beuster), 16 November 1886, p.50. See also *BMB*, Nr. 21 u. 22, 1887, p.489.

> prevent it. Yet I was convinced that my proposals and pleas had not been totally in vain: he will not totally ignore the words which I tried to impress on his heart and on the hearts of his two sons. According to my experience, Schewasse usually does more than he promises. On my admonitions that he should soon make peace, he informed me that, under present conditions, there was no thought of peace in the near future - not until one of them, either he, Schewasse, or his opponent, Makoarela [Makwarela], has submitted. He had been provoked and insulted too much to just let matters go. After he has just incinerated six of his enemy's villages, he now also intends to hang the "Blind Commando" around their necks - this is a commando that blindly charges at anything, they shy back from nothing and spare nothing. To my idea concerning his family relationship[132] to his opponent, he answered: "We are not fighting for our children; we are fighting for our country."[133]

Indeed, despite the fact that his war seems to have been the most serious that the missionaries had witnessed up to that time, Beuster had come to trust direct promises which he received from Tshivhase. His faith also did not go unrewarded. In response to a request from Beuster, Tshivhase had promised to spare any of the mission's out-stations which were situated in Mphaphuli's territory. Wangemann recorded that: "The King promised to do so and has kept his word, in spite of all other atrocities [*Grausamkeiten*] which the war brought along with it."[134]

It was against the background of these then-recent tensions that Wessmann and his wife moved in at Georgenholtz. Able to excuse Makwarela for his role in the fighting since he did not seem to have participated in what they saw as the other "atrocities", *Bawenda-Freund* noted that: "For the third time, the third missionary at Georgenholtz had the liveliest hopes for Makoarele's conversion."[135]

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[132] The original Mphaphuli and Tshivhase were half-brothers. They, as well as Makhado's fore-fathers, all came from the Nzhelele valley royal family. Since then, they were also bound by ties of marriage. Each of the two rulers was married to a daughter of the other, making them both father-in-law and son-in-law to each other (*Mitteilungen des Vereins „Heidenfreund"*, Nr. 18, 1. Juli 1887, V. Jahrgang, n.p. (p.3)). Their sons were also married to each others daughters Makwarela, for example, had married one of Tshivhase's daughters in April 1879 (*BMB*, Nr. 21 u. 22, 1879, pp.411-412).

[133] *BMB*, Nr. 21 u. 22, 1887, p.489.

[134] *Ibid.* p.491.

[135] *Bawenda-Freund*, Nr. 54, 2 Quartal 1896, 14 Jahrgang, p.296.

Describing his early impressions of life in the vicinity of the station, Wessmann wrote of what he saw as the "wild" and "satanic" ways of the "heathens":

> What a turbulent life prevails around Georgenholtz was brought to my attention again this morning. One goes to sleep in the evening with the sound of drums and the wild screaming of the dancing heathens, so we also usually awake again in the early hours of the morning to the inarticulate sounds cast out by an old dagga-smoker in a state of euphoric intoxication. The wild dancing and the wild screaming of the Balembetu [Vhalembetu], a small group living scattered among the Bawenda, may also often be heard throughout the day and night. The sight of such satanic behaviour leads one to acknowledge the force and power of Satan, whereby he blinds and shackles the heathens.- During the day we hear the sound of the Bela [*mbila*], a big but beautiful instrument made out of wooden rods, whose full and clear tones are not unpleasant to hear [and] fall silent on Sundays when the bell rings to call people to services.[136]



54. "The Town-Musician of Tomboni"[137]

Makwarela was still a "heathen". However, like his predecessors and the wider mission community, Wessmann clearly saw him as being superior not only to his people, just described, but also to other "heathen rulers" as well. He also saw him as still standing on the threshold of conversion and, like his predecessors, saw this

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[136] *BMB*, Nr. 23 u 24, 1888, pp.531-532.

[137] Berlin Mission Archives, Berlin: Album, Vendaland von Missionar G. Westphal, Nr. 8529. Inscription on original: "The Venda Xylophone is mainly to be found in the capital-village. The best players are the descendants of the Mhaphulis." While this photograph is undated, a picture of the musician on the right appears as Mbila-player (Bowenda)" in M. Wilde *Schwarz und Weiss*, p.92. He also appears as «Mbilaspieler in Tschewasse" ("Mbila-player at Tschewasse [Ha-Tshivhase]") in Berlin Mission Archives, Berlin: Album XXIX, Nord-Transvaal 1, Nr.34.

conversion as being the key to unlock the floodgates of conversion among the Vhavenda. At about the same time as he described Makwarela's people, Wessmann wrote about the *khosi* himself as follows:

> The visit of a heathen ruler to the home of the mission very seldom excites the same kind of joy as the visit of Makoarele [Makwarela], our ruler. ... He does not only go around elegantly dressed but his aristocratic features and his pleasant speech are such that would lead him to be recognised as an educated man in Germany, if his black face did not give away his descent. Among the heathens, he is honoured and celebrated as a valiant man and a hero in war. Among our Christians, he is honoured and loved, not only as a ruler but also as a friend and brother. During the visit of other chiefs, it is common for the missionary to be bothered by continuous and great begging, but with Makoarele the opposite is the case, and he does not delight me only, he also regularly serves the members of our congregation with his good deeds and kindness. He stands very close to the Word of God. Also today, he reads with me, and his knowledge of this is not limited. God's spirit has already been working for a long time on his heart, so that he does not only recognise his corruption [sinful nature] but also attempts to comply with the demands of the Word of God. In his lands, he allows Sundays to be observed, and himself provides a good example of this. ... Also, blasphemers and mockers [of the Word of God] find no room in his area. If he is won for the Kingdom of God, this will give us a great harvest. With him stands or falls heathendom in these lands. Many only wait for their ruler, Makoarele, to go forward. May many praying hearts at home unite with us to win this one for salvation.[138]

Moreover, in the perception of the mission, Wessmann's admiration for Makwarela was reciprocated by the *khosi*. Not only did he show him honour in various ways, he also relied on him as a source of protection against the Boers:

> On the other hand, the high regard in which Makoarele [Makwarela] held the missionary was shown when, on a four-week journey to Makato [Makhado], he sent back the command that all occurrences that came to light be decided by the missionary and that he had to be consulted. He forbade the common [practice of] the killing of twins and, at the same time, the importation of the brandy brought by Portuguese traders from Delegoa Bay. Makato expended a great deal of effort attempting to move Makoarele into an alliance against the Boers; the first step in this direction was that one had to expel the missionaries. Because the missionaries prepared the ground for the Boers. But Makoarele replied: "Why is it then

[138] *Bawenda-Freund*, Nr. 54, 2 Quartal 1896, 14 Jahrgang, p.296 and *BMB*, Nr. 23 u 24, 1888, p.532.

> that the Boers want to grab you by the collar at night when you have still not tolerated a single missionary in your lands?"[139]

In what was becoming a familiar refrain, the Annual Report of the Berlin Mission for 1887 reported that:

> Chief Makoarele [Makwarela] was friendly and obliging towards Brother Wessmann, as he has been to all the missionaries before. He would certainly have wanted to be baptised, as he has already attained the required realisation of his salvation. But he fears [*fürchtete*] that as a Christian, he would lose the sovereignty over the whole country, after his father Pafudi's [Mphaphuli's] death. One can just painfully regret this half-heartedness. But the assistance which Makoarele [Makwarela] gives for the preaching of God's Word (he has also given Brother Wessmann a large piece of land on which Wessmann will have enough space to also accommodate his small congregation), greatly helps to open the way for the smooth spreading of God's Word.[140]

These extremely positive images of Makwarela are clearly revealed in an illustration titled "In the area of the ruler of the lands" in Wilde's *Schwarz und Weiss* and "Audience with Mpafudi (Makwarela)" in the Northern-Transvaal albums of the Berlin Mission Archives [see Illustration 55]. Squatting wearing a top-hat and a jacket with missionaries, Native Evangelists (also squatting) and (apparently) a councillor in attendance, Makwarela looks every bit the "civilised", "aristocratic" and "educated" ruler that we have come to expect from the textual descriptions.[141]

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[139] *Bawenda-Freund*, Nr. 54, 2 Quartal 1896, 14 Jahrgang, pp.296-297. See also *BMB*, Nr. 23 u. 24, 1888, p.532-533. For the Delagoa Bay liquor trade, see P. Harries *Work, Culture and Identity*, pp.90, 101-103, 108, 152-153, 255 note 131 & 256, note 146 and van C. Onselen *Studies in the Social and Economic History of the Witwatersrand 1886-1914*, 1. New Babylon, Johannesburg, Ravan Press, 1982, p.55.

[140] *BMB*, Nr. 11 u. 12, 1887, p.223. See *BMB*, Nr. 23 u. 24, 1888, p.534 for a discussion of the land grant.

[141] Robert Ross has argued that "Articles of apparel may carry strong symbolic meanings and convey messages such as gender and social status. As with other media of communication, items of dress are systematically related to each other to form codes." In asserting that the top hat is a good example of this, he has argued that it formed part "of the urban uniform of the English male upper class from the late eighteenth century onwards". Having become unfashionable in these circles by the latter years of the nineteenth century, by that time it had nevertheless taken on a new lease of life "as part of the regalia of political leaders outside the colony". These included figures such as "Hendrik Hendriks, Secretary to the Government of the Philippolis Griquas and one of the shrewdest observers of, and participants in, the political scene of mid-nineteenth century South Africa", President Paul Kruger of the ZAR, Pixley Seme (one of the founders of the South African

However, extremely ironically, what this photograph does not show is that, by the time that it was taken, the Berlin Missionaries' picture of Makwarela had changed completely.



55. Audience with *Khosi* Makwarela Mphaphuli[142]

Native National Congress, which became known as the ANC from 1923), Moshoeshoe King of the Basotho and members of the Swazi royal delegation to Britain in 1923, led by King Sobhuza II. In later years, the top hat became part of the regalia "of the South African State President and of participants in the licenced saturnalia of the Coon Carnival." See R. Ross "The Top-Hat in South African History: The changing significance of an item of material culture", in *Social Dynamics* Vol. 16, No. 1, 1990, pp.90-100 (quotations, pp.90 & 95). Some idea of just how pervasive the image of African rulers and their top hats has been (among white South Africans anyway) is revealed in *Willemsdorp*, Herman Charles Bosman's novel about small-town intrigue: " 'Yes, I recognise the smell now,' Charlie Hendricks said. 'You know, I don't feel it's right that a white man should smoke dagga. Western civilisation. We've got to set the Coloured races an example. ... White superiority. If we start going in for their degenerate practices like smoking dagga, then the next is we'll be wearing a striped blanket with a top-hat, like a Bakwena chief, or we'll be drinking kaffir beer out of claypots or – or – ' 'Or doing a spot of ritual murder to bring rain,' Cyril Steyn declared." (H.C. Bosman *Willemsdorp*, The anniversary edition, edited by Stephen Grey, Cape Town, Human & Rosseau, 1988, p.176).

[142] "In the area of the ruler of the lands", in M. Wilde *Schwarz und Weiss*, p.73 and "Audience with Mpafudi (Makwarela)", in Berlin Mission Archives, Berlin: Album XXIX, Nord-Transvaal 1, Nr.40].

MAKWARELA BREAKS FREE

In my reading, as at the time of Makwarela's dream, the missionaries still did not have any real idea of the kind of complexities of the situation in which the *khosi* had to operate. His interaction with Koen and Baumhöfner over the question of his wives had shown that Makwarela was deeply committed to local ways and had character and power enough (because of his royal position) to withstand what he saw as the unreasonable demands of the church. Although he at first resented Koen's refusal to baptise him, he re-established ties with the missionary, accepting the situation and moving on. I think the same applied to his future rule as *khosi*. He knew his duties towards the ancestors and his people as his father's heir. Prepared to embrace change, but cautious about destroying the social fabric, he realised that Christianity on missionary terms would stand in the way of his duties as king.[143] Moreover, if he had any fears for his personal safety should he convert, these would have been very real. It is likely that the case of Khashane Mamatepha, provided Makwarela (and other rulers in Vendaland) with a salutary example here.[144] It is extremely likely that

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[143] For *Gota* Totane's dilemma in this regard, see pp.119-123 and 148-150.

[144] Khashane Mamatepha was an independent *kgoši* who nevertheless gave annual "gifts" to Queen Modjaji. He had converted to Christianity at some time prior to his return to BaLobedu from working as a migrant labourer in Port Elizabeth in about 1874. It was largely though his efforts that the Rain Queen allowed Brother Fritz Reuter to establish the Medingen Mission Station in her area in October 1881. Unconvinced from the beginning that this course of action was the wisest one, Modjaji soon began to feel that she had made a mistake. In particular, she seems to have found the combination of the extremely able Khashane and the former German cavalry soldier Reuter a potential threat to her authority.

At first, from about March 1882, the queen and her council tried indirect means of dealing with the problem. They turned a blind eye to (if not actively encouraged) the spread of rumours that the Christians', especially Khashane's, bringing of the missionary had angered the ancestors and been responsible for bringing the drought which was prevailing at the time. Reuter, in turn, was blamed for bringing the English and their heavy taxes into the country. The ancestors "would only be appeased if all Christians threw away The Book and returned to the old heathen customs." In addition to this, Modjaji relied on Poke (her Prime Minister and Khashane's brother-in-law) to keep him in control. Capitalising on the rumours about the drought and the taxes, the queen ordered Khashane to shave his head, to put on his traditional clothes, and to deny his faith by burning "The Book". If he refused to comply, he had to leave the country. He refused, saying: "You can destroy The Book; it is already imprinted in my heart. I will not deny my faith. I would rather die than do that."

Adopting another approach, the Queen then ordered that no unconverted locals were allowed to go near the missionary or the mission station. The few Christians who lived at the station could stay there but they would get no new followers. At about this time, Poke, who had spoken up for the Christians, died under mysterious circumstances. Reuter was convinced that he had been poisoned. In addition, Modjaji laid a complaint with Native Commissioner Albasini alleging that

the case would have known about, and commented on, locally.[145] Not only was there interaction between Tshivenda-speakers and the people of Modjaji through ties of

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Khashane and Reuter had incited her people to civil disobedience. She demanded that both of them leave her country. Albasini referred the matter to Pretoria. A government commission was set up. Sitting on 5 July 1882, this absolved Khashane and Reuter of any blame. Modjaji responded by deposing Khashane and replacing him with an elderly puppet ruler of her own choice. However, despite the pleas of his successor to have Khashane killed, at this stage the queen stopped short of giving this order.

Despite efforts at mediation by Superintendent Knothe, Reuter, Jensen (who was training the evangelists at the Mphome seminary), Winter (from Thabo Mosegu in Sekhukhuneland), Trümpelmann (from the evangelist seminary in Botshabelo) and Schwellnus (from Tshakhuma), Modjaji remained firm in her resolve to allow no amicable contact between her people and the remaining Christians. She also connived at the seizure of cattle belonging to Christians, the confiscation of their fields, the destruction of their crops and the theft of their property.

The missionaries argued that "By rights, the Queen had no jurisdiction over his [Khashane's] territory as he was an independent chief. She merely thought of him as her sub-chief, because, over the years, she came to regard his present to her as tributes from her vassal." This opinion was at least partly shared by the ZAR authorities. During the course of the year 1883, Commissioner Albasini returned at least part of his territory to Khashane. However, the "heathens" refused to respect the government boundary lines - they crossed these, often fully armed, to enter Khashane's village. It was "only through Khashang's strong Christian principles of moderation that it did not come to open war after the heathens shot at and wounded several of Khashang's people."

In March 1884, Khashane did an evangelisation tour. Soon after this, on Good Friday 1884, "the storm which had been brewing for a long time exploded". The queen having declared him *persona non grata*, Khashane "was attacked by a group of heathens and he was shot dead, where he stood next to his friend David, in front of the church while his village was plundered and burnt to ashes." The Medingen Mission Station, half way between Khashane's village and Modjaji's capital, was then also under threat - there were constant rumours that the station would be attacked. They were surrounded every night because Modjaji's people were afraid that the whites would get to Medingen and organise revenge attacks from there. Most of the Christians remained faithful throughout - only very few fell by the wayside. Those who stayed became firmer and more sincere Christians – "even the luke-warm and lazy Christians got their second wind."

After their village had been burnt to the ground, Khashane's people resettled at Mamaïla where they were not troubled by Queen Modjadji any longer - in fact they were protected by her there. Attitudes also improved towards Reuter and the Christians at Medingen. At first, hardly any "heathens" attended the church services, for fear of persecutions. However, in time Reuter and Modjaji developed a cordial relationship with the queen using the missionary as an intermediary in her dealings with the white authorities. (*BMB*, Nr. 11 u. 12, 1882 [Jahresbericht 1881], p.186; Nr. 19 u. 20, 1882, pp.372-374; Nr. 11 u. 12, 1883 [Jahresbericht 1882], p.187; Nr. 19 u. 20, 1883, pp.375-379; Nr. 11 u. 12, 1884 [Jahresbericht 1883] p.121; Nr. 11 u. 12, 1885, pp.181-182; Nr. 21 u. 22, 1885, pp.395-396; Nr. 13 u. 14, 1886 [Jahresbericht 1885], pp.216-217 & Nr. 19 u. 20, 1887, pp.421-422 and B. Sundkler and C. Steed *A History of the Church in Africa*, p.396. See also H.T. Wangemann *Khashane Mamatepha, Ein Lebensbild aus Nord-Transvaal*, Zweite Auflage, Neue Missionsschriften Nr. 22, Berlin, Buchhandlung der Berliner evangelischen Missionsgesellschaft, 1890. [Erster Auflage, 1888 (?); Dritte Auflage, 1893.])

[145] These events certainly engaged the attention of the missionaries in Vendaland. For example, in his report for the first semester of 1885 at Ha-Tshivhase Mission Station, Beuster argued that: "here on the furthest boundary, we have been spared from all sorts of evils which affect the people in the other more central districts. But indeed, although few people suspected it and even fewer knew about it, the sword of Damocles hung threateningly over our heads now and again. Sometimes it would not have required much, for the same misfortune to also befall us here at Tshewasse [Tshivhase] ... as had happened to Khashane and his followers in Bolubedu [BaLobedu]. Thanks

trade and marriage but Missionary Schwellnuss from Tshakhuma acted as mediator between Khashane, Reuter, Modjaji and Albasini.[146] He would presumably have discussed the case with converts and others on his return. Similarly, in 1885, there was at least one case where a Christian convert, Poroa, moved from Ha-Tshivhase to Medingen to escape pressures from his unconverted relatives to abandon his new faith.[147]

Unable to see matters through Makwarela's eyes, just as they thought that things were going so well, the hopes of the missionaries to finally bring Makwarela to conversion were dashed. In their perception, a number of wars, the influence of his father and a lack of frequent contact with Wessmann would gradually strip away Makwarela's now thin veneer of civilisation. Makwarela's "heathen essence" would eventually be starkly revealed in ways that would completely rupture the relationship between him and the missionaries, throw away his chance of salvation and "bring him low". In what they saw as his "return to the darkness of heathenism", he would become little better than, if not as bad as, his father. In the person of Makwarela, the "darkness of the forest" would triumph over the "light of salvation". In missionary analysis, the example set by Koen, and his supreme sacrifice, were to have been in vain.

According to the missionaries, "1889 brought a drastic change."[148] In May of that year, in a revival of previous conflicts between them,[149] Makwarela and his brother Tshikalange became involved in a "bloody struggle" to consolidate their power bases as possible successors to Ranwedzi. The missionaries reported that Mphaphuli himself had been instrumental in engineering the outbreak of this conflict as he was worried about how powerful Tshikalange was becoming. When Tshikalange showed signs of organising to "oust his brother", Mphaphuli encouraged Makwarela to

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be to the Lord who, through His mercy, has up to now turned away similar disaster here (*BMB*, Nr. 21 u. 22, 1886, pp.411-412).

[146] *BMB*, Nr. 19 u. 20, 1883, pp.376-377.

[147] *BMB*, Nr. 21 u. 22, 1886, pp.420-423.

[148] *Bawenda-Freund*, Nr. 54, 2 Quartal 1896, 14 Jahrgang, p.287.

[149] *Ibid.* pp.288-290.

engage his brother on the field of battle.[150]

Makwarela had managed to gain a temporary alliance with *Khosi* Tshivhase, his and his father's old enemy. As a consequence, the war also spread into the latter's lands and dragged the missionaries at Ha-Tshivhase into the conflict.[151] In Beuster's cynical opinion, "Suddenly Tschewasse [Tshivase] acted as if he was the ally of his erstwhile deadly enemy – most assuredly with the intention of later, when the kingdom had been sufficiently weakened by the war between the two brothers, to attack the kingdom all the more easily."[152] Makhado "also became involved and seized the opportunity provided by the state of war to commit a series of robberies in Tschewasse's area."[153]

At this stage, victory went to Makwarela. On 3 June, Tshikalange and his followers abandoned their capital village and fled across the Luvuvhu River. Beuster reported that:

> Makoarele [Makwarela] and his allies were very happy about this outcome. The warriors rushed into the deserted village and, in a most cruel way, killed whoever had been left behind there - namely an old man, a mad woman and two other sick people who had not been able to flee with the others. Then, upon Mpafuli's [Mphaphuli's] order, the capital village was put to fire and burnt down to the ground. Old Mpafuli did not want to enter the village through the usual entrance because he feared the magic potions of his son.[154] They had to break open a new entrance for him through which he entered the village. Anything that could burn outside the village was also thrown into the fire. The new residence, Botshabelo [*Dzhavhelo*] which Tshikalange was in the process of building on a nearby hill - where the chief had, with great trouble and at great expense, almost

[150] Tagebuch der Station Ha Tsĕvase (Carl Beuster), 12 Mai 1889, pp.50-53; 17 bis 18 Mai 1889, pp.53-56; 25 Mai 1889, pp.56-57; 30 Mai 1889, p.60 & 5 Juni 1899, pp.60-61; *Bawenda-Freund*, Nr. 54, 2 Quartal 1896, 14 Jahrgang, p.297 and *BMB*, Nr. 11 u. 12, 1890 [Jahresbericht 1889], p.238 & Nr. 21 u 22, 1890, pp.465 & 478-481.

[151] Tagebuch der Station Ha Tsĕvase (Carl Beuster), 18 Mai 1889, p.55; *Bawenda-Freund*, Nr. 30, Juli 1890, 8 Jahrgang, pp.97-99; Nr. 54, 2 Quartal 1896, 14 Jahrgang, p.297 and *BMB*, Nr. 11 u 12, 1890 [Jahresbericht 1889], pp.238-239; Nr. 21 u 22, 1890, pp.465-481 & 484-488; Nr. 19 u 20, 1891, pp.460-461; Nr. 11 u 12, 1892 [Jahresbericht 1891], pp.271-272 & Nr. 21 u 22, 1892, pp.551-553.

[152] *BMB*, Nr. 11 u. 12, 1890 [Jahresbericht 1889], p.238.

[153] *BMB*, Nr. 21 u. 22, 1890, pp.465-481 & 487 and Bawenda-*Freund*, Nr. 54, 2 Quartal 1896, 14 Jahrgang, p.297.

[154] See the discussion of the supernatural protection of villages on pp.395-396.

> finished the stone walls of his residence - was destroyed.[155] All the building material, which had in part been made by White people, was thrown into the fire. The whole country of Tschefifi [Tshififi], which was otherwise so crowded with people, was within a few days, transformed into a desolate area.[156]

During the course of the following year, 1890, Makwarela symbolically demonstrated what he saw as his final defeat of his brother by establishing a new capital for himself at the site of Tshikalange's former capital. However, Tshikalange had not yet conceded defeat. During the following year, his forces combined with those of Tshivhase (who had switched sides) to attack Makwarela.[157]

In the opinion of the missionaries, these events served to withdraw Makwarela "from close contact with Brother Wessmann", leading to a situation where:

> It still appeared that he was devout and clearly striving for salvation. But, here and there, it could be seen that he was seeking to hinder the wider spread of the Gospel. However, he did not outwardly oppose the missionary as he attached great importance to the fact that the missionary viewed him as a friend and as a patron to Christendom.[158]

More importantly, in contradiction to their attitude towards Makwarela's participation in the earlier fighting against Tshivhase, the missionaries felt that, because of the war with his brother, "in spite of all his Christian understanding," Makwarela had "allowed himself to be pulled back into all sorts of cruelties."[159] They also strongly believed that "these battles served to increasingly shackle the chief to [his] heathen essence."[160] What caused them the gravest concern, however, were not the casualties which the war caused but the way in which victory was

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[155] The Tshivenda word for a fortress (a place of refuge or stronghold) is "*Dzhavhelo*". Beuster used the Northern Sotho word "Botshabelo". I am sure that Tshikalange would have used the Tshivenda word for his fortress.

[156] Tagebuch der Station Ha Tsĕvase (Carl Beuster), 5 Juni 1889, pp.60-61 and *BMB*, Nr. 21 u 22, 1890, p.481.

[157] *Bawenda-Freund*, Nr. 54, 2 Quartal 1896, 14 Jahrgang, p.297 and *BMB*, Nr. 21 u. 22, 1892, pp.551-553.

[158] *Bawenda-Freund*, Nr. 54, 2 Quartal 1896, 14 Jahrgang, p.297.

[159] *BMB*, Nr. 11 u. 12, 1890 [Jahresbericht 1889], p.239.

sealed in the capital after the return of the warriors. The victory ceremony involved a most dramatic ritual re-enactment of the process of destruction on the bodies of dead enemies, reportedly culminating in acts of anthropophagy, with the *Khosi* playing an essential role in it. As Br. Johann Meister of Ha-Tshivhase noted in his diary:

> Monday, 27 July [1891]: We had promised to come [and attend to] the casualties again today. On the way, we heard that bodies of the enemies which had been carried away and the living captives were being taken to the capital of Mpafuli [Ranwedzi Mphaphuli], ... What did they want to do with them? We had no doubt that they would violate the bodies in their extreme heathen manner. But would he not also possibly lift up his hand against the captives? With Mpafuli anything is possible. Therefore we had to go to him. We found everything that had been reported to us [to be] true. Already, the warriors were awaiting the signal to begin with their abominations. I could not resist,[161] I had to express to Makoarele [Makwarela] my great grief that he personally was taking part in such horrors, he that was so close to the Kingdom of God. He excused himself by saying that he would not have carried out these deeds were it not for his father Mpafuli. Mpafuli also promised Br. Beuster that he would do nothing evil to the captives. We did not want to wait at the capital any longer, and witness the horrors. The bodies were already laid out in the *Khoro*[162] for the Dance of the King, which would be carried out upon their dead bodies while he desecrated them with his spear. Then they were to be cut and torn into pieces, the bones separated out from each other and made into pipes, part of the flesh cooked and eaten, part given to the smiths ... to be put into the smelting oven with the iron-ore to make good iron. We left them and rode away from there.[163]

Bad as things were, they became even worse. The struggle having ended indecisively, a further struggle broke out between the brothers in 1893. This time, Tshivhase again supported Tshikalange.[164] Makwarela was supported by Makhado.[165]

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[160] *Bawenda-Freund*, Nr. 54, 2 Quartal 1896, 14 Jahrgang, p.297.

[161] In other words, "I had no alternative but to express to Makwarela ...".

[162] *Khoro* - public courtyard.

[163] Tagebuch der Johannes Meister vom 1 Juli bis 30 September 1891, Ha Tsevase, in Berlin Mission Archives, Berlin, Acta der Berliner Missionsgesellschaft betreffend Missionsstationen, Tagebücher der Missionare auf der Station Ha Tsevase, 1891 - 1900, (II), Abt. III, Fach 5, No. 14, entries for 24 & 27 Juli 1891, pp.5-9 (quotation, 27 Juli 1891, pp.8-9). See also *Bawenda-Freund*, 11 Jahrgang, Nr.43., Oktober 1893, pp.168-169 and *BMB*, Nr. 21 u 22, 1892, pp.552-553 (quotation, p.553).

[164] *Bawenda-Freund*, Nr. 42, Juli 1893, 11 Jahrgang, pp.161-162 and *BMB*, Nr. 17 u 18, 1894, pp.364 & 366-367.

[165] *BMB*, Nr. 11 u. 12, 1894 [Jahresbericht 1893], p.200 and Nr. 17 u. 18, 1894, p.364.

During the course of this war, starting on 30 September, Makwarela's warriors reportedly had to undergo an elaborate ritual at the capital before going into the field. Missionary Reinhold Wessmann, stationed at Georgenholtz, claimed to have witnessed it. According to him, "Heathenism again shone through in the chief and came alive in the people."[166] The "really heathen festival" was worse than anything he had "experienced before". It lasted for several days, with people "from all sides" attending. There were speeches, incantations, ritual washings, feastings and sacrifices. Wessmann also wrote that "the flesh of human beings [was eaten]". The "heathens" believed that this would "make them strong and invincible and prevent them from being wounded." Having "got rid of his clothes", and with this the trappings of civilisation, "like all his staff," Makwarela "wore only a loin cloth." He sprinkled his "people, who were also naked, ... with boiling water." Cut-wounds were then "made on their chests and on their backs. These hurt very much after they had been smeared with strong medicine and this made the people restless." Having "grabbed hold of a hot hammer which had been lying in boiling water", Makwarela then "gave everyone a hard hit of the hammer on the chest and on the back. Burning wood was also placed on their feet to prove their loyalty. Strong medicine which was sniffed at, transformed those present into ecstasy." As the ceremony reached its climax, "a thorn tree with three to four inch thorns was erected in the middle of the gathering-place. The inside of the tree was covered with boiled meat so that the bits of meat made it look like a Christmas-tree." All those who had "killed somebody in their lives were told to come forward ... [and] eat the hot meat, which was between the thorns, off the tree. They had to do this using their mouths only, without touching anything with their hands." Overcome by the excitement of the occasion, the "participants rushed forward in a wild hurry. The tree fell over and with this the whole crowd rushed onto the long thorns, which pierced their naked bodies." At the close of the ceremony, the *khosi* danced in front of his people, cheered on by the crowd.[167] When Wessmann later challenged Makwarela on "the futility of the feast",

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[166] *Bawenda-Freund*, Nr. 54, 2 Quartal 1896, 14 Jahrgang, p.297.

[167] Tagebuch der Station Georgenholtz (Reinholdt Wessmann) 30 September 1893, pp.38-40. See also *BMB*, Nr. 17 u. 18, 1894, pp.379-380 and *Bawenda-Freund*, Nr. 54, 2. Quartal 1896, 14 Jahrgang, pp.297-298.

the *khosi* reportedly "laughed and said that the heathens everywhere are laughing at him. They say he has no power. He now wants to show them what he is capable of."[168]

The formulaic rendering of the event clearly shows that Wessmann was relating hearsay, at the very best. Whether he had seen what he described with his own eyes or not did not matter for him, nor did it for the mission people back home. For them, what mattered was that the report confirmed their phantasmagoric ideas of savage people.

While Makwarela would continue to allow the mission to operate in his lands, and there were times when he still met with the missionaries, things were never the same again.[169] For the Berliners, Makwarela was about to descend back into "complete heathenism". Henceforth, he was in the same camp as his father, whose actions during the war were described by Wessmann in ways similar to those used to describe the ceremony of the young warriors, yet focusing even more on bodies in action, on smells and sounds. In this context, the gaze disappeared in "frantic" excitement, and with it the personalities of the people involved, reason submerged by passion:

> One Sunday morning, I accompanied a neighbour to the capital of the old chief Pafuri [Mphaphuli]. We intended to put in a good word in favour of the cessation of the war which kept the whole population from their work in the fields, and had interrupted the traffic on the roads. When we spoke to the chief, and had, in consequence of the evil smell emanating from the corpses which were thrown in old maize-holes, changed places with him, suddenly the big war-drum sounded, and a slain enemy was carried within the gate on long poles. Hardly had the chief caught sight of the body than he jumped up, rushed at the corpse like a wild animal, tore it down on the ground, sat on it, and beat it in order to relieve his anger. Soon after the dancers arrived and performed a triumphal war-dance. They consisted of

[168] Tagebuch der Station Georgenholtz (Reinholdt Wessmann), p.40 and *BMB*, Nr. 17 u. 18, 1894, p.380.

[169] *Bawenda-Freund*, Nr. 54, 2. Quartal 1896, 14 Jahrgang, pp.298-299 & Nr. 58, 2 Quartal 1897, 15 Jahrgang, p.352 and *BMB*, Nr. 11 u 12, 1894 [Jahresbericht 1893], p.201; Nr. 17 u 18, 1894, pp.368-369; April 1896, pp.112-113; August 1896, p.350; Februar 1897, pp.90 & 112; Januar 1898, pp.6-8 & 11 & November 1900, pp.691-692.

> old men and women only; for those alone are entitled to take part in the war-dance who had already killed or poisoned some one. We left the cruel scene without taking leave of the people, who had already gone frantic with excitement; and we returned home without having achieved our object, only hoping that time might remedy this.[170]

It is clear that, at a conscious level, for the missionaries, what marked *Khosi* Makwarela's return to "complete heathenism" was his alleged consumption of war *muti* containing human body parts as one of its ingredients. They did not describe his actions as cannibalism, or him as a cannibal. However, their focus on the consumption of "human flesh" as they called it (German does not differentiate between "flesh" and "meat"), clearly demonstrates that they saw his actions as *Menschenfresserei*, and not as a ritual designed to enhance the prowess and martial spirit of his followers.

For the Berlin Missionaries, cannibalism, which included the consumption of body parts of enemies captured in war, was the supreme symbol of "heathenism" and "savagery", an emblem of all that was strangest, most incomprehensible and horrible in African society. It was inconceivable to them that Christians (people who were fully "civilised" or fully "human") could be cannibals since humankind was created in the image of God and the human body housed the soul. One could not sink lower into "bestiality" than by consuming the image of God and the house of the spirit given by him. Yet, the missionaries took it for granted that, since they were freed from such scruples by their ignorance of the Law of God, "heathens" (read also "savages" or "brutes") could sink to such depths that they could treat the human body as a source of food. In their "blindness" and "superstition" they still had some idea of powers greater than themselves. As such, they could also ingest parts of the human body as sources of power. This, the missionaries believed, was the case not only in Africa but also in other parts of the world such as the South Pacific and, indeed, in the distant "heathen" past of the Germans themselves. [171] In their opinion,

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[170] R. Wesssmann *The Bawenda of the Spelonken*, pp.133-134.

[171] [Anon.] *Etwas aus der Heidenzeit des deutschen Vaterlandes. Die Bekehrung der Sachsen in der Gegend von Hermansburg*, Neue Missionsschriften Nr. 6, Berlin, Buchhandlung der Berliner

in Africa, including South Africa, it was only through the spread of the Gospel, backed up by colonial authority, that cannibalism could be eradicated.[172]

The missionaries clearly had no understanding of the different meanings of "eating", which may range from the purely metaphorical indication of a process of domination, to the very act of incorporating something edible. Nor had they an eye for the spiritual aspects of the ingestion of body parts of an enemy killed in battle in the production and consumption of *muti* which anthropophagy as a ritual practice stands for. Anyway, they used the trope and the imagery of cannibalism as the ultimate weapon in their othering of Non-Christian Africans, just as the Portuguese had done with the pictures brought back from Brazil by Hans Staden in the mid-sixteenth century and the British did during their wars of colonial aggression in nineteenth century West Africa.[173]

Surprisingly, against the background of the linguistic work of the Berlin missionaries, I have not as yet been able to trace any discussion of the morphology of the term "cannibal" in mission sources. The Tshivenda dictionary term for cannibal is *Lilema*.[174] However, many people I have spoken to have never heard this term. Instead, in conversation, *lila-vhatu* is usually used. (This was also the term that a Professor in the department of Tshivenda at UNIVEN gave me when I asked her "what is a cannibal in Tshivenda?"[175]) This also refers to "one who takes parts from

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evangelischen Missionsgesellschaft, 1890; A. Merensky (a) *Die Menschenfresserei in Afrika* & (b) *Wie die Menschenfresser auf Tongoa Christen wurden*, Missionsschriften für Kinder Nr.23, Berlin, Buchhandlung der Berliner evangelischen Missionsgesellschaft, n.d. [1895] and H.T. Wangemann (a) *Die Menschenfresser im Bapedilande* & (b) *Gerettete Menschenfresser in Botshabelo*.

[172] See especially A. Merensky *Die Menschenfresserei in Afrika*, pp.2-4 & 16.

[173] A. Kirkaldy and A. Wirz "Picturing the soul", pp.41-43. For example, Alan Maxwell Boisragon argued that Benin once had a highly-developed civilisation which then degenerated into savagery with human sacrifice, the killing of baby twins and cannibalism. He went on to depict the British intervention as being humanitarian. See A.M. Boisragon *The Benin massacre, by Captain Alan Boisragon, one of the two survivors*, London, Methuen & Co., 1897. In modern journalistic practice, similar ends are served by pictures of piles of skulls left over from Pol Pot's killing fields.

[174] N.J. van Warmelo *Venda Dictionary*, p.128.

[175] Personal communication, Prof. A.E. Khuba, UNIVEN.

corpses for medicine".[176] The root is the term "*ḽa*", meaning to eat or enjoy (be the beneficiary of).[177] In Tshivenda, the class 1 noun prefix *mu-* (plural *vha-*), without exception, indicates persons.[178] The class 5 noun prefix *li-* (plural *ma-*) refers to objects ("things"), certain body parts, certain fruits and certain categories of aliens, for example Europeans (*likhuwa*, plural *makhuwa*).[179] Thus, literally translated *ḽila-vhatu* means "the thing which eats people" (as Europeans are "white things"). In an interesting parallel with the term *Makchema* appearing in Wangemann and Merenksy's tractates, a member of the Mphephu royal family told me that the term was *luma vhatu* (singular, *luma muthu*), literally "those who bite".[180] These variations all show that local terms for "cannibalism" de-humanise the perpetrators. Through this, they are condemned and placed beyond the pale of gentile, or "civilised", society.[181] In my reading, the only exceptions to this rule could lie in acts of anthropophagy where the horror of the act was outweighed by the benefits

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[176] N.J. van Warmelo *Venda Dictionary*, J.L. van Schaik, 1989, p.128

[177] Personal communication J.M. Dederen, Department of Anthropology, UNIVEN and N.J. van Warmelo *Venda Dictionary*, p.124.

[178] N.J. van Warmelo *Venda Dictionary*, p.28 and D. Ziervogel, P.J. Wentzel; and T.N. Makuya A *Handbook of the Venda Language*, Second Edition, Pretoria, University of South Africa, 1972, p.12. For example, *munna* = man, plural *vhanna*; *musadzi* = woman, plural *vhaszdzi* and *musidzana* = girl, plural *vhasidzana*.

[179] N.J. van Warmelo *Venda Dictionary*, p.28 and D. Ziervogel, P.J. Wentzel; and T.N. Makuya A *Handbook of the Venda Language*, pp.18-19. Objects, for example, *ḽiga* = step, plural *maga* and *ḽitavha* = big mountain, plural *matavha*. Body parts, for example, *ḽila*, the great intestine or colon, plural *mala* and *ḽino* = tooth, plural *maṉo*. Fruits, for example, *ḽifula* = marula fruit, plural *mafula*.

[180] Personal communication, *Vho* Lettie Mphephu-Nengudza and N.J. van Warmelo *Venda Dictionary*, p.146.

[181] Carolyn Hamilton has developed an interesting argument on a similar theme. She argues that, in sharp contrast to the Settler construction of "Shaka and the Zulu kingdom on the colonial periphery ... as the savage, 'cannibal' Other", within local African societies, he "enjoyed a reputation for acting against the 'cannibals'." Noting that "cannibalism was as much a feature of nineteenth-century African consciousness" as of that of the settlers, she states that the idea of *buzimuzimu* is often translated as "cannibalism". However, African commentators generally describe it "as the opposite of civilized." In this context: "To be with Shaka was to be secure within culture, within an ordered, albeit tyrannical, system. To be outside his ambit was to be in nature, uncontrolled and 'cannibal'." (C. Hamilton *Terrific Majesty*, pp.211-212.) With similar logic, but working in the opposite direction, David Coplan has argued that, during the rise of the Basotho Kingdom in the late 1820s: "The chiefs of militarized clans and incipient states were much feared for their ravenous capacity to 'eat up' external enemies, internal rivals, and prosperous followers alike. Shaka Zulu, by far the most famous, was seen by his unfortunate neighbors as a kind of Lord of Chaos consuming the chiefs and clans of the region and setting them to consume each other." (D.B. Coplan *In the Time of Cannibals*, p.1.) The title of his work *In the Time of Cannibals* engages similar themes. In examining *The Word Music of South Africa's Basotho Migrants*, he reveals the relationship between these workers and the local and South African powers-that-be the "cannibals" who live off the labour of the workers.

accruing to society. War *muti* and other rituals surrounding warfare would have been just such an exception.

Missionary interpretation took no account of these subtleties. For them, *Khosi* Makwarela had simply reverted to type. In their opinion, his actions fitted neatly into the paradigm of "cannibalism" as an icon of "heathenism", in other words, "otherness". They believed that he had been exposed to the Law and Grace of God. For him, there was no possibility of claiming ignorance. Just when it seemed that he would accept Christianity, and win salvation for himself and his people, he had plummeted back into the very depths of "heathen darkness". The magnitude of his fall was compounded by the fact that, as a "chief" he had, inevitably, dragged his people down with him. For this, the missionaries believed, God had exacted retribution on him and brought him low.[182]

In May 1894, Wessmann was transferred to Tshakhuma "leaving Makoarele behind as a heathen."[183] His successor, Carl Gernecke, arrived in October of the same year.[184] In posing the question whether or not "God's Grace will give Br. Gernecke the joy of winning this Great [one] in the lands for the kingdom of Jesus Christ?", *Bawenda-Freund* argued that "We dare not ever give up the hope."[185] However, this hope would never be realised.

Hence the missionaries were not surprised when they learned, in 1897, that Makwarela, after suffering great losses in his following due to the combined effects of famine and a lengthy struggle with Tshivhase, had "become a poor, small king" who "sits and ponders revenge." They were convinced:

> He once came close to fully accepting Christianity but, when he was close, he rejected it because he feared losing his chieftainship. Now, because of

[182] *Bawenda-Freund*, Nr. 59, 3 Quartal 1897, 15 Jahrgang, p.366.
[183] Stationschronik von Georgenholtz, p.2 (126 of file) and *Bawenda-Freund*, Nr. 54, 2. Quartal 1896, 14 Jahrgang, p.298.
[184] Acta der Berliner Missionsgesellschaft betreffend Personalia: Gernecke and Stationschronik von Georgenholtz, p.2 (126 of file).
[185] *Bawenda-Freund*, Nr. 54, 2. Quartal 1896, 14 Jahrgang, p.298.

his heathenism, he has lost his power completely.[186]

Although they prayed to God that he might "win this strong one", Makwarela Mphaphuli never did convert.[187] Ranwedzi passed away in 1901 and Makwarela ascended to his throne. There was no war of succession as Tshikalange had predeceased him at the end of 1896 (possibly having been killed on Makwarela's orders).[188] Despite the fact that the *khosi* no longer had any intention of being baptised himself, Murumo, one of his sons, was among the first group of people to be baptised at New Georgenholtz on 27 June 1909, one and a half years after this station was inaugurated by Ludwig Giesekke and his wife.[189] Old Georgenholtz had been abandoned in 1899.[190] In spite of his alienation from the mission, Makwarela would only allow missionaries from the Berlin Mission to operate in his lands and would not give other "sects", including African Independent groupings, permission to operate there.[191] Makwarela died in April 1928, still a "heathen".[192]

The psychologically minded might speak of a missionary obsession with the violation of human bodies and ask whether this was not echoing their European experience? For one, there is a rich imagery of man-eating-man in European fairy tales such as the story of Hansel and Gretel, but also in religion, in shipwreck stories and generally in fantasies about the wild. Secondly, in the last third of the nineteenth

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[186] *Bawenda-Freund*, Nr. 59, 3 Quartal 1897, 15 Jahrgang, pp.365-366. For discussion of the famine of 1896 to 1897 and its effect on Mphaphuli's area, see pp.90-91 of this thesis. For the struggle with Tshivhase, see especially *Bawenda-Freund*, Nr. 57, 1 Quartal 1897, 15 Jahrgang, p.345; Nr. 58, 2 Quartal 1897, 15 Jahrgang, pp.352-353 & Nr. 59, 3 Quartal 1897, 15 Jahrgang, pp.364-365 and *BMB*, Dezember 1897, p.725; Januar 1898, p.7.

[187] *Bawenda-Freund*, Nr. 59, 3 Quartal 1897, 15 Jahrgang, pp.366.

[188] *BMB*, Januar 1898, p.7; S.M. Dzivhani "The Chiefs of Venda", p.50 and H.A. Stayt *The Bavenda*, p.17.

[189] Stationschronik von Georgenholtz, p.4 (128 of file). Murumo first joined baptism classes in 1897. Makwarela at first attempted to dissuade him from converting to Christianity but later came to accept this, possibly as he was not a likely successor (*BMB*, Juni 1898 [Jahresbericht 1897], p.315 and Oktober 1898, p.597).

[190] Stationschronik von Georgenholtz, pp.2-3 (126-127 of file).

[191] *Ibid.* p.25 (149 of file).

[192] *Ibid.* p.37 (161 of file). Note that Dzivhani and Lukhaimane aruge that Makwarela died in 1926 (S.M. Dzivhani "The Chiefs of Venda", p.50 and E.K. Lukhaimane "A Short History of the Venda", p.15). Mudau and Stayt argue that he died in 1927, with Mudau giving the date of 25 March. (J.R. Mudau "A Short History of the Mphaphuli Dynasty, p.33 and H.A. Stayt *The Bavenda*, p.17.)

century Europe experienced a severe economic depression with the twin-processes of urbanisation and industrialisation ever accelerating, up-rooting, or "devouring", thousands and thousands of people. Thirdly, innovations in military technology had made wars even more destructive. Henry Dunant had exposed this in his justly famous *Mémoire de Solferino* of 1866, which then led to the foundation of the International Committee of the Red Cross. My thinking about Europe's hidden darkness here is perhaps best revealed through another reference to literature. In Arthur Japin's fictionalised account of the life of Prince Kwasi Boachi of Ashanti, the young royal considers the horror of the Dutch Commissioner van Drunen at sacrifices performed on the royal graves. Japin has Kwasi remarking:

> As a boy, the routine executions were little different to me from the slaughter of goats. Later in life this boyhood insensibility filled me with shame, until I discovered that a man's life counted for just as little in Europe at that time. The wars fought between 1792 and 1815 alone caused the sacrifice of one million five hundred and thirty thousand lives, not counting the loss of life in epidemics spread in the course of these conflicts. Another two hundred thousand souls died in the war between Russia and Turkey, and an equal number in the Polish uprising. At the very time that van Drunen was startled by a few heads lying on his path, tens of thousands of heads were rolling in the Caucasus.[193]

Beyond psychology, we should also look at the historical context of the argument about the situation in Vendaland. Stories about cannibalism are necessarily stories about contact. It thus makes sense to ask whether the "conspicuous anthropophagy" was not a response to colonial expansion, as Gananath Obeysekere has argued with respect to the South Pacific, and Michael Taussig before him with regard to Amazonia and the Congo Free State in the period of the rubber boom.[194] The Berlin

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[193] A. Japin *The Two Hearts of Kwasi Boachi*, translated by Ina Rilke, London, Chatto & Windus, 2000, p.41. Kwasi Boachi and Kwame Poku were two young African princes given to the Dutch by the King of Ashanti, *Asantehene* Kwaku Dua I, as security for a deal they had brokered over illegal slave trading. The two boys arrived at the court of King Willem I of the Netherlands in 1837. Kwame later committed suicide. Kwasi ended up as a tea plantation owner in Java. After the bankruptcy of this plantation, he settled in the village of Bantar Peteh. He died, following a long illness, in the military hospital at Buitenzorg on 9 July 1904.

[194] M.J. Taussig *Shamanism, Colonialism and the Wild Man* and G. Obeysekere "British Cannibals", pp.7-32. But consider the qualifications of Peter Geschiere, who has stressed the fact that the trope of cannibalism was used by Africans and Germans alike, albeit with different things in mind. The

Missionaries, for their part, happened to arrive in the Transvaal at a time when many South African societies were going through a period of severe upheaval. They either suffered from the consequences of earlier wars, or they had to fend off foreign intruders such as the land-grabbing white settlers, or they were involved in wars of succession. Hence the importance of rituals of appropriation, retribution and bonding. And these in turn supplied enough horror stories to those who had an interest to denigrate some people and to frighten others.

Like his father, Ranwedzi Mphaphuli, Makwarela Mphaphuli was attempting to come to terms with the encroaching Boers, the missionaries and internal power-struggles within his society. His father attempted to gain control over the situation by permitting the missionaries to operate in the lands of his son. He would thus have access to them without having to face a direct threat to his authority.

Makwarela attempted to deal with the tensions by forming a close working relationship with the missionaries. It is clear that he found the skill of literacy and the access to western material culture which they brought useful. It also seems that he found the religion that they brought appealing. His strategy underwent changes over time. At first, it seemed likely that he would convert. In time, he realised that conversion would result in the loss of his throne. He then attempted to blend aspects of the new religion with the old. It is clear that, in doing so, he was attempting to retain his power as a ruler.

Over time, and involved in a series of battles for succession with his brother, it became clear to Makwarela that the missionaries would not accept anything but conversion to orthodox Christianity as interpreted by them. His own reading of the alternative possibilities was unacceptable. Had he accepted Christianity on these terms, it is likely that he would have lost the succession struggle with Tshikalange.

Maka used it to differentiate between kin and non-kin, the Germans as a marker of savagery. (P. Geschiere "Rubber and Cannibalism: The Germans, the Maka and the Rubberboom in South Cameroon (1900 - 1914)", unpublished paper presented to the seminar on "Fantasy Spaces - The Power of Images in a Globalizing World", Amsterdam, 27-29 August 1998.)

Even in the unlikely event that he was victorious, he would have lost his power and independence to the missionaries.

Makwarela was trying to operate creatively in a situation of dynamic change. For him, conversion was only one strategy amongst many to deal with encroachment and successionary struggles. The missionaries could not accommodate this. He was to be either a "heathen" or a "Christian", either a savage or a civilised man - there were no shades of grey in between. This static opposition was crucial to their entire world view. To challenge it would be to negate all their work and sacrifice in the area.

At a deeper level, it does not matter whether or not Makwarela Mphaphuli "really" committed an act, or acts, of anthropophagy. Either by doing so, or by allowing the missionaries to believe that he had done so, he was saying that what they believed had no power over him any more. Accepting a position of leadership under, and by the grace of, the white God would, in reality, involve ruling under, and by the grace of, the white missionaries. Instead, Makwarela had reclaimed his throne and the right to rule his people through his birthright and the power of African Religion.

CONCLUSION

The structure that this thesis has finally assumed has been a product of negotiation – negotiation between myself and my supervisors, academic conventions, the nature of the sources and the voices of the long-dead missionaries and Africans which emerge from the diaries, reports, tractates and books of the Berlin Missionaries. The most strident voices, demanding to be heard, have been those of the missionaries. However, hidden behind this have been the quieter voices of local African rulers and their people. In working with the missionary voice, I have also set out to access the African voice – a voice not heard in this way in other nineteenth century sources. I do not claim to speak on behalf of, or for, anybody. I also do not claim to have recovered or captured the past. However, I believe that I have worked with a view into the past which engages perspectives not discernible in other contemporary sources. In doing so, I have deliberately begun the main body of the thesis (Chapter 2) with African converts to Christianity and ended with an African ruler who attempted to engage with Christianity on his own terms but eventually chose to re-assert his power through the power of African Religion.

The "Vendaland conventicle" of Johannes Mutshaeni, Totane (also known as Piet) and Solomon, together with individuals such as David Denga, were converted to Christianity while working as migrant labourers in Natal and the Cape Colony during the 1860s. While some abandoned their new faith, others managed to retain it. To varying degrees, the latter group blended Christianity with aspects of African Religion.

With the arrival of the missionaries, and their commitment to enforcing what they saw as conformity to doctrinally pure Christianity, new tensions were introduced. Those local Christians who transformed their religious beliefs to meet the local context faced censure or excommunication. In addition, with the presence of the new representatives of the Christian God, they suffered a diminution in status – they were now the assistants and interpreters (both cultural and linguistic) of the representatives, rather than the representatives themselves. While Johannes

Mutshaeni and David Denga were able to handle this transformation and retain their faith, others – like Solomon – were not. Similarly, those - like Totane - who had managed to achieve power in local structures were not able to accept the subservient position to the missionaries which adherence to their brand of Christianity would have entailed. They either abandoned Christianity completely or formed their own blending of religious beliefs which, they hoped, would enable them to navigate in the local situation in which they found themselves. Christianity may mean different things to different people. It is possible that some previously-converted Christians managed to live out a private religious life which successfully achieved a blending of Christianity and African religious beliefs. Similarly, it is likely that a number of those converted by the missionaries and their assistants managed to achieve this. However, at this stage, with the power of Mission Christianity and the power of African Religion challenging each other directly for supremacy, it was impossible to do this publicly. Looking at the situation rather cynically, while the wages of "sin" may have been death, both for the first Native Assistants and some missionaries, the price of serving God was the same.

Having begun in Africa, I moved to Germany in an attempt to understand the making of the missionaries who became the recorders of what occurred in Vendaland. Starting with the history and nature of the Berlin Mission Society, I went on to look at the lower-middle and artisan class background and personal biographies of the candidate missionaries and the training that they received in the seminary. In doing so, I argued that, on the whole, the mission were successful in instilling the obedient, petite-bourgeois – and German – mindsets that they set out to develop in these prospective servants of the Lord and representatives of German culture and values. In their training of the missionaries who would serve in Vendaland, the mission authorities failed dramatically in two cases. Carl Stech and Reinhold Wessmann were both expelled from the mission for sexual misconduct. At the other end of the scale, in missionary terms, they succeeded dramatically in transforming the "rude matter" of Klaas Koen, a South African of mixed ancestry, into the ideal German Missionary. Wessmann and Koen are the subjects of two case studies, the first revealing the "Heart of Darkness" which was in danger of being exposed when missionaries "went

native" and the second just how far one could go in serving the Lord and sacrificing oneself for His greater glory.

Against this background, I returned to Vendaland with the missionaries. Having introduced the ecology of the area, I looked at the ways that they experienced, came to terms with and inscribed themselves on the environment. This lead into discussions of the ways that the missionaries portrayed the landscape textually and iconograpically for themselves, their superiors at home and the wider circle of friends of the mission back in Germany. Their relationship with the environment was a dynamic one and varied over time, depending on the perceived level of hardship and danger that they faced, with the fluctuating fortunes of missionary endeavour, and with their changing relationships with local rulers and their people. At times, they revelled in its beauty and splendour; comparing its natural features, bird and animal life to those of beauty spots in Germany. At other times, they felt threatened by its darkness and impenetrability, its serpents and devouring beasts, and the hidden menace of "fever". In addition to their use of texts and photographs, when "reality" was either not as "dark" or as "light" as the missionaries wished it to be, they called etchings into service to capture the moods and emotions that they wished to engender in their readers.

Hostile as it sometimes was to them, the missionaries saw the inhabitants of Vendaland as being concealed and nurtured by the environment. They wrote of "the dark forests of Bawendaland and the dark hearts of the heathen Bawenda", saw their mission stations as "God's gardens in the heathen wilderness" and portrayed themselves as "pioneers of culture" in the area. However, in order to make converts - (re-)fashioning them as Christians and as colonial subjects - they had to draw the local people out of the environment and understand them. In their terms, only by first understanding local ways could they hope to transform them. Examining their attempts to do this, I began by looking at missionary attempts to transform the bodies, clothing, housing, economic life, and even the musical life of local people. Arising from this, I engaged with missionary writings on local beliefs in the supernatural and their impressions and their analysis of the metaphysical and physical bases of the power of local rulers, the ancestors and medico-religious practitioners. I argued that missionary analysis of themes such

as these focused around two opposing premises. On the one hand, the wrote about what they saw as the very real power of Satan operating in local engagements with the supernatural. On the other, they cynically described what they interpreted to be manipulation of local "superstitions" by local *mahosi* and *dzinanga* as a means of social control, maintaining and increasing power, and self-enrichment. For the missionaries, conversion thus became as much of a battle over secular power as over religious power - a battle over bodies as well as over souls. Despite the very obvious distorting effects of the missionary gaze here, I found useful material for comparison with other accounts. In addition, these texts provided a useful bridge away from missionaries and back to Africans.

Opposed as they were to these practices, the missionaries reserved their greatest opprobrium for social institutions through which membership of society, and the power of its rulers, was inscribed on, or reflected royal control over, the bodies of subjects. In particular, they focused their criticism on the male initiations schools of *vhutuka* and *murundu* and the female equivalent, of *vhusha*. In all of these schools, the body was subjected to hardships and pain. In the latter two, social conformity and submission to authority was inscribed on the body by circumcision and lengthening of the labia minora respectively. At a less symbolic level, the power of the ruler was reflected in military conscription and the maintenance of the *thondo* – a military school which also served as a stage of initiation – at his capital.

Some of the missionary opposition to local practices was based on what they saw as purely humanitarian grounds. Thus, they fought against the practice of the killing of twins. In an important test case, they also managed to gain exemption from this practice at Ha-Tshivhase Mission station and, indirectly through this, at the other stations as well. I find it surprising that, during the nineteenth century, the missionaries do not appear to have contested the alleged killing of retainers to accompany members of the royal family in death and other forms of ritual homicide. This I ascribe to local secrecy surrounding such practices. Commoners, even converts to Christianity, either did not know about them or saw them as tabu topics of conversation. Members of the wider royal family may have known about them but would have felt disinclined to discuss them outside royal circles,

especially with outsiders. The failure to discuss this certainly did not arise from missionary reticence to expose what they saw as the hidden "darkness" of local society. They were more than prepared to discuss the purported use of human body parts in iron smelting and give credence to the wildest tales of cannibalism. For the missionaries, "cannibalism" became an icon of the "darkness" that they were fighting. They also described in gory detail the fate of slain and captured enemies, which reportedly included the symbolic manipulation and consumption of severed body parts.

I draw all of these themes together in the case study of the interaction between the missionaries and the rulers of the Mphaphuli people which concludes the thesis. As with the opening chapter, it is here that the African voice again cries to be heard. Even through the distorting missionary ethnographic lens, and their failure to see deeper than his "bad language", *Khosi* Ranwedzi Mphaphuli is revealed as a skilled and shrewd ruler, attempting to negotiate both his own continued survival and independence and that of his people. On the other hand, even with their venom after his fall, I find the missionaries' far more nuanced portrayal of *Khosi* Makwarela extremely moving. He refuses to fit into the mounds that they keep on fashioning for him and bursts from the pages of their records full of vitality and bursting with life, not as a cardboard cut-out of a "civilised" or "savage" ruler. The skeleton of the concluding chapter was in fact the first one that I wrote as a paper for presentation to a conference while still in Germany.[1] Having lived with Makwarela for five years, I am going to miss him. (I suspect that my family may be more pleased at his departure than me.) I nevertheless believe that my thesis in general, and his story in particular, dramatically support my assertion that the window into the past opened by my reading of the Berlin Mission records makes a valuable contribution to our knowledge of the nineteenth century history of Vendaland and of studies of missionary history in South Africa.

[1] A. Kirkaldy "Makoarele's return to 'the darkness of heathenism'".

APPENDIX:
REQUIREMENTS FOR ACCEPTANCE TO THE SEMINARY OF THE BERLIN MISSION

[*Berliner Missions-Berichte*, Nr. 12 u 13, 1873, pp.224-225]

1. Anyone who wishes to be admitted into the Berlin Missionary Seminary must, of necessity, have a heart fully converted to the Lord Jesus Christ and must also have the necessary Christian maturity and steadfastness. He must lead a life or prayer and know about sin and grace, contrition, faith and sanctification out of his own experience.

2. He must have sufficient knowledge and understanding of the Holy Scriptures.

3. His conduct, in the eyes of the people, must be beyond reproach.

4. He is to have at least primary education from a well-established Elementary School [*Volkschule*].

5. His ability and judgement, and his memory and understanding, should be equal to the tasks of his training, namely for the learning of several ancient and modern languages.

6. His health must be good and robust, so that he may be able to endure the hardships of his period of training in the Seminary, as well as the strains of his profession amongst the heathen in South Africa.

7. A pupil of the Berlin Mission Seminary must not be engaged [to a future wife] and must remain so while attending the Seminary.

8. The consent of his parents or guardian is required before he can be admitted.

9. Testimonials from his pastor and other Christian men have to be produced.

10. He must be between twenty and twenty-four, at the most twenty-five, years of age at the time that he enters the Seminary.

11. In order that we may learn to know the young men better, they are expected to stay in Berlin for about one year as candidates [for admission to the Seminary]. During this time, they are to attend the lessons for candidates; during this time they have to see to their own maintenance, either by working for a Master of their Craft or by other means. No aid will come from the Mission House during this time.

12. Admission is given once a year, at the beginning of October.

13. The first year, in a particular sense, counts as a probation year. During this time, the pupil will not be provided with linen and clothing by the Mission House; so, at his entry, he has to be provided with sufficient [linen and clothing] for a year. Thereafter, as a pupil of the Seminary, he will be

provided with accommodation, food, clothing and training free of charge.

14. Anyone found unfit as a pupil may be dismissed from among the complement of pupils at any time without compensation.

15. Anyone between the ages of fourteen and sixteen who feels the desire and the calling to serve the mission in South Africa in the future, should in the meantime become either a primary school teacher, or a carpenter, a locksmith or wheelwright, if circumstances allow this or if his inclination is not against this. Any other profession does not make admission to the Mission house impossible, though.

16. The Missionary Society cannot take over legal obligation to pay the salaries of the workers, since it has no standing source of income, and because it is only able to expend annually what is put into its hands by the free love of the Mission's friends. Yet the Lord never lets his servants suffer want. Anyone entering its service does this in the faith that he who first seeks the Kingdom of God and its righteousness will have all other things added to him.

[Note that a similar translation appears in S.P.P. Mminele "The Berlin Lutheran Missionary Enterprise at Botshabelo, 1865 - 1955: An Historical-Educational Study", unpublished M.Ed. thesis, University of the North, 1983, pp.17-18.]

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"Miryam mit dem kleinen Nathanael auf dem Rücken kocht für die Erbauer der Kapelle von Alt-Georgenholtz." / "Miryam with the young Nathanael on her back cooks for the builder of the chapel of Old-Georgenholtz.", Nr. 8620.

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E) PERSONAL COMMUNICATIONS

Personal communications from: Dr. J. Becher, Afrika Seminar, Humboldt Universität zu Berlin; Mr. J.M. Dederen, Department of Anthropology; Mr. W.F. Malunga, Department of History; Rev. M. Moremi, Department of Religious Studies; Dr. N. Musehane, Department of Tshivenda & Prof. E.A. Khuba, Department of Tshivenda, University of Venda for Science and Technology; Dr. W. de Villiers, General Practitioner, Louis Trichardt; Ms H. Giesekke, descendant of Berlin Missionaries in Vendaland, Louis Trichardt and Pietersburg; Mr. M. Goldblatt, Johannesburg-based photographer and Ms L. Nengudza-

Mphephu, sister of the Late *Khosi* P.R. Mphephu.

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