Part I



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Rock Art, Scripts and Proto-Scripts in Africa: The Libyco-Berber Example

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It is infinitely more difficult and rare to discover and calculate an alphabet than to compose or let out a scream, a confession or a brief splendour … I mean to say: a poem. I have searched and I am searching in the world—which is limited for a god but inexhaustible for a mortal—the fundamental, the number or, more specifically, the alphabet. This process is in vain. Too fortunate still if, during a quest that never accepted it, I happened to stumble over the poem.

– Roger Caillois, *Pierres réfléchies*, p. 15

Introduction

The oldest writing supports found to date are made of bone, terracotta and stone. This cannot preclude the fact that other short-lived or fast-disappearing materials could have been used. For this reason, we will never know anything about prehistoric expression on clay, hide, bark or sand, to mention only a few examples.

The existence of stone scripts justified the birth of epigraphy, which brought specialists to work on the large corpus of inscriptions in Greek, Latin, Gaulish, Phoenician, Punic, Egyptian, Arabic and Meroitic, among others. To date, the work of elaboration and translation is ongoing, as is sometimes the deciphering of the languages in which they are written. The age of these texts in general, their almost imperishable support and the fact that we find among them the oldest scripts in the world, have often encouraged another group of researchers—those who study rock art—to seek, in their own corpora, the origin of alphabetical or hieroglyphic systems that appeared later in the same regions. Indeed, according to them, their search for proto-scripts is all the more legitimate since it seems that these images have often been linked

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to myths — i.e. etymologically speaking, to *muthoi*, 'tales' — even if their meaning escapes us. We do not mean at this stage to identify what André Leroi-Gourhan called *mythogrammes*, i.e. an image layout making such stories visible — if not readable. Nor do we mean to identify 'symbolic stenography' as mentioned by Jacqueline Roumeguère-Eberhardt when she writes, concerning the rock art found in the region of Wedza in Zimbabwe, that

> *… the abundance of animals on that rock face represents totemic groups as well as morphology, connoting all the major historical events such as battles* [and] *alliances. A young man's instruction consists in learning how to read the story of these events through that symbolic stenography — a support for the knowledge held by the guardians of traditions as well as the instructor who is specialised in the teaching of the story.*[1]

In this case, the reading difficulty differs from that highlighted by Julia Kristeva:

> *For those of us who belong to a cultural area in which a script is phonetic and literally reproduces phonetic language, it is difficult to imagine that a type of language — a script — could have existed and exists today for many peoples, and operates independently from the spoken chain which, as a result, is not linear (as is uttering), but which is spatial and as such registers a system of differences where each mark obtains a value according to its position in the written sequence.*[2]

These experts do not seek *mythogrammes*, logograms, ideograms or pictograms, but 'pre-letters' or 'pre-hieroglyphs' prefiguring a system of phonetic transposition, and therefore a 'script' in the strong sense of the word, which refers to 'a group made up of graphic, minimal, recurring and combinable units transcribing the phonetic and semantic units of a given language'.[3]

Yet in Africa rock art is increasingly considered as historical documentation likely to bring us, for example, useful information on population history.[4] In addition to the issue of dating, one of the problems posed by the study of rock art is that interpretation is generally very difficult and, save for fairly rare exceptions, we cannot just rely on the style, theme and repertoire of figures without taking their meaning into account. Yet, it is regularly suggested that certain rock displays could constitute a language, a proto-script we do

1 Jacqueline Roumeguère-Eberhardt, *Le signe du début du Zimbabwe. Facette d'une sociologie de la connaissance* (Paris: Publisud, 1982), pp. 127–28 (my emphasis).

2 Julia Kristeva, *Le langage, cet inconnu* (Paris: Seuil, 1974).

3 Joaquín Galarza & Aurore Monod-Becquelin, *Doctrina Christiana, Le Pater Noster* (Paris: Société d'Ethnographie (Recherches Américaines 2), 1980), p. 127.

4 Jean-Loïc Le Quellec, *Rock art in Africa. Mythology and legend* (Paris: Flammarion, 2004); Jean-Loïc Le Quellec, 'Rock art research in southern Africa, 2000–2004', in Paul G. Bahn, Natalie Franklin & Matthias Strecker (eds), *News of the world III.* Oxford: Oxbow Books, 2008d.

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not—or barely—know how to recognise, but which would not be possibly any less decipherable one day, and which in any case would lead to a transition towards a true script, considered as being much more recent.

Therefore, at this stage, we will not linger over the rock images and inscriptions left by European settlers, a good South African example of this being the texts engraved on rocks during the Anglo-Boer War.[5] These documents raise other questions, such as that concerning the line between 'rock art' and 'graffiti', the latter often being held up to public obloquy, when both are rich in ethnographic, social and historical information.[6]

I. Views of graphic language

A graphic language as evoked by rock art specialists can remain fairly vague. As such, the 'almost a reading' possibility was evoked by Marcel Otte in reference to Palaeolithic art, with the actual caves being considered 'as a book'.[7] Even more vague is the thesis of Emmanuel Anati, who thinks that, all over the world, rock images supposedly use only a limited list of graphemes, these always being the same and transcribing humanity's unique first language. As wild as these imaginings can be, the seductive power of global interpretations is such that Anati's thesis received the unexpected support of French palaeontologist Yves Coppens.[8] More definite, while being as general, is the idea maintained by Paul Bouissac, who defends a 'maximum semiotic hypothesis' according to which art is 'a true script, in a literal rather than a metaphorical sense'.[9]

Some archaeologists adopt similar ideas when studying particular sites. This is the case with the assertion by Narcís Soler Masferrer (and co-authors) concerning the pecked engravings on horizontal limestone blocs in Gleb Terzuz (North of Mijic, Western Sahara): 'Signs and animals are linked, creating an enigmatic language.'[10] With regard to other sites in the same region, in the area of Taref (near Bir Lehmar), the same authors became bolder and suggested the existence of a proto-script:

5 Sven Ouzman, ''Koeka Kakie, hents op bokkor of ik schiet!' Introducing the rock art of the South African Anglo-Boer War, 1899–1902', *The Digging Stick* 16 (1999), pp. 1–5.

6 Sven Ouzman & Benjamin Smith, 'Southern Africa's Khoekhoen herder rock art', *The Digging Stick* 21(3) (2004), p. 502.

7 Marcel Otte, *Préhistoire des religions* (Paris: Masson, 1993), p. 73.

8 Emmanuel Anati, *Les origines de l'art et la formation de l'esprit humain* (Paris: Albin Michel, 1989).

9 Paul Bouissac, 'Beyond style: steps towards a semiotic hypothesis, in Michel Lorblanchet & Paul G. Bahn (eds), *Rock art studies: the post-stylistic era, or where do we go from here?* (Oxford: Oxbow Books 1993).

10 Narcís Soler Masferrer, C. Serra, E. Joan & U. Jordi, *Sahara Occidental. Passat i present d'un poble. Sahara Occidental. Passado y presente de un pueblo* (Girona: Universitat de Girona, 1999), p. 114.

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> *In these shelters we find rock art representations with an abundance of signs, animals and human representations. We do not know the meaning of these signs. They could be about cattle marks or about ritual or magic signs, or we could be dealing with signs associated with the origin of writing.*[11]

Rüdiger and Gabriele Lutz, dealing with certain rock engravings from the Libyan Messak, deemed that they were 'a first step towards hieroglyphic inscription' and saw them as *ideogrammes.*[12]

This hypothesis deserves to be taken into consideration, since Africa has several native writings — the most famous ones being from Egypt — namely, hieroglyphic, hieratic and cursive or demotic writing. In Sudan, the ongoing deciphering of Meroitic texts concerns the oldest sub-Saharan written culture.[13] In the Horn of Africa, we can mention Ge'ez alpha-syllabary and its derivatives, used to write Amharic, Oromo, Tigre and Tigrinya. During the 1950s, Shakh Bakri Sapolo invented a new system, better adapted to the specificities of the Oromo script, but the intervention of the authorities limited its usage.[14] To write Somali, two scripts were invented in the 20th century: the Osmanya script, by Osman Yuusuf Keenadiid in 1920–22, and the Borama or Gadabuursi script, by Abdurahman Sheikh Nuur in 1933. The Vai syllabary, designed during the 1820s–30s by Dualu Bukele, was inspired by the Cherokee syllabary, created in America in 1819 and introduced in Liberia by a migrant of mixed race who had become an important chief;[15] the Vai syllabary could have inspired the Southern Nsibidis ideograms from Nigeria.[16] At the end of the 1800s, Flo Darwin, who went to study medicine in America, designed there the Bassa alphabet, which he introduced in Liberia on his return in 1910.[17] In Cameroon, the Bamum or A-ka-u-ku syllabary was

11 Ibid., p. 133.

12 Rüdiger & Gabriele Lutz, 'From picture to hieroglyphic inscription. The trapping stone and its function in the Messak Settafet (Fezzan, Libya)', *Sahara* 5 (1992), p. 78.

13 Claude Rilly, *La langue du royaume de Méroé: un panorama de la plus ancienne culture écrite d'Afrique subsaharienne* (Paris: Honoré Champion 2007).

14 R.J. Hayward, & Mohammed Hassa, 'The Shakh Bakri Sapalo syllabary and summary of the "Oromo orthography of Shaykh Bakri Sapalo"', *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 44(3) (1981), pp. 550–56.

15 Konrad Tuchscherer & P.E.H. Hair. 'Cherokee and West Africa: examining the origins of the Vai script', *History in Africa* 29 (2002), pp. 427–86.

16 J.K. Macgregor, 'Some notes on Nsibidi', *The Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland* 39 (1909), pp. 209–19; Elphinstone Dayrell, 'Further notes on 'Nsibidi signs with their meanings from the Ikom District, Southern Nigeria', *The Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland* 41 (1911), pp. 521–40; H.H. Johnston & L.W.G. Malcolm, 'Short notes on the syllabic writing of the EGâp — Central Cameroons', *Journal of the Royal African Society* 20(78) (1921), pp. 127–29.

17 Helma Pasch, 'Competing scripts: the introduction of the Roman alphabet in Africa', *International Journal of the Sociology of Language* 191 (2008), p. 16.

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invented by Sultan Ibraham Njoya after he had seen Arabic texts, probably around 1903, and to fight against colonial domination. Certain characters of the Bagam script, which was used by the Eghap and is of obscure origin, stem from it.[18] The Mende syllabary, called *ki-ka-kui* (from the name of the first three signs), was invented in Sierra Leone by Kisimi Kamara in 1921, explicitly to counter British power, attributed to the knowledge of writing. While this system, over time, did not resist the pressure of the Latin alphabet, around one hundred people were still using it in the 1990s, to translate Koranic texts in particular.[19] The Kpelle syllabary, attributed to Chief Gbili de Sanoyea, in Liberia, was used mainly during the 1930s and the 1940s. The same goes for the Toma/Loma syllabary, invented in the 1930s by Wido Zogbo, from Boneketa, also in Liberia.[20] Several other African graphic systems are even more recent inventions: for example, the N'Ko script, which was elaborated in 1948 by Sulemana Kante to write down the Mandingue languages;[21] or the Mandombe written form created by David Wabeladio Payi in 1978 following a revelation, and which is used in the Democratic Republic of Congo to transcribe Kikongo, Lingala, Tchiluba and Swahili.[22]

It is worth noting that all the writing systems that appeared in Africa from the 19th century onwards were linked to colonial disruptions, and were very generally invented in reaction to the introduction of Latin characters. All their authors had been in contact with what was nicknamed 'speaking paper', and, having recognised its power, decided to endow their own people with it, very often after having a dream about it.[23] In some cases, inventing a new script, or reactivating an old graphic system, also represented a means to oppose governmental linguistic policies, as was the case for Oromo and Tifinagh to which I refer later.[24] These examples inform archaeologists by illustrating a process that could just as well have occurred in other contexts and at other times. In any case, they prove that contact between natives who do not know the script and newcomers who do can lead to the creation of new

18 Alfred Schmitt, *Die Bamum-schrift. 1. Text, 2. Tabellen, 3. Urkunden*, 3 vols. (Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz, 1963).

19 Tuchscherer, 'Cherokee and West Africa'.

20 Joseph Joffre & Théodore Monod. 'A new West African alphabet: used by the Toma, French Guinea and Liberia', *Man* 43(85) (1943), pp. 108–12; Pasch, 'Competing scripts', pp. 17–18.

21 Dianne White Oyler, 'The N'Ko alphabet as a vehicle of indigenist historiography', *History in Africa* 24 (1997), pp. 239–56, and www.nkoinstitute.com.

22 (Poireau 2004).

23 Sigismund Wilhelm Koelle, *Outlines of a grammar of the Vei language, together with a Vei-English vocabulary and an account of the discovery of the nature of the Vei mode of syllabic writing* (London: Kegan Paul, Trench and Trübner, 1854), pp. 235–36; Pasch, 'Competing scripts', p. 14.

24 Pasch, 'Competing scripts', p. 31.

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scripts inspired by — but not calqued on — the systems being introduced. It is that 'trans-cultural diffusion' process via contact without direct transmission that has been called 'stimulus diffusion' by American anthropologist Alfred Kroeber.[25]

II. The origins of the Libyan script

One of the African native alphabets, the genesis of which is still disputed, lends itself particularly well to the hypothesis of a script originating from earlier rock images. I refer here to the Libyan script that was used to write down ancient Libyan — which was mentioned by Herodotus[26] — and its current descendant, the Tifinagh language, which, after more than two thousand years, is still used by the Tuareg.[27] The word 'Libyan' refers to the north of Africa, according to Greco-Roman usage, and Libyan texts from Numidia (current northern Tunisia and eastern Algeria) are generally contemporary with Carthaginian and Roman antiquity. A very large number of formulary and repetitive Libyan inscriptions are found on funeral steles (Figure 1.1), where they are sometimes accompanied by Punic or Latin texts, whereas Tifinagh inscriptions (Figure 1.2) are very generally engraved or painted on rocks from central and central-southern Sahara.[28] The distribution area of these written forms (roughly, from the Canary Islands to Libya, and from the Mediterranean to the Sahel) covers that of current or vanished Berber dialects which they served, or still serve, to transcribe. The formation of the letters is based on the use of points, lines, circles and squares; their tracing is non-cursive; and they are placed vertically from bottom to top for Libyan texts, and vertically or horizontally for Tifinagh texts (and then from right to left, or vice versa, or using boustrophedon [bi-directional] or even spiral writing). This type of alphabet and its current variations, around ten of them, only note consonants and two semi-vowels which can take on a dot, such a dot being used only at the end of a word and generally having the value /a/, and sometimes /u/ or /i/. With the lack of space between words and the uncertainty of the reading direction, these characters make translation very difficult. The oldest attestation dated with certitude is a dedication engraved on a stele from Dougga (in Tunisia) going back to 138 BC,[29] but the possibility

25 Alfred L. Kroeber, 'Stimulus diffusion', *American Anthropologist* 42 (1940), pp. 1–20.

26 Herodotus, *The Histories*, Book IV, 155.

27 Mohamed Aghali-Zakara, 'De l'origine et de la survivance des écritures libyco-berbères', in Fantar, M'hamed Hassine & Ahmed Siraj (eds), *Débuts de l'écriture au Maghreb* (Casablanca: Publications de la Fondation du Roi Abdul-Aziz Al Saoud pour les études islamiques et les sciences humaines, 2005), pp. 85–90.

28 Lionel Galand, 'Du berbère au libyque: une remontée difficile', *Lalies* 16 (1996), pp. 77–98.

29 Jeannine Drouin. 'Formules brèves et formes graphiques en touareg' *Bulletin de Littérature orale arabo-berbère* 22–23 (1995), p. 37.

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of an older usage, from the 7th to the 6th century BC, is perfectly tenable, even if it is not unanimously agreed on.[30]

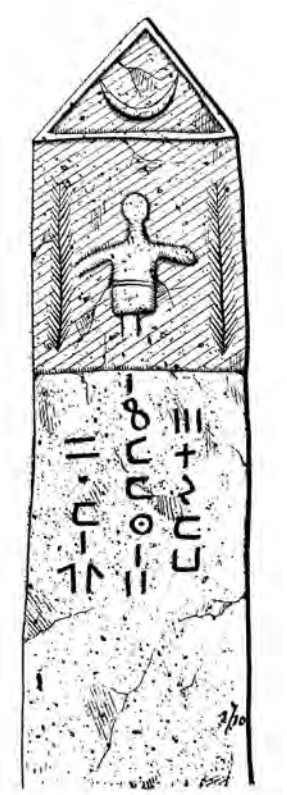


Figure 1.1 Example of stele with a Libyan inscription, discovered in 1853 in the Cheffia region (Algeria)[31]

The question of the origin of the Libyan script is still under debate. There are three theories in this regard: a) borrowing and adaptation from another ancient written form (Phoenician, Thamoudean, Safaitic or South-Arabic), b) autochthonous creation from a stock of ancient signs, and c) a mixture of the two previous theories, with borrowing from the script *idea* and from Phoenician signs, the alphabet then being complemented with a stock of ancient local symbols. Going over all three theories, Salem Chaker and Slimane Hachi

30 Gabriel Camps, 'Recherches sur les plus anciennes inscriptions libyques de l'Afrique du Nord et du Sahara', *Bulletin archéologique du Comité des Travaux historiques et scientifiques* 10–11 (1974), pp. 143–66.

31 After Jean-Baptiste Chabot, *Recueil des inscriptions libyques* (Paris: Imprimerie Nationale, 1940), p. 49.

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have concluded that 'the Libyan graphic material is largely autochthonous and certainly stems from Berber pre-/proto-historic geometric art'. For them, the source of that material should be sought in the marking, identification signs, ornamentation and magico-religious signs used previously, and which are still used nowadays at times. These authors suggest even the possible 'existence of an embryonic form of pre-alphabetical script, with a limited stock of *ideogrammes*, reconverted afterwards in alphabetical signs'.[32] The idea of a re-functionalisation of some ancient material as suggested by the writing practices of the Phoenicians/Punics is ancient, since James G. Février thought that we ought to search for the origin of the Libyan script in 'an old local repertoire: tribal tattoos, marks of ownership, signs engraved on freestones'.[33] And way before him, Oric Bates deemed that 'it may be safely concluded that the Libyans borrowed from the Phoenicians a few letters and the idea of writing, and that they added to the borrowed letters enough owner's marks to make an alphabet, rude, but suited to their simple needs'.[34]



Figure 1.2 Example of Saharan inscription in Tifinagh characters, Algerian Tadrart

32 Salem Chaker & Slimane Hachi, 'À propos de l'origine et de l'âge de l'écriture libyco-berbère. Réflexions du linguiste et du préhistorien', in Chaker, Salem & Andrzej Zaborski (eds), *Mélanges offerts à Karl-G. Prasse* (Paris & Louvain: Peeters, 2000), p. 11.

33 James G. Février, 'Écritures libyques et ibériques' in James G. Février (ed.), *Histoire de l'écriture* (Paris: Payot, 1959), p. 325.

34 Oric Bates, *The eastern Libyans: an essay* (London: Macmillan, 1914), p. 86.

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For Malika Hachid,

> *… it is first of all among the Capsians of the Maghreb, more than 10 000 years ago, and among the Bovidian Proto-Berbers of the Sahara, 7000 years ago already, that we need to look for that old stock of varied signs, then among the oriental and Saharan Libyans of the beginnings of history. It is in that iconographic melting pot that certain graphic socio-religious elements are found* […] *and progressively became open to the implementation of a sort of primary ideographic language. It is only with the Garamante Palaeo-Berbers that this primary system moved towards a scriptural form that ended in the first writing characters.*[35]

Drawing attention to the fact that in Ekaden Ouachérène (= Ikadnouchère, Tassili-n-Azjer), a magnificent painting of a quadriga (two-wheeled chariot) surrounded by several inscriptions was dated quite convincingly to the 6th–5th centuries BC,[36] she deduced that the document 'offered a record of the characters of a Libyan Saharan alphabet during that period'.[37]

Yasmina Djekrif reckons that the signs of the Libyan script 'are part of the repertoire of the designs relating to Berber art used in pottery decorations and tattoos', and recalls in this regard that 'basic figures have been pointed out a long time ago: crosses, points, sets of lines [and] circles accompanying animals on certain rock engravings of Neolithic tradition'.[38]

In a text as elegant as the Tassili paintings on which he commented, Slimane Hachi set out that

> *… the most recent horse or camel phases, of less than 4000 years old, went down the stylisation and schematisation road. Drawings, becoming increasingly plain, were reduced to basic lines to express, contrary to the previous phase, realities that were less numerous, less diversified and, at first sight, more trivial. The graphic drift we can observe here seems to go with the fact that representation was following a semiological direction. Further on, the slim-waisted elegant women of Tamadjert, with a proud bearing and theatrical body movements are part of the trip, with their slender necks and definite energy; they look at you, placing their long hair behind their necks and overwhelming you with the insolence of their eternal youth. It is most likely in this movement that one should look for the origin of the first signs of the North African script, the Libyan script.*[39]

The theory according to which Libyan writing could be autochthonous, and to which I will soon return, is shared by Ginette Aumassip: 'First of all, seen

35 Malika Hachid, *Les premiers Berbères: entre Méditerranée, Tassili et Nil* (Algiers/Aix-en-Provence: Ina-Yas/Edisud, 2000), pp. 185–86.

36 Andreas Müller-Karpe, 'Eine quadriga-darstellung in der zentral-Sahara (Nachtrag von Otto Rössler)', *Beiträge zur allgemeinen und vergleichenden Archäologie* 2 (1980), pp. 359–79.

37 Hachid, *Les premiers Berbères*, p. 174.

38 Yasmina Djekrif, 'L'épighraphie libyque', *Forum de l'Enseignant (ENS Constantine)* 3 (2007), p. 23.

39 Slimane Hachi, 'Djanet, mirage miraculé', *L'année patrimoine* (2003), p. 37.

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as a derivative of Punic script, the oldest alphabetical script after Ougarit and which was spread by Phoenician trade, in North Africa in particular, the Libyan script seems to find its origin more in some old local collections of tattoos and local marks of ownerships.'[40]

Mohammed Aghali-Zakara, who deems that we 'can imagine that a set of iconic signs of pictographic origin, used as markers, *aides-mémoire*, aesthetic marks and marks of ownership, have evolved and that figurative signs became phonetic'[41], also agrees with this theory.

Finally, while Lionel Galand does think that 'Libyan materials were, for most, created in Africa where, besides, we often find them utilised in varied ways, [such as] tattoos, pottery decorations [and] animal marks', he still tempers this opinion by reminding us that the Tuareg do not seem to relate this set of signs with their script.[42] In fact, he expressed this opinion several times, writing as early in 1996:

> *Personally, I think that, as does Camps (Camps 1960: 269-274), Libyco-Berber scripts result from successive adaptations carried out on symbols or signs in use among African populations, e.g. tattoos or animal marks, even if, as shown by a recent study (Drouin 1995: 66), the Tuareg do not actually make the link.*[43]

III. Libyan script and rock art

In 2002, Salem Chaker reiterated that 'the general forms of the Libyan script (geometrism) are perfectly in line with the geometric figures and symbols of North African proto-historic rock art (paintings and engravings) and with the geometric decoration of Berber rural art'.[44]

The idea that the origin of Libyco-Berber scripts — a term we use here to group ancient Libyan script and ancient or current Tifinagh script[45] — is endogenous, as such presupposes the existence of a proto-script to be sought among ceramic and furniture decorations, tattoo and weaving designs, the wall ornamentation of houses and rock images. Could it be that, in the face of all these documents, we find ourselves in the same situation as that of the

40 Ginette Aumassip, 'La période caballine, un renouveau de la vie saharienne' in *L'Algérie en héritage. Art et histoire* (Arles: Actes Sud, 2003), p. 56.

41 Aghali-Zakara, 'De l'origine et de la survivance des écritures libyco-berbères', p. 86.

42 Lionel Galand, 'Un vieux débat: l'origine de l'écriture libyco-berbère', *Lettre de l'AARS* 20 (2001), p. 2.

43 Galand, 'Du berbère au libyque'.

44 Salem Chaker, 'L'écriture libyco-berbère. État des lieux, déchiffrement et perspectives linguistiques et sociolinguistiques'. Colloque annuel de la SHESL, Lyon-ENS, 2 February 2002, p. 5.

45 Lionel Galand, 'Petit lexique pour l'étude des inscriptios libyco-berbères', *Almogaren* 23 (1992), p. 123.

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overwhelming majority of 16th- and 17th-century Spanish scholars — the likes of Hernan Cortes, Diego Durán, Gregorio García, Jerónimo de Mendieta and Bernardino de Sahagún — who, unable to recognise indigenous Mexican scripts which did not use any Latin, Greek or Hebraic letters, only saw *pinturas*, *figuras*, *signos*, *señal*es, *efigi*es and *imágenes* in them?[46] Bernardino de Sahagún thought, for example, that the Indians 'had neither letters nor characters, that they did not know how to write and that they communicated among themselves by means of figures and images'.[47]

Relatively speaking, the texts quoted above seem to reckon that the majority of rock art specialists are actually in a comparable situation: unable to recognise anything other than 'images', they do not know how to identify in them the emergence of a script. Yet, irrespective of what we think as far as the ideas they set out are concerned, these texts share an essential feature: their authors merely *suggest* the existence of a pre- or proto-script, or a relation between certain rock signs and letters from the Libyan alphabet, without proving any of it.

This alphabet contains between 22 and 24 signs, transcribed with their variants as they appear depending on the orientation of the inscriptions (Figure 1.3).

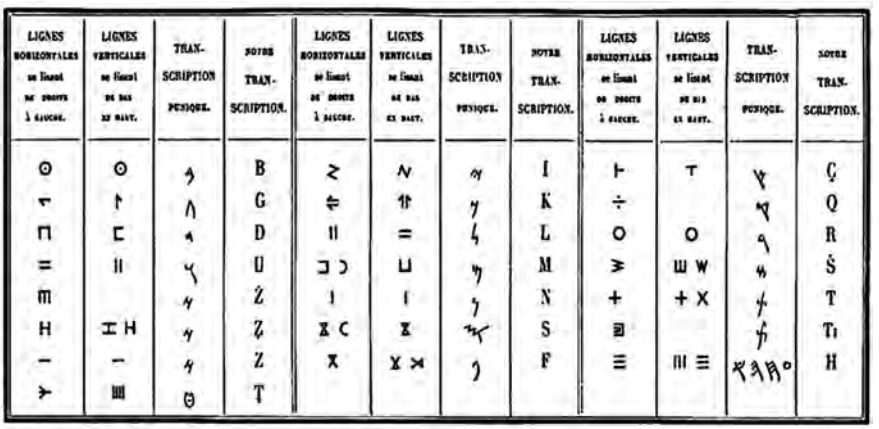


Figure 1.3 The Tifinagh alphabet

In accordance with the endogenous origin theory, it appears indeed that some of these signs are identical to marks currently in use. Thus, in the extreme

46 Anne-Marie Vie-Wohrer, 'Découverte des écritures indigènes au XVIe siècle dans le Mexique central', *Amerindia, revue d'ethnolinguistique amérindienne* 19-20 (1995), pp. 421–31.

47 Bernardino de Sahagún, *Historia general de las cosas de Nueva España*, 4 vols (Mexico: Porrúa, 1969), Book III, 165.

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south of Tunisia, P. Pillet[48] pointed out that families identify their camels thanks to such marks: O (*holga*: 'the ring'), ū m (*holga mefta*: 'the open ring'), | (*metreg*: 'the vertical bar'), — (*semta*: 'the horizontal bar'). Ali Zouari pointed out that these signs and the names given to them are, in the town of Sfax, similar to those incised on the round loaves that families give to bakers for baking as a means of identifying which breads belong to whom.[49] Similarly, Mark Milburn pointed out that the Tubu of the Tibesti use camel marks that are also comparable to certain alphabetical letters, and which can be found engraved, separately or in sets, on rocks:[50] ⊓ ('the donkey hoof'); \\ ('the assegai fight'); Ψ ('the crow leg'); ᴍ ('the sinuous rope' — cf. the ancient Libyan ū); ↿ ('the goat herder's crook, to catch pods in trees'). The author establishes a link between these signs and those of an enigmatic inscription copied at er-Roui by Burthe d'Annelet.[51]

As for Salem Chaker and Slimane Hachi,[52] they draw attention to how close Libyan letters are to the ownership marks of the Tuareg of Ahaggar, which were inventoried by Father de Foucauld (Figure 1.4), and the fact that some of these marks are sometimes found on tombstones.[53]

Iddir Amara has also pointed out the graphic proximity of certain Libyan or Tifinagh letters to geometric figurations, such as the ithyphallic figure 'z',adding that 'the triangle, the quadrangular sign, the chevron, the parallel or crossed lines [...] can represent the matrix from which the Libyan alphabet was shaped'.[54] He attached great importance to the 'I' sign engraved on the shoulder of a bovine from Khanget el-Hadjar in the south of Constantine (Algeria): since it matches the letter /S/ of the Libyan alphabet, Iddir Amara intended to read in it the word *eSu*, which designates the ox in Tuareg, and in this saw a confirmation 'of the age of the language and the presence of certain primitive alphabetical signs'.[55] In Guerrar el-Hamra, according to him, another image seemed to go in the same direction: the representation

48 C.P. Pillet, 'Les marques de chameaux dans l'extrême sud Tunisien', *Revue tunisienne* 108 (1915), 234.

49 Ali Zouari, *Les relations commerciales entre Sfax et le Levant aux XVIIIe et XIXe siècles* (Tunis: Institut national d'Archéologie et d'Art, 1990).

50 Mark Milburn, 'Sur quelques inscriptions énigmatiques des confins Nigéro-Fezzanais', *Le Saharien* 91 (1984), p. 25.

51 Jules-Louis-Charles de Burthe d'Annelet, *À travers l'Afrique française*. 2 vols (Paris: Firmin-Didot, 1939).

52 Chaker & Hachi, À propos de l'origine et de l'âge de l'écriture libyco-berbère', p. 11.

53 Edmond Bernus, 'Marques de propriété touarègues et pierres tombales (plaines au sud-ouest de l'Aïr)', *Sahara* 8 (1996), pp. 7–17.

54 Iddir Amara, 'Nouvelle approche de l'art rupestre de l'Atlas saharien: les figurations de la période tardive', *L'Anthropologie* 107 (2003), p. 553.

55 Iddir Amara, *L'art rupestre dans le sud-ouest de l'Atlas saharien (Algérie): étude analytique et typologique des figurations de la période récente* (Paris: Panthéon-Sorbonne, 2001), p. 209.

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of an extremely schematic horse which he believes to be associated with the two letters 'ⵡ'—/W/ and ⵙ /S/. Supposing that the neck of the animal represents a /Y/, Amara then reads the word YWS as 'horse'.[56] Finally, he interprets extremely schematic representations of horsemen as resulting from the association of the Libyan letters ⵣ (/Z/), divided in two to form the horse's legs and tail, and 'ⵏ' (/N/) placed above to figure the horseman.[57]

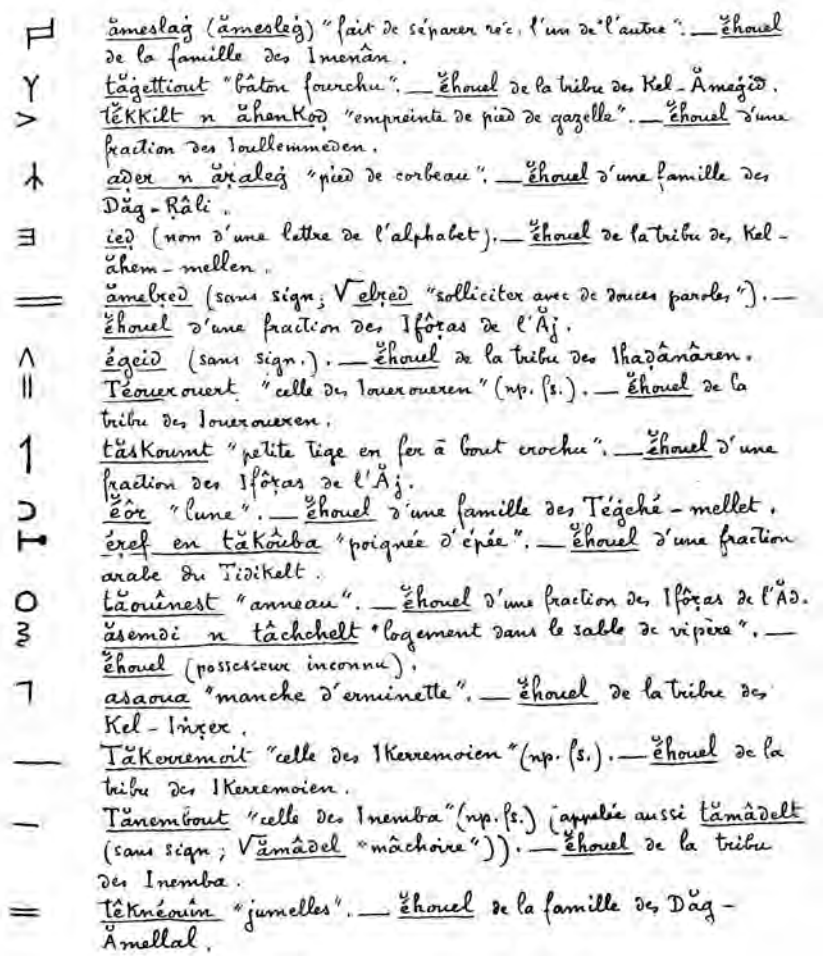


Figure 1.4 Table of Tuareg marks from the Ahaggar area[58]

56 Ibid., pp. 352–53.

57 Ibid., p. 210.

58 Charles de Foucauld, *Dictionnaire abrégé Touareg-Français de noms propres (dialecte de l'Ahaggar)*. (Paris: Larose éditeurs, 1940), p. 629.

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All these arguments can be summarised in three main points:

- The progressive stylisation, schematisation and geometrisation of Saharan rock art prepared the ground for the appearance of Libyan script.
- Certain signs used for tattoos or ceramic and furniture decorations, testify to this process.
- A few signs associated with rock images specifically show the birth of the Libyan script.

The problem is that none of these points can stand up to specific examination.

The progressive stylisation and schematisation of rock images from the Sahara has often been referred to, and Alfred Muzzolini has mentioned in this regard the slow 'secularisation' of art.[59] Although these notions of 'stylisation' and 'schematisation' required details, every author in question agreed to that the horse and camel images were indeed more 'schematic' than those left by older pastoral populations. We need to think about this finding because, on the one hand, this phenomenon is noticeable especially during the camel period — therefore *after* the appearance of the Libyan script — and, on the other hand, because of the fact that truly geometric figures are very rare. To give weight to the theory being defended, we need to show that, during the horse period preceding the camel period, such figures would have been multiplied, becoming increasingly abundant before the appearance of writing — which is then supposed to have recycled some of them. Yet, this is not the case. In fact, there is no record of the progressive appearance of signs, followed by their progressive geometrisation up to their becoming letters — contrary to what can be seen, for example, in Mesopotamia.

The example of the quadriga from Ekaden Ouachérène/Ikadnouchère in particular, as put forward by Malika Hachid, certainly does not point in the direction of progressive geometrisation, since it is beautifully drawn, with wide curves that cannot be qualified in any way as being 'schematic', and even less as 'geometric', since the quadriga's painter made good use of perspective. While painted or engraved images showing non-schematic horses, probably associated with inscriptions, are possibly not as rare as

59 Alfred Muzzolini, 'Le profane et le sacré dans l'art rupestre saharien', *Bulletin de la Société Française d'Égyptologie* 124 (1992), pp. 24–70.

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has been mentioned,[60] only the most recent ones show schematic animals or animals reduced down to angular geometric drawings.[61] As such we cannot continue to assert, without the support of a solid — not yet produced — documentation, that Libyan inscriptions supposedly mark 'the result of a long process of schematisation of rock engravings'.[62]

IV. Signs as a proto-script

In the argumentation exposed here, resorting to signs used for tattoos or ceramic and furniture decoration has never been clearly documented, and is practically always limited to a simple claim. Yet, two noteworthy series of exceptions exist. One is given by Gabriel Camps, who reports signs marked on pottery pieces from Sila and Germa — although isolated signs certainly cannot prove the existence of a script. Potentially more convincing are the three signs ⵣⵆⵔ painted on a vase from Tiddis going back to the 3rd century BCE,[63] although, again, this is a possibility and not a proof. Indeed, we absolutely need to keep in mind this warning from Lionel Galand: 'One or two isolated signs can indeed have a symbolic value and transmit a message, but they do not necessarily imply the existence of a script. They only become "letters" if they undoubtedly belong to an alphabet, within which they are opposed to other letters to form a structured set'.[64] Unfortunately, making a discovery creates enthusiasm that regularly leads one to forget this word of caution, as happened to ethnologist Marceau Gast; after examining four signs engraved on the abutment of a window in a ruined building in St-Hilaire near Banon, in Haute-Provence, he wrote 'it is certain [...] that these are ancient Libyco-Berber signs that can date back to the Middle Ages',[65] when nothing was less certain. The other exception is given by Malika Hachid, who produced the photography of painted Kabyle pottery (with, in particular, a series of ⵡ aligned

60 Malika Hachid, 'Du nouveau sur le monument d'Abalessa (Ahaggar, Algérie). De la date de l'introduction du dromadaire au Sahara central, du personnage d'Abalessa et des inscriptions rupestres dites 'libyco-berbères', *Sahara* 17 (2006), pp. 95–120; Jean-Loïc Le Quellec, 'À propos d'un site à gravures de la Tadrart algérienne: récurrences d'une assocation image-inscription', *Les Cahiers de l'AARS* 11 (2007), pp. 125–36; Werner Pichler, 'A propos "Association"', *Rock Art Research* 25(1) (2008), pp. 117–19; Jean-Loïc Le Quellec, 'From co-occurrence to association', *Rock Art Research* 25(1) (2008c), pp. 119–21; Jean-Loïc Le Quellec, 'Du neuf avec de l'ancien: à propos des gravures et inscriptions du monument d'Abalessa', *Sahara* 19 (2008a), pp. 178–83; Jean-Loïc Le Quellec, 'En suivant monsieur Akha (ou Agha) de la Tadrart au Messak', *Les Cahiers de l'AARS* 12 (2008b), pp. 161–69.

61 Cf. for example Hachid, *Les premiers Berbères*, pp. 176–177.

62 Amara, *L'art rupestre dans le sud-ouest de l'Atlas saharien (Algérie)*, p. 214.

63 Gabriel Camps, 'Écriture libyque', *Encyclopédie berbère* 17 (1996), p. 2571.

64 Lionel Galand, 'La datation des inscriptions. Pour une évaluation des critères linguistiques', *La Lettre du RILB* 11 (2005), p. 1.

65 Marceau Gast, 'Une pierre gravée singulière à Banon', *Actualité des Alpes de Lumière* 58 (1993).

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vertically) accompanied by the following legend: 'Berber geometric art, which could have inspired Libyan written form, will be preserved up to today in popular art (weaving, tattoos, rock paintings, wooden sculptures, jewellery …)'.[66] Yet, even by finding many more examples, the proposed theory would not be reinforced for all that. Indeed, one cannot transpose into the past an extremely recent image (19th–20th centuries) by supposing its decoration to be behind a tradition of which, in fact, it is only, at best, the result! There again, it would be important to have at one's disposal ancient documents showing: a) the progressive geometrisation of recognisable iconic figurations; and b) the re-use, within a graphic system, of geometric signs thus obtained. Yet, Gabriel Camps, in a brilliant work, carried out a meticulous analysis of the decoration found on ancient Berber ceramics. From this work, it emerges that only five vegetal and aviform designs were identified which could meet the first condition, that of a progressive geometrisation. But in actual fact, only one really illustrates an evolution leading from an iconic design (a bird) to a geometric form not immediately recognisable as being an animal, and none of them can be related to any of the letters of the Libyan alphabet (Figure 1.5). Besides, whether on the pieces of pottery or the weavings and wall decorations of houses from Kabylie, Ghât or Ghadamès, the major tendency of the Berber schematisation of animal and anthropomorphic figures leads to triangular forms[67] — which can only be found on two letters (⵼ and ⵅ) of the alphabet supposed to derive from it. A more recent study, by Jacques Fontanille, suggests the possibility of a 'shared foundation' or 'direct relation' between the corpus of decorative elements of proto-historic Berber pottery and Libyan script, and concludes that it would be very difficult to confirm such a possibility.[68]

As far as tattoos are concerned, ancient testimonies are obviously extremely rare. But on examining the Egyptian representations of Lebū and Temehū, or 'Eastern Libyans', from the tomb of Pharaoh Seti I (19th dynasty) and Medinet Habou (20th dynasty), we find that their many body marks do not match any of the signs of the Libyan alphabet,[69] except for a double line on the forearm of one of these characters — although a mark formed by two parallel lines is so commonplace that nothing can be concluded from it, especially since it is the only one here. The mark appears several times on the skin of Ötzi, the man who was discovered in 1991 in a

66 Hachid, *Les premiers Berbères*, p. 165, fig. 252.

67 Gabriel Camps, *Aux origines de la Berbérie. Monuments et rites funéraires protohistoriques* (Paris: Arts et Métiers Graphiques, 1962), pp. 378–80.

68 Jacques Fontanille, 'Décoratif, iconicité et écriture. Geste, rythme et figurativité: à propos de la poterie berbère', *Histoire de l'art et sémiotique* 3(3) (1998), p. 15.

69 Hachid, *Les premiers Berbères*, pp. 95–97.

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glacier in the Italian Dolomites and dated to 5300 BP.[70] For the same reason, we cannot call upon the body decorations of Iheren-style characters, which consist of parallel lines, chevrons and Ç aligned vertically,[71] and for which the fact that they were tattooed rather than painted cannot be proved. As such, it appears that regularly mentioning tattooed signs as the possible source of the Libyan alphabet relies, in fact, only on an actual or sub-actual documentation, unduly transposed to the past.

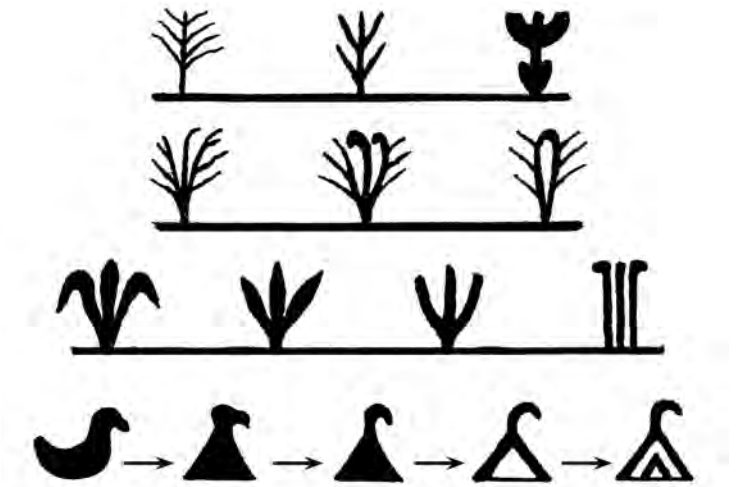


Figure 1.5 Progressive geometrisation of four types of iconic signs used to decorate Berber pottery[72]

As for the ownership signs used to mark animals, Salem Chaker and Slimane Hachi say about them:

> *… writing must have progressively emerged from previous practices: animal marking, tattooing, engraving and rock decorating, all the practices in which we find forms that are strangely similar to the characters of the Libyco-Berber alphabet. To be convinced about it, we simply need to refer to the camel markings of the Tuareg from Kel-Ahaggar as published by Charles de Foucauld.*[73]

And yet no, such a reference cannot be sufficiently convincing, for these marks were recorded by Father de Foucauld at the very beginning of the 20th century and cannot testify to the existence of an equivalent practice supposedly older than the script. It is also very difficult to obtain information on the markings

70 Luc Renaut, 'Les tatouages d'Ötzi et la petite chirurgie traditionnelle', *L'Anthropologie* 108 (2004), p. 72.

71 For example, Hachid, *Les premiers Berbères*, p. 74, fig. 102.

72 After Camps, *Aux origines de la Berbérie*, fig. 146.

73 Chaker & Hachi, 'À propos de l'origine et de l'âge de l'écriture libyco-berbère', p. 10.

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used by pre- and proto-historic engravers and painters. Nevertheless, four parallel undulating lines visible on the cheek of an Iheren-style bovine from Wa-n-Derbawen (Tassili-n-Azjer), perhaps testify to such usage.[74] And the fact that the ⵠ, ⵙ, ⵣ and ⵟ signs, all attested in the Libyan script and in Saharan Tifinagh inscriptions, also belong to the set of signs used by Lapp cattle breeders to mark their reindeer,[75] or that the signs ⵔ, ⵛ, ⵜ, ⵜ and ⵡ, also attested among Tifinagh inscriptions, are also Mongolian marks,[76] show the extent to which it is impossible to rely on simple isolated signs.

An examination of the available literature shows that the marks of cattle breeders, rock paintings, weavings, jewellery and *a fortiori* wood decorations can only benefit from an essentially ethnographic — not prehistoric — documentation. As such, it is difficult to see how recent signs, supposed resulting from a long evolutionary process, could be used as illustrations of their antique source!

V. The studies of Iddir Amara

From among all the authors mentioned previously, Iddir Amara is the only one who really tried to document the emergence of the Libyco-Berber script from rock images. The first example he gave, that of the letter 'z' with the value /Z/ in Tifinagh, and which is supposedly derived from rock figurations presenting ithyphallic men, is also mentioned by Salem Chaker and Slimane Hachi who write:

> *Some of the figures attested in the horse phase can clearly be found as alphabetical characters as well as Berber decoration designs which, we know it, are still receiving today a semantic interpretation (Cf. Devulder 1951, Moreau 1976, Makilam 1999). The most striking case is that of the anthropomorphic sign* ⵣ*, which manifestly represented and still represents a human being and has the value Z in the Tifinagh alphabet.*[77]

This example has no value, for two reasons: a) the letter 'ⵣ' is only found in the Tifinagh and not the Libyan alphabet from which the Tifinagh alphabet derives — its appearance as a letter is thus relatively recent; b) contrary to the claims of the above-mentioned authors, this figure is only found in the camel phase context, not the horse phase:[78] as a result, it appeared too late to be behind a letter that came up before that. These are also the reasons

74 E Landais, 'Le marquage du bétail dans les systèmes pastoraux traditionnels', *Revue d'élevage et de médecine vétérinaire des pays tropicaux* 53(4) (2000), fig. 3.

75 Ibid., fig. 1.

76 Ibid., fig. 10.

77 Chaker & Hachi, 'À propos de l'origine et de l'âge de l'écriture libyco-berbère', p. 5.

78 Alfred Muzzolini, 'Au sujet de l'origine de l'écriture libyque', *Lettre de l'AARS* 19 (2001), p. 24.

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for which its presence on an amphora of the 1st century found in Germa, the Garamantian capital, as interesting as it is, does not contribute to this debate — while indicating nevertheless that a variant of Tifinagh script (this letter being characteristic of it) was probably in use in the Fezzân at the time.[79]

However, the fact that decorations 'are still receiving today a semantic interpretation', does not prove anything, since this interpretation could just as well correspond to the remotivation of symbols no longer understood. Moreover, the publications of the three authors mentioned by Salem Chaker and Slimane Hachi in support of their theory ought to be used cautiously. The famous work of M. Devulder established, for example, that the Ouadhias represent an egg with … a white triangle, which jeopardises, to say the least, the hypothesis of the iconic origin of the signs.[80] Salem Chaker and Slimane Hachi actually specified in a footnote that the interpretations given by Jean-Baptiste Moreau and Malika Grasshof (who signs under the name 'Makilam'), in their publications, 'must be taken cautiously'.[81] In my opinion, this is the least we can say, especially as regards 'Makilam'[82] who practises a type of reading based on Jungian, Durandian or Eliadian archetypes, on the basis of hasty generalisations and falsehoods thrust forward with such self-confidence that even honest researchers unfortunately do not fail to be favourably impressed by them.

The second example produced by Iddir Amara is that of the 'I' sign engraved on the shoulder of a bovine from Khanget el-Hadjar, in the south of Constantine (Algeria), which is supposedly an 's' from the Libyan alphabet. This is indeed possible, but is not proved in the least. To say that, in addition, it supposedly refers to the word *eSu*, which designates the ox in present-day Tuareg, supposes that this term was already known in ancient Libyan, which is also possible but still not proved for all that. And that, from among the dozens of thousands of bovines represented in the Sahara and the Atlas, someone felt the need to write the word 'ox' on a bovine, is again possible, but very curious: the information thus added would have been perfectly redundant and unnecessary, as would the addition of the word 'horse' on a perfectly recognisable horse picture. Finally, the sign in question, compared to the bovine, is of another making altogether and must have been added much

79 Camps, 'Écriture libyque', p. 2572.

80 M Devulder, 'Peintures murales et pratiques magiques dans la tribu des Ouadhias', *Revue africaine* 426–427 (1951), pp. 63–102, fig. 40.

81 Chaker & Hachi, 'À propos de l'origine et de l'âge de l'écriture libyco-berbère', p. 5, n. 1.

82 Malika Grasshof, *Signes et rituels magiques des femmes kabyles*. 1st edition (Aix-en-Provence: Édisud, 1999).

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later at an unknown date. As such, this example consists only of unverifiable hypotheses, i.e. the '⵼' sign is supposedly ancient, refers to a Libyan letter, is read as *eSu* and designates an ox. Contrary to what the author claims, it is therefore impossible to consider this document as a confirmation 'of the age of the language and presence of certain primitive alphabetical signs'.[83]

A third example is that of an extremely schematic horse which is supposedly partly made up of the two letters ⵡ /W/ and ⵙ /S/ (Figure 1.6). This reading is only possible if the document has been over-interpreted and manipulated in a rather acrobatic way. On the one hand, the script in which the author chose to recognise the letter ⵙ /S/ could just as well be seen as an ⵙ /S/ included in a ⵍ (Libyan /M/), and on the other hand, the dot situated at the centre of the square might not be intentional, meaning that it could just as well have resulted from a wall alteration, on which other quite similar cups can be observed. Since Iddir Amara did not physically examine this wall himself but based his claim on a photo published by Malika Hachid, it is therefore impossible for him to prove that the said dot forms an integral part of the script.

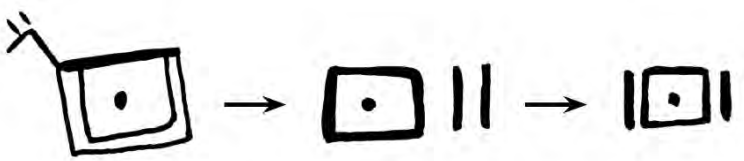


Figure 1.6 Breaking down a rock engraving into alphabetical signs[84]

Finally, the 'ⵡ' sign in fact does not exist at all in the image under analysis: it is purely and simply constructed by the author, on the basis of some arbitrary breakdown. Moreover, even if it existed, it could only correspond to the value /L/ or /U/ in Libyan (depending on the orientation of the script). As a result, to read the word *aƳiS* 'horse' on this image is wishful thinking, and this example is no more valuable than the previous ones.

The last example concerns a horsemen whose mount is of the 'pectiniform' type (comb-shaped). To see in it the Libyan letter ⵣ (/Z/) results from a breakdown as arbitrary as the previous ones, ignoring the fact that the ⵎ and ⵐ are also found in Libyco-Berber characters. Above all, pectiniform figures only appear in the camel phase, and to make of them the ancestors of a script that appeared during the previous period can only result from playing on words, by specifically attributing all horse images to the 'horse phase'. This is possible only if we do not take into account the fact that horse

83 Amara, *L'art rupestre dans le sud-ouest de l'Atlas saharien (Algérie)*, p. 209.
84 After Amara, *L'art rupestre dans le sud-ouest de l'Atlas saharien (Algérie)*, fig. 56.

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representations persist during the camel phase, and that a figure that could be referred to as being 'caballine' (horse-like) because it represents a horse, is not automatically 'caballine' (from the horse phase) in the sense of 'period prior to the camel phase'. Therefore, like all the others, this example also comes to nothing.



Figure 1.7 Figures of pectiniform horsemen interpreted by Iddir Amara as compositions realised from Libyan letters[85]

In fact this is not very surprising, for after having recalled that in the Anti-Atlas, in Tinzouline in particular, 'signs from Western Libyan script are sometimes combined with small animal figurations (horse, dog, oryx) that seem to play the role of *pictogrammes*', Gabriel Camps had firmly affirmed that we could not conclude anything from it as regards the origin of the script: 'these *pictogrammes*, if they really play this role, cannot be used to support the theory of the in-situ birth of the Libyan alphabet by transformation of ancient ownership marks and other traditional scripts, such as those still found on tattoos.'[86]

Thus, none of the three points of the previously mentioned arguments has the least demonstrative value. Not that they are *a priori* unacceptable, but they are simply not supported by any factual data. Therefore it falls to their advocates to document their claims if they are to maintain these.

But that is not all. Even if these three points could finally be proved — which I strongly doubt — it would not be sufficient to point out that ancient signs are found among the letters of a subsequent alphabet to prove the derivation of the latter from the former. Acting in this manner would equate to following a pseudo-reasoning of the *post hoc, ergo propter hoc* type. Indeed, two major difficulties would remain in that one would still have to prove that: a) these are not simple, and therefore ubiquitous, signs; b) the signs identified as such have a constant value and indeed form a system.

Yet, these two conditions seem, this time *a priori*, extremely difficult to verify, for two reasons:

85 After Amara, *L'art rupestre dans le sud-ouest de l'Atlas saharien (Algérie)*, fig. 56.
86 Camps, 'Écriture libyque', p. 2568.

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a) The signs being sourced are of the simplest types: dots and lines (simple or multiple), circles and squares, rounded or angular arches, crosses, diabolos and zigzags. While there is a basic principle according to which the simpler a sign, the more it is likely to spread and receive different values, these signs are actually the ones that are found everywhere, at all periods, with the most diverse values and meanings. The only way to avoid this problem would be, therefore, to work on recurrent *associations* of identical signs not found on the most ancient rock testimonies.
b) Strictly speaking, the value of pre- and proto-historic Saharan rock signs is unknown, and can only be so in the absence of testimonies of painters and engravers. Any interpretation of rock images, as interesting as these can be, can only be a product of assumption, and any hypothetical constancy of the value of certain signs therefore remains unprovable. Moreover, no sign system has ever been revealed among Saharan rock images, when tens of thousands of these are known, and when thousands of pages have already been dedicated — in vain, from this point of view — to the 'signs' found on such images.[87]

Contrary to the theory of a proto-script to be sought among rock signs, there remains a last argument in view of which all others mentioned so far seem secondary. It is summarised as follows by Jean-Jacques Glassner, in a review on the origin of cuneiform script:

> *Writing results from a conceptual work that cannot be dissociated from its application for fear of meaninglessness. The concept is cut out from the actual continuum of the forms to which it gives birth. Invention and first attestation are therefore necessarily situated in the order of simultaneity, the second only being the activation of the first. Based on this comment, there can be neither pre- nor proto-script.*[88]

As such, the futile search for a Libyan matrix within rock images from the Sahara is similar to the approach of entomologist Kjell Bloch Sandved, who, for twenty-five years, looked for the letters of the Latin alphabet in the designs of butterfly wings.[89] While he did find them all in the end, it does not shed any light on the origin of this alphabet. For all that, any quest for the origin of the letters of the

87 Jean Leclant *et al.*, *La culture des chasseurs du Nil et du Sahara* (29), 2 vols (Algiers: Mémoires du CRAPE, 1980); Jean-Loïc Le Quellec, *Symbolisme et art rupestre au Sahara* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 1993).

88 Jean-Jacques Glassner, 'L'invention de l'écriture cunéiforme', *Pour la Science* 1930 (2002), pp. 19.

89 Kjell Bloch Sandved, *The butterfly alphabet* (New York: Scholastic, 1999).

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Libyan alphabet is not necessarily hopeless. Looking for their antecedents must simply be done somewhere other than in rock iconography.[90]

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90 For example, Werner Pichler & Jean-Loïc Le Quellec, 'Considerations on the sign ≈ and the problem of its interpretation in Tifinagh inscriptions', *Sahara* 20 (2009), pp. 7–14.

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2



From Pictures to Letters: The Early Steps in the Mexican Tlahcuilo's Alphabetisation Process during the 16th Century

Patrick Johansson

Introduction

The alphabet was probably one of the most important weapons used by the Spanish in their enterprise of colonisation after the Conquest of Mexico (1519–21). If horses, cannons and muskets showed the military power of the Spaniards, the alphabet was apparently proof of their cultural 'superiority'.

The fact that paper could 'speak' literally astonished indigenous political and religious authorities, used to conserving and transmitting their knowledge through memorial orality and pictography. Among other things, this western technology helped to enable Christianity, the religion of the Book, to become dominant, and also to integrate Mexican natives into a new social order. The alphabetical texts from the oral pictorial tradition, considered as idolatrous, to be transcribed and read by friars, and some of their contents refuted and then forbidden. Other texts considered as 'good', often interpolated, were conserved in the 'golden jail of alphabet' and eventually used by friars in different colonial contexts.

Many pictographic documents were destroyed. But some were re-created after the Conquest, by native painters, when Spanish friars, realising they had to know the Other to evangelise him or her better, asked the native *tlahcuilos* (indigenous scribes or painters) to paint again some of the pictographic documents that had been destroyed. However, by then the indigenous artists had become acquainted with the alphabet, and consequently no longer painted in the old style.

The transcription process and the re-creation of native texts can be schematised as follows:

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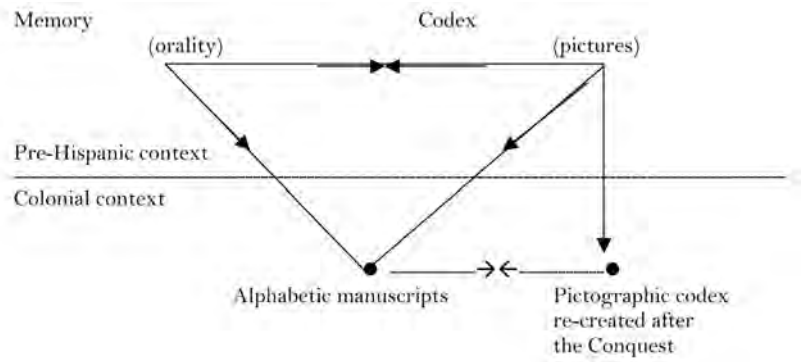


Figure 2.1 The process of transcription and re-creation of texts after the Spanish Conquest of Mexico

The transition from pictograms to letters implicated a gradual ideological change for those who were in charge of transmitting tradition. In pre-Hispanic times, oral texts and pictography could — in semiological terms — be independent or complementary. A 'virtual' text could be forged in either a linguistic or a pictorial crucible without a direct semiological correspondence between pictures and words. The pictorial text was thus to be *seen* rather than to be read. It could also be articulated in both oral and pictorial languages, the second being, in this case, a visual feedback structure for orality.[1]

During the first part of the colonial period, as they were getting acquainted with the alphabet, Nahua painters of pictorial books (*tlahcuilo*) were modifying their ways of constructing meaning through pictures. The nature of the modifications often depended on the topics but the general trends of transformation show the influence of the alphabet on the pictorial expression.

On the other hand, pre-Columbian pictorial documents were 'read' after the Conquest for Spanish friars or people interested in the native culture. The result was a verbal text transcribed in alphabetical manuscripts 'illustrated' with pictograms. It is interesting to observe the semiological mixture in such documents as well as to compare the alphabetic and pictographic versions.

After examining briefly the semiological relation between words and pictures in a pre-Columbian Nahuatl context, we will consider the gradual transformation of indigenous writing during the 16th century.

1 Cf. P. Johansson, *La palabra, la imagen y el manuscrito. Lecturas indígenas de un texto pictórico en el siglo XVI* (UNAM, México, 2004), pp. 115–67.

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I. Words and images in Nahuatl pictographic writing before the Conquest

Before the Conquest, pictographic writing did not directly refer to words. The pictorial text was to be seen, and eventually generated a verbal speech, alluding to the sequence, but there was no codified correspondence between pictures and sounds. The only exceptions might have been toponyms and anthroponyms, although we are not absolutely sure they wouldn't have been influenced by the alphabet in the early contact with the Spaniards. The different levels of codification are described below.

Pictorial codification

Simple pictography

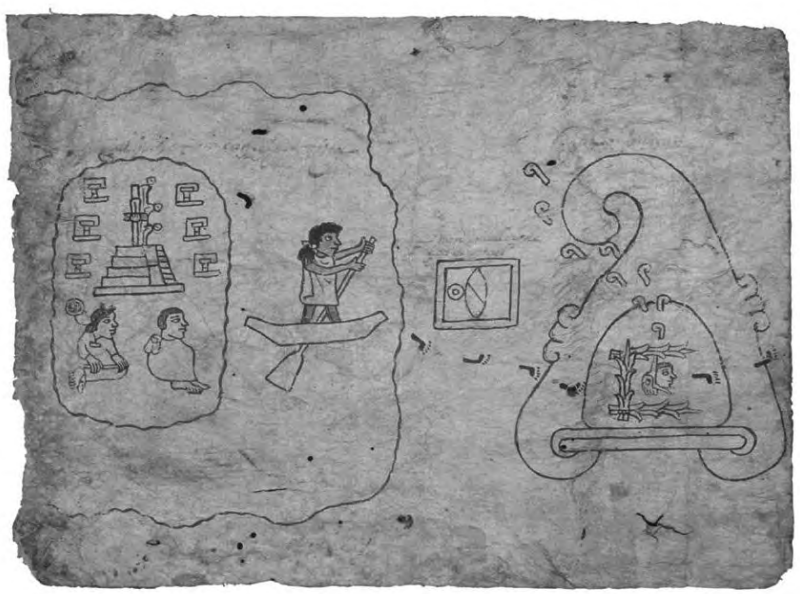


Figure 2.2 The departure from Aztlan, *Codex Boturini*, plate 1

The image in figure 2.2 represents the action with certain details that might be omitted in an eventual 'reading' of the pictorial text. Although a verbal text can be extracted from the picture, the pictography is designed to be seen. There is a direct impression of forms in the mind of the onlooker. In the first plate of the *Codex Boturini*, besides the departure from Aztlan (the island) and the depiction of Colhuacan (mountains with a cave inside), the picture generates a metaphorical impression of birth and gestation through forms (spiral) and the symbolism of the components (island, water, cave, etc.).

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In historical contexts, a picture was worth so many words that the eventual readings were often incomplete. The reader somehow chose what being said was among other possibilities and read it the way he wanted.



Figure 2.3 A battle around Lake Texcoco, *Codex Xolotl*, plate 7

A picture, through visual metaphors, could also be a 'detonator' of orality in shamanic contexts of reading. The 'book of dreams', or *temicamatl*, is an example of this.

Metonymical reduction of pictorial sequences

Due to an economy of pictorial resources, some sequences were simplified through a codification of components. An example is war, which is generally referred to in Nahuatl iconography by a shield and arrows or a shield and the Aztec spade-like weapon called a *macuahuitl*. It could simply symbolise a martial people like the Aztecs.



Figure 2.4 *Codex Mendoza*, plate 1

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Or, in a narrative context, it could express that a war was being waged against another nation.

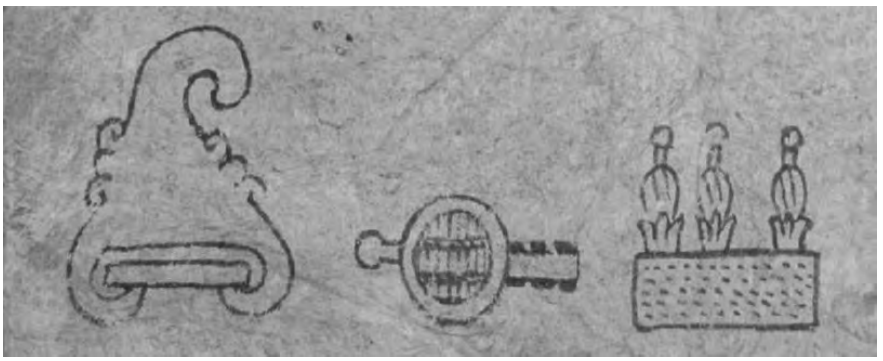


Figure 2.5 War is settled between Colhuacan and Xochimilco, *Codex Boturini*, plate 21

A defeat was expressed by the same glyph surrounded by footprints.



Figure 2.6 The Mexica are defeated in Chapultepec and take refuge on the moors of Acocolco, *Codex Boturini*, plate 19

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Ideograms

More abstract concepts could be figured by pictures that referred to ideas. The idea of 'movement', for example, was expressed through twisted earth segments being embraced around an axial eye.

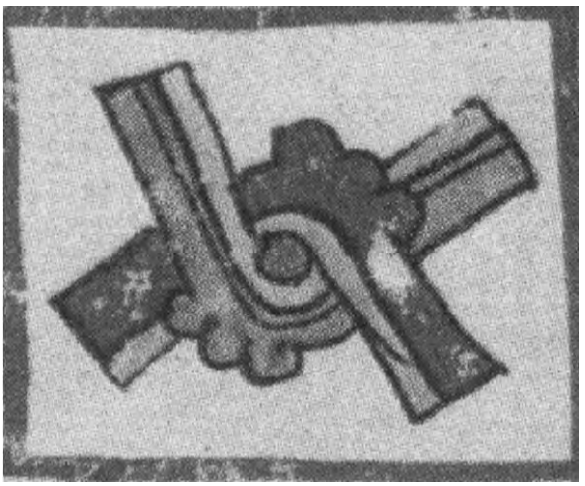


Figure 2.7 Ollin 'movement', ***Codex Borgia*****, plate 10**

Phonograms

In some cases, proper names could have been painted using a partial rebus-like phonetic relation between the picture and the name.



Figure 2.8 Toponymic glyph and pictorial expression of the conquest of Cuauhnahuac, ***Codex Mendoza*****, plate 2**

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The volute in figure 2.8 expresses the word *nahuatia* ('to command'), alluding to its sound and not to its meaning: *nahua-(tia)* provides only the two first syllables in order to make, with the pictogram tree, the word *Cuauh-*[2]*:Cuauhnahua(c). Nahuac* ('near') is phonetically induced by the two first syllables of a word, which means something else (to command).

1. Formemes[3]

Among the more or less codified pictographic elements that make up the pictorial expression are the specific aspects of lines and strokes, the size of the pictograms, their position within the limits of the graphic support, whatever it might have been: bark paper, maguey fibre, animal skin, stone, as well as the colours and their symbolism, etc.

2. A bi-dimensional frame for the production of pictographic meaning

The position of the pictograms on the graphic support was not linear. Although something was 'going on' in narrative terms, a pictorial composition prevailed which generated an integration of the different elements. A bi-dimensional loom seems to have woven meaning besides referring objectively to an event.

II. The first contact with the alphabet

The alphabetisation process of the indigenous people began as soon as Franciscan friars arrived in what was to become New Spain. The alphabet was so important for the evangelisation that a side entrance of Texcoco's main church was decorated with stylised letters of the alphabet.

As early as 1523, Fray Pedro de Gante, to the natives of Texcoco, attempted to initiate into the occidental art of alphabetic writing as he was teaching them catechism and 'mechanic arts'.

A few years later, he had them paint, in pictograms, different prayers of the Catholic liturgy in order to make the process of evangelisation easier. The 'Lord's Prayer' was one of these.

2 The Nahuatl term for 'tree' is *cuahuitl*, which becomes *cuauh* in a syntagmatic composition.

3 *Formeme*: formal unity of meaning in pictography.

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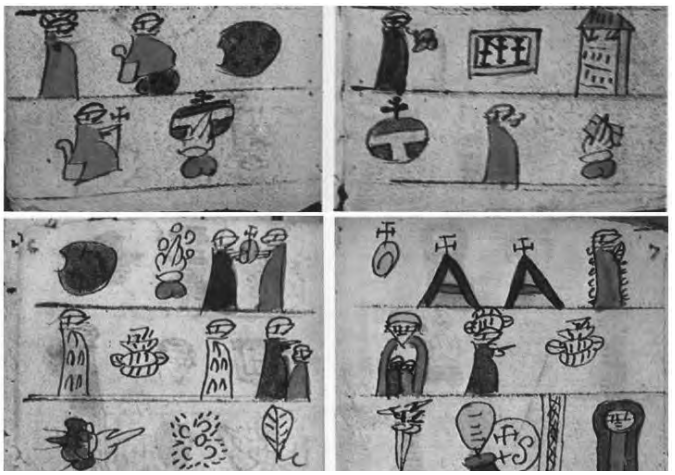


Figure 2.9 Fray Pedro de Gante's catechism

Totatziné ilhuicac timoyetztica
Ma moyectenehua in motocatzin
Ma huallauh in motlatocayotzin
Ma chihualo in ticmonequiltia in tlalticpac
Yn iuh chihualo in ilhuicac
Totlaxcal momoztlaye totechmonequi,
In axcan ma xitlechmomaquili
Ihuan ma xitechmopopolhuilitzino in totlatlacol
Yn iuh tiquintlapopolhuia in techtlatlacalhuia.
Ma xitechmomanahuili
Ynic amo ypan tihuetzizque: yn amo qualli tlanequiliztli
Yhuan ma xitechmomaquixtilitzino yn ihuicpa in ixquich in amo qualli
Ma in mochihua

Literal translation of the prayer:

Our father who are in Heaven
May your name be well pronounced
May your rulership come
May what you want be done on earth
May the same be done in Heaven
Give us today the bread we daily need
And forgive us our sins as we forgive those
Who offend us
Protect us so that we don't fall on
Bad wishes
And liberate us from everything which is not good.
So be it.

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In this pictorial version of the prayer, pictures were supposed to refer to words and phrases that had to be memorised and then said by the indigenous people. However, there was a semiological compromise between words and forms, colours and ideas. In the Nahuatl expression *ma moyectenehua in motocatzin* ('hallowed be thy name')—literally, 'may your name be well pronounced'—the adverb *yec(tli)* ('well') is pictorially referred through a red colour of a voluminous volute, which expresses the holiness of fire, the rising sun or blood. On the other hand, the image for *ixquich* ('all') represents cotton (*ichcatl*), thus establishing a phonetic link between the pictorial sign and the word.[4]

Pictographic writing was not directly related to verbal language, although there were obvious connections between a story said in words and the same story painted with pictograms. Many anecdotes tell the surprise of the indigenous when they saw that 'a paper could speak'.

The Franciscan friar Jeronimo de Mendieta, referring to the facility with which natives learned Spanish, Latin and the alphabet, wrote:

> *'… and they began to write in their own language and send each other letters as we do; before, they considered a marvel that the paper would speak and tell each one what the absent wanted to make known'.*[5]

A Jesuit father, Miguel del Barco, tells a story of a hungry Cochimi Californian Indian who ate a piece of bread sent by a friar from Loreto to another living in San Javier Viggé, Baja California, along with a letter which referred, among other things, to the piece of bread being sent. Asked where the piece of bread was, the Cochimi 'was puzzled that such a tiny thing could speak. Nevertheless he said: if the paper says so, it lies.'[6]

A few days later, the Cochimi was sent again to deliver a message along with another piece of bread. When the messenger felt hungry, and before he ate the bread, he placed the paper behind a stone so as not to be seen when eating it. Asked the same question as the first time, the Cochimi answered again that the paper was lying, for that time he was sure he could not have seen him from where it stood.[7]

4 P. Johansson, 'Un padre nuestro en imágenes del siglo XVI', in *Castalida*, pp. 12–19.

5 Fray Gerónimo de Mendieta, *Historía eclesiástica Indiana* (Mexico City: Editorial Porrúa, 1980), p. 411.

6 Miguel del Barco, *Historia natural y crónica de la antigua California*, Miguel León-Portilla (ed.), 2nd edition (Mexico City: Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, 1988), p. 178.

7 Ibid.

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These and many other anecdotes prove that there was no direct correspondence, before the conquest, between the picture and the word.

III. Typology of changes in indigenous pictographic expression

Cultural contact between Spaniards and Mexican cultural elites had essentially two aspects:

- Franciscan friars had frequent contacts with *tlamatinime* (wise men) and *tlahcuiloque* (painters) in order to know better the culture of those they wanted to evangelise. After the foundation of the Imperial School of the Holy Cross at Tlatelolco in 1536, this cultural exchange became more intense.
- The first viceroys wanted the Emperor Charles V and then King Philip II to know about native culture, and asked Mexican painters to copy their pictorial documents in order to send these copies to Spain.

One of the first documents to be copied was the *Codex Mendoza*, which was produced for the first viceroy of New Spain, Don Antonio de Mendoza. This copy of an original native document was finished in 1553. Its elaboration could not have begun before 1535, the date of Mendoza's arrival in Mexico. Barely fourteen years after the Conquest, the Mexican painters had already learnt quite a few things about occidental drawing techniques and philosophy.

A greater iconicity of the picture

The Aztec pictographic speech produced meaning through composition and included oral speech for further details. After the Conquest, due to European influence, the tendency was to express everything pictorially.

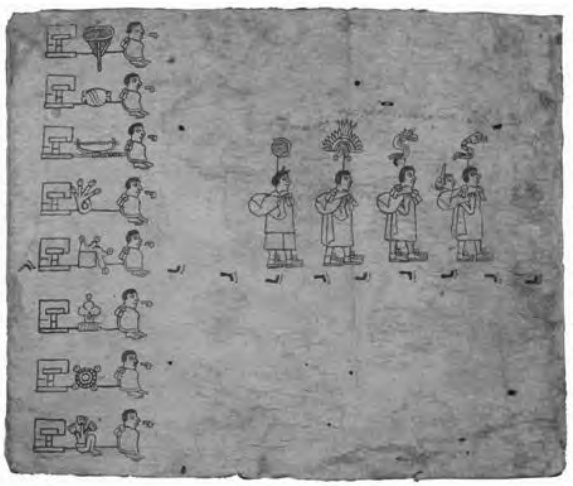


Figure 2.10 ***Codex Boturini*****, plate 2**

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Figure 2.11 *Codex Azcatitlan*, **plate 5**

Two images that refer to the same pictorial sequence display many of these changes: in Figure 2.10, the orthogonality of the two axes, as well the blank spaces defined by the composition, refer to a *crucial* separation of the Aztecs from the other tribes and the desolation of the arid northern lands (which equated to 'death') they had to cross on their way to the centre of Mexico.

Contrasting with that sober and highly expressive way of painting, is the iconic visual bustle in Figure 2.11, which, in fact, improperly corresponds to the oral version of the story and seeks to provide details in the form of script. The ideological tendency expressed by the change would be that, as in the alphabet, the script has to say everything.

The perspective

One of the first things the Mexican painters learnt from Spanish friars or painters was to integrate perspective into their compositions.

Palaces and temples in perspective might have appeared 'more real' to native painters, but they probably did not understand that they were losing, somehow, the principles of their production of meaning through pictures. If we compare the following two colonial indigenous versions of a temple with a pre-Hispanic pictorial representation, we see a series of cultural modifications.

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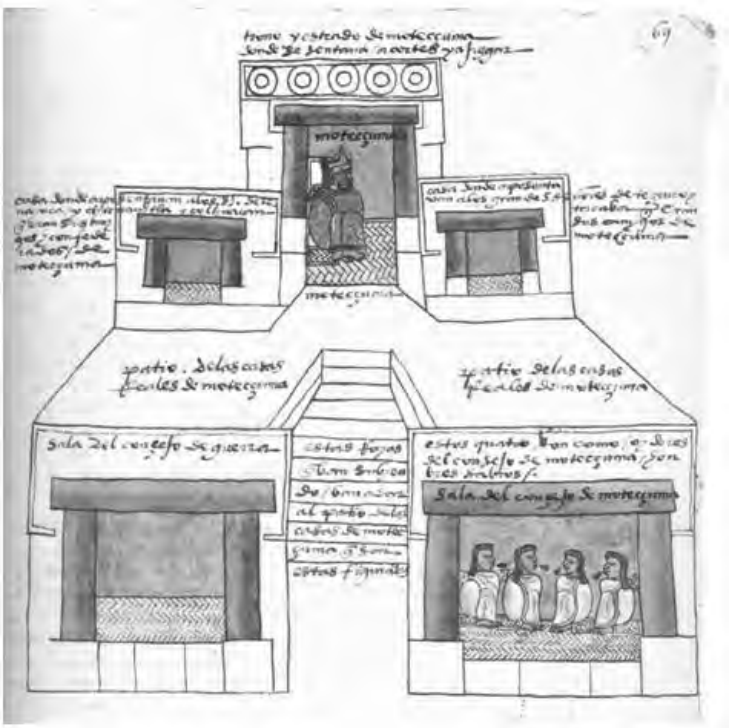


Figure 2.12 *Codex Mendoza*, **plate 70**



Figure 2.13 *Codex Azcatitlan*, **plate 2**

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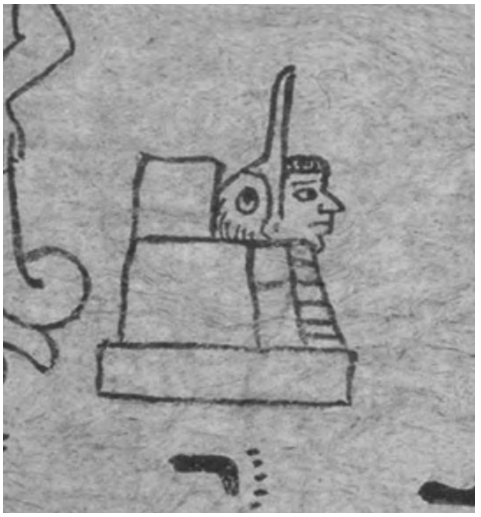


Figure 2.14 *Codex Boturini*, **plate 3**

The pre-Hispanic image of the temple in the *Codex Boturiui* (Figure 2.14) does not pretend to look like a real temple. It provides lines, figures, a certain number of steps and a profile, which refer to the *idea* of 'temple'.

With the use of perspective, the density of pictorial speech diminishes considerably. Natives were not perceiving forms to create an idea of 'temple', and of the deity to which the idea related, but rather the referent — the temple itself, the real temple. This new pictorial form of painting tended to change indigenous mentality: it was somehow transparent. It encouraged native painters to deal with reality instead of remaining in the poetic abstraction of symbolic forms.

A recrudescence of phonetic glyphs

As we saw earlier in Figure 2.8, phonograms were sometimes used to refer to a toponym or an anthroponym. However, they were not used to express actions or common names. After the Conquest, this tendency appears, probably due to the influence of the alphabet. There follow two examples of this direct relation between pictures and words.

In Figure 2.15, the thief — *ichtequi* in Nahuatl — is referred through a rebus-like construction of meaning. We see a bunch of threads (*ichtli*) and an obsidian blade which is cutting it: *-tequi* ('to cut'). 'To cut threads' (*ich-tequi*) becomes, phonetically, *ichtequi* ('thief'). We can compare this colonial representation with the former way of painting (Figure 2.16) to appreciate the change.

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Figure 2.15 *Codex Mendoza*, **plate 72**



Figure 2.16 *Codex Mendoza*, **plate 71**

Another example can be found in *Codex Azcatitlan*, a pictorial book painted after the Conquest according to new graphic principles.

The water (*a(tl)*), the hands (*ma(itl)*) and the mountain (*tepetl*) create the word *a-ma-tepetl* (*Amatepetl*), a 'paper mountain' of great importance in both pictorial and oral version of the narration.

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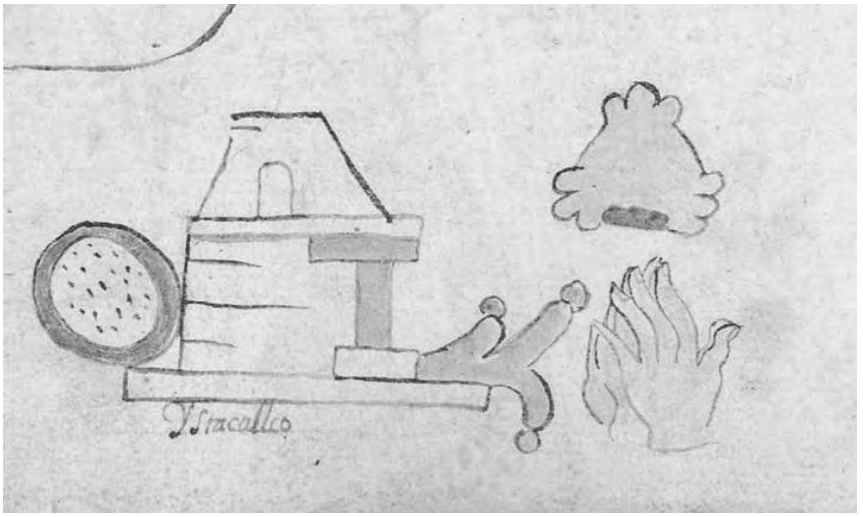


Figure 2.17 Amatepetl, *Codex Azcatitlan*, plate 12

The pictures and the words

The subordination of the image to a verbal *logos* by indigenous *tlahcuilos*, under the influence of Western writing, is manifest in the *Codex Xolotl.* Various degrees of subordination can be observed in it, as described in Figure 2.18.



Figure 2.18 *Codex Xolotl*, plate 8 (detail)

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Figure 2.19 *Codex Xolotl*, **plate 8 (detail)**

In Figure 2.19 the Tepanec spy tells King Maxtla what he saw: 'Chimalpopoca killed a dancer.' A genuine Nahuatl expression would probably have omitted the verbal report to the king since it had presented the act itself.

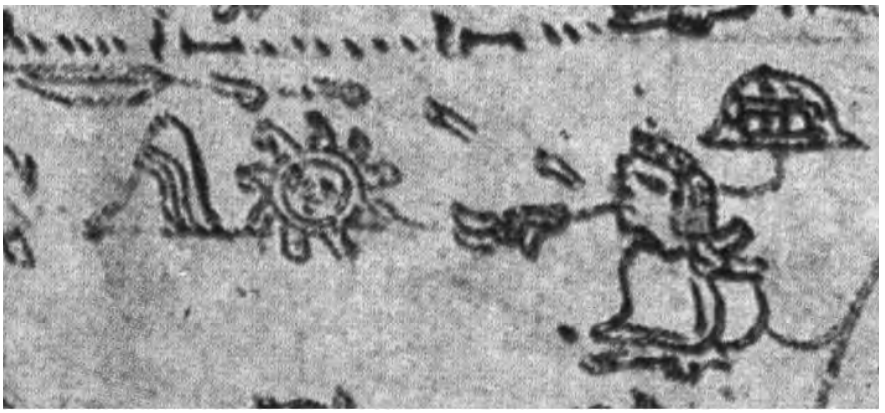


Figure 2.20 *Codex Xolotl*, **plate 8 (detail)**

Although the meaning in Figure 2.20 is visually comprehensible, the series of pictographic elements undoubtedly constitutes a sentence, which reads: 'Tlacateotzin (sun) escaped (leg of a deer) to Texcoco (hill) on a boat (canoe) with Nezahualcoyotl (coyote).'

Words and pictographic paradigms

In Figure 2.21, Chimalpopoca, in jail, addresses Nezahualcoyotl. Following a volute, which expresses the act of speaking, we observe the following pictographic paradigms between each volute:

- skull: 'kill';
- loin cloth: 'Maxtla' (the Tepanec king);
- sun: 'Tlacateotzin' (sun-man), Tlatelolco's king;

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- hill: Tlatelolco;
- skull pierced by an arrow: 'to destroy';
- forearm with water: Acolhua (from Texcoco);
- stone and a cactus: the glyph for 'Tenochcas';
- house: 'lineage';
- stone (*tetl*) and a flag (*pantli*): glyph for 'Tepanec'.

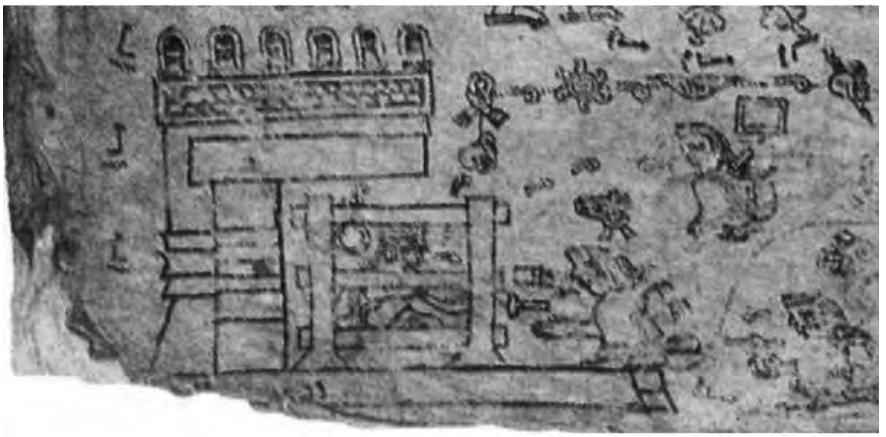


Figure 2.21 ***Codex Xolotl*****, plate 8 (detail)**

The corresponding verbal reading would be: 'Maxtla will kill Tlacateotzin from Tlatelolco and will destroy the Acolhua and Tenochca so that only the Tepanec will rule.'

This text would probably have belonged to a time of orality and would not have been painted before the Conquest. During the colonial period, Mexican *tlahcuilos* imitating the alphabet would paint everything.

IV. The reading of a pictorial book and its alphabetic transcription, circa 1576

Pictographic books were read during the 16th century in order to inform friars or chroniclers about indigenous traditions and history. These readings by natives were then alphabetically transcribed in specially designed European documents. As an example, look at the third plate of *Codex Boturini* (Figure 2.22).

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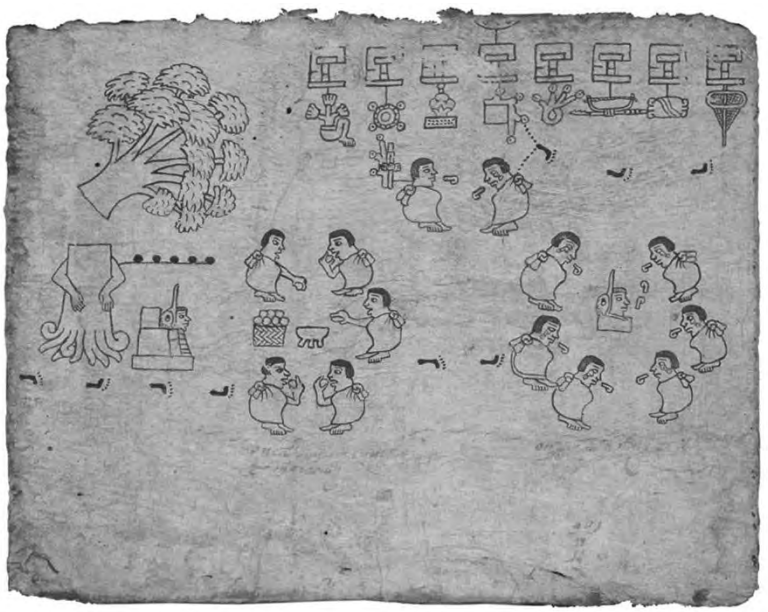


Figure 2.22 *Codex Boturini*, **plate 3**

In oacico yn quavitl ytzintla
Niman oncan omotlallique
Cenca tomahuac yn quahuitl
Niman oncan contlallique yn
tlalmomoztli (yn
Intlalmomaz)
Ypan quitlallique in diablo
yn ocontlallique
niman concuique yn imihtac.

Auh niman ye tlaquazquia
(tlaquasque)
Yn niman ympam poztec yn quavitl
Niman (f. 5 r) yc quicauhque yn
quiquaya (cenca

Omotetzauhmauhtique omisahuique)
Cenca huecauhtica in totolloticatca

Auh niman ye quinnotz yn diablo
quimilhui (yn inteouh)

to Cuahuitl itzintla
(or to the foot of the tree)
Then they settled.
The tree is very big
Then they placed their earth temple
On It, they placed their devil
Once they had placed it
Then they took their lunch.

And as they were about to eat
Then the tree broke on them
Then they left what they were eating

They remained a long time astonished
Then their god called them, he told them

'Tell those who come along with you, the
Eight tribes

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Xiquinnavatican yn amechvica yn chicue calpotin	*Tell them we won't go on, We will turn back here.'*
Xiquimilhuican camo tiazque ça nican titocuepazque.	*After he had said this The eight tribes became were very sad about*
yn oquimilhuique cenca tlaocoxque yn yehuantin in chicue calpoltin yn oquinnavatique niman oquitoque in chicue calpoltin.	*what he had ordered. Then the eight tribes said:* *'Ô lords where shall we go? We are going with you.'*
Totecuiyovane campan tiazque ca tamechtoviquilia. (ca tamechtohuiquilizque)	*Then once again they (the Aztec) said: 'No, you will go by yourselves'.* *Then, first, the eight tribes went on*
Niman occeppa oquimilhuique. Ca amo ca ça anyazque (ca ye cualli)	*They left them at the foot of the tree They stayed there a long time.*
Niman ic atto valpeuhque yn chicue calpoltin ompa quimoncauhque yn quavitl ytzintlan huecauhtica yn ompa catca.	

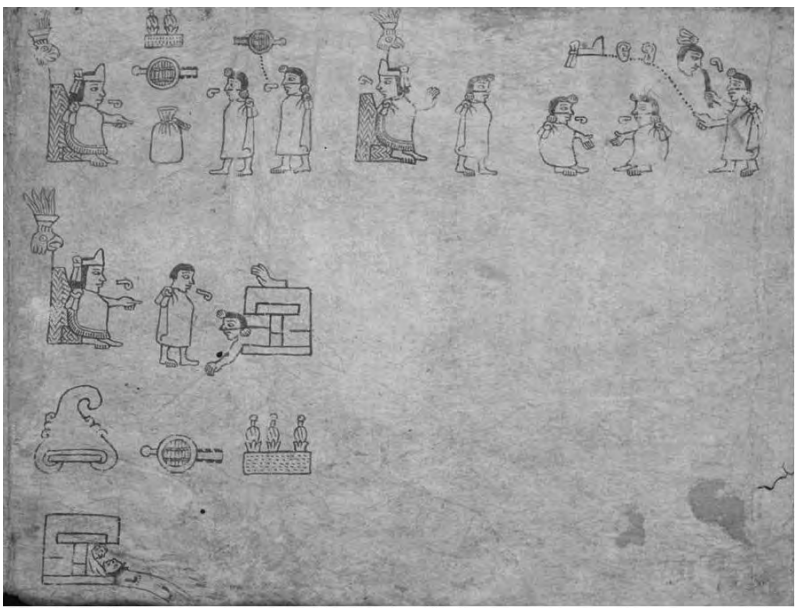


Figure 2.23 ***Codex Boturini*****, plate 21**

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The following transcription is a reading of a pictographic sequence. Curiously, in plate 21 of the same codex (Figure 2.23), there is a different relation between the picture and the text. The pictographic sequence seems to be the drawing of an oral text:

ca oncan mopilhuatito ca yn contitlan	*They went to procreate there at Contitlan*
yn ipan acatl y yn moyaochiuhque *yn colhuaque monamicque yn xochimilca*	*That year there was a war* *The Colhuaque fought the Xochimilca*
yniquac ye quimohuitillia yn colhuaque	*The Colhuaque were in danger*
niman ye quitova yn tlahtohuani yn coxcoxtli *Im mexica cuix ayocaque* *ma hualhuiyan.Niman ye quintzatzilia*	*Then the king Coxcoxtli says:* *'The Mexica, they don't have enough room'*
niman ixpan onyaque in tlahtohuani *niman quimilhui.* *Tla xihualhuiyan* *yn axcan techpehuazque yn xochimilca* *namechtequiuhtia cen xiquipilli*	*Let them come! Then he goes to tell them:* *Then they went see the king* *Then he said: Come,* *today we will fight the Xochimilca* *I order you to take 8,000 prisoners (Xochimilca)*
yn anquimaçizque *yn amomalhuan yezque.*	
Niman quitoque yn mexica. *Ca ye qualli tlahtohuanie* *ma xitechmotlaocolili chimalçoltzintli* *yhuan maquauhçoltzintli*	*Then the Mexica said:* *'It's fine, Ô King, but* *Give us at least an old shield* *And an old spade'*
Niman quito yn tlatohuani. *Camo tiçia çan iuh anyazque.* *Auh yn mexica niman ye monavatia quitoque.* *Tley tiquitquizque ?*	*Then the king said:* *'No you will go like this'.* *And the Mexica then deliberate, they said:* *'What will we bring as a tribute?'*
Niman quitoque. *Maço* *çan ti ytz ynic tiquinyacatequizque* *(f. 21r) yn tomalhuan*	*Then they said:* *'Let's cut the noses of our prisoners,* *for if we cut their ears he might say we have cut both ears.*
yntla innacaz tiquintequitizque *haquitozque (ca quitoz)* *haço nenecoc yn oquintequilique yn immaca* *mo yehuatl ma yehuatl yn ynyac.*	*In order that this doesn't happen* *Let's cut their noses.'*

If we consider the pictographic precision of the story, it becomes evident that the image is a pictorial translation of the oral text. Consider only the first and

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the last part of this sequence; in *mopilhuatito* ('they went to procreate'), the act of procreating is pictographically clear. Now, the path with the footprint refers to the grammatical extroverted modality of the expression, *to* ('they went to …'). In the latter statement, 'Let's cut the noses of our prisoners, for if we cut their ears (he [the king] might say we have cut both ears …', the right arm refers to the indicative mode of speech, while the left, with the dotted line, expresses the conditional: 'what the king could say'.

V. The pictograms and the word

During the colonial period, Mexican painters worked with both pictograms and words. They verbally glossed some pictures or they illustrated alphabetic texts.

The alphabetic glosses of pictographic documents

Among the first pictographic documents to be 'read' and transcribed to alphabet was the indigenous book compiled by the Franciscan friar, Bernardino de Sahagún, to describe pre-Hispanic religion and culture. In the foreword of his *General History of the Things of New Spain*, Sahagún wrote:

> *All the things we talked about were brought to me in pictures, which was the writing they used in ancient times; and the grammarians explained them in their language, writing the explanation at the foot of the picture.*[8]

The texts written below the picture were then transcribed in a manuscript. Some of these manuscripts show the hesitation of the scribe when doing this.

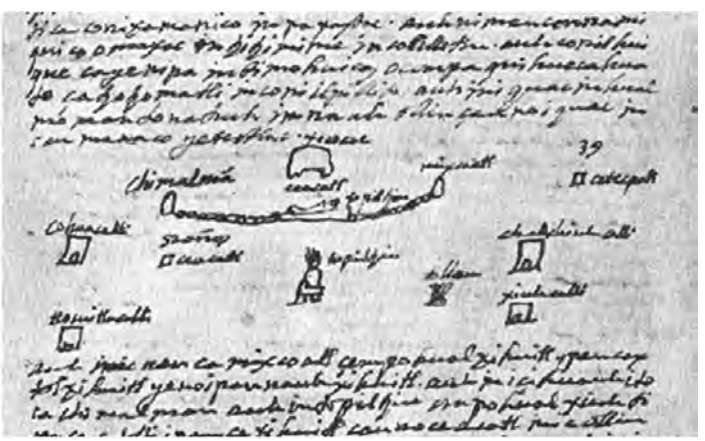


Figure 2.24 *Codex Chimalpopoca*, **folio 78**

8 Bernardino de Sahagún, *Historia general de las cosas de Nueva España*, 4 vols (Mexico City: Porrúa, 1969), p. 74.

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The scribe preferred to maintain the structure of the original pictograph rather than make a mistake in the transcription.

The alphabetic text turns around with the pictures

The directional criteria of pictography were sometimes applied to the verbal notes glossing the pictures:



Figure 2.25 *Codex Telleriano-Remensis*, **folio 30r**

In Figure 2.25, the alphabetic text follows the progression and turns with the walkers.

The illustrations

Some texts, eventually proceeding from a reading of pictorial documents and alphabetically transcribed, were illustrated. The illustrators generally read the text before painting the image:

In the pictorial sequence shown in Figure 2.26, Cuauhcoatl (*quauh*) should come first (far right) in the chronological order of progression, and Chimalma should be the last (far left). The inverted order of the illustration comes from the fact that the *tlahcuilo* painted the walkers from left to right as they appeared in the order of the text without considering the actual progression of the figures.

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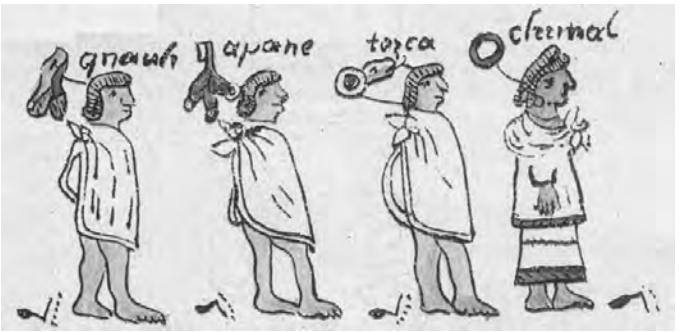


Figure 2.26 *Codex Aubin*, **folio 4r**

VI. A semiological mixture in some documents

The alphabetic transcription of pictographic document readings, their illustration and the fact that most of the *tlahcuilos* were still *nepantla* ('in the middle')—between the pictogram and the letter—sometimes led to a semiological mixture in manuscripts referring to pre-Hispanic history:



Figure 2.27 *Manuscrit* **85, folio 21r**

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Figure 2.28, Manuscrit 40, folio 3r

Figures 2.27, 2.28 and 2.29 clearly show that Mexican *tlahcuilos* were still in a stage of transition during the 16th century. The visual portrayal of dates and actions was particularly significant. The text, written in the alphabet, allows us to give a meaning to the pictures and of how the Mexican native *tlahcuilos* might have felt about their orality and the pictography they transcribed.

The Franciscan friars repeatedly affirmed that Mexican natives easily learned alphabetic writing, and soon were able to read and write in Spanish, Nahuatl and Latin. The transition was much more difficult for *tlahcuilos* whose principles and philosophy of pictographic writing were firmly established. Nevertheless, as we can see, the alphabet had a clear influence on their way of painting.

Considered as idolatrous, traditional book painting was no longer tolerated by the 17th century. Native *tlahcuilos* were reduced to painting maps and to expressing, in pictures, conflicts between people for the tribunals.

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During the 16th century, under the influence of the alphabet, the *tlahcuilos* had tried to get closer to the word in their pictography. However, they could not compete with letters in a new order in which everything that mattered was written. Pictography progressively disappeared during the 18th century, and with it a vision of the world.



Figure 2.29 ***Codex Aubin*****, folio 48r**

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3



Edmond R. Smith's Writing Lesson: Archive and Representation in 19th-Century Araucanía[1]

André Menard

Introduction

In 1956, Claude Lévi-Strauss addressed a letter to the 1st International Congress of Black Writers and Artists, held in Paris. He stated that 'after the aristocratic humanism of the Renaissance and the bourgeois humanism of the 19th century' the Congress announced the arrival of 'a democratic humanism' in which 'every human society must be represented, not just a few'. However, these societies' access to the rank of civilisation is neither evident nor immediate, as it requires the presence of representatives. Lévi-Strauss explained this situation in the following manner:

> *these civilizations of which you are the spokespeople have hardly had any written documents and some only devoted themselves to the monument's transitory forms. For lack of these so-called noble productions, in order to comprehend them, one must focus oneself, with the same degree of passion and respect, on the 'popular' manifestations of culture: those shared by all members of society.*[2]

The part of this declaration that we wish to highlight is the suspicion of an improbability behind the convergence of written works and negritude as proposed by the congress, an improbability that obliges Lévi-Strauss to return these black writers to the sphere of orality and to the role of ethnographic informants. He treats them as 'spokespeople' of an ethnic collectivity, in other words, as subjects whose enunciations remit to a space that is both unanimous and anonymous.

Throughout the 20th century, the power of this post-racial or post-colonial image of an 'ethnic subject' has been corroborated time and again. In the case of

1 Fondecyt Project nº 3080038, Chile.

2 C. Lévi-Strauss, 'Lettre au Ie Congrès d'artistes et écrivains noirs', *Présence Africaine*, nº 8-9-10 (1956), pp. 384–85.

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the Mapuche, it appeared frequently in the discourse not only of anthropologists, but also of an important number of intellectuals and indigenous leaders who, especially from the 1990s onward, have created the image of a Mapuche culture that is eminently oral, characterised by content that is just as ancient as it is shared, in which the role of its intellectuals and political leaders is defined precisely as that of the spokespeople of a collective message. In this chapter, we will examine to what degree this imaginary concept of the oral Mapuche subject has an historical basis. Concretely, we will survey the references to their writing, or lack of writing, made by travellers in the mid-19th century, that is, in the years immediately before the colonisation of indigenous territories by Chile and Argentina. At the time colonisation began, scientific, racial and evolutionary paradigms were established and continued in operation from the end of the 19th century through the first half of the 20th century.

One of the aspects that we hope to stress, in considering this image of the ethnic subject as an oral and collective subject, is the political dimension that this implies. In the literature by both Lévi-Strauss and current Mapuche intellectuals,[3] writing is associated with a place of external conflict and is supposedly foreign to the indigenous community. In this sense, we have found recurrent references to the written word as one of the main instruments of deceit and dispossession of Mapuche lands. On one hand, the cultural space is depicted as an oral space, harmonious and naturally occurring (rather than constructed), that is, prior to conflict and negotiation, and, on the other hand, writing appears to be a vector of violence that has come from the outside.

I. Lévi-Strauss and Derrida

In 1955, Lévi-Strauss presented an exemplary illustration of this negative image of writing in the form of his famous chapter, 'A Writing Lesson', from *Tristes Tropiques*. In 1967, Jacques Derrida proposed the deconstruction of the opposition between orality and the written word, showing the existence of a writing in the interior of language itself, an 'archi-writing' beyond (or closer than) alphabetic script. In this context, Derrida takes the image of writing and then unpacks it as a privileged incarnation of violence and exploitation of man by man. And he does so by identifying the series of violent actions associated with the act of naming. The scene is well known to us. Derrida calls it the 'war of the proper names'. The players in this war are Lévi-Strauss and the Nambikwara girls who played games to reveal the hidden names of their friends, while the ethnographer amused himself, teasing them so they would confess the names of the adults. What Derrida draws from this scene is the idea of an

3 We refer to the exemplary case of the poet Elicura Chihauilaf and his concept of *oraliture* as a cultural mediation between an oral interiorness and a written exteriorness.

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'original and natural goodness' associated with their illiterate condition. And he does so by explaining how 'writing exists from the moment the name is erased within a system',[4] or even beforehand, from the moment one assumes something like a 'proper name', since 'when in *conscience* the name *calls itself* proper, it is classified and obliterates itself in *being named*. It is nothing more than a supposed proper name.'[5] Derrida therefore alludes to the impossibility of a society without writing, given that 'if one stops understanding writing in the strict sense of lineal and phonetic notation, it should be possible to say that all societies capable of producing, or rather of obliterating their proper names and availing themselves of the classificatory difference, practise writing in general.'[6]

But this violence and this prohibition imply a type of logic that neither Derrida nor Lévi-Strauss explore in great depth. It is a logic that we will see more clearly in the writing lesson published in 1855 by the North American traveller Edmond Reuel Smith.

II. Smith's view of non-writing cultures

Smith visited the Araucanía in 1853, that is, ten years before the Chilean state initiated its definitive colonisation campaign in the independent Mapuche territories. When contemplating writing, we can say that Smith occupies a middle position between the 20th-century philosopher and anthropologist. While Derrida criticises the ethnocentric notion of writing by relativising its definition and generalising its presence beyond occidental literacy, and while Lévi-Strauss also launches a criticism of the civilising pretensions of occidental ethnocentrism — but basing his argument on the ethnocentric (or exclusively logographic) notion of writing — Smith states his ethnocentric contempt for a society considered even more primitive due to the fact (among others) that it has never known writing (in the ethnocentric sense of the word). In this configuration, Smith's view coincides with Derrida's in his non-mystification of illiteracy as a guarantee of peace or progress (which Lévi-Strauss *does* mystify). On the other hand, he parallels Lévi-Strauss on the impossibility of conceptualising writing beyond its occidental and alphabetic version.

But what is truly noteworthy is that the parallel with Lévi-Strauss is not limited to this grammatological blindness. It also traverses his narration, turning the writing lesson published in 1955 into a kind of echo of the one published in 1855. Let us read them in parallel.

4 J. Derrida, *De la grammatologie* (Paris: Minuit, 1967), p. 168.
5 Ibid., p. 161.
6 Ibid., p. 161.

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The first scene is an experimental situation that Smith explicitly introduces as the study of an effect:

> *In order to see what effect would be produced, I showed my drawing materials and sketches, and offered some of my paints to the women.*

But his preoccupation with the effect shifts towards the women:

> *But though they admired the colors, especially the vermillion, they would not accept them, evidently fearing that they might produce some mysterious effect upon the wearer. It was only after painting my squire José all the colours of the rainbow, to convince them that there was nothing to be dreaded, that they would allow me to paint the faces of the children.*

Not only did they allow Smith to paint their children, but they also complained when the paint washed away after bathing in the river. And

> *Yet though they brought back the children to be repainted, they themselves could not be persuaded to use the bright pigments which they so much admired.*[7]

Smith does not give any detailed explanation of why the adults refused to let themselves be painted. We can assume that it had to do with the fear of some kind of mysterious effect. But this does not explain why they would have allowed him to paint the bodies of their children. In order to understand this attitude, we must return to Lévi-Strauss's writing lesson.

After reminding us that the Nambikwara don't know how to write or draw, meaning they don't know how to create figures by making lines, Lévi-Strauss describes the montage of an experimental scene, analogous to that described by Smith:

> *I handed out sheets of paper and pencils. At first they did nothing with them, then one day I saw that they were all busy drawing wavy, horizontal lines. I wondered what they were trying to do. Then it was suddenly borne upon me: they were writing, or, to be more accurate, were trying to use their pencils in the same way as I did mine, the only thing which at that moment they could conceive, given that I had not yet tried to distract them with my drawings.*[8]

Lévi-Strauss installs his scene upon the ignorance of figurative drawing as the primary use of a pencil and paper. In this context, the experiment's effect is the imitation of the ethnographer by the 'other'. The experiment carried out by Smith is the inversion of this scene. First, it is he who initiates the act of writing by painting the Mapuche bodies. But, isn't this body paint the imitation, this time by the white traveller, of an indigenous practice that is

7 E.R. Smith, *The Araucanians, or notes of a tour among the Indian tribes of the southern Chili* (New York: Harper & Brothers Publishers, 1855), p. 221.

8 C. Lévi-Strauss, *Tristes trópicos* (Buenos Aires: Eudeba, 1976), p. 350.

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well documented, not only by Smith himself (he describes it a few pages earlier in his book) but also by other travellers of the same period? This allows us to assume that the adult women's refusal to allow their bodies to be painted, and their enthusiasm to let Smith paint the bodies of their children, places Smith's corporeal doodles at the same level as the illiterate Nambikwaras' imitation of Lévi-Strauss. The Mapuche women make him see — even though he isn't fully conscious of it — that grammar and orthography also impose themselves upon the body as a surface of inscription. In other words, he is faced with a form of writing that is subject to its own system of rules and variations.

The second moment of the 1855 scene was when the drawing became a problem of representation. Smith takes his paper and pencils and begins to draw:

> *They were much amused when I made some rough sketches of dogs, chickens, and other familiar objects, which they easily recognized. A woman was sitting near of whom I drew a rude outline, painting the head, dress, beads, etc., of appropriate colors. The men laughed heartily at the sight, and even she was rather pleased; still they evidently entertained some suspicions, and though Sanchez attempted to explain every thing to their satisfaction, none of the rest would consent to be drawn.*[9]

After the rejection and distrust of the idea of having their bodies painted comes the rejection of being painted on paper — in other words, of being represented. Once again, this rejection is explained by the fear of the mysterious and magical effects implicated in this act. But what we want to underline here is the author's immediate continuum from his paragraph about the fear of graphic representation, to one about the fear of proper names:

> *This unwillingness to have one's portrait taken is universal among these people; for, being superstitious and great believers in magic, they fear lest the one having the painting in his possession may, by machinations, injure or destroy the one represented.*
>
> *The same superstitious dread applies in the case of names also, and few Indians will ever tell you their names, being in possession of which, they fear that you may acquire some supernatural power over themselves.*[10]

He then illustrates this attitude about proper names by transcribing a dialogue:

> *Asking our Indian companion his name one day, he replied,*
> *'I have none.'*
> *Thinking that he had mistaken my meaning, I again asked, and was told,*
> *'I don't know.'*
> *I, of course, thought that my 'Indian-talk' had been unintelligible to him; but Sanchez afterward told me that the question had been properly worded, and explained the cause of my receiving such unintelligible answers to so simple a question.*[11]

9 Smith, *The Araucanians*, pp. 220–21.
10 Smith, *The Araucanians*, p. 222.
11 Smith, *The Araucanians*, pp. 222–23.

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But in the lines that follow, precisely where one would expect to find an explanation given by the *lenguaraz* (interpreter) Sánchez, we read:

> *Writing, being above their comprehension, is regarded by them as a species of magic. They were especially amazed when they saw the dictionary (written by a Jesuit missionary), and learned that by consulting it I could find out words in their own language. All attempt to explain this mystery was vain, for they were fairly stupefied, and could scarcely credit their senses.*
>
> *One of those present having pointed to some object and asked its Indian name, I refered to the dictionary and immediately answered him. He was incredulous, and leaning over, he peered into the book as if to see if he could recognise any resemblance between the thing itself and the printed word. I pointed out the word; but, not satisfied with looking, he laid his hand upon the page to feel the letters. A passing breeze at that moment rustled the leaves. He jerked back his hand in an instant. Had that mysterious book whispered to him in an unknown tongue? It was upon his left hand, too, and therefore for ill-omen! He withdrew; and wrapping his poncho about his head, sat for several hours in moody silence.*
>
> *It was not considered safe to write when any of the Indians were present, for fear of exciting suspicion; and it was only by stealth that I could occasionally take notes of what I saw. For this purpose I availed myself of a neighboring thicket, to which I could repair and hidden from view. Even then I was likely to be questioned if long absent from house.*[12]

III. Writing as a thing of danger

Instead of an explanation by the *lenguaraz* Sánchez about the taboo of proper names — given in the paragraph preceding the dialogue with this anonymous Mapuche — we jump to a question about alphabetic writing, with which the Nambikwaras' writing lesson began. And, as in the case of the latter group, the relationship between writing in an alphabetic sense and writing in a more ample sense (visible in the existence of proper names) is marked by violence, or at least by mistrust and danger. But in order to understand the distance between both writing lessons, we must introduce the distinction, as proposed by G. Spivak,[13] between the two possible meanings of the term 'representation': on the one hand, in the sense of political representation when talking in the name of someone (in German, *vertreten*), and, on the other hand, in the artistic or philosophical sense, a mimesis or portrait (*darstellen*). Thus, for the Nambikwara, the danger would be found — according to Lévi-Strauss — in the threat of writing as an instrument of man's exploitation of man,[14] the threat of political representation (*vertreten*) experienced by the indigenous themselves

12 Smith, *The Araucanians*, pp. 223–24.

13 G.Ch. Spivak, 'Can subaltern speak?' in Cary Nelson & Lawrence Grossberg (eds.) *Marxism and interpretation of culture* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1988), pp. 271–313.

14 Lévi-Strauss, *Tristes trópicos*, p. 354.

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(who, upon understanding 'confusedly that writing and perfidiousness had been jointly installed among them', abandoned their chief after he simulated knowing how to read and write).[15]

For Smith's Mapuche, writing (both alphabetic writing and its archi-scriptural form identifiable in its treatment of proper names) incarnated the danger of magical re-presentation (*darstellen*). It is in this sense that, in his narration, Smith brings to the scene the Mapuche who was searching among the pages of his dictionary for a picture or an ideogram that would depict the objects that had been named. But instead of a transparent representation, he encountered the arbitrariness of a sign expressing itself in the appalling form of a supernatural voice, an incomprehensible voice, the magic voice of a book …

This anecdote fits into the framework of the image of the Mapuche that Smith is trying to demonstrate: the image of a savage and profoundly superstitious people. However, this does not mean that witchcraft has not been (and does not continue to be) a fundamental space in the development of conflicts that permeate Mapuche sociability. In this sense, witchcraft represents a crease in the supposedly homogenous space of the indigenous community. And it's not just a crease caused by eventual conflicts among members of the community. It is, rather, the distinction between magic and religion, which in their classic essay on magic, Henri Hubert and Marcel Mauss defined as the division between irregular or even illicit acts and obligatory, necessary acts.[16] Thus, if religious rites obey a moral obligation, magical practices obey a contingent necessity. Now, it is true that according to Hubert and Mauss there is a common element between magic and religion: the concept of *mana*, a complex notion that sometimes functions as a space and sometimes as energy, sometimes as a verb, sometimes as a noun, and at other times as an adjective …[17] But these very authors explain that religion, as opposed to magic, works with sacredness, which is a partial form of *mana*. Thus *mana* would escape from the limited sphere of religion and, in its magical form, would permeate the different layers of society. But what we are trying to indicate here, relying on the importance of the contingent nature of magical practices and their administration of *mana*, is its proper political dimension. What is important is that we can understand *mana* as something that is more abstract or insubstantial than a singular force or medium. According to Hubert and Mauss, *mana* can materialise, for example, in a voice or in the sound of something, as far as voice or sound represent a property that can come off that thing. *Mana* is that thing's potency or efficiency,

15 Lévi-Strauss, *Tristes trópicos*, p. 355.

16 H. Hubert & M. Mauss, 'Esquisse d'une théorie générale de la magie', in M. Mauss, *Sociologie et anthropologie* (Paris: PUF, 1950), pp. 15–16.

17 Hubert & Mauss, 'Esquisse d'une théorie générale de la magie', p. 101.

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but it is separate from the thing, like, for example, the mysterious voice that came from Smith's dictionary. But in any case, the most important aspect of *mana* is its differential character, the fact that it marks a division or difference from the thing itself. It is from this definition that we can consider it to be a type of writing. It is the line that differentiates, for example, the dictionary from its mysterious voice. But it can also be the line that marks a difference—a kind of writing—in the voice's interior, like a pure difference in intensity between two areas of discourse. For example, the differential that splits spoken word between its referential level and its performative level, the latter being populated by all kinds of legal, contractual, notarial, diplomatic and war-like enunciates.

It is in this *manatic* differential where we find a kind of Mapuche 'writing' parallel to the writing that marks the obliteration of proper names in language. And here all we are doing is revisiting the testimony of another traveller who visited independent Araucanía in the 1840s. This traveller is Ignacio Domeyko, a Polish geologist, who, in his book *My Travels*, published in 1846, describes a well-documented characteristic of Mapuche oratory: a particular kind of rhetoric, a special tone of voice that *caciques* used for their solemn reunions. Domeyko writes:

> *This declamatory, song-like manner has also been used for centuries by the Araucanians to bestow vigour on all official communication among caciques, and between a cacique and his subjects; it is used in place of writs, seals, and other customs that are so indispensable for the civilised world.*

And he insists on the both extraordinary and political character of this type of 'writing', explaining that

> *The messenger, sent by a powerful cacique to others, be it to communicate an assembly, a parliament, or a warring expedition, travels all over the country from house to house, and using the same tone, which he does not abuse for normal conversation unless required for hospitality's sake, announces orders and instructions.*[18]

We should note that this splitting tone of voice, both notarial and political, was also detected by Lévi-Strauss among the Nambikwara. In his description of an encounter—potentially violent—between two groups of Nambikwara, Lévi-Strauss emphasises the particular style that the indigenous chiefs use to pronounce their discourses:

> *The men had come alone; a long conversation among the respective chiefs began straight away, which was more a succession of alternating monologues spoken in a whining, nasal tone that I had never before heard. 'We are very irritated! We are your brothers! We are friends! Friends! We can come to an agreement!'*[19]

18 I. Domeyko, *Mis viajes II* (Santiago: Editorial Universitaria, 1977), p. 684.
19 Lévi-Strauss, *Tristes trópicos*, p. 357.

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In both episodes, we can see that the splitting of the tone corresponds to a doubling of time, a *mana* of time. We can thus understand *mana* as writing that marks the entry into an extraordinary time. It is a strictly political time in which a decision is made between alliance and war.

IV. Archiving and a sense of time

By understanding writing in this sense, we can see that a political act (and also a magical act) becomes a type of register. But the contrary is also true if we consider that all writing also implies a policy of registry. Thus, a problem arises having to do with the characteristics of the archive, in which these writings draw a relationship with time, or in the same sense, the problem of the characteristics of time as defined by the type of archive. By reading the testimonies and documents produced in the context of 19th-century independent Araucanía, we can attempt a characterisation of this particular way of understanding or constructing time. Everything seems to indicate that it is a kind of time created using the logic of gift and/or revenge. It is a time that is very different from, even opposite to the time that the state machine would install at the end of the 19th century using its own policies of archive and registry.

In schematic terms, we propose that time from the state's perspective functions like homogeneous time, empty and naturally given. From the perspective of a Mapuche archive, time is heterogeneous and politically constructed. This means that for the state archive, time would operate as a given surface upon which a series of historic and bureaucratic events can be registered. In this sense, it is significant that the end of the military conquest of Araucanía by the Chilean state in the 1880s coincided with the creation of the Civil Registry (1886) as a machine for registering the temporal series of births and deaths. If we consider that, together with this archive, an apparatus of legal and notarial registry was also installed, we can conclude that the state registry machine establishes upon the abstract surface of time, both given and homogeneous, a system for the inscription and inheritance of properties—in the sense of goods, lands and identities through the property of 'proper' names.

For its part, the Mapuche archive's heterogeneous time depends on certain events in order to be created. It is in this sense that it relates to the institutions of gifts and revenge. As Derrida said when interpreting Marcel Mauss, what a gift gives is time: the time of a debt, that is, the time of expectation, the expectation that the gift will be returned. Gift and counter-gift work as the heterogeneous moments which give and create time. According to anthropologist Viveiros de Castro, revenge would fulfil an analogous function in the 16th-century Tupi society. According to this author, the reason behind the difficulty felt by Catholic missionaries when trying to eradicate the systematic practice of cannibal wars

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was based on the fundamental role of revenge in this society. Revenge seems to have been the way the Tupi created time. And its central moment would have been the ritual dialogue between the victimiser and his victim immediately before the victim's death. In this dialogue, each person made a list of their family members assassinated and eaten by their respective lineages, and a list of those who would they kill and eat in the future. This dialogue was a heterogeneous moment, creased or suspended between past and future revenge. And so instead of inscribing itself on the homogeneous surface of a given time, revenge as an event was the very element that created time.[20]

In terms of a register of proper names, or proper names as a register, each archive prioritises opposite dimensions. In the case of the state archive, the fact that it relies on a naturally given time is articulated with an orientation towards an ordering of filiations. In this framework, the register of proper names, and more precisely of surnames, is meant to be the reflection of a biologically given order of genealogies. In the case of the Mapuche archive, proper names are oriented towards a register of a historically constructed political order of alliances.

V. The writing of proper names

We return to the issue of names in Edmond Smith's writing lesson. In that episode, he proposes the existence of a treatment of proper names *à la* Nambikwara — in other words, the existence of a taboo against proper names. Upon reviewing the (scarce) literature on the issue of names in the Mapuche context, a different situation seems to appear. It seems that the administration of proper names among the Mapuche refers to an institution of exchange more than to an institution of taboo. Without going into detail, we shall say that the mechanism for assigning a proper name, through the institution of the *laku*, was something that functioned far from mechanically. In its primary and less developed form, this mechanism entails the transfer of a name from paternal grandfather (*laku*) to grandson (*laku*), or from grandmother to granddaughter. However, what seems really to matter in this institution is not the parental relationship itself, but rather the act of donation through which any person can become a *laku* with respect to another. In other words, and paraphrasing M. Sahlins, it is not only the relationship that produces a type of action (the donation of a name), but also the action that can produce a relationship.[21] In this way, a proper name can be considered the register of an alliance.

20 E. Viveiros de Castro, 'Le marbre et le myrte, de l'inconstance de l'âme sauvage', in A. Becquelin & A. Molinié (eds), *Mémoire de la tradition* (Nanterre: Société d'Ethnologie, 1993), pp. 365–431.

21 Sahlins explains this situation using the following example: if friends make gifts, gifts also make friends: M. Sahlins, *Islas de historia* (Barcelona: Gedisa, 1997), pp. 12 & 42.

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Examples of this abound. In Smith's text, we see that a few days after the writing lesson he meets with the important *cacique* Mangiñ Wenu, who, in an act of friendship, gives him the name of one of his sons, named Ñamculan. In the inverse sense, examples of Mapuche children or adults who receive Spanish names also abound: for example, one of the sons of the powerful *cacique* Kallfükura from Salinas Grandes was named Alvarito Rewmay as evidence of the 'friendship and support' of Argentine Colonel Alvaro Barros and the *cacique*.[22] Another case is that of an important 20th-century Mapuche leader, Manuel Aburto Panguilef, whose surname Aburto came from a pact between his grandfather Luís Ayñamco and the *Comisario de Naciones* (a representative of the government in Mapuche lands), Francisco Aburto, a pact that had been sealed by donating his surname to the Mapuche chief. Thus, we can see how a proper name, in this case the surname Aburto, does not refer to the genealogical continuity (biological or racial) of a filiation as much as it does to the registry of an alliance as an historic and political occurrence.

From another point of view, we can say that if the state archive, centred on filiation, sanctions inheritance, then the Mapuche archive, centred on alliance, registers movements of 'contagion'.[23] And if inheritance can be understood as the legal determination of a piece of biological data, contagion can be understood as the corporeal registry of a political and magical act. According to this perspective, an alliance is not a simple contract between two people defined by a biologically and legally stable identity. On the contrary, it is an occurrence in which the very personality and corporeality of the allies are transformed. It is the model of the shaman's becoming animal. Something analogous happens in the solemn pact between Mapuche and state authorities: the exchange of names, uniforms or letters between, for example, a *cacique* and a general, rather than confirming their respective positions, modifies them, transforming the *cacique* into a sort of general and the general into a sort of *cacique*. Magic and politics become blurred in this ability to become the powerful enemy. Thus, an alliance does not seek to dissolve enemies' differences into the homogeneousness of a definitive friendship. On the contrary, an alliance marks this difference as an act of heterogeneous friendship amongst a backdrop of potential and permanent enmity. And in this power to become the other through a pact and an alliance, we re-encounter the figure of *mana* as duplicity and supplement, as the mysterious voice that sifted out of the pages of the dictionary.

22 T. Guevara & M. Mañkelef, *Kiñe mufü trokiñche ñi piel, Historias de familias, Siglo XIX* (Temuko: Liwen-CoLibris, 2002), p. 149.

23 For the filiation/alliance and inheritance/contagion oppositions, see G. Deleuze & F. Guattari, 'Dévenir animal, dévenir imperseptible' in *Mille plateaux, capitalisme et schizophrénie II* (Paris: Minuit, 1980).

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VI. An archive as a source of magic

The Mapuche archive operates as one that registers this series of becomings and alliances, and as such it is a source of magic and political *mana*. We can find a good illustration of this dimension of the Mapuche archive in its alphabetic facet, in a news story published in the Los Angeles newspaper *El Meteoro* in 1869. The story seeks to explain the influence among the Mapuche of Bernardino Pradel, a Chilean journalist and politician:

> *Mr. Pradel appears dominating the barbarians with his word, with his prestige, with his astuteness and with a talisman which the savages respect just as much as Christians respect the bible and Mahometans respect the Koran. This talisman is a bunch of papers wrapped up in a cloth by the cacique Mañil, which he sent with his son Quilapan for inquiry to General Urquiza, who was not able to receive them because the messenger could not cross the mountains due to a terrible snow storm. Mañil later entrusted these papers to Mr. Pradel, who in turn added more papers, making the caciques accept that they were documents that Mañil had given him to defend the lands of the upper Biobío. After Mañil's death, Quilapan guarded the papers with much veneration, as if they were an amulet or something similar. It is with this talisman that Mr. Pradel gained so much influence among the Indians.*[24]

What is interesting here is that the political *mana*, whether transported by the *cacique* Mañil or contained in Mangiñ's archive, exceeds the limits of strictly documental writing of a file of papers, and affects his body. The testimonies tend to illustrate the charismatic power given by corporeal attributes like the military jacket given to Mangiñ by General Cruz in gratitude for his support in the 1851 civil war. Or others with greater magical connotation, like the white stains he had on his skin that proved that he was a sorcerer.[25] In this sense, it is understood that after his death, his body entered in direct continuity with the *manatic* dimension, incarnated by his archive. This is, at least, what we assume from the following testimony:

> *Before dying* [Mangiñ] *called his sons. He advised them to not surrender to the Chileans, because they would steal their lands and enslave their sons. This is what they promised him.*
>
> *He believed that with his death, the winka* [the Chileans] *would enter.*
>
> *His son Külapang buried him with a jacket trimmed with galloons that had been given to him by General Cruz. The burial was conducted in secret. No one knew where he lay.*
>
> *Later that day, Külapang ran away from Chanko. The Chilean Army chased after him tirelessly. He hid in Loncoche* [...]

24 *El Meteoro* of Los Angeles, 19 June 1869, year 4, n°144. Quoted in J. Pavez (ed.), *Cartas Mapuche. Siglo XIX* (Santiago: CoLibris-Ocho Libros, 2008), p. 89.

25 Guevara & Mañkelef, *Kiñe mufü trokiñche ñi piel*, p. 91.

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> *It was there where he took the canoe where his father lay. He took it in a cart. He put it in a hidden place where the Chilean soldiers wouldn't be able to find it.*
>
> *Everyone believed that if the soldiers took the belongings and remains of Mangiñ, they would resemble him (by magical transmission). And then they wouldn't be able to defeat them.*[26]

In the reference to the magical power of 'semblance' that appears in the last sentence of the above quotation, and which the editor, ethnographer Tomás Guevara, associates explicitly with a principle of 'magical transmission,' we re-encounter the problem of representation, and not just any kind of representation, but rather magical re-presentation as the power of contagion. In this way, we can try to understand how the Mapuche archive becomes a source or a brand of political authority. The highly segmental character of the Mapuche's 19th-century power structure generated obstacles to the types of authority based on centralised political representation (*vertreten*). In this context, the Mapuche archive as a *manatic* register of alliances gives authority a sustenance based precisely on the other meaning of re-presentation (*darstellen*): re-presentation as a magical resemblance generated by a political effort. In this context, writing in the alphabetic sense is articulated with the register of alliances as magical and political re-presentations of the other. It is as if by wearing General Cruz's jacket, the *cacique* Mangiñ was re-presenting General Cruz in a magical and theatrical sense. And in this same sense, the treaties and letters exchanged between these *caciques* and the maximum authorities of the Republic (Chilean and Argentine) can be understood as ways to re-present these very authorities, registers of a becoming Minister or President, brands and vehicles of *mana* and their capacity for contagion. Instead of political representation, we are talking about political re-presentation.

The installation of the state archive and its regime of colonial registry would impose its own logic of representation/re-presentation. This is how we arrive at the letter sent by Lévi-Strauss to the black writers in 1956. And more recent are the discourses of a sector of the Mapuche movement that in the 1990s displaced the effective position of Mapuche authority from the *lonko* (*cacique*) to the *werken* (messenger or spokesperson). In these discourses, political representation is determined by another kind of re-presentation. It is not about magical or artistic re-presentation anymore, but rather about biological, racial or cultural re-presentation through which an individual automatically re-presents the collective that he/she comes from. The ethnic leader and the anthropological informant thus coincide in a common demand for exemplarity. They must be good and loyal examples of their race or their

26 Guevara & Mañkelef, *Kiñe mufü trokiñche ñi piel*, p. 92.

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culture. This naturally occurring re-presentation replaces the magically and politically constructed re-presentation.

In the end, both types of re-presentation refer to the problem of the relationship between archive and body. We saw how in the Mapuche archive there was continuity between alphabetic and corporal writing. We also saw that the state archive endeavours to register filiations, and that the colonisation of indigenous territories coincided with the development of scientific racism. In this context, we can deduce that for the machines of state registry, the body was also included as an object of inscription. But in this case, they were anthropometric inscriptions meant to inscribe the body in the normality of a race, in a genealogical identification or in a national identity. In the case of the Mapuche archive, the inscriptions and registers that are visible on the body (like proper names, a military jacket or the magical stains on Mangiñ) do not denote the mark of a racial norm, nor do they allude to belonging to an identitary class, but rather they are the register of an extraordinary becoming. In one case, the archive operates like a homogeneous surface for inscribing bodies. In the other, bodies and corpus of documents unfold the heterogeneous surface of an archive.

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Part II



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4



Missionary Knowledge in Context: Geographical Knowledge of Ethiopia in Dialogue During the 16th and 17th Centuries

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Translated from the French by Sarah Townshend

Introduction

At the beginning of the 1990s, in his thesis, 'Knowledge and figures of Ethiopia in occidental cartography from the 14th century to the 16th century', Bertrand Hirsch proposed an inquiry into the history of cartographic representations of Ethiopia from the beginning of the 14th century to the end of the 17th century. Reconstructing genealogies from them, he proposed to inscribe these in the complex development of the relationship between the Ethiopians and the Occidentals. Much of this information had been assembled by Jesuit missionaries, who had committed themselves to the project of 'mapping by direct measurement on the ground'.

In seeking to reconstruct the stages of knowledge developed by the missionaries, Hirsch focused on two figures in particular, both associated with the remarkable breakthroughs in European cartography at the end of the 17th century: Pedro Paez, who lived in Ethiopia from 1603 to 1622; and Manuel de Almeida, active from 1624 to 1633 (the date on which he, like a good number of his co-religionists, was expelled by the new Ethiopian power). Hirsch emphasises:

> *The breakdown effected by Paez is essential. It concerns the complete separation of the Ethiopia which covered half the continent on the 16th century maps, from the historic Ethiopia which he travels over and which he wants to convert.* [...] *Paez was therefore the leader in the first revision of the geography of Ethiopia, by an implicit critique of the geography and cartography of his time. De Almeida continues the enterprise by an explicit critique of the cartography and the construction of a new map.*[1]

1 B. Hirsch, *Connaissances et figures de l'Éthiopie dans la cartographie occidentale du XIVe siècle au XVIe siècle* (unpublished doctoral thesis, Paris, 1990), p. 524.

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The point here is not to reflect on the breakthroughs brought about by this 'mapping of the ground', but rather to try to understand and to grasp more fully how these missionary writings were produced and elaborated in terms of terrain, and overall to analyse the contexts of their production, the reasons and the aims which governed their development. It is equally a matter of examining how, and by whom, this missionary knowledge was formed, and particularly to account for, over and above the authors, the role of local 'intermediaries' in the construction of this knowledge.[2] In this way, we can approach the end product itself, too often considered as an enormous 'database' on which the historian can draw, as it would concern information on the terrain; to use it finally to construct his own 'scientific' discourse, which in the end boils down to the delivery of a discourse very lightly superimposed on the scriptural activity of these missionaries.[3] In my opinion, the question of knowledge in the missionary context is closely related to writing. But why does one write? One writes as much about as for … And these different perspectives lead one to question the different sources which produce knowledge, in two senses of the term: that which constructs and that which renders visible.

This is what I propose to do in examining several texts produced by missionaries in a particular geographic area: the realm of 'Prester John' (identified since the middle of the 14th century with the Ethiopian king). These texts do not strongly correspond, sometimes overlap and may or may not be borrowed. It is not a matter of combining one with the other, with the aim of sorting out 'true' from 'false', to tally for verification and to correct or to cross-check information,[4] but rather to consider them as social products.

I will focus on three documents, which draw up the list of the 'kingdoms' and 'provinces' ruled by 'Prester John'.[5] These documents have been provided

2 I think, in particular, of the steps proposed by Kapil Raj in an article on the elaboration of Indian cartography: K. Raj, 'Connexions, croisements, circulations. Le détour de la cartographie britannique par l'Inde, XVIIIe–XIXe siècles', in B. Zimmermann & M. Werner (eds), *De la comparaison à l'histoire croisée* (Paris: Seuil, 2004), pp. 73–98.

3 A. Torre, '"Faire communauté". Confréries et localité dans une vallée du Piémont (XVIIe–XVIIIe siècle)', in *Annales, Histoire et sciences sociales* (1-2007), pp. 101–35, in particular pp. 101–7, which suggest the strong methodological orientation around this question of the production of sources.

4 A. Frugoni, *Arnaud de Brescia dans les sources du XIIe siècle*, introduction and translation by Alain Boureau. (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 1993), in particular the introduction (IX–XVII), which insists on the method implemented by Frugoni as denouncing the method of *combination* in history.

5 I have re-used the formula of Fr Paez who, in his text of *História da Etiópia*, used this term for convenience in indicating that the king of Ethiopia was designated thus in Europe. P. Paez, *História da Etiópia*, I. Boavida, H. Pennec & M.J. Ramos (eds) (Lisbon: Assírio & Alvim, 2008), p. 71.

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by three Jesuits who lived in this missionary land: (1) Luis de Azevedo[6] (who arrived in Ethiopia in 1605 and was expelled in 1633) (2) Pedro Paez and (3) Manuel de Almeida respectively. The three men are not quite contemporaries. If, on the one hand, Azevedo clearly knew the others well, Paez, on the other hand, probably at least read Azevedo indirectly through Guerreiro, another Jesuit who never set foot in Ethiopia, and Almeida had direct knowledge of Paez's and Azevedo's texts through Guerreiro … Their lists differ from one another, but neither Paez nor Almeida give reasons either for the modifications and additions that they have made from the lists which pre-dated theirs, or for the omissions to which they were party.[7]

I. Luis de Azevedo: from geopolitical knowledge to propaganda knowledge

To draw up the list of 'kingdoms' and 'provinces' was a standard enough procedure on the part of missionaries in the areas that they opened up. The programme of the Jesuits included teachings relative to the 'physical world, cosmography and astronomy'.[8] This training enabled them to provide their hierarchy with geographical descriptions of the places and areas in which they were active. Azevedo was himself entrusted by the superior of the Ethiopian mission, Paez, with the responsibility of providing a 'spiritual and material state' for the mission for the years 1605–1607. He drafted the annual letter from Ethiopia on 22 July 1607; the letter contained a detailed description of the 'kingdoms' and 'provinces' dominated by the Ethiopian king on the one hand, and those in relationship with him on the other. Azevedo put forward a list of the names of twenty-seven 'kingdoms'. For each, he indicated the religious persuasion of the inhabitants (Christians, Moors or 'gentiles') and the nature of the relationship of each 'kingdom' with the Ethiopian power, based on whether they were dependent on the latter or not.[9] There followed an outline of fourteen 'provinces', which conformed to the same categories of classification.[10]

6 See L. Cohen Shabot, 'Azevedo, Luis de', in *Encyclopaedia Aethiopica*, vol. 1 (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, 2003), p. 418.

7 These differences between the three documents had been noticed but little commented upon regarding the question of missionary knowledge; see C.F. Beckingham & G.W. Huntingford (trans. & eds), *Some records of Ethiopia (1593–1646). Being extracts from the history of high Ethiopia or Abassia by Manoel de Almeida, together with Bahrey's History of the Galla* (London: The Hakluyt Society, 1954). p. 11.

8 F. Dainville, *La géographie des humanistes. Les jésuites et l'éducation de la société française* (Paris: Beauchesne, 1940), p. 165.

9 'Relationes et Epistolæ variorum tempore missionis Lusitanæ (1589–1623). Pars prima—Liber II', in C. Beccari (ed.), *Rerum Aethiopicarum scriptores Occidentales inediti a saeculo XVI ad XIX*, vol. 11 (Rome: excudebat C. de Luigi, 1911), pp. 130–32.

10 Ibid., pp. 132–33.

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The whole territory presented by the missionaries was contained in a circular, north–south geography, starting with the most northern 'kingdom' (Tigre and its port, Suakin) situated on 18° North latitude, passing through 12° (the latitude of Zeyla) to reach Mombasa (here, with no indication of latitude), and finally taking a westerly direction to rise towards the north in the direction of Cairo.[11] After presenting the 'geopolitical' situation of this zone, Azevedo drew attention to the time in which he was writing: the area dominated by the 'emperor' was reduced to six 'kingdoms' from the preceding list: 'Tigre, [Tigré], Abagamedrî [Bägemder], Dambeâ [Dämbya], Goiâma [Godjam], Xaoâ [Choa] and Amarâ [Amhara]'.[12]

Azevedo, who had arrived in Ethiopia two years earlier, was unable to provide this information on his own, and indicates that he gathered it together with a 'local' intermediary, João Gabriel, 'who was for some years captain of the Portuguese of Tigres'.[13] This character (circa 1554–1626) is interesting in more than name. He was the son of an Ethiopian woman and an 'Italian' soldier who entered Ethiopia in 1541, under the guidance of D. Cristóvão da Gama, as commander of the military force which came to bring help to the Ethiopian king Galawdéwos (1540–59) against the imam Ahmed ibn Ibrahim (nicknamed *Grañ*, 'the left-handed', by the Ethiopians). João Gabriel settled in Ethiopia after the military campaign, and received a double education, both religious and military, from the Jesuit priests of the first mission (1557–97) and at the Ethiopian monastery of Däbrä Libanos, where he learned the Gueze language (the liturgical language of the church and the clerics). He was then chosen by the Ethiopian power as 'captain of the Portuguese', succeeding António de Góis, and accompanied the different kings in their travels either to wage war or to collect tribute, a responsibility that he fulfilled from 1606 to 1607.[14] It was precisely this military experience, from the association with territories to be preserved and to be conquered, on which Azevedo relied to draw up his lists. And in order to produce what type of knowledge?

It is not my intention here to judge the validity of the information but rather to illuminate and to emphasise the nature of the knowledge that the Jesuit transmitted in his annual letter. This description is a synthetic and impressionistic presentation of the religious geopolitics of this region of Africa, that of a military alongside a royal power, able to designate the 'kingdoms'

11 Ibid., pp. 130–32.
12 Ibid., p. 133.
13 Ibid., p. 126.
14 I. Boavida, 'Gabriel, João', in *Encyclopaedia Aethiopica*, vol. 2 (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, 2005), pp. 632–33.

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and 'provinces' subject to the 'emperor' — those which paid a tribute or those which did not — and the presentation is that of a man sensitive to religious matters and able to distinguish the religious identities present in each one of the 'kingdoms'. This knowledge was useful to the Jesuit hierarchy (both in Goa and in Rome), which wanted to know the conditions of the missions in which their people were engaged. Thus Azevedo's description, which is almost geostrategic, had an internal value only, that is, within the limited frame of the Society of Jesus; in Goa, for the Provincial (to whom the letter is addressed);[15] then in Rome, in order to allow for the evaluation of the risks and the potential of this missionary field.

And to be precise, the time of writing of the letter is inscribed in the context of the second Jesuit mission in Ethiopia, at the beginning of the 17th century. An earlier mission, from 1557, involved six Jesuits, who were confronted first with the opposition of the royal court and then suffered persecution during the reign of Minas (1559–63) and, with less intensity, under his successor, Särsä Dengel (1563–1597). Until the end of the 16th century, the missionaries were isolated from the court and had to stay in the north of the country, in Tigre province, at May Gwagwa (Fremona). Their isolation was accentuated when the Ottoman Turks occupied the Red Sea port of Massawa, which meant that no European could take this route into Ethiopia and missionary relief could not arrive.[16]

The impetus for the reactivation of the Ethiopian mission in the last decades of the 16th century came from Philip II, king of Spain and Portugal. The reasons were partly of a diplomatic nature, and envisioned the renewal of relationships with Christian Ethiopia so as to unite against the Ottoman presence in the Red Sea. Equally, they were of a commercial and religious nature: the descendants of the Catholic Portuguese community, in fact, would soon lack 'spiritual guidance', since the fathers who had arrived in 1557 were either dead or comparatively elderly. Philip II entrusted the responsibility of executing his wishes to his representative in the territory of *Estado da India*, the viceroy Manuel de Sousa Coutinho, who himself applied to the Provincial of the Jesuits to send some missionaries to Ethiopia. Several attempts were made, the first of which took place in 1589: the two missionaries, Antonio de Monserrate and Pedro Paez, were shipwrecked off Dhafur (south of Arabia). They were captured by a Turkish boat and put on land, only to be taken prisoner again. Their detention ended in the month of September 1596, after the payment of a large ransom. In 1595, a second attempt was undertaken by

15 'Relationes et Epistolæ', vol. 11, p. 82.

16 H. Pennec, *Des jésuites au royaume du prêtre Jean (Éthiopie). Stratégies, rencontres et tentatives d'implantation (1495–1633)* (Paris: Centre Culturel Calouste Gulbenkian, 2003), p. 15.

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sending another Jesuit, Abraham de Giorgii. He was captured at Massawa and decapitated later that year.[17]

It is effectively within this context of geopolitical tension that Azevedo's letter must be read. The information that he communicates tended to give his superiors the measure of a regional geopolitical situation, which could have consequences for the physical situation of his personnel. In consequence, it seems to me that the 'knowledge' elaborated in this context did not completely answer the questions that the cartographers then asked in their offices in Europe. On the contrary, as emphasised by Hirsch,

> *that which remained constant in the geographic literature of Ethiopia throughout the 16th century was the immensity of the Ethiopian area. The belief that the pagan regions which extend to the south of the Christian kingdom are close to the Cape of Good Hope remain deep-rooted in the geographic literature of Ethiopia throughout the 16th and to the beginning of the 17th century, in perfect harmony with that which was showed by the cartography.*[18]

Finally, whether this letter was published or not was not the concern of the author. In fact, it was, as we shall see, out of 'the control' of the missionary.

To write in order to stimulate the zeal of young recruits

Azevedo's letter was probably drafted in three copies in order to be sent by three different routes,[19] as were other letters from Ethiopia and those from missionaries in the rest of the Indies (India, Japan and Brazil), which reached Rome and Lisbon via Goa. It became the object of publication under the auspices of the Jesuit Fernão Guerreiro, who since 1603 had specialised in publishing the annual reports of the missionary fields in an abridged and revised form. In 1611, with the authorisation of the general of the Order, Claudio Aquaviva, he published the letters sent in 1607 and 1608, under the title 'Annual report of things that the fathers of the Society did in the oriental Indian regions [...]'.[20]

17 Pennec, *Des jésuites au royaume du prêtre John (Éthiopie)*, pp. 100–11.

18 Hirsch, *Connaissances et figures de l'Ethiopie*, p. 425.

19 I. Loyola, *Écrits*, M. Giuliani (ed.) (Paris: Desclée de Brouwer, 1991), pp. 711–16.

20 Guerreiro F., *Relação anual das coisas que fizeram os padres da companhia nas partes da India oriental, et em alguas outras da conquista deste Reyno nos annos de 607 et 608 et do processo de conversão et Christandade daquellas partes, com mais hua addiçam à relaçam de Ethiopia…Tirado tudo das cartas dos mesmos padres que de lâ vierão, & ordenado pello Padre Fernão Guerreiro… Vai dividida em sinco livros…*, (Lisbon: P. Crasbeeck, 1611; revised ed. Coimbra: Imprensa da Universidade, 1942). In 1614, some Spanish and German translations were published, *Historia y anal relacion de las cosas que fizieron los padres de la Compañia de Jesus por las partes de Oriente*; *Indianische newe relation: erster theil was sich in der Goanischen Provintz.*

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Essentially, Guerreiro takes the geographic information from Azevedo's letter, distorting certain names of the Ethiopian 'kingdoms' — like 'Goroma' for 'Goiâma [Godjam]' — eliminating the twenty-seventh 'kingdom' and interpreting 'Moçambique' (the oriental African coast) as 'Manomotapa' (Monomotapa, interior kingdom of southeast Africa).[21] The fundamental point on which I wish to insist is the elaborate contextualisation of this letter, and some others, and how and in what perspective Guerriero presented them. The Jesuit outlines in seven chapters 'some Ethiopian matters',[22] tackling 'the temporal state of this Ethiopian empire', and the manner in which 'the king aligned himself with the priests and concerns about the depletion of the holy Roman church'.[23] Thus, Azevedo's letter is integrated into the previous chapters, and Guerreiro relates the circumstances of the Ethiopian king's conversion to the Roman faith — though it would only take place much later, at the end of 1621. Seen from Europe and from Goa, the submission of the 'great Ethiopian empire' to the Church was equivalent to the conversion of her king.[24]

According to this perspective, the information concerning the twenty-six 'kingdoms' and the religious practices of the inhabitants had the effect of accentuating the immense work that remained to be accomplished. In spite of the Ethiopian king's conversion to Catholicism, the five missionaries found themselves faced with a considerable area in which to exercise their mission. In my opinion, the reasons for the publication of these texts on Ethiopia were, firstly, to stimulate the apostolic zeal of young recruits in the Jesuit colleges in Europe. The desire to leave for foreign lands was fostered by the letters that came from the missions, and by this type of publication, which would have been read aloud during meals.[25] Secondly, in the 1550s[26] the Society put in place the system of distribution of the letters of its missionaries, scattered to the four corners of the earth, so as to acquire 'a flattering notoriety and reputation in the opinion of the European powers'.[27] This philosophy is probably one

21 Ibid., pp. 64–66. Regarding the distortion of the names found in the 1942 edition (consulted edition), perhaps the errors are attribuable to the printer. It would therefore be fairer to return to the manuscripts.

22 Ibid., p. 31.

23 Ibid., p. 33.

24 Pennec, *Des jésuites au royaume du prêtre Jean (Éthiopie)*, p. 277.

25 J. Masson, 'La perspective missionnaire dans la spiritualité des jésuites', in *Dictionnaire de spiritualité*, vol. 8 (Paris: Beauchesne, 1977), pp. 1030–104; J.C. Laborie, *La mission jésuite au Brésil. Lettres et autres documents (1549–1570)* (Paris: Éditions Chandeigne, 1998), pp. 10–11.

26 *Avisi particolari delle Indie di Portogallo* (Rome: 1552); *Novi avisi di piu de l'India et massime de Brasil* (Rome: 1553).

27 Laborie, *La mission jésuite au Brésil*, p. 17.

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of the reasons why these documents were 'prepared for their sake',[28] apart from being a testament to Guerreiro's *Relation* and the knowledge it contained about Ethiopia.

Nevertheless, the public would also have been 'partial to these 'curious letters' describing the savage cannibals or the mysteries of Prester John's kingdom',[29] as described by Jean-Claude Laborie. They would have been anxious to re-examine the geographical information, hitherto sparse, concerning the river system of the Nile and the extent of the 'empire' of Prester John.

II. Pedro Paez: Knowledge in order to refute

The second list of 'kingdoms' and 'provinces' is that of Pedro Paez. The list appears in Chapter One of book I of his *Historia da Etiopia*. Paez's catalogue is different from that of Azevedo, since he puts forward a list of thirty-five 'kingdoms' and eighteen 'provinces'.[30] Paez explains that he does not entirely withdraw the totality of information in Azevedo's letter, although, as we shall see, according to Guerreiro's version, he had access to Azevedo's letter. Chapter One aimed at putting into context the polemic which underlined the competition between the Jesuits and Dominicans over the Ethiopian missionary field at the beginning of the 17th century.

An aim: to refute

In 1610 and 1611, Luis de Urreta, a Dominican who taught theology in Valencia, published two works on the kingdom of Prester John.[31] Urreta's books defended two essential ideas: the first was that the Ethiopians were 'good Catholics', and had been so for a long time, and the second that the Dominicans had been present in Ethiopia before the Jesuits.

The publication of Urreta's first book, *Historia eclesiastica y politica …*, did not go unnoticed by the Society of Jesus. Indeed, since the middle of the 16th century, the Jesuits had been engaged in an attempt to reconquer spiritually this kingdom. Ethiopia was known to be Christian, but its Christianity presented major differences from that of Rome. In particular, the unification

28 Ibid.

29 Ibid.

30 Paez, *História da Etiópia*, p. 72.

31 L. Urreta, *Historia eclesiastica y politica, natural y moral, de los grandes y remotos Reynos de la Etiopia, monarchia del Emperador, llamado Preste Juan de las Indias, con la historia de predicatores en los remotos Reynos de la Etiopia por Fray Luis de Urreta* (Valencia: 1610); L. Urreta, *Historia de la sagrada orden de Predicatores en los remotos reynos de la Etiopia. Trata de los prodigiosos Santos, Martyres y Confessores, Inquisidores apostolicos, de los conventos de Plurimanos, donde viven nueve mil frayles, del Alleluya con siete mil, y de Bedenagli de cinco mil monjas, con otras grandezas de la religion del Padre Domingo* (Valencia: 1611).

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of the Ethiopian church with the Patriarchate of Alexandria and its adherence to the Monophysite doctrine (a doctrine centred on the divinity of Christ incarnate) were the two principal points on which the first Superior General of the Order, Ignatius of Loyola, insisted, as is shown by the letter he addressed to the Ethiopian sovereign, Claude (Gälawdéwos, 1540–59).[32] At the beginning of the 17th century, the Jesuit missionaries sent to Ethiopia were far from being upstarts who aimed to convert the Ethiopian sovereign and his people to the Roman faith. The assertions of the Dominican would lead the members of the Society of Jesus to different responses.

Counter-production in Europe and Ethiopia

The first reactive text was that of Father Fernão Guerreiro himself, who published an appendix to the relevant volume of annual reports of the missionaries in the Orient for 1607–08,[33] entitled 'Addition to the reports on Ethiopian matters, with much more information, more reliable and very different to those which Father Frei Luis de Urreta follows in the book which he published on the History of the empire of Prester John'.[34]

Guerreiro returns, point by point, to the affirmations of Urreta, and sets himself in opposition to the information contained in the letters from the Ethiopian missionaries written between 1560 and 1608. The polemic does not support the question of geographical knowledge but rather the affirmations of Urreta relative to the 'catholic faith of the Ethiopians and to the Dominican presence before that of the Jesuits in Ethiopia'. In this way began the series of critiques of Urreta's production which continued until the middle of the 17th century. Originating in Europe, this process was also carried on in Ethiopia.

Concomitantly, the Jesuit Provincial in Goa took steps so that a refutation could be made by an Ethiopian missionary, as intimated by Paez's prologue to the *Historia da Ethiopia*, to which one attributes this controversy.[35]

Methods for a refutation

The two works of Urreta and that of Guerreiro reached Ethiopia at the earliest in 1613, and at the latest in 1614, as Paez himself suggested in two letters

32 Loyola, *Écrits*, pp. 918–22. Letter from Ignatius of Loyola to King Claude (Gälawdéwos), Rome, 23 February 1555.

33 Guerreiro, *Relação anual das coisas que fizeram os padres da companhia nas partes da India oriental*.

34 Ibid., pp. 287–380: 'Adição à Relação das coisas de Etiópia, com mais larga informação delas, mui certa e mui diferente das que seguiu o Padre Frei Luis de Urreta, no livro que imprimiu da Historia daquele império do Preste-João.'

35 Paez, *História da Ethiópia*, p. 63.

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addressed to two different destinations.[36] Paez determined the approach to his refutation by effectively altering the order of the chapters of Urreta's books and responding to them point by point. So much so that the organisation of his 'book I'[37] is identical to that of Urreta: he maintained this ordering in books II and III, but not in book IV, which attempted to blend the history of the 17th-century Jesuits with that of Ethiopia, and allowed for no reference to Urreta, since Paez placed himself outside the chronological period reached by the Dominican.

Thus the object of Chapter One of 'book I' is the question of the lands dominated by Prester John. The major argument in this venture, conducted by Paez from 1614 until his death, was the systematic review and re-editing of what he considered as Urreta's fabrications, bearing in mind the fact that he was there, in the place itself, to see, to question, to listen and to note, which accorded him more legitimacy. His refutation was founded on analysis by the construction of 'real' knowledge, because he 'was actually there', a stance reminiscent of the method of social anthropology defended by Lévi-Strauss.[38]

To the 'myths and the great confusion'[39] of the Dominican, Paez opposed some information gathered *in situ*, originating from local intermediaries, whom he names. Paez was a confidant of the Susneyos king (1607–32), whom he followed in his military campaigns, and established precious links with the literati of the court, notably the historiographer Tino and the 'great people of the royal camp', from the men of war regularly travelling through the reconquered territories and those to be defended. Thus when he gives the list of kingdoms and provinces that comprised the land dominated by Prester John, he is able to specify: 'the chief secretary of the emperor tells me all that. Then in order to consolidate myself more I interrogated, in the presence of the emperor, one of his brothers, Eraz [*raš*] Çela Christos, and he told me the same thing.'[40]

36 Biblioteca Pública de Braga (BPB), hereafter BPB, *Cartas annais das missões da Etiópia*, Ms. 779, doc. XIb, f° 154, letter addressed to the provincial of Goa, Francisco Vieira (4 July 1615); 'Relationes et Epistolæ', vol. 11, pp. 359–60, letter to Thomas de Ituren (20 June 1615); see Pennec, *Des jésuits au royaume du prêtre Jean (Éthiopie)*, pp. 249–51, for a more developed argument.

37 The manuscripts of the *Historia* begin directly with chapter 1, after the dedication and the prologue to the reader (Achivum Romanum Societatis Iesu [ARSI], hereafter ARSI; P. Paez, *História da Etiópia*, *Goa 42*, f° 3; BPB, *Ms 778*, f° 3). It is thus convenient to call this first part (composed of 37 chapters) 'book 1'. On the other hand, books II, III and IV have titles.

38 C. Lévi-Strauss, *Anthropologie structurale deux* (Paris: Plon, 1973), p. 25.

39 Paez, *História da Ethiópia*, p. 71.

40 Ibid.: '*Tudo isto me deu por rol o principal dos secretários do imperador e, depois, para me certifar mais, perguntei diante do mesmo imperador a um seu irmão, que se chama Erâz Cela Christôs, e me disse da mesma maniera.*'

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The knowledge deployed by Paez was constructed without the aid of measuring instruments, which he did not have at his disposal as he wrote,[41] but he was supported by the experience of his informants, who were used to calculating distances from one point to another in terms of a day's march; so much so that when the results varied from one person to another, Paez took note for the sake of precision. He thus presents three measurement suggestions to go from north to south: two months, fifty days and forty-five days. And Paez, estimating the distances travelled over at eight places per day, reaches a total of four hundred places from north to south to keep the median measurement. The same operation was effected to calculate the distances from east to west, and the result that he puts forward oscillates between two hundred and forty and three hundred places. But this desire to define the Ethiopian field, or more precisely where he had been, was aimed at deconstructing Urreta's data, which he later cites, in order to indicate its falsity:[42] from north to south, six hundred and eighty, and from east to west, four hundred and seventy.

The Jesuit called for local participation because he needed 'proof'; without his local informants, it would have been impossible for Paez to give these measurement estimates, never having set foot himself in the ancient territory ruled by Prester John. He did not wish to concern himself with the area ruled by the Ethiopian king because of his preoccupation with demonstrating the falsity of Urreta's affirmations, as even at the time that the Ethiopian kings exercised dominion over a much larger territory (Ethiopian assertions which were arguable, but which he had no intention of calling into question). The information he received reduced the range to practically half of that considered by Urreta.

The knowledge that Paez presented was brought forward to the time of writing, a fact of which he was perfectly conscious; he did not omit to point out the political changes that the 'empire of Prester John' had experienced in the middle of the 16th century under the oppression of the Oromos ('Gallas'), which had considerably reduced the Ethiopian territorial area. This contextualisation of Paez's writings allows us to understand that he did not make use of the 'geographical' information contained in Azevedo's letter.

But something in the analysis would be missing if I did not tackle the question of the distribution of this 'knowledge'. The *História da Etiópia*, which was only published at the beginning of the 20th century — and we shall see the reasons for this — was destined to nourish a Jesuit 'library'. The ethnographical material (habits and customs; modes of life and religious practices; customs pertaining to table, dressing, birth, life, and death …) geographical material

41 Ibid.

42 Paez, *História da Etiópia*, pp. 71–72.

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(streams, rivers, lakes, mountains …) and historical material (chronicles and royal lists …) constituted a weighty argument for the competition between the missionary orders, but without bringing absolute finality to the publication of the texts thus produced. These texts developed in the missionary field could at least, if need be, help the Jesuit decision-makers to manage their personnel efficiently.

In consequence, it was without realising it that Paez proposed a new reading of the Ethiopian field and suggested attributing to it the wish for an epistemological rupture. Once again, this brings forth a reading contrary to the sources, exempt from contextualisation and puts these stakes at the moment of writing into perspective. But for all that, Paez is certainly one of the links in this scientific chain that was subsequently completed. The situation in which Manuel de Almeida found himself seems to me, on the contrary, to raise again a completely different logic of production, which I now intend to develop.

III. Manuel de Almeida: Knowledge to justify a failed mission

The third list of the 'kingdoms' and 'provinces' of Ethiopia is that of Manuel de Almeida, who proposed, contrary to his predecessors, a cartographic translation of the considered data. This map was published for the first time in 1660[43] in *Historia geral de Ethiopia* … [44] by Father Baltasar Teles (an adaptation of *Historia de Ethiopia e alta ou Abassia* … by Almeida). The general boundaries of the graphic production are the coastal contours of the Horn of Africa, copied from a Portuguese nautical map. The Ethiopian area with its regions, the frontiers of which are indicated by dotted lines, is bordered in the east by the coast of the Red Sea, in the west by the Nile (*Rio Nilo*), in the north by the confluence between the Mareb (*Rio Mareb*) and Takkäzé (*Rio Tacaze*) rivers and in the south by the areas occupied by the Galla (Oromo) populations settled in the regions of the Christian kingdom, in Bali, Däwaro (*Reino Doaro galas*) and Fätägar (*Reino Tategar galas*). In the southeast are found the kingdoms of Ädäl (*Adel*) or Zeila and the *Bantu* of the Somalian coast. Finally, the toponyms are indicated by number (61 or 62 according to the version) and hark back to a table of places. A significant characteristic is

43 Hirsch pointed out the existence of four manuscript versions of this map, in which the differences are minor (Hirsch, *Connaissances et figures de l'Éthiopie*, p. 527).

44 B. Tellez, *Historia geral de Ethiopia a Alta ou Abassia do Preste Ioam, e do que nella obraram os Padres da Companhia de Iesus: composta na mesma Ethiopia, pelo Padre Manoel d'Almeyda, natural de Viseu, Provincial, e Visitador, que foy na India. Abreviada com nova releyçam, e methodo pelo Padre Balthazar Tellez, natural de Lisboa, Provincial da Provincia Lusitania, ambos da mesma Companhia* (Coimbra: 1660).

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that the main point of the toponyms indicated on the map are at the interior of a diagonal going from the northeast (from Tigre) to the southwest (to Godjam [*Goiam*]), which corresponds with the zone of the Catholic occupation of the Ethiopian area. We shall return to this. The map was created from facts gathered in Ethiopia by means of an astrolabe, from information contained in Paez's manuscript which Almeida had in his possession, as we shall see, and from the accounts of local intermediaries.[45]

The Jesuit partly re-uses the lists of the 'kingdoms' and 'provinces' of his predecessor, keeping the same number, but replacing certain of them by others.[46] On the other hand, he does not forget to indicate that these kingdoms and provinces were those that 'Prester John ruled in the past'.[47] This is a thought that drives him to devote an ensuing chapter (Chapter Three of book I)[48] to the 'kingdoms' and 'provinces' ruled by the Ethiopian emperor in the 17th century. The Ethiopian area is thus reduced in size to a point of comparison with a kingdom of Europe, in particular Spain, which is more limited still.[49]

But the knowledge that Almeida presented at the time, through these different lists and by means of this map, cannot be understood without a re-contextualisation of the writing of his text.

Manuel de Almeida: to rewrite in order to write better …

In January 1624, as Almeida arrived in Ethiopia,[50] the manuscript of *Historia da Ethiopia* had not yet been sent to the Jesuits of Goa. António Fernandes, at that time the Superior of the mission, does not seem to have done what was necessary to dispatch the text, even though this last had logically been accomplished before the death of its author, Paez, in 1622. It was rather Almeida who took it upon himself to highlight the interest therein. For him, this work constituted an excellent argument for the defence of the Jesuit enterprise in Ethiopia in the face of the competing claims of the Dominicans. Moreover, this evaluation largely transcends the least explicit agreements effectively existing between the Jesuits of different 'nationalities' in the missionary field. Indeed, the argument that Paez was Castilian, according to which he would have written a partisan work with regards to the Portuguese, does not explain

45 M. Almeida, 'Historia de Ethiopia a alta ou Abassia, imperio do Abexim, cujo Rey vulgarmente he chamado Preste Joam', in C. Beccari (ed.), *Rerum Aethiopicarum scriptores occidentales inediti a saeculo XVI ad XIX*, vols. 5–7, (Rome: excudebat C. de Luigi, 1907–08), vol. 5, p. 8.
46 Ibid., p. 9: 'Marrâbet, Maûz, Bizamô'.
47 Ibid., p. 9.
48 Ibid., p. 11.
49 Ibid., p. 9.
50 Ibid., p. 338.

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anything about the esteem in which Almeida held him. From this point of view, Paez's manuscript had to be published, and the fact that he had proposed its Latin translation reinforces the idea that he considered that this work would have a large distribution.[51]

At the end of 1624, the manuscript was in India, as is attested by a note which appears at the end of the document.[52] This note, dated 4 December 1624 from Baçaim (Bassein),[53] was from the patriarch Afonso Mendes, who was sent to India with the authority of the Ethiopian patriarch and whose sojourn in India lasted just until the beginning of April 1625.[54] The patriarch's annotation, which has little connection with the content of the text, testifies all the same to the manuscript's presence in India. What is more, a letter from the same patriarch written in Bandorá on 26 December 1624, confirms that Mendes made use of Paez's manuscript, extracting information with regard to the surest route to take to get to Ethiopia.[55]

But Almeida's enthusiastic letter does not appear to have had the anticipated response, as not one copy reached Europe.[56] The *Historia da Ethiopia* was left in India until the departure of the missionary contingent for Ethiopia, at the

51 Here is what he wrote in his letter of 8 May 1624, from the Jesuit residence of Gorgora, to the employed general Mutio Vittelleschi ('Relationes et Epistolæ variorum tempore missionis Lusitanæ (1622–1635). Pars prima—Liber III', in C. Beccari (ed.), *Rerum Aethiopicarum scriptores occidentales inediti a saeculo XVI ad XIX*, vol. 12, (Rome: excudebat C. de Luigi, 1912), p. 51): 'The book of Ethiopian things made by Fr Pero Paes, who is in heaven, goes this year [to leave] from there [Ethiopia]. I ask the superior fathers of India that they would make copies of it and leave a copy at Goa, and that he send the others to V.P., and I ask V.P. that as it is done by the father in Portuguese, that it were published, because I believe that it has much authority, as it was done by a father of the Castilian nation and that equally it refutes the brother Luis de Urreta and treats in the way they deserve, the things of the Portuguese which came there a long time ago and the things of Ethiopia and said what he saw with his own eyes for nearly twenty years that he lived here. After such an impression that the father made, if that is possible, if that seems to be a good thing to V.P. to translate and to print in Latin so that it reaches all parts of Europe.'

52 ARSI, *Goa 42*, f° 537.

53 One of the Portuguese trading posts on the Indian occidental coast, to the north of Goa, where the Jesuits had a residence.

54 'Relationes et Epistolæ', vol. 12, p. 143.

55 Ibid., p. 110.

56 Evidently there is the BPB manuscript, *Ms 778*, which is a copy of the ARSI manuscript (*Goa 42*), a copy of which can only be subsequent to 4 December 1624, since the copyist took *in extenso* Mendes's annotation without marking a difference between the end of the *Histoire* and Mendes's letter. Of course, the copy could very well have been made in India between December 1624 and March 1625 and the sent to Europe. Without being absolutely categorical, however, a similarity exists between the writing of book II of the *Goa 42* manuscript and that of BPB (*Ms 778*), which leads one to think that the copy was made in Ethiopia.

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beginning of April 1625.[57] Then it was returned to Ethiopia instead of being sent to Europe to be published.[58]

In consequence, the area of distribution of this text did not include Europe, but it remained at the centre of the region which constituted the province of Goa, limiting it to internal distribution only to the members of the Society. The fact that the *Historia da Ethiopia* appeared in Ethiopia in 1625 is the sign of a decision to which the name of Mendes can be connected, as Beccari has already pointed out, indicating 'that the Patriarch Mendez himself probably carried Paez's codex with him as he was sailing from India towards Ethiopia so that it could be used for the profound knowledge of the missionary situation'.[59]

I return to my hypothesis concerning Paez's *Historia da Ethiopia*, in which I emphasise the censure, or rather the repeated obstructions, to which the manuscript was subjected.[60] It seems to me, and in the light of this inquiry on the re-contextualised missionary knowledge, that the conjecture concerning repeated obstructions should be re-evaluated. I prefer to emphasise that Paez's text received different evaluations, the point of view of Almeida with regard to his publication in Europe being only one. The numerous bits of information that figure in Paez's manuscript were probably judged more useful to the missionaries who, from 1635, were disembarking for their new missionary field, in order to return to that which Beccari defended.

Given that the re-evaluation of a hypothesis frequently entails other ideas, I suggest that the request, made some years later to Almeida in Ethiopia, to rewrite Paez's *Historia da Ethiopia*, as we shall see, tends to confirm the interest in the contents of this text, as well as the research to which the missionary was dedicated.[61]

Whereas the Ethiopian fathers had gathered together at the end of 1625, in order to practise the *Spiritual Exercises* in plenary session,[62] the Superior of the mission, Antonio Fernandes, entrusted to Almeida the task of rewriting Paez's *Historia*. He acknowledged several times in his text that Paez's text was originally his own, but Almeida's *Historia da Ethiopia a alta ou Abassia* is in

57 'Relationes et Epistolæ', vol. 12, p. 143.

58 A hypothesis which Beccari had already pointed out at the time of the publication of Paez's manuscript, see P. Paez, 'Historia Æthiopiæ', in C. Beccari (ed.), *Rerum Aethiopicarum scriptores occidentales inediti a saeculo XVI ad XIX*, vols. 2–3, (Rome: excudebat C. de Luigi, 1905–06) vol. 3, p. 508.

59 Paez, 'Historia Æthiopiæ' vol. 3, p. 508.

60 Pennec, *Des jésuites au royaume du prêtre Jean (Éthiopie)*, pp. 257–67.

61 Ibid., pp. 264–67.

62 With the exception of those in the northern province (Tigre) because of the distance, ARSI, *Goa 39 II, Hist. Æthiopiæ*, doc. 52, f° 312 (extract from the annual letter from 1625 to 1626, written by Gaspar Paes).

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reality a complete rewriting of that of his predecessor, with Almeida taking care to suppress the polemical aspect relating to Urreta.

Context of the production of the Historia *and its map*

Unlike Paez's manuscript, which was written completely in Ethiopia and for the reasons described above, that of Almeida is inscribed in a totally different context. The chronological signs that punctuate his narrative allow the reader to know the time of his writing and indicate that certain parts of the manuscript were compiled on missionary ground (Ethiopia), and that other parts were written after the Jesuits had been expelled by the new royal Ethiopian power in 1633 (1643 is the last date contained in the *Historia*).[63] In fact, two thirds of it were written up in Goa, and this in a context extremely different from that which Paez had known. The mood was one of bitterness linked to the failure of the mission; the Goanese context obliged him to revisit, to interpret the Jesuit mission in its entirety and to draw up a first assessment of this enterprise.[64]

The geographical map that he completed, without any doubt in Goa, is certainly, as emphasised by Hirsch,

> *new in the themes it introduced, since it is no longer about a vast unbounded area but a reduced area showing the historic places of a religious confrontation: the places taken by the Catholic mission with their martyrs, their stone churches and the large Ethiopian monasteries testify to the traditional religion and to the resistance to Catholicism, and about the Muslim regions (the coast, the kingdom of Ädäl, the Funj (Funchos) kingdom or pagans (Oromo regions).*[65]

But it signifies, particularly for the Society of Jesus and the missionaries evicted from Ethiopia, the desire to inscribe the Jesuit presence, after the event, in the terrain and in Ethiopian history. The body of residences, stone churches and places of the Jesuit martyrs who remained after most had been evicted, are associated with the high places of the memory of Ethiopian religious identity (Däbrä Bizan [n° 1], Axum [n° 16], Däbrä Libanos [n° 53]).

63 He started to write in 1628 while he was in Ethiopia, attesting certain passages, notably from book I, Almeida, 'Historia de Ethiopia a alta ou Abassia', vol. 5, p. 22. Book II would have been written in part in Ethiopia as for VII others they were in Goa; see Beckingham & Huntingford (eds), *Some Records*, intro.

64 See, Almeida, 'Historia de Ethiopia a alta ou Abassia', vol. 5, pp. 333–40, ch. 1, book IV, where the author translates accurately enough the disappointment engendered by the failure of the mission. In this chapter, he pays particular attention to the 'human resources' deployed, in emphasising the energy spent, 'firstly by the Venetian kings of Portugal and the entire Portuguese nation and secondly by St Ignatius and his sons'. He completes his quantitative analysis with the Jesuits remaining in Ethiopia and the martyred dead in 1639, inviting the putative reader to reflection.

65 Hirsch, *Connaissances et figures de l'Éthiopie*, pp. 530–31. See the author's pages concerning the principles of construction of this map, pp. 531–35.

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Up until the middle of the 17th century, the province of Goa continued to have an interest in the Ethiopian mission, certainly diminishing since the Jesuits who remained in place would die one after the other as martyrs,[66] sending new missionaries, of which the trace of at least one was conserved in the catalogues of the province.[67]

Thus Almeida's geographic map, published for the first time in Teles's work in 1660, is to be considered, in my opinion, as the justification for the Jesuit mission in Ethiopia and is likewise inscribed in the debate that started at the beginning of the century between Dominicans and Jesuits.

For if Almeida's *Historia* eliminated the polemical challenge to Urreta, it did not prevent Almeida from including an appendix entitled 'Appendix to the History of Ethiopia in which the principal errors which were written in one [History] printed in Valencia in 1610, are refuted'.[68] But this competition between the orders became more complex with the presence, from 1622, of the *Propaganda Fide*, claiming responsibility for, and criticising within the papacy, the action of the Jesuits in Ethiopia.[69]

Moreover, the map published by Teles, with a compendium by Almeida, helped to legitimise an Ethiopian mission in which the 'Portuguese' Jesuits had been involved. But it was equally a result of real geographical knowledge (substituting that of *Abassia* or *Etiopia alta*[70] for the notion of *Æthiopia*), knowledge which was assimilated by the Society itself, not only uniquely in terms of failures or successes, but in terms of 'geographic sciences', the issues being the use of that missionary library in the service of 'science in the process

66 ARSI, *Goa 25*, *Catalogi triennales Goan. & Malab.*, 1614–99 (year 1641, ff° 72v-73; 79).

67 ARSI, *Goa 25*, *Catalogi triennales Goan. & Malab.*, 1614–99 (year 1647, f° 91v; year 1649, f° 110 'P. Torcato Parisiano natural da Marca de Ancono jdade 29, da Comp.a 11 theologo estudos acabados, leo latim 2 annos, esteve hum annos e meyo na Christandade de Salcete em cuja lingoa confessava, e pregava, vay este anno a Mocâ, q. he hum Porto de Arabia no Mar Roxo na contra costa de Ethiopia, aonde deve estar desfarçado acudindo aos neg.os daquella Missão, e entrando nella tendo occazião').

68 School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS), hereafter SOAS, *Historia de Ethiopia a alta, ou Abassia: Imperio do Abexim, cujo Rey vulgarmente he chamado Preste Joam … Composta pelo Padre Manoel de Almeida da Companhia de Iesus, natural de Viseu*, *Ms 11966* [f° 9] 'Appendix à Historia de Ethiopia na qual se refutam os principaes erros q[ue] andão escritos em huã q[ue] se imprimio e[m] Valença no año de 1610'. This appendix occupies folios 9v to 48r after the *Historia de Ethiopia a alta e Abassia*. The manuscript, from the British Museum (*Add MS 9861*), which was used and published in its entirety by Beccari (Almeida, 'Historia de Ethiopia a alta ou Abassia', vols 5–7), does not contain this appendix.

69 Archivo della Congregazione de Propaganda Fide, série Congressi Missioni Miscellanee, vol. 3, ff° 203-241 v (on Ethiopia ff° 236-239). J. Metzler, 'Orientation, programme et premières décisions (1622–1649)', in *Sacrae Congregationis de Propaganda Fide memoria rerum, 350 ans au service des missions, 1622–1972*, vol. I/1 1 1622–1700 (Rome, Freiburg & Vienna: Herder, 1971), pp. 146–96.

70 Tellez, *Historia geral de Ethiopia a Alta ou Abassia do Preste Ioam*, pp. 3–10.

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of being developed'. And this was at the heart of the Society, which had been able to protect the body of data concerning its missionary field so that it could operate more efficiently.

It was not by chance that the first author known to have used the map published by Almeida was a Roman Jesuit, Francesco Eschinardi (1623–1703). He was teaching astronomy, mathematics and physical sciences at the Jesuit colleges of Florence, Perugia and Rome, was the author of pedagogic works[71] and was a friend of Athanasius Kircher (1602–80), the German Jesuit scholar. As Hirsch emphasises, the object of Eschinardi's curiosity was probably 'the combination of a scientific interest for the Nile network and a desire to justify the Jesuit mission'.[72]

It is, moreover, in this period that a reversal took place in which the map became a means of legitimising the mission — of making it a properly scientific object. The body of data of the field translated into the map remained under the control of the Society, and Eschinardi broadened it beyond the 'Jesuit' sphere ….

Conclusion

Throughout this inquiry, I have attempted to show that missionary knowledge is produced according to its own logic, responding to concerns that must be reconstructed in their social context and seen in terms of utterance *in situ*. The various presentations of knowledge are in dialogue, and it is this that should be circumscribed, and determined more precisely, before establishing the genealogical filiations between these various presentations of knowledge. So the reading that can be made of these sources, in this case the Jesuit library, is found to be modified, and with this the very consideration of what a particular 'knowledge' is and how it was developed.

To return to the concerns expressed at the beginning of this enquiry, the contextual analysis of this missionary knowledge has emphasised that this knowledge collected on the ground during the first half of the 17th century was not designed, in the first place, to be distributed to an erudite public but was kept for circulation inside the Order. In the case of Abyssinia, it was only much later, in the second half of the 17th century, that the knowledge gathered at the heart of the Society swung towards the 'scientific sphere'. The investigation of this knowledge, which was gathered by the missionaries from data in the field

71 F. Eschinardi, *Cursus physicomathematicus … Pars prima, de cosmographia. Tomus primus continens duplicem tractatum, primum de sphaera, secundum de astronomia* (Ex typographia J.-J. Komarek: 1689), p. 367.

72 Hirsch, *Connaissances et figures de l'Éthiopie*, p. 538; and on Eschinardi, pp. 535–40.

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and which was ordered by the Society, would merit further investigation in other missionary fields, to estimate the extent of its achievement.

So what about the 'political' question tackled by each of the missionaries in a different manner? I would be inclined to insist on the fact that when the missionaries presented the different lists of 'kingdoms' and 'provinces', it showed at the least that by these designations they understood or appreciated very different things, just like the local intermediaries whom they questioned. This leaves one to think that this category, which could appear 'stable' to us, is, in fact, much more complex. Therefore, instead of wanting to determine what geopolitics or cartography was relative to the 17th century of Ethiopia,[73] it is desirable to weave again the dialogue with which each of these missionaries grappled. These documents, 'treated as products and not only as 'sources', no longer *tell* only the history, they *are* themselves a sedimentary history, like a monument wherein can be read the series of successive architectural modifications which result in its final structure', to quote the anthropologist Jean Bazin[74].

This would be a way in which to re-evaluate not only the relevance of the documentation as social production, but also the objects of history, the history of men, ideas, situations, places and the relationships that they produce.

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73 I return with this allusion to the analysis that Toubkis and I have conducted on the Ethiopian political system for the 17th century, asking ourselves about this category of empire, if it was operational for the period concerned, and how and in what way the Jesuits were able to play a role in the conception of an empire which spanned, it must be admitted, the entirety of the Ethiopian historiography; see H. Pennec and D. Toubkis, 'Reflections on the notions of "empire" and "kingdom" in seventeenth-century Ethiopia: royal power and local power', *Journal of Early Modern History*, 2004, vol. 8 (3–4), pp. 228–59.

74 J. Bazin, 'La production d'un récit historique', in *Des clous dans la joconde. L'anthropologie autrement* (Toulouse: Anacharsis Éditions, 2008), p. 272.

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5



From Travelling to History: An Outline of the VOC Writing System during the 17th Century

Adrien Delmas
Translated from the French by Christine Bull

Curse thee, thou quadrant!' dashing it to the deck, 'no longer will I guide my earthly way by thee; the level ship's compass, and the level dead-reckoning, by log and by line; these shall conduct me, and show me my place on the sea. Aye,' lighting from the boat to the deck, 'thus I trample on thee, thou paltry thing that feebly pointest on high; thus I split and destroy thee.

– Herman Melville, *Moby-Dick*[1]

Introduction

The history of historiography has had the wind in its sails for a few years already. Now, whether it deals with history as a discipline,[2] as a concept[3] or even with the relations to time,[4] this novelty has paid no attention to travel writing as one (of the) origin(s) of history writing. When considering the period preceding the 19th century—generally recognised as the century when history acquired its academic status—a certain number of genres hold the field; among these are history master of life, sacred history, ancient history, royal chronicles and genealogy.[5] With this perspective in mind, this essay's first objective is to ask to what extent travel writing can and must

1 H. Melville, *Moby-Dick* (New York: The Heritage Press, 1943), p. 534.
2 A. Momigliano, *Problèmes d'historiographie ancienne et moderne* (Paris: Gallimard, 1983).
3 R. Koselleck, *L'expérience de l'histoire* (Paris: Gallimard/Le Seuil, 1997).
4 F. Hartog, *Régimes d'historicité* (Paris: Le Seuil, 2003).
5 A. Grafton, *What was history? The art of history in early modern Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007).

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integrate this list of history writings which prevailed in early modern times. To achieve this, we will look at historiography not so much as a literary genre but as the result of established and organised practices, especially practices linked to writing and to its physical inscriptions.[6]

At the turn of the 17th century, the desire of several merchants from the United Provinces to trade with the East Indies and the launching of the first fleets beyond the Cape of Good Hope went along with a deep overhaul of writing practices. New demands regarding navigation to faraway places, as well as the need to administer territories on several continents, combined to turn writing into an essential tool of the Vereenigde Oost-Indische Compagnie (VOC), or Dutch East India Company. The charter of 1602, which marks the birth of the Company, already placed writing at the centre of its activity:

> *As soon as any ships return from the journey, the generals or commanders of the fleet, of the ship or of the ships shall be obliged to report to us on the journey and its achievements and provide us with a written account of it in the required manner.*[7]

Within this system of writing, which the Company developed throughout the 17th century, the writing of daily life or *daghregister*, in a handwritten form, emerges as the most used and the most appropriate form. This short essay aims at giving some marks for the history of this genre.

I. Dead reckoning

The start of open-sea navigation (as opposed to navigation by sight) profoundly changed practices aboard ships. The necessity of finding one's bearings without being able to refer to landmarks visible from the ship required that pilots equip themselves with new instruments and become familiar with the techniques of how to use them. The first of those instruments was obviously the compass, or the 'magnet' as it was called at the time. Jean Bodin described it in the *Methodus Historica* as the instrument which would establish the superiority of the Moderns over the Ancients.

> *If one looks closely, there is no doubt that our discoveries are equal to and often surpass those of the ancients. Is there, for example, something more admirable than the magnet? Yet the ancients have ignored it and its wonderful usage, and they were confined to the Mediterranean basin, while our contemporaries travel each year around the earth in their many navigations and have colonised a new world.*[8]

6 R. Chartier, *Inscrire et effacer, Culture écrite et littérature, XIe–XVIIIe siècles* (Paris: Gallimard/Le Seuil, 2005).

7 E. Gepken-Jager *et al.* (eds), *VOC 1602–2002: 400 years of company law* (Deventer: Kluwer Legal Publisher, 2005), p. 37.

8 J. Bodin, *La Méthode de l'histoire* (Algiers: Belles Lettres, 1941), p. 298.

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The swing beyond the Pillars of Hercules and the entering of the ocean, first achieved by the Portuguese in the 15th century, entailed the use of instruments other than the magnet, and first and foremost those which could establish the latitude of a ship. By measuring, with the help of the Jacob's staff (Figure 5.1), the astrolabe or the sextant, the height of the sun at its zenith, or equally of some stars at night, such as Polaris, it became possible to locate the position of a ship on a north–south ladder divided into 180 degrees. But the inability of sailors to couple the measurement of latitude with a corresponding measurement of longitude remained a problem that would not be overcome until much later.[9] In spite of the many theoretical essays which tackled this subject from that time on, it was not possible to establish an accurate and absolute location of the ship at any time. During the first centuries of open-sea navigation, the pilots could only establish the relative location and had to resort to the practice of *gegist bestek*, or dead reckoning. The principle is rather simple: it consists of writing down for how long (hence the need to have time-measuring instruments on board such as the hourglass or the clock) and at what speed (measured with the help of the knotted rope) a certain course was held. Crossing direction, time and speed made it possible to mark the estimated location of a ship on a map (Figure 5.2).[10] Based on this, the dead reckoning of the following day would be done. At a pinch, the calculation of the latitude was not necessary because it only confirmed what was already done by dead reckoning. It proved to be the only way of adjusting one's progress, steering the ship and reaching one's destination.

The practice of dead reckoning would entail the need, in open-sea navigation, to keep a 'memory' or log of the navigation. More practically, the task of the pilot consisted in writing down the observed course and estimated distance in a journal, and that on a daily basis, if not more frequently. In the words of Master Pedro de Medina, the author of the famous *Arte de Navegar* published in Valladolid in 1545, which was going to reveal the secrets of open-sea navigation to the whole of Europe,

> *that is why the pilot must be well prepared for long journeys and have a register of his journey, where he records the wind that he uses every day and in which way: and also how fast his ship can sail, checking with the clock how many leagues per hour it covers.*[11]

9 See W.G.L. Randles, 'Portuguese and Spanish attempts to measure longitude in the sixteenth century', *Mariner's Mirror*, 81, 4 (1955), pp. 402–8.

10 Marking the distance covered on the earth on a map in two dimensions was not straightforward and required the use of trigonometric calculations.

11 P. de Medina, *Arte de navegar* (Valladolid: F. Fernández de Córdoba, 1545), book III, chap. 11.

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Figure 5.1 Measuring the height of the sun with the help of the Jacob's staff. Thomas Hood, *Gebruyck vande Zeecarte geschreven* (Amsterdam: Claesz, 1602)

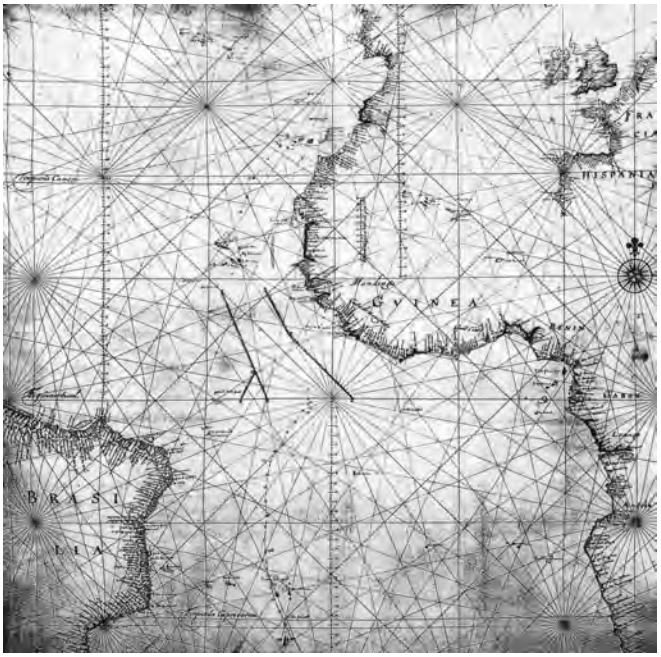


Figure 5.2 Reporting the dead reckoning on a map. Nederlands Scheepvart Museum, Amsterdam

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The *Arte de Navegar* was first translated into Dutch in 1580, from its French version published in Lyon in 1554, under the title *De Zeevaert ofte Conste van ter Zee*[12] (Figure 5.3). From 1584–85, the *Spieghel der Zeevaerdt* by Lucas Jansz Waghenaer became the reference in terms of science and open-sea navigation and the model for all navigation textbooks printed throughout the 17th century in the United Provinces. At the end of his Introduction, Waghenaer concluded on the inability of his contemporaries to establish the longitude and came to the conclusion that it was necessary to use dead reckoning in order to adjust one's progress on the open sea.[13] The second edition, published in 1690, of Nicolas Witsen's work on all that dealt with navigation, *Aleoude en hedendaegsche scheepbouw en bestier*, stated, in even more detail, the information to be written in the logbook:

> *An exacting navigator must record his estimated positions in his day-registers. For this purpose it is useful that changes in wind, current and tide, in addition to other indicators that affect navigation, are noted down on a board every quarter hour while the ship is under sail so that the navigator can make his daily estimate more accurate.*[14]

By the sheer number of published works, the *arts of navigation* had become one of the pioneering genres in the United Provinces' publishing world by the turn of the 17th century—especially thanks to the activity of the printer and bookseller Claesz.[15] However, what was really at stake was not so much on the shelves of the Dutch libraries as on the oceans throughout the world, where Dutch merchants, willing to compete with Portugal in the spice trade, launched the first ships to sail under the Dutch flag from 1595. On board those early ships, one would find the *arts of navigation* but also, and especially, journals in which to record these 'memories of navigation' and write down the dead reckoning on a daily basis in order to estimate the position of the ship.

12 P. de Medina, *L'art de naviguer: contenant toutes les reigles, secrets, & enseignemens necessaires à la bonne navigation* (Lyon: G. Rouille,1554); *De zeevaert ofte conste van ter zee te varen* (Antwerp: Hendrick Hendricksen, 1580).

13 L.J. Waghenaer, *Spieghel der zeevaerdt* (Leiden: Plantijn, 1584–85). See C.A. Davids, *Zeewezen en wetenschap: de wetenschap en de ontwikkeling van de navigatietechniek in Nederland tussen 1585 en 1815* (Amsterdam: De Bataafsche Leeuw, 1985), p. 380.

14 N. Witsen, *Aleoude en hedendaegsche scheep-bouw en bestier* (Amsterdam: Blaeu, 1690), p. 474. Quoted by Davids, op. cit., p. 151. '*Een naerstigh stuerman moet zijn dagh-registers, en gissingers in geschrift houden, weshalven dientstigh is, dat nacht en dagh, in alle quartieren te scheep, op en ley, t'elkens aangetekend wordt, hoe de windt, stroom en tij verander mitsgarder alle bejegeningen den loop betrefende, op dat den stuurman eens daaghs zijn gising te bequamer kan maken.*'

15 See G. Schilder, *Monumenta cartographica Neerlandica* (Amsterdam: Uitgevermaatschappij Canaletto, 1986–2003) VII, pp. 7–24. Claesz, who moved to Amsterdam in 1578, published another version of Pedro de Medina's *arts of navigation. De zeevaert ofte conste van ter zee te varen* (Amsterdam: Claesz, 1589).

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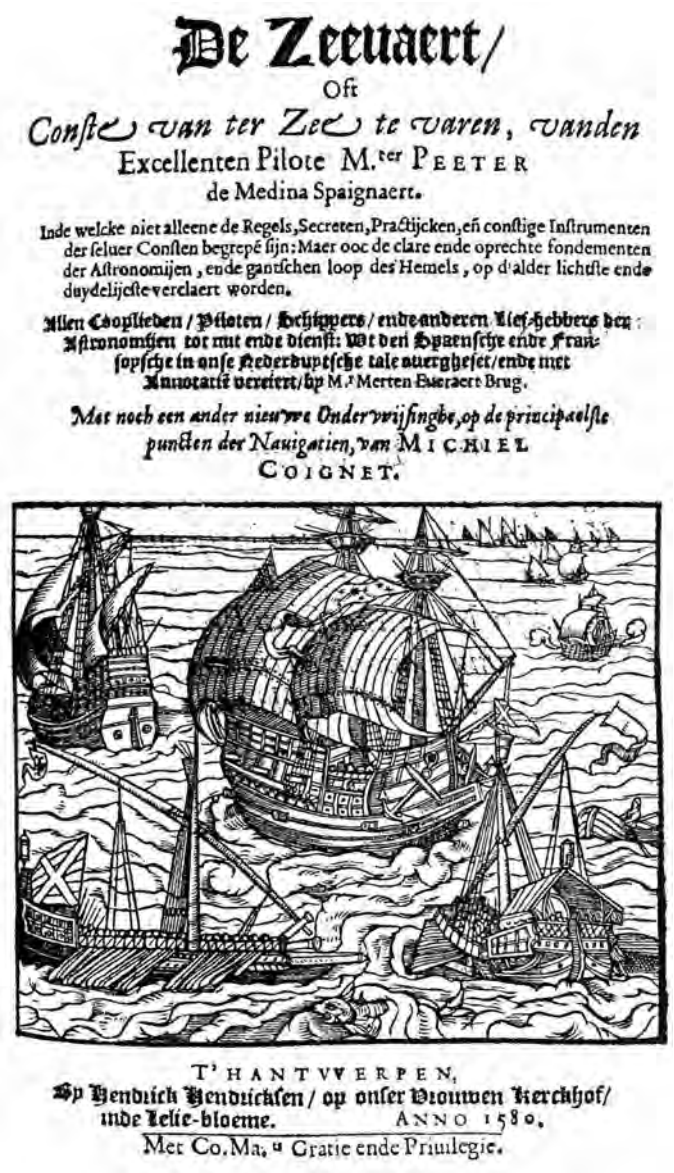

De Zeevaert/
Oft
Conſte van ter Zee te varen, vanden
Excellenten Pilote M.ter PEETER
de Medina Spaignaert.
Inde welcke niet alleene de Regels, Secreten, Practijcken, eñ conſtige Inſtrumenten der ſelver Conſten begrepē ſijn: Maer ooc de clare ende oprechte fondementen der Aſtronomijen, ende gantſchen loop des Hemels, op d'alder lichtſte ende duydelijcſte verclaert worden.
Allen Coopluyden / Piloten / Schippers / ende anderen Liefhebbers der Aſtronomijen tot nut ende dienſt: Wt den Hyſpanſche ende Franſoyſche in onſe Nederduytſche tale ouergheſet/ende met Annotatie vereert/by M.r Merten Eſcuraert Brug.
Met noch een ander nieuwe Onderwijſinghe, op de principaelſte punctē der Nauigatien, van MICHIEL COIGNET.
T'HANTVVERPEN,
By Hendrick Hendricksen / op onſer Vrouwen Kerckhof/ inde Lelie-bloeme. ANNO 1580.
Met Co. Ma.t Gratie ende Priuilegie.

Figure 5.3 Pedro de Medina, *De Zeevaert ofte Conste van ter Zee te varen* (Antwerp: Hendrick Hendricksen, 1580)

On 16 April 1655, the *Heeren XVII* (the Directors of the VOC) decreed what was to be given at the start of a journey to the Commanders, Lieutenants and Upper- and Under-Navigators in 'a list of books, maps and navigation instruments' (Figure 5.4). As well as the compass, astrolabe, telescope, maps

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and almanac, there is a lined diary and one without lines for each of the three people responsible for the sea journey.[16] Instructions on how to keep the *daghregister* or logbook issued much later, during the 18th century, specify the contents:

> *The first Commanders and also their Lieutenants and Upper- and Under-Navigators shall have to ensure that at every opportunity on the journey the Observation of the Sun, the discovery of the Pole height and the compass direction shall be performed and after the discovering of your position* [. . .] *such will be recorded by him in the day-registers at a penalty of three month's salary to the one who is negligent in this regard.*[17]



Figure 5.4 A 'list of books, maps and navigation instruments to give out to Commanders, Lieutenants and Upper- and Under-Navigators' as decreed by the Heeren XVII, 16 April 1655

16 Algemeen Rijksarchief (ARA), VOC 103. See also, about the navigation instruments taken on board, G. Schilder, 'Het cartografisch bedrijf van de VOC' in Patrick van Mil & Mieke Scharloo (eds), *De VOC in de kaart gekeken: cartografie en navigatie van de Verenigde OostIndische Compagnie* (The Hague: SDU, 1988).

17 ARA, VOC 4952. 'Ordre Wegens het houden en schryven der Dagregisters, op de Schepen der Ed. Oost Indische Compagnie, als by de Vergadering der Seventienne is gearresteert' i.e. 'Instructions on the keeping of the *daghregisters*'. 'Artickle 12: De Pools hoogte en miwyzing der Compassen in Zee, aan te tekenen, op de boete daar toe staanle, volgens Resolutie als boven. *De eersteGezagvoerders, nevens hunne Luitenants, Opper-en Onder-Stuurluiden, zullen hebben te zorgen, dat by alle gelegentheden de Observatein aand de Zon, ter ontdekking van de Poolshoogte en Naaldwyzing, op de reyse, word verricht, en dat na bevinding der laast, (en by gebrek van dien na de aantekening op de laaste Vojagie) de Compassen tessens xworden verlegt, en verbetert, en zulks door hen in de dagregisters word aangetekent, op poene van drie maanden gagie, te verbeuren by den genne, die daar in nalatig is geweest.*'

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The sentence imposed in case of negligence certainly did not matter that much: the practice of dead reckoning, which was going to lead to the systematic and daily writing aboard ships, was simply essential for the steerage of ships.

II. Hydrography

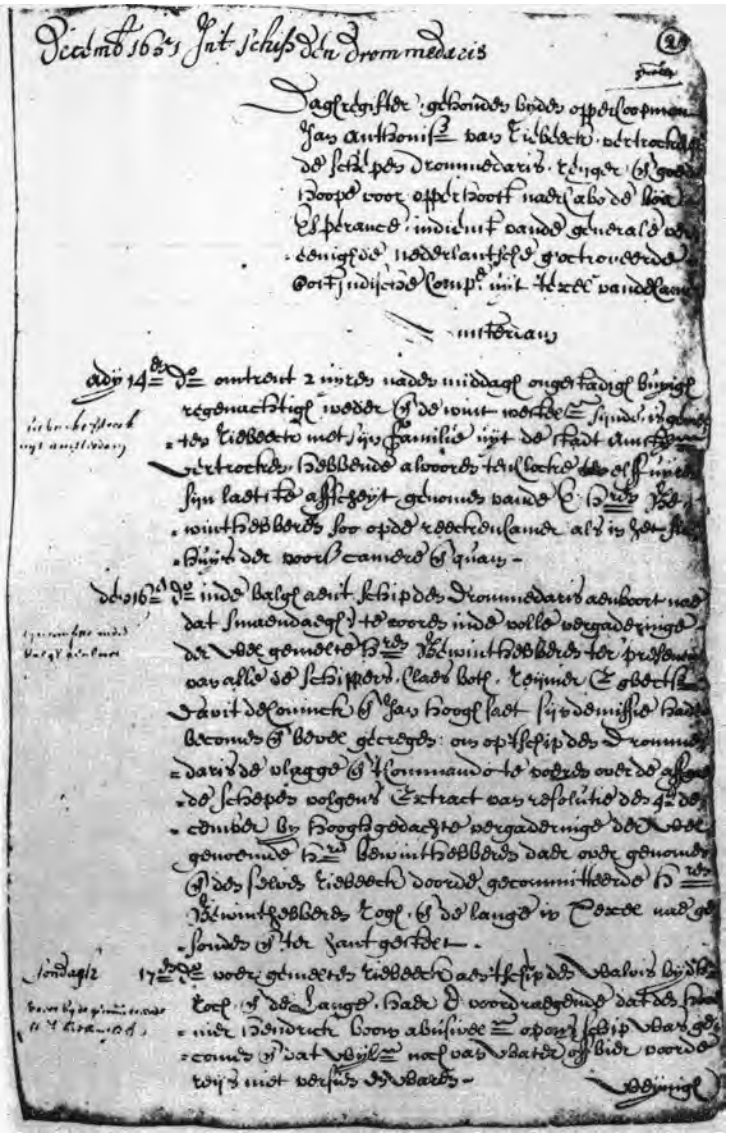


Figure 5.5 *Daghregister* kept at the Cape of Good Hope (first page)

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When Jan van Riebeeck left Texel on 24 December 1651 on board the *Drommedaris* for the Cape of Good Hope, where the Directors of the VOC had given him the responsibility of founding, halfway between Europe and Asia, a way station for ships, he did not forget to use dead reckoning to reach his destination. On 26 December, the *daghregister* notes: 'we estimated that our progress since yesterday could not have been more than 10 miles on a south-westerly course.' On 29 December, 'estimate to have sailed this day 16 miles on a S.W. by W. Course.' On 4 January, 'at noon we were at lat. 43 deg. 40 min. And have sailed 27 miles on a S.W.1/2 W course. Estimate to be opposite to Cape Finisterre'.[18] It would be the same until they had reached the Cape of Good Hope (Figure 5.5).

This practice of daily writing would quickly go beyond the simple objective of navigation, for which it had been established. The register would not be limited to recording the three measures of time, speed and the progress made. Many other events that happened during the voyage would be noted in the diaries, such as the passing of other fleets, news from the crew, etc. The instructions described them as 'important matters and happenings' and required them to be written down in the diary.[19] On this same entry of 26 December 1651, when Van Riebeeck was establishing the dead reckoning of the day, he also wrote 'Wind as before, but rather slack. The entire fleet was fairly dispersed, the flute *Reijger* as well as the yacht *Goede Hoope* becoming separated from us. [...] Hailed a Pernambuco trader who requested to join us and informed us that the one glass ago he had seen on our starboard the flute and the yacht aforesaid, which had wandered somewhat among the large number of ships' etc. This pattern of a journal written on a daily basis to estimate the ship's position proved to be totally appropriate to report all the observations made during the journey.

In Article 1 of the 'Instructions on how to keep the *daghregister*', it is specified that between the two journals issued to the pilots by the Company,

18 H.B. Thom (ed.), *Journal of Van Riebeeck* (Cape Town: A.A. Balkema, 1952), pp. 4, 7 & 9.

19 ARA, VOC 4952. 'Artickle 11. Wat in de dagregisters moet aangetekent worden, volgens Resolutie als boven. *De dagregisters, die ten dienst der Compagnie zyn geschikt, zullen zulke aantekeningen moeten behelzen, als by Compagnies Instructien en Ordres in't gemeen, en aan de Eerste Gezagvoerder in't byzonder, werd gelast, namentlyk het gebruik van de Lugt Pompen, Brandspuyten, het aankopen van verversfig in vreemde Haven, an wanner het Buskruyt is gekeert. Verders noteerens waardige zaken en gevallen, als de beschryving van de opdoening, of gedaante, der voornaamste pasfeerende Eilanden, en kenlyste Gebergtens of uitstekende hoeken der bestevende Kusten, met derzelver pylings of afstand, bevonden breette, Naaldwyzing, diepten en granden op dien tyd, en de defecten of mislagen wegens der zelver strekking en legging in de Kaart, als mede aanmerkingen op de bevinding van het vaarwater, loop der stroomen, en alle het geen nieuwelyk is ontdekt, en betrekkelyk tot de Zeevaart is, zullende alle beuzelingen, niet tot de konst der Zeevaart dienende, uit deze dagregisters gealten worden, en een kort register wegens de voornaamste zaken agter het zelve werden gestelt.'*

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the one with lines had to be used. If the pre-printed paper provided was not enough, one still had to keep the diary in a good state of readability, at the risk of having to rewrite the register once on land.[20] Such a statement for writing clearly reveals that the journal was not only meant to be read on board to carry out the dead reckoning and determine the ship's position. Written and taken care of to be read on land, the logbook would survive the journey and find a second life once it had arrived safe and sound.

Who was the reader of these registers on land? The *Artickel brief*, or work contract, drawn up in 1616, to be signed by every employee when joining the Company, stipulated that diaries kept on board could under no circumstances be taken out of the Company's service, at the risk of severe punishment.[21] The aim of collecting registers kept at sea on a daily basis was summed up in a few words: *Konst der Zeevaart*, or 'the improvement of navigation', that is to say the building up and improvement of hydrographic knowledge. This practice, which consisted of comparing experiences from various journeys in order to find a better knowledge of hydrography, goes back to the very first days of the Company and earlier. The sequence between the first and the second Dutch journey beyond the Cape of Good Hope is exemplary in that respect.

On the eve of Frederick de Houtman's departure in 1595, Petrus Plancius, the father of open-sea navigation in the United Provinces, handed a first 'memorandum' to Houtman. This was an accurate summary of the information necessary for the first voyage to the East Indies. Although the voyage did not bring back the expected riches, it opened the route beyond the Cape to the Dutch for good, and numerous fleets soon followed.[22] In accordance with a contract signed before he departed, Houtman was forced, when he came back in 1597, to return all the documents he had been given, as well as any annotations and amendments he might have made. Plancius was immediately going to write a second 'memorandum', more thorough and more accurate,

20 ARA, VOC 4952. 'Article 1. The first Commanders and also their Lieutenants and Navigators shall keep day-registers of their Journeys in the lined Journal-books that were given to them for this purpose and in the matter desired, namely the experience of each day in the lines and the matter of writing down the same, and if lacking such lined Journal-books he shall keep his day-register, which should be suitable to be of service of the Company, in a [Journal-book] he shall suitably line himself on penalty of rewriting, because no others except such lined day-registers will be accepted.'

21 See K. Zandvliet, *Mapping for money: maps, plans and topographic paintings and their role in Dutch overseas expansion during the 16th and 17th centuries* (Amsterdam: Bataafsche Leeuw, 1998), p. 101.

22 Rijksmuseum Historisch Scheepvaartmuseum, Mss 7. 'Memorie bijplacio Gemaeckt', pictured in Schilder, *Monumenta cartographica Neerlandica*, VII, p. 232.

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integrating the experience of the first journey for Van Neck's fleet.[23] This practice of experience feedback, already in place during the first two journeys a few years before the founding of the VOC, would in fact guide the functioning of the VOC's hydrographic office for the next two centuries.[24] The office became a real institution in Amsterdam when Hessel Gerritszoon was appointed to the position of 'chart-maker' in 1617. His successor as the director of the *Stuurmanskammer*, Willem Jansz Blaeu, was to receive the following instructions:

> *Willem Jansz Blaeu must use the journals and books of the merchants, captains and navigators already in his possession and those to be handed over to him shortly to correct, improve and amplify the maps used for sailing to the Indies so that the departing and returning ships can use the best standardised maps to choose the most certain route for the progress and fulfilment of their respective voyages.*[25]

As early as 1618, to solve the problem of sending maps to ships involved in trading in the Indian Ocean, the VOC's directors decided to set up a second hydrographic office at a suitable place in Asia. Following its capture in 1619, Batavia became the head office of the second *Equipagemeester* of the VOC.[26] Once they had arrived at their destination the pilots were taken to give back the navigation journals with their own hands as well as all other documents provided by the Company. The market value of these documents sometimes tempted the pilots to infringe the rules of the Company and to sell them to outsiders.[27]

The keeping of a 'register of a sea journey' therefore had two clear and distinct objectives. On the one hand there was the performance of a particular journey, and on the other the gathering of hydrographic knowledge. The register was used as a vital link between the experience of a particular journey and the accumulated knowledge of an organisation which largely relied on its abilities

23 See A. Delmas, 'Travelling stories: written culture and European expansion based on the case of *Itinerario* at the turn of the 17th century', unpublished paper, Dept. of Historical Studies, UCT, 2007.

24 G. Schilder, 'Organization and evolution of the Dutch East India Company's Hydrographic Office in the seventeenth century', in *Imago mundi*, 28 (1976).

25 P. van Dam (F.W. Stapel, ed.), *Beschryvinge van de OostIndische Compagnie* (The Hague: Nijhoff, 1927–54) 1, I, p. 414. *'Willem Jansz. Blaeu in de journalen en de boecken van de koopluyden, schippers en stuurluyden, die alrede in handen zijn of na desen sullen overgelevert worden, de caarten, tot de vaart na en in de Indiën dienstigh, sal corrigeren, verbeteren en amplieren, ten eynde de gaende en komende schepen uyt deselve caerten de best aanwysinge mogen bekomen ende de seeckerste coursen nemen, tot vorderinge en voleyndinge van haere voyagiën.'*

26 ARA, VOC 313 fol. 326 and VOC 1241 fol. 503–510. A draft written in 1618 set the prerogatives for the *Equipagemeester*.

27 In 1699, François Dusson de Bonrepaus commented, from Amsterdam, that 'the pilots of the East Indies keeps [the maps and journals] for themselves, without the directors of the Company knowing, and sell them for a lot of money.' Zandvliet, *Mapping for money*, p. 129.

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to send fleets to the most remote places on earth.[28] As far as hydrographic knowledge was concerned, the form and materiality of the register on board, in the way that resorting to dead reckoning had created them, also proved to be completely adequate to respond to the needs of the Company. But the usefulness of the register was not to be limited to navigation alone.

III. On land

On 5 April 1652, just over three months into the journey, the Cape of Good Hope could be seen from the *Drommedaris*. On 7 April, the ship dropped anchor in Table Bay and it was only on 24 April that its occupants 'went ashore with all our baggage and family to stay there in a make-shift wooden hut'. The *daghregister*, begun with the casting-off from Texel, would not, however, be stopped and would continue its narrative for the next one hundred and fifty years of the VOC's presence at the Cape of Good Hope. The instructions given to Van Riebeeck on the eve of his departure were clear: a diary had to be kept and pointed out. 'Of all that occurs in your neighbourhood, you will keep accurate notes and a diary, and shall not fail in this point.[29]

28 The rest of the 'Instructions on the keeping of the *daghregisters*' is clear regarding the additional information that must be included in the journals, with in mind the 'second' function that the *daghregister* is to fulfil: 'Artikel 7: Wat in de dagregisters moet aangetekent worden, volgens Resolutie als boven. *De dagregisters, die ten dienst der Compagnie zyn geschikt, zullen zulke aantekeningen moeten behelzen, als by Compagnies Instructien en Ordres in't gemeen, en aan de Eerste Gezagvoerder in't byzonder, werd gelast, namentlyk het gebruik van de Lugt Pompen, Brandspuyten, het aankopen van verversfig in vreemde Haven, an wanner het Buskruyt is gekeert. Verders noteerens waardige zaken en gevallen, als de beschryving van de opdoening, of gedaante, der voornaamste pasfeerende Eilanden, en kenlyste Gebergtens of uitstekende hoeken der bestevende Kusten, met derzelver pylings of afstand, bevonden breette, Naaldwyzing, diepten en granden op dien tyd, en de defecten of mislagen wegens der zelver strekking en legging in de Kaart, als mede aanmerkingen op de bevinding van het vaarwater, loop der stroomen, en alle het geen nieuwelyk is ontdekt, en betrekkelyk tot de Zeevaart is, zullende alle beuzelingen, niet tot de konst der Zeevaart dienende, uit deze dagregisters gealten worden, en een kort register wegens de voornaamste zaken agter het zelve werden gestelt.'*
One will remember with pleasure how Melville, always talking from the sailor's point of view, made fun of this practice of accumulating knowledge: *'Espied by some timid man-of-war or blundering discovery-vessel from afar, when the distance obscuring the swarming fowls, nevertheless still shows the white mass floating in the sun, and the white spray heaving against it; straightaway the whale's unharming corpse, with trembling fingers is set down in the log — shoals, rocks, and breakers hereabouts: beware! And for years afterwards, perhaps, ships shun the place, leaping over it as silly sheep leap over vacuum, because their leader originally leaped there when a stick was held. There's your law of precedents, there's your utility of traditions; there is the story of your obstinate survival of old beliefs never bottomed on the earth, and now not even hovering in the air! There's orthodoxy!'* Melville, op. cit., p. 330.

29 *'van alle't geene omtrent u passert sult correct notitie ende dagh register houden sonder daar van te blijven in gebreecke'*, D. Moodie, *The record, or a series of official papers relative to the condition and treatment of the native tribes of South Africa* (Amsterdam: A.A. Balkema, 1959), p. 8.

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By sustaining this form of daily writing about everything observed, one could come to the conclusion that it would be similar to the register kept at sea. But that would ignore the fact that, once on land, the purpose of writing changed again. The decision to keep this form of daily writing not only on board ships but in all of the VOC's territories had already been made a few decades previously. On 6 December 1621, a *plakaat* demanded that a *daghregister* be kept in all the Company's territories, in which one would note 'everything that happens there that involves us as well as what involves the English and any others, whoever it may be, no matter the sources'.[30] At this time, the VOC had a foothold in Batavia, Ternate and Banda, and, in the course of the 17th century, the Company would expand to Macassar, Timor, Malacca, Colombo, Surat, Mocha, Deshima, Tonkin etc. In all these trading posts, the authorities were responsible for keeping a daily account of events. Much more detailed instructions on how to keep this epistemological tool of the VOC were issued in 1643 and completed in 1670. The authorities had to focus on six main areas of peculiar importance:

> *The first, the exact description of the places in possession of the Company*
> *The second, the government and laws of these places*
> *The third, the customs and habits of the inhabitants*
> *The fourth, the resources of the country*
> *The fifth, army and trade of VOC enemies*
> *The sixth, army and trade of the Company*[31]

The residual effects of the practice of writing at sea can be found on land, for example, in comments on the climate, patiently recorded every morning. But if the form and the paper are the same, the role is totally different. By turning the writing of a navigation log into a land-based practice, and from all the attention which was devoted to it, the Company expected several results. In the first place, the *daghregister*, as a database about the occupied site, could prove to be extremely useful locally. The collecting of information — whether of a commercial, political, geographical or ethnographic nature — was carried out by the highest local authorities, but an essential role was played by local populations, especially interpreters, in the collecting of data. Just as data gathered at sea would be used by the pilot as a 'memory of the navigation', information gathered on land was a 'memory of the colony', on which it was possible to draw as often as necessary. In the Cape *daghregister*, one finds on several occasions the mention '*pro memoria*', which comes after comments

30 J.A. van der Chijs (ed.), *Nederlandsh Indisch plakaatboek*, (The Hague: M. Nijhoff, 1885) I, pp. 604–5: '*alles, wat aldaer geschiedt en den onsen bejegent, so wel met d'Engelsen, als oock met andere, wie het oock sy, in eenigerhande manieren*'.

31 Ibid., II, pp. 57 & 530.

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regarded as most important. In the same way, on several occasions, the journal makes references to previous entries, thus proving that it was actually read locally.[32] In a more anecdotal way, in Deshima, where the Dutch had the European monopoly of trade with Japan, the *daghregisters* have signs that they were read by local Japanese authorities.[33]

But what is really at stake with the *daghregisters* is not so much its storage or local usage as the circulation of the text. Similar to the content, if not more so, this conveying was subject to accurate and strict regulations. The first instructions regarding the shipping of documents created in the Indian territories go back to the very beginnings of the Company—in 1609, to be precise.[34] A few years later, in 1617, a resolution formalised and made compulsory the sending of annual reports on the activities of the Governor General of the Indies to the Netherlands.[35] As regards documents written at the Cape, the first shipment of the *daghregister* to Holland was made as early as 18 April 1652, on the *Salamander*, when Van Riebeeck had not yet set foot on land; a few days later, a copy was sent to Batavia. Right from the second shipment, on 15 May, the nature of the documents sent to Holland became more diversified: resolutions passed by the Council of Policy, a letter dated 18 April, recommendations to officers to be based in the Cape dated 15 May and 12 December 1651, a memorandum written by Van Riebeeck in 1651 to secure the position of Governor, as well as a copy of the *daghregister* kept from 21 December 1651 to 13 May 1652. As required by such a practice, a *register van papieren*, that is, a list of all the documents sent, was included.

With time, the documents written at the Cape of Good Hope became more diversified and progressively started to differ from the *daghregister*, which, during the first years, included all the written work classified according to daily entries. The *resoluties*, *plakaats* or other *memories* from the *Politieke Raad* (Council

32 See A. Delmas, 'The role of writing in the first steps of the Colony: a short inquiry into the *Journal of van Riebeeck*, 1652–1662', in Nigel Worden (ed.), *Contingent lives: social identity and material culture in the VOC world* (Cape Town: Royal Netherlands Embassy, 2007).

33 P. van der Velde (ed.), *Deshima diaries, Marginalia 1700–1740* (Tokyo: Japan-Netherlands Institute, 1992), p. xx.

34 Van der Chijs (ed.), op. cit., I, pp. 9–10: *'met alle vloten copijën uit Uwe generale boeken overzenden, in goeden form, zoo van't journaal als grootboek, ten einde uit dezelve de geheele staat van de Comp. Bespeurd en verstaan mag worden, met balans van hetzelve boek, numerende Uw eerst boek No.1, en zoo voor't verlvolg No. 2, tot den uiteinde toe, gelijk alle kantoren alle jaar mede zullen doen, en de copijën aan U zenden.'*

35 Article 32 of the instructions issued on 22 August 1617: *'You shall make a perfect description every year of the conditions in the Indies, … so that people can know how and with what success the affairs both of trade and war, and particularly the establishment of the Christian religion, schools and so on, have been propagated and directed and thereafter, when convenient, to describe all other matters.'* W.P. Coolhaas (ed.), *Generale missiven van Gouverneurs-Generaal en raden aan heren XVII der Verenigde oostindische compagnie* (The Hague: Nijhoff, 1960–97), p. 1.

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of Policy) differed from this type of writing, which was, however, maintained until 1795, when the Company's rule over the Cape of Good Hope ended. The creation of the *Raad van Justice* (Court of Justice) in 1656 and of the *Meesterkantoor* (Master of the Supreme Court) in 1673 would also lead to the practice of keeping registers totally independent from the writing of the *daghregister*. However, the practice of shipping documents to the leading authorities of the Company in the United Provinces and in Batavia would be maintained. All written documents were therefore made in three copies and regularly sent to Europe and Asia. To certify them, the inscription '*Copij*' would precede the text.

IV. Archives

Once in Holland, the delivered documents were bound together, and great care would be taken in writing the place of origin and the date of receipt on the cover.[36] The administration of the VOC was divided into six chambers, among which Zeeland and especially Amsterdam stood out for the number of its representatives (four and eight, respectively) among the *Heeren XVII*, the highest institution of the Company. In principle, each chamber was to receive all the documents sent from Asia; however, this arrangement was impractical, and led to repeated complaints from the four minor chambers (Enkhuisen, Delft, Hoorn and Rotterdam).[37] To solve the problem of the duplication of documents, the Council of the Indies in Batavia contemplated, for a time, the idea of having a printing machine to print and duplicate the huge number of documents to be sent to the United Provinces. The idea was soon dropped; as a result, only the two main chambers would continue to get some of the handwritten copies of documents coming from the East Indies.[38]

As with the circulation of written documents within the VOC, the receipt of these was also regulated. Although playing a secondary role, the chamber of Zeeland could be considered as a model. A *chartermeester*, or archivist, employed full-time, was responsible for making a list of all written documents received. Even more significant, the chests used to send written documents could only be opened in his presence.[39] In short, the discipline and secretiveness already mentioned regarding hydrographic work was observed for all the papers circulating between the various institutions of the VOC.[40]

36 ARA, VOC 4952.
37 R. Raben (ed.), 'History and manual', in *De archieven van de Verenigde Oostindische Compagnie (1602–1795)* (The Hague: SDU, 1992).
38 ARA, VOC 741, 5 & 8 June 1725.
39 ARA, Radermacher Archives 190 & 354. Instructions of 1737 to the *chartermeester*.
40 See Raben (ed.), op. cit., p. 33.

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With such a well-established system to support its maritime, commercial and colonial activities, only the excessive quantity of paper could jeopardise the circulation of documents within the VOC. In Amsterdam, where one would have wished to operate on the model of Zeeland, the quantity of documents received from Asia required the setting-up of a body devoted exclusively to their reading. As early as 1644, the *Haag Besogne*, a committee composed of four directors, was set up. The committee, which gathered in The Hague before the bi-annual meetings of the *Heeren XVII*, was responsible for writing up summaries of all documents received.[41] By the end of the 17th century, despite the existence of an intermediary institution created to cope with such a quantity of information, Amsterdam had become inundated with papers: 'the books and papers, from time to time received from Asia, have grown in such quantities (which will only increase in the year to come)', complained one of the Directors.[42] Exceptional measures had to be adopted. But neither the allocation (in 1695) of a room exclusively dedicated to the filing of letters — the *chartkamer* in Oostindisch Huis (the headquarters of the Company) — nor the appointment of a full-time librarian in 1699 — who swore an oath not to make the papers available to anybody — would change anything.[43] To deal with this scriptural inflation, the Directors, for the first time in 1693, came to contemplate the benefits of a writing-up of history.

V. Privilege

Throughout the 17th century, the thought of drawing some history out of the daily writing carried out on all the oceans and on three continents had never been expressed. Actually, such a step was unthinkable from an institution that mainly relied on the circulation of papers for its internal functioning and which had placed all its faith in the manuscript form to maintain secrecy against its main competitors. Unhappy with the fact that it had not published anything, the Company had, on several occasions, intervened with the States General to stop the publication of information closely or loosely related to its activities in Asia. On 12 February 1619, the VOC was granted by the authorities the privilege of printing documents related to its possessions, real or desired, in Asia:

> *If the aforementioned Maps, journals and descriptions of places and events mentioned above, through print, or otherwise revealed to the world, became known and were*

41 Van Dam, op. cit., pp. 309–15. Among other recommendations, The *Haag Besogne* secretly had to determine the safest route for the annual return fleet, according to the states of war or peace obtaining between the Company's various competitors.

42 ARA, VOC 244. Quoted in Raben (ed.), op. cit., p. 32.

43 Van Dam, op. cit., 1, I, pp. 412–13.

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> *spread, it could provide Powers, Monarchs and Republics, but also particular merchants here and elsewhere, occasion and facility (assistance) to get into and to take possession of the aforementioned supplicants' East Indian navigation and trade and to profit from it.* [...] *To prevent the same and to forbid it as much as possible, we [the States General] are pleased to grant and guarantee that no inhabitant of this country may henceforth make or cause to have someone make any journals, maps, or other descriptions, memoirs and depictions of East Indian navigation, or of the islands surrounding and near it without their* [the Directors of the Company] *express permission.* [...] *All on penalty of confiscation of all exemplars in this country no matter if they are made, printed, written, divulged and sold or distributed.*[44]

After less than twenty years of existence, the divorce between the Company and the printing world was therefore consummated. This had not been the case during the first years. The activity of the printer Claesz, for example, had not only been tolerated but also must have played a driving role in the launching of commercial activities between the Netherlands and the East Indies. The books issued from Claesz's press, which includes the *Itinerario* of Jan Huygen van Linschoten or even the accounts of the first two Dutch voyages in the Indian Ocean,[45] had certainly been used to promote the activities of the Company among private investors. The little bookshop *In' Schrijfboeck op't Water bij de oude Brugghe* in Amsterdam ('the writing book on the water, by the old bridge') could have served as a meeting place for traders, investors, navigators and sailors during the first years of the Company.[46]

44 ARA, Staten Generalen 12302, Akteboeken 1617–1623, f. 104 verso, 12 Febuary 1619. Reproduced in K. Zandvliet, *De groot waereld in't kleen geschildert: Nederlandse kartografie tussen de middeleeuwen en de industrële revolutie* (Alphen aan den Rijn: Canaletto, 1985), p. 177. '*Nadien de voorsz. Caerten, journalen, ende affteyckeningen der platsen, ende gelelentheden, hierboven gementioneert, soo doorden druck, als anderssints alle de werelt geopenbaert, bekent, ende gemeengemaeckt worden ende daardoor nyet allen alle omleggende potentaten, princen, ende republicquen, maer oock particuliere coopluyden, soo hier als elders, occasie, ende behulpsaemheit, gegeven, om d'voorsz. Oostinische navigatie, ende negotien mede bijder handt te grijpen in der supplianten vaerwater te comen, ende hunluyden alsoo en voordeel af te sien.* [...] *Daerover dat zij supplainten om tselffde te prevenieren, ende soo veel doendelijck is te beletten, versocht ende gebeden hebben dat ons soude gelieven hun te vergunnen ende octroyeren dat niemandt van deser landen ingesetenen voortaen eenige journalen, lees-, ende pascarten, ofte andere beschrijvingen, memorien, ende affbeeldingen der voorsz. Oostindische navigatien, ofte vande eylanden daerom ende bij gelegen, sonder huyluyden expresse belatinge, ende consent den tijt deser octroys haer supplianten bij ons verleent geduerende sal mogen maecken, ofte doen maecken.* [...] *Alles op pene van confiscatie van alle d'exemplaren, die soo hier te lande, als eders buymogen gemaeckt, gedruckt, gescreven, gedivulgeert, ende vercocht, ofte gedistribueert worden.* [...]'.

45 J.H. Linschoten, *Itinerario, voyage ofte schipaert van Jan Huygen Van Linschoten naer Oost ofte portugales Indien* (Amsterdam: Claesz, 1596); W. Lodewijcksz, *D'eerste boek. Historie van Indien waer inne verhaet is de avontuuren die de Hollantsche scheppen bejegent zijn* (Amsterdam: Claesz, 1598) and J. van Neck, *Het tweede boeck, journal oft dagh-register, inhoudende een warachtich verhael ende historiche vertellinghe vande reyse* (Amsterdam: Claesz, 1601).

46 See Schilder, *Monumenta cartografica Neerlandica*, p. 16.

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But things changed rapidly, certainly under the effect of the regrets expressed concerning the use that other nations had made of these first works and most notably the *Itinerario* of Linschoten.[47] On 29 July 1617, for example, the printer Willem Jansz Blaeu was banned by the States General from publishing the discoveries made by the Le Maire voyage. Two years earlier, Jacob Le Maire had found a new route to the Pacific south of the American continent, a route that was much easier to navigate than the Strait of Magellan. While the Le Maire fleet was anchored in Batavia, the local VOC authorities, considering that the expedition had encroached on their reserved domain, confiscated all the documents on board. Blaeu, who held, in Amsterdam, the post of official cartographer of the Company, naturally inherited them all. However, the documents became useless after a second resolution, issued on 2 August 1617, forbade him from making corrections to the existing globe or maps:[48]

> *It is resolved thereupon to notify the aforesaid Willem Jansz., that he shall not presume to correct the Globe, or the printed or written Map, nor in any other manner to publish or cause to be published the aforesaid discovered Straits, Water, Countries, Islands, or Coasts discovered there, but to keep himself strictly and specially holden as interdicted, as such it is considered for the Public good.*[49]

VI. History

At this stage of the 17th century, it would have been impossible for the VOC to act like its little sister, the *West Indische Compagnie* (WIC), established in 1621, which had not only allowed the publication of a history of the Company in America but which, in order to achieve this, had given permission to consult and use its official written documents. Thanks to WIC's resolution of 28 January 1627,[50] Johannes de Laet was exceptionally allowed to read registers, journals and other documents owned by the Company, from which he was to draw his *History of the New World*.[51]

If histories born out of the presence of the VOC in Africa and in Asia were to see the light of day, it would only be in a parallel, not to say marginal or circuitous, way. To achieve this, one would need the involvement of historians working outside the Company and its writing system. For instance, neither Philippus Baldeus, for his *Naauwkeurige Beschryvinge van Malabar en*

47 See Delmas, 'Travelling stories'.

48 D.J. Barreveld, *Tegen de Heeren van de VOC. Isaac Le Maire en de ontdekking van Kaap Hoorn* (The Hague: SDU, 2002), pp. 163–75.

49 E.B. O'Callaghan (ed.), *Documents relative to the colonial history of the state of New York*, (Albany: Weed, 1856), pp. 1 & 16.

50 ARA, oud WIC, 20 fol 30 v.

51 J. de Laet, *L'Histoire du nouveau monde ou description des Indes occidentales* (Leiden: Elzeviers, 1640).

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Choromandel[52] (Figure 5.6), nor Olfert Dapper, for his *Description de l'Afrique*[53] (Figure 5.7), nor Peter Kolb, for his *Caput Bonae Spei Hodiernum*[54], had access to the official recordings of the VOC. The writing of the voyage and the writing of history were inarticulate.

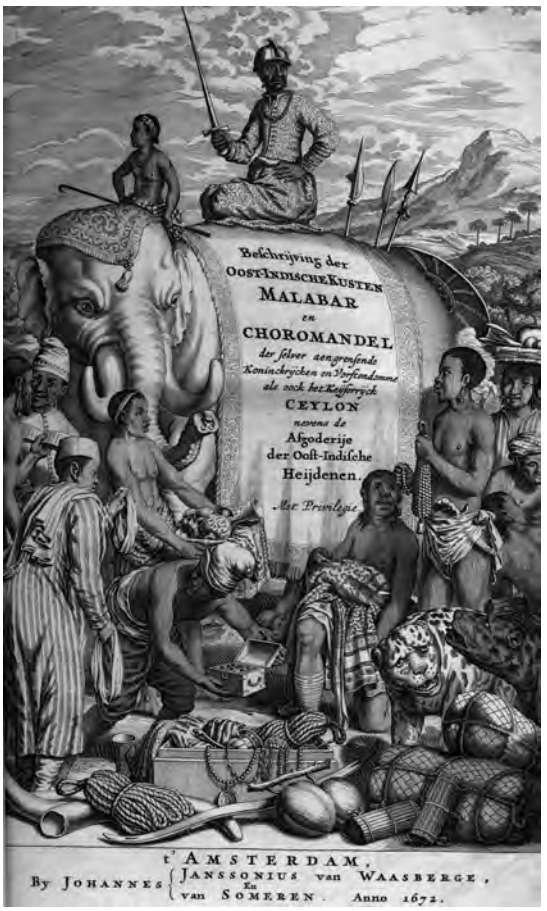


Figure 5.6 Philippus Baldeus, *Naauwkeurige Beschryvinge van Malabar en Choromandel* (Amsterdam: Johannes Jansonneus van Waasberge, 1671)

52 P. Baldeus, *Naauwkeurige beschryvinge van Malabar en Choromandel, Der Zelver aangrenzende Ryken, En het machtige Eyland Ceylon. Nevens een omstandige en grondigh doorzochte ontdeking en wederlegginge van de Afgoderye der Oost-Indische Heydenen* (Amsterdam: Johannes Jansonneus van Waasberge, 1671).

53 O. Dapper, *Description de l'Afrique* (Amsterdam: Wolfang, 1686). See I. Schapera (ed.), *The early Cape Hottentots* (Cape Town: Van Riebeeck Society, 1933), p. 4.

54 P. Kolb, *Caput Bonae Spei Hodiernum, das ist vollstädige beschreibung des Africanischen vorgebürges der Guten Hofnung* (Nüremberg: Peter Conrad Monath, 1719).

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Even François Valentijn, whose *Oude en Nieuw Oost-Indiën*, a monumental work of five books in eight volumes to the glory of the Company, was published between 1724 and 1726, had been unable to rely on the official recordings created by the VOC's activities (Figure 5.8). To have access to the written documents coming from the official system, the author could only rely on



Figure 5.7. Olfert Dapper, *Description de l'Afrique* (Amsterdam: Wolfgang, 1686)

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Figure 5.8 François Valentijn, *Oude en Nieuw Oost-Indiën* **(Dordrecht/Amsterdam: 1724–26)**

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personal contacts he would have made in the Indies.[55] For example, Simon van der Stel, Governor of the Cape from 1679 to 1699, provided him with a copy of the account of the inland expedition carried out in 1685.[56] Joannes Camphuys, General Governor in Batavia from 1684 to 1691, equally gave Valentijn access to his writings about Java. But most of Valentijn's middlemen remained anonymous, certainly because they were less important and more exposed to punishment. Among others, Valentijn made, without explicit reference, abundant use of Georgius Evehardus Rumphius's writings in Ambon — which brought him many accusations of plagiarism *a posteriori*. However, in his warning to the reader, Valentijn explained himself clearly:

> *Some travellers were partly frightened and partly forbidden to write properly and accurately as the century requires so they judged it would be better to make available their writing to* [me], *so that I could compile them as much as they desired and make their Journeys and Description known to the World; and I, who took the pen for them, am able to protect them so that they should not be exposed.*[57]

Rumphius, having written his history, geography and natural history works in Ambon as a Company employee, was never allowed to publish them. *De Ambonese Historie* remained in handwritten form until the 20th century, and *De Generale land-beschryvinge van het Ambonesche gouvernement*, initially thought of as an introduction to the *Historie*, has been lost.[58] Valentijn had thus made the choice to disregard totally the Directors' wishes banning any work which would make public its activities and knowledge in the East Indies, and he had taken the responsibility of not quoting his sources, like Rumphius, who had provided him with the information for the content of his history. As

55 F. Valentijn, *Oude en nieuw Oost-Indiën* (Dordrecht/Amsterdam, 1724–26). The section of the book on Cape history has been published recently: F. Valentijn, *Beschryvinge van de Kaap der Goede Hope* (Cape Town: Van Riebeeck Society, 1971), pp. 225–363.

56 The story of the circulation of this narrative, about the expedition to Namaqualand in 1685, is a history in itself. The fact that Van der Stel made the manuscript available to Valentijn is even more disconcerting, when one knows that, in 1688, the Governor convicted one of the Cape burghers, H. Claudius, for having revealed information on this expedition to a French traveller. The latter, Father G. Tachard, had in 1686 indeed published his *Voyage de Siam* (Paris: A. Seneuze et D. Horthemels, 1686) which included, in the passage on the Cape, some details on the expedition, particularly the fact that the mountains in Namaqualand contained copper.

57 Valentijn, op. cit., p. 16.

58 G.E. Rumphius, *De Ambonese historie. Behelsende een kort verhaal der gedenkwaardiste geschiedenissen zo in vreede als oorlos voorvevallen sedert dat de Nederlandsche Oost Indische Comp: het besit in Amboina gahadt heeft.* Published in *Bijdragen tot de taal-, land- en volkenkunde van Nederlandsche-Indië* (The Hague: Nijhoff, 1910). See E.M. Beekman (ed.), *The Ambonese curiosity cabinet* (New Haven & London: Yale University Press, 1999), pp. lxxvi–lxxxvii.

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a result of a work done on the edges of the Company's writing system, the *Oude en Nieuw Oost-Indiën* is at the least unbalanced, with long digressions on sites of minor importance for the Company and noticeable gaps about the territories, such as Java, where it concentrated its activity. Right until the end of the book, Valentijn would attempt to justify himself as best he could, for having published such a history:

> *… and would be even more astonished if Reason of State allowed us to set on paper in full detail all things as they were wisely and foresightedly performed by our people, which no honourable Dutchman will demand of me, nor any intelligent person expect from me, although I know that there are some who have been afraid of me, realising that I know many things, which are not known to everyone; and if I am careful enough to keep such matters secret from the Dutch, no foreigner will imagine, if he knows me properly, that I, to the disadvantage of my Fatherland, should give him any information regarding them, although I very well know, that many would then have sought my book far more eagerly than they would do otherwise; but to all these I shall reply only that I have written this work to do a great service to my Nation, and especially to the Honourable Company of the Netherlands, as was in my power, but in wise to do the smallest disservice of it, having attempted only to elevate it thus above all the courageous travellers and brave folk known by the Ancients, who dared to undertake great and heroic things, even with the utmost danger, and in such a manner as I do not think has previously been done by any.* [59]

In view of all the excuses made in the name of a *historia magistrae* that only the theoreticians of history at that time still seemed to take seriously,[60] one can easily imagine that the VOC's Directors, at the beginning of the 18th century, remained sceptical. The historiographic logic was totally outside the plans of the Company, which saw only a technical and administrative logic in writing. Under no circumstances could history-writing be considered as a goal, as an outcome.[61] Finally, it was only to deal with the inflation of written documents mentioned above that the project of summarising the Company's history gained ground among the leading bodies of the Company. In the resolution of 9 July 1693, the Directors reckon:

59 Valentijn, op. cit., II, p. 266.

60 On the *ars historica* in the 16th and 17th centuries, see Grafton, op. cit.

61 The parallel with the Society of Jesus — governance from one centre (Rome), activities carried out on several continents and reliance on a strictly organised system of writing — breaks on this point about historiographic concern. Indeed, in the case of the Jesuits, the historiographic project was present right from Loyola's first writings. See E. Lamalle, 'L'archivio Generale della Compagnia di Gesù', *Archiva Ecclesiae* XXIV–XXV, 1 (1981–82), pp. 89–120.

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> *that the business and service of the Company necessitate a pertinent and accurate description of it to be written, of its constitution, government and functioning, both in the Indies and here, from its beginning and birth, its continuation, expansion of its activities around those areas and places where it has its establishments, residences and trading posts.*[62]

To achieve this, they chose a trustworthy person, Pieter van Dam, who had already worked for the Company for more than forty years as its official *advocaat*.[63] After more than seven years' work of compilation and writing, the summary of one century of the Company's existence took up a few thousand pages. The lawyer-turned-historian was therefore the first writer to be able to quote documents produced within the Company to build his narrative, and even to transcribe long passages from these in appendices. The *Beschryvinghe van de Oostindische Compagnie* is divided into four books, the first two being the most imposing. The first one, a description of all the bodies of the Company, represents a complete administrative history of the Company from its beginnings in 1602—and even a little earlier, from the first Dutch journeys to the Indian Ocean. The second book recounts the history of all the Company's possessions in the East, organised geographically, like any document received and filed. The *Beschryvinghe*, which more or less expands from east to west, starts from the Moluccas Islands to finish with the Cape of Good Hope, while going through Amboin and Macassar, Japan and China, Macao and Bengal, Ceylon and Coromandel, Abyssinia and Persia, etc. All sorts of documents produced within the VOC were mobilised, from the Directors' resolutions to the documents sent to and received from Asia, and the result is a comprehensive and accessible account of a hundred years of Dutch presence in the East Indies. On 10 March 1701, during a meeting of the Directors, the encyclopaedic work was presented to the *Heeren XVII*. On the very same day, the manuscript was put in a safe under lock and key. As far as we know, in the 18th century, only a few extracts were copied to be sent to the Zeeland chamber.

VII. Literature

Moluccas, September 1768. After much indecision, Captain Bougainville had to surrender himself to the evidence: he was lost. Condemned to look through several books that he had been able to buy in Europe before his departure, he

62 Van Dam, op. cit., I, p. 4: '*hoe dat de aangelegentheyt en den dienst van de Compagnie wel soude vereysschen, dat van desselfs constitutie, regieringh en handel, soo in Indiën als hier te lande, wiert opgestelt een pertinent en naeukeurige beschyvinghe, an dat het begin en geboorte af, vervolgens de voortganck en uytbreydingh van desselfs handel alomme in de gewesten en plaatsen, daar sy haere etablissementen, residentiën en comptoiren is hebbende.*'

63 Ibid., pp. viii–xxxiii.

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expressed regret at not having access to a writing system similar to that of the VOC:

> *There is no doubt that the administration of the Company, to retain the exclusivity of the spice trade, is very wise and that navigation through these seas is very difficult and known only to the Dutch.*[64] *[...] Although I am convinced that the Dutch portray navigation in the Moluccas as far more dangerous than it actually is, I know it is, however, full of pitfalls and difficulties. The greatest for us being that we had no accurate map of the area, the French maps of this part of the Indies being more likely to lose the ships than to guide them.*[65]

Published travel accounts could have met with great success in Europe, but they were not sufficient to satisfy the pilots at the other end of the world. Increasingly popular as reading matter during the 17th century, many travel logs, just as the historical works mentioned above, escaped the vigilance of the Directors of the VOC, and ran aground on some or other of the printing presses in Amsterdam. To cite just one example, the famous voyage of Bontekoe would become the great best-seller in Dutch culture during the Golden Age.[66] It is unfair, therefore, not to recognise any printed destiny in this genre of daily writing, once born at sea. But to consider the writings made in the 17th century about the world outside of Europe, it is clear that the distinction was not as much between two literary genres (travel accounts/histories) as it was between writing media (printed/manuscript). To complete the proof, let us listen for the last time to the remarks of Bougainville, whose wisdom was also to lose his temper:

> *How many times haven't I regretted not having the Journals of Narborough & Beauchesne, such as they were written by their own hands, and being obliged to consult them only from disfigured extracts.*[67] *[...] Frankly, the way in which fine style writers render sailors' journals is pitiful. They would blush at the stupidities and absurdities they make them say, if they had the slightest knowledge of naval terminology. These authors* [publishers] *take great care to cut back every detail that has to do with navigation and that could help to guide navigators; they want to*

64 L.A. de Bougainville, *The Pacific journal of Louis-Antoine de Bougainville* (London: Hakluyt Society, 2002), p. 149.

65 L.A. de Bougainville, *Voyage autour du monde* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de Paris-Sorbonne, 2001), p. 309.

66 W.Y. Bontekoe, *Iournael ofte gedenckwaerdige beschrijuinghe vande Oost-Indische reyse van Willem Ysbrantsz. Bontekoe* (Hoorn: Deutel, 1646). For a list of travel accounts published in the 17th century, see K. Zandvliet, 'Joa Blaeu's Boeck vol kaerten en beschrijvingen van de Oostindische Compagnie. Met schesten van drie kaartekenaars: Zacharias Wagenaer, Jan Hendricksz. Thim en Johannes Vingboons' in *Het kunstbedrijf van de familie Vongboons* (Amsterdam: Gary Schwartz, 1989), pp. 58–95 and J.H. Landwehr, *VOC: a bibliography of publications relating to the Dutch East India Company, 1602–1800* (Utrecht: HES, 1991).

67 Bougainville, *Voyage autour du monde*, p. 186.

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make a book that appeals to the silly women of both sexes and end up writing a book that every reader finds boring and no one finds of any use.[68]

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68 Bougainville, *The Pacific journal*, pp. 24–25. Bougainville is making reference to the extracts from Sir John Narborough's *Journal*, published by Abbé Prevost in the *Histoire générale des voyages* (Paris: Didot, 1746–70) XI, pp. 28–48.

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6



Towards an Archaeology of Globalisation: Readings and Writings of Tommaso Campanella on a Theological–Political Empire Between the Old and the New Worlds (16th–17th Centuries)

Fabián Javier Ludueña Romandini

Introduction

Over the last few years, historians and philosophers have drawn attention to the fact that the processes of discovery and exploration of the globe between the 16th and 19th centuries constitute the genealogical background of modern politico-economic globalisation. From this perspective, we can say that it was the traffic of discovery which brought about the 'de-spacing of the world'. In fact, the word 'globalisation' signifies 'the application of technical means to eliminate the concealing distance'.[1]

It is precisely in terms of the most impressive fulfilment of the modern prophecy of a global political topology that some transformations have taken place within the historical discipline, which nowadays proposes the construction of a 'global history' according to the challenges of its object of study.[2] Nonetheless, the question of how far this 'global history' can be considered

1 P. Sloterdijk, *Sphären II: Globen, Makrosphärologie* (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1999), p. 785.

2 Without any doubt, 'global history' was born before its official birth date. Cf. Marc Bloch 'Pour une histoire comparée des sociétés européennes', *Revue de synthèse historique*, XLVI (1928), pp. 15–50; and F. Braudel, *Grammaires des civilisations* (Paris: Flammarion, 1963). For some important (though very different) examples of global history in our time, cfr. Ch. Bayly, *Die geburt der modernen welt: eine globalgeschichte 1780–1914* (Frankfurt & New York: Campus Verlag, 2006); S. Gruzinsky, *Les quatres parties du monde. Histoire d'une mondialisation* (Paris: Seuil, 2004); Ch. Grataloup, *Géohistoire de la mondialisation. Le temps long du monde* (Paris: Armand Colin, 2006) and L. Testot, *Histoire globale: un autre regard sur le monde* (Paris: Éditions Sciences Humaines, 2008).

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entirely new,[3] or how it can solve old problems of historical science dating back to the 19th century — such as the relationship between morphology and history, synchrony and diachrony, continuity and discontinuity — are epistemological and methodological issues that cannot be addressed in this essay.[4]

A virtuous exercise of the 'global history' as a form of 'connected histories', however, implies the difficult but necessary coexistence and integration of the micro-historical dimension on a macro-historical scale.[5]

In this paper we propose a case study that addresses the global history of the death throes of what Sanjay Subrahmanyam has called the *'conjoncture millénariste'*, which took place throughout Eurasia during the 16th century.[6] On the one side, we will extend the chronological period until the first decades of the 17th century. On the other side, we will try to understand to what extent the singularity of the casuistry can be integrated into an extensive epistemological globality, without losing its differential features.[7]

The basis of this case study is Tommaso Campanella's (1568–1639) political work and the cultural circulation network of written material in which this piece was inscribed during the European early modern period. More precisely, we want to explain how Campanella was able to conceive and theoretically justify the seizure of lands in the New World according to an explanatory model of a millenarian kingdom or, to be more exact, of a messianic one. We also believe that Campanella's theoretical model can serve as a paradigm of other imperial messianic[8] proposals in which the reason for a political

3 For example, the '*outre-histoire*' defended by Georges Dumézil, or the institutional history of the Indo-European societies practised by Émile Benveniste, could be considered, in many senses, not only as the background of a project of comparative history on a global basis but also they show a theoretical ambition which was never surpassed.

4 Some of the most important methodological problems concerning the 'global history' have been brilliantly analysed by R. Chartier, 'La conscience de la globalité', *Annales* (2001/1), pp. 119–23.

5 This has been pointed out by S. Subrahmanyam, 'Connected histories: notes towards a reconfiguration of early modern Eurasia', in V. Liebermann (ed.), *Beyond binary histories. Re-imagining Eurasia to c. 1830*, (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1997), pp. 289–315 and by S. Gruzinsky, 'Les mondes mêlés de la monarchie catholique et autres "connected histories"', *Annales* (2001/1), pp. 85–117.

6 S. Subrahmanyam, 'Du Tage au Gange au XVIe siècle: une conjoncture millénariste à l'échelle eurasiatique', in *Annales* (2001/1), pp. 51–84.

7 From the standpoint concerning the epistemology of history and the social sciences in general, the problem of the 'case study' has been analysed by J.-C. Passeron and J. Revel, in 'Penser par cas. Raisonner à partir de singularités' in the collective volume under the title of *Penser par cas* (Paris: EHESS, 2005), pp. 9–44.

8 Our perspective tries to abandon the inaccurate perspective that explains millenarism as a historical phenomenon opposed to state development. An example of such a position is M. Adas, *Prophets of rebellion: millenarian protest against the European colonial order* (Chapel Hill & London: University of North Carolina Press, 1979).

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theology can serve as the fundamental '*mythomotorik*'[9] in the constitution of a global Christian empire.

From the viewpoint of a cultural history of globalisation, written production is predominant, for in the bookish culture of European humanism also lies the genesis itself of the legitimating discursive practices — and even more of the productive ones — of the process of conquest and colonisation of America. Likewise, therein also lies the origin of much of the reaction and resistance that such a process aroused at the time of its genesis and dissemination.

After a ten-year absence, during which he travelled around various Italian cities and faced long political and doctrinal conflicts with the Holy Office's censorship, Tommaso Campanella returned to Stilo, the small town in Calabria where he was born. It was then, in 1598, that he wrote his 'secret book', addressed to the Catholic King of Spain, the *Monarchia di Spagna*. In this text, Campanella put forward one of the most ambitious politico-philosophical programs of modernity: the religious fundamentals and necessary political means for the creation of a universal monarchy where Spain would function as the armed wing and civiliser of the papal *plenitudo potestatis*. The following year, in September of 1599, the Dominican monk was arrested for being the ultimate instigator of an enormous political and religious conspiracy with the aim of founding a utopian city in Calabria.

The philosophical fundamentals and political architecture of Campanella´s revolutionary programme have been left to us by its author in the form of the text known today as *The City of the Sun*. The great conspiracy met its demise following the betrayal of two of its members; Campanella himself was later subjected to torture and interrogation, and was imprisoned for over two decades in a Spanish jail in Naples. During his detention, his writing did not cease, and he produced, among other works, the brief but decisive *Discorso delle ragioni che ha il re Cattolico sopra il nuovo emisfero*. Written in Italian in 1607, it was immediately translated into Latin and included as the last chapter in one of his most important political works, the *Monarchia Messiae*, which he had written the previous year, in 1606. We shall therefore analyse this brief treatise, as well as the chapters that Campanella devotes to the philosophical, legal and political problem of the New World's land seizure in his *Monarchia di Spagna*. We will attempt to show how Campanella's whole theoretical construction is the result of a singular appropriation of certain texts of the medieval legal-philosophical tradition, through which, openly opposed to Machiavelli, Campanella nourishes his thought and at the same time provokes the uppermost exegetic tension on the sources upon which he based his

9 We take the concept of '*Mythomotorik*' from J. Assmann, *Das kulturelle gedächtnis. Schrift, erinnerung und politische indentität den frühen hochkulturen* (Munich: Beck, 1992).

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work. In this way, he attaches to these sources a new value which enables the legitimisation—from the learned culture of scholasticism and Renaissance humanism—of the seizure of land in the New World.

I. The model of the *Monarchia di Spagna*

Both texts (with only apparently different modalities) provide the conceptual elements to understand the discovery and the conquest of the New World in a legal and political context, as well as the forced evangelisation of its inhabitants. The objective was to establish a new global empire based on the historical restoration of biblical prophecy.

The first trace of the conceptual elaboration of this problem is represented by the *Monarchia di Spagna*. In this text, as throughout all Campanella's work, Christopher Columbus[10] is presented as the chief witness of one of the greatest epistemological events of his time: the collapse of the authority of certain Church Fathers[11] who maintained the denial of the antipodes and, at the same time, the exaltation of 'experience' as a direct source of knowledge. One of the most sublime merits that Campanella finds in the Hispanic monarchy is the ability to 'control the seas' by using navigation in its highest perfection as the instrument to reduce distances between countries and avoid the weakening of the growing empire.

According to Campanella, the first reaction of the New World inhabitants to the arrival of the Spanish to their lands was astonishment (*stupore*), since they thought that they had come from the sky and that with their arms they had brought thunder. The written word, horses and arms provoked the same kind of amazement (*ammirazioni*) they had produced in the Europeans at the time of the original discovery of these wonders.[12] However, the first mistake of the Spanish, according to Campanella, was to deny the validity of the Americans' gods and to show themselves as both earthly and covetous of gold (*terrestri, ingordi dell'oro della terra*). This initial gesture of disdain would therefore unleash the war between the Spanish and Americans. That being so,

10 Campanella insists on the etymology of the name Cristóbal Colón: Cristóbal means '*ferens Christum*' and Columbus '*Columbam Ecclesiam*'.

11 Among those who denied the antipodes, cfr. Augustine of Hippo, *Civitate Dei*, XVI, p. 9, in J.-P. Migne, *Patrologia Latina*, 41 (Paris: Garnier, 1844–55), pp. 487–488 and Lactantius, *Divinae Institutiones*, III, 24, in J.-P. Migne, *Patrologia Latina*, 6 (Paris: Garnier, 1844–55), pp. 425 ff.

12 T. Campanella, *Monarchia di Spagna. Libro non conosciuto. Discorsi di fra Tommaso Campanella de predicatori sopra la Monarchia di Spagna* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1997), p. 340: '*Essendo entrati i Spagnoli nel Mondo nuovo per l'occidente, furo visti con gran stupore dalli terrazzani, sì che non sapendo essi niente di questo nostro mondo, stimaro che essi dal cielo scendessero, e che fossero le navi figlie delle nubi, e che li archibugi fossero tuoni, che essi dal ciel portavano, e si stupiro assai che la carta parlasse, e la scrittura, e che gli uomini andassero a cavallo, le quali ammirazioni appresso a noi furo quando furon trovate queste cose, come oggi cessano e ne restaro le favole solamente, e non fur tutte ad un tempo a noi come a loro.*'

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which strategy should the Spanish have followed to avoid this conflict? In the view of our Dominican monk, they should have used the Americans' belief in them as gods to let them know that they did not descend from the skies but instead from a nobler and immortal seed, that is, the Christian God, creator and governor of all things and of humankind — and above all the latter, which bears resemblance to Him and, as a result, is nobler than any other creature.[13] Having reached this point, we have Campanella's first metaphysical perspective regarding the categorisation of the inhabitants of the New World: they are human beings descended from Adam in the first term, and then, from Noah, part of whose lineage lived in the New World[14] after the Flood had separated Spain from the American territory.[15] In Campanella's perspective, a prophetic time had been opened since the Incarnation of Christ. Its fulfilment started with the discovery of the New World, which presaged the universalisation of the Christian message, one of the conditions for the ending of the present eon and the establishment of a millennial kingdom.[16]

At this point, Campanella demonstrates for the first time the core arguments that justify the evangelising mission and the seizure of American lands:

> *God, having compassion towards you who are idolatrous and who have violated nature's law, has sent us here, your brothers, to show you the truth and take you towards it and by means of the Pope and of Spain* [...] *He* [God] *wants to attract you towards Him.*[17]

13 Campanella, *Monarchia di Spagna*, p. 342: *'E prima dovevano predicare che essi erano veramente figli di Dio, e non delle nubi, ma di seme più nobile de d'anima divina e immortale, e che Dio è quell'autore che ha fatto il cielo e la terra, e che governa tutte le cose, e che più cura tiene delle cose più nobili, come de figli più a sé simili. E che essendo gli uomini più nobili d'ogni altra creatura, tiene più cura di loro che d'altro.'*

14 This argument is not new. It must be understood as an example of the complex problem consisting in the status of the biblical texts supposed to transmit a revealed truth, which did not contain all the necessary knowledge about the existing world that was discovered in the course of the voyages of exploration. On these problems, particularly in Renaissance humanism, cfr. M.T. Hodgen, *Early anthropology in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1964) and G. Gliozzi, *Adamo e il Nuovo Mondo* (Florence: Einaudi, 1977).

15 In this sense, the myth of Atlantis as explained by Plato (*Critias*, p. 108 ff) was one of the sources for Campanella. On the myth of Atlantis in modern Europe, cf. P. Vidal-Naquet, *La démocratie vue d'ailleurs*, (Paris: Flammarion, 1990). Cf. Campanella, *Monarchia di Spagna*, p. 342: *'E che Noè mandò colonie a voi per la China e Giappone e passò lo stretto d'Anian, e popularo tutto il paese sino a Baccalaos e tutto il Perù, e che tutti i discendenti di Noè, salvi pochi, poi peccaro, e voi peccaste e noi, e che Dio mandò novi maestri, Mosè e altri.'*

16 This messianic component is already present in the conception that Columbus had of his own voyages. Cf. A. Milhou, *Colón y su mentalidad mesiánica en el ambiente franciscanista español* (Valladolid: Ediciones de la Universidad de Valladolid, 1983).

17 Campanella, *Monarchia di Spagna*, p. 342: *'E che Dio avendo compassione di voi che sete idolatri e violastivo la legge della natura, ha mandato noi, fratelli vostri, qua per insegnarvi il vero, e tirarvi a lui, e per mezo del Papa e di Spagna, onde questo paese si è distaccato del diluvio, vi vuol tirare a sé.'*

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Idolatry and the violation of the natural law seem to be the ultimate justifications of the Spanish intervention as emissaries of the Christian truth, even though Campanella has not yet drawn all the conclusions contained in his theory. In this sense, the Calabrian monk is still faithful to the doctrines of Francisco de Vitoria and proposes to '*accarezzarle assai, e non mostrar crudeltà né avarizia*'. However, Campanella perfectly knows that the sovereign's condescension is supported and justified by its intimate relation with the capacity of killing that is in the very essence of his power. For this reason, he makes the case that it would be convenient to remind the inhabitants of the New World that the Spanish hold the arms to support the land seizure:

> *And He* [God] *has then given us these weapons to take revenge on those who have violated nature's law and on those who prevent us from spreading the seed of truth.*[18]

Campanella does not deceive himself either when he puts economic worth at the centre of the Spanish interests, even though he suggests that the Americans follow a kind of 'evangelic poorness' while the Spanish take the American gold, not for greed, but to use it as an exchange value:

> *And tell you that we also despised the gold they despised, but we used it to exchange one's goods with the others', that we looked for it without voracity and that, in return, we contributed to this land with the iron, which is more useful for cultivation and for man's defence.*[19]

Once the Americans are convinced of Spain's redeeming mission, the 'seizure of land' could be brought about by means of a sort of a voluntary depopulation, taking the natives to Spain to turn them into workers, farmers, servants and artisans.[20] As for the Spanish, all of them could become soldiers to serve in the conquest of new territories. The logic of America's voluntary depopulation by God's command — which goes hand in hand with Spain's voluntary population[21] — and of the natives' transformation into productive resources,

18 Campanella, *Monarchia di Spagna*, p. 344: '*E ci ha dato [Dio] poi queste armi per vendicarci contra quelli che hanno violato la legge naturale e contra quelli che impediscono la semenza che noi spargiamo della veritá.*'

19 Campanella, *Monarchia di Spagna*, p. 344: '*E dire che quell'oro che essi sprezzavano, noi ancora lo sprezzamo, ma ce ne servimo per commutare i beni dalli uni alli altri, e cercarlo senza voracità, e che invece a quel paese portiamo il ferro, che è piu utile per il culto della terra e per la defensione umana.*'

20 Campanella, *Monarchia di Spagna*, p. 344: '*E poi mettere assai di quella gente su le navi, dicendo che è precetto di Dio, per bocca del Papa, e del Re, che essi benigno alle nostri parti, se servirsi di loro a far colonie intorno all'Africa, e per populare la Spagna di lavoratori, agricoltori, servi, artisti, e far tutti i Spagnoli soldati, e così di mano in mano entrar all'acquisto di tutti i paesi loro.*'

21 Campanella, *Monarchia di Spagna*, p. 348: '*E perciò se ne debe assai di quelli transportare in Spagna e Africa, e piantar nelle falde d'Africa e Asia assai città e populose, facendo defensori e giudici li Spagnoli, e artisti e agricoltori li Indiani e altri presi in guerra e convertiti a noi.*'

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is the matrix which guides the conquest proposed by Campanella. His counter-model in this case would be the immediate massacre of the discovered population and the involuntary seizure of lands.[22] However, Campanella still maintains that the power to produce the massacre, which is inherent to the papal and Spanish sovereign powers, must be strategically displaced into the background so that, by acting with the persuasive force of the prophetic word, the Americans voluntarily cede their lands and riches in exchange for access to the Spanish productive system.[23] This included access to their social system, since Campanella even theorised that the natives who are useful to such enterprises of conquest might as well be declared bishops or barons.[24] Of course the Calabrian philosopher does not delude himself either with respect to the fact that some natives would be hostile to such a process. About them, Campanella writes: '*Delli ostinati farne schiavi*'.[25]

Convinced by means of a planned and selective education[26] instead of an unnecessary — but always possible — massacre, Campanella believes that the natives '*veranno facilmente all'obedienza spagnola*'.[27] This is precisely why a doctrinal and territorial isolation must be imposed to prevent the circulation of foreign ideas which could bring the potentially most devastating element for the Spanish plan, that being heresy:

> *The first union is good religion. That is why every port and every river's mouth must be protected with great towers so that the English do not enter them to sow heresy: everything would be lost then. And there is nothing to be done with more zeal and veneration, they believe, than preaching the Pope's authority, with the aim*

22 Campanella, *Monarchia di Spagna*, p. 346: '*E poi, repugnando i popoli a loro, cominciaro ad uccidere, tal che essi per scampo di ritiraro a i monti, e i Spagnoli andavano a caccia d'uomini cme di bestie, e si vantava ogn'un la será.*'

23 Campanella, *Monarchia di Spagna*, p. 346: '*Per tanto io giudico che re di Spagna debba atenderé a tesorizzare nel Mondo novo più sopra gli uomini che sopra l'oro e l'argento, se vuol più acquistare e mantenere.*' As has been pointed out by J. Headley, 'Campanella, America and world evangelization' in K.O. Kuppermann (ed.), *America in European consciousness, 1493–1750* (Chapel Hill & London: University of North Carolina Press, 1995), pp. 243–71, Campanella seems not to be aware of the massive depopulation of America as a result of the epidemics.

24 Campanella, *Monarchia di Spagna*, p. 348: '*e mandar con loro alcuni di nostri, e quelli che han fatto gran progessi bisogna farli vescovi, abatí, ecc., e illustrarli, sì per dare animo alli altri di far il medesimo, sì anco per mostrare a quei popoli che a virtuosi loro maestri no doniamo onori e ricchezze, e in vero bisogna instituire un ordine di predicatori del Mondo nuovo con questo titolo, perché à molto necessario*' [...] '*e delli loro re convertiti transportare in Spagna e farli baroni, per illustrare l'Imperio e dare l'animo a quei popoli benigno verso questo paese nostro.*'

25 Campanella, *Monarchia di Spagna*, p. 348.

26 This education includes the teaching of astrology, mathematics and mechanics. Cf. Campanella, *Monarchia di Spagna*, p. 354: '*Di più, debe ne paesi commodi istituire le scole d'astrologi, matematici, meccanici e altri, ut supra, per misurar le stelle, i mari e i paesi di quell'emisfero, e insegnarli a suoi, e illustrare i gran capitani, e il suo imperio con la figure celesti.*'

27 Campanella, *Monarchia di Spagna*, p. 350.

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> *of being always bound to our religion and to have the need, in their search for the eternal life, of leaning on us.*[28]

However, the Spanish are not called to merely be mediators of the natives' eternal salvation, but also of their legal relation with the things they could use. Indeed, Campanella, as if inspired by the conflict of the Franciscans with Rome regarding evangelical poverty, and using similar arguments, among others, to the ones of the *Quo Elongati* Bull of Gregory IX (1230), proposes that the King of Spain should keep for himself the *dominium* of the goods that the natives possessed, while the latter would only have the *usus:*

> *The King must achieve* [...] *that nobody has any possessions, but everything must be the King's, with the exception of priests, and from time to time distribute the land, arts and trades, so that love is felt for nobody but the King who offers his gifts.*[29]

This doctrine will also affect the Spanish who inhabit the New World and who should be supported at the expense of the State. However, they would hold the right of property over the arms and their gardens:

> [...] *and make the Spanish, who are the soldiers and lords of the land, not to possess anything but their weapons and a garden to rest* [...]. *And if this is done, vine to produce wine and the other seeds of our land can be sent to them, since everything will belong to the King.*[30]

In this first text, the seizure of land in the New World is justified by means of an extra-legal title that makes the establishment of every right possible: the realisation of the eschatological prophecy of a worldwide evangelisation prior to the coming of the millennial kingdom. The fulfilment of this prophecy is possible thanks to the papal *auctoritas* (authority) and to its performers, the Spanish *potestas (*power*).* The King's sovereignty presupposes the use of force, yet in this first text Campanella only shows it as a threat to enslave those who rebel and as a display of the power of the Catholic King's armies. But in fact Campanella suggests that the conquest is to be accomplished by means of a voluntary depopulation, to allow the establishment of a legal regime of

28 Campanella, *Monarchia di Spagna*, p. 350: '*La prima unione è la buona religione, però si guardi ogni porto e ogni bocca di fiume con torri grosse, che non vi entrino li Inglesi a seminar l'eresie, che si perderebbe ogni cosa. E non si debe cosa fare con più zelo e riverenza appresso a loro che predicar l'autorità del Papa, acciò essi sempre stiano legati alla religión nostra, e abbino bisogno, alla vita eterna loro, di pendere da noi.*'

29 Campanella, *Monarchia di Spagna*, p. 352: '*Il Re debba fare* [...] *che nessuno di loro posseda, ma ogni cosa sia del Re, altro che li sacerdote, e ogni tanto tempo distrubuire i campi e l'arti e offici, affinché nessuno pigli amore se non col Re che li dona.*'

30 Campanella, *Monarchia di Spagna*, p. 354: '[...] *e far che i Spagnoli, che sono soldati e signori del paese, non possedano altro che l'armi e qualche giardino di spasso* [...] *E se questo si fa, si possono mandare a loro le viti per fare il vino, e li altri semi della terra nostra, perché tutto serà del Re.*'

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property whereby the sovereign would be the supreme and only owner of all the goods used by the Spanish and natives on the American soil. Similar to the right of property conservation and to the sovereign possibility of establishing the state of exception, the Catholic monarch would reserve the possession of arms for his Spanish subjects, which would guarantee the control of internal dissent and the protection of the conquered territories against contamination by the Protestant 'heresy'.

II. The model of the *Monarchia Messiae*

In spite of Campanella's apparently convincing arguments in the *Monarchia di Spagna*, his views soon became more radical through his harsh criticism of the proposals of Vitoria, De Soto and De Vio. In fact, the *Sermo de iuribus regis catholici super novum Hemispherium* (1607) begins with a demolition of the views of De Vio, Soto and Vitoria[31] on the medieval doctrine of the just war. According to these theorists, the only just cause for a war of occupation of the American territories was the pre-eminence of the evangelising mission. In effect, the natives' resistance authorised the Spanish sovereign to carry out a violent conquest. The monarch's only justification for war was therefore the native opposition to the fulfilment of the biblical prophecy of universal evangelisation. To a certain extent, Campanella seemed to share this opinion in the *Monarchia di Spagna*. In this way, the papal assignment of the mission is the real legal title of the conquest. However, the entire argument upon which the doctrine of the just war was based is entirely supported by the regulation of space in the *Ius Gentium* of the *Respublica Christiana*, which drew a distinction between the sovereign's soil and Christian and non-Christian peoples. The conquest venture and the layout of *amity lines* rapidly called into question the doctrine of the just war. Modernity would be opened with the manifest declaration of a rightless space located in the New World. The Campanellian line of argument, with its doctrinal roots in medieval *Ius Gentium*, shortly gave rise to new theories to justify the seizure of land. In fact, Campanella explains, if we follow the doctrine of the just war to support the seizure of lands, the occupied territories should be immediately restored, given that a) when Columbus occupied the land he did not send ahead priests, who could neither be received nor rejected, and b) even if priests had been sent and not been welcomed, this does not authorise the declaration of war, since faith

31 Cf. F. de Vitoria, *Relectio de Indis* (Bari: Levante, 1996). ch. 2, n. 9, pp. 51–54 and *Relectio de iure belli* (Madrid: CSIC, 1981) q. 1, pp. 98–109. Cf. also D. de Soto, *De iustitia e iure*, l. IV, q. 2, a. 2 (Salamanca: Andreas a Partonarijo Typographus Salmanticae, 1556) and *Commentaria in quartum sententiarum* (Venice: 1589) tomus primus, dist. 5, quaestio unica, a. 10, p. 301.

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cannot be imposed, only demonstrated with reason, patience and exemplary miracles.[32] Campanella admits,

> *Certainly, Cortés occupied the Mexican empire with the sword and imprisoned its King, without him or his subjects having made any offense to the Spanish or the preachers for which they could set war in defense of religion or their allies.*[33]

Indeed, Campanella claims, the Spanish let the priests go to the New World and incited the natives to attack them, so as to 'claim' a war of self-defence and earn the right of occupation.[34] In his eyes, this is a perfect example of a Machiavellian use of religion. The real source of any legality of the land seizure in the New World resides, according to Campanella, in the Pope's *auctoritas*, *he* who also holds the temporal *potestas*. The full possession of spiritual and temporal powers compels him to punish the violations of the natural law that the natives have committed. These crimes, which could be equated to crimes against the *auctoritas*, are three: public sodomy, idolatry and anthropophagy.[35] In Campanella's words:

> *For this, I confirm the first assertion: that the Pope is lord or rector of the whole orb in the temporal and spiritual fields. For the infidels having corrupted the law of nature, for the unpunished public sodomy, for idolatry and anthropophagy, eating each other, not only for piety and for Christ's precept, must the Pope send doctors of the evangelical law to them, who live like beasts and do not yield to reason. But he must also send soldiers to exterminate idolatry and punish anthropophagy and sodomy, and force them to the true worship of God, not in a different way to that of the Hebrew when, sent by God, they entered in the land of the Canaanites to destroy such ungodly nation, even when it was not as wild as*

32 T. Campanella, *Sermo de iuribus regis catholici super novum Hemispherium aliaque regna infidelium, secundum scripturas Dei, contra eos qui hac in causa scripserunt, aut adulando, aut contradicendo* in *Monarchia Messiae* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France 2002), p. 426: '1. *Quoniam quando Columbus eo adnavigvit primamque occupavit terram, haudquaquam praedicatores praemisit evangelicos, pro quibus non receptis et expulsis iustum ipse bellum movere posset.* 2. *Neque propterea iuste infertur bellum, quia praedicatores non recipiuntur: fides enim, ut ait Bernardus, non est imperanda, sed suadenda rationibus, patientia et miraculis efficacibus.*'

33 Campanella, *Sermo*, p. 426: '*Astu sane Cortesius occupavit Mexicanum regnum regemque eorum vinculis compedibusque coarctavit, nulla regis aut regnicolarum iniuria in praedicatores aut Hispanos praecedente, und ipse tutandi religionem aut socios arma movere posset.*'

34 Campanella, *Sermo*, p. 428: '*Hoc idem faciunt profecto Hispani secundum theologos istos. Etenim praemittunt religiosos ad incolas novi Orbis, quo ab illa idiota gente calce feriantur et ad feriendum irritentur. Unde mox ipsi fingunt sibi ius occupandi quicquid possunt.*'

35 We can also find this theory in M. de Montaigne, 'Des cannibales' in *Essais*, book I, chap. XXXI (Paris: Garnier, 1962), p. 238.

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to being fed by humans like this one, against the lawful and against the natural law[36].

From this reasoning, it could be deduced that, in opposition to Vitoria, Campanella did not consider it right to send soldiers to protect priests. He would rather send priests *simultaneously* to evangelise, and soldiers to punish sin and, if necessary, to exterminate the natives of the occupied territories. In this way, he establishes a parallel in human history between biblical Canaan and America. Alexander the Great is praised as a conqueror, and it is through him that Campanella introduces a substantial modification to the doctrine which he had supported in the *Monarchia di Spagna*: that the natives will no longer be considered human beings; with the mediation of Sepulveda, Aristotle[37] is introduced to justify the barbaric nature of the New World inhabitants and, in consequence, their subjugation to slavery:

Alexander the Great also founded his monarchy over this right and occupied barbarous regions to bring barbarism down and introduce civilization. And Aristotle, his mentor, in his Politics, taught him this reasoning, stating that those who utterly violate the laws of nature should be subdued with the arms, in the same way the other beasts are. With their horrific crimes, they turn their nature into bestial, and this cannot be corrected but with force, not with reason, and is also worthy of slavery.[38]

Hercules, Cyrus and the Roman Empire are therefore worshipped for having embarked on wars against the beasts and monsters of the Earth, the tyrants, the Laestrygonians, the Lycaons and the cannibals. However, Campanella echoes a possible objection built upon the theories of De Soto, according to which '*at neminem posse proprio privari regno et possessione, nisi prius a competenti iudice condemnatum*'.[39] Campanella responds that the Pope is the judge who has

36 Campanella, *Sermo*, p. 430: '*Quapropter priorem assertionem confirmo, Papam esse dominum vel rectorem totius orbis in temporalibus ac spiritualibus. Cumque praevaricassent infideles naturae legem per sodomiam publicam impunitam, per idolatriam et per anthropophagiam se invicem comedendo, non modo ex pietate Christique praecepto, debere Papam mittere doctores evangelicae legis ad pisos ferino more viventes, nec rationi acquiescere volentes, sed etiam milites qui idolatriam exterminarent, anthropophagiam et sodomiam punirent et inhibirent illosque ad veri Dei cultum cogerent, non secus ac quando Hebraei Cananaeorum terram ingressi sunt a Deo missi, ut impiam nationem delerent, quae tamen nec tam fera erat ut hominibus vescerentur, sicut haec contra fas et ius naturae.*'

37 Cf. Aristotle, *Politics* I, 3, p. 1253.

38 Campanella, *Sermo*, p. 430: '*Sed et magnus Alexander hoc super iure suma fundavit monarchiam, barbaras regiones occupare professus, ut prosterneret barbariem civilitatemque introduceret. Et Aristóteles eius praeceptor primo Politicae cap. 3 hanc illum docuit rationem, asserens eos, qui enormiter naturae leges violant, armis subiugari debere, sicuti et ceteras bestias. Ipsi enim enormibus sceleribus in bestialem sese transferunt naturam: quae non ratione amplius, sed vi corrigenda veniat servituteque sane digna.*'

39 Campanella refers here to De Soto, *Commentaria*, tomus primus, dist. 5, quaestio unica, a. 10, p. 301.

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condemned the natives, and that it is he as sovereign who has determined the bestiality of the Americans and thus their need of punishment:

> *And the pontiff, undoubtedly, is also the judge of these nations, as for he bears the primary essential reason and is Jesus Christ's vicar, who could this also perform, on account of their cruel crime and barbarous incorrigibility.*[40]

The Pope's place as 'first essential reason' makes clear reference to the Supreme Pontiff's capacity to decide over the state of exception which had been declared over the American territories and which made the land seizure possible. In this sense, the Pope makes his *auctoritas* dependent on divine sovereignty, whose will is revealed in the biblical prophecies. In fact, in Campanella's view, the American conquest is a prophetic eschatological event and it is the Catholic King who then executes the papal and divine judgments, without being the judge himself:

> *For this reason, the prophecies of the Messiah being in force, stating that he would destroy the Gentile and all the kings of the lands which opposed him and that he would subjugate them with the word and material arms, as pointed out in the sermons preceding Monarchy of the Messiah, certainly, the Catholic King, his serf, in compliance with these prophesies, does not sin for judgment usurpation at all.*[41]

The Campanellian theory of the conquest as a prophetic event which builds a new global order is founded on an extremely complex reading of the Old and New Testaments. In this respect, it is only after a thorough analysis of his reading of the Bible that the conceptual roots of his political theology can be understood. In this sense, for example, Campanella sees the conquest of the New World as a fulfilment of the prophecy in which Abraham would be the heir to the world, a prophecy which would later be confirmed by Paul.[42] However it is undoubtedly Psalm 2, called 'messianic', that clearly describes Campanella's religious and political purpose regarding the New World; it is his belief that the state of exception established in the new territories is nothing but the full realisation of this psalm's prophecy:

> *David in Psalm 2: '… and I shall bequeath you the peoples and the possession of the land extremities. You shall break them with a rod of iron; you shall dash them*

40 Campanella, *Sermo*, p. 436: *'Ac pontificem absque dubio iudicem esse, et harum nationum in quantum Iesu Christi primae rationis essentialis locum tenet et vices, qui et hoc possit, earum praesuppositis immani crimine et barbarica simul incorrigibilitate.'*

41 Campanella, *Sermo*, p. 438: *'Quas ob res cum prophetiae de Messia extant, quod ipse destructurus esset gentilismum omnesque reges terrae contradicentes et subacturus verbo et armis materialibus, tandem, sicut docuimus in praecendentibus sermonibus De monarchia Messiae, profecto rex catholicus servus eius, has exequendo prophetias, nequaquam peccat usurpatione iudicii.'*

42 Paul, Epistle to the Romans, 4:13, 1–3: Paul makes reference to Genesis 12:7.

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> *in pieces like a potter's vessel'. And certainly, this is how the Spanish king broke the nations and fulfilled the prophecies.*[43]

The conclusion Campanella draws from all this is eloquent:

> *From these discourses well can be deduced that any mighty nation which occupies foreign lands is sent by God to this aim by instinct or by a manifest voice or revelation, and while it decrees to punish some of them or make them better, nobody without the consent of the divine right can subjugate such lands.*[44]

It is therefore clear that this model of the exception and of military punishment of mortal sins is not in conflict with, but rather complementary to, the previously stated voluntary depopulation. Of course, Campanella's proximity to Vitoria's thought here turns to bitter criticism, and the natives' humanity, previously defended as a necessary argument for their conversion, is subsequently discarded. The sovereign exception declared in America is no longer addressed to human beings but, instead, to animals that have violated the natural law. However, as we have seen before, the sovereign violence was entirely present in the *Monarchia di Spagna* as a threat and as a decision result of violence abstention. The decision is here the opposite, but the essential theoretical premises have not changed; they are in fact carried to their logical conclusion. Finally, in Campanella's perception, the central point is that the conquest enterprise is not only conquest and pillage. Instead, to the initial state of exception which allows moral punishment and the seizure of land, the conquest venture entails the establishment of a new special legal order — which is not the mere reproduction, as mentioned, of the one in force in the metropolis. This new order allows the indoctrination and voluntary use of the native workforce.

III. Conclusion: Written culture and the humanistic 'library' of Campanella

One of the main texts appropriated by Campanella was the *De ecclesiastica potestate* by Giles of Rome. In fact, as we have seen, the Calabrian philosopher based his political thinking on related medieval developments — especially Roman canon law. In this sense, it is crucial that Campanella still moves within the medieval tradition of the distinction between spiritual and temporal

43 Campanella, *Sermo*, pp. 439–40: '*David Ps. 2: 'Dabo tibi gentes haereditatem tuam et posesiones tuas terminos terrae; et reges eos in virga ferrea, et tamquam vas figuli confringes eos, etc.' Et quidem ita prorsus confringit rex hispanus nationes, prophetias adimplendo.*'

44 Campanella, *Sermo*, p. 434: '*Hic ex sermonibus rite elicitur, nationem quamcumque praepotentem, quae alienas occupat terras, mitti a Deo per instinctum aut per manifestam vocem et revelationem; dum alias castigare decernit, aut meliores facere neminemque absque iuris divini nutu alienigenarum subiugare terram.*'

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powers. In the work of Giles of Rome, the legal notion of exception is central. Similarly, Campanella considers that the Pope, representative of the Church's *auctoritas*, 'is equivalent to an *ontological absolute* in the political order; he judges it all but is not judged by anyone; he is a unique sovereignty, placed above every other power, excluding every similar power and every other power depend on him'.[45] Undoubtedly, Giles of Rome's statements represent the 'most solid version'[46] of a defense of the papal *plenitudo potestatis* during the Middle Ages. In a certain way, it could be argued that Giles of Rome's view is even more radical than that of Campanella, since, in the *casus imminens*, a real conjunction of the Pope's spiritual and temporal powers is produced. As for Campanella, the conception is that these two powers are always separate, though subordinated because *'principes cristianos bracchia esse corporis Christi mystici,*[47] *Papam vero caput*'.[48] Even though the Pope's absolute supremacy is an *a priori* principle extracted from divine revelation, he will always need the executor arm of a Catholic monarch. However, what is radically different with Campanella is the space and conceptual nature of the exception. Medieval law and political theory had explained the exception with the formulae of *causa urgente, ratione peccati et causaliter* and later on with the embracing *ratio necessitatis*. Nonetheless, the medieval need was not yet the source of the exception anchored in the papal *auctoritas*, but the occasion of its realisation. Even though Campanella appears to place the exception within the *ratione peccati* paradigm, for the first time he opens the doors to an unprecedented broadening of the concept, which now coincides in space with the New World and allows the conquest enterprise. This process will culminate with the legal inclusion of the necessity that turns the exception into a real 'state' of law.[49] Once more, the 'anthropological machine' is set off in the American territories, a machine which has been present since the beginnings of Western philosophy and which allows the distinction between man and animal as an essential political gesture. In this sense, Campanella produces a double process since, in the *Monarchia di Spagna*, natives are conceived as a human beings — though inferior — and yet at the same time are situated in a childhood which requires

45 F. Bertelloni, (referring to Giles of Rome) 'El modelo teórico de la excepción en la teoría política medieval' in *Deus Mortalis*, nº 4, (2005), pp. 117–48, quotation on p. 129.

46 Bertelloni, 'El modelo teórico', p. 148.

47 About the concept of *corpus mysticum* and its importance for political philosophy, medieval and modern, cf. H. de Lubac, *Corpus mysticum. L'Eucharistie et l'eglise au moyen-age* (Paris: Aubier Montaigne 1949).

48 Campanella, *Sermo*, p. 446.

49 Giorgio Agamben, *State of exception* (Chicago: Chicago University Press 2005).

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tutelage.[50] In the *Sermo de iuribus regis catholici super novum Hemispherium*, what immediately follows childhood is the declaration of the in-humanity of the inhabitants of the New World, who must be obliged by military force to achieve humanity (*cogi ad humanitatem*).[51] Campanella constructed his political argument using medieval philosophy, but when forced to think of the discovery of the New World, he took the *Ius Gentium* of the *Respublica Christiana* to its peak. Ultimately, it gave birth to a global *nomos* of the earth, of which the latter *ius publicum Europaeum* will be the highest expression.

As can be seen, the Campanellian line of thought represents the combination of, at least, a triple textual path: on the one side, the *corpus* of Roman canon law and, on the other, the texts of the Franciscan tradition — of a legal nature as well — to which the Calabrian philosopher had access. Likewise, the biblical interpretations based on the Joachimite millenarism provided a messianic foundation to the conquest and evangelisation enterprise.[52] The texts from Roman canon law, together with solid hierocratical stances such as that of Giles of Rome, provide Campanella with the necessary excerpts and gloss for the construction of an articulated doctrine around the papal *potestas*, founded in the capacity to declare the American colonies as spaces of legal exception which legitimise their military appropriation.

The *Monarchia di Spagna* has a series of *marginalia* containing the texts used by the Calabrian philosopher to give an account of the history of the papal theocratic power and of the *translatio imperii*: the *Cronica universale* by Giovanni Villani, the *Annales* by Caesar Baronius, the *Cronica maior* by Matthew Paris, the *Historia sui temporis* by Rudolf Glaber and the *Cronica summorum pontificum imperatorumque* by Martin of Troppau. Although the study of these sources goes beyond the remit of this essay, it is worth mentioning that all these texts were read over the background of a conception about the divine — and hence necessary — nature of the universal Empire. This legal *topos* has its origin in *De civitate Dei* (*The City of God*) by Augustine of Hippo (I, 15), which says that sovereign God chose the Romans as holders of the *officium imperii* and that this legitimised their wars of annexation. The motif is reintroduced by Dante but it is highly probable that Campanella used at this point the *Monarchia*

50 Following, in this sense, the propositions of De Vitoria. For the theories defending the idea that the man of the New World was inferior or a child, cf. A. Pagden, *The fall of natural man* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1982), pp. 27–108.

51 T. Campanella, *Theologicorum* (Rome: Centro Internazionale di Studi Umanistici, 1958), t. X/3, p. 58.

52 Cfr. H. De Lubac, *Exégèse médiévale. Les quatre sens de l'ecriture*, 4 vols (Paris: Aubier, 1993); M. Reeves, *The influence of prophecy in the latter Middle Ages. A study of Joachimism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1969) and G.L. Potestà, *Il tempo dell'Apocalisse. Vita di Gioacchino da Fiore* (Bari: Laterza, 2004).

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sive de potestate imperatoris et papae by Antonio Rosellis (1466 edition), which exposes almost all the arguments in favour of the empire following the *ius divinum*, *naturale*, *gentium* et *civile*.

On the other hand, besides the controversial visible use of the works of De Soto, Cajetan, Thomas Aquinas and Torquemada — which were part of the Campanellian 'library' in these matters — we would like to suggest by way of a hypothesis the existence of a still unexplored source that would have been known to Campanella and which would have been the basis of many of his speculations of a Franciscan nature over the political organisation proposed for the New World. Likewise, it would have offered a great deal of the historical material from which he studied and interpreted the reality of the American conquest. We are referring to Jerónimo de Mendieta's *Relación de la descripción de la provincia del santo evangelio que es en las indias occidentales que llaman la Nueva España hecha el año 1585*, which was translated into Latin and included in the large compilation of Franciscan texts by Francisco Gonzaga in 1587. We cannot here establish the parallels between the texts, which would demand a very detailed comparison of the borrowings, polemics and shifts of meaning made by Campanella with respect to the Franciscan tradition represented by Mendieta. However it should be sufficient to highlight that the idea of a Hispanic monarchy ceded by the Pope on an eschatological basis is also one of the main pillars of Mendieta's treatise:

> *The preeminence or prerogative of these blessed princes, granted by God for the zeal of their faith, bears great resemblance to that which was awarded to patriarch Abraham, when he was told that all the people in his lineage and descendants would be blessed. Because the blessing received by Abraham's lineage was to enjoy the coming of God's Son to the world, incarnated in the Virgin's womb, who was direct descendant of that patriarch, and thus to participate in the redemption of human race, which was made by spillage of His precious blood. And this same blessing has been given and is given to this New World and a great number of recently discovered people, with the help of these blessed kings and their descendants, by sending preachers who with their doctrine have introduced Christ in this New Orb where He was unknown: He was thus by new faith engendered and born in the hearts of innumerable people who ignored Him before* [...] *God provided for these times where the Roman pontiff would still be Spanish, from the House of Borgia, called Alexander VI, who was extremely happy with the news, together with the Roman cardinals, court and people. All of them were marvelled at the sight of things from so remote lands, and that the Romans, lords of the world, had never known before; and so that those idolatrous peoples who were in the devil's power could become aware of their Creator and make their way to salvation, the Pope, by his own will and cause, with the cardinals' agreement, donated to the kings of Castile and all the isles and solid ground that they discovered towards West, provided that, when*

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conquering them, they would send preachers and ministers, as agreed, to convert and indoctrinate the natives: and for that he sent them his authorised Bull.[53]

It is interesting to explore the great paradox in which Campanella is immersed and how it reflects the peculiarity of modern European humanists in every study of a cultural history of miscegenation, starting from the circulation of written material. Campanella never, in fact, knew the New World. Even though he spent half of his life isolated in a Spanish dungeon in Naples, it did not stop him from writing one of the most ambitious legal-political projects of modernity. In many respects it represented a synthesis of the efforts of European *'mythomotorik'* about a millennial kingdom capable of legitimising the conquest by means of a *translatio imperii*. Campanella's example must be taken as a guide for the study of other cases of European humanists who, faced with the challenge of the new American lands, responded with the arms of old texts of the philosophical-political tradition of Europe. 'New Worlds, Ancient Texts' is the expression Anthony Grafton has used to summarise this paradox, in which texts created in other worlds, and for other worlds, were appropriated and utilised—their senses distorted and resignified—to confront the new global world of our technical-scientific modernity.[54] The Campanella case is also enlightening for the challenges of the 'global history', which is now in full development. In fact,

53 J. de Mendieta, OFM, Pedro Oroz, OFM, Francisco Suárez, OFM. *Relación de la descripción de la provincia del santo evangelio que es en las indias occidentales que llaman la Nueva España hecha el año 1585* (México: J.A. Reyes, 1945) chap. III: '*Tiene muy gran semejanza la preeminencia ó prerrogativa de estos bienaventurados príncipes, concedida de Dios por el celo que de su fe tuvieron, con la que se le concedió al patriarca Abraham,cuando le fué dicho que en su linaje y descendencia serían benditas todas las gentes. Porque la bendición que las gentes alcanzaron en el linaje de Abraham, fué gozar de la venida del Hijo de Dios al mundo, encarnando en el vientre de la Vírgen, que por línea recta descendía de aquel gran patriarca, y participar de la redención del género humano, que por el derramamiento de su preciosa sangre se hizo. Y esta misma bendición se ha administrado y administra á este Nuevo Mundo y gentes sin número recién descubiertas, por mano de estos dichosos reyes y de sus descendientes, enviando predicadores que con su doctrina han introducido á Cristo en este Nuevo Orbe donde no era conocido: de suerte que por nueva fe fué engendrado y nació en los corazones de innumerables gentes que antes de todo punto lo ignoraban [...] Proveyó Dios para aquel tiempo que aún el Pontífice romano fuese español, de la casa de Borja, llamado Alejandro VI, el cual en extremo se holgó con la nueva, juntamente con los cardenales., corte y pueblo romano. Maravilláronse todos de ver cosas de tan lejas tierras, y que nunca los romanos, señores del mundo, las supieron; y porque aquellas gentes idólatras que estaban en poder del demonio pudiesen venir en conocimiento de su Criador y ponerse en camino de salvación, hizo el Papa de su propia voluntad y motivo, con acuerdo de los cardenales, donación y merced á los reyes de Castilla y León de todas las Islas y Tierra Firme que descubriesen al occidente, con tal que conquistándolas enviasen á ellas predicadores y ministros, cuales convenía, para convertir y doctrinar á los indios: y para ello les envió su Bula autorizada.*' Cfr. also the important book by J.L. Phelan, *The millennial kingdom of the Franciscans in the New World* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1970), which is, however, insufficient for a juridical approach to the subject.

54 Cfr. A. Grafton, A Shelford & N. Siraisi, *New worlds, ancient texts. The power of tradition and the shock of Discovery* (Cambridge, Massachusetts & London: Harvard University Press, 1992).

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even if we agree with Subrahmanyam that a Euro-Asian situation of global millenarism in modernity is a source of great imperial developments, it is still true that in Christian Europe the declensions of milleniarism have a very strict legal-political and religious sense. It is deep-rooted in a textual constellation that is dense but capable of being precisely reconstructed, where 'messianism', 'millennial kingdom', '*potestas*' and 'state of exception', have their own meanings built over the basis of slow appropriations, textual circulations and multiple reconstructions of various textual *corpora*. Then, how is it possible—even in the construction of 'connected histories'—to account for the comparative parameters when these textual traditions can still be different even if we take into account the cultural loans and circulations? Without a doubt, this is one of the major challenges of 'global history' but also of the cultural history of what is written in a global world.

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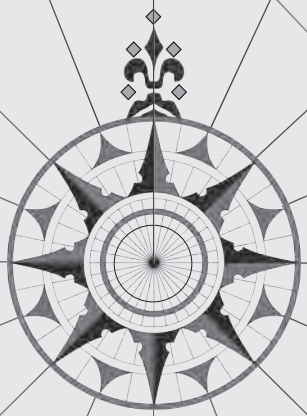
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Part III



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7



Charlevoix and the American Savage: The 18th-Century Traveller as Moralist[1]

David J. Culpin

Introduction

The importance of the travel narrative in the 18th century and its influence in forming a 'new anthropology' has been amply demonstrated, notably by Michèle Duchet.[2] Scholars have also observed that travel narratives habitually borrow from other literary forms: pirate attacks, shipwrecks and encounters with 'savages' were the stuff of novels and, as Lestringant and Carile have observed, 'Novel characteristics became a rule of the travel genre, a necessary ornament to the expression of "naked truth"'.[3] But the relationship between moralistic discourse and travel writing has not been studied. This is surprising given the similarities of title and focus shared by moralists and writers of travel narratives: compare, for example, the title of La Bruyère's *Characters or Manners of this Century* (1688) and Lafitau's *Manners of the American Savages* (1724).[4] In order to illustrate the relationship between these two forms of discourse, this paper will focus on a single travel narrative, the *Journal of a Journey through North America* by Pierre-François-Xavier de Charlevoix. Charlevoix (1682–1761) was a Jesuit priest and, between 1723 and 1744, a

1 I would like to thank the British Academy for the grant which made possible the research on which this paper is based. My thanks are also due to Teresa Zurbriggen for bibliographical assistance, as well as to Yvonne Rodríguez-Colón and staff at the Bibliothèque Nationale in Paris.

2 Michèle Duchet, *Anthropologie et histoire au siècle des Lumières* (Paris: Albin Michel, 1995).

3 *'Les caractéristiques romanesques sont une loi du genre viatique, un ornement nécessaire à l'expression de la "vérité nue"'*, Frank Lestringant & Paolo Carile, preface to Guillaume Chenu de Laujardière, *Relation d'un voyage à la côte des Cafres 1686–1689* (Paris: Les Editions de Paris 1996), p. 12. All translations from works originally published in French are my own.

4 Jean de la Bruyère, *Caractères, ou mœurs de ce siècle*, Robert Garapon (ed.), (Paris: Garnier 1962); Joseph-François Lafitau, *Mœurs des sauvages amériquains*, E.H. Lemay (ed.) (Paris: F. Maspero, 1983).

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contributing editor of the Jesuit publication, the *Mémoires de Trévoux*.[5] He was also the author of a number of historical works, including a *History of Japan* (1736), a *History of New France* (1744) and a *History of Paraguay* (1756). His *History of New France* ranks among the most influential and important texts dealing with North America in the first half of the 18th century, yet very little attention has been given to this work by recent scholars.[6]

Charlevoix's *Journal of a Journey through North America* was published in the concluding volume of his *History of New France* in 1744.[7] It consists of thirty-six letters, dated between 30 June 1720 and 5 January 1723, which relate Charlevoix's voyage across the Atlantic to Quebec, his overland journey to Montreal, the descent of the Mississippi through Louisiana to New Orleans, and the return to France via Saint-Domingue (modern day Haïti). The letters purport to have been written during the journey, and are apparently addressed to Madame la duchesse de Lesdiguières. Charlevoix is careful to maintain this impression of spontaneity, addressing his reader directly throughout the journal, as, for example, when he writes: 'you are not unaware of the reasons why it has been said that Louisiana is the home of great treasure'.[8] Among scholars who have studied the *Journal* there has been a diversity of opinion about the origins of the text: Amat accepted as genuine the dates attributed to the letters, whilst Pouliot thought it more probable that Charlevoix was writing after the event and simply practising an established literary genre. More recently, Pierre Berthiaume has shown conclusively that the letters are a later composition which draw on a wide range of published sources.[9]

5 For Charlevoix's biography, see: François Moureau (ed.), *Dictionnaire des lettres françaises. Le XVIIIe siècle* (Paris: Fayard, 1995) and Jean Sgard (ed.), *Dictionnaire des journalistes 1600–1789* (Oxford: Voltaire Foundation, 1999).

6 On 18th-century travel writing, see Friedrich Wolfzettel, *Le discours du voyage. Pour une histoire littéraire du récit de voyage en France, du moyen âge au XVIIIe siècle* (Paris: PUF, 1996). On Charlevoix, see Christian Amat, 'Un missionnaire philosophe face à l'Amérique: Le R.P. Charlevoix', in Jean Balcou & René Pomeau (eds), *L'Amérique des Lumières* (Geneva: Droz, 1977); and Maurice Roelens, 'L'expérience de l'espace américain dans les récits de voyage entre La Hontan et Charlevoix', in *Studies on Voltaire and the Eighteenth Century* 155 (1976), pp. 1861–95.

7 Pierre-Francois-Xavier Charlevoix, *Histoire et description générale de la Nouvelle France avec le journal historique d'un voyage fait par ordre du Roi dans l'Amérique septentrionale* (published simultaneously Paris: Didot, Giffart, Nyon, Rollin & Veuve Ganeau, 1744). For full details, see Charlevoix, *Journal d'un voyage*, Pierre Berthiaume (ed.) (Montréal: Presses de l'Université de Montréal, 1994), p. 74. All references are to the Nyon edition, in which the *Journal* occupies the third of three 4° volumes; spelling has been modernised throughout.

8 '*Vous n'ignorez pas non plus les raisons qu'on avait eues de publier que la Louisiane possédait dans son sein de grands trésors*', Charlevoix, *Journal d'un voyage*, Letter XXXII, p. 447. References to the *Journal* take the form of the letter number in Roman numerals, followed by the page number in Arabic numerals.

9 Amat, 'Un missionnaire philosophe face à l'Amérique', p. 27; Charlevoix, *Textes choisis*, Léon Pouliot (ed.) (Paris & Montréal: Fides, 1959), Introduction, p. 12; and Charlevoix, *Journal d'un voyage*.

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This paper aims to show how the traditions of moralistic discourse shaped the vision of the travel writer and, in turn, the impression of non-European civilisations which was conveyed to the 18th-century reader. It will focus on: (1) the forms adopted; (2) the populations observed; (3) the thematic preoccupations of the author; and (4) the reflexivity of the writer's observations.

I. Forms

French moralists of the 17th and 18th centuries typically employ one of several characteristic literary forms, which Louis van Delft has called 'short prose forms'.[10] In the second half of the 17th century it is the maxim and the remark which predominate in the best-known works of the period, La Rochefoucauld's *Maxims* and La Bruyère's *Characters*, first published in 1665 and 1688, respectively. In the 18th century, changing fashions bring about the emergence of new 'short forms', although those which date from the preceding era are still found.

The journal and the letter

Charlevoix entitles his work *Journal*, which is a diary, a record of events as they occur. It is also a form used in other 17th- and 18th-century travel narratives, including Choisy's *Journal of a Voyage to Siam* (1687) and Challe's *Journal of a Voyage to the East Indies* (1721). It is quite clear that Charlevoix had a wide knowledge of existing narratives relating to North America: Volume I of the *History of New France* contains a list of over 80 authors consulted during the preparation of his book, ranging chronologically from Champlain's *Voyage* of 1603 to the *Letters* of the Jesuit missionaries published in 1738. But this list also gives an indication of the titles characteristically used by such works: 'Relation', 'Description' and 'History' are the most common terms employed, followed by others such as 'Voyage' and 'Memoir'. There is only one journal, Joutel's *Historical Journal of La Salle's last voyage to the Gulf of Mexico* (1703). The use of this term by Charlevoix therefore represents a clear editorial choice.

In the first half of the 18th century, the term 'journal' is much more commonly used to describe a publication akin to a newspaper, such as the *Journal des savants* or the *Journal de Trévoux* to which Charlevoix contributed. In this sense, a 'journal' requires a reader, who is often addressed directly. In the case of one contemporary journal, the *Mercure*, this was a female reader. But the journal had also become a favourite form of moralistic discourse in the first half of the

10 *'Les formes brèves de la prose.'* See Louis van Delft, *Le moraliste classique: essai de définition et de typologie* (Geneva: Droz, 1982).

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18th century, even when the term 'journal' did not appear in the title. This literary form, whose popularity was launched by Addison's *Spectator* (1711–12), had numerous French-language imitators, including Van Effen's *Le Misanthrope* (1711–12), Marivaux's *Le Spectateur français* (1721–24) and Prévost's *Le Pour et contre* (1733–40). The letter, too, both as a form used within the journal and in its own right, had become increasingly popular as a form of moral discourse: Montesquieu's *Persian Letters* (1721), Voltaire's *Letters concerning the English Nation* (1733), and d'Argens's *Chinese Letters* (1739) are just three of the best-known examples. Together, the letter and the journal came to rival the maxim and the character in the first half of the 18th century, and may be considered the characteristic forms of moral discourse during the period.

The authorial persona

In his *Journal*, Charlevoix deploys several devices to give the impression that he is writing this literary type of journal, particularly in relation to the construction of an authorial persona. In the first place, the author or narrator is gallant, and, when he addresses his female reader, his tone is lightly brushed with the *badinage* of gallant discourse. He plays upon the conceit of the conquered conqueror who can refuse nothing to his lady, and asserts that he is writing at her request: 'You have expressed the wish that I should write to you regularly, on every possible occasion, and I promised to do this because it is impossible for me to refuse you anything.'[11] Conventionally, too, the writer of such journals wishes to be seen as an amateur, and therefore, in spite of the accuracy of his information and the reliability of his judgement, Charlevoix reminds his reader that this is not a work of scholarship and that he is not an 'author'. To this end he is careful to emphasise the fragmentary nature of his work. In the very first letter he reminds his correspondent that she had counted on 'a continuous journal'; but since various problems, including the difficulty of finding messengers make this impossible, he concludes 'you will have only a truncated, unfinished journal'.[12] Finally, like other practitioners of the genre, the authorial narrator paints a picture of himself as a trustworthy correspondent, an observer whose judgment is reliable. In the first letter he reminds the recipient that she knows him to be a man of sincerity. His judgment can therefore be relied upon, as can the accuracy of his information. This is put to the proof in an early letter, which begins: 'Madam,

11 '*Vous avez souhaité que je vous écrivisse régulièrement par toutes les occasions que j'en pourrais trouver, et je vous l'ai promis, parce qu'il ne m'est permis de vous rien refuser*', Charlevoix, *Journal d'un voyage*, Letter I, p. 44.

12 '*En effet, c'est sur un journal suivi que vous avez compté* […] *vous n'aurez qu'un journal tronqué et sans suite*', Charlevoix, *Journal d'un voyage*, Letter I, p. 44.

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I am going to speak to you about Quebec. All the descriptions of it which I have seen thus far are so defective that I thought I would bring you pleasure by depicting accurately this capital of New France.'[13]

The portrait

But, apart from the letter and the journal, other rhetorical devices were characteristically used by 17th- and 18th-century moralists, among them the portrait.[14] This feature is repeatedly found in Charlevoix's *Journal* and, as Pouliot has observed, it is arguably the best feature of a writer whose sentences can often be long and lacking in clarity.[15] The examples that Pouliot gives of Charlevoix's mastery of the portrait are taken from the *History*, but the remark holds true for the *Journal*.

Charlevoix comes closest to the literary portrait when he dramatises the individuals he meets, using direct speech, either in the form of dialogue or monologue. Here are two examples. The first is taken from Letter XXI, in the context of a passage described as 'Portrait of the savages of Canada. Their good and bad qualities'. Charlevoix writes:

> *An Outagami indian whom the Illinois were burning with the greatest cruelty, having observed a Frenchman among the spectators, asked if he would be good enough to help his enemies torture him; when the Frenchman asked why he made this request, he replied: 'So that I will have the pleasure of dying at the hand of a man. My greatest regret,' he added, 'is that I have never killed a Man.' 'But,' retorted an Illinois, 'you have killed such a one and such an other.' 'I have killed many Illinois,' replied the victim, 'but these are not Men'.*[16]

Charlevoix then concludes, addressing his correspondent directly, 'our surprise at such imperviousness to suffering should not prevent us from seeing great courage in this action. To raise the soul above suffering to such a degree always requires an effort of which ordinary souls are not capable.'[17]

13 *'Madame, je vais vous parler de Québec; toutes les descriptions que j'en ai vues jusqu'ici sont si défectueuses que j'ai cru vous faire plaisir en vous représentant au vrai cette capitale de la Nouvelle France*', Charlevoix, *Journal d'un voyage*, Letter III, p. 70.

14 For the 17th-century origins of this tradition, see Jacqueline Plantié, *La mode du portrait littéraire en France* (Paris: Champion, 1994) pp. 1641–81.

15 Charlevoix, *Textes choisis*, p. 35.

16 *'Un Outagami, que les Illinois brûlaient avec la dernière barbarie, ayant aperçu un Français parmi les spectateurs, le pria de vouloir bien aider ses ennemis à le tourmenter; et celui-ci lui ayant demandé pourquoi il lui faisait cette prière: "C'est, répondit-il, que j'aurai le plaisir de mourir par la main d'un homme. Mon plus grand regret, ajouta-t-il, c'est de n'avoir jamais tué un Homme". "Mais," reprit un Illinois, "tu as tué un tel et un tel." "Pour des Illinois," répliqua le patient, "j'en ai assez tué, mais ce ne sont pas des Hommes"'*, Charlevoix, *Journal d'un voyage*, Letter XXI, pp. 306–7.

17 *'[…] la surprise qu'une telle sensibilité pourrait causer, n'empêche point qu'on ne doive y reconnaître un grand courage. Il faut toujurs, pour élever l'âme au-dessus du sentiment à ce point-là, un effort dont les âmes communes ne sont point capables*', Charlevoix, *Journal d'un voyage*, Letter XXI, p. 306–7.

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The second illustration is taken from Letter XXVII. At this point in the narrative, Charlevoix is at Pimiteouy, on the border of Canada and Louisiana. He has been advised by the Indian chief against continuing his journey down the Mississippi until later in the season, but has rejected that advice. The chief then responds as follows:

> *'Since your mind is made up,' he said to me, 'it is my view that all the Frenchmen here should join you in order to strengthen your escort: I have even told them my thoughts on the matter, and have stressed that their honour would be permanently compromised if they left their priest in danger without sharing it with him. I wish I could have accompanied you myself, at the head of all my soldiers, but you know well that my village might be attacked any day and that I could not be absent or weaken its defences in such circumstances. As for the Frenchmen, nothing could keep them here except a self-interest which they must sacrifice to your preservation. This is what I have explained to them, and I added that if one of them were to fall into the hands of the enemy, this would be only the loss of a man, whereas a single priest is worth several of them, and that there is nothing that they should not risk in order to prevent so great a misfortune.' I was charmed, Madam,* [says Charlevoix] *by this man's wisdom* [...]'.[18]

A few lines later a second encounter is recorded, involving the same participants. Charlevoix writes:

> *This morning he* [the chief] *visited me for a second time, accompanied by his mother-in-law, who was carrying a small child in her arms. 'You see before you,' he said as he approached, 'a grief-stricken father. This is my daughter, who is dying; her mother died giving birth to her, and none of the women has yet been able to feed her. She rejects anything she swallows, and has perhaps only a few hours to live; I would be pleased if you would baptise her, so that she might go and see God when she dies.' The child was indeed very unwell, and beyond all hope of recovery, so I did not hesitate to baptise her.*
>
> *If my journey had in all other respects been completely useless, I confess to you, Madam, that I would not regret all its fatigues and dangers, since, in all probability,*

18 *'Puisque ta résolution est prise, me dit-il, je suis d'avis que tous les Français qui sont ici se joignent à toi pour fortifier ton escorte: je leur ai même déjà déclaré ma pensée sur cela, et je leur ai fortement représenté qu'ils seraient à jamais perdus d'honneur s'ils laissaient leur Père dans le danger sans le partager avec lui. J'aurais bien souhaité pouvoir t'accompagner moi-même à la tête de tous mes soldats, mais tu n'ignores point que mon village est tous les jours à la veille d'être attaqué, et il ne me convient pas de m'en absenter, ni de le dégarnir dans de pareilles conjonctures. Pour les Français, rien ne peut les arrêter ici qu'un intérêt qu'ils doivent sacrifier à ta conservation. C'est ce que je leur ai fait entendre, et je leur ai ajouté que si quelqu'un d'eux tombait dans les mains des ennemis, ce ne serait que la perte d'un homme, au lieu qu'un Père en valait lui seul plusieurs, et qu'il n'y avait rien qu'ils ne dussent risquer pour prévenir un si grand malheur". Je fus charmé, Madame, de la sagesse de cet homme* [...]', Charlevoix, *Journal d'un voyage*, Letter XXVII, pp. 388–9.

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if I had not been at Pimiteouy, that child would not have entered heaven, where I do not doubt she will soon be.[19]

Several features are noticeable about these passages, and others of the same type. In the first place, they are used to highlight a moment of bravery or virtue and, as in the case of moralists who use this technique, the portrait painted by the words of the speaker is followed by a commentary, often in the form of a *sentence* or memorable phrase. Charlevoix's use of this technique reminds us that his narrative is cast in the mould of exemplary history, practised by Bossuet in the 17th century and still popular in the 18th: it offers a moral lesson by showing character in action.

Chapter headings

In addition, monotonously similar chapter headings are a common feature of much contemporary moralistic discourse. In the wake of La Bruyère, moralists such as Brillon, Bernard, Trublet and Génard produced works describing the trappings of French society or the moral life of those who inhabit it, each composed of chapters on subjects such as 'Fashion', 'Women', 'On the state', 'On happiness', 'On the nobility', and 'On the Church'.[20] In an age that saw the rapid developement of encyclopaedias, works such as these attempt to provide the reader with encyclopaedic coverage of all matters of moral concern, whether in the public or the private domain.

The structure of Charlevoix's *Journal* parallels very closely the chapter headings found in such works of moral discourse. Each of his thirty-six letters is prefaced by a summary of its contents: for example, Letter VIII, 'Description of the country between the Lake of St Peter and Montreal'. But these introductions have a double purpose: sometimes they summarise the stage of the journey undertaken since the previous letter, sometimes they provide a reflection upon

19 *'Ce matin il est venu me rendre une second visite, accompagné de sa belle-mère, qui portait entre ses bras un petit enfant. "Tu vois, me dit-il en m'abordant, un père bien affligé. Voici ma fille, qui se meurt, sa mère est morte en la mettant au monde, et aucune femme n'a pu encore réussir à la nourrir. Elle rejette tout ce qu'elle prend, et elle n'a peut-être plus que quelques heures à vivre: tu me feras plaisir de la baptiser, afin qu'elle puisse aller voir Dieu après sa mort". L'enfant était effectivement très mal, et absolument hors d'espérance de guérison, ainsi je ne balançai pas à lui conférer le baptême. Mon voyage dût-il être d'ailleurs tout à fait inutile, je vous avoue, Madame, que je n'en regretterais pas les fatigues et les dangers, puisque selon toutes les apparences, si je n'étais pas venu à Pimiteouy, cette enfant ne serait jamais entrée dans le Ciel, où je ne doute pas qu'elle ne soit bientôt'*, Charlevoix, *Journal d'un voyage*, Letter XXVII, p. 389.

20 Pierre-Jacques Brillon, *Suite des caractères de Théophraste et des pensées de M. Pascal* (Paris: E. Michallet, 1697); Jean-Frédéric Bernard, *Réflexions morales, satiriques et critiques sur les mœurs de notre siècle* (Amsterdam: chez Pierre Marteau le jeune, 1711); Nicolas Trublet, *Essais sur différents sujets de littérature et de morale* (5 editions) (Paris: Briasson, 1754–60); François Génard, *L'Ecole de l'homme ou parallèle des portraits du siècle, et les tableaux de l'Ecriture Sainte. Ouvrage moral, critique et anecdotique* (London: 1752).

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what has been seen, and sometimes they do both. In a more or less unbroken succession of letters, Charlevoix deals with different areas of the collective life of the Canadian savage, for example: 'On the types of hunting undertaken by the savages' (Letters V–VII), 'On wars' (Letters XIII–XVI) and 'On the government of the savages' (Letter XVIII). These lead to an important series of three letters which offer an extended treatment of their moral life: 'Portrait of the savages of Canada; their good and their bad qualities' (Letter XXI), 'Some characteristics of the character of these peoples' (Letter XXII) and 'Continuation of the character of the savages and the way of their life' (Letter XXIII). Finally, the series culminates in two chapters entitled 'On the traditions and religion of the savages of Canada' (Letters XXIV–XXV). Collectively, the letters provide a comprehensive picture of the customs and character of the 'savages of Canada' as seen by Charlevoix, but it is also noticeable that, as in the case of La Bruyère's *Characters*, Le Maître de Claville's *Treatise on the true merit of man*[21] and Génard's *The School of Man*, the portrayal of individual character, society and government culminates in a chapter dedicated to religious obligation. That is to say, in his *Journal*, Charlevoix employs structures and rhetorical devices commonly used by contemporary moralists, and which would be familiar to readers of such works.

II. The populations observed

We now turn to the different European and indigenous populations that Charlevoix encounters and describes during the course of his journey. An examination of what he says about these populations reveals the moral hierarchy in which he placed those groups, and illustrates the defence of politeness which Charlevoix, like many 18th-century moralists, undertakes.

European inhabitants

The first Europeans he encounters are the inhabitants of Quebec, and Charlevoix dwells, in particular, on the social pleasures he finds in the capital: 'there are hardly seven thousand souls in Quebec, but one finds there a small, very select world, lacking nothing that is required to make society agreeable'. This society includes 'glittering salons at the home of the wife of the Governor and the wife of the Chief Secretary, where persons of all sorts may pass their time very agreeably'.[22] Later,

21 Charles-François-Nicolas le Maître de Claville, *Traité du vrai mérite de l'homme* (Paris: Saugrin, 1734).

22 '[…] *on y trouve un petit monde choisi, où il ne manque rien de ce qui peut rendre une société agréable* […] *des cercles aussi brillants qu'il y en ait ailleurs, chez la Gouvernante et chez l'Intendante. Voilà, ce me semble pour toutes sortes de personnes de quoi passer le temps fort agréablement*', Charlevoix, *Journal d'un voyage*, Letter III, p. 70.

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when writing about Creoles (people born in America of European descent), he comments that, 'nowhere is our language spoken with greater purity', adding that 'quickness of wit and easy, sophisticated manners are possessed by everyone, and rusticity in language or behaviour is unknown in even the remotest regions'.[23] In other words, the Canadian capital described by Charlevoix resembles Paris, the capital of France, in its sophistication. In contrast, Charlevoix's description of Montreal recognises the merits of the city, but does not reach the same heights of eulogy. It is a city in the process of expansion, and he notes that 'a sort of suburb is beginning to take shape which, in time, will be most attractive'.[24] But for the moment the amenities of civilised life are lacking.

The relatively primitive state of society which Charlevoix encounters outside Quebec reflects the early stage of settlement at that date, and is further emphasised when he begins his journey through Louisiana towards New Orleans. Throughout the length of his journey down the Mississippi the only Europeans encountered are woodsmen, and the proposed city of Rosalie is simply a stronghold on a hilltop, surrounded by a palisade, and which, he says, has been given the grandiose name of 'Fort' (XXX, p. 414). He finds no settled populations until he reaches the country of the Natchez, just before arriving in New Orleans (Letters XXX and XXXI), but the population he describes there is an undifferentiated, undistinguished mass, lacking in sophistication or refined manners. On arrival in New Orleans, the situation that Charlevoix finds is almost equally primitive, and consists of 'about a hundred shacks, thrown up just anywhere, a large store built of wood, and two or three houses which would not adorn even a village in France'. But Charlevoix's rather depressing picture of the present is followed by a more lofty hope 'that this savage wasteland, still covered by cane and trees, will one day—and perhaps before very long—become an opulent town, and the metropolis of a great and rich colony'.[25] Charlevoix clearly has a preference for such a place, and for the sophisticated social circles where a gentleman will feel at home.

23 '[…] *nulle part ailleurs on ne parle plus purement notre langue.* […] *l'esprit enjoué, les manières douces et polies sont communes à tous; et la rusticité, soit dans le langage soit dans les façons n'est pas même connue dans les campagnes les plus écartées*', Charlevoix, *Journal d'un voyage*, Letter III, pp. 79 & 80.

24 '[…] *il commence à se former une espèce de faubourg, qui avec le temps fera un très beau quartier*', Charlevoix, *Journal d'un voyage*, Letter VIII, p. 138.

25 '[…] *une centaine de barraques placées sans beaucoup d'ordre*; […] *un grand magasin bâti de bois*; […] *deux ou trois maisons qui ne pareraient pas un village de France.*' '[…] *ce lieu sauvage et désert, que les cannes et les arbres couvrent encore presque tout entier, sera un jour, et peut-être ce jour n'est-il pas si éloigné, une ville opulente, et la métropole d'une grande et riche colonie*', Charlevoix, *Journal d'un voyage*, Letter XXXI, p. 430.

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Indigenous populations

Charlevoix names approximately sixty tribes of North American Indians in the pages of his *Journal*, though most of them receive little more than a passing mention and are barely differentiated from each other. However, in the series of six letters already mentioned (XXI–XXVI), Charlevoix does describe at some length the character and customs of Canadian 'savages' in general. In Letter XXI he writes: 'It is infinitely surprising to find that men who, on the outside appear to be entirely barbarous, treat each other with a gentleness and consideration that is not found among the common people in the most civilized nations.' And he continues: 'One is no less charmed by the natural, unaffected gravity which reigns in their manners, their actions and even in the majority of their pastimes; and also by that politeness and deference which they show to their equals [...]'.[26] As in the case of the European populations, it is the marks of civilization which Charlevoix prizes most highly in his description of the Canadian 'savages'. The aristocratic form of politeness known as *honnêteté* (the term Charlevoix uses in this passage) is that which dominated in the salons of Paris, and which contemporary moralists most sought to inculcate.

Among these 'savages' it is the Huron of Canada who are presented at the greatest length and most sympathetically, and with whom Charlevoix associates the qualities of civilisation. This depiction is no doubt influenced by the fact that the Huron were allied to the French. Charlevoix writes that 'the peoples of the Huron tongue are more taken up than others with the cultivation of the land'. One effect of this is that, 'they are better settled, better housed, better defended, they have always enjoyed better laws and a more clearly defined form of government'. He concludes: 'They also have a reputation for being more hard-working, more industrious, more skilful in business matters, and more measured in their reactions, all of which can be attributed only to the spirit of society which they have preserved more than other peoples.'[27]

Also prominent in the *Journal* are the Iroquois (also found in Canada), though Charlevoix generally presents them in a less favourable light than the Hurons,

26 '*Mais ce qui surprend infiniment dans des hommes dont tout l'extérieur n'annonce rien que de barbare, c'est de les voir se traiter entr'eux avec une douceur et des égards qu'on ne trouve point parmi le peuple dans les nations les plus civilisées.* [...] *On n'est pas moins charmé de cette gravité naturelle et sans faste qui règne dans leurs manières, dans toutes leurs actions, et jusque dans la plupart de leur divertissements; ni de cette honnêteté et de ces déférences qu'ils font paraître avec leurs égaux* [...]', Charlevoix, *Journal d'un voyage*, Letter XXI, p. 308.

27 '*Non seulement les peuples de la langue huronne se sont toujours plus occupés que les autres de la culture de la terre, ils se sont aussi beaucoup moins étendus, ce qui a produit deux effets: en premier lieu ils se sont mieux établis, mieux logés, mieux fortifiés, il y a toujours eu parmi eux plus de police, et une forme de gouvernement plus marquée.* [...] *Ils ont aussi la réputation d'être plus laborieux, plus industrieux, plus habiles dans leurs affaires, et plus mesurés dans leurs démarches, ce qu'on ne saurait attribuer qu'à l'esprit de société qu'ils ont mieux conservé que les autres*', Charlevoix, *Journal d'un voyage*, Letter XXV, pp. 198 & 199.

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no doubt because they were allied to the English, and therefore encountered as enemies. Whereas the Hurons only *appear* to be barbarous, the Iroquois are referred to unambiguously as 'these barbarians'. They are, Charlevoix adds, guilty of acts of terror 'the mere telling of which would cause alarm'.[28] Also, unlike the Hurons, the Iroquois are not a sedentary people; they do not possess or cultivate the land, but undertake vast seasonal migrations in search of food. The conjunction of these characteristics anticipates the definition of the term 'Savages' found in D'Alembert and Diderot's *Encyclopaedia*, where we read: 'Barbarian peoples who live without laws, without social organisation, without religion, and with no settled dwelling [...]. Part of America is peopled by savages, most of whom are still fierce, and feed on human flesh.'[29] The Iroquois are therefore largely lacking in those qualities which Charlevoix and his contemporaries associated with civilisation. Furthermore, the claim that indigenous peoples did not occupy the land on which they lived served as a common justification for colonisation.

As in the case of the European populations, the indigenous peoples of Louisiana figure much less prominently in Charlevoix's text than those of Canada. The first peoples he meets are the Illinois, living closest to the Canadian border, who are condemned as morally depraved. He tells us, for example, that, 'The Iroquois in particular were quite chaste, until they came into contact with the Illinois and other neighbouring tribes from Louisiana; all they have gained from this contact is to have become like them'.[30] In the same letter he speaks of 'the scorn which the other savages have for the Illinois',[31] a scorn which is illustrated by the words of the dying Outagami already quoted. More generally, Charlevoix later adds, 'the Illinois have the reputation for being cunning, barefaced thieves.[32] Similarly negative is his judgment on the Natchez, living near New Orleans at the mouth of the Mississippi. His letter conveys, in essence, two pieces of information about these people: first, the Natchez live under a despotic regime which reduces them to 'a sort of slavery';[33] and second, 'we know of no nation on this continent whose women are more

28 '[...] *cruautés, dont le récit ferait horreur*', Charlevoix, *Journal d'un voyage*, Letter VII, p. 124.

29 '*Peuples barbares qui vivent sans lois, sans police, sans religion et qui n'ont point d'habitation fixe* [...]. *Une partie de l'Amérique est peuplée de sauvages, la plupart encore féroces, et qui se nourrissent de chair humaine*'; from Jean le Rond d'Alembert and Denis Diderot, *Encyclopédie*, art. 'Sauvages' (Geneva: 1771–76).

30 '*Les Iroquois en particulier étaient assez chastes, avant qu'il eussent commerce avec les Illinois, et d'autres peuples voisins de la Louisiane: ils n'ont gagné à les fréquenter que de leur être devenu semblables*', Charlevoix, *Journal d'un voyage*, Letter XXI, p. 303.

31 '[*le*] *mépris où ils sont parmi les autres sauvages*', Charlevoix, *Journal d'un voyage*, Letter XXI, p. 307.

32 '*Les Illinois ont la réputation d'être hardis et habiles filous*', Charlevoix, *Journal d'un voyage*, Letter XXVII, p. 384.

33 '*une espèce d'esclavage*', Charlevoix, *Journal d'un voyage*, Letter XXX, p. 419.

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sexually unbridled'.[34] What Charlevoix says of the Natchez and the Illinois does not put them among the civilised nations; they remain curiosities.

To some extent these descriptions simply repeat stereotypes commonly found in travel literature: knavery, sexual licence and cruelty are commonly associated by travellers with peoples that they do not know or understand, whether this is Loyer writing about Africa, or Du Halde writing about China.[35] It nevertheless remains true that Charlevoix finds praiseworthy those characteristics of both the European and indigenous populations which, in his eyes, most closely resemble the best French, and therefore the most civilised, practices.[36]

III. Themes

After our considerations of form and ethos, it is not surprising to discover a thematic similarity between Charlevoix and the French moralists. The preoccupations of the latter focus on topics that stretch in a widening circle from the self, through the family and governance, to religion. Of these, governance (i.e. politics) and religion were most problematic since, as La Bruyère put it in the first edition of his *Characters*, 'A man who is born a Christian and a Frenchman is constrained when writing satire, the important subjects are forbidden'.[37] The 'important subjects' are religion and politics. In reality, censorship in France prohibited any criticism of the King, the Church or the family. Consequently any discussion of politics and religion tended to be either conventional or was dealt with indirectly, as for example in Montesquieu's *Persian Letters* (1721), where a traveller to France can, with feigned naivety, express astonishment at local practices. Charlevoix, as a traveller in America is, in effect, using the same technique, and his vision is shaped by the customary analyses of moral discourse.

34 '*Nous ne connaissons point de nation dans ce continent où le sexe soit plus débordé que celle-ci*', Charlevoix, *Journal d'un voyage*, Letter XXX, p. 423.

35 Le P. Godefroy Loyer, *Relation du Voyage du Royaume d'Issiny* (Paris: A. Seneuze & J.-R. Morel, 1714); Jean-Baptiste du Halde, *Description géographique, historique, chronologique, politique, et physique de l'empire de la Chine* (Paris: Le Mercier, 1735).

36 This evaluation must at least nuance the enthusiastic judgment of Christian Amat who writes, 'A very clear split is found [in Charlevoix's *Journal*]: those civilized peoples among whom society and prejudice have extinguished primitive qualities are relegated to the bottom of the ladder; in the middle are the Creoles who, through their contact with virgin nature have recovered bodily strength and a taste for physical effort; and finally, at the top, are the savages "who are completely unaware of, and who do not wish to know, those false goods which we prize"' [*'Un clivage s'établit très nettement chez Charlevoix: au bas de l'échelle se trouvent relégués les civilisés chez qui la société et les préjugés de toute sorte ont étouffé les qualité primitives; au centre, les créoles qui au contact de la nature vierge ont recouvré la force du corps et le goût de l'effort; au sommet, enfin, les sauvages "qui ignorent parfaitement et n'ont pas envie de connaître ces faux biens que nous estimons"'*] (art. cit., p. 26). The author is quoting Letter XXII, p. 322.

37 '*Un homme né chrétien et Français se trouve contraint dans la satire; les grands sujets lui sont défendus*', La Bruyère, *Les Caractères*, 'Des ouvrages de l'esprit', p. 65.

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The savage self

In the first place, the moral nature of the savage is assessed using the same terms as are applied to Europeans, namely passion and self-interest According to Charlevoix, 'the principal source of our passions and the disorders which trouble civil society, that is to say self-interest, has almost no power over these peoples, who are not concerned about acquiring wealth and who give little thought to tomorrow'.[38] They therefore feel less strongly that desire to do evil to their neighbours which, in other societies, produces so many crimes. Charlevoix adds: 'Since their knowledge is more circumscribed than ours, their desires are even more so.'[39] The good qualities he admires are very largely those which French moralists, in imitation of the writers of antiquity, embodied in treatises on subjects such as 'Friendship' and 'Happiness'.[40] The savages demonstrate, for example, an ability to bear pain that is akin to Stoicism, and is compared to a precept of Cicero's. Furthermore, 'the savages are of a naturally tranquil disposition and at a young age become masters of themselves; reason guides them much sooner than other men'.[41] They demonstrate the qualities of civility, gravity and politeness (*honnêteté*), which, for Charlevoix, are 'All proofs of a well-made mind which knows how to possess itself'.[42] Conversely, they are not without evil qualities which impact negatively upon their happiness, for example, 'They take offence and are suspicious',[43] they are prone to jealousy, and they are capable of a cruelty too horrendous to describe. But their principal vice is drunkenness, for, as Charlevoix says, 'Until they fell into drunkenness, the savages had nothing, apart from war [...] that could disturb their happiness; drunkenness has made them self-interested [...]'.[44]

38 '*le grand ressort de nos passions, et la source principale des désordres, qui troublent le plus la société civile, c'est-à-dire, l'intérêt, n'ayant presque point de force sur des gens, qui ne songent point à thésauriser, et s'embarrassent fort peu du lendemain*', Charlevoix, *Journal d'un voyage*, Letter XVIII, p. 272.

39 '*Leurs connaissances étant plus bornées que les nôtres, leurs désirs le sont aussi davantage*', Charlevoix, *Journal d'un voyage*, Letter XVIII, p. 272.

40 See Robert Mauzi, *L'Idée du bonheur dans la littérature et la pensée françaises au XVIIIe siècle* (Geneva & Paris: Slatkine Reprints, 1979).

41 '[...] *les sauvages sont naturellement tranquilles et de bonne heure maître d'eux-mêmes, et la raison les guide aussi bien plus tôt que les autres hommes*', Charlevoix, *Journal d'un voyage*, Letter XXI, p. 307; Letter XXIII, p. 326.

42 '*Toutes preuves d'un esprit bien fait, et qui sait se posséder*', Charlevoix, *Journal d'un voyage*, Letter XXI, p. 308.

43 '*Ils sont ombrageux et soupçonneux*', Charlevoix, *Journal d'un voyage*, Letter XXI, p. 309.

44 '*Les sauvages, avant que d'être tombés dans celui dont nous parlons [l'ivresse], à la guerre près, [...] n'avaient rien qui troublât leur bonheur; l'ivrognerie les a rendus intéressés*', Charlevoix, *Journal d'un voyage*, Letter XIX, p. 285; Leteer VII, p. 124; Letter XXII, p. 321.

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The family

The picture of ideal family life painted by Charlevoix is one which corresponds closely to the new sense of domesticity then emerging in France, and is founded above all on female modesty.[45] On this subject, Charlevoix criticises La Hontan, author of the *New Voyages to North America* (1703), precisely because of what he says about relationships between savages and French women.[46] According to Charlevoix, 'There is no indication that any one of them has ever taken the least liberty with French women, even when they were their prisoners. They are not even tempted in that direction, and it is to be wished that French men might have the same distaste for native women'.[47] But also important is the notion of motherhood, and the care shown by savage women for their children. Charlevoix writes, 'The care which mothers have for their children while they are still in the cradle is beyond words, and shows clearly that we often spoil everything by the reflections we add to what nature inspires in us. They never leave them, and carry them wherever they go'.[48] Charlevoix's attitude is, however, ambivalent, and reflects contemporary debate about the role of discipline in education, for, in spite of his admiration for maternal dedication, he speaks of the 'ill-disciplined childhood' which savage parents allow their children to enjoy. But fortunately, he says, 'since they have had more contact with the French, some of them are beginning to chastise their children'.[49]

Government and society

Questions relating to the origins of law and the comparative benefits of different forms of government were at the heart of 18th-century thought, as famously embodied in Montesquieu's *Spirit of the Laws* (1748),[50] and it is in this context that Charlevoix's comments are best understood. His fundamental observation

45 See L. Abensour, *La femme et le féminisme avant la Révolution* (Geneva: Slatkine, 1977); and Samia I. Spencer (ed.), *French women and the Age of Enlightenment* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1984).

46 Louis-Armand de Lom d'Arce, baron de Lahontan, *Nouveaux voyages dans l'Amérique septentrionale*, in *Œuvres completes*, Réal Ouellet (ed.), 2 vols (Montreal: Presses de l'Université de Montréal, 1990).

47 '*Il est sans exemple qu'aucun d'eux ait jamais pris la moindre liberté avec les Françaises, lors même qu'elles ont été leurs prisonnières. Ils n'en sont même pas tentés, et il serait à souhaiter que les Français eussent le même dégoût des sauvagesses*', Charlevoix, *Journal d'un voyage*, Letter VIII, pp. 142–3.

48 '*Le soin que les mères prennent de leurs enfants, tandis qu'ils sont au berceau, est au-dessus de toute expression, et fait bien voir sensiblement que nous gâtons souvent tout, par les réflexions que nous ajoutons à ce que nous inspire la nature. Elles ne les quittent jamais et les portent avec elles*', Charlevoix, *Journal d'un voyage*, Letter XXI, p. 323.

49 '[…] *une enfance si mal disciplinée*'; '*Cependant, depuis qu'ils ont eu plus de commerce avec les Français, quelques-uns commencent à châtier leurs enfants*', Charlevoix, *Journal d'un voyage*, Letter XXIII, p. 326 & pp. 325–6.

50 Montesquieu, *L'Esprit des lois* (1748).

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is that, in spite of appearances to the contrary, a form of government does exist among the 'savages' of America. He writes: 'One might at first think that they have no form of government, that they know neither law nor subordination, and that, living in complete independence, they allow themselves to be led solely by chance or unbridled caprice; however, they enjoy almost all the advantages that well-organised authority can bring to the most civilised peoples'.[51] Nevertheless, in spite of the structured society in which they live, the Canadian savages, at least, reject repressive forms of political authority. They are, he says, 'Born free and independent, and are horrified by even the shadow of despotic power'.[52] The same spirit of independence extends to the absence of social rank. Recalling the moral nature of the American Indians, Charlevoix says: 'As they are not slaves of ambition and self-interest, and as it is practically these two passions alone which have weakened in us that feeling of humanity which the author of nature had engraved in our hearts, thus it is that the inequality of social rank is not necessary for the maintenance of their society'.[53] Therefore, instead of creating a society which accords prestige to the accumulation of wealth and possessions, the savages live 'in complete ignorance of, and do not even wish to know those false goods which we esteem so highly, for which we pay with the loss of joys of real worth, and which we enjoy so little.'.[54] Here the picture which Charlevoix paints is the traditional image of bucolic, pastoral simplicity, inherited from antiquity and given recent expression in Fénelon's *Telemachus* (1699).[55]

Religion

Charlevoix was a Jesuit, and one would not expect his religious precepts to go far beyond the bounds of orthodoxy. He is quite clear that the savages need the Gospel, and writes that 'Religion alone'—meaning the Christian religion—

51 '*On croirait d'abord qu'ils n'ont aucune forme de gouvernement, qu'ils ne connaissent ni lois, ni subordination, et que vivant dans une indépendance entière, ils se laissent uniquement conduire au hasard et au caprice le plus indompté; cependant ils jouissent de presque tous les avantages, qu'une autorité bien réglée peut procurer aux nations les plus policées*', Charlevoix, *Journal d'un voyage*, Letter XXIII, p. 341. Charlevoix here contradicts Lahontan, who had written in his *Memoirs on North* America [*Mémoires de l'Amérique septentrionale*] (1704), 'They [the savages] have neither laws, nor judges, nor priests' ('*Ils n'ont ni lois, ni juges, ni prêtres*'), in *Œuvres complètes*, vol. 1, p. 643.

52 '*Nés libres et indépendants, ils ont en horreur jusqu'à l'ombre du pouvoir despotique*', Charlevoix, *Journal d'un voyage*, Letter XXIII, p. 341.

53 '*Comme ils ne sont point esclaves de l'ambition et de l'intérêt et qu'il n'y a guère que ces deux passions, qui ayent affaibli dans nous ce sentiment de l'humanité que l'auteur de la nature avait gravé dans nos cœurs, l'inégalité des conditions ne leur est pas nécessaire pour le maintien de la société*', Charlevoix, *Journal d'un voyage*, Letter XXIII, p. 341.

54 '[...] *ils ignorent parfaitement, et n'ont pas même envie de connaître ces faux biens, que nous estimons tant, que nous achetons au prix des véritables, et que nous goûtons si peu*', Charlevoix, *Journal d'un voyage*, Letter XXII, p. 322.

55 François Fénelon, *Les aventures de Télémaque* (1699).

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'can perfect the good and correct the bad in these peoples'.[56] As proof, he describes the purity of faith which he finds in a village of Christian Hurons who have retained 'the simplicity and the integrity of the first age of man', and combined it with 'an incredible innocence of manners' which is the product of their faith.[57] But when Charlevoix discusses the religious beliefs of the pagan savages, his stance is not predominantly censorious. They are not, for example, without some notion of the Deity, and he tells his correspondent: 'Nothing is more certain, but at the same time nothing is more obscure, than the idea which the savages of this continent have of a Supreme Being'; and he adds: 'The most firmly held belief among our Americans is the immortality of the soul'.[58] Overall, Charlevoix's assessment of the religious practices of the savages appears relatively indulgent: there is no condemnation of their total depravity; there is no categorical statement that their perception of the divine is entirely misplaced — it simply needs correcting. In effect, the religious beliefs of the American savages and the terminology employed to describe their understanding of God, differ little from those of the European Deists of the same period. Perhaps one might even see in these words a position akin to the tolerant attitude famously adopted by the Jesuits in the controversy concerning Chinese Rites, which had flared up in 1715.

IV. Reflexivity

Finally, it is worth asking whether, despite his taste for the pleasures of civilised society, there are not occasions when Charlevoix intended to criticise the manners and morals of his own nation. French moralists are prescriptive as well as descriptive; they do not simply depict, they also pass judgment. Todorov has pointed out that the same can be said of the travel writer, whose goodwill towards the new worlds that he sees is often accompanied by criticism directed towards his own country. Todorov continues, 'We should therefore not be surprised that we frequently find in travel narratives both the image of the noble savage and its inevitable counterpart, the criticism of our own society'.[59]

56 '*La seule religion peut perfectionner ce que ces peuples ont de bon, et corriger ce qu'ils ont de mauvais*', Charlevoix, *Journal d'un voyage*, Letter XXIII, p. 342.

57 '*la simplicité et la droiture du premier âge de l'homme*'; '*une innocence de mœurs incroyable*', Charlevoix, *Journal d'un voyage*, Letter IV, p. 82.

58 '*Rien n'est plus certain, mais rien n'est en même temps plus obscur que l'idée que les sauvages de ce continent ont d'un Premier Etre*'; '*La croyance la mieux établie parmi nos Américains, est celle de l'immortalité de l'âme*', Charlevoix, *Journal d'un voyage*, Letter XXIV, pp. 343 & 351.

59 '*On ne s'étonnera donc pas de trouver l'image du bon sauvage et sa contrepartie obligée, la critique de notre propre société, abondamment présentes dans les relations de voyage*'. T. Todorov, *Nous et les autres. La réflexion française sur la diversité humaine* (Paris: Editions du Seuil, 1989), p. 303.

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Government

Charlevoix's criticisms are primarily political and moral—one would not expect religious criticism from the pen of a Jesuit. These criticisms, insofar as they implicate the King and the government, are, for the most part, expressed briefly, indirectly and discreetly. They are nonetheless perfectly plain in the context of contemporary France, and single out those abuses which most frequently attracted negative attention. He says, for example, of the French inhabitants of Canada, that '[…] everyone here has what is necessary to live: very little is handed over to the King; the *taille*,' the hated land tax paid by peasants and non-nobles, 'is unknown to the inhabitants of this land; bread is cheap; meat and fish are not expensive'.[60] Similarly, in a text published during the course of the War of the Austrian Succession (1740–48), Charlevoix's comment is not without force when he says of the Natchez that 'They rarely make war, and do not glory in the destruction of men'.[61]

Les Grands

Charlevoix is, however, less restrained in his criticism of the nobility, *les Grands*. Early in his text he points out that some of the unreasonable prejudices associated with the nobility in France are also found in Canada. For example, among the French Canadians, 'The most to be pitied are the gentlemen and the officers, who have only their private incomes to live on, and who have their families to provide for'. But, he says, they could help themselves: 'the soil is good almost everywhere, and agriculture causes no loss of social status'.[62] The disdain of the aristocracy for agriculture, and their refusal to be associated with manual work, was commonly seen in the 18th century as one of the causes of French economic decline. The false values of the European aristocracy have blighted the life of the Creoles, just as the sale of alcohol, motivated by the avidity of European traders, has brought about the ruin of the American savage. Like Prévost in *Manon Lescaut* and Bernardin de Saint-Pierre in *Paul and Virginia*, Charlevoix blames Europeans for exporting corruption to unspoiled parts of the world.[63]

60 '[…] *tout le monde ici a le nécessaire pour vivre: on y paie peu au Roi: l'habitant ne connaît point la taille; il a du pain à bon marché; la viande et le poisson n'y sont pas chers*', Charlevoix, *Journal d'un voyage*, Letter X, p. 171.

61 '*Ils font rarement la guerre, et ne mettent point leur gloire à détruire les hommes*', Charlevoix, *Journal d'un voyage*, Letter XXX, p. 419.

62 '*Les plus à plaindre sont les gentilshommes, et les officiers, qui n'ont que leurs appointements, et qui sont chargés de familles*'; '[…] *la terre est bonne presque partout, et l'agriculture ne fait point déroger*', Charlevoix, *Journal d'un voyage*, Letter X, p. 172.

63 Charlevoix, *Journal d'un voyage*, Letter VIII, p. 142; Abbé Prévost, *Histoire du chevalier des Grieux et de Manon Lescaut* (1731); Bernardin de Saint-Pierre, *Paul et Virginie* (1788).

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But Charlevoix is openly virulent when it comes to his criticism of *les Grands* in France. A passage reminiscent of La Bruyère's *Characters* is worth quoting at length. He writes:

> *So, Madam, one does not find here, or at least only rarely, those arrogant individuals who, full of their own greatness and merit, imagine that they are almost beings apart, and disdain the rest of mankind, by whom, in consequence, they are never loved or trusted; they do not truly know other people who are like themselves because jealousy, which reigns among les Grands, does not allow them to see themselves sufficiently closely; they do not know themselves because they never study themselves and because they always flatter themselves; and they do not realise that in order to gain access to the hearts of men one must, in some respects, become their equal. The result is that, with that superior understanding which they claim, which they regard as an essential property of the elevated rank they occupy, the majority of them wallow in profound and irredeemable ignorance of all that it is most important to know, and they never enjoy the real pleasures of life. In this country all men believe themselves equally men, and what they esteem most in a man is the man himself. No preference is given to birth, no pre-eminence is attached to that merit which inspires pride and which serves to make others feel their inferiority.*[64]

As understood in the context of Louis XV's reign, Charlevoix's views on governance were widely in accord with contemporary disquiet about social inequality, the injustices of the tax system, the plight of the poor and the economic and human cost of war.

Conclusion

Writing about the image of the self and the other in 18th-century ethnological discourse, Roger Mercier has said: 'The observer sees in reality only what his education and his social and cultural milieu have prepared him to see, and he interprets what he sees as in a deforming mirror, made up of the categories of his

64 *'Ainsi, Madame, on ne voit point ici, ou du mois on rencontre rarement de ces esprits hautains, qui pleins de leur grandeur, ou de leur mérite, s'imaginent presque qu'ils sont une espèce à part, dédaignent le reste des hommes, dont par conséquent ils n'ont jamais la confiance et l'amour; ne connaissent point leurs semblables, parce que la jalousie, qui règne entre les Grands, ne leur permet pas de se voir d'assez près; ne se connaissent pas eux-mêmes, parce qu'ils ne s'étudient jamais, et qu'ils se flattent toujours; ne font pas réfléxion que pour avoir entrée dans le cœur des hommes, il faut en quelque facon s'égaler à eux; de sorte qu'avec cette prétendue supériorité de lumières, qu'ils regardent comme une propriété essentielle du rang éminent, qu'ils occupent, la plupart croupissent dans une superbe et irremédiable ignorance de ce qu'il leur importe le plus de savoir, et ne jouissent jamais des véritables douceurs de la vie. Dans ce pays tous les hommes se croient également hommes, et dans l'homme ce qu'ils estiment le plus, c'est l'homme. Nulle distinction de naissance; nulle prérogative attribuée au rang, qui préjudicie au droit des particuliers; point de prééminence attachée au mérite, qui inspire l'orgueil, et qui fasse trop sentir aux autres leur infériorité'*, Charlevoix, *Journal d'un voyage*, Letter XXIII, pp. 341–2.

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thoughts'.[65] This paper has focused on Charlevoix's *Journal of a Journey through North America*, and has suggested that, in this case, those categories are the traditional forms and themes of contemporary French moral discourse. The use of short literary forms, the defence of politeness, the centrality of self-interest in human behaviour, the domestic role of women, condemnation of luxury, criticism of *les Grands*, and religious orthodoxy tinged with natural religion are all staples of that tradition. But the *Journal* is just one example, and the same analysis could be applied to many other texts of the period, including Charlevoix's *History of New France* itself, and Prévost's vast compendium, the *General History of Voyages*.[66]

But this observable interference between two literary genres raises broader cultural questions which are much more difficult to answer. If, for example, what the writer sees is understood according to what is known, how much of the unfamiliar remains unseen and not understood? If the reader judges the 'other' by the standards of French culture, is its 'otherness' not removed? It conforms or is inferior; it cannot be 'different'. As Rousseau put it as early as 1755 in his *Discourse on the Origins of Inequality*, 'For three or four hundred years the inhabitants of Europe have flooded the other parts of the world, and they publish innumerable collections and accounts of their travels, but I am persuaded that the only people we know are Europeans'.[67] Thus the apparently innocuous travel narrative reinforces the comfortable (if unconscious) superiority of the French reader in a way that is common to much colonising or imperialist discourse.[68]

Finally, however, it is legitimate to highlight one further conclusion arising from this study, namely, the importance of many French moralists who were influential in their own day but who are all too frequently absent from literary histories of eighteenth-century France.

65 '*L'observateur ne voit dans la réalité que ce que sa formation et son milieu culturel et social l'ont préparé à voir, et il interprète ce qu'il voit à travers le verre déformant que constituent les catégories de sa pensée*', in Roger Mercier, 'Image de l'autre et image de soi-même dans le discours ethnologique au XVIIIe siècle', in A. Pagden (ed.), *Facing each other: the world's perception of Europe and Europe's perception of the world* (Aldershot & Brookfield, Vt.: Ashgate/Variorum, 2000), p. 223.

66 Abbé Prévost, *Histoire générale des voyages*, 15 vols (1746–59).

67 '*Depuis trois ou quatre cents ans que le habitants de l'Europe inondent les autres parties du monde, et publient sans cesse de nouveaux recueils de voyages et de relations, je suis persuadé que nous ne connaissons d'hommes que les seuls Européens*', in Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Discours sur l'origine et les fondements de l'inégalité parmi les hommes*, Note X, in *Œuvres complètes*, Bernard Gagnebin & Marcel Raymond (eds), vol. III, pp. 212–13.

68 In the context of the 19th century, Butler writes: 'Travel writing helped to support European and U.S. imperialist agendas (whether explicitly or implicitly) by reinforcing the imperialist world-views of their home countries. The travelers' home countries represented the paragon of civilization and, thus, put the writing travelers in a position of supposed superiority over other lands', in Shannon Marie Butler, *Travel narratives in dialogue: contesting representations of nineteenth-century Peru* (New York: Peter Lang, 2008), p. 4.

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8



Written Culture and the Cape Khoikhoi: From Travel Writing to Kolb's 'Full Description'

Nigel Penn

Introduction

Between 1488 (Bartolomeu Dias's rounding of the Cape of Good Hope) and 1719 (the date of publication of Peter Kolb's book *Caput Bonae Spei Hodiernum*)[1] over 250 narratives were published in Europe which featured descriptions of the indigenous inhabitants of the Cape, the Khoikhoi.[2] For the most part, these descriptions took the form of travel narratives and were almost entirely negative, the Khoikhoi (or 'Hottentots') being depicted as barbaric, naked savages, lacking human characteristics such as speech and reason, devoid of religion, practising cannibalism and engaging in unrestrained sexual promiscuity.[3] Although a small percentage of printed works suggested that the Khoikhoi, by virtue of their primitive nature, might share certain attributes with humanity's first parents and thus be exemplars of innocence rather than depravity, such works were rare before the 18th century. They were, in any case, based more on the iconography of the representation of the primitive in European art rather than eyewitness

1 The title of Kolb's book means 'The Cape of Good Hope today'. Its subtitle, 'Das ist, vollständige beschreibung des Afrikanischen Vorgebürges der Guten Hofnung', explains that it is a 'full description' of the African indigenous inhabitants of the Cape. Throughout this chapter I have used the unpublished English translation of Kolb's work by Major Raven-Hart, the manuscript of which is in my possession.

2 This is the estimate of Anne Good, in 'The construction of an authoritative text: Peter Kolb's description of the Khoikhoi at the Cape of Good Hope in the eighteenth century', *Journal of Early Modern History*, 10, 1–2 (2006), p. 64.

3 For a convenient compilation of extracts from these travel narratives, see Major R. Raven-Hart, *Before Van Riebeeck: callers at South Africa from 1488 to 1652* (Cape Town: C. Struik, 1967) and *Cape of Good Hope, 1652–1702: The first 50 years of Dutch colonisation as seen by callers*, 2 vols (Cape Town: A.A. Balkema, 1971).

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observation.[4] Overwhelmingly, therefore, written and pictorial representations of the Khoikhoi in travel narratives before 1700 were negative.[5] A significant change in the representation of the Khoikhoi occurred in the 18th century. Increasingly, the Khoikhoi came to be depicted with a degree of sympathy, and joined the ranks of that growing category of humanity that enlightened Europeans came to identify as 'noble savages'. It is the purpose of this chapter to argue that this change in opinion was largely the result of the publication of Kolb's book about the Cape, which contained the most detailed and sympathetic description of the Khoikhoi to that date. It is also my intention to demonstrate that Kolb's book marked an important stage in the evolution of what we might call 'travel literature' into a genre akin to the scientific compilation of knowledge. Of great significance here is the transformation that written culture, or established European knowledge about the Khoikhoi, underwent in the colonial context. To put it simply, the knowledge of the Khoikhoi that Kolb gained during an extended stay at the Cape changed the way that Europeans thought about the Khoikhoi. Description, based on a lengthy period of personal observation, replaced the stereotypes of travel literature. Furthermore, as I hope to demonstrate in a brief discussion of the publishing history of Kolb's work, the material form in which his knowledge was published was also of importance to the reception of his ideas.

I. Travel writing and the Khoikhoi

European knowledge about the Cape was first published in books which, very generally, we may refer to as being travel books. That is, they were written by men who had travelled, and the books were accounts of the travels that they had made. Certain features in the genre of travel writing influenced the way the Khoikhoi were portrayed. To begin with, these travel books did not have the Cape either as the specific destination of the journey or as the specific subject of the travel account. For early European voyagers, the Cape was significant because it lay on the route to the East. It was not significant in itself. If it had an importance it was largely symbolic—it marked the place where the seafarer

4 See M. Van Wyk Smith, '"The most wretched of the human race": the iconography of the Khoikhoin (Hottentots), 1500–1800', *History and Anthropology*, 5, nos. 3–4 (1992).

5 For an excellent discussion of representations of the Khoikhoi in English publications, see Linda E. Merians, *Envisioning the worst: representations of 'Hottentots' in early-modern England* (London: Rosemont Publishing/Associated University Presses, 2001). See Francois-Xavier Fauvelle-Aymar's *L'Invention du Hottentot: histoire du regard occidental sur les Khoikhoi (xv–xix siecle)* (Paris: Publications de la Sorbonne, 2002) and David Johnson, 'Representing the Cape "Hottentots", from the French Enlightenment to post-apartheid South Africa', *Eighteenth Century Studies*, vol. 40, no. 4 (2007), pp. 525–52 for French attitudes to the Khoikhoi.

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left the Atlantic Ocean and entered the Indian Ocean. In time, seafarers judged that the Cape lay almost exactly halfway between East and West, and that practically as well as symbolically, it occupied an important place on the long route from Europe to the Indies. Even after this realisation, however, for many years the Cape's symbolic significance outweighed its practical significance as a halfway point. Many voyagers, particularly the Portuguese (who had discovered the Cape sea route) found it unnecessary, or undesirable, to stop there. Though the Portuguese immortalised and mythologised Table Mountain and the Cape of Storms through the epic poetry of Camões, they tended to avoid Table Bay as an anchorage. Both the weather and the people were judged to be too dangerous. After all, warmer waters and richer shores beckoned.[6]

The Cape's symbolic significance was not solely derived from its position as the dividing line between two oceans. It also acquired a large part of its meaning from being at the southernmost tip of Africa. This meaning had been created from the corpus of ideas about Africa, and about the outermost places of the earth, that were circulating in European books long before the Cape was actually observed by European travellers. The European discovery of the Cape was, simultaneously, an exploration of the southernmost tip of Africa and an encounter with its inhabitants. Although exact knowledge of this distant place and its people only began to reach Europe after Dias's voyage of 1488, European ideas about what might lie at the end of the world already exerted an influence on what was being reported. Just as Portuguese geographical discoveries had been influenced by pre-existing concepts of the existence of a sea route to the Indies, so too were encounters with outermost Africans influenced by pre-existing concepts concerning the nature of human societies.

Europeans had long believed in a fundamental dichotomy between civility and savagery. The European heartlands, i.e. the 'known world', represented civilisation, where people looked like Europeans and professed the Christian religion. The further one went beyond the borders of civilisation, however, the more likely one was to discover wildness and savagery. Such ideas rested on a number of sources: biblical, classical and traditional. The Bible taught that the world's centre was the Holy Land, and the further from this centre one went the closer one drew to savagery. Classical writers of Greece and Rome had also drawn a distinction between the civilised and the barbaric, the latter category of person being, obviously, people beyond the boundaries of

6 A point made by Felipe Fernandez-Armesto in 'Portuguese expansion in a global context', in Francisco Bethencourt & Diogo Ramada Curto (eds), *Portuguese oceanic expansion, 1400–1800* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), pp. 480–511.

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Greece and Rome. The extremely influential Roman author, Pliny the Elder (d. AD 79), had written a book of natural history that was widely diffused during the Middle Ages. Pliny described how the further one travelled from the centres of Roman civilisation the more likely one was to meet the monstrous human races: dog-headed people, cannibals, pygmies, cave dwellers who squeak like bats and live on snakes, Amazons, neckless Blemmyae with their eyes in their shoulders and many, many more such freaks of nature. This world-view was reinforced by the publication of Marco Polo's travels and the fabulous travel accounts of Sir John Mandeville, whose book circulated widely in the 14th and 15th centuries and was, for instance, one of Columbus's most influential reference works. European folk tales were full of wild men, usually depicted as unclothed forest dwellers or troglodytes.[7] Europeans who sailed far south to the end of Africa—further south than any European had ever been, expected, therefore, to encounter an inversion of civilised order. They were not slow to see their expectations realised in the persons and society of the Khoikhoi of the Cape.

By the late 16th century, the volume of European shipping calling at the Cape began to increase, and so too did written accounts of the Cape. Significantly, however, it was the Khoikhoi who featured most prominently in these accounts as the Cape's most spectacular, albeit repulsive, feature. Representations of the Khoikhoi, both verbal and visual, had become predominantly negative as authors and artists stressed those aspects of Khoikhoi culture that reinforced expectations of savagery and wildness. Thus Jan Huygen van Linschoten's account of his voyage to the east, published in 1596, described the inhabitants of southern Africa as being remarkable for their nakedness, their blackness and their ugliness. Linschoten's reference to the local inhabitants was largely incidental, as the bulk of his work was firmly focused on discussing Portuguese possessions in the East. Yet his depiction was very influential as his book became the pre-eminent guidebook for those European mariners who sought to challenge Portuguese dominance in the Indian Ocean.[8]

The first official Dutch expedition to the East Indies in 1595–97 produced a number of accounts of the Khoikhoi, which included references to their stench, their cannibalism and their primitive speech. Thereafter, one travel account

7 See Peter Mason, *Deconstructing America: representations of the other* (London: Routledge, 1990) for a discussion of these ideas. Also Margaret T. Hodgen, *Early anthropology in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1964) and Mary B. Campbell, *The witness and the other world: exotic European travel writing, 400–1600* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1988).

8 See *Jan Huygen van Linschoten and the moral map of Asia: the plates and text of the* Itinerario (London: The Roxburghe Club, 1999) and Adrien Delmas, 'Linschoten's *Itinerario*', unpublished paper presented at Historical Studies Department, University of Cape Town, 2007.

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followed another in replicating the signs of savagery. Thus the near nakedness of the Khoikhoi was emphasised, along with all those customs—eating of loathsome food, unfamiliar language, etc., which signalled to European audiences that they were learning about a society that was as far removed from civilised humanity as the Cape was from Europe. Not all of the Khoikhoi customs that were described were as fictitious as was the charge of cannibalism. The Khoikhoi did smear themselves with fat or grease, for instance, a practice which served to protect them from the elements and which announced to their fellows that they had easy access to meat—a sign of wealth. Sometimes too, as part of important initiation ceremonies, the Khoikhoi would hang the organs and entrails of slaughtered animals about their persons. Europeans, however, not understanding the significance of these practices noticed only the unpleasant smell of rancid fat.[9] The net result of these culturally insensitive descriptions, as M. Van Wyk Smith explains, was that 'the image of the Khoikhoi took a plunge from which their reputation never fully recovered'.[10]

Seventeenth-century accounts of the Khoikhoi were, if anything, even more unflattering, and the entry of the English into the East India trade meant that the number of adverse descriptions about the Khoikhoi multiplied.[11] John Davis's description of 1597 first raised the question as to whether the Khoikhoi were entirely human, while Sir Thomas Herbert's description of 1627 is a comprehensive catalogue of Khoikhoi imperfections in which the revolting nature of Khoikhoi customs, their thieving habits and their alleged cannibalism are listed alongside the statement that the Khoikhoi, being descendants of Ham, were accursed.

Herbert's description is one of the first to draw attention to the singularity of Khoikhoi women and their alleged ability to give birth without pain and to suckle their young by dangling a breast over their shoulder so as to feed their baby while carrying it on their back. These attributes, as Jennifer L. Morgan notes, link Khoikhoi women to the way in which African women in general were described by European travellers and alert us to the fact that in European descriptions of Africans the female is often constructed as being particularly bestial and sexually promiscuous.[12] While early European perceptions of the Khoikhoi were influenced by European ideas

9 A.B. Smith, 'Different facets of the crystal: early European images of the Khoikhoi at the Cape, South Africa', in M. Hall & A. Markell (eds), *Historical Archaeology in the Western Cape: The S.A. Archaeological Society Goodwin Series*, Vol. 7, (June 1993).

10 Van Wyk Smith, 'The most wretched of the human race', p. 293.

11 Ibid. See also Merians, *Envisioning the worst.*

12 Jennifer L. Morgan, '"Some could suckle over their shoulder": male travelers, female bodies, and the gendering of racial ideology, 1500–1770', *The William and Mary Quarterly*, 3rd ser., vol. 54, no. 1 (January 1997).

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about Africa and Africans, we should remember that much of sub-Saharan Africa was as unknown to Europeans before circa 1400 as the New World was before 1492.[13] Indeed, as Z.S. Strother reminds us, for many Europeans the Khoikhoi were the most widely known of African societies; thanks to their position on the sea route to the East Indies, 'for centuries, Khoikhoi experienced more frequent, and more frequently superficial, contact with Europeans than any other single African population.'[14] As knowledge of the West African coastline grew, however, European representations of Africa and Africans became more and more negative. With one or two exceptions amongst Portuguese writers (who expressed admiration for the willingness of the Kingdom of the Kongo to accept Christianity), the majority of accounts dealing with sub-Saharan Africans up to c. 1600 stressed that Africans were 'uniquely deficient in colour, culture and character'.[15] By this stage the transatlantic slave trade was providing Europeans with further reasons to denigrate Africans. Merchants and colonisers sought to legitimise the enslavement of Africans by asserting that their black skin was proof that they were the descendants of Ham and therefore subject to a biblical curse to labour for others.[16] Although Thomas Herbert's 1627 account of the Khoikhoi affirms that they 'being propagated from Cham, both in their visages and Natures seem to inherit his malediction' the Khoikhoi were not, as it happened, treated like other Africans and subjected to formal enslavement.[17] That they were not, owes something to their own efforts (at an early date they aggressively repelled Portuguese attempts at domination), and perhaps even more to certain entrenched traditions in European culture that encouraged visitors to the Cape to see mitigating characteristics in Khoikhoi society.

There was a long-standing belief, inherited from both biblical authority and classical writers, that there had once been a state of paradise on earth, of innocent harmony of man with nature. The image of Adam and Eve in naked purity haunted the European imagination, and it was seriously believed that an earthly paradise might well exist at the southern ends of the earth.

13 Benjamin Braude, 'The sons of Noah and the construction of ethnic and geographical identities in the medieval and early modern periods', *The William and Mary Quarterly*, 3rd ser., vol. 54, no. 1 (January 1997), pp. 104–5.

14 Z.S. Strother, 'Display of the body Hottentot', in Bernth Lindfors (ed.), *Africans on stage: studies in ethnological show business* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1999), p. 2.

15 Alden T. Vaughn and Virginia Mason Vaughn, 'Before Othello: Elizabethan representations of sub-Saharan African', *The William and Mary Quarterly*, 3rd ser., vol. 54, no. 1 (January 1997), p. 42.

16 See Braude, above, for a discussion of the evolution of the idea of the curse of Ham as being applicable to Africans.

17 The quote may be found in Raven-Hart, *Before Van Riebeeck*, p. 119.

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Following Dante's authority, which had placed the terrestrial paradise on the summit of the island of Purgatory in the far south, some writers began to identify the top of Table Mountain with paradise. Aluigi de Giovanni did so in 1543, and in 1588 Livio Sanuto wrote the following: 'Upon the top of this promontory [Table Mountain] Nature … hath formed here a great plain, pleasant in situation, which with the fragrant herbs, variety of flowers, and flourishing verdure of all things, seems a terrestrial paradise.'[18] Associated with this belief was the idea that the primitive or wild people who lived in this state of nature might not be so monstrous after all and, in fact, might be closer than more civilised races to a state of unfallen innocence. This idea, which would find its full expression in the concept of the 'noble savage' during the 18th century, existed uneasily alongside that of the 'ignoble savage'. The inherent tensions between these conflicting views of savagery are clearly seen in some of the early visual representations of the Khoikhoi. European artists who used woodcut or etching to create and reproduce images had often not been to the Cape themselves. They therefore used a set of stock images of 'savages' or 'noble savages' to illustrate travel reports from southern Africa.



Figure 8.1 'In Allago', woodcut by Hans Burgkmair, from Giovanni Botero, *Le Relationi Universali* (1618)

Thus it is that some depictions of Cape Khoikhoi make them appear like copies of the first created couple—Adam and Eve—or like classical figures from

18 Quoted by M. Van Wyk Smith, *Shades of Adamastor: an anthology of poetry* (Grahamstown: Institute for the Study of English in Africa, Rhodes University, 1988), p. 9.

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Greek and Roman art in an Arcadian landscape and, sometimes, like images of John the Baptist. This 'uneasy blend of classical statuary and Renaissance wild man' remained the dominant visual representation until the beginning of the 17th century.[19]

It was only in 1627, with the illustration that accompanied Herbert's account of the Cape, that visual representations of the Khoikhoi began to match the now almost entirely negative written accounts.



Figure 8.2 'Man and Woman at the Cape of Good Hope', from Sir Thomas Herbert, *A relation of some yeares travaile, begvnne anno 1626: into Africa and the greater Asia, especially the territories of the Persian monarchie* (London: William Stansby & Jacob Bloome, 1634)

The man in this picture looks demonic, aggressive and also (to European viewers) somewhat ridiculous with his outlandish hairstyle and bodily cicatrisation. But, as Strother notes, it is the woman whose representation 'reconciles savage culture with savage form. Whereas the man's proportions are naturalistic, the woman's arms are lengthened, her legs shortened and her countenance given a freakish simian cast as she skips up with a handful of bleeding entrails, her mouth open in enthusiastic ululation.'[20] Notably, too, her 'uberous dugg' is stretched over her shoulder to feed her infant. 'In the chain

19 Van Wyk Smith, 'Iconography', pp. 289–90.
20 Strother, p. 9.

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of being that proposes the Hottentot as the "missing link" between the human and the animal realms,' continues Strother, 'it is the Hottentot woman who serves as the truly transitional figure between man and ape.'[21]



Figure 8.3 'Moors from Mozambique', plate from Jan Huygen van Linschoten, *Itinerario* (1599)

In subsequent editions of Herbert's book he (or his editors) added details that emphasised the sexual depravity of the female Hottentot. Khoikhoi women, he alleged, would reveal their pudenda to visitors for any small favour, while the 'apish' language of the Khoikhoi was explicable once it was understood that 'tis thought they have unnatural copulation with those beasts and baboons with whom their women familiarly converse.' It was but a short step from these sexual fantasies to believing that Khoikhoi women had elongated nymphae, the so-called 'Hottentot apron', which they would willingly display to the curious for a small gift.[22] Proving, or disproving, the existence of such an 'apron' became an essential part of many subsequent travellers' accounts of Khoikhoi women, the guarantee, as it were, of eyewitness veracity and a

21 Ibid., p. 10.
22 Van Wyk Smith, 'Iconography', p. 296.

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means by which prurience could pose as scientific observation.[23] This almost obligatory inspection assumed absurd proportions in Le Vaillant's account, and illustration, of a female Hottentot in his *Voyage* of 1790.



Figure 8.4 'A Hottentot Woman', plate from François le Vaillant, *Travels into the Interior Parts of Africa, by the way of the Cape of Good Hope: in the Years 1780, 81, 82, 83, 84 and 85* (London: G.G.J. & J. Robinson, 1790)

Le Vaillant's contribution, however, satisfied neither public nor scientific curiosity, and the unfortunate fate of Saartje Baartman in the 19th century is testimony to the enduring interest in the sexual anatomy of Khoikhoi women.[24] As Strother points out, typical depictions of female Khoikhoi sexuality were anti-erotic rather than erotic, and in this respect Khoikhoi women were treated as being different from, and inferior to, other African women.[25]

23 For accounts of the significance of the debates about the 'Hottentot apron', see Sander L. Gilman, 'black bodies, white bodies: toward an iconography of female sexuality in late nineteenth century art, medicine and literature', in H.L. Gates (ed.), *'Race', writing and difference*. Special issue of *Critical Inquiry*, 12, 1 (1985).

24 See Strother, 'Display of the body Hottentot'. For a recent account of Sara Baartman, see Clifton Crais and Pamela Scully, *Sarah Baartman and the Hottentot Venus: a ghost story and a biography* (Princeton & Johannesburg: Princeton University Press & Wits University Press, 2009).

25 Ibid., pp. 2, 3, 16–22.

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II. Kolb and the Khoikhoi

On the eve of the colonisation of the Cape by the Dutch in 1652, the Khoikhoi were widely believed, by Europeans, to be the most wretched and debased of all human societies. This negative perception was largely the result of the writings of travellers who had, on the whole, but a superficial knowledge of the Khoikhoi, which they had gathered during fleeting visits to the Cape. That many of these accounts had been sensationalised, with a view to meeting the market demand for extraordinary travel tales, is unquestionable. The Dutch occupation of the Cape afforded the opportunity for more detailed knowledge of the Khoikhoi by European observers. Unfortunately, however, Dutch colonisation also meant that the Khoikhoi were now to be exposed to dispossession and subjugation, processes that made them vulnerable to an increase in negative stereotyping. Even before Dutch settlement, Europeans had been determined to derive the maximum benefit from the Cape and its inhabitants. The Cape was, after all, but a stepping stone to the wealth of the East, and its principal function, as far as the Europeans were concerned, was to facilitate voyages to and from this destination. Exploitation of the Khoikhoi increased after 1652, and most colonial accounts highlighted those factors which suggested that the Khoikhoi were unworthy occupants of a land whose productivity would increase under Dutch control.

A major exception to this tendency was to be found in the publication of Dapper's study of Africa, which appeared in 1668 and which was translated into English in 1670. Van Wyk Smith hails this as 'a major work of rehabilitation, a genuine attempt, despite many lapses into stereotypes, to reassess the peoples of Africa'.[26] The work is, strictly speaking, a scholarly one, a compilation rather than a travel account, although it is based on the work of many who left accounts of their travels. The section on the Cape includes an illustration of some Khoikhoi, which was probably based on a realistic and well-observed original. The written text, although in some ways derogatory, does credit the Khoikhoi with some human virtues and probably drew on the work of George Frederick Wreede, a German student who had visited the Cape in 1659 and studied the Khoikhoi.[27]

The most detailed, and also the most sympathetic, account of the Khoikhoi was that produced by Peter Kolb and published in his monumental *Caput Bonae Spei Hodiernum* in Germany in 1719. Kolb, a German astronomer, was a resident

26 Van Wyk Smith, 'Iconography', p. 297.

27 Ibid. See also I. Schapera (ed.), *The early Cape Hottentots* (Van Riebeeck Society, 14, Cape Town, 1933). For an assessment of Dapper and a discussion of his sources see Adam Jones, 'Decompiling Dapper: a preliminary search for evidence', *History in Africa*, Vol. 17 (1990), pp. 171–209.

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at the Cape between 1706 and 1713.[28] This lengthy stay makes him a rather untypical traveller since it means the knowledge that he collected was based on more than superficial observation or hearsay. His book, indeed, is one that exemplifies how the genre of first-person travel narratives was linked to the accumulation of facts about foreign parts and foreign peoples. Kolb was not exclusively concerned with the Khoikhoi — two thirds of his book describes his journey to the Cape and the natural history and settler society of the colony — but his observations on the Khoikhoi are so extensive that it is not too fanciful to see in them the concerns and methodologies of a proto-ethnologist.

It would be wrong, however, to think of Kolb as an ethnographer or anthropologist. The human sciences only came into existence during the 18th century, as part of the Enlightenment, and although Kolb displayed certain Enlightenment traits he was born a little bit too early (1675) to be considered a typical Enlightenment thinker. It is more correct to see him as falling between the tradition of 17th-century natural philosophy and the Enlightenment. In the 17th century, men like Copernicus, Kepler, Galileo and Newton (Kolb too was an astronomer and mathematician by vocation) 'had created a magisterial science of nature based on the realisation that the physical world operated according to orderly, discoverable laws'.[29] The challenge facing 18th-century intellectuals was to try to extend this insight to an analysis of the natural world in general and, ultimately, to develop a science of human nature. A crucial landmark in this endeavour, and one that post-dated Kolb's work, was Linnaeus's *Systema Naturae* of 1735. Linnaeus's great attempt to systematise, classify and order the plant kingdom was based on empirical observation and the precise measurement of observable differences. Plants were divided into classes based on structural variations in their sexual, or flowering, parts. It was an artificial system, whose methodology lent itself to other natural sciences, but it was not a system available to Kolb. Nor was Kolb a naturalist by training. He was obliged, therefore, to adopt another system, or systems, to order his material on the Cape, and it is here that it is important to understand Kolb's pre-Enlightenment background.

Kolb's instincts were clearly encyclopaedic (and this might tempt one to see him as a forerunner of Diderot), and he delighted in getting things down in

28 I have extracted biographical details concerning Kolb from the entry in *Allgemeine Deutsche Biographie* 16 (Leipzig: die Historische Commission bei der Königl. Academie der Wissenschaften, 1882), pp. 460–61, and from E. Moritz, *Die Deutschen am Kap unter Hollandischer Herrschaft, 1652–1806* (Weimar, 1938), pp. 69–71. There is also an autobiographical essay in the Kolb papers at the Gymnasium of Neustadt am der Aisch. I thank Professor David Wardel for translating this for me from the Latin and Professor Hans Raum for accompanying me there. Ann Good's article, cited above, also has important biographical material.

29 See dust jacket and contents of C. Fox, R. Porter and R. Wokler (eds), *Inventing human science: eighteenth century domains* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995).

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ordered lists. But without the framing certainties of mathematics it was not always clear to him exactly how to order all the information about the physical world of the Cape which he was collecting. The ordering principles of his lists are, perhaps, best sought for in the realms of resemblance and representation which Foucault sees as having been influential as a way of knowing in the 16th and early 17th centuries. But, truth be told, Kolb enjoyed listing things for the sake of listing them, and in this regard he is typical of an age, in Europe, where people delighted in collecting facts, curiosities and things for their own sakes. It was the era, especially in the Netherlands, of the *rariteiten-verszamelingen* and the *naturalienkabinetten*, and Kolb's book is, in many ways, a printed version of a wonderful collection of facts and curiosities from the end of Africa.[30] Of significance here is that Kolb sailed for the Cape with the blessing of one of the great collectors of the day, Nicolas Witsen, mayor of Amsterdam and a director of the Dutch East India Company.[31]

At this moment in history — the early 18th century — Kolb was not unique in presenting ethnographic material in the form of a travel narrative. Other travellers, elsewhere in the world, were engaged in writing in considerable detail about supposedly primitive people. But Kolb was the first to subject the Khoikhoi to prolonged scrutiny and to write about his sources of knowledge and methods of investigation. Although Kolb was not, strictly speaking, a scientist (a word only coined in the 19th century) his insistence on the value of his own empirical observations and the respectable sources that he cites as evidence signal to us that he was determined to separate fact from fiction.[32]

Despite these intentions, it was impossible for Kolb not to be influenced by the literary genres and practices of his day. Kolb had not only read Dapper, but many of the earlier travel accounts about Africa and the Cape. In Kolb's book, the first three chapters consist of an account of his voyage to the Cape, that is, the adventure of travel or the genre of the sea voyage is still seen as being an integral part of the book's content. Another feature of these travel accounts, as we have seen, is that in them the division between fact and fiction was not as

30 See Roelof van Gelder, 'De wereld binnen handbereik: Nederlandse kunst-en rariteiten-verzamelingen, 1585–1735', in E. Bergvelt & R. Kistemaker (eds), *De wereld binnen handbereik* (Amsterdam: Zwolle, 1992).

31 For Witsen, see P.J.A.N. Rietbergen, 'Witsen's world: Nicolaas Witsen (1641–1717) between the Dutch East India Company and the republic of letters', in (no editor), *All of one company: the VOC in biographical perspective* (Utrecht: HES Uitgevers, 1986), pp. 121–134 and Rebecca P. Brienen, 'Nicolaas Witsen and his circle: globalization, art patronage, and collecting in Amsterdam circa 1700', in Nigel Worden (ed.), *Contingent lives: social identity and material culture in the VOC world* (Cape Town: University of Cape Town Press, 2007), pp. 439–49.

32 For a more extensive discussion of Kolb's epistemic universe, see Nigel Penn, 'Notes towards a rereading of Peter Kolb', *Kronos: Journal of Cape History*, No. 24 (November 1997), pp. 41–45.

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watertight as later commentators would have liked, and it is essential to realise that the Kolbian oeuvre is a hybrid of pre- and post-Enlightenment discourses. It is significant to note that Kolb originally presented his account in the form of letters addressed to his benefactor and dedicatee, the Margrave of Ansbach-Bayreuth. This epistolary genre is an important form for the student of Kolb to consider, for it draws attention to a literary tradition that one does not normally associate with scientific discourse.[33] But Kolb's initial impressions of the Cape were conveyed to his first astronomer patron, the Prussian nobleman Baron Von Krosick, as well as to Witsen and other learned men, in the form of unpublished letters which enjoyed a limited circulation amongst a network of correspondents.[34] Interestingly, the Dutch edition of Kolb's work, published in 1727, did away with the epistolary form, and it is possible that the years between 1719 and 1727 mark a significant shift in publishing practices towards presenting travel accounts as being more scientific than literary in their form and content. The imagined audience of a work addressed to the public in general, rather than to a singular correspondent, clearly suggests that the publishers of the Dutch edition anticipated a wider, and different, readership. This, as well as the fact that the 1727 edition was a revised version (Kolb was able to work on this before his death) with patronage from some influential VOC officials, would have lent greater credence to the second edition.[35]

Although Kolb claimed to base his account of the Cape on personal observation or on the word of trustworthy witnesses, he was occasionally guilty of errors of fact or of accepting received wisdom. Kolb's text is scattered with references to published sources, to other authors and authorities, and in this respect he is an exemplary scholar. The serious reader of Kolb should pay attention to these sources for they remind us that, for all Kolb's originality, *Caput Bonae Spei Hodiernum* was a product of its time and of Kolb's own reading. Kolb's sources include the classical (Pliny), the medieval and the modern. Unsurprisingly, travel accounts feature prominently, with Tachart, Mercklin, Dapper, Arnold, Sadeur and Holsteiner's works amongst those mentioned. He also expressed great admiration for Robert Knox's book on Ceylon, believing

33 Anne Good has an interesting discussion on the encouragement that Kolb received from certain of his circle of correspondents in Europe, who had received letters from him while he was at the Cape, to publish his Cape book in an epistolary form. See Good, 'The construction of an authoritative text', pp. 75–81.

34 Ibid.

35 The move from an epistolary format to a more scientific, less personal presentation of text in European publications at this time deserves more investigation. But Chartier's point, that formal transformation has a major effect on the status of a work, is incontrovertible. See Roger Chartier, 'Labourers and voyagers: from the text to the reader', in David Finkelstein & Alistair McCleery (eds), *The book history reader*, 2nd edition (London: Routledge 2006), p. 91.

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it to be the model of the type of description which he saw himself as writing. But Knox's book was as much a tale of adventure, imprisonment and escape as it was an account of Ceylonese society. Interestingly, Kolb had also read Baron de Lahontan's narratives of travel in Canada (published in 1703), a work in which American Indians are presented sympathetically and where they express critical views of European society. As Anne Good observes, this was 'part of the emerging trope of the Noble Savage' and one that would be employed by Kolb himself.[36]

Later 18th-century writers on the subject of the Khoikhoi — such as Mentzel,[37] La Caille[38] and Gordon[39] — pounced on Kolb's errors gleefully and were disparaging of his efforts, seeking to cast doubts on his veracity. This may have stemmed partly from authorial competitiveness, but it should also be remembered that those who came after Kolb were no longer able to observe Khoikhoi society in anything like its original form. The devastating effects of the smallpox epidemic of 1713 on the Khoikhoi (a catastrophe that occurred just after Kolb's departure from the Cape), together with the destruction wrought by rapid colonial expansion into Khoikhoi territory after that date, meant that post-1713 Khoikhoi society was but a shadow of its former self. Kolb was, therefore, both the first European observer to make a detailed study of Khoikhoi society in its entirety and the last to be able to do so. Many of his observations concerning the Khoikhoi were unverifiable, for the simple reason that independent Khoikhoi societies were scarcely to be found within the borders of the colony after 1713.

For the most part, Kolb was concerned to redeem the reputation of the Khoikhoi and ensure that they were henceforth regarded as members of humanity. I have argued elsewhere that this sympathy for 'the other' may have arisen from the circumstances of Kolb's voyage to the Cape, where he was exposed to the brutal world of life on a VOC ship.[40] After experiencing the savage customs of the Dutch sailors and German soldiers for months on end in a confined space, Khoikhoi society must have seemed relatively humane. Good has suggested that exposure to a Pietistic education at the

36 Good, p. 85.

37 O.F. Mentzel, *A geographical and topographical description of the Cape of Good Hope* (first published 1785, English translation Cape Town: Van Riebeeck Society, 1925).

38 R. Raven-Hart (ed.), *Nicolas Louis de la Caille: travels at the Cape 1551–1753* (Cape Town: A.A. Balkema, 1976).

39 P.E. Raper & M. Boucher (eds), *Robert Jacob Gordon: Cape travels, 1777 to 1786*, 2 vols (Johannesburg: Brenthurst Press, 1988).

40 Nigel Penn, 'The voyage out: Peter Kolb and VOC voyages to the Cape', in Emma Christopher, Cassandra Pybus & Marcus Rediker (eds), *Many middle passages: forced migration and the making of the modern world* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007), pp. 72–91.

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University of Halle may also have made Kolb more humane than most of his contemporaries.[41] Whatever the causes of this sympathy, Kolb was fascinated by Khoikhoi customs, particularly the rite-of-passage ceremonies, or *anders maken* ceremonies. This has led some commentators to accuse Kolb of being guilty of 'othering' the Khoikhoi, by dwelling on what made them different to Europeans. Kolb was nearly always, in fact, sympathetic to the Khoikhoi and at pains to point out the similarities between their customs and those of other societies, such as the Jews or the Ethiopians. He thus wrote how their language, though difficult for Europeans to understand or speak, was indeed a form of human speech.

Although Kolb himself did not claim to be able to speak the language, he did provide a word list as proof that it was possible for Europeans to learn it. Kolb never claimed to be the author of this list, and acknowledged that he had benefited from the knowledge of a Company official at the Cape called De Greevenbroek as well as information collected on this subject by Nicolas Witsen, but this did not save him from subsequent accusations of plagiarism. In truth, Kolb was most modest about his linguistic skills and more concerned to portray the Khoikhoi favourably than to parade his own knowledge. Kolb also wrote how the Khoikhoi were capable of intelligent reasoning and acts of kindness, how they were (contrary to popular beliefs) sexually modest and faithful. Indeed, he argued how in certain respects the Khoikhoi were superior to both slaves and Europeans in matters of morality. These observations would later play a direct role in encouraging *philosophes* like Rousseau to postulate the existence of a state of 'noble savagery'.[42] Once translated into English, Kolb's work would also help to stem the tide of negative perceptions about the Khoikhoi in England.[43]

Kolb also went into a great deal of detail about the family life and family structures of the Khoikhoi, their eating habits, their care of livestock, their skill in preparing skins and butchering animals, their handicrafts and their treatment of the ill. As part of his attempt to incorporate the Khoikhoi into the human family, Kolb asserted that the Khoikhoi had knowledge of God, or a supreme being, and therefore that they had religion. The fact that they were heathen, Kolb realised, was scarcely their fault, though he did note that they had little interest in converting to Christianity. It was even possible, wrote Kolb, that the Khoikhoi may have been descended from the Israelites, or perhaps the Troglodytes. This latter group of people had, since the days of

41 Good, p. 79.

42 For the influence of Kolb on Rousseau, see Fauvelle-Aymar, *L'Invention du Hottentot*, pp. 270–75.

43 Merians, pp. 163–67.

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Herodotus, been associated with the land of Ethiopia and were said, like the Khoikhoi, to be remarkably fleet of foot. Kolb's suggestion that the Khoikhoi might have been descendants of the Israelites was based on comparisons between many of the Khoikhoi's religious and social customs and those of the Jews of the Old Testament. Thus the Khoikhoi practice of excising one of a man's testicles as a precondition of his being regarded as having come of age was compared to the Jewish custom of circumcision, while certain common taboos regarding menstruation, Kolb argued, showed that the two peoples had a common origin.

While making such comparisons served Kolb's purpose, in that they brought the Khoikhoi into the family of humanity, there were important differences, which he noted, that suggested that they were not as civilised or advanced as Europeans. Noteworthy here were the Khoikhoi practices of genital mutilation and finger amputation. The Khoikhoi were also accustomed to smearing both themselves and their garments with animal fat, thereby ensuring that they could always be smelt before they were seen. Although Kolb attempted to explain why the Khoikhoi did these things, he was not a defender of these customs himself. Nor was he an admirer of the custom whereby, at certain rites of passage (or *anders maaken* ceremonies, as he calls them) senior males would urinate over those who were undergoing the process of transformation. Despite these reservations, by explaining that these (to him) repugnant customs were associated with rite-of-passage rituals such as birth, puberty, marriage and burial, Kolb revealed himself to be possessed of a unique sensitivity. Very few commentators of his era would have been aware of the significance of these ceremonies.[44]

Kolb did not dispute the common perception that the Khoikhoi were lazy and improvident. He wrote distastefully, too, about their custom of killing one of a pair of female twins at birth and leaving the incapable elderly to die when they could no longer keep up with the group. But these criticisms, while suggesting that the Khoikhoi were not as civilised as Europeans, did not mean that Kolb regarded them as being irreclaimable savages. He did not approve of the attacks which had been made on them by gangs of armed colonists seeking to steal their livestock. Neither did he condone instances where the Company had utilised force or fraud against them. It is quite certain that he would have deplored, if he ever learnt of it, the news of their virtual annihilation by smallpox in 1713. Sadly, however, it was those Khoikhoi groups with which he was most familiar, those of the southwestern Cape, that were

44 For a discussion of Kolb's observations on the Khoikhoi, see Johannes W. Raum, 'Reflections on rereading Peter Kolb with regard to the cultural heritage of the Khoisan', *Kronos: Journal of Cape History*, no. 24 (November 1997), pp. 30–40.

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the first to disappear from the face of the earth — before Kolb's book was even published.

III. Cape travel writers after Kolb

After Kolb, it is fair to say, there was not a great deal that could be added by travel writers to the sum of knowledge about the Khoikhoi. Most visitors to the Cape during the 18th century who left accounts of the Khoikhoi were heavily indebted to Kolb although they seldom acknowledged this in a generous manner. This indebtedness is testimony to the popularity of Kolb's work and its wide circulation in a number of editions and translations. But if Kolb was mentioned by rival authors it was usually in an attempt to discredit or contradict him. One of the reasons for this was that Kolb's work on the Khoikhoi was the starting point for their own work, and in order to supersede it they were forced to belittle it. One of the most common criticisms of Kolb's book was that it was too long, and that it contained much that was uninteresting. The result was that many subsequent translations and publications of Kolb's book were abridged, or edited in some way.[45] This tended to erode Kolb's careful scholarship and contextualising discussions. It also tends to make Kolb into a more modern figure than he really is. Although it was recognised that the description of the Khoikhoi was the most interesting part of the work (resulting in heavy editing of the other parts), this editorial foregrounding of the Khoikhoi has distorted Kolb's intention of providing a 'full description' of the Cape and, by altering the format of the book, altered the way the book has been read. Kolb was not only a proto-anthropologist, he was also a writer influenced by pre-18th-century travel accounts. By cutting out those sections deemed to be unoriginal or boring, editorial selection has created the impression that he was primarily concerned with the strange or unusual and that he sensationalised things. Also, because much of what Kolb had written about the Khoikhoi could no longer be verified after the 1713 smallpox epidemic, he was accused of being a liar.

Mentzel, for instance, presents an almost entirely negative account of the Khoikhoi in which he attempts to refute virtually every favourable remark that Kolb had made about them, claiming that 'since that author is not so trustworthy that one can rely on him, it cannot but be pleasant to hear something definite about them which is based on true fact'. Mentzel's 'true facts', in fact, are a reversion to the stereotypes of the 16th and 17th centuries. Perhaps the most charitable thing that can be said of his views is that they might have been

45 Good, pp. 89–94.

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influenced by his perception of what the Khoikhoi had become when he was at the Cape in the 1730s — a remnant group of dispossessed subjects working as labourers on colonial farms.

The plight of these survivors was somewhat more sympathetically described by Sparrman and Thunberg, in the second half of the 18th century.[46] Both of these men were aware that they were describing a colonial labour force and not an independent society, and their remarks should be read in this context. By the time they visited the Cape — in the 1770s — the colonial frontier had ceased to advance and the frontier colonists, along with their Khoikhoi and 'Bastaard' servants, were engaged in ferocious fighting with both Khoikhoi and San (Khoisan) resistors. Sparrman related that one of the objectives of the colonists was to take San, or Bushmen, captives in order to enslave them. San captives, mainly women and children (since the men were killed), were indeed taken and forced into labouring on the colonial farms. Whether the correct name for this is slavery is, perhaps, debatable, for in most respects they shared the same labouring conditions as the Khoikhoi, a supposedly free people. While these conditions were terrible, including loss of freedom, cruel treatment and negligible wages, the captives could not, in theory, be bought and sold.[47]

Very few travellers dared to go to the frontier in those troubled times (and unless they had special permission from the Company would not have been allowed to do so anyway). Even fewer travellers went beyond the frontier, but one such man was Robert Gordon, the commander of the garrison at the Cape, who went as far as the Orange River and was the first European to leave an account of reaching the river's mouth. Gordon was a cultured man, humane and widely curious. He was in correspondence with learned *philosophes* in France and a source of knowledge for them about the Khoikhoi and the San. It is quite clear from his journals (unpublished until the late 20th century) that he was determined to verify certain aspects of Kolb's account of the Khoikhoi (such as *anders maaken* ceremonies), whenever he could. Although critical of Kolb in some details, Gordon's accounts of the Namaqua and other remote Khoi groups largely confirm Kolb's vision of the Khoikhoi as a cheerful, intelligent and skilled pastoralist people much given to dancing and communal celebration of ceremonies. Gordon's real contribution to our knowledge about the Khoisan consists of his observations

46 See V.S. Forbes (ed.), *Anders Sparrman: a voyage to the Cape of Good Hope, 1772–1776*, 2 vols (Cape Town: Van Riebeeck Society, 1975) and V.S. Forbes (ed.), *Carl Peter Thunberg: travels at the Cape of Good Hope, 1772–1775* (Cape Town: Van Riebeeck Society, 1986).

47 For a study of relationships between Khoisan and colonists in the northern Cape frontier zone in the 18th century, see Nigel Penn, *The forgotten frontier: colonist and Khoisan on the Cape's northern frontier in the 18th century* (Cape Town & Athens, Ohio: Double Storey Books & Ohio University Press, 2005).

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about the San, or Bushmen, a people who had not previously been considered worthy of scholarly attention. Gordon's unpublished field notes are a mine of information about the San, and indeed, about the remote Khoisan of the 18th-century Cape interior in general.

A less reliable, and altogether more flamboyant traveller than Gordon was François le Vaillant whose writings about the Khoikhoi did more to establish their status as exemplars of 'the noble savage' than any other writer.[48] Although Le Vaillant probably did not travel as far as he asserted that he did (and certainly not as far as Gordon), his writings were widely read as his romantic and sentimental style struck a chord among the educated classes of Europe. By the 1780s, there were many Europeans whose appetites had been stimulated by travellers' accounts from the Pacific Ocean and who were hungry for accounts of beautiful, scantily clad savages whose innate innocence might provide more civilised societies with more natural models for human conduct. Le Vaillant believed he had found such a society among the Khoikhoi and, in the form of 'Nerina', a veritable 'Hottentot Venus'.

Le Vaillant was not unaware, of course, that this idyllic life and pastoral vision was directly threatened by Dutch colonialism. But while he was suitably critical of the evils of European colonialism he was not, perhaps, honest enough with his readers to confess that the worst had already happened and that the Khoikhoi society he described was a figment of his romantic imagination.

It may thus be seen that during a period of approximately three hundred years, travel accounts, in one form or another, were responsible for the process of the 'invention of the Hottentot'. Although the Khoikhoi received a sympathetic treatment and a thorough description in the work of Kolb, his book did not altogether transcend the genre of travel writing. Nor did Kolb's work put an end to the publication of other travel accounts about the Cape in the 18th century. These later works may have been more 'enlightened' (in the sense that they employed the discourses of both natural science and 'noble savagism') but it is doubtful whether they represented as significant an advance in knowledge about the Khoikhoi as did Kolb's work. It is Kolb's work that points towards the new genre of the human, or social, sciences, not Le Vaillant's, which is firmly rooted in the venerable tradition of the travel narrative.[49]

48 For the most recent edition of Le Vaillant's travels, see Ian Glenn (ed.), *François le Vaillant: travels into the interior of Africa via the Cape of Good Hope*, vol. 1 (Cape Town: Van Riebeeck Society, 2007).

49 See Johnson, 'Representing the Cape "Hottentots"' for a discussion of the influence of Kolb on Le Vaillant and other French travellers at the Cape.

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9



Nothing New Under the Sun: Anatomy of a Literary-Historical Polemic in Colonial Cape Town Circa 1880–1910[1]

Peter Merrington

Introduction

Written culture in the colonial context, in Cape Town in the late 19th century and well into the 20th, was dominated by a practice in which a social elite marked out their identity and laid their claims. This English-speaking, Cape-based elite enjoyed extensive resources and discursive platforms by which they envisioned a particular view of the emerging unified state of the Union of South Africa.[2] It is possible to generalise and to suggest that the common thread in their discursive intention was to develop and to direct what came to be termed 'Africana', a settler-originated concept for the interpretation of southern Africa. This concept appears to embrace antiquarian studies about the land and its peoples, artefacts, histories, architecture and landscapes, botany and horticulture, heritage, property and objects of art. At the core of this received concept of Africana lies the idea of

1 The title of this essay completes the title of a novel *That which hath been*, which is discussed in the essay. The phrase is from Ecclesiastes 1:9, 'that which hath been shall be, and there is nothing new under the sun'. Its present meaning (as was the title of the novel, from a different perspective) is intended with a sense of historical irony.

2 The Union of South Africa was the unification in 1910 of the two British colonies of the Cape and Natal, and the two Boer republics of the Transvaal and Orange Free State. It was established as an autonomous state within the British Empire, with similar status to that of the Australian Federation (established in 1902) and the Canadian Confederation. Internal politics were entirely to be under the authority of the Union parliament, while the head of state was a British-appointed governor general. Some aspects of foreign policy (and the military) remained under the control of Whitehall. Black South Africans were summarily marginalised, and the main debate was whether the country would retain close British affiliation and grow an English-speaking white voting majority or yield to the ambitions of nascent Afrikaner republican nationalism. The key words in 1910 were 'reconstruction' and 'reconciliation', the latter being between the 'two races' of English and Dutch.

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book collecting — books, manuscripts and ephemera of all sorts that pertain to South and southern Africa, in which practice the Victorian virtues of collecting and cataloguing by scientific method gave a governing taxonomy to a complex and extensive panorama of the land. An entire world view is tacit in the emergence, since the 1880s, of catalogues of written material about South Africa. This world view, as the essay will describe, was a sentimental colonial version of an assumed latter-day 'Tory' English perspective that carried weight (in England) in relation to the stress of modernity and social change, and (in South Africa) in terms of defensive colonial 'Englishness'.

These broad issues are organised for present purposes around a particular historical controversy in late 19th-century and early 20th-century Cape Town. The controversy seems, today, to be irrelevant to questions of South African nationhood and public culture, but at the time it became a stormy microcosm of broader issues. The context in which the controversy took place was the shaping of a new nation-state, the lobbying for political dominance in this new state by British imperialists and Afrikaner nationalists, and the attempts to frame a sense of desired cultural heritage, history and identity for the state. The agenda is similar in the most general sense to debates that led to the shaping of the 'New South Africa' in 1994, but the details are very different indeed. The 'New South Africa' of 1910 was, with the tacit consensus of the dominant lobbies, a white state. The Union of South Africa that emerged from a decade of political manoeuvring was a racially exclusive entity, and its identity was shaped by the interests of the dominant elite of the day. The purpose of this paper is to trace the emergence and the fortunes of a particularly intense controversy over a period of thirty years, a controversy that in many ways epitomises broader developments from about 1880 to 1910, and to indicate the role of a culture of letters in late Victorian Cape Town, where the debate was aired and amplified.

I. The source of the controversy

The controversy was about two rival interpretations of the behaviour of an early Dutch governor of the VOC-controlled Cape, Governor Willem Adriaan van der Stel.[3] He was appointed governor in 1699 but was recalled in 1708 after a group of free burgher farmers sought to have him impeached on charges of self-enrichment and monopolising of agricultural trade. Van der Stel's father, Simon van der Stel (the previous governor), had built the iconic Cape Dutch homestead of Groot Constantia as his personal residence, with an extensive

3 The VOC, or Dutch East India Company, established a replenishment station at the Cape in 1652, regarded as the founding event of settler South Africa. The VOC was explicit in its instructions not to develop a 'colony', but officials who left the company were granted land rights as 'free burghers' and established their own farms in the Western Cape. Their produce was sold to the company on terms prescribed by the VOC.

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wine farm, in the Cape Peninsula. Willem Adriaan emulated this with another fine homestead and farm, Vergelegen ('far-lying'), beyond the Cape Flats some 60 kilometres from the Cape settlement. This estate, and Van der Stel's farming activities, seem to have prompted the accusations. An English-speaking clique in Edwardian Cape Town became determined to interpret Van der Stel as a visionary builder and founder, against the more historically forceful view that he was rightfully accused and recalled. This second view was associated with an ascendant Afrikaner nationalist perspective that saw in the matter the origins of a burgher democratic cause. What is interesting in this peculiar antiquarian debate is the way in which the debate was conducted, its synchronic public symbolism in the development of national identity in 1910, and the nexus of relations between a culture of letters, attitudes to social class, to land and landed estates, to heritage-formation and national historiography and archivism.

II. The role of Dorothea Fairbridge

The narrative begins squarely with a culture of letters. Charles Aiken Fairbridge, attorney and member of the colonial Cape Parliament, was a self-made connoisseur of books and local history. He compiled what appears to be the first 'Catalogue of Books Relating to South Africa', as a gift from the Cape Colony to Queen Victoria for her jubilee in 1888.[4] He accumulated a large private collection of books, mostly from Britain and Europe. After his death his daughter, Dorothea Fairbridge, arranged for the Fairbridge Collection to be donated to the South African Library (of which he had been a trustee) and housed in the new Fairbridge Wing, paid for by the mining magnate Sir Abe Bailey. Dorothea Fairbridge went on to become a cultural activist in the field of Cape heritage. She was a documentary writer, novelist and nation-builder devoted to propagandising the idea of a South African Union within the British Empire and Commonwealth. She dedicated her work to the imperial and colonialist visions of her hero, Sir Alfred Milner (British High Commissioner in South Africa from 1899 to 1906). As her second novel, *Piet of Italy* (1913), indicates, she shared with the majority of her social caste a dual sense of identity, fiercely pro-British while also newly pan-South African rather than merely colonialist in the older sense of the term.[5]

4 C.A. Fairbridge & J. Noble, *Catalogue of books relating to South Africa* (Cape Town: for the Colonial and Indian Exhibition Committee, W.A. Richards and Sons, 1886).

5 D. Fairbridge, *Piet of Italy* (London: Mills and Boon, and Cape Town: J.C. Juta, 1913). This novel deals with a boy who survives a shipwreck off Cape Town and is brought up as an Afrikaans-speaking Muslim in the 'Cape Malay' community, only to rediscover his roots as a Catholic Italian. The novel fictionalises the work of the architect Herbert Baker, as well as of the journalist Ian Duncan Colvin and his illustrator, G.S. Smithard. It also deals with the plight of a local priest who is accused by Rome of modernising zeal—modelled on the experiences of the Fairbridges' friend Rev. H.C.V. Leibbrandt (Dutch Reformed Church), who played a leading role in the Van der Stel controversy.

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Dorothea Fairbridge was trained in her father's interests in books and history. At the outbreak of the South African War (1899–1902), she met Lord Milner and began the Guild of Loyal Women to support his imperialist cause. She found a powerful patron in Florence Phillips, who was the wife of a mining magnate, Sir Lionel Phillips. Florence Phillips shared Fairbridge's ardour about ensuring that the forthcoming Union of South Africa should be British in character and affiliation, and also shared her enthusiasm for the emerging concept of Africana, or the collecting and preservation of South African antiquities. They began (with the Reverend Hendrick Carel Vos Leibbrandt in the chair) a private association that was the forerunner of the SA Monuments Council and the SA Heritage Resources Agency. They engaged in a wide range of initiatives, and what is significant for now is the dominant set of discourses in which these initiatives were inscribed and aired to the public. The coterie included architects and artists, with particular influence from Cecil Rhodes's personal architect, Herbert Baker. Their inspiration was the general movement in England, in the 1890s, towards the recovery of 'Englishness', the vernacular architecture revival, the emphasis on vernacular gardening, on conservation of land, landscape and architecture, the National Trust, *Country Life* magazine and similar initiatives. The challenge was to translate these concepts into an African context. The translation was of course thoroughly modulated through an existing discursive frame of reference that drew on these English initiatives and on Edwardian habits of travel and travel writing (not to mention racial fantasies).

Their vision for South Africa was rooted in a set of interpretations of the Western Cape as a region with a long and gracious history, ornamented with fine country estates that were regarded as types of English landed estates, with baroque architecture, valuable furniture and objects of art and an air of genteel elegance and virtue. The landscape was inscribed as Arcadian, Mediterranean, at times Egyptian, at times Greek. The old Cape Dutch farmsteads were interpreted as a local version of the newly valued vernacular. A complex discourse emerged concerning heritage — material heritage, the idea of national destiny and heritage, spiritual heritage and the ethnic affiliations within which this rich heritage would be handed on (connected with teleological fantasies about 'destiny'). Alongside the Mediterranean interpretation of the land was an equally influential 'Elizabethanising', of personalities, national virtue, public activity and identity.[6] These two elite sets

6 The 'Elizabethan' was a major theme in Edwardian public culture, reinforced by the phenomenon of 'historical pageantry' that arose in England in 1905 and was exported to the colonies. The 'Pageant of Union' held in Cape Town in 1910 was a spectacular example of this genre, produced by the Empire pageant master Frank Lascelles after his successful staging of the Quebec Tercentenary Pageant in 1908. See P.J. Merrington, 'State of the union: performance and public identity in North America and South Africa, 1908–1910', *Journal of Literary Studies* 15, 1/2 (1999), pp. 238–63.

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of values, the classical and the Elizabethan, governed the dominant English-speaking public cultural discourses about the Cape, and Dorothea Fairbridge was, with her circle of historians, antiquarians and architects, a leader in the promotion of these images and gestures.

III. Enter the archivist, Hendrik Leibbrandt

The Fairbridges had a neighbour, a defrocked clergyman in the Dutch Reformed Church, named Hendrik Carel Vos Leibbrandt. He had lost his position due to his 'modernising' zeal, and was more suited to the liberal or 'progressive' intellectual climate of English-dominated Cape Town than the rural congregations he had served. He had a keen interest in Cape history, and served as informal tutor in this regard to the young Dorothea Fairbridge. She became an avid disciple of his interests, leading to her career as a documentary historian and author. Charles Fairbridge was an authority on the importance of record-keeping and curating, having served on the boards of both the South African Library and the South African Museum. In 1881, Charles Fairbridge, chairing a parliamentary committee, offered Leibbrandt the position of the first Cape Colonial archivist. His task was to oversee the official documents of governance at the Cape, dating back to the earliest Dutch authorities (including the diary of Jan van Riebeeck, the first Dutch commander at the Cape). Up to that date, little had been done about the safekeeping or documenting of this material.

The appointment of Leibbrandt was a blow to George McCall Theal, the Canadian-born doyen of South African historians. Theal felt (justifiably, seeing that he had been acting as part-time custodian of the archives since the previous year) that the job should be his. As compensation, Theal (who worked for the Government Stationery Office) was later appointed Colonial Historiographer. Leibbrandt's appointment in 1881 was controversial, since members of the committee of enquiry that first proposed in 1880 the post of Parliamentary Librarian and Colonial Archivist (a combined office) had in fact nominated Theal in Parliament for the job. The chief spokesman for Theal was J.H. (Onze Jan) Hofmeyr of the Afrikaner Bond and editor of their newspaper *Het Volksblad*, who argued in his editorials for justice for Theal. The philanthropic parliamentarian and proprietor of the *Cape Argus*, Saul Solomon, had also nominated Theal. That very year, when Solomon's newspaper was bought by the Afrikaner Bond, in collaboration with their then patron Cecil Rhodes, it spoke out stingingly against the evident injustice to Theal. The prime minister of the Cape, Sir Gordon Sprigg, ignored this and kept Leibbrandt in the post, partly because he had already secured for Leibbrandt the task of collating and cataloguing the archives of the historically important town of Graaff-Reinet.

A more diffuse politics also seems to be behind the controversy. Theal's South African history-writing is more favourably disposed to the cause of

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Dutch independence than to imperial sentiment. Leibbrandt, on the other hand, was a friend of 'progressives' such as Fairbridge and the Clerk of the Legislative Assembly, John Noble, who were decidedly pro-British.[7] Noble, who was Leibbrandt's brother-in-law and another neighbour of the Fairbridge family at Sea Point (he worked with Charles Fairbridge in compiling the 1886 'Catalogue of Books Relating to South Africa'), was accused by the Theal faction of manipulating Parliament into employing Leibbrandt through his contacts with the *Times* of London. Noble's brother Roderick was Professor of English at the South African College as well as editor of the *Cape Monthly Magazine*, which promoted 'progressive' or Anglo-South African interests.

IV. Conflicting views over Van der Stel's impeachment

A professional rivalry between Leibbrandt and Theal ensued (highly productive in its vigour), which came to be focused in public on one particular historical matter. Leibbrandt proposed a progressive interpretation of an early *cause célèbre* at the Cape, the impeachment of the Dutch Governor Willem Adriaan van der Stel on the grounds of corruption and self-enrichment. Leibbrandt's interpretation was that Van der Stel's intentions were to improve Cape agriculture rather than to suppress the free burgher farmers in his own favour. Others took the side of the burghers, seeing the farmers' reaction as the protest of citizens in protection of their rights against a tyrannical overlord. This debate accrued political colours, with sympathisers of the Cape Afrikaner Bond siding with Theal, and supporters of modernisation, state intervention and political 'progress' (by and large the pro-British lobby) siding with Leibbrandt's views.[8] Among Leibbrandt's published selections from the substantial old Dutch records in the archives are volumes which contain the accusations against Van der Stel, and his defence.[9]

Theal writes to Charles Fairbridge in February 1887, passing on information about 17th-century German and Dutch travel narratives concerning the Cape, for possible inclusion in Fairbridge and Noble's Catalogue. It is a friendly and informative communication between two avid bibliophiles, but it also mentions

7 The appointments of Leibbrandt and Theal are recorded in the first issue of the *South African Archives Journal*, 1959. Johan F. Preller writes in English of 'The Leibbrandt Appointment' (pp. 28–32), while A.J. Boeseken writes in Afrikaans, at greater length, of '*Theal as Baanbreker*' (pp. 33–42). Comparing these two essays, it is evident that the Nationalist civil service establishment of the 1950s sustained the division of opinion in favour of Theal.

8 Dorothea Fairbridge dramatised the progressivist lobby's interpretation of Afrikaners as rebarbative, in her social comedy novel *The torch bearer* (Cape Town: J.C. Juta, 1915).

9 H.C.V. Leibbrandt, *Rambles through the archives of the Colony of Cape of Good Hope, 1688–1700* (Cape Town: J.C. Juta, 1887) and *Précis of the Archives of the Cape of Good Hope. 5* vols (various publishers, 1896–1906).

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that a special (and potentially lucrative) project, offered him by a 'Society at the Hague', has to be abandoned because Sir Gordon Sprigg, once again the Premier of the Cape, refuses him access to the archives; that to use copies of the material, which are available at the Hague, would be a betrayal of trust in this regard, since he (Theal) is a public servant; and that in any event the Sprigg administration is opposed to his part-time occupation as a historian, demanding its pound of flesh from him as a civil servant:

> *Sir Gordon Sprigg has neither affection nor esteem from me, but he is the head of the Government and I am a public servant, and he is therefore entitled to loyal service from me. Now he has declined to allow me access to the Archives in Cape Town, and it would therefore be treachery on my part to procure copies of those same papers from the Hague with the object of working with them. If I cannot do that work openly, in the clear light of day, I will not do it at all.*[10]

This is a revealing document in that Fairbridge (while a personal supporter of Leibbrandt) appears as someone whose antiquarian interests transcend faction and politics.

Theal was joined by Johan Frederik Van Oordt, who published a novel in Dutch under the pseudonym 'D'Arbez' (a pun on the Afrikaans phrase *daarby*, or 'there in person') entitled *De Strijd om Regt: Een Verhaal uit de Dagen van Gouverneur Willem van der Stel*, which dramatised the cause of the free burghers (1898).[11] This novel was later translated into Afrikaans.[12] It was not the first historical fiction on the subject, being preceded by a slight novel, Thomas McCombie's *Adriaen van der Stel* (1885), which relished Van der Stel's supposed bad character. Alys Fane Trotter (the first person to produce a systematic documentary study of the Cape Dutch homesteads) wrote, on the other hand, with evident sympathy for the Van der Stel family, finding it incomprehensible that Willem Adriaan's detractors should have taken his farmstead of Vergelegen as evidence of his self-indulgence when the head of the cabal, Henning Huysing, had earlier built the homestead of Meerlust on a more expansive scale.[13] Huysing, moreover, had been raised from poverty by Van der Stel's father, the preceding Cape governor Simon van der Stel, and had married a servant of their family. Ian Duncan Colvin, in his *Romance of South*

10 G.M. Theal to C. Fairbridge, 17 February 1887, National Archives, Cape Town, A1426.

11 J.F. van Oordt ('D'Arbez'), *De strijd om recht: een verhaal uit de dagen van Gouverneur Willem van der Stel* (Amsterdam: HAUM, 1898).

12 The Afrikaans translation by L.A. and Dr P.C. Schoonees was published by HAUM, Cape Town, in 1932, evidently in support of the emergent Afrikaner Nationalism of the day, which had its base among Cape Afrikaner intellectuals.

13 A.F. Trotter, 'Old Cape homesteads and their founders', *Cape Times* Christmas Number (December 1898); *Old Cape Colony: a chronicle of her men and houses from 1652 to 1806* (London: Selwyn & Blount, 1903), p. 119.

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Africa, also criticises Theal's views. Colvin was a journalist with the *Cape Times* and a promoter of Cape heritage. Says Colvin, who was an enthusiastic friend of both Leibbrandt and Fairbridge:

> *Now Willem Adriaan has been much abused, especially by Peter Kolbe and Dr Theal, though fortunately he has had a staunch friend in Mr Leibbrandt [...]. His name, like that of Lord Charles Somerset, is popularly associated with harshness and tyranny. Yet if the records prove anything they prove that he was as good a man as his father, that he ruled wisely and kindly, and that his fall was due to a wicked conspiracy bolstered up by charges which were, one and all of them, entirely and absolutely false.*[14]

Colvin states that Theal 'elevates into a sort of South African Magna Carta' 'a memorial which narrated a portentous list of imaginary crimes and tyrannies', and then counters Theal's argument on several specific points. He concludes his chapter on Willem Adriaan van der Stel as follows:

> *But the cloud of detraction is passing; indeed, thanks to Mr Leibbrandt, it may be said to have already passed and the star of the Van der Stels shines out in our sky as clear and effulgent as the Southern Cross.*[15]

A school history reader published in 1910, which was compiled from Theal's historical writing, was unfavourably reviewed in *The State*.[16] Dorothea Fairbridge contributed extensively to this magazine, and when she came to write her own *History of South Africa* for schools, she made a point of the Van der Stel controversy:

> *There is no space to enter into the controversy here, save to note that the Rev. H.C.V. Leibbrandt, who was for thirty years Keeper of the Archives of the Cape of Good Hope, and had special facilities for studying this period of Cape history, has recorded his conviction that not one of the charges will bear the light of investigation.*[17]

In early August 1909 the *Cape Times* published a very positive review of Colvin's *Romance of South Africa*, and a second favourable review a few days later, both of which cited his defence of Van der Stel. The *Cape Times*, like all South African papers in 1909, was engrossed in the build-up to Union, following the progress of the Union Bill at Westminster and advertising monthly the contents of *The State*, and the work of the South African National Union (chaired by the pro-British lobbyist Florence Phillips), which was planning a major exhibition of South African industry to be held in Cape Town. Colvin's book was seen as a valuable contribution to nation building. Theal thought otherwise and joined

14 I.D. Colvin, *South Africa* (London: T.C. and E.C. Jack. 'Romance of Empire' series, undated, c. 1909), pp. 141–42.

15 Colvin, *South Africa*, p. 154.

16 *The State* (April 1910), p. 673.

17 D. Fairbridge, *A History of South Africa* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1918), p. 64.

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in vigorously, writing about the 'misrepresentation' of himself 'by the fanatics on the outer fringes of both the great political parties in this country':

> *Nothing but respect for the truth would justify the publication of a book so calculated to stir up racial passions as this volume of his, especially in the present time, and truth is not what he has striven long and earnestly to seek.*[18]

Besides the Van der Stel affair, Theal also takes issue with Colvin's description of the Slagter's Nek rebellion against British authority by remote Dutch farmers in 1815. He concludes, though, with a generous gesture:

> *The plan of the book is so excellent, and the author's style is so graceful, that I most sincerely wish it could be re-written with much less prejudice against those South African colonists who are now fellow-citizens with ourselves of the widely-extended British realm, and are entitled to truthful representation and common justice.*[19]

J. Edgar of the South African College replied with a long letter, summed up in his view that he has 'read all I can find on the case of Adriaan van der Stel, and I can find nothing in them to support Dr Theal's sweeping assertions'.[20] Theal responded, forcefully claiming that neither Colvin nor his supporters could read Dutch, and were pronouncing a verdict of 'not guilty' by merely listening to the arguments in defence. The Union archivist Colin Graham Botha, who was at that time an amateur historian under Leibbrandt's tutelage, innocently sent in a letter detailing the Cape family descendants of the Van der Stels, and another (unsigned) letter appeared on 7 September admonishing Theal for his mean spirit towards a 'nation builder'. It is evident that popular sentiment in Cape Town was on the side of Van der Stel, and that Theal's professional strictures were regarded as unwanted quibbling.

A year after Colvin's *Romance of South Africa* Fairbridge published her first book, the historical novel *That Which Hath Been*, again in support of Leibbrandt, making Van der Stel out to be an enlightened visionary and nation builder.[21] She dedicates her novel, 'the first significant historical novel in South African English literature'[22] to her mentor, 'Hendrik Carel Vos Leibbrandt, to whom South Africa owes the good name of Willem Adriaan van der Stel'. Theal, in his 1912 *Catalogue of South African Books and Pamphlets*, retorts that Fairbridge's novel is 'a cleverly written Romance, in which Governor W.A. van der Stel is represented, not as a faithless and unscrupulous tyrant, as he really was,

18 G.M. Theal, in the *Cape Times* (17 August 1909), p. 9.
19 Theal, *Cape Times* (17 August 1909), p. 9.
20 J. Edgar, in the *Cape Times* (20 August 1909), p. 6.
21 D. Fairbridge, *That which hath been* (Cape Town: *Cape Times*, 1910).
22 J.L.P. Snyman, 'The South African novel in English, 1888–1930' (unpublished MA thesis, University of Potchefstroom for Christian Higher Education, 1952).

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but as a noble-minded man'.[23] In the same year he published *W.A. van der Stel and Other Historical Sketches*, and one Leo Fouche edited *Het Dagboek van Adam Tas (1705–1706) Met een Onderzoek naar de Klachten der Vrijburgers tegen de Gouverneur Willem Adriaan van der Stel*, which was translated into English two years later. This was intended to shed more light on the legitimacy of the burghers' accusations. The controversy had become a sounding board for political developments at the time, with renewed division between nationalist Afrikaners (J.B.M. Hertzog founded the original Nationalist Party in 1915) and Progressives or Unionists, who saw in the patrician Van der Stel family a mirror to their own allegiances.

V. Turning Van der Stel into a visionary

Dorothea Fairbridge's patron Florence Phillips, wife of the mining magnate Lionel Phillips, purchased Vergelegen, the old homestead that was built by Willem Adriaan van der Stel, and made it into a model farm (importing new strains of livestock for breeding experiments) and a Mecca for the artists and writers, politicians and statesmen of the day. This acquisition followed the colonial model of a sentimental Tory identity. It seemed to be *de rigueur* for politicians to seek to receive peerages and to find for themselves a local country seat on the lines of English landed gentry. Florence's husband, Lionel Phillips, was made a baronet in 1910, along with Lord de Villiers of Wynberg, honouring their work in the National Convention that led to Union. Various other politicians joined the trend, purchasing old Cape Dutch farmsteads for themselves. The discourses all speak of mellow thatch, cooing doves, ancient oaks, elegant facades and gracious hostesses, French Huguenot (rather than 'rebarbative' Dutch) wed with English, old blood housed in homesteads that are jewel-like in their Arcadian settings.

Florence Phillips ruled from Vergelegen, with a magisterial control over cultural and artistic developments in South Africa. She sponsored Sir Edwin Lutyens to come to the country to design the Johannesburg Art Gallery, which she stocked with art purchased in London. She organised exhibitions and associations, sponsored significant studies such as Edward Marloth's multivolume *Flora of South Africa*, took charge of artists such as Gwelo Goodman — whose entire career as a colonial post-Impressionist became one of documenting of this genteel Africana world-view — and she sustained Dorothea Fairbridge's career as an author and 'nation builder'.[24]

Fairbridge did her proud. Fairbridge's first published work was a series of essays on 'Old Cape Homesteads', that appeared in *The State. The State*

23 G.M. Theal, *Catalogue of South African books and pamphlets* (Cape Town: *Cape Times*, 1912).
24 A detailed chronicle of Phillips's work is in T. Gutsche, *No ordinary woman: the life and times of Florence Phillips* (Cape Town: Howard Timmins, 1966).

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was initially run and edited by members of Lord Milner's 'kindergarten' of young Oxford idealists, whom he had picked to assist in the reconstruction of the country after the South African War. They founded the 'Closer Union Movement' and ran the magazine under this banner for four years (1908–12). Its purpose was exclusively to debate the needful institutions of the new country, to propagandise a South African identity within the 'family' of the British Empire and to promote a sense of a common public culture. It was backed by Phillips and came to be sponsored by Sir Lionel. The magazine is a fascinating proleptic archival record of the ways in which a new nation-state is envisioned in public culture. Its neo-Hegelian idealism was driven by the vision of the editor, Lionel Curtis, who went on, after 1906, to campaign for 'closer union' within the British Empire.

On the wings of this shared idealism (and reacting to the political events of 1906, when a new British government recalled Milner and gave self-government to the Orange River and Transvaal colonies), Fairbridge published *That Which Hath Been* in 1910. It is a sustained sympathetic prosopopoeia of Willem Adriaan van der Stel and his family, his visions for the 'young country' and the furtive disloyalty of his detractors. He is gracious, kind, just, drawn to the beauty and promise of the land, dedicated to 'improvement' in arboriculture, viticulture and afforestation (the very values espoused by the progressivist lobby in 1910). In a memorable passage, Fairbridge places Willem Adriaan high on the flanks of Table Mountain, from where he gazes out at the panorama of the Cape Flats and the Hottentots Holland mountain range, with its promise of the hinterland beyond. She compares him here explicitly with the idea (and the idealised gestures) of Cecil John Rhodes, who by this date had been redeemed in memory among the imperial loyalists and served as their icon of nationhood. She also compares Van der Stel with her amour Lord Milner, who, she believes, was equally wrongfully withdrawn from his governorship of the Cape. Idealism is trammelled by the bitterness of lesser men. Idealism is sacrificial. The dreamers, the visionaries, Van der Stel, Rhodes and Milner are conflated into an algorithmic pattern of selfless nation-building in the face of regressive and crude democratic nationalists.

Two decades later (at the very moment when J.B.M. Hertzog, Nationalist Prime Minister of the Union, argued for the Statute of Westminster, which yielded greater autonomy for the British dominions) Henri Deherain, a French historian of Africa, wrote of this debate in his obituary essay on Dorothea Fairbridge:

> *When I spoke to Miss Fairbridge, we were amused to find ourselves firmly on opposing sides of the barricade, but I saw in the violence of the terms Miss Fairbridge used in speaking of her adversaries Huysing and Adam Tas — my clients, in the event — what passions this two-centuries-old quarrel was still able to arouse in the Cape. I shall add that she did not convince me of the innocence of Van der Stel, and*

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> *I was especially struck by the way in which all the French settlers of the Cape at the time took sides against him.*[25]

Deherain's footnote to this comment, in the very different political context of 1931 and from a neutral French perspective, is of particular interest in that the question of loyalty is entirely revised, from British imperialist sentiment to proto-republican nationalism:

> *In the history of South Africa, the Van der Stel affair assumes an importance far beyond the actual source of contention. In taking a united stance against the Governor, the white inhabitants acquired a sense of national solidarity for the first time. They became aware that they were no longer temporary European settlers in Africa but that they were beginning to form a new race, that they were no longer either Dutch or French, but Afrikaaners (sic)* [. . .] *Perhaps we are witnessing here* [in the uprising of the settler free burghers] *the dawn of South African nationalism, of which the recent adoption by the Union of South Africa of a different flag from the British one* [1927] *is the latest manifestation.*[26]

Fairbridge died in 1931. Her last commission as a writer was to edit the Milner papers, which were held by Milner's widow (and Fairbridge's romantic rival) Violet Milner (who was first married to Lord Edward Cecil, son of Victoria's Tory foreign minister the Earl of Salisbury). This project was abandoned by Fairbridge, with heightened emotions between the two, and was given to the historian Cecil Headlam instead. The passing of the Statute of Westminster coincided with the closure of a narrative of both imperial and personal romance. The national narrative was being rewritten in South Africa. English-speaking South Africans were adopting new interpretations of their place, in terms of a general sense of Western or European 'whiteness' and 'civilisation' rather than with specifically English or British sentiment. Further literary interpretations of Simon van der Stel and Vergelegen (including an English-language novel and a play in Afrikaans) were exclusively on the side of a version of 'freedom' and incipient settler nationalism.[27]

Vergelegen remains an iconic heritage site, but with a final twist in the matter of interpretation. Coinciding with the remaking of South African society and public culture in 1994 (the year of inauguration of a post-apartheid

25 H. Deherain, 'Un historien de Bonne-Esperance: Dorothea Fairbridge' (Paris: Bibliothèque Nationale, Bulletin de la Section de Geographie, 1931), p. 216. Privately translated into English, 1994.

26 Deherain, 'Dorothea Fairbridge', p. 217.

27 N.K. Lock, *No wine for the governor* (London: The Bodley Head, c. 1946); I.L. Jansen van Vuuren, 'Die beeld van Willem Adriaen van der Stel in die geskiedskrywing en in D.J. Opperman se versdrama, "Vergelegen"' (unpublished MA thesis, University of Potchefstroom for Christian Higher Education, 1973). Opperman's verse drama was published in 1956. See also A. Postma, *Governor or robber baron? The story of Vergelegen and Willem Adriaan van der Stel* (Somerset West: Annabi Publishers, 1995).

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state), historical archaeologists have shifted the focus of study from settler values to the remains of slave culture at Vergelegen, marking a new turn in the narrative of nationhood.[28] At the same time Vergelegen (still owned by the mining house of Anglo American) serves as a national hospitality house. Where Florence Phillips entertained Jan Smuts and the Governors General of the day, Vergelegen has now hosted summit receptions for leaders of the modern world such as Nelson Mandela and Bill Clinton.

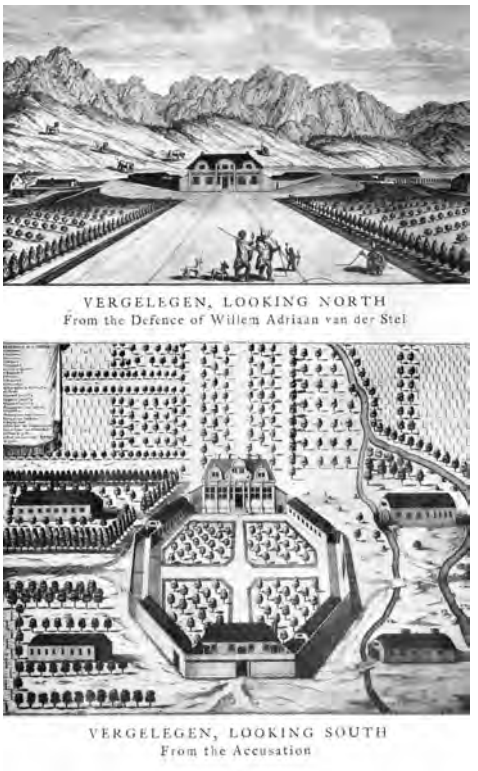


Figure 9.1 Two representations of the layout of Willem Adriaan van der Stel's farm, Vergelegen. At the top is Van der Stel's own image, showing the farm as a marker of settlement against the threatening backdrop of the mountains of the African escarpment with roaming lions. A group of indigenous people in the foreground indicates perhaps Van der Stel's self-image as a benevolent figure. Below is an image submitted by Van der Stel's opponents in which the extent of the land is emphasised. From Fairbridge, D., *Historic Houses of South Africa* (London: Oxford University Press, and Cape Town: Maskew Miller, 1922). The original prints of engravings were submitted to the VOC in accusation

28 A.B. Markel, 'Walls of isolation: the garden fortress of Governor Willem Adriaan van der Stel', *South African Archaeological Society Goodwin Series*, 7, 71 (1993), p. 83.

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and in defence. Fairbridge's photographic reproductions of the prints were taken by Arthur Elliott, a supporter of Fairbridge's heritage campaign, and the acknowledged leading photographer of Cape architecture circa 1910. (Source: author's collection.)



Figure 9.2 Line drawing of Vergelegen by G.S. Smithard, from Fairbridge, D., Historic Houses of South Africa (London: Oxford University Press, and Cape Town: Maskew Miller, 1922). Smithard worked for the Cape Times as artist collaborator of the journalist I.D. Colvin, who was the first to give serious coverage to the question of preservation of the Cape built environment during the 1890s. Both Colvin and Smithard feature as sympathetic fictional characters in Dorothea Fairbridge's novel about local heritage and identity, *Piet of Italy* (1913). (Source: author's collection.)



Figure 9.3 Reconstruction by the mural artist Jan Juta, showing Willem Adriaan van der Stel at Vergelegen in the company of other Dutch and of black slaves (South Africa House, London, circa 1930, original in colour). This painting, in the South African embassy in London, is now covered with a screen as it is considered to be racially offensive. Jan Juta was the son of Sir Henry Hubert Juta, chief justice of the

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Cape in the 1890s, and member of an influential pro-British family with visions of nation-building that were identical to those of Fairbridge. Juta was commissioned for numerous mural art works in public buildings in South Africa (as was Smithard). His choices of scene were often derived from the choices of historical episode that were included in the 1910 Pageant of South Africa (in which his mother, Lady Juta, played the Queen of Spain), indicating the direction of sentiment in a popular settler canon of South African history. (Source: author's collection.)

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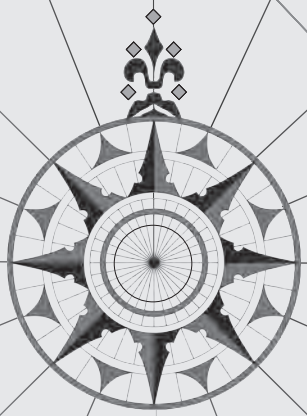
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Part IV



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10



Mapuche-Tehuelche Spanish Writing and Argentinian-Chilean Expansion during the 19th Century

Julio Esteban Vezub

Introduction

Until the collapse of the Spanish Empire, the colonial authorities, both secular and ecclesiastic, systematically introduced the practice of writing among the Mapuche and Tehuelche peoples in the extreme south of South America. The young states of Argentina and Chile continued to promote this discipline and their hegemony over the borderlands during the major part of the 19th century. However, once the expansion into Araucanía, Pampa and Patagonia was completed, circa 1880, the liberal elites of Argentina and Chile, and their historians, made strong moves in the opposite direction. They pursued the Mapuche notaries and *lenguaraces* (translators), confiscated their work and worked meticulously at erasing the political and cultural effects of writing, and the historicity, of the Mapuche and Tehuelche societies.

From the 18th to the 19th centuries, the great *úlmenes*, *lonko* and *gamákia*—or *caciques*—had permanent secretaries and notaries, sent their children to the Jesuit and Franciscan missionary schools, received government provisions such as paper, wax seals and ink, formed extensive information networks that crossed the Andes, and conserved their documents for many decades. Even though historians and anthropologists had access to these sources throughout the 20th century, they insisted, blindly, that these colonised, or soon to be colonised, cultures were illiterate, and complained about their primitive vocality. It was only recently that research concerning both nations, and in Wallmapu—or Mapuche country—acknowledged the ethnocentric prejudices of reducing reading and writing to their alphabetic expressions, as the hidden texts were unearthed from the national archives.

Using the correspondence of José María Bulnes Llanquitruz and Valentín Saygüeque, two great northern Patagonian chiefs of the 19th century, we will concentrate on the relationships between Spanish writing and reading as practised

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in the *rukas* and Mapuche-Tehuelche *toldos*.[1] This includes other significant types of engravings and markings, such as historical lineages stamped on textiles, silver jewellery and rock paintings. We will also look at the translation of ritualistic parliamentary proceedings to documents, and the techniques of supervising and controlling the writers. Of special interest is the conception of writing with blood, which lends a physical significance to the writing. Finally, we will look at written texts that include Mapuche and Tehuelche words, and at the lapse in Spanish linguistics, both of which were symptoms of the ambivalence that power relationships felt in the colonial and republican environments.

I. Mapuche-Tehuelche writings, the historiography, and the corpus secrets

Santiago Albarracín, an official naval log-keeper who sailed the northern Patagonian rivers during the period of Argentinian expansion in the 1880s, transcribed a letter sent by a *cacique* to the head of the expedition. He described the letter as having 'curious and picturesque orthography', '… one of these indigenous documents, each rarer than the other and which will completely disappear with the extinction of their authors'. Albarracín foresaw that these documents '… would be antecedents which would possibly help in the future to write the history of this war-mongering and freedom-loving race, which resisted the progress of civilization for so long'.[2] The sailor was surprised at the unexpected discovery of literacy and the historicity of the documents, noting their value as a source for future historians.

Although Albarracín's prejudices considered the work primitive, he recognised the practice of writing and bureaucracy in the 19th-century Mapuche-Tehuelche *toldos*, and the combination with non-alphabetical forms to portray meanings, which took anthropologists and historians more than a hundred years to understand.

As Jacques Derrida revived Jean-Jacques Rousseau's proposal that writing is only the representation of speech, it is strange that more attention has been paid to determining the image than the object.[3] To overcome that negligence, paraphrasing González Echeverría, we will concentrate on the multiple relationships among the Mapuche-Tehuelche archives, the power, and the stories about legitimacy and the beginnings. This author describes the

1 'Toldo' is the Spanish noun for the Mapuche-Tehuelche house in the Pampa and Patagonia regions, made of wooden posts and beams and tented with guanaco (*Lama guanicoe*), cow, horse and other animal hides. 'Toldería' is a group of this type of housing.

2 S. Albarracín, *Estudios generales sobre los ríos Negro, Limay y Collón Curá y el lago de Nahüel Huapí* (Buenos Aires: Imprenta J. Alsina, 1886) I, p. 54.

3 J. Derrida, *De la gramatología* (México: Siglo XXI, 1998), p. 37.

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Archive as a modern myth that is based in an antique format, a form of origin, completely empathetic with Mapuche memorials.[4]

Albarracín's observations were disregarded. The sources were within reach of historians and many cited them, but they believed that the only possibility of confronting the past of the Patagonian native societies lay with the explorers' chronicles, the documentation of the frontier forts or the retrospectives elaborated by the ethnographers of the first half of the 20th century. They bemoaned the documentary silence, and the distortions given by the generalised second-hand testimonies. The prejudice was so strong that attention was not paid to the data and available signs of Spanish writing between Mapuche-Tehuelche people for decades.

In 1955 Tomás Harrington referred to the abundance of correspondence between the *caciques* and the national authorities. With relation to the corpus that is the concern of this essay, Alberto Scunio was as surprised as Albarracín at the 'English calligraphy' of José Antonio Loncochino, the Mapuche who worked as Saygüeque's main secretary.[5] Twenty years later, the Benedictine monk Meinrado Hux published the biographies of both *lonko* or 'heads',[6] referring to the documents of the two cousins, Llanquitruz and Saygüeque, but without detecting the fact that these chiefs used to write; Hux limited himself to extracting empirical data only. Despite the fact that these historians had read and cited the documents, they did not visualise the life, complexity or social networks behind the sources. It was necessary to change viewpoints to understand that these documents were not rare or occasional, if not frequently practised in political and commercial issues in the most important *tolderías*.

Another priest and historian, Juan Guillermo Durán, has recently glossed the letters from the archives of Manuel Namuncurá, Calfucurá's son, verifying the existence of native correspondence and small bureaucratic teams during the years prior to national occupation.[7] But Durán insists that the canonical perspective of the possession of papers and photographs was a 'curious fact', as anticipated earlier by Albarracín, or a 'primitive documentation', which was captured and kept by Estanislao Zeballos, the intellectual designer of the 1880 political extermination and barbarisation of the native peoples.

4 R. González Echevarría, *Mito y archivo. Una teoría de la narrativa latinoamericana* (México: FCE, 2000).

5 'In January of 1880, Saygüeque continued to correspond with his old friend Francisco P. Moreno through his secretary Loncochino, an Indian whom headed his letters with the inscription *Gobernación Indígena de las manzanas* and possessed a really enviable English handwriting'. A. Scunio, 'El País de las Manzanas', *Boletín de la Academia Nacional de la Historia*, XLV (1972), pp. 183–207.

6 M. Hux, *Caciques huiliches y salineros* (Buenos Aires: Marymar, 1991).

7 J.C. Durán, *Namuncurá y Zeballos: el archivo del cacicazgo de Salinas Grandes (1870–1880)* (Buenos Aires: Bouquet Editores, 2006).

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In spite of these exceptions, historians forgot that many religious orders and the Spanish Crown had instructed some native elites in religious dogma and the administration of power.[8] Since the 17th century the colonists had tried to establish written communications in northern Patagonia. The government of Chiloé sent missionaries and qualified people to maintain these communications with Lake Nahuel Huapí, a completely autonomous region east of the Andes.[9] Contrary to those efforts, the historiographical blindness that accompanied the process of state expansion imposed disciplinary limits on 20th-century researchers. Even those that worked methodologically as classical historians, as in the case of Milcíades Alejo Vignati,[10] preferred to be known as 'ethnologists', considering that they studied cultures without writing, therefore placing them out of the disciplinary boundaries of history.

Resigned to this manner, the last supporter of the school of the *kulturkreises* in Argentina defined its genealogical reconstruction technique 'in chronological order in an inverse sense', denying historicalness and agency to the actors: 'Once it surpassed the temporary limit of memory, and thus exhausted the oral testimonies, written sources are undertaken. There is no history of this character elaborated by the natives that exists. This supposes a limitation counting partial information in two senses: 1) augmenting limitations, and 2) deformed or distorted in variable degrees'.[11] According to this paradoxical appraisal, where both classes of registration are despised, the (native) oral precedes schematically to the written (Occidental or Spanish-Creole), and anthropologists ultimately resort to the written, with their alien condition to the culture and real world-views.

A different perspective was offered by Guillermo Cox's diary, one of those underestimated sources of the 19th-century native world. This traveller reported that the 'Chilean-Spanish dictionary' and the *Chilean Grammar* by Father Febres inspired admiration among Huentrupan's people, to whom Cox read '… words and phrases in Dugu-Mapu and the prayers, that some principally the women, knew by memory'. Cox also baptised a girl by native request, and they asked him to recite 'the Creed in Chilean tongue'.[12] Mariano

8 González Echevarría, *Mito y archivo*, p. 82.

9 D. de Rosales, *Historia general del reyno de Chile* (Valparaíso: Imprenta del Mercurio, 1877) I, p. 257.

10 M.A. Vignati, 'Un capítulo de etno-historia norpatagónica: José María Bulnes Llanquetruz', *Investigaciones y Ensayos* 13 (1972), pp. 89–123.

11 R. Casamiquela, *El linaje de los Yanquetruz Confirmación genealógica de la presencia—en época histórica—del sustrato pantehuelche en el área pampeana* (Trelew: Fundación Ameghino, 2004), p. 5.

12 G. Cox, *Viaje en la rejiones septentrionales de la Patagonia, 1862–1863* (Santiago de Chile: Imprenta Nacional, 1863), pp. 136–37.

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Baudrix, the Chilean consul in Buenos Aires, recounted in the prologue of the 1863 edition that the *Pehuenches* who accompanied Cox were delighted with the reading of their own vicissitudes, published in *El Araucano*.

But the egocentric methodology of the Historic-Cultural School ignored how the texts on the Mapuche-Tehuelche returned to the protagonists, and the way in which each reading contained other readings, and how the European and native writings fed each other mutually. In comparison with the antecedents, much of the invisibility of the sources and the poor quality of the observations of 20th-century ethnologists were consequences of the 'kidnapping' of the corpus and its indiscriminate blending with the documentation kept by military commanders. This happened to Saygüeque's correspondence, which he had conserved since 1860. His archives were captured in 1881 during the attack on his *toldos*, and at present are still not filed on their own in the Archivo General de la Nación. Instead they are mixed with the papers of Conrado Villegas, the leader of the military campaigns against Saygüeque between 1880 and 1885.[13] The material capture of the documentation had continuity in the symbolic capture of the memory of the subjects that produced it, and of the historic conditions in which they produced the documents. The ghostly survival among the manuscripts of an Argentinian leader should be considered in historiographical perspective: if the Archive is the 'backup' of the national past, the abduction of the native corpus is symptomatic of the occlusion of other projects, or other alternative national identities.

Upon revising the etymology, González Echevarría emphasised '… the multiple connections among the secret (to know or understand private knowledge), the origin and the power that encloses the concept of Archive'.[14] The word 'arcane' stems from Latin, and means 'mysterious or specialised knowledge, language, or information accessible or possessed only by the initiate'.[15] If, as Echevarría says, the power, the secret and the law are in the origin of the archives, and the archives keep the secrets of the State, it is necessary to discuss what relationships we, the historians, have with this *mana* that feeds us.

Thus the new epistemological and ideological conditions can be understood, which permits us to recover the agency of the actors. The recent attempt at an intellectual reordering of the Mapuche corpus was filed in the opposite order imposed by the official archives, and was organised by the original management tied to these documents. This new practice supplies the formulation of an anti-

13 Archivo General de la Nación, Buenos Aires (AGN), VII, 723 'Angel Justiniano Carranza'.
14 González Echevarría, *Mito y archivo*, p. 60.
15 'Arcanum', *Merriam-Webster's Online Dictionary* (www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/arcanum).

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secret, a body of data that is public, in an unessentialistic way, which returns to the problems of legitimacy and origins.

The influence of the Spanish literate tradition was accessible to Abelardo Levaggi, a historian knowledgeable in legal sciences, who showed the relationship between the practices of the Mapuche notaries and the construction of a diplomatic corpus among autonomous entities since colonial times.[16] María Teresa Boschín contributed to this investigation that the office of the '*Secretaría de Valentín Saygüeque*' was one of those corpus *desaparecidos*, endorsing it with other famous documentary assemblies of the Argentinian 19th century, such as the office of the '*Secretaría de Juan Manuel de Rosas*', the governor of Buenos Aires between 1829 and 1852.

Pavez Ojeda deepened that theoretical break by advancing the declassification of the Mapuche documents, contributing to the characterisation of the literate *toldos* and *malales*.[17] Upon putting into practice a notion of writing that exceeds the alphabetical demonstrations, and to question the concept 'logo-phonocentric', Pavez Ojeda emphasises the homology among the letters, the treaties and the oral parliaments as forms of reciprocating text, breaking the paternalistic cliché that the modern appropriations which natives carry out would be resolved by means of cognitive assimilations with 'traditional' practices. This decreasing relationship with the State recovered the radical importance of writing and reading for the Mapuche autonomy projects. and the historical bureaucratic practices, which this author considers unsubmissive to the 'notarial order', are neither fully state, nor fully urban. Thanks to the dialogue with these contributions, we move away from the thought of the writing as an external element to the oral tradition.

In what measure were the Mapuche-Tehuelche illiterate? The question has promoted the search for other discursive registrations, looking back at alphabetical writing in a more wide-ranging analysis in relation to material culture and the 'arts of memory',[18] the role of specialists and shamans, and with other significant types of engravings and markings acknowledged, such as historical lineages stamped on textiles, silver jewellery and rock paintings. As Deleuze and Guattari said, it is not a matter of an evolutionary analysis, but

16 A. Levaggi, *Paz en la frontera. Historia de las relaciones diplomáticas con las comunidades indígenas en la Argentina (Siglos XVI–XIX)* (Buenos Aires: Universidad del Museo Social Argentino, 2000).

17 J. Pavez Ojeda, 'Cartas y parlamentos: apuntes sobre historia y política de los textos mapuches', *Cuadernos de Historia* 25 (2006), pp. 7–44; and 'Las Cartas del Wallmapu', in J. Pavez Ojeda (comp.), *Cartas mapuche siglo XIX* (Santiago de Chile: Ocho Libros/CoLibris, 2008).

18 C. Severi, 'Scritture figurate e arti della memoria nel nuovo mundo: Valades, Schoolcraft, Löwy', in Convegno internazionale di studi, *Memoria e memorie* (Firenze, Leo S. Olschiki Editore, 1998), pp. 29–65.

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what predominates the strategies of the subjects in contexts of confrontation: the goldsmithing, jewellery making, the ornamentation, even the decoration, do not form a writing, although its power of abstraction is not in any way smaller. What happens is that the agency's power is in another form. With the concerns of writing, the nomads did not have any need to create it; they lent it to their sedentary imperial neighbours, who even provided them with a transcription of the phonetics of their tongues.[19]

In the 17th century, the Spanish chroniclers mentioned 'knots and arrows' that functioned 'as appointment notices';[20] in that more extensive line of reasoning, according to Harrington, *yáutatrr* or *yautatrrúiêtrr* simultaneously signified 'to paint', 'to mark' and 'to write' in the Tehuelche *gününa yájitch* tongue of northern Patagonia. Cox recounts that upon concluding a letter dictated by Huincahual, with the translation by the *lenguaraz*, it was passed to the *cacique* to be signed, and '… the signature was very simple: he was pleased to draw a small line curve in the shape of a shell'. [21]

The thesis of María Teresa Boschín, on the rock art of north-central Patagonia, considers that information,[22] associates the 'shell' with the spiral motifs and verifies the inscription on diverse media — stones, leathers, textiles, bodies — of the names of the lineage names or 'family emblems' registered by Francisco P. Moreno and by José Félix de Augusta on either side of the Andes.[23] Harrington concluded that, one or two generations after Moreno's expedition, the function of tattooing was to facilitate the recognition, on the part of friends and kin, of the dead person 'in the other world'.[24] According

19 G. Deleuze & F. Guattari, *Mil mesetas, capitalismo y esquizofrenia* (Valencia: Pre-textos, 1988), p. 403. Tzvetan Todorov had another approach, with ethnocentric appraisals on the levels of abstraction: 'The stylized drawings, the pictograms that the Aztecs used are not a lower degree of writing: they are a notation of the experience, not of the language.' T. Todorov, *La conquista de América. El problema del otro* (Buenos Aires: Siglo XXI, 2003), p. 88.

20 Rosales, *Historia general del reyno de Chile* I, p. 178.

21 Cox, *Viaje en la rejiones septentrionales de la Patagonia*, p. 95. In Spanish, *lenguaraz* means 'someone who speaks two or more languages' (www.rae.es/rae.html).

22 M.T. Boschín, *Tierra de Hechiceros. Arte indígena de Patagonia septentrional Argentina* (Salamanca: Ediciones Universidad de Salamanca, 2009).

23 F.J. de Augusta, '¿Cómo se llaman los araucanos?' (Bahía Blanca: Centro de Documentación Patagónica, Universidad Nacional del Sur, 2002). 'The Gennaken have family insignias, like the Pieles Rojas; my caravan was led by the descendants of the "days" or of the "sun that keeps going", a powerful family in another time, and today represented only by three or four individuals', in E. Moreno, *Reminiscencias de Francisco P. Moreno* (Buenos Aires: Eudeba, 1979), p. 117.

24 'The Tehuelches and Gununas were tattooed. On the arms and back of the hands and the ankles [...] a line or inverted triangles. The objective of the tattooing was to serve them as a light in the other world, after death, they could be recognized by their kin and friends', in T. Harrington, 'Cuaderno I' (Manuscript: Fondo Documental Programa Pilcaniyeu, CENPAT-CONICET, n/d), I, p. 86.

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to Boschín, the *mapudungun* meaning of the lineage names inscribed in a list of subordinate *caciques*, sent by Saygüeque to the first military governor of Patagonia in 1880, can be compared with the motifs of art that are repeated in the archaeological sites.

Francisco P. Moreno, the Argentine naturalist who carried out scientific explorations that facilitated the territorial occupation, commented that Saygüeque himself '… indicated repeatedly a mountain that is found situated against its *toldos*, in Caleufú, telling me that there were dens used as hideouts of *walichus*, with walls painted, but never, in spite of having promised to accompany me, I never did see them'.[25] The explorer attributed the responsibility of the paintings to a 'race extinguished that perhaps preceded the current natives', but Boschín re-establishes the contact of both methods of communication, asking if the 'trip to the Paleolithic Era' that Moreno carried out would have been guided by the descendants, or by the same authors of the parietal art.[26] Saygüeque's secret—he being one of the leaders who had seized the alphabetical writing—protected its rock archive. This gave evidence that the identity among the different types of texts, be it on stone or paper, was conceived as a difference of communication styles. Saygüeque himself proclaimed in his letters, that he was '… a little deaf to understand what is written, only I lack very little to explain well the Christian's *castilla* language […] as likewise I do the operation when I direct commission in the style of my tongue'.[27]

The Mapuche letters were written and read collectively, in dual relationship when the texts were noted in parliaments, and at the same time the parliaments dramatised the treaties or documents. Upon emphasising the interpretation of the Hispanic-Creole-Mapuche parliamentary ritual as textual activity, like a 'space of marks production' where the traditional relationship is inverted, Pavez Ojeda undermines the image of '… a colonial subject reduced to a pure corporal presence, a subjectivity that is dispelled with the voice, by its supposed incapacity to be recorded in history'.[28] On the contrary, the *lonko* drew narratives whose chronology we can extend to at least one hundred and fifty years, to the principles of the 18th century. Although it is 'old' to measure the distance between two generations, Saygüeque appeals to legitimacies of double origin upon invoking the '… educations that were left to me by the inheritance of my deceased father *Antiguo Cacique Principal* Chocorí'. The same

25 F.P. Moreno, *Viaje a la Patagonia austral 1876–1877* (Buenos Aires: Solar/Hachette, 1969), pp. 320–21.

26 M.T. Boschín, *Historiografía del arte rupestre de la Patagonia Argentina. Problemas, teorías y metodologías* (Salamanca: Memoria de Grado Universidad de Salamanca, 2002), p. 61.

27 AGN VII, 723, fs. 419–24.

28 Pavez Ojeda, 'Cartas y parlamentos', p. 30.

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thing was done by his cousin Ynacayal, who combined the teachings of his father with the ideas he received from 'numerous educated Christians', written as a code of ethics where the different commandments were enumerated like the 'first article', the 'second' and 'third'.

That control of different textual 'styles' or 'operations' emphasises the mediation of the secretary, or *lenguaraz*, who sat on the right of the *lonko* to assume the role of translator, although their leader would have understood Spanish.[29] The ethnographical sources, such as the Mapuche letters, gave many examples where these assistants of shamanic upbringing 'passed the word'.[30] Not all the *lenguaraces* were alphabetised, but many had a socio-political or economic rank equivalent to that of the *cacique*, or were related to him. Often they were '*códigos*', wise men or consultants. In Saygüeque's *toldos*, 'nobody understood Spanish', except 'Loncochino, the silversmith from Valdivia Flandés, and the Chilean Indian Cochi-Miguel [...] who should drink my words', according to Moreno.[31] This idea of the beverage, occupies a major place in the ritual, and the secretary's mission is to decipher the hidden or true meaning of the message. He is also identified as the witchdoctor or shaman, the specialist of excellence that '... controls the esoteric knowledge of the *sacred codes* and norms of the Mapuche society'.[32]

The Mapuche and Tehuelche had high regard for written paper, and to speak and understand Spanish was highly prestigious. Cox pointed out that if some of its speakers wanted '... to show off their knowledge of the *Castilla*, they would speak Spanish and say "good morning relative"'.[33] As we saw, the penetration of this language goes back to the 17th century, and José Bengoa mentions the installation of a mission and school for native children in the western foothills, next to Santa Bárbara, where many children of *caciques* were educated.[34] According to this historian, after the revolutionary wars, the royalist friars strongly influenced the '*Pehuenches*', also known as the inhabitants of Saygüeque's '*País de las Manzanas*'.[35] José Antonio Loncochino, who was educated in one of these schools since childhood, participated in reciprocity relationships and cattle distribution. In addition, he was a *capitanejo* under the command of Saygüeque, in

29 L.V. Mansilla, *Una excursión a los indios ranqueles* (Buenos Aires: CEAL, 1980), I, p. 12.

30 Cox, *Viaje en la rejiones septentrionales de la Patagonia*, p. 94.

31 Moreno, E., *Reminiscencias de Francisco P. Moreno*, p. 146.

32 Tom Dillehay, cited by R. Foerster, *Introducción a la religiosidad mapuche* (Santiago de Chile: Editorial Universitaria, 1993), p. 117, noted in italics.

33 Cox, *Viaje en la rejiones septentrionales de la Patagonia*, p. 183.

34 J. Bengoa, *Historia del pueblo mapuche. Siglo XIX y XX* (Santiago de Chile: LOM, 2000), pp. 147–48.

35 This territory was known as the 'Manzanas Country' (the country of the apples) on account of the great number of fruit trees introduced by Jesuit missionaries arriving in the region via the Pacific Ocean during the 17th century and the beginning of the 18th century.

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the context of growing militarisation in the family relationships, with occurred at the same time as the diffusion of Spanish writing. That is to say, the *cacique* and his assistant dominated the expressive resources of the European language, without neglecting the formal procedures and the parliamentary protocols in their own tongue in that framework of crisis. The dialogue between texts, the homology among the parliaments, the writing and the legal language — whose 'dialectic and controversial nature' were incorporated by the Mapuche — would be reinforced with the historic speech that would also exploit Saygüeque in favour of the centralised political power. González Echevarría concluded, by the way of the Latin-American narrative origins, that if '… the key figures of the notarial rhetoric were the notaries and the lawyers; among the key figures of the historic writing the secretaries were found'. We now have a more profound understanding of the place Saygüeque and Loncochino occupied in this ambiguous relationship of the Mapuche-Tehuelche with writing.

II. From blood ink to the bureaucracy of war

Valentín Saygüeque and José Antonio Loncochino were the duo who disciplined their relatives. To understand the emergence of the national states in Patagonia, and the effects on the Mapuche-Tehuelche chiefdoms, it is useful to review the differences between Saygüeque and his cousin, Llanquitruz, who preceded him in the control of the Limay and Negro river basins until his murder in 1858. Also, it is necessary to understand what changes were produced between the learned written practices of each one, before Saygüeque managed to locate the centre of the information field and power.

Llanquitruz set down the basis for the lasting pact with the nation-state that Saygüeque perfected between 1860 and 1880. The letters written and conserved in the *toldos* for these twenty years were the guarantee of that diplomatic relationship. The fact that Llanquitruz, Saygüeque and Loncochino were baptised with Christian names illuminates the Mapuche-Tehuelche capacity for 'contagion'.[36] Before Loncochino started as secretary in 1874, Saygüeque had inherited the writers who had worked for his cousin, Llanquitruz, and along with them the premises of the chiefdom: the weaving of networks, the rhetoric of lineage, the handling of identity, the exercise of police power in favour of authorities, the militarisation of relationships, the accumulation of resources and the territorial autonomy before the expansion of Argentina and Chile.

Loncochino, a Mapuche educated in a mission in Valdivia, demonstrated the difference in the management of epistolary red tape and bureaucratic regulation.

36 A. Menard, 'Edmond R. Smith's writing lesson: Archive and representation in 19th-century Araucanía', in this volume.

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Although few of Llanquitruz's papers have been conserved, and these limited to the three years prior to his murder, they are sufficient to determine that he intervened more visibly than Saygüeque in writing: he stamped crosses as proof of faith and signed with his own hand the treaty with the State of Buenos Aires in 1857. More surprising still, for lack of ink he wrote a letter with his own blood, a fact that frightened the military commander to whom he had sent the missive. Llanquitruz's stamp was printed as significantly as the letter of the secretary, Francisco del Carmen Marqués Bravo, another wage earner in the *toldos* from Valdivia,[37] and who supported the main lineage heads for twelve years at least.

That corporeal relationship with writing, that continuation of the blood rituals that were commonly practised to seal pacts among the Mapuche-Tehuelche, would be subsequently mediated by the notarial protocol, and would be lost when Saygüeque succeeded his cousin at the top of the chiefdom. The blood ink, with which Llanquitruz both terrified and seduced the authorities, would be replaced by friendly letters to the landowners of Carmen de Patagones, the enclave where the indigenist policy was organised. To the political condition of the corpus he added the character of accounting and commercially collected letters. At the end of the letter series, toward 1879, the communications acquired a military–diplomatic condition, as relations hardened between the Chilean authorities and the trans-Andean *lonko*, with whom Saygüeque intensified the exchange. In that altered framework, José Antonio Loncochino acted as a secretary of war.

In the first link, Llanquitruz argued that his efforts were promoting peace, and informed the Argentinian commander that he had met with the *caciques* '… demonstrating that all the people of Carmen de Patagones *venía firmada* asking [for] peace, and neither fights nor *tradisiones*, because I am the *cabeza* of all the *indiadas* and [I owe] to advise them'.[38] The physical conception of the writing reappears, where those who signed a document are presented in full-person ('*venía firmada*'), and the people are transported along with the commitment through the paper. *Tradiciones* in Spanish means 'traditions', but *traiciones* means 'betrayals'. The lapsed linguistics stripped both poles of the new political relationship, leading to a crisis of subjectivity. In the meantime, writing guaranteed that they would abstain from treason or revenge, a key dynamic in 'traditional' societies, where war is the institution that assures the internal cohesion of the community and, simultaneously, promotes the centrifugal forces that cause the community to splinter, complicating the process of unification under the State.[39] Writing would help to alter these

37 Hux, *Caciques huiliches y salineros*, p. 25.

38 José María Bulnes Llanquitruz to commander Benito Villar, 12 June 1856. AGN X, 19. 4. 5.

39 P. Clastres, *Investigaciones en antropología política* (Barcelona: Gedisa, 1981).

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structures; one of the great trans-Andean *lonko*, Quilapán, wrote to a Chilean commander: 'If there is no peace signing there is always war.'[40]

The letters of Llanquitruz relate that the *caciques* who supported him 'gave their faith of every heart', through hugs and squeezing of hands, besides marking the sign of the cross 'for those who didn't write', like an oath. The salutations, messages and questions initiated in the documents repeated the parliamentary ritual, supported by a series of symbolic, material, and reciprocal gifts that Saygüeque would continue with his people until 1880.[41] Bureaucratic discipline did not end with the literal translation of the *caciques*' meetings, nor with the distribution of cattle and silver jewellery in exchange for subordination. The collective representation continued with the sending of lists of *caciques* and *capitanejos* to the authorities, including the names of those 'under the command' of leaders such as Llanquitruz or Saygüeque. Undoubtedly, these lists eroded the pluralism of the old parliaments, to the benefit of the vertical relationship among the '*cabeza principal*' of the kin, as well as the nation-state.

The lapsed linguistics in the letters, and the relative shortage of terms in *mapudungun*, are symptoms of ambivalence *vis-à-vis* relations with the colonial (and republican) authorities. Formulae and paragraphs are repeated from document to document, but the meanings varied: a commander, advised to take care by the *güaliche*, sent greetings to his girlfriend and his native mother-in-law in 1861, due to the modernisation programme and the threats received by Saygüeque in 1879, on behalf of an 'Argentine Government that has too much power'. From the first to the last communication, the traffic shows us the empathy and the incorporation of state agents into the plot of the relationship, the ending of the distribution of cattle by the authorities and the final subjugation under the abstraction of a common 'country'.[42]

Without counting proper nouns, toponymy, deictic and ethnic allocations, native words do not abound in the office of the '*Secretaría de Valentín Saygüeque*'. *Huinca* ('foreign'), *güaliche* ('devil'), *mapo* ('land'), *enguillimapo* ('land' or

40 *'Al señor Don Barbosa en Toltén'*, Quilapán, 29 April 1870 (Archivo Universidad de Concepción, by courtesy of Rolf Foerster).

41 Col. Lucio V. Mansilla, who conducted an expedition to a treaty agreement with the *ranqueles* of the Pampa Central, described the red tape: 'The parliament is initiated with an inexhaustible series of salutations and questions [...] Later continues the messages [...] My brother, or my father, or my cousin, they have entrusted me to tell you that you will be happy in good company of all his bosses, officials and soldiers; he desires to meet you very much; he has very good news of you; he knows that you desire peace and that proves that you believe in God and that you have an excellent heart. At times each speaker has his own *lenguaraz*, otherwise they use communal *lenguaraz*.' In Mansilla, *Una excursión a los indios ranqueles* I, p. 13.

42 Olegario Orquera, Carmen de Patagones, 4 July 1861; and governor Álvaro Barros to his *'estimado compatriota Don Valentin Shayuequé'*, Buenos Aires, 6 December 1879 (AGN VII, 723, f. 462; and fs. 387–89).

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'southern country'), *ulmen* ('big man'), *conas* ('soldiers'), *müná* ('cousin') and *ruca* ('house') are the few that are found in the 137 documents that comprise the corpus of Saygüeque. Some of these terms were used by Christians, such as the commander Orquera or the mayor of Valdivia. However, Loncochino, the more knowledgeable secretary, did not use these terms. His arguments concluded that to write in 'the style of the *castilla* language of the Christians', and to speak in 'the style of the tongue', involved different words, and that the names of the people and the territory made a bridge between both communications.

We have referred to the 'treasons' or 'traditions' that Llanquitruz proposed to stop –for example, distributing twenty sets of shirts, shorts, vests, jackets and 'white hats' that could be of 'lower quality' because they were destined for his *caciquillos* and *capitanejos*. In several letters, confusing the Spanish first-person plural possessive pronoun (*nuestros*) with the second-person plural (*vuestros*), his cousin Saygüeque would insist on the failure of writing for other sensitive themes related to the sacred dimension, the ownership of 'blood and race' and the property of the land.[43] The writing advances the duality of these chiefdoms, especially in the critical points of identity, autonomy and territoriality. In the same way, ethnic signs and the categories of colonial texts (*indio*, *cacique*, *tribu*, etc.) would soon appear in the speech and text of the Mapuche.

III. The cartography of the Mapuche-Tehuelche corpus and the problem of power

The question we are left to resolve is, by what measure were these corpuses autonomous? Did the alphabet function like a state device between the Mapuche and Tehuelche? The triptych composed by politics, commerce and writing ordered the elites of the *tolderías*. Thus they indicated the supply of a ream of annual paper, according to the treaty between the Argentine government and Saygüeque of 1863, as well as the wax and the ink sold by the merchants.[44] According to the perspective of the *caciques*, the availability of literate resources helped in the successful management of government-issued rations, and whatever arrangements were made with officials and landowners. The incorporation of Spanish was one of the adaptations to the demands of contact with the State, but was also an exceptional resource, capitalised on by the native elites for their own projects.

The systematic dating of each letter was evidence that they were written with attention to the ordering of the days according to the Gregorian calendar. Beyond the coexistence and the superimposition of temporalities, the presence

43 AGN VII, 723, fs. 202–5; and f. 425.
44 AGN VII, 723, fs. 490 & 305.

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of missionaries, soldiers and merchants from the 18th century onward meant that there were fewer and fewer societies outside of this time—and, thus, of Western history. Despite the efforts of Francisco P. Moreno to simplify the calendar, by assuring that the natives counted 'suns', the relation of the Mapuche-Tehuelches of the 19th century with the Spanish world was governed by the time of capital and the State, a chronology taught in the mission schools and what was organised with the semi-annual rations of cattle and other goods drawn by the *caciques* in Carmen de Patagones.[45]

In the gaps in that temporality, Saygüeque dedicated systematic efforts to re-creating a tradition, centered in the building of the figure of his father Chocorí, and with it the repetition of the norms that he had instilled, to build bridges between the assault on his chiefdom and the continuity of family structures. This provides the rare opportunity to explore how the Mapuche-Tehuelche depicted the past, having accounted it from several generations before, with the goal of claiming their territory, explaining alignments and defining alterity. Just like every historiographical operation following the recognition of an identity, the letters also were fictitious alimentation. Far from devaluing, the lack of strict adaptation of the actors' story with their real past constitutes an indication of the complexity of its elaborations, built in a process of confrontation and cultural contrast; it is doubtful that it holds the imposition of exogenous or unilateral criteria.

Relating to the lack of autonomy of literate practices, Menard and Pavez Ojeda have presented objections that must be considered. These are based on the tendency to segmental sovereignty, and in the collective, diffuse forms and centrifuges of Mapuche political power, which were reflected in a decentred way to write texts that first were said in *mapudungun*, and later were translated and written in Spanish, a process that favoured polyphony, a multiplicity of speeches and forms of collective sovereignty.[46] The arguments of Menard and Pavez Ojeda question the theoretical framework of 'mestizo logics' and the hybridisation in Amselle's keys, Gruzinski and Boccara.[47] These arguments are based on an epistemology that facilitates the monitoring of the interruptions,

45 Moreno related that Saygüeque had told him '… that inside 5 suns [*anter*] there would take place a parliament concerning war [*aucatrahum*], composed of its main *caciques* and *capitanejos* for them to know me as a friend'. In F.P. Moreno, 'Viage á la Patagonia setentrional', *Anales de la Sociedad Científica Argentina* I (1876), p. 192.

46 Menard, 'Edmond R. Smith's writing lesson: Archive and representation in 19th-century Araucanía'; Pavez Ojeda, 'Las cartas del Wallmapu', p. 30.

47 J. Amselle, *Mestizo logics. Anthropology of identity in Africa and elsewhere* (Stanford, Cal.: Stanford University Press, 1998); S. Gruzinski, *La pensée métisse* (Paris: Fayard, 1999); G. Boccara, *Guerre et ethnogenèse Mapuche dans le Chili colonial. L'invention du soi* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 1998).

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the splits and the leakage lines against hegemony. Menard and Pavez Ojeda note that that theoretical framework remits to a process of colonisation that suppresses the heterogeneousness of the Mapuche archives.

The answer cannot be restricted, although the category '*indígena*' operates on the limitations of current colonial thought, and the same one was reappropiated in the 19th-century Mapuche-Tehuelche texts; one example is Saygüeque's letterhead, 'Gobierno Indígena de las Manzanas'. It is in this conflicting translation where they visualised the 'spaces of split', the 'in-between' and the gaps that open the subordinates' subjects to fracture, and at the same time to configure the social experience. Concerning the subordinates' voices, there where the majority of the stories are conserved, they were built by the colonisers or the local elites, Homi Bhabha noted that even the mimicry, executed by an 'unforeseeable colonised subject', struck the problem of unsolvable cultural difference for authority.[48] The appropriation of writing opened channels for that class of new significations, even when Patagonia was not exactly a 'colonised' space during the period.

Without doubt, the people were well informed. The news of Paraguay's war, the conflicts in Chile and the clashes with Bolivia and Peru, the vicissitudes of the revolution of 1874 and the factions of Buenos Aires, or the equipping of Argentinian troops with the Remington rifle, came at the Caleufú River with other news through the correspondence. Saving the distances among the militarisation of the '*Gobernación Indígena de las Manzanas*' and the state army, the description outlined by Jens Andermann, of a Julio Argentino Roca that '… emerges from his campaign tent as the final recipient of an enormous network of parts and reports that cross a field of annexation increasingly more vast',[49] seems to credit a reading from the office of the '*Secretaría de Valentín Saygüeque*' like the informational capital that permitted the *cacique* to be located in the centre of a field of power, in the sense proposed by Bourdieu.[50] It would not be an exaggeration to assert that, from time to time, *Las Manzanas* functioned like a postal distribution centre.

If we have not been able to find a simple answer to the debate on autonomy, it seems that this may be resolved in the future by means of a cartography of the Mapuche corpus, and of the oral networks and writings that supported it, paying attention to the plots of relationship and the onomastic, the territoriality and the toponymy, and their respective forms of totality and fragmentation.

48 H. Bhabha, *El lugar de la cultura* (Buenos Aires: Manantial, 2002), p. 54.

49 J. Andermann, 'Entre la topografía y la iconografía: mapas y nación, 1880', in M. Monserrat (comp.) *La ciencia en la Argentina entre siglos. Textos, contextos, e instituciones* (Buenos Aires: Manantial, 2000), p. 36.

50 P. Bourdieu, *Razones prácticas sobre la teoría de la acción* (Barcelona: Anagrama, 1999).

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One of the methodological keys of the investigation that we present is to superimpose the layout of the native roads of northern Patagonia with a network of information and correspondence at the heart of which was positioned Saygüeque. The traffic map of their '*Secretaría*' permits us to visualise the reach of a chiefdom whose influence was projected far beyond the inexact limits of the *País de las Manzanas*. We can represent the received letters by means of two different maps, because each one corresponds better with a different hypothesis of the territorialisation process designed by the office of the '*Secretaría de Valentín Saygüeque*'. We do not vary the form to visualise the decentralised relations that began between *Las Manzanas* and dozens of localities and Andean places, but we do modify the representation of the communications with Argentinian towns.

In the first map, the *toldos* of the Caleufú appear like an image of Rome — where all roads lead — assimilating the image of Saygüeque with that of Julio Argentino Roca leaving his tent, to take up again the metaphor of Andermann. In the second variant, the rosary of fortifications, *estancias* and small towns tacked along the Negro River appears like a centralised communication and political vector organised from Carmen de Patagones. In both cases, the *País de las Manzanas* is defined like an area whose occupation was disputed to the disadvantage of Chile. The cartographic representation of the sample correspondence flow showed an important dispersion of trans-Andean senders, with the supremacy `of Valdivia and Pitrufquén. In the second locality resided Ambrosio Paillalef, the main trade relation for Saygüeque to the west of the Andes.

We devised two maps because neither offers by itself an exact image of the configuration of an informational field, which should be dialectically drawn. Pairing the maps with the correspondence traffic offers only a partial interpretation of the spatial influence of Saygüeque and his *caciques*. Ignacio Coliqueo's letter, sent from Buenos Aires, supplies two valid readings. Moreover, Saygüeque's accumulation of power was fed from the metropolis, and at the same time the historic influence of his lineage was prolonged by the lands of Coliqueo to the south of Buenos Aires. Although fruitful, the definite cartography represents only a lesser part of the written communications, and offers a slanted image — demonstrating the lack of ties with *caciques* who had neither circumstantial nor permanent clerks. To complete a genuine representation of the territoriality and the spatial projection of the '*Gobernación Indígena de las Manzanas*', we need to superimpose an image of the wide spectrum of correspondence with a map of Patagonia's *tolderías* (see Figure 10.3).

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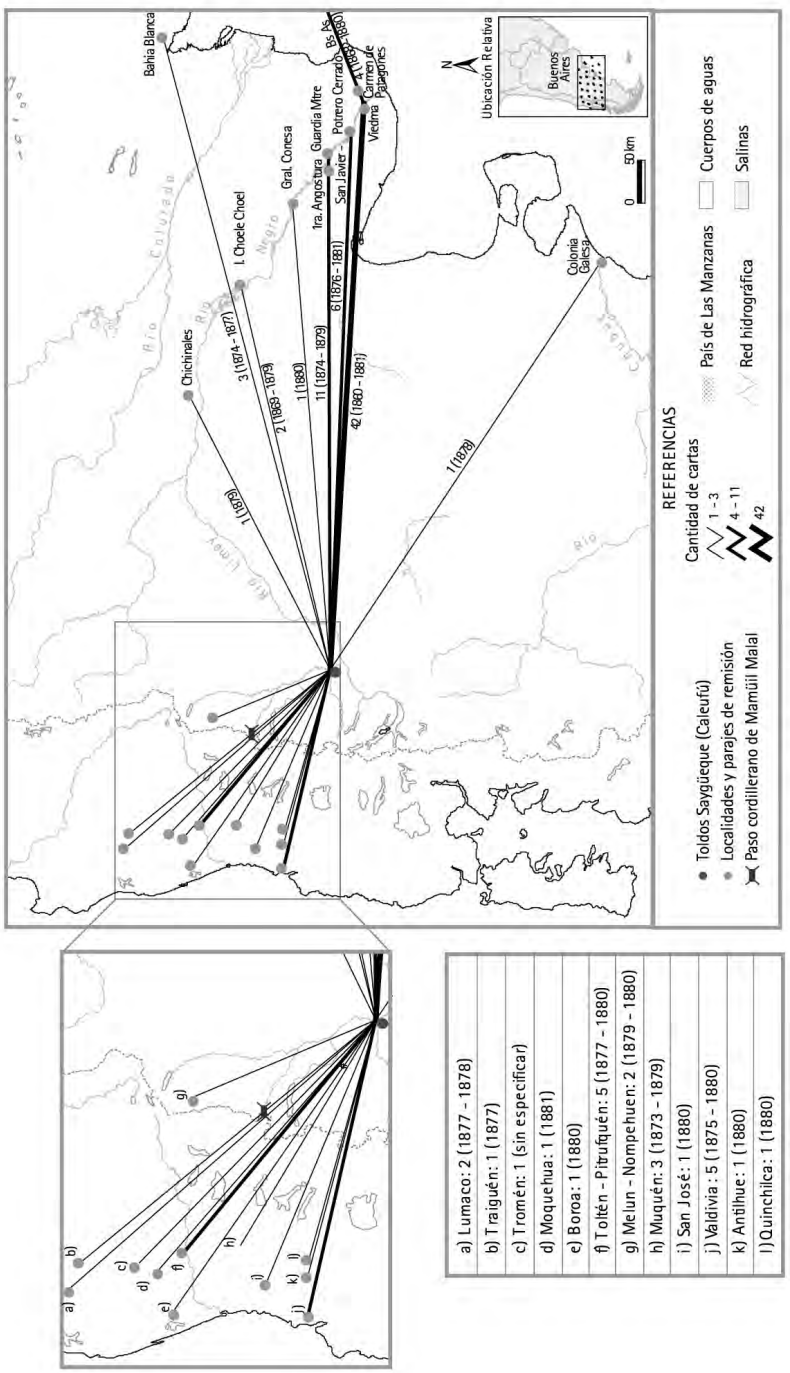


Figure 10.1 Correspondence received by Valentín Saygüeque: frequency and localities received from 1860–1880 (variant I)

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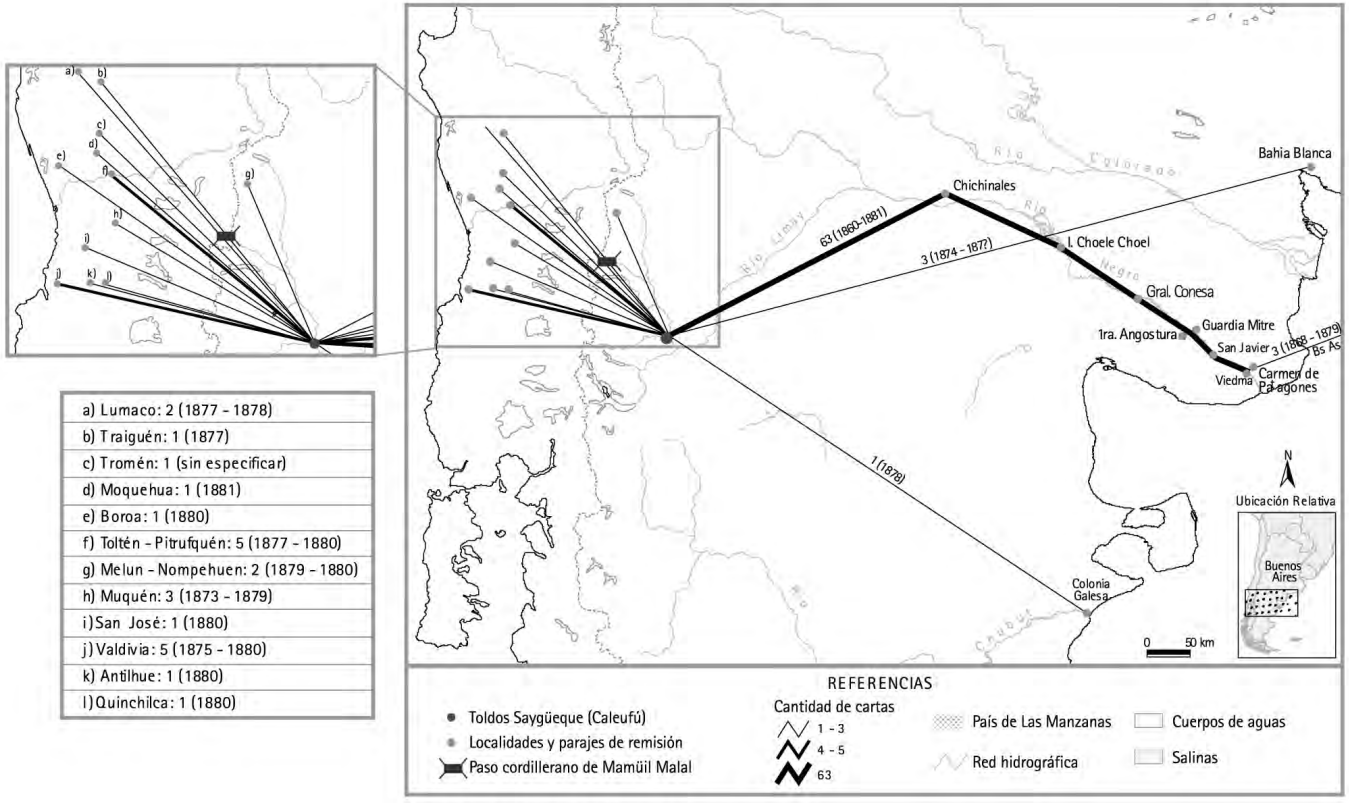


Figure 10.2 Correspondence received by Valentín Saygüeque: Frequency and localities received from 1860–1880 (variant II)

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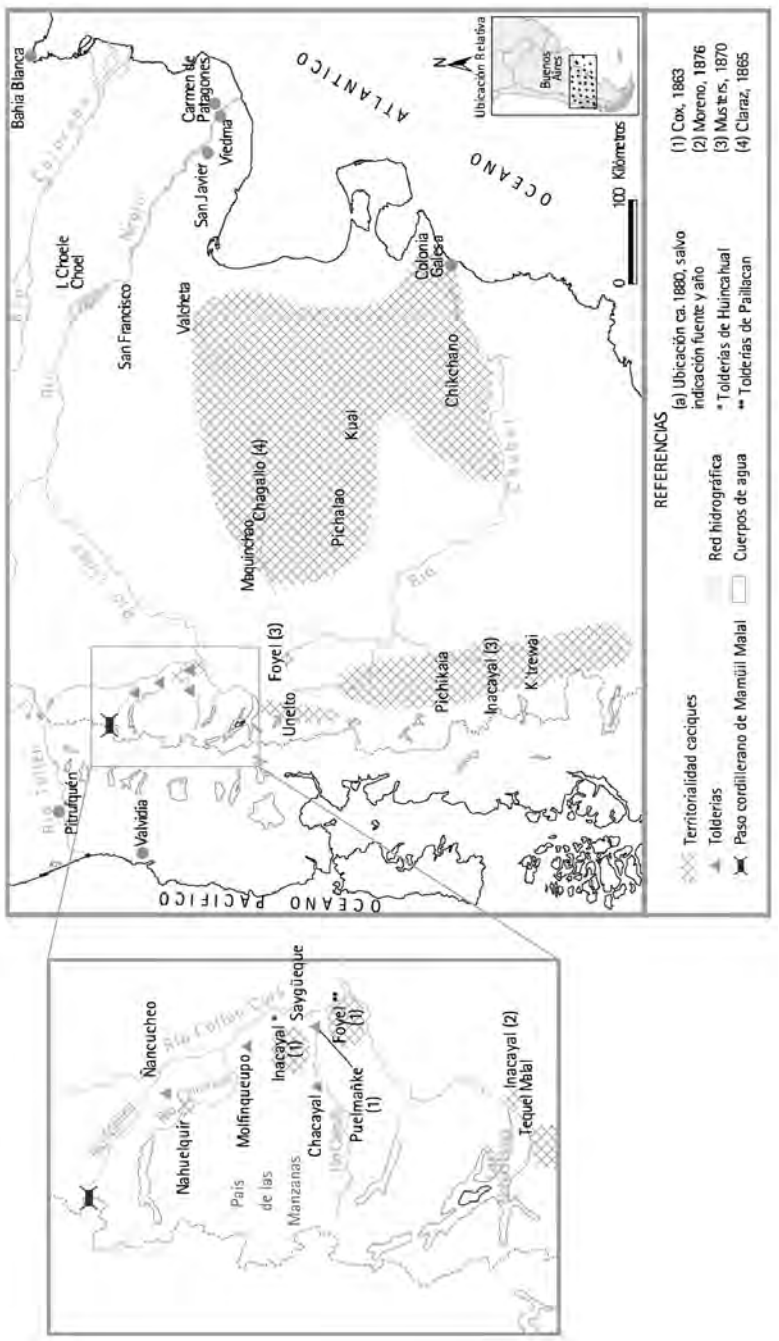


Figure 10.3 Central–North Patagonia and the País de las Manzanas: Caciques' territories and positions of tolderías (1863–1880)

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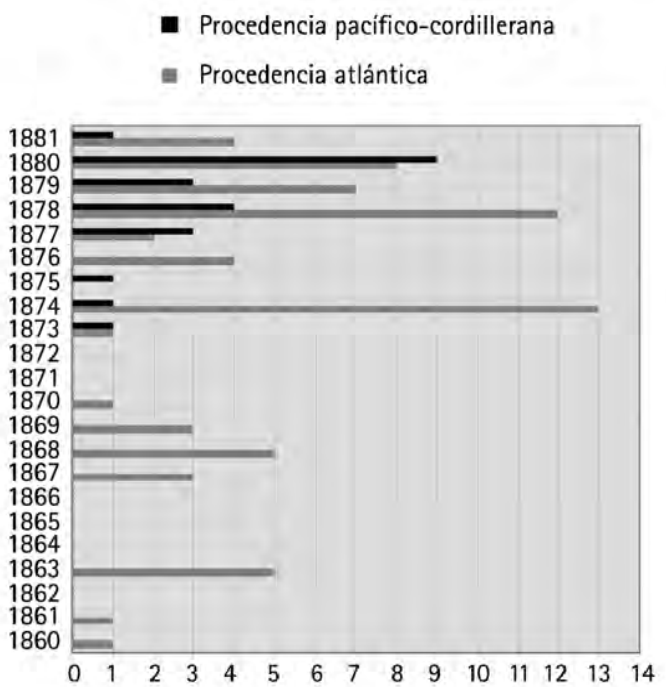


Figure 10.4 Annual quantity and classification of documents received by Valentín Saygüeque

Figure 10.4 summarises part of the correspondence flow information that the maps provide (figures 10.1 and 10.2). The same graphic details the quantity of letters and documents received yearly by the office of the '*Secretaría de Valentín Saygüeque*', between 1860 and 1881, classifying them according to the Atlantic or Pacific-Andean origin. The reading permits us to visualise a hiatus during the period 1864–1866, and another in 1871–1872, although it cannot be affirmed that the receipt of letters was suspended. It is verified that writings originating in Chile appeared in 1873, and that the ties intensified in that direction when Argentina started the war with the occupation of territory in northern Patagonia.

The bar chart recalls the image of the Andean pass as a 'back door', from an Argentinian perspective, to enter into the native world.[51] Cox described a semi-clandestine world of traders of firewater, cattle, weapons and other goods that transported a very important but less visible sociability with the

51 P. Navarro Floria & G. Nacach, 'Un viaje al interior de la frontera: Guillermo Cox en el norte de la Patagonia, 1862–1863', *Primer encuentro las metáforas del viaje y sus imágenes. La literatura de viajeros como problema* (Rosario: Universidad Nacional de Rosario, 2002).

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Pacific and the trans-Andean *lonko*. Nevertheless, during the first decade of the epistolary exchange, the closeness of the political and economic relationships of the Andean sector of the current Neuquén province seems to have been articulated from Carmen de Patagones and the Argentinian villages, with a peak of thirteen Atlantic letters in 1874.

The national configuration of the area was varying decade to decade, in direct relationship with the growing efficacy of rations to the 'Indian friends'. Not in vain, a fundamental part of the letters related precisely to the administration, politics and timing problems of the rationing system. In some way, the success of the ration policy explains the proliferation of letters, but the success of the politics of the letters explains also the proliferation of the rations.

The first known letter from Saygüeque was dated 30 April 1863, in the framework of treaties with the authorities. If the political power of the State is *polis*, police, that is to say, that network of communication, then the bureaucratic praxis organised around Saygüeque would be symptomatic of the radical change that his chiefdom experienced. In the systematisation of the informational circuits, and where in each class they were captured — populations, merchandise and capital, as Deleuze and Guattari would say — a substantial part of the paradoxes of a chiefdom that fled the State, but was fed and seemed to be conducted by the State, were played out.

We have understood the area of these Mapuche-Tehuelche chiefdoms using the methodology that Pavez Ojeda calls 'intertextual cartography',[52] continuing the relationships between the territoriality and the corpus, where from the declassification of the office of the '*Secretaría de Valentín Saygüeque*' which was hidden in the papers of General Villegas. Drawing attention to the reconstruction of regions that begin and finish with the explanation of the geographer or the historian,[53] we have drawn a map superimposing routes that connected *toldos* and houses of kin, mountain passes, Hispanic–Creole enclaves, prominent landmarks, lineage markings and networks of correspondence and oral communications. Pavez Ojeda shows that the Mapuche chiefdoms forced the registration of their speech and their geopolitical disposition in Spanish texts in such a way that their own territory was recognised in a letter or treaty that recorded toponyms and *kümpeñ*, or names of lineage.[54] Because of this, listings such as those sent by Saygüeque to the authorities, detailing which *caciques* were subordinate, were organised geographically as per the

52 Pavez Ojeda, 'Las cartas del Wallmapu', p. 20.

53 G. De Jong, *Introducción al método regional* (Neuquén: Lipat-Universidad Nacional del Comahue, 2001), p. 77.

54 Pavez Ojeda, 'Cartas y parlamentos', pp. 24–32.

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Patagonian map so that the chief-kin were enumerated, giving territoriality to each one. Abusing the theory of the Latin-American narrative of González Echevarría,[55] through the notarial formula that they had learned, the *caciques* showed their legitimacy in two senses — genealogically and territorially.

If the sketch of the correspondence map of other great contemporary men like Reuque or Purran would be tested, or the territoriality of the *lonkos* that depended on them, we would see networks laid out with some crossroads, but differently planned to the ones that we devised for Saygüeque. The same orientation duality and segmentality would certainly observed by the cartography of the relationship networks and the correspondence of Paillalef, Saygüeque's main trans-Andean associate, who settled in Pitrufquén. He wrote that he had returned to his house '… as usual in union with all the *caciques* Chegueltos [Tehuelches] and Chileaneans'. The appeal, such as 'a friend of the other band', that was used by a Chilean official to identify Saygüeque gives a guideline for his placement. So he was visualised from the other side in a spatial reference saturated with national alienation. From Buenos Aires, Azul or Carmen de Patagones, in the pampas the 'Indian Chilean' multiplied, yet another member of the elite from Valdivia wrote to '*Don Balentin Saigüeque Cacique Mayor de los Argentinos*'.[56] If the borders were imposed *posteriori*, then they owed their design to the links that each State had established with different *lonko* and *úlmen*, who at the same time competed territorially.

Finally, if at the beginning of our investigation we interpreted that Saygüeque and Loncochino's writing was adapted by the imaginary republican and liberal, today we tend to identify his roots in the colonial tradition of notarial practice. Since the first documents, this duo was presented like a source of light for their third parties, and Saygüeque attributed his legitimacy to the '*Rey de los Cielos*'. In an inverse proportion to the shortage of words in 'tongue', the expressions illustrated abounded the references to progress, 'order', ' public good', 'peace' and 'civilisation'. Invocations are also found to the 'God of the Christians', and to the tolerance of these in the borders. Saygüeque understood that 'creole' is for everyone who was born 'in the land', a description that was used for himself and as well for Julio Argentino Roca, the Minister of War who in 1880 would be consecrated as President of the Nation.[57]

55 González Echevarría, *Mito y archivo*, p. 97.

56 AGN VII, 723, f. 333.

57 'Friends, I evidently believe that we should consider ourselves as legitimate brothers, we view each other with a lot of kindness and equity. You and my inhabitants we are truly creole sons of this ground, and sons of a single *criador*, the one that we worship equally.' Letter to Conrado Villegas, 5 August 1879 (AGN VII, 723, fs. 202–5).

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Saygüeque and Loncochino conceived 'America' as a dispersion of European enclaves, that only acquired integrity since the Christians had been in the borders from historic times. 'America' is a 'Spanish' environment, without ownership of the native people, despoiled of territorial unity, decomposed in alien and exterior geographical points, a construction rather than a continent. In the preface to the final aggression, the *cacique* and his secretary used American and pro-Indian arguments to challenge global control.[58] Despite the 'heart pain' of the devastation suffered by the Indians of 'that America', now unified in their misfortune, the new circumstances did not impede Saygüeque to insist on conciliatory politics, and in subordination. The will of a God that Saygüeque says is shared with the Christians, the original owner of the fields, is the petition that would decide the legitimacies, from which would demand the right to continue representing the President of the Nation in the Patagonian 'deserts'. Despite the statements of monotheism, the lapsed linguistic which would perforate the controls, and the fact that Loncochino would note repeatedly *Criador* (breeder), instead of *Creador* (creator),[59] brings us back to the sacred condition of the ancestors as those responsible for lineages and breeding.

In the dynamic handling of those illustrated concepts, the ideology of the colonial pact that had ended with the revolutions for independence was still communicated among the 19th-century Mapuche.[60] The collision between the natives, colonial texts and republicans helped to mould one to the other, to the point that there would not be unique answers for the problem of autonomy. 'The writing is linked with the foundation of cities and punishment', says González Echevarría in a line that stems from Foucault. But the Mapuche-Tehuelche corpus disturbed this original tie, upon opening nomadic strategies of simulation and leakage, in the key of Deleuze and Guattari, in order to annul the power.

Thus it happened with the *caciques* Juan Ñancucheo, Antonio Modesto Ynacayal, Foyel Payllacamino and N. Guircaleufo, members of the narrow circle of Saygüeque, who wrote from the '*Tolderías de las Manzanas*' to request the liberty of 71 men captured by the army in 1880. José Neculcura, the secretary who assisted them with the editing, copied various paragraphs of a petition conserved by the *caciques* since 1876. This model document had been

58 In this case, 'American' refers to both North and South Americans.

59 'Likewise my deceased father gave me the knowledge of Santiago Chile, and other several Republics, Provinces, departments, and villages, which had all been populated by *Indígenas* races; occupied today by the Christians and giving numerous damages to the poor creole Indians of this America [...] Friends I expect you to count on me [like] a regular representative of the Mr. President of the Nation' (AGN VII, 723, fs. 202–5).

60 R. Foerster, 'Del pacto colonial al pacto republicano', *Tefros* 6, 1 (2008).

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elevated by the members of the Argentinian elite of Carmen de Patagones, and sent to the Governor of Buenos Aires, to intercede in favour of Saygüeque, with whom they maintained business. In the *caciques*' version, the new Governor of Patagonia was even treated as a 'citizen' as copied in the old document. The transcribed formula adapted to the new demands, and the '*vecinos de este pueblo*', that enunciated the elite's original petition, would be replaced by the '*vecinos de esta tribu*', in the only letter that was signed collectively among them and conserved in the office of '*Secretaría de Valentín Saygüeque*'. The 'neighbouring of the tribe' brings us back to the problem of mimicry, and to the subversive effects of the Mapuche-Tehuelche writing that the modern liberal State Archive made invisible.

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11



To My Dear Minister: Official Letters of African Wesleyan Evangelists in the Late 19th-Century Transvaal

Lize Kriel

Introduction

In Karin Barber's edited volume, *Africa's Hidden Histories: Everyday Literacies and Making the Self*, a strong case is made that the 'the profusion of innovative individual writing'[1] by Africans throughout colonial Anglophone Africa should be recognised and subjected to more serious scholarly attention. The inventive studies in this volume focus mostly on individual Africans' personal archives — tin trunks and suitcases under beds — and what their content, accumulated during the first half of the 20th century, might reveal about 'new kinds of personhood', but also 'new ways of relating to the world of officialdom'.[2] In this essay I take a step back into the 1890s, into the tumultuous period of cultural contact, when the Transvaal was still an open — or at the most, closing — frontier zone where Boer and Briton and various African polities were still contesting one another's claims to supremacy.[3] I also turn away from a search for Africans' personal archives and back to the more conventional repositories of historical evidence — the archives of the Wesleyan Methodist Mission Society (hereafter WMMS) and the Superintendent of Natives of the South African Republic (Transvaal), respectively. The type of correspondence I found there, and the

1 K. Barber, *Africa's hidden histories: everyday literacy and making the self* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2006), p. 3.

2 Barber, *Africa's hidden histories*, pp. 3–4.

3 For an exposition of the situation north of the Vaal River in the last half of the 19th century, and the historiography up until the end of the 20th century, see J. Du Bruyn, 'Early Transvaal — a historiographical perspective', *South African Historical Journal* 36 (May 1997); J.W.N. Tempelhoff applies frontier theory to the northern districts of the Transvaal in his doctoral study, 'Die okkupasiestelsel in die Distrik Soutpansberg, 1886–1899' (Pretoria: Archives Year Book Series, 1997).

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deductions that can be made from their location there (even the mere fact that these letters survived there), bring me back, however, to the Barber volume's question about the ways in which literacy enabled Africans to relate to the world of officialdom.

The letters I intend to study from the archives of the Wesleyan Methodist Mission Society are stored in the Cory Library in Grahamstown, South Africa. They had all ended up in the correspondence of Owen Watkins, the first Chairman of the Transvaal and Swaziland District. Most of these letters were addressed directly to Watkins by African Christians associated in some way or another with the District. Others were written to the local white Wesleyan missionaries, who then attached the Africans' letters to their own letters to Watkins. These letters were all written between 1889 and 1891, the last years of Watkins's term as chairman — shortly before a number of black Wesleyan evangelists broke away from their European-linked Society to establish their own 'Ethiopian' church.[4] While the published story of African involvement in the spread of Wesleyanism is an heroic tale of piety, martyrdom and faithfulness not only to God but also to the earthly Wesleyan institutions,[5] these letters reveal a discomfort and a discontent that makes the breakaway in the early 1890s much more comprehensible. It should immediately be added, however, that not all the discontented African evangelists joined the new independent movement, partly because the Transvaal open frontier still offered some opportunities for arbitrary action even within — and sometimes *particularly* from within — the white structures.[6]

We see this in a dramatic way in Salomon Maloba's letter — not to Watkins, whom he did not even involve in the process, but to the Boer government. The file in the Archive of the Superintendent of Native Affairs of the ZAR (*Zuid-Afrikaansche Republiek*, or South African Republic), now in the National Archives of South Africa in Pretoria, dates from 1895 to 1897.[7] It contains a statement in the handwriting of the secretary of the Superintendent of Native Affairs, as well as a compensation claim, written in Maloba's own hand, for

4 J.P. Dugmore, 'The beginnings of Methodist missionary policy in the Transvaal' (MA dissertation Pretoria: University of Pretoria, 1939), p. 17.

5 See, for example, the chapter 'The Transvaal I, treasure hid in a field' in G.G. Findlay & W.W. Holdsworth (eds.), *The history of the Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society IV* (London: Epworth Press, 1922), pp. 327–57.

6 For an investigation of one such a case, see L. Kriel, 'Negotiating contested space: African Christians, white missionaries and the Boer conquest of the Blouberg, late nineteenth century Transvaal', *Kleio* 36 (2004), pp. 184–69.

7 National Archives of South Africa (hereafter NASA), Pretoria: TAB: SR.262/95, Verklaring van Naturellen-Zendeling Salomon Maloba omtrent het vernielen van zijne statie door het Commandos tegen Malabock [Statement by native missionary Salomon Maloba about the damaging of his station by the commandos against Malaboch] (31 January 1895).

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damages incurred by Africans on a Wesleyan outstation during the Boers' war against a local African ruler.[8]

My intention is to look into ways in which the introduction of written culture was appropriated by, or integrated into, societies without traditional forms of writing, the main focus being the material form of the writing and its circulations.

I. Levels of reading and writing

The first assumption I make by having selected only the letters written to Watkins by *African* evangelists, is that these (all) men indeed came from societies without traditional forms of writing. Although this may not be altogether wrong, it is an assumption that requires some qualification: many of the African writers did not originate from the same African communities among whom they had been living and teaching at the time.[9] Some learned to read and write in white homesteads or on Dutch Reformed Church or German Lutheran mission stations—thus their preference for writing in Afrikaans or in 'Sesuto'.[10] Many of them had acquired their reading and writing skills while on a sojourn away from home as migrant labourers in the British colonies.[11] Numerous African men followed that route, and returned to their communities better respected than before. Those who had converted to Christianity, and as a result learned how to read and write, returned with strange new ideas that communities were reluctant to accept *en masse*—although several rulers were quick to grasp the importance of acquiring the skills of reading and writing.[12]

And yet, by the 1890s reading and writing were still competing with many other acquisitions from the world of the white people in terms of their practical

8 During the course of the 1890s, the Boers embarked on several campaigns to subjugate the African communities of the Soutpansberg district in the north of their republic. The campaign against the Bahananwa of Mmalebôhô (Maleboch) was waged in 1894. See J.S. Bergh, *Geskiedenisatlas van Suid-Afrika. Die vier noordelike provinsies* (Pretoria: Van Schaik, 1999), pp. 214–25.

9 *Wesleyan Missionary Notices* 1891, p. 84.

10 In present times we distinguish between Sepedi, Setswana and Sesotho as the northern, western and southern forms of the language, respectively, but in the 19th century many missionaries in the Transvaal still referred to all the northern dialects under the umbrella term 'Sesuto'—especially the Wesleyans, who got their religious literature from Morija in Lesotho.

11 Many of the African Christians met by German Lutheran missionaries in the northern parts of the Transvaal accounted that they had been converted by Wesleyan missionary James Allison while working in Pietermaritzburg in Natal. See, for example, *Berliner Missionsberichte* (1872), p. 309.

12 See A. Kirkaldy & L. Kriel, 'Converts and conservatives. Missionary representations of African rulers in the northern Transvaal, ca. 1870–1900', *Le Fait Missionaire* 18 (July 2006), pp. 109–44.

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applications. Many men (black and white) still lived by the lore of the gun; survival for most still depended more strongly on an ability to hunt, to raise cattle or to harvest crops than to handle a pen on paper[13]—or at least, as will be illustrated, farming had to be combined with 'teaching' if one wished to survive. What would one write about if one had nothing to eat or nowhere to live?

This brings me to a second assumption too easily (and wrongfully) made: that all burghers of the Transvaal Republic (a status restricted to white men) could read and (even less likely) write. White officialdom operated in written form, but many district officials could only operate through the hand of a secretary, hardly able to sign their own names themselves.[14] In Pretoria many of the ZAR officials had to be imported from the Cape Colony or straight from the Netherlands by President Paul Kruger—the 'Voortrekker' descendants who had been 'manning' the frontier since the 1850s neglected an education of reading and writing to such an extent[15] that they were deemed by many not capable of modernising their state. The broad distinction between Africans with their 'Kgoro tradition' and Boers with their 'Statenbijbel tradition' is certainly not to be erased altogether,[16] but there were many nuances within these overarching contexts, and amongst the 'men of letters' race as the strongest discriminatory differential could sometimes be mitigated.

The porous barriers between orality and literacy are particularly evident in the language expressed on paper by these black men associating themselves with Wesleyanism in the Transvaal by the 1890s. Lovedale English and Algemeen Beschaafd Dutch were the two extremes. As with the letters of Boers submitting claims for compensation after campaigns they had participated in

13 This becomes apparent in all the classical Transvaal studies by Trapido, Delius and others cited by Du Bruyn, 'Early Transvaal', pp. 136–44. It is illustrated particularly vividly in Fred Morton's writings on the 19th-century Transvaal. See especially his *When rustling became an art: Pilane's Kgatla, 1820–1902* (Cape Town: David Philip/New Africa Books, 2009).

14 The correspondence in the Archives of the Commandant General and the Superintendent of Native Affairs of the Boer Republic are cases in point.

15 For the poor state of white education in the 19th-century Transvaal, see A.H. Lugtenburg, *Geskiedenis van die onderwys in die S.A. Republiek (1836–1920)*, pp. 45–6, 51–6, 62; G.D. Scholtz, *Die ontwikkeling van die politieke denke van die Afrikaner* IV, pp. 37, 99, 110 & 217; A.N. Pelzer, *Geskiedenis van die Suid-Afrikaanse Republiek* I, p. 30. Thanks to Marelize Grobler for these references from a draft chapter for her MA study on women in the ZAR.

16 Isabel Hofmeyr elaborately and vividly illustrated the poverty of such dichotomous thinking about African orality and Afrikaner literacy. See *We spend our years as a tale that is told: oral historical narrative in a South African chiefdom* (Johannesburg: Wits University Press, 1993), p. 141, and 'John Bunyan, his chair and a few other relics' in L. White, S.E. Miescher & D.W. Cohen, *African words, African voices: critical practices in oral history* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2001), pp. 86–8.

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against African communities,[17] the letters of the Wesleyan evangelists and assistants are a glorious confusion of pidgin Afrikaans and English — but, now and again, also 'Sesuto'. The fact that they preferred to express themselves, however poorly, in Afrikaans or in English rather than in the vernacular, cannot be contemplated apart from the fact that the addressee, Watkins, and his ministers in the various districts, gave few indications of strenuous efforts to learn the autochthonous languages.

Another discrepancy: despite the inconsistency of the abilities of writers (black and white) to express themselves in 'lines'[18] on paper, the modernising aspirations of the Transvaal State, in other respects, had been quite efficient, especially after the British had laid the foundations for some infrastructure during the 1877–81 interregnum. The Boers, subsequently, having won back their freedom with a fight, were now most eager to prove that they were indeed capable of running a state efficiently.[19] They had already been notorious for their legalistic ways[20] and the officials now imported to Pretoria from the Cape Colony and the Netherlands consolidated this tendency with the meticulous record-keeping skills for which they had been recruited in the first place. This explains why we shall be able to trace the journey of the black Wesleyans' compensation claim from 1895 until 1897 through various Boer government departments. Furthermore, by 1890 the postal service was remarkably efficient. In conjunction with the expanding railway network, mail coaches also criss-crossed the republic by road; late arrivals were fined, and while this sometimes still caused human cargo to be hurled through mid-air around a sharp corner,[21] the mail often arrived safely — within six days between Lourenço Marques

17 See, for example, the letters in the archive of the Commandant General of the ZAR in the aftermath of the Boer campaign against the Bahananwa of Mmaleboho (Malaboch) in 1894.

18 See, for example, the letter of P.M. Mushi, Good Hope, to O. Watkins, Olverton, 1 August 1890 in the Archives of the Wesleyan Methodist Mission Society, South Africa, Cory Library, Rhodes University, Grahamstown (hereafter WMMS): Owen Watkins Papers.

19 Tempelhoff, Die okkupasiestelsel, pp. 11–17.

20 See examples of this in: P. Delius, 'Abel Erasmus: power and profit in the Eastern Transvaal', in W. Beinhart, P. Delius & S. Trapido (eds), *Putting a plough to the ground. Accumulation and dispossession in rural South Africa, 1850–1930* (Johannesburg: Ravan Press, 1986), pp. 176–217; P. Delius & S. Trapido, 'Inboekselings and oorlams: the creation and transformation of a Servile Class', in B. Bozzoli (ed.), *Town and countryside in the Transvaal. Capitalist penetration and popular response* (Johannesburg: Ravan Press, 1983), pp. 53–88.

21 G. van den Hurk, 'The Netherlands South African Railway Company and the postal service of the South African Republic 1884–1902', *SA Philatelist* 68, p. 5; E. Bolsmann, 'George Jesse Heys a Pretoria pioneer', *Yearbook Africana Society of Pretoria* 11 (1993), pp. 61–2; I.B. Mathews, *Transvaal philately: the stamps, forgeries, postal history and miscellanea of the Transvaal territories from inception to Union* (Cape Town: Reijger, 1986), pp. 187–228. Thanks to Jo Groenewald, whose enthusiasm and erudition led me to these sources.

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and Pretoria.[22] And what should not be overlooked is that letters written by black hands, although their feet may not have been allowed to walk on the same pavements as whites in the Boer towns, were handled through the same system as those sent by mine bosses in Johannesburg or the Chair of the Wesleyan Methodist Mission Society in Pretoria.

Why did these African men, whose letters we find amongst the Watkins Papers and within the Archives of the ZAR, address officialdom? Many of them had converted to Christianity outside the Transvaal and for many years practised and spread their adopted religion wherever they had settled upon their return, without any white involvement. And yet they saw a need to associate with the WMMS when it established a Transvaal and Swaziland District early in the 1880s. Even though written in a missionary context, very little is revealed in these letters about these African Christians' own take on religious matters. Most of the time, the letters address very practical problems. In their variety, these problems also shed light on the reasons Africans living in a Boer state saw for affiliating themselves with a white, English-speaking Church funded from Britain. (A separate District for the Transvaal was established for the very reason that the South African branch of the Wesleyan church was not in a financial position to fund expansive missionary endeavours in the north.)[23] In the very act of articulating their problems by writing letters, the Africans also revealed the limitations to, and the inadequacies of, Wesleyan support, as well as its impingement on their autonomy.

II. The form of the letters

While they explicitly state what the action of writing entails ('I take up my hand to write a few lines onto you')[24] and the material artefacts of exchange are anxiously awaited (Mashaba counts how long it takes for a letter to arrive),[25] the acts of posting and collecting the letters, inserting them into and removing them from envelopes and the buying of stamps are not mentioned in the letters themselves (quite similar to 'western' practice). Even the Dutch–Afrikaans translations of Hosea Malepo's letters are included without explanation in the Watkins collection alongside the originals in his mother tongue.[26] It seems that while the form of

22 WMMS, Owen Watkins Papers: R.O. Mashaba, Lourenço Marques, to O. Watkins, Pretoria, 4 August 1890.

23 W.A. Venter, 'Die geskiedenis en invloed van die Wesleyaanse Sending in die Transvaal gedurende die Negentiende eeu' (D.Phil thesis, Bloemfontein: University of the Orange Free State, 1961), pp. 288–94, Findlay & Holdsworth, *The history of the Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society*, p. 327.

24 WMMS, Owen Watkins Papers: D.K. Olifant, Bethal, to O. Watkins, 10 August 1890.

25 WMMS, Owen Watkins Papers: R.O. Mashaba, Lourenço Marques, to O. Watkins, Pretoria, 4 August 1890.

26 WMMS, Owen Watkins Papers: H. Malepo, Uitkyk, to O. Watkins, 10 July 1890 & 30 July 1890.

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the medium is frequently contemplated in the letters themselves the circulation process is taken for granted. There is a strong sense of trust in all the letters that what is being expressed on paper will reach the eyes for which it is intended.

The letters feature various examples of metaphors in which the process of conveying meaning in words, is expressed ('line' for 'line'). In many of these the conventions of conversation are transmitted to paper. More remarkable, perhaps, is the recognition of writing as a means of solidifying what had been said — to remind white ministers what they had promised on previous occasions, what they had committed themselves to orally and often, in the letters, have not delivered on yet. The African Christians had no problem in grasping the significance of giving authority to a statement or a claim by having it put on paper. A few examples:[27]
D.K. (probably Klaas)[28] Olifant wrote as follows:

> *Dear Sir*
> *I sent River G Low.* [Reverend G Lowe] *I sent Andries & Petrus to bring the Book & money 12* [amount?]. *As I have said to the chairman I been at Makhutsong at once from that time I leave you & the chairman to tell them about it. & also Mr chairman his word. and the people of Makhutsong they don't want hear anything from me they want hear from you. & so Dear Sir as long as the people of Makhutsong so is.*[29]

Jeremiah Thabane, clearly frustrated, wrote to Watkins:

> *Dear Sir — Be not angry at your servant seeing him troubles you with letters. Because this is the third time of my writing to the Chairman* [previous two letters not in collection]. *For it seems to me a troublesome thing to weary a father as you by letters. But what can I do if I don't make known to Chairman what I want.*[30]

27 A general note on quotations from the letters: in my transcriptions I have attempted to stick as closely as possible to the handwritten letters, and thus have refrained from making any corrections or improvements. Insertions are indicated in square brackets, and words I could not decipher are followed by a question mark in square brackets. Nevertheless, the process of converting handwritten letters into typescript on a computer screen still seems to have stripped the texts of several layers of meaning.

28 Two Olifants are featured in an article on 'The native ministers of the Transvaal and Swaziland District'. See the *Wesleyan Missionary Notices* (1891), pp. 84–5.

29 WMMS, Owen Watkins Papers: D.K. Oliphant, Bethal, to O. Watkins, 14 December 1890.

30 WMMS, Owen Watkins Papers: J. Thabane, Makapanstad, to O. Watkins, 29 May 1891. Jeremiah Thabane was one of the Transvaal-trained Africans who did not work amongst his own community. See G. Weavind, 'Brief Biographical Sketches of the Native Ministers of the Transvaal and Swaziland District' — Second Series, *Wesleyan Missionary Notices* (1891), p. 114: 'JEREMIAH TABANE was brought as a little boy, by his father, a Christian man from one of our stations in Zoutpansberg, to Mr Watkins to be trained for the work of the Church. On the formation of the Native Training Institution Jeremiah was admitted one of the first students. His diligence was most praiseworthy and he made such progress that he stood at the head of the Institution when he came out. He was appointed, on leaving the Institution, to the Kilnerton Station, where he has conducted a very successful school and become an efficient pastor.'

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The regular form of correspondence between white missionaries is readily appropriated by the African writers. Even the writers most uncomfortable with the English medium copy the customary ending of 'regards to your wife' with flair hovering between formality and familiarity: 'I remain with the best love to you & Mrs Watkins DK Olifant'[31] … and: 'We are all pretty well. Remember me to Mrs Watkins & to the children if they are well. Mrs Msimang send her best respects to you & to children & Mrs Watkins. Your Servant, D Msimang.'[32]

Those writers most comfortable with the English medium used striking metaphors to convey their understanding of the implications of applying the technology of mail to enhance communication. This brings us to the issue of circulation.

III. Circulation

A few evangelists' one and only letter in the collection is a sad story of not being able to survive trying to teach others to become educated—and the termination of those efforts. Some of these letters were addressed to the local white ministers, who then passed the letters on to Watkins. The following letter by Elisha Leshomo[33] is a case in point. It was addressed to Reverend Sharp, Watkins's white colleague from Mafikeng, who passed the information on to Watkins:

Bullpan
June 9th 1890
Dear Sir

I am sorry to disturb your minds, however I can not help for it does not please me to keep still while I am complaining I suppose you remember the time at Vryburg when I brought my complaints before you about my fee though at that time you were littlebit troubled in heart though you kept that not for you argued with the Chairman to add one pound more in the two pounds of my payment so it was little better than before & the promise was made that the people will plough for me of which they did for one year & the promise was altogether neglected.

But now I must say the fee of three pounds for a Leader & Preacher & for one who is also preaching at distances, is too little, why? for it is his clothing & his wifes; his land of [?]cow & wife. Then the fee is too little for me. The reason is I have wife to take & cloth & also widow mother to do the same for her such as ploughing, clothing etc

31 WMMS, Owen Watkins Papers: D.K. Olifant to O. Watkins, 10 August 1890.

32 WMMS, Owen Watkins Papers: D. Msimang to O. Watkins, 7 May 1891.

33 Leshomo is introduced to readers in Britain as 'an old Heald Town boy.' He was stationed at a Batlaping settlement near Vryburg, called Bullpan. *Wesleyan Missionary Notices* (1887), pp. 222–23.

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And if you don't see any ways of promoting my fee I must go to Mafeking & to the work as the rest, & do my other works which is now impossible for me to do, for I am father of the fatherless as the rest.

Please dear minister you can as well refer my complaints forward for, after gathering crops I wish to come to Mafeking if spared to build my Mother's hut which is falling & mine also & Michael Leshomo; if possible.

I wishes you & Mrs Sharp good health, dear Sir

I remain to be your submissive & sincere Servant

Elisha M Leshomo

Ten days later, from Sharp to Watkins:

Mafeking BB
June 19 1890
My dear Mr Chairman
Yours to hand thanks for instructions which it contains

I have received by post today a letter from Elisha which I enclose. I think you will agree with me that the best thing is to let him come to Mafeking to pursue his own "Sweet/secret will" [?] at further length. He is no good in the world to us. I must have forgotten to tell you that I did not pay him for last qr. and told him that he would have to forget the 3 mo s salary. He will get the £9 at the end of June. Do you agree to my stopping this? …[34]

From the correspondence it is not always clear whether the writers have received a written response from the chairman, but from many of the other letters in the Watkins archive (written by white as well as black writers) we are reminded that as much as correspondence on paper accounts for many issues, perhaps more was still resolved through interpersonal contact—verbally. Daniël Msimang, one of the better known African evangelists who was actually featured in an official history of the Wesleyan Methodists,[35] confirmed this in a letter he wrote from Mahamba in Swaziland:

My Lord
I have desire to write you this few lines about the things I have here. 1st I informed you that Ferreira is out and now one called Lamanden [?] Commissioner or tax gether, and when he was here he ask me the tax & I paid him. You never answer me.

2nd I informed you about the School, & also you never answer, but about it I settle the matter although is not quite settle. but I believe it will be alright. the only thing is the poor or the need of money even in the place where we are working, and

34 WMMS: Owen Watkins Papers.

35 Daniël Msimang was one of the converts of James Allison who returned to his own people after his sojourn as migrant labourer in Natal. By 1922 he was still loyal to the Wesleyan Methodists and his son Joel, had become a missionary at Mahamba too. Findlay & Holdsworth, *The history of the Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society*, pp. 339–40; *Wesleyan Missionary Notices* (1891), pp. 112–13.

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some of the people or pupil are orphans, and about the School even if you didn't answer it is nothing we shall speak about when we meet again.

3rd I ask the names of the people in this place that I might know who has paid & who is not paid yet. and you never sent me yet. I don't know what to do & they are also look me in the likemanners. I wonder how I shall work when you do not answer me? I heard from Alpheus Nkosi, that he need the Blankets will you help me buy him some Blankets & even if some other things he needs, we shall settle it between you & me when we meet.[36]

One of the persons whose correspondence circulated the most successfully was also the one whose English had been closest to mother-tongue standard. With his metaphoric expressions, however, he portrays his own internalisation of the process of constructing a written form for a language. In his letters, Robert Mashaba brings together the following strains of communication: he acts upon a letter he had received from the Wesleyan Secretary in Cape Town; he conveys this information to the local ruler and community; he insists on Watkins responding to this appeal, not only on his own behalf but now also upon the request of the local community; he gets his response from Watkins and after several appeals the long-awaited visit by Watkins actually does take place. In his letters, he thus conveys his role as mediator between the writing missionaries and the talking community, and this community's desire to become readers and writers themselves:

Undated, but filed with a letter dated 21 June 1890

Lourenco Marques
Delagoa Bay
Rev O Watkins
Kilnerton
Dear Sir
I am being asked by the Chief Mabayi Debeza Tembe, to let you know that he had also recieved a letter from the Secretary of the S.A. Conference, directing him to you; and that it is his expressed wish that he should be taught, and that he will be glad to see his wish attended to with promtness.
I remain to be your obedient Servant Robert Ndevu Mashaba
On behalf of Chief Tembe

Lourenco Marques
Delagoa Bay
21st June 1890
Rev O Watkins
Kilnerton
Dear Sir
Having learn from the Secretary of the S.A. Conference and the Rev. SE Lowe, that the Delagoa Bay Mission is handed over to you, I now humbly beg you to come

36 WMMS, Owen Watkins Papers: D. Msimang to O. Watkins, 24 April 1891.

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down as soon as possible, and that you should make no delay in extending the work, and make it carried on properly. I shall be always waiting to see you, or hear from you what to do.

I remain to be your obedient Servant Robert Ndevu Mashaba.

Lourenco Marques
Delagoa Bay
4th August 1890
Dear Rev Sir
It is now over a month since I received your letter, dated 10th July 1890, in which I found that, you hope to be here within about three weeks' time, from the date you wrote. I have been, therefore, since the day I received your letter, which was on the 16th July 1890, waiting to see you. And the chief Mabayi Tembe has been sending messengers after messengers, to ask where is the minister whom I told him that he is coming? And the answer I gave always is, He is coming and not very far.

But now he has lost his hope, and thinks all this time I have been telling him a lie, because I did not like to tell him that the ministers had failed to answer his request.

As for myself, I cannot tell you what I am. I am utterly confused in the mind, neutralized in the spirit, because it is always necessary for a man to have some sort of a plan by which he could be guided, and not to be guided by a blank sheet as I do. Of course I got the Compass which guides me, but still your plan is required, and for this plan I have been waiting, now it's getting over three months, calculating from the clossing of the S.A. Conference, held last April in Cape Town. I hope, dear Sir, that you will not delay to put forth some action after this.

I beg to remain your obedient servant Robert Ndevu Mashaba.[37]

The African Christians mostly wrote to 'complain', and to convey to their white superiors their dissatisfaction with their state of living. However, nothing of the content of these letters filtered through to audiences in Britain. In Wesleyan publications, like the periodical *Wesleyan Missionary Notices* and even the official history of the Society launched in the early 1920s, African evangelists are praised for their piety — even acknowledged for their mammoth contribution to spreading Wesleyanism. But nothing of their daily frustrations is conveyed to the readers. The circulation of complaints stopped with Owen Watkins.

One has to conclude that the Africans, regardless of the necessity to express themselves in a language that was not their own, were fairly efficient in circulating their letters, but they had no power over what would be published in Britain. And these publications were the media through which the Wesleyans collected their financial contributions, and through which the image of their worldwide movement was built. Africans were not underrepresented in these publications — but they were made to play a role that would not make Watkins and company seem incompetent to support them. For every black Wesleyan

37 WMMS, Owen Watkins Papers, dates as indicated.

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that 'made it' into the *Wesleyan Missionary Notices*—with an illustration in respectable Western apparel and a pen sketch of his pious life and his fervent spreading of the gospel[38]—the stories of several others were discarded by the Society. The case of Elisha M Leshomo, who had to go and build a new hut for his mother, has already been described. In the letter cited below, the African missionary had to give up teaching to go back to his oxen:

> *Reverd Owen Watkins*
> *My Dear Lord I let you know that I have receive one pound from William Moloto but I never receive two pound yet. My Dear Lord I want to go to Zeerost I like to see my oxen because is very long time when I left them it is very hard/bad [?] to me to get three pound months and I get my cloths myself my Dear Lord I am telling you that I do like any more to be a teach [?] and one thing I have got no house there for any. Dear Lord I like to work with myself I like to see my oxen I do want troubled you my Dear Lord I let you know that I do want teaching the people any more will please Sir sent one teach here this country his not good to me because three pound his not enough for me I am using to buy food and my cloths I can keep nothing for myself if I got some cattle and cow I will live well my Dear Lord I feel hungry because I have got no food I am your friend*
> *James Mlandaba*[39]

The way these African voices were silenced in the annals for posterity should not belie their perseverance as letter writers in the historical moment. Even from the few letters that did survive in Watkins's correspondence, we can see that the tactic of persistently sending the one letter after the other (and remarking in every subsequent letter that this is a follow-up on the previous one) was often resorted to. What becomes clear is that Owen Watkins's ideal, of extending the Wesleyan empire as far and wide as possible as quickly as possible,[40] had its casualties. Those who were left to do the work on the ground were often without infrastructure. They had the skill to write asking for direction from their chairman, but this was not always forthcoming.

The example from without the Watkins collection, the letters found in the archives of the Boer state, the ZAR, tell the story of a Wesleyan African, Salomon Maloba, who took matters in his own hands by choosing a different route of communication—not consulting his white overseers and begging them for assistance, but taking the same route as a burgher of the Boer state would have. His letters insisting on compensation for damages suffered during a Boer military campaign circulated no less successfully than the compensation claims of many a Transvaal burgher or burgher's widow. Where Africans were

38 *Wesleyan Missionary Notices* (1891), pp. 84–5 & 112–13.

39 WMMS, Owen Watkins Papers. J. Mlandaba, Hartingsburg, to O. Watkins, 10 October 1890.

40 *Wesleyan Missionary Notices* (1891), p. 248.

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able to initiate engagement with Boer officialdom through the written word, the chances of being taken seriously, and thus of being treated more equally, were far greater than in face-to-face encounters, especially where the regional Boer officials (Commissioners and Commandants)—some of them only semi-literate—had an inclination to assert their authority in the pubic eye through the visible, physical application of force.[41] We see this in the case of Boer Commissioner Grobler, whose public flogging of Wesleyan evangelist Philip Mushi was reported in the latter's own hand:

> *Revrd O Watkins*
> *Dear Chairman I let you know Sir. Mr Grobler have sent a man here at Olverton to call me & David. On the third July it was afternoon about one o'clock. I went with their / this [?] man [M …. D. too] As soon as we comes there he aske who are you? I told him our names. Oh dear! Chairman. he didn't say many words he just said is you clever Philip & Strong David. Come after me. & we follow him & he ask the boy to bring two straps oh yes very thick straps he brought they never span any oxen very hard indeed he said to me take off your coat & lay down yes I lay down Then he begin to beat me with all his might—I count fifteen lashes on my back. But oh Mr Chairman is not fifteen is thirty Because twice fifteen is thirty & D. received the same.*
>
> *Dear Chairman you know me I am not well. I am defect I mean about my leg. What do Chairman think now I can't do anything now I am very sick I can't scratch my back & my right hand is nearly broken & too is very sick I don't know where is my heart. Dear Chairman I have no work here at Olverton in this time the second thing this place is very hard for me to live here alone. the dutch they are very sharp with us native people Please let me know I must do am very sick this betten [?] is not betting is only the dead*
>
> *Yes Sir I write this letter with much sorrows last word I am very sick is all I can't do anything*
> *I remain your faithful*
> *Philip Mushi*
> *David is very sick too*[42]

For Grobler, identifying the literate Mushi as 'Slim Philip' was enough to revert to the 'wisdom' of the strap, and for a white missionary colleague to remark:

> *…[I]t must not be forgotten that we are in the Transvaal, that a Kafir though the Englishman has appointed him teacher, is still only a kafir & he is harassed &*

41 This was poignantly reported on by the missionary Christoph Sonntag of the Berlin Mission Society, in his diary of a Boer campaign against the Bahananwa in 1894. Ironically, it was also he who encouraged Maloba to launch a written complaint with the Boer authorities. See an English account in the abbreviated published version of the missionary diary: K. Sonntag (ed.), *My friend Maleboch. Chief of the Blue Mountains* (Pretoria: privately published, ca. 1983), pp. 78–79 (23 June 1894).

42 WMMS, Owen Watkins Papers: P. Mushi, Olverton, to O. Watkins, 4 July 1890.

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hindered especially in the wilder parts of the country by the farmers & others who object to the natives being taught either secular of religious education.[43]

But then again, the contrast between Mushi and Maloba, both literate Africans in the Transvaal in the 1890s, illustrates the diversity of conditions that could restrict or expand agency and the circulation power of the written word. Mushi's association with the white Wesleyan structures failed to protect him against the wrath of a local Boer official, and appealing then to the white Englishmen of his denomination did not bring much solace. Maloba, after having suffered at the hands of local Boer aggression, engaged directly with Boer officials in Pretoria, and his complaint was taken seriously—into the processing mechanisms of Boer officialdom. The cover of the Maloba file in the archive of the Superintendent of Native Affairs bears testimony of how the evangelist's letter migrated between the Superintendent's office, the local Commissioner's office, the office of the State Secretary and the Executive Council. In his letter, Maloba cleverly refrained from stating his denomination as Wesleyan—probably correctly anticipating that Boer officialdom's anti-English bias could have worked against him. If the Boer officials developed the faulty impression that Maloba was affiliated to the nearby German mission station, it could only work to his advantage, considering that their white missionary, who had been an eyewitness to the entire war, was respected among the literate officials in Pretoria.

Earlier in this essay I proposed that literate officials in the Transvaal may have been less racially biased in their treatment of African Christians when they encountered one another on the stage of literate officialdom, where their mutual knowledge of a particular range of performative skills prevailed. The Maloba file in the Boer archives illustrates how a semi-literate Boer official who, under similar circumstances, might have treated an African in the same brutal way as Grobler had treated 'Slim Philip Mushi' four years previously, adapted his performance according the alternative *mise en scène* of the bureaucratic stage. Barend Vorster Sr, the Commissioner for Salomon Maloba's district, was known for his suspicion of missionary work, and had played a prominent role in instigating the animosity that resulted in the Boer campaign against the Bahananwa of the area. However, by having staged his cause on the central platform of Boer officialdom, Maloba had entangled Vorster in the very legalism of the Boer state, which so often worked against Africans, but on this occasion left the Commissioner with few other respectable options but to instruct his secretary to write a proposal in favour of a compensation

43 WMMS, H. 2711, Box no. 329, Tvl. S.A. 31, 1891, No. 1025a: T.H. Wainman, Good Hope, Smitsdorp to M. Hartley, London, November/December 1891.

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pay-out for the African Wesleyans. Maloba had been the cunning diplomat: he had cut out a role for Vorster in which he could represent himself as a fair administrator without losing face in the eyes of the African Christians in his area, but also without having incurred the proposed compensation sum of fifty pounds upon himself; that would be paid out by the central government in Pretoria.

In this survey I have thus deliberately deviated from the approach of the contributors to *Africa's Hidden Histories*, who went in search of indications for the development of a uniquely African personhood in literate black people's private writings. With a number of glimpses into the circulation of official letters written by Africans in the 19th-century Transvaal, I have sought to emphasise how finely attuned even first-generation literates could become to the different, albeit not unlimited, performative possibilities in paper-driven procedures.

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12



Literacy and Land at the Bay of Natal: Documents and Practices across Spaces and Social Economies[1]

Mastin Prinsloo

If we open the black box that is the finished and completed document, we expose the processes of its production: the other times and places, the other participants in the larger-scale systems of text production as a process.

– J. Lemke[2]

Introduction

An influential meta-narrative about literacy in Africa is that it was introduced by Europeans, in the 17th, 18th and, particularly, 19th centuries to people who were living in a timeless, homeostatic present, locked in an unmediated engagement with their life-world. In this view, literacy, Christianity and European civilisation brought to these people the potentials of culture, history, development, reason, progress and modernisation, as well as the capacity for alienation. Literacy was seen by some as the critical gateway through which locals irrevocably crossed, or would cross, into a new conceptual and cultural world. This is the view held by literacy scholars such as Jack Goody[3] and Walter Ong.[4] It is also the story told by agents of the 'civilizing mission' of the 19th century, which included most of the Europeans in Africa at the time: in particular, missionaries, but also adventurers, linguists, natural scientists, educators, traders and, not least, colonial officials. For example,

1 An earlier version of this paper was published in *English in Africa*, 35(1) (2008), pp. 97–116.

2 J. Lemke, 'Material sign processes and ecosocial organization' in P.B. Andersen, C. Emmeche and N.O. Finnemann-Nielsen (eds.) *Downward causation: self-organization in biology, psychology, and society* (Aarhus: Aarhus University Press, 2000), p. 203.

3 J. Goody, *The domestication of the savage mind* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977).

4 W. Ong, *Orality and literacy* (London: Methuen, 1982).

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the Swiss missionary, Henri-Alexandre Junod, working in Limpopo in the late 19th century, believed that 'immersing Africans in a written language structured by a disciplined grammar and a regular orthodoxy … would raise (them) to think in the manner that had led to the development of Europe'.[5] Junod believed that literacy, rather than physical force, would ensure that written precedent (accompanied by order, rigour and self-control) would replace the flexibility, impermanence and instability associated with orality.

The story of literacy and indigenous people has, of course, also been told from the perspective of colonial and imperial conquest. From this vantage point, literacy is seen as the discursive adjunct to a coercive process, a gateway through which the subjugated local people were pushed into a new world where they were cognitively re-orientated and individuated. A conquered people, they were further distanced from their experiential life-world by the alienating resources of literacy: they were persuaded to accept the colonisers' own myths about civilisation and progress, namely, that these were products of European history as well as having universal application for other people. This is the account given by Leon de Kock in his study of the 'civilizing mission' of Christian missionaries in 19th-century South Africa.

Implicit in both the above perspectives, which could be seen as two versions of the same story, is an autonomous model of literacy, as Brian Street describes it.[6] Such a model sees literacy working as a social technology that has effect in context-independent and linear ways, producing uniform cognitive and social consequences. A third perspective has hardly yet been developed by historians of the African colonial experience.[7] It is the argument, developed in this paper, that alphabetic, print literacy and documentary practices, like colonialism and, indeed, Christianity, neither arrived nor were received as a unitary package. Instead, they came embedded in a variety of situated contexts, networks, artefacts, relationships, assumptions and practices. These practices and commitments were imported from European contexts where they had deep roots in established social networks and material relations. But once transported, they very soon encountered different contexts, histories and practices, and underwent changes that sometimes took by surprise

5 Quoted in P. Harries, 'Missionaries, Marxists and magic: power and the politics of literacy in South East Africa', *Journal of Southern African Studies* 27(3) (2001), p. 410.

6 B. Street, *Literacy in theory and practice* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984).

7 The exception here is the work of Patrick Harries, who follows Street in seeing literacy as a situationally variable social practice that was 'taken hold of' in complex ways by converts at the Swiss mission station around Elim in the north of South Africa during the 19th century. See P. Harries, *Butterflies and barbarians: Swiss missionaries and systems of knowledge in South-East Africa* (Oxford: James Currey, 2007); and Harries, 'Missionaries, Marxists and magic', pp. 405–27.

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those who had brought them. Print literacy, like Christianity, was not simply transplanted in the African context to do its work, the way Ong, Goody and others suggested,[8] but was translated, interpreted, recontextualised and re-embedded in a range of ways by local people. Such recontextualisation processes were variable and uneven, depending on the social networks, power relations and mediating technologies that affected their dynamics.

I. The problem of the document

According to Jan Blommaert, the historiographic 'problem of the document' is at its most acute in the study of Africa because of the view of Africans as primarily members of oral cultures.[9] Drawing on the examples of linguistic anthropologists such as Johannes Fabian and Dell Hymes, Blommaert suggests that the techniques of historical criticism applied to documents may need to be complemented with ethnographic, linguistic and sociolinguistic research that is sensitive to the changes produced when documents move across spaces and economies of social and communicative practices. He suggests that we need a greater sensitivity to the document as formally and functionally relative to particular linguistic, cultural and political systems. I take up this concern by way of a study of historical documents and secondary analyses around two distinct historical events: firstly, the attempt of a 17th-century Dutch captain to purchase the Bay of Natal on behalf of the Dutch East India Company; and secondly, the attempts of Piet Retief, renowned Boer leader, to get a grant document for the same area of land from the Zulu leader, Dingane, which efforts culminated in his and his followers' deaths at the hands of the Zulu leader's soldiers.

My focus in this discussion is on early encounters with land grant documents on the part of people in Africa under circumstances where European influence had not yet become hegemonic. Such 'border' cross-cultural, pre-colonial and early colonial encounters are of interest because they offer opportunity to examine the provisional and contingent dimensions of practices and procedures which later take on the appearance of being universal or natural. These encounters and events are also fruitfully studied because they provide opportunities to examine and interpret how literacy is put to use in the interests of asserting and contesting relations of domination, inequality and resistance.

8 Others here include E. Havelock, *Preface to Plato* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1976).

9 J. Blommaert, 'Writing as a problem: African grassroots writing, economies of literacy, and globalization', *Language in Society* 33 (2004), p. 643.

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II. Staking claims in Africa: An early 'purchase' of the Bay of Natal

For my purposes here, I treat as a series of literacy events the multiple-sourced account of the failed purchase in early colonial times of the 'Bay of Natal' (later the site of the harbour city of Durban).[10] On 4 December 1689, the galiot *De Noord* arrived at the Bay of Natal, with 'verbal and written instructions' given to the captain, Gerbrantzer, to rescue the shipwrecked crew of the *Stavenisse* and to purchase the bay from the local inhabitants. The details of this exercise are recounted in a dispatch sent by the Dutch governor of the Cape, Commander Simon van der Stel, to the Chamber of XVII (the *Heeren XVII*, or company directors) of the Dutch East India Company (VOC), which owned the ship:

> *after embarking the crew of the 'Stavenisse,' and solemnly purchasing that bay with some surrounding land from the king and chief of those parts for some merchandise, consisting of copper arm and neck rings and other articles, upon behalf of the Honourable Company, whose marks were set up in various places* [*'der zelver wapen in verscheidene plaatsen opgerigt'*] *and proper attention having been paid to everything, they sailed on the 11th January following, and four days later put into the so-called bay De la Goa* [...][11]

In this short passage, there are examples and mention of three distinct semiotic or enscription practices, of which, firstly, only the writing of documents might be thought of as literacy in the conventional sense. Secondly, the beacons set up around the bay were also coded signs, which were apparently intended to signal possession or presence, however differently those signs might be read by local residents, or by other visiting European ships. Thirdly, the copper arm and neck rings, regarded as cheap trinkets by the Europeans, were utilised by the Africans as signs that inscribed their bodies with statements of identity and social place in a local economy of signs that was not comprehended by the European sailors and traders, who only knew that these items had exchange value in this setting far in excess of their value in a European context.

My focus here is on the documents. The 'written instructions,' to which van der Stel referred, had been delivered to the captain of *De Noord*, and were notably specific in their detail. Apart from the instructions to clean the ship and proceed to the Bay of Natal without delay, they included the following:

10 Literacy events and practices are the units of analysis in my study. While the former are those occasions when written language is a part of people's actions and interactions as well as their interpretive processes and strategies, the latter refer to the more general sociocultural framings, or social practices, that give significance to particular acts. The concept of literacy practices incorporates literacy events as empirical occasions where literacy is integral, and analyses them in terms of how such events are shaped by wider sociocultural practices.

11 J. Bird, *The annals of Natal*, 2 vols (Cape Town: Maskew Miller, 1883, reprinted Cape Town: Struik, 1965), p. 54.

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4. Watching a fit opportunity, you will enter into a negotiation with the chief or so-called Ingose, solemnly to purchase from him, for the Honourable Company, for beads, copper, ironmongery, and such other articles as they have a liking for, the bay natal and the adjoining land, and you will have a deed of conveyance, 'in communi et solemni formâ,' written by Lourens van Swaanswyk, passed before commissioned members of the ship's council, and signed by the said chief Ingose and some of his nearest relatives, taking good care that the articles of merchandise for which the bay and adjoining land is purchased are not noticed in the deed, except in general terms, and that the amount of the same be estimated at nineteen or twenty thousand guldens.

5. Having effected this, you will run down the coast, and endeavour to make the bay De la Goa, lying in from 33° to 34° S. latitude, and to ascertain whether, as stated by the Portuguese, and laid down in your charts, there is a round sandbank at the entrance; you will carefully sound the bay, and have a chart of it drawn by the quartermaster, Cornelius Hemerans.

6. With regard to securing the missing men of the 'Stavenisse', and the purchase of this bay, you will use same precautions which are above dictated in the fourth article; and you will above all attend carefully to your duty, and to the interests of the Company, taking note of everything which may in any way be profitable or is worthy of remark, and having such things carefully entered into your log-book by Lourens van Swaanswyk.[12]

What is immediately apparent is the role of writing in the Dutch East India Company's precise instructions, which conclude with the general injunction to the ship's captain to write down anything that might later be turned to profit by the Company. The formal legal and Latin phrases and the subterfuge over the price to be paid indicate the Company officials' appreciation of legal literacies, how the law of contract applied in Holland, and how the hazardous activities of its ships were linked to a wider enterprise of competitive European accumulation practices in which advantage was to be secured through fine attention to detail.

Literacy operates here as an important instrument of regulation and control that extends the interests of the Company into the day-by-day activities of its agents. The document that contains the instructions to the captain could be said to be an 'immutable mobile', to use Latour's term, in that it consists of durable and manageable materialised strings of symbols that distil and transport knowledge, classifications and procedures into the far reaches of the networks of practices that sustain such objects and their connected enterprises. But, contrary to Latour's analysis, the 'immutability' of such documents, with regard to their functions and effects, is not guaranteed when they operate at the very limits of the network of practices that give them effect. The standardised practices and classificatory procedures (such as those of the Dutch legal

12 Bird, *The annals of Natal*, p. 56.

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system) do not automatically apply here. In contrast to the exactness of these instructions, indeed, the attempts at their execution were very much messier: Van der Stel's dispatch went on to inform the Chamber of XVII that *De Noord* was itself wrecked on the coast within a few hours after leaving the bay De la Goa. Prior to the sinking, the ship's captain, Gerbrantzer, had carried out his instructions 'to the letter', but stated that he had lost the 'deed of sale' recording the purchase of the Bay of Natal when the ship sank. He is reported to have made his way back by land to Cape Town, with eighteen of his men of whom only four survived the 2000-mile journey, 'the rest dying of hunger, thirst or heat, except for two or three who were killed by the Hottentots'.[13]

Gerbrantzer told John Maxwell years later that he had purchased the place ('Terra de Natal') on behalf of the Dutch East India Company for 20 000 florins.[14] This figure repeated the lie in his 'written instructions,' as Van der Stel described them, that he should record the sale as 'nineteen or twenty thousand gulden'.[15] Gerbrantzer is reported by Maxwell to have returned again to Natal in 1705, to find the 'late king's son then reigning', to whom Gerbrantzer spoke of the agreement with the new leader's father:

> *'My father,' answered he, 'is dead; his skins (i.e., his clothes) are buried with him in the floor of his house, which is burned over him; and that place is fenced in over which none may now pass; and as to what he agreed to, it was for himself: I have nothing to say to it'. So Gerbrantzer urged it no further, having no orders concerning it from the company.*[16]

While the colonial historian Mackeurton's description of these encounters is drawn from the same sources and so does not differ substantially from the accounts of Bird and Chase, quoted above, his comments are nonetheless revealing. Regarding the purchase of the bay, he says the document 'expressed the consideration as twenty thousand guilders, but the actual value of the goods handed to the delighted chieftain, Inyangesa, was less than a thousand. In a few days stone beacons of the Dutch East India Company, bearing the V.O.C. monogram, ringed the harbour.' He then comments as follows: 'The deception practiced upon the simple Inyangesa [referring to the low price paid] would have meant nothing to him had he discovered it. He was incapable of grasping the conception of either the ownership of land or its alienation in perpetuity.'[17]

13 Ibid., p. 59.

14 Ibid., p. 60; J. Chase, *The Natal papers* (Grahamstown: Godlonton, 1843. Reprint, Cape Town: Struik, 1962), p. 12.

15 Apparently, in the translation from Dutch to English, the currency simply got changed in name (*gulden* to *florins*) and not number.

16 Bird, *The annals of Natal*, p. 60; Chase, *The Natal papers*, p. 12.

17 G. Mackeurton, *The cradle days of Natal* (London: Longman, 1930), p. 66.

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All these accounts of the events fail to mention that the Dutch captain could not have made sense of the direct speech of the chief—or, later, his son—let alone report it verbatim. Gerbrander would have relied on Khoi interpreters whom he had with him, and who spoke both Xhosa and Dutch, well or less well, in addition to their own language. Whatever the young chief might have said would have been interpreted and refracted through local (Xhosa) language and culture, Khoi sensibilities, Dutch language and cultural values, and reinterpreted in English by Maxwell and the others. This fact of extensive translation across language, values and cultural practices is a feature and a problem with much of the data on early colonial and colonial-era cross-cultural encounters around literacy. With these limitations on the reliability of the reported data in mind, I shall now discuss the meanings of these events.

III. Literacy events and practices

Taking a broad view, the events around the failed purchase of the Bay of Natal provide details of one example of the application of what could be called the appropriating discourses of colonialism in the early days of European world expansion. The ways of representing Africa stressed the wildness of the visited scene and its inhabitants, and involved a taming and claiming of what was regarded as a socially vacant space through naming it, measuring it, surveying it, putting monogrammed beacons on it. Explorers' and traders' ships were often stocked with goods and bargaining chips, 'gold, silver, pelts, fish, stones, swords, anything that could be bought and sold at a profit'.[18] As an alternative strategy to direct conquest, what often followed were acts of appropriation by way of 'land purchase'.

But what is noteworthy in the events described above, where Gerbrantzner and the Company failed in their first effort to acquire the Bay of Natal, was the Europeans' incapacity at that early moment to have their way as regards land acquisition, and for the logic of the son of the chief to hold sway over the Europeans, who were not yet in a position to assert their logic by force. Had the written document of land purchase not been lost at sea, it would still have had no leverage over local knowledge, because such leverage does not lie, miraculously, in the technology itself, the document as self-evident, but is entirely dependent on situated social practices. In Mackeurton's view, quoted earlier, it was the simple-mindedness of the local ruler and his son, their conceptual incapabilities, which prevented them from realising, first, that the father had sold too cheaply, and, secondly, that the son was bound by contract

18 B. Latour, *We have never been modern* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1993), p. 216.

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to forfeit the land. An alternative explanation for these dynamics would simply be that the Europeans' network was just not long enough, yet, to displace local knowledge and practice. The Europeans' assumptions that their practices were universally applicable did not count when they did not have the means to insist that that was the case. It is likely, though, that the Company's primary concern in getting the signed 'land grant' document was to support their claim to the territory in their dealings with competing interests in Europe, so the indigenous disinterest in the 'contract' was not their first concern.

IV. The location and contingent origins of European land deeds

The widespread interest in acquiring land deeds for foreign territories is a very interesting example of how literacy practices normalise over time in particular contexts. In Latour's phrase, they are 'black-boxed',[19] or 'compacted', to use Freebody and Freiberg's term.[20] In colonial times, Europeans took with them when they travelled such assemblages of power and knowledge as the alienability of land and related social constructions of space and time. They also took them as given universals, as self-evident technical resources. Such practices relating to land ownership and transferability were 'black-boxed' because the history that had produced them had been erased from memory and the practice treated as standard or normal. The disputes, strategies, compromises and achievements that had earlier produced these practices were forgotten, and they had become a resource, tool and self-evident method of procedure. While putting a slightly different 'spin' on this phenomenon in his discussion of European expansion, Benedict Anderson makes the following, supportive claim: 'arriving from a civilization in which the legal inheritance and the legal transferability of geographic space had long been established, the Europeans frequently attempted to legitimize the spread of their power by quasi-legal methods'.[21]

Michael Clanchy's historical study, aptly titled *From Memory to Written Record*,[22] uncovers some of the forgotten disputes in relation to the practice of recording land ownership through written documents in the context of medieval England. Clanchy details the struggle that was waged by state and private property interests for the acceptance of written documents (of land

19 Latour, *We have never been modern*, p. 174.

20 P. Freebody & J. Freiberg, 'Globalised literacy education: intercultural trade in textual and cultural practice' in M. Prinsloo & M. Baynham (eds) *Literacies: global and local* (Amsterdam: John Benjamins, 2008), p. 17.

21 B. Anderson, *Imagined communities: reflections on the origin and spread of nationalism*, revised edition (New York: Verso, 1991), p. 174.

22 M. Clanchy, *From memory to written record* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1993).

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ownership) in lay, as opposed to religious, contexts, from the 11th through the 13th century. The struggle over land in medieval England was linked to the growth of a capitalised, commercialised market, and of rural production for market exchange, from 1066 through to 1307. One result of this struggle was the expansion of private property, both as an idea and on the ground, and therefore of contests over land and its ownership and usufruct rights. Established practice, where land ownership was confirmed by the testimony of 'twelve good men and true', was contested by educated property owners who could use reading and writing for their own and their families' advantage, and who won the battle to use written records for recording land ownership. These changes took place in a context where reading and writing were the preserve of a small cohort; there was no question at the time as to whether or not people who did not read or write remained capable of rational action, of acquiring and digesting information, and of making well-founded political and religious decisions. Street's discussion of Clanchy makes the point that the development of normalised and standardised social practice in relation to written records reflected the interests of some groups and individuals more than others.

The contingent development of particular practices, knowledge, institutions and subjectivities were peculiar, at first, to European history and politics and occurred in contexts of social struggle. Over time, those social struggles have receded from memory and the practices of recording property ownership in written, legal documents have become entrenched and taken for granted in Europe and elsewhere in the world. Contemporary practice is therefore the product of a number of disputes and resistances, whose history disappears in the face of the routinisation and standardisation of such practice. As one example, Clanchy's study shows that the practice of dating (that is, the writing in of the date) in property documents and business letters, so apparently self-evident and neutral, was an outcome of conflict and gradual change, with clerics first objecting to the secular use of an essentially non-secular time frame, to a practice that was seen as sacrilegious and construed as a threat to the power of the church.

In Latour's terms, closing the 'black box' on these disputes allows social actors to take the work of others as a resource and to move on. The strength of the socio-historically constructed network of people, materials and technologies lies in such social actors utilising these resources, and, in turn, having their dispositions shaped by the practices and material technologies they are using (and whose histories are unseen and forgotten). Reading and writing, like other resources embedded in particular practices, carry their histories into new networks of practice and have particular effects that involve

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the extension and modification of those networks of practice. If we study it without regard for its history, literacy remains a 'black box', an unanalysed instrumentality in those contexts.

V. Literacy, land and power at the court of Dingane

The issues of land and of documents of transfer and ownership at the Bay of Natal reappear frequently, over a period of several hundred years. Elsewhere,[23] I show how the Bay of Natal is the intermittent focus of land documents, from the 17th to the 19th century,[24] in which cross-cultural misunderstandings are repeated due to the application of practices in settings different to those in which they originated. In the following section, I move on to examine both the dramatic events around the killing of Piet Retief and his followers, and the documents and literacy practices that play a key role in these events.

It is apparent that the Zulu leader Dingane, like Shaka before him, had an appreciation of the potentials of writing for communicating over space and time.[25] While he did not know exactly how written signs had their effect, Dingane clearly understood what written communication was about, and how to exploit it for his own ends. Indeed, as I describe below, he actively and strategically used writing to manage his relations with the settlers at the Bay of Natal, and with the Boer trekkers who entered his domains and sought land to occupy. His situated use of writing undoubtedly took the Europeans by surprise, with dramatic results.

It is notable just how much the dealings I examine were text-mediated events, despite assumptions that African people were living in a 'pre-textual' world which they could, according to the 'great divide' theorists, only cross after sustained education and immersion in Western knowledge forms. In particular, the events leading up to the killing of the Boer leader Piet Retief and his followers, while visiting Dingane's homestead, are set up in numerous ways through the complex use of writing on the part of Dingane, especially, and the Boers, with shifting roles being played by a missionary as literacy mediator and secretary to the Zulu king. The extent to which these relations were text-mediated is seldom noted in the historical record. Dorothy Smith points to a similar gap in contemporary sociology, which she criticises for

23 M. Prinsloo, 'Shaka draws first: early literacy encounters at the Bay of Natal' (forthcoming).

24 At one time in the 1820s, three European settlers, namely Lt. Farewell, Lt. King and Nathaniel Isaacs, according to Isaacs's account in his journal, independently and separately held grants, purportedly signed by Shaka, the Zulu king before Dingane, to the same land at the Bay of Natal. See N. Isaacs, *Travels and adventures in eastern Africa* (London: Edward Churton, 1836. Reprint, Cape Town: Struik, 1970).

25 Prinsloo, 'Shaka draws first'.

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taking little account of 'the phenomenon of textually mediated communication, action and social relations'.[26]

The journal of Francis Owen, a missionary at Dingane's court in 1837 and 1838, is the only European record of the important events around the death of Piet Retief. Owen's journal provides details of just how much Shaka's successor was engaged in writing practices, and also reveals some of the complex dynamics involved. Owen's descriptions of his unanticipated and unsought work as Dingane's literacy mediator or scribe provide details of how Dingane actively and enthusiastically used reading and writing in his dealings with various groups of Europeans. These descriptions also reveal the complex power relationships that were in operation in relation to these textual practices. Owen was almost entirely subject to Dingane's political authority while at his homestead. Dingane would let him preach to children but hardly ever to adults, and laughed openly at some of Owen's religious ideas. Nevertheless, Dingane gained in a number of ways from Owen's presence under his patronage, not least of which being his usefulness as a reader and a writer, and therefore made several efforts to keep Owen content and in place. He sent for Owen frequently, indeed, almost daily, to read or write letters.

Owen commented a number of times on Dingane's enthusiasm for writing. After dictating a letter, Dingane was, in Owen's description:[27]

> *desirous of putting his own mark on the letter* [so] *I gave him the pen wherewith, as if affecting to write, he made a scribble down the paper, at which I could not keep my countenance, nor did he preserve his.* [One assumes here that Owen means that they both laughed.] *He is indeed wonderously taken with this sure means of communication by writing and resorts to it at every opportunity. Whenever he sends a message to or by a white man it is always on paper. The other day having occasion to send a white man to Delagoa Bay, he made him write down the message that he might not forget it and sent to me for pen, ink and paper for that purpose.*[28]

Within days of settling in to his house on the edge of the king's homestead, Owen was persuaded by Dingane to write a letter in his own name, asking for gunpowder: 'I wrote a letter to Mr Maynard's agent at Port Natal to this effect, Sir, I beg to send you an elephant's tooth and shall be obliged by you sending me in return as much gunpowder as it is worth by bearer. I remain, etc.' The extent to which Dingane informed and controlled Owen's writing practice is made clear by the latter's disclosure that, upon having read to him

26 D. Smith, *Writing the social: critique, theory and investigations* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1999), p. 209.

27 I rely here on Owen's record. Owen does not anywhere in his diary consider whether his limited fluency in Zulu and his restricted understanding of local political and cultural dynamics might shape or limit his account.

28 F. Owen, *The diary of the Rev Francis Owen* (Cape Town: Van Riebeeck Society, 1926), p. 59.

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the letter in draft, Dingane required the following correction: 'Tell him the source of the tooth.' Owen then added the postscript: 'P.S. The tooth has been given me by Dingaan (sic).'[29]

When, instead of the gunpowder, a letter arrived from the Bay of Natal asking whether the original letter was a forgery, Owen informed Dingane, who persuaded him to sit down and write another letter confirming the original order for gunpowder. This letter was sent off immediately with the messenger who had brought the letter from the Bay, and the gunpowder duly arrived. Later, Owen, upon discovering that British authorities had imposed a ban on providing the Zulu king with gunpowder, was mortified that he had been used to circumvent it. In his diary, he protested at length his ignorance of this ban, and wrote that he had subsequently refused Dingane the use of his bullet mould, in an effort to make up for having been so used by the Zulu king.

Dingane's letters to the Port of Natal settlers similarly reflected the shifting power relations between them and the Zulu leader. Dingane had earlier demanded of the missionary leader, Captain Gardiner, that he return refugees from the Zulu who had sought protection at the Bay. Dependent on the goodwill of the king but undoubtedly knowing that the refugees would be killed if returned, Gardiner had sent them back nonetheless, thereby securing his tenure for a while. Owen wrote a letter demanding the return of yet another group of refugees, 'Isiguabani and three or four other men who were mentioned by name'[30]. Of interest, is Owen's horror as well as meek compliance with the request: 'This morning Dingaan sent for me to write a letter to Capt. Gardiner … This letter was of a very serious and inauspicious nature … I was grieved and shocked at the assertions which it contained, I felt it was best to write according to Dingaan's dictation.'[31] On this occasion the matter was resolved by a return letter two days later from Captain Gardiner, explaining that the fugitives had fled elsewhere.[32]

VI. Blood and ink

Dingane's dealings with the Boer leader, Piet Retief, are particularly interesting as regards the use of writing. Both his manipulative use of texts, on the one hand, and the great store put on written documents by the Boers, on the other, are remarkable. After arriving at Port Natal with his followers

29 Ibid., p. 41.
30 Ibid., p. 86.
31 Owen, *The diary of the Rev Francis Owen*, p. 85.
32 Ibid., p. 71. These events were part of a rising tension between the Bay settlers and the Zulu kingdom. Dingane had already stopped trade with the Bay settlers.

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on 19 October 1837,[33] Retief immediately wrote to Dingane asking him to cede Port Natal and the territory around it, the same land that had already been granted at least four times in writing to various European groups and interests, dating from the document held by the captain of *De Noord* to those of Lieutenant Farewell, Captain King and Nathaniel Isaacs, and including a document signed by Dingane and held by Capt. Gardiner, who was then resident at the Bay of Natal.

Dingane's communications with the Boers were strategic from the start, and won the following somewhat confused but admiring comments from Owen:

> *He* [Dingane] *then dictated a letter to the chief of the Boers who had written to him the other day. The purport of this letter does credit either to Dingaan's honesty or to his polity or to both. It was to say that these sheep which had been captured from Umzelekaz (in number 110) belonged to the Dutch, and that he was anxious to return them to their proper masters … I was much pleased with this little instance of Dingaan's sense of justice. As he was desirous of putting his own mark on the letter I gave him the pen wherewith, as if affecting to write, he made a scribble down the paper.*[34]

While Owen, at the time of writing this letter, did not know whether the king was being honest or strategic in his wish to return stolen sheep, the latter proved to be the case. The Boers arrived at Dingane's homestead soon thereafter. A complicated process of letter-writing and translating followed, with the Dutch-speaking Boers putting great store on getting a land allocation document, written in English, signed by Dingane:

> *November 8th—Dingarn sent very early for me, and in great haste to meet the Dutch on business. Mr Retief had written a letter to himself as from the king who had dictated it. This letter being in Dutch was first interpreted to me, and then read over to the king for his approval. I was requested both by the king and Mr. Retief to write the letter in English.*
>
> …
>
> *The Gouverneur* [Retief] *then returned home with me, here I wrote in English to the following effect. 'An answer to your letter and the conversation which has now taken place* [referring to Retief's letter of 26 October] … *To go on now with the request you made for the land. I am quite willing to grant it …*[35]

Realising that the land Dingane was now 'quite willing' to give to the Boers had already been given by him 'to the king of Great Britain by a formal grant, signed by him since Captn Gardiner's late arrival',[36] Owen was outraged.

33 See R. Davenport, *South Africa: a modern history*, 2nd ed. (Johannesburg: Macmillan, 1977), p. 58.

34 Owen, *The diary of the Rev Francis Owen*, pp. 58–59.

35 Ibid., pp. 62–63.

36 Ibid., p. 63.

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The letter that Dingane dictated included an elaborate demand that the Boers prove themselves before getting land:

> *I wish to explain that a great many cattle have been stolen from me from the outskirts of my country by people with clothing, horses and guns. These people told the Zoolus that they were Boers, and that one party was gone to Port Natal and that they (the Zoolus) would see now what would come upon them! It is my wish now that you should shew that you are not guilty of the charge which has been laid against you, as I now believe you to be. It is my request that you should retake my cattle and bring them to me, and if possible send me the thief, and that will take all suspicion away from me, and I will cause you to know that I am your friend. I will then grant your request.*

Displaying some independence from Dingane, Owen had a private conversation with Retief, warning the Boer chief of the Zulu king's profligacy with land documents:

> *After writing the above I had a long conversation with Mr Retief on the inconsistency of Dingarn's conduct, and the vain hopes which he was holding out to him. I told him of the grant of country to the English government, and asked him whether supposing the settlers at Port Natal objected to their occupying the country of Victoria, except on their becoming subject again to the British Government, they would occupy it on these terms? He plainly said No.*[37]

Retief was adamant, though, that the Boers would carry out Dingane's wish, saying that 'the expedition against the native chief … was necessary … for a vindication of their own character' (64). It is apparent that the Boers were interested in cooperating with Dingane at least as long as it took to get a land grant document signed by him. Dingane, on the other hand, was demanding that the Boers should act as tributaries to him and that Retief, as a tributary chief, should demonstrate his acceptance of that role through his willingness to undertake tasks for the Zulu king, including attacking his enemies (as the earlier group of settlers had done for his predecessor, Shaka),[38] and submitting to his authority when it was asserted. Their failure to understand or accept this probably proved fatal to Retief and his followers. The misunderstanding was produced, I suggest, by way of the written documents, with the Boers understanding the meaning of these written practices differently to the Zulu king.

Owen continues:

> *We then went to the king to have his signature. Having read the letter to him I asked him in the presence of the Dutch, whether he had not already given the land which*

37 Owen, *The diary of the Rev Francis Owen*, p. 63.

38 Isaacs recounts how the settlers were required to fight on the side of the Zulu army against their enemies.

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> *the Boors* [sic] *had been requesting of him to the British Government! He paused for a few minutes, and then said, 'I will speak to Mr. Retief on that subject when he returns with the cattle.'*[39]

The Boers carried out Dingane's request, and recovered and returned the Zulu cattle from Sekonyela and his Tlokwa people. In the raid, they also captured guns and horses, which they decided to keep for themselves. Dingane was upset at this, and got Owen to write another letter, insisting, as the latter describes, that they:

> *send him* [Owen's emphasis] *the guns and horses along with the cattle. When the cattle, guns and horses arrived he promised to assign the Dutch some land. The whole communication was indicative of the cruelty, artfulness, trickery and ambition of the Zoolu chief … I knew not in what way to avoid writing the letter; it needed no remarks from me to convince Mr Retief of the character, duplicity and designs of the king of the Zoolus.*[40]

Dingane was clearly involved in a complex strategy, wishing to establish dominance in his relationship with the Boers and concerned about their guns, horsemanship and willingness to fight.[41] Among other things, he called in an immense herd of oxen 'for no other conceivable motive than to display his wealth to the Dutch. This herd consists of the white back oxen only but it was without number' (61). Dingane also assembled a large number of men from different parts of his kingdom to dance for the Boers. Both the colour-coded cattle and the dancing soldiers were undoubtedly signs of the magnificence of the Zulu king, though it is not evident that the Boers read them that way.

Retief's written answer to Dingane's letter demanding the guns and horses heightened the tension further. As Owen described it, Retief kept the horses and guns and replied in a letter, containing 'some excellent reflections and advice on the conduct of wicked kings', that the chief Umzelekazi had been ruined: 'because he had not kept God's word but had made war when he ought not. He [Retief] referred him [Dingane] to the Missionaries to tell him what God had said in his word respecting kings who did not favour or obey his word' (81). These veiled warnings were clearly not to Dingane's liking, and probably convinced him that the Boers were a threat that had to be dealt with. They had defeated the Ndebele and were now threatening him. Owen's diary summarises the events that followed, and also reveals the pivotal role played by letters and documents in this history:

39 Owen, *The diary of the Rev Francis Owen*, p. 64.

40 Ibid., p. 101.

41 The Boers had recently defeated the powerful Ndebele, led by Mzilikazi, so Dingane had good reason to be aware of their military capabilities (see Davenport, *South Africa: a modern history*, p. 58).

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> *February 2, 1838.—Dingaan sent for me at sunset to write a letter to Mr Retief, who with a party of Boers is now on his way to the Zulu capital. The letter was characteristic of the chief. He said that his heart was now content, because he had got his cattle again. He requested that the chief of the Boers would send to all his people and order them to come up to the capital with him … He promised to gather together all his army to sing and dance. He said, 'Tell them that they must bring their horses, and dance upon them, in the middle of the town, that it might be known which could dance best, the Zulus or the "Abalungu" (the general name given to white people)'. The Dutch will be too wise to expose themselves in this manner.*[42]

The Boers did indeed come as invited, and left their guns to one side as requested. Owen's diary recounts the subsequent sequence of events:

> *February 6, 1838.—A dreadful day in the annals of the mission … the usual messenger came, with hurry and anxiety depicted in his looks. He (Dingane) sent to tell me not to be frightened as he was going to kill the Boers …. 'There!' said someone, 'they are killing the Boers now!'*
>
> …
>
> *Two of the Boers* [had] *paid me a visit this morning, and breakfasted only an hour or two before they were called into eternity. When I asked them what they thought of Dingaan they said that he was good;—so unsuspicious were they of his intentions. He had promised to assign over to them the whole country between the Tugela and the Umzimvubu Rivers, and this day the paper of transfer was to have been signed!*[43]

The historical record shows some puzzlement as to why Retief should have made himself and his followers so vulnerable to this kind of attack. As Davenport puts it, 'Retief failed to read Dingane's mind, rather presumptuously lectured him on the defeat of Mizilikazi as a sign of divine disapproval, yet walked into Dingane's carefully prepared trap on 6 February 1838 without taking the sort of precautions which other Voortrekker leaders clearly thought necessary'.[44] From a perspective on literacy as situated social practice, however, we can understand these dynamics. Retief, a Calvinist Christian, apparently saw the Bible as a source of divine wisdom, and had a general regard for the forcefulness of written documents. He had published his *Manifesto*, explaining why he and his followers were leaving the Cape Colony, in the *Graham's Town Journal* in February 1837. His main point there, as Davenport summarises it, was that 'the authorities had abandoned the proper way of handling white–black, master–servant relationships, and offended the law of God as well as human susceptibilities in doing so'.[45] Retief's reliance on the literalness and reliability of the written word, together with his assumptions of white superiority

42 Owen, *The diary of the Rev Francis Owen*, p. 104.
43 Ibid., pp. 107–8.
44 Davenport, *South Africa: a modern history*, p. 59.
45 Davenport, *South Africa: a modern history*, p. 40.

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(apparent in his views on master–servant relationships from his *Manifesto*), would have hindered him from realising that Dingane could make tactical use of documents. He apparently took comfort from the assurances in writing that Dingane sent him, and chose, for whatever reason, to ignore the doubtful value of land-grant documents under such conditions. Dingane, on the other hand, took advantage of the credibility that the written communications drafted by the pious missionary held for the Boers, while feeling no deep commitment to the veracity of the written word. He used these written communications in ways that were consistent with his own interests and political responsibilities. And, of course, the two leaders did not share the same view of land as ownable and alienable, in the specific European sense. Had Retief managed to secure such a land grant, it would only have had value in the eyes of the Europeans, and, no doubt, Retief's concern that the document be written in English reflected precisely his concern that the British be kept out of the Bay area.

In the aftermath of these events, Dingane's soldiers attacked other nearby Boer settlements, all but destroying the Voortrekker presence in Natal, until the arrival of Boer reinforcements — Andries Pretorius's commando of 500 men — brought about the military defeat of the Zulu at Blood River in December 1838. The first Boer state, the Republic of Natalia, was established and lasted for six years before being subsumed into the British Empire.[46] Owen was allowed to leave Dingane's homestead in February 1838, attempted, without success, to set up a ministry amongst the Dutch settlers and, after spending some time at the Bay of Natal, left on a boat for the Cape Colony in May that year. In his journal he summarised his thoughts on the failure of his mission:

> *The pride and insolence of the Zoolu chiefs are the main hindrances to the promulgation of the truth. When that pride is abated, the way will be made more easy for the entrance of the Gospel. God is now humbling the pride of the nation generally, and of chiefs in particular, he has permitted them to fall by their own pride, self-conceit and wickedness into such an atrocity as will in all probability bring ruin upon themselves and the nation, from which it will never recover and thus the way will be prepared for the missionaries of the word. In the view of this we adore the inscrutable ways of Providence and perceive that the very fact which is driving us away from the country will ultimately contribute to the establishment of the truth.*[47]

Concluding remarks

I would note that Owen's thoughts are apt, in that the spread of literacy and Christianity in southern Africa went together in tightly linked ways, in most

46 See Davenport, *South Africa: a modern history*.
47 Owen, *The diary of the Rev Francis Owen*, p. 120.

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cases, and were closely dependent on the military conquest or political domination of local people for their expansion. But we can also clearly see from the above study why they never spread or operated in the linear and predictable ways that Owen and others would have hoped. Literacy never simply, on its own, in some kind of autonomous way, operated as a portal through which subjugated local people were cognitively re-orientated, where the master codes of local knowledge were removed and replaced by Western ones. These dynamics were much more variable, politicised and complex than the 'great divide' theorists of literacy would suggest. An approach to literacy that is sensitive to the networked, historically contingent and socially relative effects of knowledge and practices provides a better way of examining and understanding the historical record in relation to social artefacts such as written deeds of land ownership. Print literacy came to Africa embedded in a range of specific practices, relationships and artefacts rather than as a unitary package. Shaped by European experiences and interests, these practices were subject to interpretation, translation, recontextualisation and re-embedding in a range of localised ways by indigenous people as well as by relocated Europeans. In the two cases that I have examined, Europeans took assumptions on the private ownership and alienability of land with them when they travelled, and asserted the universality of their own practices, underwritten by texts. I have shown that the written documents of land purchase had no leverage over local knowledge until such time as the network of practices and arrangements that sustained this local knowledge had been supplanted, usually by force and conquest.

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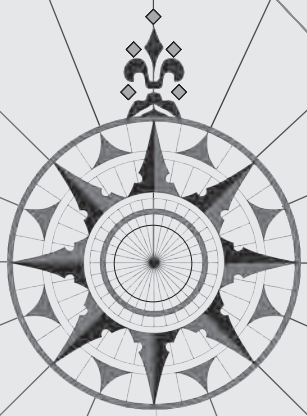
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Part V



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13



The 'Painting' of Black History: The Afro-Cuban Codex of José Antonio Aponte (Havana, Cuba, 1812)[1]

Jorge Pavez Ojeda

Introduction

The episode known in Cuba as 'Aponte's conspiracy' refers to events that occurred at the beginning of 1812, when several groups of slaves and 'free blacks' rose up against the colonial government of Havana and the western region of the island. The authorities imprisoned the leaders of this rebellion and condemned them to death. Among these leaders was the free black José Antonio Aponte, who was considered the principal leader of the conspiracy. At the time, Aponte was a well-known cabinet-maker, sculptor, devotee of the Virgen de los Remedios (Our Lady of Remedies) and a long-standing member of the Batallón de Morenos Leales de La Habana (Battalion of Loyalist Blacks of Havana). In the search of his house in Guadalupe (Pueblo Nuevo), a neighbourhood located outside the city walls, the police seized a large number of documents, a library containing a dozen volumes and two manuscripts written by Aponte himself, the so-called Book of Paintings and Book of Architecture.[2] Confronted with the

1 I would like to thank Lilith Kraushaar for her comments on the first version of this paper, and the organisers of the workshop, 'Written Culture in a Colonial Context', in Cape Town, for their invitation to this stimulating event. The translation of this paper into English has been possible with the support of the Fondo de Desarrollo Académico of the Universidad Católica del Norte (Chile).

2 E. Entralgo, *La liberación étnica cubana* (Havana: Ministerio de Educación, 1953); J.L. Franco, *La conspiración de Aponte* (Havana: Consejo Nacional de Cultura, 1963); Franco J.L., 'La conspiración de Aponte', in Franco, *Ensayos históricos* (Havana: Ciencias Sociales, 1974), pp. 125–90; S. Palmié, *Wizards and scientists. Explorations in Afro-Cuban modernity and tradition* (Durham & London: Duke University Press, 2002), pp. 79–158; J.A. Hernández, 'Hacia una historia de lo impossible. La revolución haitiana y el "libro de pinturas" de José Antonio Aponte' (PhD dissertation, Pittsburgh Univ., 2005), pp. 172–273; J. Pavez Ojeda, 'Africanismes á Cuba. Textes, images et clases (1812–1917)' (PhD dissertation, Ecole des Hautes Etudes en Sciences Sociales, 2007), pp. 275–441. Palmié broadly develops the criticism of the silence of Cuban historiography on the Book of Paintings by J.A. Aponte (*Wizards and scientists*, pp. 82–97). For a more detailed account of the texts that have addressed the Aponte case in the 19th and 20th centuries, see Pavez, 'Africanismes à Cuba', pp. 275–342.

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Book of Paintings, a pictographic work filled with characters, icons, allegories, hieroglyphics, verses, maps, landscapes, cities, symbols, colours and texts spread over 72 large plates, the trial judge proceeded to interrogate the author for five days about 'the meaning of the paintings'.[3] Although this book has never been found, we do have various elements from which to propose an interpretation of the 'paintings': the documentation of the extensive interrogation, in which Aponte describes exhaustively each of the plates included in his book, and the library which serves as inspiration for the author 'since all is the result of his reading, and that he dares with a Historical Book to portray what the reading requested from him'.[4]

The 'reading' of these 'paintings' was begun in a systematic way by Stephan Palmié and Juan Antonio Hernández.[5] We propose to deepen these perspectives for the deciphering of what we believe to be an Afro-Cuban codex. To approach this work in the form of a codex implies the study of three aspects that manifest the textuality in play in the paintings: the conditions of possibility and production of the Book of Paintings, based on an analysis of the 'visual economy'[6] in which the pictorial work is unfurled as a tool for political interpretation and teaching; the critical movement initiated by Aponte against the naturalistic representation of the races and against the epistemic regime that supported it; and the celebration and glorification of universal black history proposed by Aponte to make visible the 'lettered secrets', conserved in the archives of Western Ethiopianism.

The analysis of the Book of Paintings in these three dimensions implies approaching the unique reading that Aponte makes of the documents of the literate culture of his era and previous eras. Thus, the power of the Book of Paintings can be understood based on the analysis of the intertextuality that is displayed in the images, showing the critical operation that is developed in the relationship between image and alphabetic writing. The Book of Paintings processes, translates and composes using diverse compositional methods,

3 The legal document was titled *Expediente sobre declarar. José Antonio Aponte sobre el sentido de las pinturas que se hayan en el L. que se le aprehendió en su casa. Conspiración de José Antonio Aponte, 24 de marzo de 1812* [Dossier on declaration. José Antonio Aponte about the meaning of the paintings found in the B[ook] that was seized in his home. Conspiracy of José Antonio Aponte, 24 March 1812], Cuban National Archive (Archivo Nacional de Cuba, or ANC), Political Affairs, Lot 12, file 17; edited in Franco, La conspiración de Aponte. We have published our own transcription of the papers in Pavez Ojeda (ed.), *Anales de Desclasificación*, I, 2 (2006) pp. 717–59; also at www.desclasificacion.org.

4 *Expediente* …, ANC, Political Affairs, lot 12, file, 17, f. 20.

5 Palmié, *Wizards and scientists*, pp. 99–158; Hernández 'Hacia una historia de lo imposible', pp. 172–273.

6 D. Poole, *Visión, raza y modernidad. Una economía visual del mundo andino de las imágenes* (Lima: Sur, 2000).

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taken from multiple written and oral sources and iconographic documents, and displays them in figurative compositions. For the analysis of the disappeared 'paintings', the list of the books, 'all old and used', seized in the home of the accused during the trial process will be quite useful: 'one very elegant board book which is titled *Descripción de Historia Natural*, an *Arte Nebrija*, *Guía de Forasteros de la Isla de Cuba*, *Maravillas de la Ciudad de Roma*, *Estado Militar de España*, *Sucesos Memorables del Mundo*, *Historia del Conde Saxe*, *Formulary for letter-writing*, *Catecismo de la Doctrina Cristiana*, *Vida del Sabio Hisopo* and the Third Volume of *Don Quijote*.'[7] In addition, during the trial, Aponte indicated that he had loaned two other books that were central to the making of the paintings: *El libro de la vida de San Antonio Abad* and *El Libro del Padre Fr. Luis Yrreta del orden Domínico de Balencia*.[8]

I. Context: The production of the paintings

The production of Aponte's book as a pictographic writing implied a work of transliteration to a language and a pictorial account of European texts — historical, mythological and religious — published from the 16th to the 19th centuries. This is the inverse of what is observed, for example, in the treatment received by the Mexican codex during the first century of the Spanish conquest. Faced with the destruction of these books of images by the missionaries, and the persecution of their authors and readers — the *tlacuolli* — the pictographic historiography of the Mexican peoples began to be transcribed or 'transferred' to an alphabetic written system. Drawings became increasingly rare in chronicles, as generations of Aztec, Mixtec or Chichimec intellectuals lost their understanding of the pictoglyphic codes as they were taught to read and write by missionaries in indigenous schools.[9] The fact that among Aponte's seized books was an edition of Antonio de Nebrija's *Arte*[10] suggests that the production of this Afro-Cuban codex may be understood as a response to the language and writing system promoted by Nebrija's grammar starting at the end of the 15th century. With his Latin and Castilian grammar, Nebrija instituted an imperial grammatical system designed to control the enunciation of 'common language' and convert it into the heir to the language of European and Christian domination of America

7 *Expediente* …, ANC, Political Affairs, lot 12, file 17, f. 23.

8 For a more precise identification of these books, see Pavez, 'Africanismes à Cuba' pp. 451–55. Only the volumes that will be cited in this article are included in the bibliography.

9 M. León-Portilla, *El destino de la palabra. De la oralidad y los códices mesoamericanos a la escritura alfabética* (México: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 1996), pp. 31–71.

10 The brevity of the bibliographic description does not permit us to ascertain if this is the Latin grammar, of 1481, or the Castilian of 1492.

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(Latin). Walter Mignolo has indicated that these two grammars express the same passion: 'linguistically and philosophically, [Nebrija] was obsessed with controlling the voice through written language'.[11] Phonetic writing becomes an instrumental function for subjugation of non-alphabetic signs and of the word, which are maintained as the founding origin of the meaning that the writing is called on to stabilise. Nebrija's dream of a word-writing isomorphism as a signifier–signified isomorphism, expressed in his axioms 'write as pronounced and pronounce as written' and 'one symbol for each sound' will imply the 'reduction to artifice', that is, to the alphabet, of 'strange and foreign tongues', to the extent that metaphoric and polysemous symbols do not allow for control of the voice and unification of the territories under the same law: it is then 'all of the Amerindian relationship with the written symbols [that] had to change'.[12]

Aponte's work clearly goes against the grain of this historic process of 'reduction to the alphabet' of colonised writings, of control of signified by the signifier and of the language by the writing. Aponte explicitly proposes to transform into images the alphabetic texts and the iconographic materials which are available to him *'ex omnibus terries ac saeculis'*[13] and whose historical pertinence requires their figurative elaboration: Christian hagiography, ancient mythology (Greek, Roman and Christian), military and official administrative documents (battle maps, royal decrees), Baroque aristocratic imagery and *emblemata*, murals painted in the streets of Havana, biographies of sovereigns, military officials, religious men and saints (European, Asian, American and African), almanacs, catechisms, books on the history of Ethiopia, Christianity and its religious congregations, and also the history of his own life and the genealogy of his family. The trial process would reinstate the alphabetic order of meaning, by obliging Aponte to explain the meaning of each image in the book, which was then transcribed into an alphabetic document. Presuming in the alphabet as the writing of literal meaning, the judges attempt to control any possible dissemination of the meaning of the 'paintings', by making the book and its author disappear, leaving the trial record as the only remnant and trace of their existence.

For the creation of the Book of Paintings, Aponte's workshop had become a place of pictorial and textual experimentation, of *collage* and *bricolage* of

11 W. Mignolo, *The darker side of the Rennaissance. Literacy, territoriality, and colonization* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1995), p. 41.

12 Mignolo, *The darker side of the Rennaissance*, pp. 45 & 53. It is important to remember that this plan would be developed in America starting in the 16th century, with the teaching of Christian doctrine in Náhuatl and Quechua (rather than Latin) to the 'Indians'. Blacks and Spanish children, on the other hand, were evangelised in Castilian.

13 Palmié, *Wizards and scientists*, p. 118.

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images, plans, figures, signs and symbols, where the master Aponte received the collaboration of young disciples, thus instituting a space for the informal teaching of writing and graphic and visual arts. Trinidad Núñez, for example, worked as painter in a store. In that role, he carried out some specific works for the Book of Paintings, dedicating himself specifically to 'superimposed figures which are not printed'.[14] This young painter reproduced images of saints and also created his own figures based on descriptions from the books, such as those of the *Life of San Antonio Abad* and of Friar Urreta. Neither of these books contained prints upon which Núñez could model his figures, and he was thus guided only 'by the explanation of both works'.[15]

We should remember here that religious prints were circulated widely in the cities of Latin America in this period[16] and constituted an important tool of the Counter-Reformation to promote popular devotion to the Catholic saints. Francisco Stastny observes that in America, the 'spectator' is invited to 'read' these images as hieroglyphics (scrolls), something that by the 18th century in Europe had been limited to book illustrations. This relationship between the 'spectator' and the painting is summarised in the aphorism, '*ut pictora poiesis*': like poetry, painting should be read. What we have here is one of the 'medieval symptoms' of Latin American Baroque art, which can be explained by the massive dissemination of religious prints and the simultaneous and contradictory restriction on circulating new historical, scientific and philosophical books which would enable the deciphering of these images. Thus, if in Europe the 'successive vision' of medieval gothic had been substituted, since the works of Alberti and Vasari, by the unity of time and place brought by the centralised Renaissance perspective, in America, on the

14 *Expediente* …, ANC, Political Affairs, lot 12, file 17, f. 63.

15 Ibid. In the interrogation of Trinidad Núñez, there are details of his various pictorial contributions: 'the dark-skinned Cleric who has a book in his hand' (plate XVII), the 'painting of Juan de Baltazar Knight of the Order of San Antonio Abad who is showing […] [Balencia] some Books' (plate XXIX), the 'three Saints to the right Thomas, George and Mark' (plate XXXVII), the 'Images of the Saints taken from the book of San Antonio Abad: the lower part of a black Bishop and other Clergymen and Secular men who accompany him; and the other Effigies of Saints that are not of [chisel], for the Book of Father Friar Luis Yrreta of the Dominican order of Balencia' (plate XLVI). It had been eight years since Aponte had commissioned these figures from Trinidad Núñez, due to '[Aponte], being a devotee of those saints'. *Expediente* …, ANC, Political Affairs, 12/17, f. 96–98.

16 In 1836, the printing house of Bologna came to sell more than 200 printed plates of various saints in Havana; see A. Fornet, *El libro en Cuba* (Havana: Letras Cubanas, 1994), p. 61. For the case of Lima and Quito in the 17th century, see J.R. Jouve, *Esclavos de la ciudad letrada. Esclavitud, escritura y colonialismo en Lima (1650–1700)* (Lima: Instituto de Estudios Peruanos, 2005).

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other hand, space continued to be inhabited by time, without having acquired its 'own geometric reality'.[17]

There are several venues, genres and graphic styles that were present in the city of Havana as a visual economy produced by the 'coloured class'. Its public spaces were, at the end of the 18th century, places where popular graphic expression proliferated. Many streets, alleys and places were named for the mural paintings that identified them.[18] In addition to these pictorial expressions, there were murals commissioned by the Creole sugar barons to adorn the rooms of their mansions, and the ecclesiastical commissions for churches. This same aristocracy used a type of 'visiting card' that was painted, printed or engraved, then called 'hieroglyphics', with which they commemorated the dead and honored the memory of their lineage.[19] The 'fans', on the other hand, were used much more by the popular classes and also carried significant iconography. In his declaration, Aponte indicated that 'not being a painter [...] I have often bought different prints of countries, and paintings to take from them, or from old fans what is most suitable to his idea'.[20] These so-called 'countries' were a genre of printed landscapes where nature is cast or 'petrified' in scenes of monumental ruins (palaces, pyramids), presented as the work of 'the supreme author'.[21]

17 F. Stastny, 'Síntomas medievales en el "Barroco Americano"' (Lima: Instituto de Estudios Peruanos, 1993), pp. 11 & 23–25. Following Palmié, it is starting from this determination of time concerning the image that Aponte identifies 'a source and crucial method of power and its generation', similar to the revelatory operation of the movements of power that Marx would initiate with the powers of capital upon 'studying its images, reading its books and being in proximity to them to learn their secrets' (Marx, cited in Palmié, *Wizards and scientists*, p. 126).

18 J. Rigol, *Apuntes para la historia del grabado y la pintura en Cuba* (Havana: Letras Cubanas, 1982), pp. 50–51,who gives the examples of the street 'del Águila' (of the Eagle), 'los Ángeles' (the Angels), of 'Pilgrim Jesus' (the statue carved by Aponte and set up on an altarpiece in front of his house), the plaza 'del Vapor' (of Steam), the crossroads of the 'Macaco', names that refer to the painted murals in those places.

19 Palmié, *Wizards and Scientists*, pp. 103 & 318. We know the names of the poets of these cards. In the case of Nueva España (New Spain), the poetic anthologies were entrusted to famed writers such as Carlos Sigüenza y Góngora or Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz, who developed allegories of figures such as Neptune, Isis or Huitzilopochtli. About this subject, see O. Paz, *Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz o las trampas de la fe* (México: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 1982), pp. 212–28. On the other hand, there is no registry remaining of the Afro-Cuban painters of the cards, subject as these painters were to the obscurity of the black 'class and condition' (Rigol, *Apuntes*, pp. 51–52).

20 *Expediente* ..., ANC, Political Affairs, lot 12, file 17, f. 20.

21 Antonio Parra's book (1787), found in Aponte's library, contains several plates of these 'countries'. A. Parra, *Descripción de diferentes piezas de historia natural las mas del ramo marítimo: representadas en setenta y cinco láminas*, ed. Armando García Gonzalez (1787; Havana: Academia, 1989), pp. 185–86.

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While the printed fans and 'countries' were generally imported, the public and private murals, church paintings, sculptures, 'hieroglyphics' and prints were produced by blacks and mulattos from Havana, who practically monopolised the visual arts. This quasi-monopoly of the artistic trade would lead the colonial government in 1818 to create the Academia de Bellas Artes San Alejandro (St Alexander Fine Arts Academy), in order to 'take away this occupation of painter from the black artisans'.[22] It is assumed that this measure would also contribute to the homogenisation of Havana's pictographic imagery, restricting the proliferation of heterodox styles, such as those criticised by the *Papel Periódico* of Havana at the end of the 18th century for being 'in bad taste'[23] and which Bishop Espada was planning to destroy, because of his 'aversion to Baroque sensibility'.[24]

Restricting the access of blacks, whether slaves or free, to the various expressions of literate culture (books, schools and the lettered professions) implied the constitution of 'textual communities',[25] strongly linked by public reading, done by the few literates.[26] In fact, the dissemination of printed material among the black populations of Havana at the beginning of the 19th century, especially the *Gaceta de Madrid (Madrid Gazette)*, which provided information about the events of the Haitian revolution, prompted complaints from Governor Someruelos (1804–09) because of the euphoria that this news produced among

22 Bachiller & Morales, cited in Rigol, *Apuntes*, pp. 73–74. The last one on the list of a large number of black painters from Havana, of which the best known were perhaps the mulattos Nicolás de la Escalera (1765–1835) and Vicente Escobar, 'born black' (1757) and 'died white' (1854), who had used the benefit of the 'Gracias al sacar' decree to buy his 'white' status. The African origin of many painters of the colonial Baroque period in America seems to be a constant; cf. S. Sebastián, *Le baroque ibéro-américain. Message iconographique* (Paris: Seuil, 1991).

23 Despite the criticisms, between the end of the 18th century and the first half of the 19th century wealthy Creoles from Havana had commissioned blacks to paint these murals in their mansions. Cf. S. Fischer, *Modernity disavowed: Haiti and the cultures of slavery in the age of revolution* (Durham & London: Duke University Press, 2004), pp. 61–65.

24 Rigol reports on the feverish activity of this 'reformist' bishop of Havana (1800–1832) in his mission to seek out and burn non-canonic paintings and sculptures, such as the painting of the Last Supper in a church, where the Apostles appeared dressed as priests and the Virgin as a nun, horrified by the attendance of the Virgin at the supper, or also the paintings that he considered 'badly drawn' such as the scene of the embarkation of the Bishop of Havana forced into exile by the English. Rigol, *Apuntes*, pp. 54–55.

25 B. Stock, *The implications of literacy: written languages and models of interpretation in the eleventh and twelfth centuries* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984), pp. 90–91.

26 For more on these subjects, see G. García, *La esclavitud desde la esclavitud* (Havana: Ciencias Sociales, 2003); Jouve, *Esclavos de la ciudad letrada*; E. Franca Paiva, 'Leituras (im)possíveis: negros e mesticos leitores na América Portuguesa', in E. de Freitas Dutra & J.-Y. Mollier (eds), *Política, nacao e edicao. O lugar dos impresos na construcao da vida política* (São Paulo: Annablume, 2006), pp. 481–95; and Pavez, 'Africanismes á Cuba', pp. 293–308.

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the black population.[27] This explains the concern of Aponte's judges when they learn that the accused had lent 'the book of father Urreta' to the 'black Catalina Gavilan de la Villa de Guanabacoa' and 'the book of San Antonio Abad' to the young Trinidad Núñez.[28] In addition to promoting reading, Aponte also gave writing classes and 'plan drawing classes' to Agustín Santa Cruz, requiring him to transcribe royal decrees and military maps. The suspicion and persecution always generated by this type of 'lettered practices'[29] by the black population implied the development of an important sensibility for the reading and 'writing' of images. If the Counter-Reformation provided the institutional framework through which the Baroque was to shape 'a bureaucratic system that is understood through the organization of a State Church', thus underscoring the 'dominant position assumed by the bureaucracy in the colonial empire',[30] the 'medieval symptoms' of Baroque painting appear to point to a genealogy of meaning and historicity that unfolds prior to and outside the 'bureaucratic rationale' of imperial Baroque, to the extent that pictorial production is monopolised by free blacks and mulattos who have been simultaneously excluded from and subordinate to the institutions of the 'lettered city'.[31]

In this way, throughout the centuries, the relationship to the image became imposed as a privileged form of transmitting content and affects due to its particular power to influence subjects of all classes, but especially those subject to literacy restrictions.[32] In the case of Aponte's Book of Paintings, the same scenes of deciphering the codex through the reading of the Mexica, Chichimec and Náhuatl *tlacuolli* are quite suggestive for imagining the use that Aponte sought to give to his book, as a pedagogical 'anchor' of the accounts of black history that he was able to present to his visitors. We should remember that all of the accused in the trial of the conspiracy indicated their familiarity with the Book of Paintings and the explanations Aponte provided about the images. The sessions in which these edifying accounts were shared were also

27 A. Ferrer, 'Noticias de Haití en Cuba', *Revista de Indias* LXIII, 229 (2003), pp. 675–94; A. Ferrer, 'Cuba en la sombra de Haití: noticias, sociedad y esclavitud', in *El rumor de Haití en Cuba: temor, raza y rebeldía, 1789–1844* (Madrid: Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas, 2005), pp. 179–231.

28 *Expediente* …, ANC, Political Affairs, lot 12, file 17, f. 97.

29 B. Street, 'Los nuevos estudios de literacidad', in V. Zavala, M. Niño-Murcia & P. Ames (eds), *Escritura y sociedad. Nuevas perspectivas teóricas y etnográficas* (Lima: Red para el desarrollo de las ciencias sociales, 2004), pp. 81–107.

30 R. Naranjo, 'Barroco latinoamericano y formación de la razón burocrática contemporánea', *Revista de crítica literaria latinoamericana*, XXX, 60 (2004), pp. 305 & 299.

31 A. Rama, *La ciudad letrada* (Hanover: Ediciones del Norte, 1984).

32 On the effect of the images during the colonial Baroque, see J.A. Maravall, *La cultura del barroco: análisis de una estructura histórica* (Barcelona: Ariel, 1990); C. Bernand, *Negros esclavos y libres en las ciudades hispanoamericanas* (Madrid: Fundación Histórica Tavera, 2001); Jouve, *Esclavos de la ciudad letrada*, pp. 53–74.

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reported by Juan Arnao, who indicated that in Aponte's house there were 'various warrior figures, drawn with charcoal on the interior walls, which must have been images of the dedicated guides (the Haitian revolutionaries) and even the invincible Dessalines'. And he emphasises that the nighttime meetings at Aponte's house were a 'fact known by everyone', although the host promised those who attended to 'keep under sworn oath the secret of these dangerous activities'.[33] A review of certain plates of the Book of Paintings reveals how these meetings, cloaked in the mystery of a secret society or Masonic lodge, served to offer a glorious account of the rise of the black class in universal history, in an attempt to influence through allegorical images of black historical figures.[34] Thus, art is always linked to political power, since it serves to mediate and distinguish the 'visible' (the king and his court) from the 'invisible' (the fantastic and secret character of the foundation of political power).[35] In this sense, Palmié points to a central aspect by emphasising Aponte's proposed 'vision of the past [which was] unacceptable to the regime', which enables the Book of Paintings to be viewed as 'a conspiracy of images'.[36] The effect of these images would be long-lasting, and it is likely that several of the accused in the 'Monzón conspiracy' (Havana, 1835) had been ideologically informed more than two decades earlier in the meetings at Aponte's house.[37]

The potency of the political effects of Aponte's paintings necessitates that their interpretation be distinguished from that of pure religious devotion. The work is destined to produce an affect of class through an 'effect of representation', 'fertilising' the images with an account which is a political manoeuvre: to raise the visibility of the historical sovereignty of a black 'class and condition' whose genealogy has been made invisible and silenced by the imperial 'bureaucratic rationale'. We propose, then, to show here how Aponte's book confronts this bureaucratic rationale by vindicating a *theocratic rationale*

33 Arnao (1900), cit. in Rigol, *Apuntes*, p. 63.

34 Palmié, *Wizards and scientists*, pp. 124–25.

35 J.-G. Bidima, *L'art negro-africain* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1997), pp. 52–53.

36 Palmié, *Wizards and scientists*, p. 97.

37 Pavez, 'Africanismes à Cuba', pp. 414–34. Pilar Borrego was accused and interrogated in both trials. But in addition, a 'manuscript in the form of a book' was found in the house of the principal accused, the schoolteacher and captain of blacks León Monzón. Today, this book, titled *Año de 1812, Apunte general de todo lo ofrecido en esta Epoca. León Monzón* [Year 1812, General notes on everything available at this time], has also disappeared. See J. Llaverías, *La Comisión Militar ejecutiva y permanente de la Isla de Cuba* (Havana: Imprenta El Siglo XX, 1929), p. 85. Regarding the 'Monzón conspiracy' and all its textual proliferation, see P. Deschamps-Chapeaux, 'Margarito Blanco el "Ocongo de Ultan"', *Boletín del Instituto de Historia y del Archivo Nacional* 25 (1964), pp. 97–109; and *Criminales. Plaza de La Habana. Año de 1839* [Criminals. Plaza of Havana. Year 1839], ANC, Military Commission, lot 23, file 1.

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that precedes it, and whose narrative enriches the historical images through the representation of black sovereignty.

II. The place of blacks in history: Historical Ethiopianism versus racial naturalism

Aponte's workshop succeeded another cabinet that operated just prior to it, within the city of Havana, and to which Aponte was probably linked. This is the naturalist cabinet of the Portuguese military officer Antonio Parra, whose work, mentioned above, is today considered to be the first scientific work published on the island. Antonio Parra gathered pieces of fossils, molluscs and dried fish which he found on the seashore, collected and carried with the help of a 'servant', thus creating the collection which he would later present to the public in the form of a book and a public exhibit in his home. For the graphic illustration of this work, Parra enjoyed the invaluable experimental collaboration of his 16-year-old son, who was responsible for printing the plates and for the research and readings that required his technical efforts.[38] Thus, like Trinidad Núñez was for the Book of Paintings, Parra's son was an essential collaborator in the graphic production of the work. Parra's naturalist cabinet, without a doubt, provided a certain inspiration, theoretical and methodological, for Aponte's decision to create a book of history, not about types of natural species, but about the social classes of races and nations.

The links that can be made between Parra's naturalist cabinet and Aponte's historicist workshop are many. Towards 1783, the military official and amateur naturalist had some caoba-wood furniture made 'in the local style' to exhibit his collection to the public; to do this, he consulted with 'various master carpenters'. Parra would later write to the court of Spain, indicating that he kept examples of species in caoba-wood cases carved 'by the most discerning craftsmen in the country'.[39] Considering that all the carpenters in Havana at the time were free blacks,[40] and that Aponte had achieved a certain reputation in this profession, in addition to his erudition and interest in general knowledge, there are sufficient elements to suppose that Aponte made the furniture for exhibiting the ocean fauna, receiving from Parra himself one of the few print editions of

38 A. García González, *Antonio Parra en la ciencia hispanoamericana del siglo XVIII* (Havana: Academia, 1989), pp. 37 & 41.

39 García González, Antonio Parra, pp. 36–37. Parra's book includes two plates of the furniture.

40 P. Deschamps Chapeaux, *El negro en la economía habanera del siglo XIX* (Havana: Unión de Escritores y Artistas de Cuba, 1971).

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his *Descripción de Historia Natural* (1787).[41] A few years later, Aponte began to create his own illustrated history.[42] To this end, instead of walking the beaches in search of fossils, Aponte walked the docks of Havana searching for travellers who could supply him with books and information.

It is important, then, in the critical dialogue that opposes Aponte's work with that of Parra, to stop and consider the 18th-century concept of a 'natural history', since both Cuban books face off precisely around the problem of the illustration of a historical gnoseology. Parra was a self-taught naturalist and thus was not trained in the disciplines of natural species classification; he did not use the 'natural system' created by Linnaeus (1735) and practised an 'empirical manipulation' of the pieces he collected. These self-taught practices and certain 'errors of classification' led Armando García González to consider that 'Don Antonio would have become a capable naturalist, if he had had the opportunity to study with a suitable teacher or school'.[43] This is, undoubtedly, an important point, but here we should understand the activity of classifying nature in a broader sense. The inclusion in Parra's book of three final plates (LXXI, LXXII and LXXIII) with the title 'Negro: Deformed hernia' shows the place of the black body in the 'natural history' as a piece that is linked in the continuum of nature and at the same time marks a transformation. Here is 'Domingo Fernandez, Negro of the Congo nation; 32 years old (he who worked as a coach driver or coachman)', whose 'Spherical sarcocele hernia' (testicular elephantiasis) is described in all its dimensions:

> *in its circumference of one and a half varas and six inches; and from top to bottom three quartas and five inches: its weight of four arrobas and two pounds. Presents in*

41 On one of the pieces crafted by Aponte (Parra, *Descripción de historia natural*, plate B, without folio), Carib Indians appear as columns of the structure. Coincidently, in plates XVIII–XIX and XIV–XV of the Book of Paintings the *cacique* Mariel and other Taíno men appear in similar position, *holding up* something: 'souls', banners, 'an Indian woman'. *Expediente* …, ANC, Political Affairs, leg. 12, exp. 17, f. 35, 40.

42 On plate VIII (*Expediente* …, ANC, Political Affairs, lot 12, file 17, f. 25), there appears Manuel Godoy, minister of the court of Spain, nicknamed 'the Prince of Peace', when he arrives 'at his highest level', for having carried out the negotiations with the French (1795) (Palmié, *Wizards and Scientists*, p. 319). This enables us to date the beginning of the elaboration of the Book of Paintings between 1787 (publication of Parra's books) and 1795. The campaign of Jean François and the Black Battalions of Cuba in support of the Spanish against the French in Ballajá (Haití, 1794) had facilitated the entrance into Cuba of information and iconography of the Haitian revolution on this island (Ferrer, 'Cuba en la sombra de Haití: noticias, sociedad y esclavitud', pp. 190–93 & 228). Furthermore, starting in 1804 Trinidad Núñez's iconographic contributions to the Book of Paintings (plate XVI) are included. Thus, it can be considered that Aponte's creative process develops parallel to, and inspired by, the events of the Haitian revolution (which started in 1791), but Hernández mistakenly dates the start of the production of Aponte's book to 1806 (Hernández, 'Hacia una historia de lo impossible', p. 234).

43 García González, Antonio Parra, pp. 38, 41 & 97.

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> *the front part until the knees, length of two quartas from one to the other: in the back part, the length from one leg to the other one vara less two inches. What is notable in particular, the penis is found 14 pulgadas from the pubis, separating part of the body from the member, with the particularity of not urinating through it but through a small opening, which is found at its base. This illness, acquired in 1777, having begun with the size of a truco ball, and motivated by this he went to the Hospital de San Juan de Dios, where he received the unctions; but unsuccessfully, as far from shrinking, it has grown to the mentioned size, with the singular particularly of not being uncomfortable except when walking, which requires work; apart from that he is robust, healthy and free of even minor ailments.*[44]

The 'description of pieces of natural history of the island' ends by indicating that Domingo Fernández 'makes his living by begging; and as a result it is rare to find, in this City of Havana, those who have not seen this strange natural phenomenon with their own eyes, and those who are not moved to admiration, and compassion by seeing such a large mass. END.'[45] The image of this 'example' of black *pathos* at the end of the series of images of plants, fossils and marine fauna of the island seeks to mark the limit of nature with the image of a sick black man, whose bodily deformity is identified with his race. The testicular deformation of this black body signifies here a function and a limit of demarcation.

The appearance of the monster as a problem for 18th-century natural science is linked to the need to complete the classificatory charts of the temporary transformations that articulate the continuum of beings. While the fossil, which is abundant in the plates of Parra's book, functions as a form of identity, allowing the similarities to survive over time, the monster allows difference to appear still as exception, produced by transformations in the natural continuum, as the origin of bodily specificities.[46] The body of Domingo Fernández plays the role of monster in this book, that is, that body that alludes to the variations in nature that prove the difference between bodies, without even constituting a type. But by choosing the body of a sick black man, Parra links the monstrous difference to a system of types, that of the races as varieties of the human species. With his *Systema Naturae*, Linnaeus had broken apart the unity of man (biblical monogenesis), incorporating him into the natural series, in the same system of classification (composed of orders, classes, species, varieties and races, in one chain without gaps or spaces), and relegating the differences between man and animal to metaphysics.[47] The inclusion of a sick/monstrous black man at the end

44 Parra, *Descripción de historia natural*, pp. 194–95.

45 Ibid.

46 M. Foucault, *Les mots et les choses* (Paris: Gallimard, 1966), pp. 163–70.

47 About 'natural history', see J. Duvernay-Bolens, *Les géants Patagons. Voyage aux origines de l'homme* (Paris: Michalon, 1995), and S.J Gould, *La falsa medida del hombre* (Barcelona: Crítica, 1997).

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of the continuum of species that range from fossils to fish, and including marine plants and crustaceans, constitutes in Parra's work the mark of a threshold that points to an anomaly: the continuity of nature in the same species and variety is overlapped with the racial difference and the specificity of a *pathos* that marks the identity of a classificatory difference and the limit of variability in a continuum. What is emphasised, then, is a form of transition among species based on a vestige of the transformations suffered by the human body over time, with the fossil vestige (the 'black' body) whose original forms of identity and of invariability support a system of racial types.

The association of African blacks with monsters goes back to ancient times. From the geographies of Pliny, Herodotus, Strabo and Julius Solinus, to the biblical exegeses of Isidore of Seville and Saint Augustine, Africa was the land of monsters. In the works of these authors, the torrid climate was the most frequent explanation for the proliferation of monstrous life forms on the continent where blacks ('Ethiopians', from the Greek *aethiops*, or 'burnt face') lived alongside fantastical animals. Saint Augustine and Isidore of Seville would provide the biblical twist to ancient geography: the anatomical monstrosity of the Africans is for them the manifestation of the filth of the soul; the black body (viewed as deformed) is the symptom and the sentence brought by Noah's curse on Ham, and the slavery of blacks is justified as divine punishment for the sin of their cursed ancestor.[48] Alonso de Sandoval appears to be the first in America to systematically approach this naturalist and monogenetic *doxa* concerning the monstrosity of the 'Ethiopians' (understood as 'African blacks').[49] The work to save the 'Ethiopians' that Sandoval proposes in his *De*

48 A. de Sandoval, *De instauranda Aethiopum salute, Historia de Aethiopia, naturaleça, Policia Sagrada y profana, Costumbres, ritos y Cathecismo Evangélico de todas las Aethiopes con que se restaura la salud de sus almas* (Madrid: Alonso Paredes, 1647); Fra B. Molinero, *La imagen de los negros en el teatro del Siglo de Oro* (Madrid: Siglo XXI, 1995). If despite this, the Catholic monogenism continued to include blacks in the human species, thus requiring their evangelisation, the Protestant reformers, on the other hand, demonised the monstrosity of blacks, thus discarding the possibility of their humanity and their evangelisation.

49 This Jesuit, who baptised slaves recently arrived at Cartagena de Indias, dedicates the third chapter of his work to the 'cause of the extraordinary monsters found in Africa, and in Asia, principally in the part of it occupied by Ethiopia (according to the authors)'. There, the author proposes to 'understand [...] the diversity of forms, which are found in the human species among the Ethiopians and other Kingdoms of blacks' for which 'it is necessary to know the cause of the generation of the monsters and their beginnings'. Cf. Sandoval, *De instauranda Aethiopum salute*; and commentaries of this book in M. Cesáreo, 'Menú y emplazamiento de la corporalidad barroca', in Mabel Moraña (ed.) *Relecturas del Barroco de Indias* (Hanover: Ediciones del Norte, 1994), pp. 185–221; L.A.M. Restrepo, 'Memorias en conflicto y paz en Colombia: la discriminación hacia lo(s) "negro(s)"', in D. Mato (comp.) *Estudios Latinoamericanos sobre cultura y transformaciones sociales en tiempos de globalización 2* (Buenos Aires: Consejo Latinoamericano de Ciencias Sociales, 2001), pp. 179–95; Bernand, *Negros libres y esclavos.*

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instauranda Aethiopum salute (1647) is debated with a theme that is characteristic of the literature of the Spanish Baroque: that of the impossibility of 'cleansing' the black man (by lightening his skin), a problem whose theological translation was the salvation ('cleansing') of his soul.[50]

The importance of Sandoval in the foundation and dissemination of historical Ethiopianism in America (as opposed to biblical Ethiopianism) gives him a place in the Book of Paintings, where he appears painted in the company of various black clergymen and pilgrims in a scene that takes place in Vatican Rome. This is on plate XXXVII, where 'Father Sandoval Jesuit and author who witnesses with the others, the reality of the mentioned dark individuals',[51] showing a procedure that is repeated in Aponte's book: the use of pictorial scenes for textual citations (detailing the written text that is transliterated) and for the staging of the authorship of these works (incorporating the cited authors into the paintings). The authors simultaneously constitute an object of representation and a source of the events. The description of this plate also enables understanding of the diversity of bibliographical and oral sources that inform the Book of Paintings.

The image begins by representing 'Pope Clement XI with a Cardinal and another clergyman of the order of Saint Benedict both dark-skinned, the first named Jacobo and the second without a name and librarian of His Holiness',[52] persons whose existence he claims to know of 'only through conversation' with 'a black man whose name he doesn't know who had the book of general history and taught him about both figures, and for this reason the declarer created this painting'.[53] Although it is not clear what 'general history' is being cited here, it is very possible that the librarian figure refers to Abba Gregorius, an Ethiopian monk and grammarian who around 1649 served as informant to Hiob Ludolf as he was developing his *Historia aethiopica* (1681) at the Vatican. Aponte indicates later that 'much of what is drawn on this paper' is owed to his 'reading the book on the life of San Antonio Abad',[54] and that

50 In the many editions of the *Emblemata* of Andrea Alciato, the black Ethiopian figure appears as one which two white men attempt to wash, but they are unable to change his colour no matter how much they try: 'he is the symbol of negativity, of the impossible, as the motto of Emblema 59 prays' (Fra Molinero, *La imagen de los negros*). Lope de Vega, for his part, writes *'es como el negro el necio/que aunque le lleven al baño/es fuerza volverse negro'*. In his salvation project, Sandoval attempts to confront these 'evidences'.

51 *Expediente* …, ANC, Political Affairs, lot 12, file 17, f. 55.

52 *Expediente* …, ANC, Political Affairs, lot 12, file 17, f. 53.

53 Ibid.

54 We identify this work as that of J. Baltasar Abisinio, *Fundacion, vida y regla de la grande orden militar y monastica de los caualleros y monges del glorioso Padre San Anton Abad, en la Etiopia, monarchia del Preste Iuan de las Indias compuesta por don Iuan de Baltazar Abissino* (1609; Paris: Jean Tompere, 1632) who reported on the history of the knights and the Rule of San Antonio Abad).

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he has learned of the existence 'of the Temple that exists in the same City called San Esteban de los Indianos in back of the Saint Peter's Cathedral'[55] through reading the 'foreigner's guide to Rome'.[56] These sources enabled him to corroborate the existence of many other religious persons, either black or 'negrophiles', circulating in the Vatican: the 'bishop of eastern india [...] associate of various secular and ecclesiastical relatives all dark-skinned', who are received by 'the cardinals, accompanied by the Franciscan General and that of St. Bernard'; 'two religious men [...] a Dominican and another from San Benito are [authors] of the truth of the history that they explained, the first one named Friar Luis de Urreta, and the second Father Alvarez'.[57] Both authors were known for their historical works on Ethiopia, the latter having served as chaplain of a mission entrusted in 1520 by King Manuel I of Portugal to Rodrigo de Lima, in response to the letter from Elena, sovereign of Abyssinia and mother of he who would receive this embassy, the Negus Dawit II, Atani Tingli.[58] As a result of this mission, Bishop Oviedo, 'the third patriarch', was sent with a group of Jesuits who arrived as a religious mission to the Abyssinian theocracy when King Claudius succeeded Dawit II, some years after the return of Alvares and de Lima to Portugal in 1525.[59] Consistently shown in the paintings was 'Father Pereira Carmelita', together with 'the Jesuit Father Oviedo, who was a teacher of the Latin language in Abyssinia; a Cardinal detains the Jesuit Fathers Illescas and Maceo with their guide, 'because they were opposed to those of Abyssinia'.[60] Later follow 'three dark-skinned men in ecclesiastical dress' at the door of the Templo de Santa Maria del Popolo,[61] and 'the painting of a Religious man of the Order

55 *Expediente* ..., ANC, Political Affairs, lot 12, file 17, f. 53.

56 This is in reference to the work of the Bishop of Santiago de Cuba, Gabriel Díaz Vara Calderón, *Grandezas y maravillas de la inclyta y sancta ciudad de Roma* (Madrid: Joseph Fernández de Buendía, 1678). The edition includes a removable map of Rome. Baltasar Abisinio (1609) also refers to the Temple: 'The Abyssinians who live in our School and Church of S. Esteban de los Indianos in Rome, are almost all Clergymen of our Order' (Baltasar Abisinio, Fundación, *vida y regla*, French ed., p. 88). Also does Luys Urreta, *Historia eclesiástica, política, natural y moral de los grandes y remotos reynos de la Etiopía, monarchia del emperador, llamado Preste Iuan de las Indias* (Valencia, 1610), pp. 609–22.

57 *Expediente* ..., ANC, Political Affairs, lot 12, file 17, f. 54.

58 Urreta, *Historia*; F. Alvares, *Verdadeira Informação das Terras do Preste João das Indias Segundo Vio e Escreveo ho Padre Alvarez Capellã del Rey Nosso Señor* (1540; Paris: J. Tompere, 1830). Alvares seems to be the first to carry to Europe news of the *Kebra Nagast*, the book about 'the glory of the kings' of the Ethiopian theocracy. He also publishes the epistolary exchanges between the Negus and the kings of Portugal, Manuel and John.

59 Sandoval, *De instauranda Aethiopum salute*, pp. 275–82. We should note that the patriarch Andrés de Oviedo is represented in the print of the frontispiece of Sandoval's book, together with San Francisco Xavier and other monks baptising black children.

60 *Expediente* ..., ANC, Political Affairs, lot 12, file 17, f. 55.

61 *Expediente* ..., ANC, Political Affairs, lot 12, file 17, f. 55.

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of Preachers with the name Tomas and of dark skin, who was Prior of the convent of San Esteban de los Indianos built by Clement XI for people of that class, as stated in the guide cited of this City';[62] 'two black men by the name of [Tomas] and Marcos who are pilgrims' wearing clothing embroidered with 'canons and Laws' and 'Theology and Philosophy', respectively; and the Jesuit Father Sandoval mentioned earlier. The painting concludes 'with two boats the one which carried them, and the other with captured Moors'.[63]

Of the erudite Ethiopists described here, one of them, Father Urreta, had previously appeared [plate XXIX] in the context of a visit to Valencia by the clerics Mantex S.J., the 'bishop of Málaga', 'the Blacks of Abyssinia', an 'ambassador' with insignias of the knightly order of San Antonio Abad, some 'Counts', and the Abyssinian Juan de Baltasar, who appears pointing to a landscape of 'the Sacred Scripture' where he 'had bought from the Greeks with precious stones and money'.[64] Later, the priest and the counts 'cleared Baltazar to enter Valencia', where they had 'a defender in Father Urreta of the order of Preachers'. From this visit there arose two works that also would mark a milestone in the European Ethiopianist imaginary. These include the already cited book of Baltasar of Abyssinia, which in turn would serve as a source (the book and the author) for the work of the Dominican Friar Luis Urreta.[65]

In the description of this plate, which is filled with historical characters of dark-skinned Christianity, we see the central position occupied by those authors who took it upon themselves to inform Europeans about the history of Abyssinia. Aponte's erudition, which far surpasses the knowledge of his accusers, was a cause of worry to them, such that a large part of the interrogation concerning this plate centres on determining the sources upon which the Afro-Cuban artist draws to assert the blackness of so many clerics, in the very capital of Western Christianity. Thus, we learn that, in addition to the principal books and authors already indicated, Aponte draws upon information of which 'he cannot indicate the time nor the occasion of what he is being questioned about because he has not read it' since it is 'known only through conversation' with 'a black man whose

62 Díaz Vara, *Grandezas y maravillas*.

63 *Expediente* …, ANC, Political Affairs, lot 12, file 17, f. 55.

64 *Expediente* …, ANC, Political Affairs, lot 12, file 17, f. 43.

65 Baltasar Abisinio, *Fundación, vida y regla*; Urreta, *Historia*, 102–3, indicates that Juan Baltasar, of the order of preachers and 'the guard of Prester John', arrived at the convent in Valencia 'with some originals and papers, partly in Ethiopian language and partly in Italian, poorly organised but useful and genuine, because they were corroborated with signatures and seals of serious and religious persons'. Cf. also Doresse, *L'empire du Prêtre Jean* (Paris: Plon, 1957), pp. 209–10, who criticises, from a somewhat ethnocentric positivism, Urreta's 'ingenuity' towards Baltasar.

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name he does not know'. Later, Aponte is led to specify that 'in the same way as with that individual, this has happened with others whose names he hasn't learned even though he has conversed with them'. And also, with respect to a group of black priests, that 'by having heard the reverend fathers Friar Diego de Soto and Friar Rafael Miranda upon their return from Rome refer to having seen them in a council they attended preaching in the Basilica a dark-skinned man who had been brought by the General of Abyssinia who also attended: with the warning that the speaker did not hear fathers Soto and Miranda in person but heard others who spoke to him refer to them'.[66]

The intertextual richness of this painting not only helps us to specify the Ethiopian sources, both written and oral, that nurture Aponte's work, but also his constant search for news from overseas, which lead him to visit the Havana docks in order to supply himself with books, information and knowledge about the history of Africa and of the Africans who were transported in the triangulation of the 'Black Atlantic'. Not surprisingly, 'the print or painting concludes with two boats the one that carried them [the general of Abyssinia and his group] and the other carrying Moor prisoners', which confirms Paul Linebaugh's statement regarding the relevance of boats as 'the most important Pan-African communication channel prior to the appearance of the long-play record',[67] something that Aponte not only understood but also wanted to represent historically, in a scaling-up that is even today difficult to comprehend in its full heterogeneity.

The four works that stand out here as written sources of Aponte's Ethiopianism dialogue constitute the foundations of historical Ethiopianism.[68] Their authors, Juan Baltasar Abisinio of the Order of San Antonio Abad, Luis Urreta of the Order of Preachers, Francisco Alvares of the Order of San Benito, and Alonso de Sandoval of the Company of Jesus, appear in several paintings. From these works, Aponte will recover the characters of the Abyssinian theocratic sovereignty for his representation. Thus, early on in the book (on plates V to VII, after the first plates, which are dedicated to the biblical Genesis), a key character in this history is presented: Prester John. This generic name was identified with the Negus of Ethiopia, in 1329, by the Dominican

66 *Expediente* …, ANC, lot 12, file 17, f. 55.

67 Linebaugh, cit. in P. Gilroy, *The black Atlantic. Modernity and double consciousness* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1993), p. 13.

68 In addition to the references that these works make to one another (including others such as the histories of Ethiopia by Manuel de Almeida and by Jerónimo Lobo) and to others available in other languages (such as those of Hiob Ludolf and the *Kebra Nagast*), Aponte could have had access to this knowledge through associates who spoke English or French such as Juan Barbier (alias Juan Francisco) or Hilario Herrera, 'el Inglés'. Cf. Hernández, 'Hacia una historia de lo impossible', p. 248; and Franco, 'La conspiración de Aponte', p. 159.

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Jourdain Catalan de Séverac, after centuries of European speculation about the exact location of his mythic kingdom, which was located, according to the texts, in 'eastern India'.[69] On the first of these plates [V], the Negus Asnaf Sagad (Prester John, known as Claudius) confronts, with the support of the Portuguese, the Bey of Alexandria (an Ottoman governor who served as administrator of Egypt in the name of the 'Turkish' emperor), flooding Cairo to force him to pay the tribute he owed to the Rule of San Antonio. This battle occurred in 1572, a few decades after the Negus had forged an alliance with the West via the embassy of de Lima and Alvarez.[70]

This first war scene announces what will be a constant in the work as a representation of the 'war of races':[71] the explicit military superiority of the black armies in comparison to their enemies. In this case, the comparison is to their Portuguese allies and their common enemy, the 'Moors' of the 'Turk'. In another case [plates XVIII–XIX], the author's grandfather, Joaquin Aponte, together with other officials (Hermenegildo de la Luz, José Antonio Escoval) and soldiers of the Black Battalions (the father of the author, Nicolás Aponte) appear triumphant in the defence of the Tower of Marianao (Havana) during the English invasion of 1762.[72] Several plates later [XLIV–XLV], the army of the African king Tarraco appears, invading Hispania (an event dated to the 3rd century B.C.) parallel to the event of the defeat of Sennacherib by the angel (a biblical event dated historically around the 7th century B.C.).[73] Faced with the concern of the judges about the number of military successes of the black

69 Doresse, *L'empire du Prêtre Jean*, p. 216; M. Mollat, *Les explorateurs du XIIIe au XVIe siècle. Premiers regards sur des mondes nouveaux* (Paris: Comité des travaux historiques et scientifiques, 1992), pp. 43–44.

70 Baltasar Abisinio, *Fundación, vida y regla*, pp. 80–81 & 93–96. Hernández, 'Hacia una historia de lo imposible', p. 246, following Silverberg, believes that this scene occurred in 1543 during the reign of Galawdewos (Dawit).

71 Hernández, 'Hacia una historia de lo imposible', pp. 249–58.

72 *Expediente* …, ANC, Political Affairs, lot 12, file 17, f. 34–35.

73 Upon a closer inspection of the sources of these histories, the intricate link between these events can be seen: the Bible (Kings 2:19) mentions the 'Pharaoh Taraca' (Tearco, Tarcus, Tarraco, Tirhaka), a black king who governed Egypt and was engaged in war against the Assyrians, in the same episode as the defeat of Sennacherib; Herodotus, for his part, mentions Sennacherib as the Assyrian king who liberates Egypt from the Ethiopian occupation (Palmié, *Wizards and Scientists*, pp. 119–20); Alonso de Sandoval indicates that king Tarraco invaded and sacked the Mediterranean coast and returned to Africa in 934 BC (Sandoval, *De instauranda Aethiopum salute*, p. 241). Aponte himself indicates that he has read about the episode of Sennacherib in the 'News of Universal History', a work that summarises various previous versions, and which is possibly attributed to Sieur de Royaumond Prieur de Sombreval [or Nicolas Fontaine, or Le Maistre de Sacy], *Historia de sucesos memorables del mundo: con reflexiones instructivas para todos*, ed. Leonardo de Uria y Orueta (1673; Madrid: Imprenta y Librería de Antonio Mayoral/Imprenta y Librería de Manuel Martín, 4 vols, 1765–79).

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armies, Aponte would respond that they were represented there 'for historical reasons like everything else in the book'.[74] Besides the Bible, the Ethiopianist works, the historical synthesis, memory and family archives,[75] the biography of Maurice de Saxe found in his library[76] must also have inspired Aponte in the creation of this series of war plates, considering the prominence and fame of his battalion of black soldiers in the military successes of that well-known German freemason, who served European royalty during the 18th century.[77] This confirms what Palmié called 'the strange rigour' of Aponte's procedure and 'the horrific implication of the systematicity' of the Afro-Cuban artisan-historian[78] in his zeal to rewrite in paintings the historical becoming of the Africans.

Returning to the figure of Prester John, in his subsequent appearance [plate XVI–XVII] he is shown surrounded by symbols and standards of the Ethiopian sovereign (lions and crosses), 'with the Holy Spirit above indicating that it came down when Queen Candace baptised the Princes in the Nile River carried by the eunuch her Treasurer to whom the apostle Saint Philip gave the Shell with which he baptised another Queen and the Book that she has in her hand is that of the Prophecies of Isaiah that the eunuch was reading in the carriage'.[79]

This episode of biblical Ethiopianism[80] was probably written in the 1st century A.D. (with the eunuch as the queen's secretary/treasurer). However, there is a record of Queen Candace from the 5th century B.C., which led Pliny the Elder to establish, before the New Testament, that Candace was the generic name of the queens that governed Meroé (Ethiopia/Abyssinia). In what follows,

74 *Expediente* …, ANC, Political Affairs, lot 12, file 17, f. 60.

75 The search of Aponte's house provided evidence of a series of battle plans, military ordinances and royal charters related to the activities of his grandfather and father and other officials of the Mulatto and Black Battalions loyal to the King of Spain. Cf. *Expediente* …, ANC, Political Affairs, lot 12, file 17, f. 73–74. For more on these battalions, see P. Deschamps Chapeaux, *Los Batallones de Pardos y Morenos Libres* (La Habana: Arte y Literatura, 1976); G. García, *Conspiraciones y revueltas. La actividad política de los negros en Cuba (1790–1845)* (Santiago de Cuba: Oriente, 2003); M. del C. Barcia Zequeira, 'Los Batallones de Pardos y Morenos en Cuba (1600–1868)', in Colloque International: D'esclaves à soldats. Miliciens et soldats d'origine servile, XIIIe–XXe siècle, EHESS/CNRS/Université Paris X, 27–29 May 2004.

76 L.-B. Néel, *Historia de Mauricio, conde de Saxe, mariscal de los campos y ejercitos de S.M. Cristianisima* (1752; San Sebastián: s. ed., 2 vols., 1754).

77 P. Naudon, *La franc-maçonnerie* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1963), p. 40.

78 Palmié, *Wizards and scientists*, p. 120.

79 *Expediente* …, ANC, Political Affairs, lot 12, file 17, f. 29.

80 The Bible, Acts 8:26–38. The eunuch of Queen Candace was represented since the 3rd century in Christian iconography as the first act of the universalisation of baptism. Cf. J.-M. Courtés, 'Traitement patristique de la thématique éthiopienne', in J. Devisse (ed.) *L'image du noir dans l'art occidental*, vol. II, t. 1 (Paris: Bibliothèque des arts, 1979), p. 20.

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the plate incorporates several more characters from the Ethiopian theocratic gallery: Abalseo, 'the first black Apostle ordained by Saint Philip himself', 'Miguelet [Menelik], son of King Solomon and Queen Sheba, who emissary of his father to Queen Candace as a prank, gave the same Salomon the Tablets of the Law', 'Abraham, other Prester of the Indies', 'the three Wise Men, Melchor Gaspar and Baltasar guided by the Star that was granted to the first so that he could take others to the adoration of Jesus Christ just born who is more [to the] left in the arms of his mother'.[81]

And later, in plate XLVI, the representation of these characters continues in a geographical framework showing Abyssinia, the 'mountains of Armenia', the Valley of Hebron, Persia, the Red Sea, columns, temples, the statue of the cherub (watching over the Valley of Hebron) and Noah's ark. Among the characters, 'the great Abad of the Knights of San Antonio and a bishop of Eastern India, David Prince son of Santa Elena', this last one surely Lebna Dengel Dawit I (1382–1411)[82]; 'San Juan Abad of the monks of the Thebaid with other companions of the bishop and Great Abad at the foot of a column representing its pedestal: above which is placed an image of the Virgin Mary of Regla and at her feet the faith that crowns two black men as a sign of embracing her and defending her; with King Moriacatapa and his people two both sides'.[83] Together with the Virgin are 'San Samuel, Santa Elena and Moises, San Benito of Palermo, Santa Cerma and Santo Eliseo', white hermits, Jesus Christ with a lamb on his shoulder, San Pedro de San Salvador, San Antonio Catajirona, Santa Eufrasia, San Paulino de Nolas, San Felipe Martín 'cutting the head of a white King for blasphemy with a sword given to him by San Miguel', and San Serapio.[84] Most of these characters from the religious and political history of Ethiopia are found in hagiography in the four books mentioned[85] which, together with the oral sources, informs the textual community of European Ethiopianism.

III. Universality and black dignity: The representation of class as jubilee

The *Life and Fables of Aesop* is the only Greek work in Aponte's library that was a source of inspiration for his book, despite the fact that within it can be found more

81 *Expediente* …, ANC, Political Affairs, lot 12, file 17, f. 30–31.
82 Palmié, *Wizards and scientists*, p. 325.
83 *Expediente* …, ANC, Political Affairs, lot 12, file 17, f. 61–62.
84 *Expediente* …, ANC, Political Affairs, lot 12, file 17, f. 62.
85 Alvares, Verdadeira Informação; Baltasar Abisinio, *Fundación, vida y regla*; Urreta, *Historia*; Sandoval, *De instauranda Aethiopium salute.*

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than fifty characters of the Hellenic-Roman mythological and historical corpus.[86] Both the fables and the biography of Aesop refer to a regime of representation prior to and outside the Baroque, the Renaissance and the Middle Ages, and have been considered archetypes of the forms of political and rhetorical representation. The *Life of Aesop* represents him as a black slave, mute and monstrous, to whom the gift of the word is given by magic, and through his wisdom obtains his freedom.[87] Aesop's fables have been considered the foundation of prose (for Hegel, 'with the slave begins the prose'[88]), and we can see in the Book of Paintings some of his traces, in the form of aphorisms similar to those used by Aesop to denounce the ignominies of power. For example, the metaphor where 'avarice' 'jumping to the dock' in Havana from a boat 'encounters death',[89] or the verse that says 'death destroys all but prudence',[90] developing more explicitly in the figure of the 'God of the fables', that 'declares that being death the key to the world, all is a fable as expressed in the following verse: *It consumes with great violence/Death the most lucid/but never has been able to destroy prudence*'.[91] Violence, death, avarice or prudence are recurring themes in the Aesopian criticism of the 'good' and 'bad' forms of government, which is extremely pertinent in the context in which

86 Jupiter, Sagittarius, Vulcan, Venus, Saturn, Rhea, Neptune, Pluto, Isis, Apollo, Calliope, Melpomene, Clio, Cupid, Euphras, Diana, Euterpe, Medusa, Perseus, Mars, Andromeda, Hydra, Oedipus, Euphron, *Étarque*, *Climanote*, Persephone, Morpheus, Amphitrion, Pallas, Uranus, Polymnius, Terpsicore, Talía, Agrippina, Momus, Hercules, Minerva, Priamus, Pyrrhus, *Poliginia*, Achilles, Ulysses, Enea, Helen, Paris, Electra, Cerberus, etc. Aponte's sources for all of the Homeric imagery displayed in his book appear to be the ornamental series with motifs of Antiquity, which were disseminated as iconography from early colonial America (Jouve, *Esclavos de la ciudad letrada*, p. 72). Hernández ('Hacia una historia de lo imposible', p. 208) reminds us of the great value of Africans in the Iliad and the Odyssey.

87 P. Carranza, 'Cipión, Berganza and the Aesopic Tradition', in *Cervantes: Bulletin of the Cervantes Society of America*, XXVIII, 1 (2003), pp. 141–63. The author emphasises the influence of Aesop's Fables (whose translation into Spanish dates from the end of the 15th century) in the development of Spanish picaresque. The *Life of Aesop* that accompanies the Spanish edition corresponds to the most ancient manuscript version, written in the 1st century AD, identified as *Vita G* (P. Badeñas de la Peña, 'Introducción', in P. Badeñas de la Peña [ed.] *Fábulas de Esopo. Vida de Esopo. Fábulas de Babrio*, [Madrid: Gredos, 2004], pp. 166–76). Aesop is presented as a 'deformed boy with an ugly face and body, more than anyone else found at that time' (in this sense, he is comparable in his condition to the black beggar represented in the *Descripción de la historia natural de la Isla*). Of all the editions reviewed by Badeñas de la Peña and Carranza, the *Libro de la vida y fábulas del sabio fabulador Isopo con las fábulas y sentencias de (Aviano) diversos y grandes autores* appears to be the one that Aponte possessed.

88 Cit. in P. de Man, *La resistencia a la teoría* (Madrid: Visor, 1990), p. 166. However, the fable genre was not strictly Greek, but existed prior to and outside the Hellenic sphere (Badeñas de la Peña, 'Introducción', pp. 179–81).

89 *Expediente* …, ANC, Political Affairs, lot 12, file 17, f. 25.

90 *Expediente* …, ANC, Political Affairs, lot 12, file 17, f. 73.

91 *Expediente* …, ANC, Political Affairs, lot 12, file 17, f. 37: '*Consume con gran violencia/La parca lo mas lucído/pero jamás ha podido Aniquilar la prudencia*' (author's italics).

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Aponte lived.[92] In his *New Science* of 1744, Giambattista Vico approached the double problem that the figure of Aesop implies, the same problems that Aponte addresses in his pictorial poetic: that of the writing of the metaphor (writing as metaphor and metaphor as writing) and that of the political function of metaphor. For Vico, the metaphors of the slave Aesop (the fable as genre) contain the origin of the legislative demands of the *demos*, since the 'vulgar tongue' is governed by a 'poetic logic' that will lead the plebeians to demand to participate in the matters of the Republic. Vico compares Greek Aesop with the Roman Solon, and proposes that, rather than historical figures, they are generic figures of the poetic or metaphoric logic.[93] Thus the leap is made to the 'demotic age', which succeeds the 'age of the gods' and the 'age of heroes'.[94] The fusion of a historical logic with a poetic logic is at the very centre of Aponte's proposal, which also travels through the 'ages of the world' under the auspices of the Muses and the goddess Isis, just as the 'wise Aesop' had done.[95]

The details of this insight are in a painting that has a short description but important consequences and which immediately follows a self-portrait of Aponte. This is plate XXVI, where

> *It signifies Diogenes inside a jar on a desolated Beach protected by the Goddess Isis who favoured him and who is shown in a carriage from where she alit each afternoon to provide him with whatever he needed. Of this learned King Don Rodrigo represented at the bottom ordered Diogenes to come out of the jar who answered him that whatever His Majesty the King did he as a poor man would obey him: and asked by the King what he could do he took two fistfuls of earth showing him a sceptre in the right hand and in the left the Coat of Arms and flags of Spain. The King excited by such wonder gives thanks to God and makes sure that he stays in his jar returns to his Kingdom in the boat he went in and painted more to the right. Asked again, how*

92 J. Cascajero, 'Lucha de clases e ideología: introducción al estudio de la fábula esópica como fuente histórica', *Gerión* 9 (1991), pp. 11–58.

93 G. Vico, *Principes d'une science nouvelle relative à la nature commune des nations*, ed. Fausto Nicolini (1744; Paris: Nagel, 1986), pp. 29–48.

94 This gnosis of Vico of the historical cycles of humanity would be proposed again in the 20th century by another illustrious Cuban, José Lezama Lima, apostle of some 'imaginary eras', which have been defined by Alberto Moreiras as a 'third space' or 'intermediate stage' situated in the interstice of the *ricorso* of the ages in Vico. This third space would be open from the demotic age, which announces decadence, and the return to an age of gods, an intermediate place where the 'American Expression' would take place, as hinted at by Lezama Lima. Cf. A. Moreiras, *Tercer espacio, literatura y duelo en América Latina* (Santiago de Chile: Lom & Universidad Arcis, 1999), pp. 108–12.

95 The prominence of the Muses and Isis is a characteristic of the 'G' manuscript of Aesop's life (Badeñas de la Peña, 'Introducción' p. 166). On the other hand, the common Aesopic influences, together with the allegory of the first inhabitants of America (see note 48) reinforce the analogy that Hernández proposes between Aponte and the Baron de Vastey, an intellectual of the Haitian monarchy of Henri Christophe. Hernández, 'Hacia una historia de lo imposible', pp. 221–22.

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> *could Diogenes in accordance with the Previous explanation have formed the Coat of Arms and Sceptre of Spain from two fistfuls of Earth that as the declarer ensures he took out of the jar: as that philosopher was not able to naturally make such wonders he said: that he has always been persuaded and believed that it was the effect of his understanding with the Goddess.*[96]

As Juan Antonio Hernández has emphasised, this plate details the legendary encounter between Diogenes of Sinope and Alexander the Great, the latter substituted by King Rodrigo, 'last of the Goths', who lost the territories of Spain in 711 to the Muslim troops of Tarik. But the meaning of this encounter is presented in a more politicised form than in the Greek legend, since it makes reference to Rodrigo's loss of the throne and to Diogenes's ability to make the sceptre and the coat of arms of Spain appear from a fistful of dirt. Responding to the judge's question about the ability of the philosopher to produce — as if 'by miracle' — these symbols of the sovereign, Aponte says that this occurs with the help and advice of the goddess Isis. For Hernández, what we have here is the relationship between political sovereignty and the 'miracle', which in the Hobbesian tradition is constituted as the secular equivalent of the 'state of exception' when the sovereign decides where the miraculous or wonderous action begins and ends.[97]

However, this tradition of political philosophy does not explain the recovery by Aponte of a medieval episode in synchronic relation to an episode from Greek philosophy. Perhaps it is worth remembering here the multiple re-appropriations of which the goddess Isis was the object on American soil, especially by the very baroque and Catholic work of Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz of Mexico. Sor Juana transforms Isis the mother of Neptune, thus linking him to the Egyptian universe. For this, 'a method universally applied by the mythologists of the Renaissance and the Baroque Era is used', a method that establishes that Isis, 'the wisdom', was subject to numerous transformations and denominations that, in fact, always refer to the same goddess, who 'the ancient authors named with great diversity: Apuleius called her Rhea, Venus, Diana, Bellona, Ceres, Juno, Persephone, Hecate and Rhamnusia (Nemesis). Diodorus Siculus (of Sicily) says that Isis is the one who has been called Luna, Juno and Ceres; Macrobius believes that she is none other than the Earth or the nature of things'.[98] Isis is considered by Sor Juana as the mother of seeds and also the mother inventor of Egyptian letters; the goddess does not *represent* knowledge, she *is* knowledge. As Sor Juana identifies herself with Isis, Aponte can do the same with Diogenes, and with

96 *Expediente* …, ANC, Political Affairs, lot 12, file 17, f. 41–42.

97 Hernández, 'Hacia una historia de lo imposible', pp. 252–53, proposes seeing here in subtext an allegory 'that relates the Muslim invasion of the medieval period with the Napoleonic period contemporary with Aponte'.

98 Paz, *Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz*, p. 229.

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the goddess's help, can 'resurrect' the kingdom of Spain, as Isis did with her husband Osiris. Cut up into fourteen pieces, Osiris's remains were sought by Isis during her pilgrimage around the world, in order to return and reassemble them, thus resurrecting the Egyptian god. For Octavio Paz, the maternity in Sor Juana 'is resolved in the symbolic resurrection of the past and of its dead. The agents of the resurrection are the signs: letters, poetry',[99] and for Aponte, images: *picta poiesis*, where 'white' signifiers can become 'black', as Francisco Velásquez did with Greek mythology on the walls of the palace of the Haitian king, Henri Christophe.[100]

Undoubtedly, Isis's participation in this miracle implies the importance of the Egyptian goddess in the production and legitimisation of sovereignty according to Aponte, Isis also being identified with the Virgin of Regla, the black patron virgin of the Bay of Havana since the 17th century—transformed into the divinity Yemayá by the Lucumí-Yoruba tradition and represented in Aponte's book along with a phrase referring to the Queen of Sheba in the *Song of Songs*: '*Nigra sum, sed formosa*'.[101] Coincidentally, and not by accident, the history of the Virgin of Regla icon is also linked to the defeat of the Spanish armies at the hands of the Moors in the 8th century: her image, the history of which was undoubtedly known to Aponte given his religious erudition, arrived in Havana in the 1680s, brought by the 'pilgrim' Manuel Antonio of Cádiz. During the invasion of Spain, the image had been buried in the convent of Chipiona, named for the African San Agustín of Tagaste (Saint Augustine), founder of the Catholic Rule of the same name.[102] To this African origin of the black Virgin of Regla (like Isis

99 Paz, *Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz*, p. 233.

100 Fischer, *Modernity disavowed*, p. 257; Hernández, 'Hacia una historia de lo imposible', pp. 220–21.

101 Sandoval, *De instauranda Aethiopiam salute*, pp. 478–79. Aponte indicates that he extracted this phrase from 'a book of praise of María Santísima'. Hernández, 'Hacia una historia de lo imposible', p. 241.

102 In the 8th century, after the death of San Agustín of Tagaste, as a consequence of the Moors' advance, the painted image of the Virgin was transported from Morocco to the bay of Cádiz. The historian of Regla, E. Gómez Luaces, tells us that in 1687 Pedro Recio Oquendo, a descendant of the indigenous *cacica* of Regla, Catalina Hernández, and of Antón Recio, a free 'Berber', donated two blocks of land to Manuel Antonio 'the pilgrim' to build the chapel of the Virgin. Of Manuel Antonio, it has been said that he was from Lima (Peru) and that he had travelled to Havana from there with the painted cloth of the Virgin. This first chapel was destroyed by a cyclone, and later the Asturian Juan de Conyedo Martín appeared in 1692 to reconstruct it, installing a new image, this time in carved wood purchased in Cádiz and brought by Pedro de Aranda. This is the image that has been worshipped until today. Cf. E. Gómez Luaces, *Dos palabras. Breve historia del pueblo de Regla* (Havana: Valcayo, 1945), p. 25; L. Aruca Alonso, 'La Bahía de La Habana y el Santuario de la Virgen de Regla. Apuntes para una historia profunda' in A. Guimerá & F. Monge (coords.) *La Habana, puerto colonial: siglos XVIII–XIX* (Madrid: Fundación Portuaria, 2000), pp. 273–74.

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and Yemayá) and of the founder of her cult (such as Aponte), we must add the arrival in Cádiz (a city which constantly reappears in the Book of Paintings) as a consequence of the fall of the kingdom of Rodrigo, and to Havana through the care of a 'pilgrim' like the Pilgrim Jesus carved and exhibited by Aponte in front of his home. Everything indicates that the pilgrimage and the melancholy of the ruins, as central motivations of the Baroque sensibility, are recovered here in a genealogy that precedes the bureaucratic rationale of the lettered city. In this genealogy, the allegory of pilgrimage is presented as a mystical practice of deterritorialisation. In fact, this concept of wisdom, engendered in Africa, as the 'mother' of the political power of the sovereign is surely the principle that Aponte seeks to establish, showing that it is the philosopher, creator of signs, who, because of his privileged relationship with the African goddess of wisdom and the conception, is at the origin of legitimacy and the allegorical symbols of Spanish sovereignty. But furthermore, if the 'resurrection' of the sovereign is the result of Isis's pilgrimage, reuniting the pieces of Neptune scattered throughout the world in order to reassemble him, the 'miracle' of the 'resurrection' of Spanish sovereignty, once lost to the Moors, and later threatened by the English, must be seen as the result of African transcontinental migration through Europe and America, as a class that becomes cosmopolitan and whose sovereignty also must be reassembled under the auspices of the universal mother of letters and oceans, wisdom and fertility.

Aponte guides his affect for the epic and mystical value of the African theocracy to the descendants of 'Ethiopians' (Africans) who participate in the events of Spanish military history. The analogy is also developed in the juxtaposition of the plate with Diogenes against that of Aponte's self-portrait. This portrait enables an understanding of the inversion of the class position that the author proposes through self-representation as a form of representation of a collective body. In plates XXIV–XXV,

> *the author of the book presents himself in his portrait showing on his chest a Laurel of loyalty the palm of victory seemingly a compass. To the left is shown the white and infancy represented by the figure of a child tied to a column and on the front plane an old face which means to tie infancy to the memory of old age, they are seen equally on the inkwell bench, rulers and pots of paint. Thus at the right hand down below there appear two Indians supporting the Souls, the City of Havana at the mouth of El Morro as the declarer went out in the year of* [1782] *for the invasion of the Isle of Providence which is seen painted to the right with its nearby cays guiding Boats of the companies of black men who leapt ashore at eight in the morning cutting through the thicket as at a league from the same Cay and sleeping there that night at the shore of the reefs in front of the Town until the following afternoon* [. . .] *having proceeded meanwhile the Capitulations* . . .[103]

103 *Expediente* . . ., ANC, Political Affairs, lot 12, file 17, f. 40–41.

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By portraying himself, and many other illustrious blacks, through visual allegories of the becoming-hero of the black subject in contrast to the becoming-monster of the beggar Fernández, Aponte is undoubtedly re-inscribing in history an expression of black corporality that, responding to the same format as that used by the naturalist Parra (that of a history 'in plates'), questions the classifications of a 'natural history' and the conditions of representation of the black type in that classification project. Furthermore, what is notable is that when Clemente Chacón was interrogated 'within view of a portrait of a black man who at his feet has this inscription JOSE ANTONIO APONTE y ULABARRA, and to the side of the painting a Plan, he said: that of everything, all he knows is that it is a portrait of Aponte himself', to which the judges reply asking him 'how does he know that it is a portrait of Aponte, he who has interrogated has supposed that there is no similarity between the copy and the original to be properly called such'.[104] This *quid pro quo* reveals how Aponte's own name seeks to be inscribed in history, not so much for the physical features of his face but, instead, for a character forged from the historic actions of the author. What he is doing, then, is presenting the biographical image as a continuum from infancy to old age, including the milestones of this process: his military missions (related to a topographical registry that he uses as a spatial framework of the 'paintings') and his 'intellectual' mission (the production of a book of history, through a series of tools: compass, ruler, pots of paint, carpenter's bench). The centrality of the episode in the Island of Providence suggests its importance in the decision to paint history (the map of the island, the gaze of the one who grows old at the child — 'memory tied to infancy' — the representation of violence and justice, by the body of a black rapist who has been executed, which appears to one side). In his commentary, Clemente Chacón indicates that 'Aponte warned him that: he included his portrait in the book so that it would be known that he was a [great] person since on the day destined for the revolution that was being planned finding him made a King'.[105] Chacón's statement will later become a commonplace in the 'prose of the' Hispano-Cuban 'counterinsurgency',[106] associated as it was to the portraits of the Haitian 'Black Jacobins' (Henri Christophe, Jean Jacques Dessalines, Toussaint L'Ouverture, Jean François) that Aponte possessed.[107] In the game of analogies, equivalencies

104 *Expediente* …, ANC, Political Affairs, lot 12, file 17, f. 13.

105 Ibid.

106 Pavez, 'Africanismes á Cuba', pp. 281–342.

107 It is quite plausible that the small-format portraits (*'cuadritos'*) that Aponte possessed of the Haitian revolutionaries had occupied a place in the plates of the book, having been torn out when the author suspected he would soon be taken prisoner. Hernández, 'Hacia una historia de lo imposible', p. 206. The question that remains is, which place did the Haitian revolutionaries occupy in the Book of Paintings?

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and historical correlations displayed by Aponte, his portrait is included in the gallery of black kings and revolutionaries, but also white sovereigns (George Washington, Charles IV), in the representation, where the artist comes to occupy the place of the king, due to his ability to reveal the place of power and give form to the 'two bodies' of the sovereign.[108] This explains why the self-portrait is not a representation of resemblance, but that of his name assigned to a body of the black class. We can see here what Richard Wright has called the 'aesthetic of personalism' in the African-American anti-slavery tradition, where the autobiographical genre permits the presentation of oneself as a 'public person'. For Paul Gilroy, this aesthetic is a 'founding motif within the expressive culture of the African diaspora', where 'authority and autonomy emerge directly from the deliberately personal tone of this history', establishing that 'the particular can wear the cloak of truth and reason, just as the universal'.[109] What we see here is a historicist portrait,[110] where not only is the problem of 'verisimilitude' expressly proposed, but so is that of 'resemblance'. The question of resemblance is at the heart of the problems associated with the definition of art. Georges Didi-Huberman has shown the closure of the 'epistemic regime' of image interpretation imposed by Vasari in his Renaissance foundation of the history of art. The autonomisation of the judgment of resemblance, based on the auto-legislative and closed principles of the 'academy', inverts the judgment of ancients such as Pliny, based on judicial and genealogical principles. The image, as a 'ritual support', is 'a matrix of resemblance designed to legitimise a certain position of individuals in the genealogical institution of the Roman *gens*'.[111] The portrait is not presented as 'an imitation of individual features' but as the encounter between 'a material and a ritual'. If in Pliny's *Natural History* the resemblance 'is dead' in the origin of art itself, what is not dead is its *dignitas*, the judicial and non-academic basis of his genealogical concept of images. Here again, Aponte skips the teleology imposed by the post-Renaissance Baroque, recovering a regime of similarities that draws on his inspiration not from the medieval sensibility that permeates the Latin-American Baroque, but directly

108 See the analysis of Velásquez's 'Las Meninas' (The Maids of Honour) in the introduction of Foucault, *Les mots et les choses*.

109 Gilroy, *The black Atlantic*, p. 69.

110 We cannot agree with the reductivist interpretation of S. Fischer when she states, 'this is a portrait determined by the future, not the past', 'without concern for verisimilitude' (Fischer, *Modernity Disavowed*, p. 48). Before her, Palmié points out Aponte's concern for the past, rather than the future: 'His project was to disinter the dead, to conjure up and redeem their spirits through a poetics of the past designed to dispel the "nightmare on the brain of the living" to which their lives and memory had been sacrificed'. Palmié, *Wizards and scientists*, p. 131.

111 G. Didi-Huberman, *Ante el tiempo. Historia del arte y anacronismo de las imágenes* (Buenos Aires: Adriana Hidalgo, 2008), pp. 111–12.

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from Roman antiquity. If the materiality of this pictorial production is represented in the self-portrait, with a figure that 'fabricates' historic forms, the genealogy of the familiar '*dignitas*' that supports—judicially and structurally—this ritual, is allegorically represented in the significant plates that the author titles 'the Jubilee of Aponte', in reference to the celebration there of the military glories of his grandfather and father in the Loyalist Black Battalions. As Gilroy has insisted, the concept of jubilee 'emerges in black Atlantic culture to mark a special break or rupture in the conception of time defined and enforced by the regimes that sanctioned bondage'.[112] The African-American perspective of slave domination only secondarily addresses the idea of a rationally oriented utopia: 'Their primary categories are steeped in the idea of a revolutionary or eschatological apocalypse—the Jubilee'.[113] Aponte's Jubilee, understood as an homage and celebration of the genealogical dignity of his notable ancestors in Spanish military history, recovers expressive tools of Baroque painting to re-situate this registry within a judicial, moral and political dimension, based on historical information transferred from generation to generation through the memory of the black battalions.

Unlike the African-American authors of the canon of 'anti-slave narrative' (de Vastey, Delany, Blyden, Douglass), Aponte does not go back so much to the Egyptological or Hebraic source, but instead refers to that of Ethiopia and its original role in the history of Christianity. Furthermore, his re-vindication of the Ethiopian theocracy precedes all the Black Atlantic authors and Afro-centrism in their different variants, as well as the founders of Rastafarianism ('dread history') and the multiple formulations of a 'black political theology'.[114] Aponte's critical research and his visibility operation directly confront the occlusion and subsumation of the black historical subject by the agents of the bureaucratic rationale who operate in the lettered city.[115] 'Impossible chronicle' (Palmié) or 'history of the impossible' (Hernández), in either case the problem of the 'impossibility of saying' takes us back to a reading of the Book of Paintings as a testimony, where the subjectivity arises from the relation and tension between the inside and the outside of the language. But in this testimonial logic,

112 Gilroy, *The black Atlantic*, p. 212.

113 Ibid., pp. 55–56.

114 In this sense, Aponte's criticism can be compared to that of fathers of the Jamaican 'dread history' including L.P. Howell, who explicitly denounced the co-optation and tergiversation of the biblical text by the Western church and its exegesis of 'white' domination. R.A. Hill, 'Dread history: Leonard P. Howell and millenarian visions in early Rastafari religion in Jamaica', *Epoché* 9 (1981), pp. 30–71.

115 Several plates before, Palmié confessed: 'The plates of Aponte's book, an intellectual pocket if you like, may forever remain closed to our scrutinising gaze' (Palmié, *Wizards and scientists*, p. 96). The idea of the 'impossible' thus appears to express a certain cognitive resignation to which Aponte did not succumb.

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'impossibility' is a category of the 'de-subjectification' whose opacity is shared with 'necessity', both categories opposed to the 'possibility' and 'contingency' of all 'operations of subjectification'.[116] The potency of the Apontian subject, as representative of and represented black man, tells us more than a simple testimony as 'an empty place in the archive': Aponte shows us precisely that between what has been said, the unsaid and what has yet to be said, nothing is completely impossible.

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116 G. Agamben, *Ce qui reste d'Auschwitz, L'archive et le témoin* (Paris: Payot Rivages, 2003), pp. 156–61.

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14



On Not Spreading the Word: Ministers of Religion and Written Culture at the Cape of Good Hope in the 18th Century

Gerald Groenewald

Introduction

Knowledge and ideas cannot spread on their own—for that to happen intermediaries are needed. These intermediaries can take different forms, but during the early modern era the main mediating agents were people and some form of representation, primarily writing. The Dutch East India Company (Vereenigde Oost-Indische Compagnie, or VOC) was active for almost two centuries (1602–1799), during which period it established a trading empire stretching from the Cape of Good Hope and Mauritius in the west to Japan and the Chinese Sea in the East. Its primary locus of activity was, however, centred on the eastern rim of the Indian Ocean: India, Ceylon, Southeast Asia and Indonesia. The trading activities of the VOC were made possible by a fleet of hundreds of large ships which plied the oceans in journeys lasting almost a year: from the Netherlands to the headquarters of the VOC in Batavia (modern Jakarta) on the island of Java, normally punctuated by a visit of a couple of weeks at the Cape of Good Hope. The Cape owed its existence as a VOC station (only gradually did it grow into a 'colony') from 1652 onwards, not to trade—as with most other Dutch 'factories' (trading stations) in the East—but to its convenient location halfway on the route between Europe and the East Indies. The VOC's activities were performed by thousands of European men—from all over northwestern Europe, but primarily from the Netherlands, the German states and Scandinavia—who worked on the ships as sailors, protected the VOC's interests as soldiers (the majority of them) or administered the Company, its trade and personnel as merchants and clerks. During the two centuries of the VOC's existence, around one million men sailed to the East Indies. Of these, only about one third returned to Europe,

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the others either dying *en route* or in the East or choosing to remain in the VOC territory as so-called 'free burghers' (former employees of the VOC who were released from service and could make a living on their own as 'citizens' but who remained subjects of the VOC). It is to this last category of people to which the Cape colony owed its growth as a settler colony.[1]

The primary aim of the VOC was to make a profit: as Nicolaes Witsen — a VOC director and a leading light in the scholarly world of the late 17th century — complained to one of his learned friends: 'What does Your Lordship ask for curiosities of learning from the [East] Indies? No, Sir, it is only money and not learning that our people are looking for, a lamentable fact.'[2] Yet the very nature of the VOC's activities unwittingly helped to create an infrastructure for the mediation of knowledge. By maintaining regular routes and traffic between different parts of the world, allowing thousands of people to have new experiences, and providing them with the opportunity to maintain contact with their home ports, a new network for the flow of knowledge was created. The VOC itself — as a large trading company which had to jealously guard its interests against competitors — required specific information: of trading possibilities, routes, local customs and political information. Part of the success of the Company is attributable to its highly efficient and well-developed communication network, much the superior of its rivals. Certain types of information had immense commercial value, particularly (given the very nature of the activities of these maritime merchant companies) that relating to navigation and sailing routes. Hence the immense importance the VOC attached to information regarding its naval technology and the mapping of the territories which it visited. The value of such information was reflected by the money the VOC invested in sending out professionals to perform the tasks of mapping, surveying and navigating, as well as by the secrecy with which they guarded this information.[3] In addition to this, the VOC put great store by written reports and statistical data — for which they had a large army of clerks and secretaries who wrote down (and copied several times!) everything the Company officials in East India House in Amsterdam might

1 F.S. Gaastra, *De geschiedenis van de VOC* (Zutphen: Walburg Pers, 1991), p. 82.

2 Quoted in P.J.A.N. Rietbergen, 'Witsen's world: Nicolaas Witsen (1641–1717) between the Dutch East India Company and the Republic of Letters', *Itinerario* 9 (1985), p. 126.

3 On these activities of the VOC, see: C.A. Davids, 'Navigeren in Azië: de uitwisseling van kennis tussen Aziaten en navigatiepersoneel bij de voorcompagnieën en de VOC, 1596–1795', in J. Bethlehem & A.C. Meijer (eds), *VOC en cultuur: wetenschappelijke en culturele relaties tussen Europa en Azië ten tijde van de VOC* (Amsterdam: Schiphouwer en Brinkman, 1993), pp. 17–37; and K. Zandvliet, *Mapping for money: maps, plans and topographic paintings and their role in Dutch overseas expansion during the 16th and 17th centuries* (Amsterdam: De Bataafsche Leeuw, 1998).

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possibly require. In short, the VOC knew that in order to properly plan and execute their business and marketing activities, they needed to systematically collect information about the places and peoples they interacted with.[4]

I. Trade and knowledge

Although the VOC's collection of commercial information certainly advanced European knowledge of the East, what was perhaps of greater significance to the Republic of Letters was the fact that the infrastructure of the VOC made it possible for intermediaries — mostly in the service of the VOC — to convey fairly quickly new information of interest to the savants of Europe. Peter Burke has argued that the creation of new knowledge in early modern Europe was greatly aided by the expansion of European trade interests. Whereas previously knowledge was very much determined by the place where an individual lived, the spatial distribution of knowledge started to change rapidly during this period with the development of 'centres' — Europe in general, but especially certain great capital cities which were also commercial centres serving as crossroads — and 'peripheries', particularly the new areas of the world encountered by European traders and explorers. The place where information was 'discovered' or collected was normally on the periphery. Raw data from the 'field' was usually only 'processed' in the centres of the Republic of Letters whereby it could be turned into 'knowledge'.[5] The movement of men and goods, which was so central to the operation of the VOC, created an excellent opportunity for this process of creating knowledge to be worked out. All that was needed was someone with sufficient curiosity or interest to collect information in the course of his other duties for the Company. In fact, as Charles Boxer has pointed out, at the same time as Witsen was complaining about the VOC's lack of interest in intellectual endeavours, 'there were more of the Company's employees (or ex-employees) who were taking an intelligent interest in the Asian cultural scene'.[6] Men like Adriaan van Rheede tot Drakenstein, George Rumphius, François Valentijn and Isaac Tissingh could combine their posts in the VOC with their scientific and anthropological researches — in all of these cases resulting in major publications which hugely impacted on the world of knowledge.[7] These men were proper scholars in their own right and their work was the result of investigations *in loco*. In general, the work of connecting the peripheries (and collecting 'raw data'

4 Cf. P. Burke, *A social history of knowledge: from Gutenberg to Diderot* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2000), pp. 157–58.

5 Ibid., pp. 53–80.

6 C.R. Boxer, *The Dutch seaborne empire, 1600–1800* (London: Hutchinson, 1965), p. 183.

7 For a discussion of these and similar researchers in the Dutch empire, see Boxer, *The Dutch seaborne empire*, pp. 155–86.

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there) with the centre (where the data was processed into knowledge) was done by much more humble men, often part of a chain of intermediaries all using their contacts and connections within the VOC and the larger world of the Republic of Letters. A good example of how this process operated is afforded by the case of how the philosopher Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz managed to obtain a text in the (now extinct) Cape Khoi language as part of his larger project to discover the origins of language. Through his network of scholarly associates Leibniz was able to gain the assistance of Witsen in Amsterdam, who used his connections within the VOC to obtain this text from a native speaker at the Cape of Good Hope.[8] In this way the VOC created the infrastructure — through the movement of men and written materials on its many ships — for the diffusion of knowledge. Of course, this movement was largely one way: back to Europe. This paper tries to gauge to what an extent, if any, this process could also work the other way around: could, and did, new European ideas reach a small outpost of the VOC empire, viz. the Cape of Good Hope, through this same process, namely, the interplay between trade, scholarly endeavours and European expansion made possible by the VOC's activities?[9]

II. Men of religion

A major component of Dutch identity in the early modern era was adherence to the 'true Christian Reformed religion', which fulfilled an even greater role in national self-consciousness after the peace with Catholic Spain at the end of the Eighty Years' War in 1648. Although in fact only a minority of the Dutch population were actually members of the Reformed Church (DRC), the public image of the Republic of the United Provinces was that of a Calvinist Reformed state — and it was also perceived as such by other European powers. Although the DRC never became the state church of the Netherlands (unlike, for example, the Anglican Church in England or the Lutheran Church in Sweden), it always remained the preferred 'public' church. An allegiance to reformed Christianity, civic responsibility and Republic freedom, and a dedication to trade became the pillars of Dutch society in the 17th and 18th centuries.

Thus there were no difficulties for the VOC in combining a search for profit with religious motives. When the Dutch States General appointed the first Governor General of the East Indies in 1609, they ordered him 'not only to

8 Cf. G. Groenewald, 'To Leibniz, from Dorha: A Khoi prayer in the Republic of Letters', *Itinerario* 28/1 (2004), pp. 29–48.

9 On this interplay, see J. van Goor, 'Handel en wetenschap', in J. Bethlehem & A.C. Meijer (eds), *VOC en cultuur: wetenschappelijke en culturele relaties tussen Europa en Azië ten tijde van de Verenigde Oostindische Compagnie* (Amsterdam: Schiphouwer en Brinkman, 1993), pp. 1–16.

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continue but also to expand, as far as is possible, the East Indian trade so that the name of Christ, salvation of the heathen, [and] the honour and reputation of our nation may be spread, and to the profit of the Company.'[10] For this reason, the VOC was prepared to take into its service ordained ministers of religion (*predikanten*) and lay-readers (*zieken-troosters* or 'sick-comforters') and send them to the East Indies on their account 'so that the name of Christ and the service of the Company may be properly propagated.'[11] In the two centuries of VOC's existence, it sent out as paid employees some 635 ordained ministers and about 2700 lay-readers to serve the religious needs of its personnel and other inhabitants of its empire.[12] As such, these ministers had a very ambivalent position: while they remained under the authority of the religious governing bodies (the so-called 'classes'; VOC ministers answered to the Amsterdam classis), and were paid employees of the VOC. The religious authorities were responsible for examining and ensuring the doctrinal and professional suitability of a candidate before the VOC would appoint him.[13] But ministers remained employees of the Company: while they had to report to the classes about the state of affairs in their congregations, the secular authorities could decide where to place ministers, and could move them around as they saw fit. In addition, the VOC enacted close control over the affairs of ministers and church congregations in their empire: not only did they have access to the correspondence between ministers and the classes, but they also insisted on having a so-called 'political commissioner' on the church councils.[14] This divided allegiance between the secular and church authorities was the cause of many a disagreement over the years, and well illustrates the position of ministers as people who had their feet in both the VOC world and the world from which they came: the Netherlands.[15]

To be a minister in the Dutch Reformed Church during this period was no easy task. Much was expected of them: in the ideology of the day a minister was

10 Quoted in the original in K. Schoeman, *Patrisiërs en prinse: die Europese samelewing en die stigting van 'n kolonie aan die Kaap, 1619–1715* (Pretoria: Protea Boekehuis, 2008), p. 308 (my translation).

11 Ibid.

12 F.A. van Lieburg, 'Het personeel van de Indische kerk: een kwantitatieve benadering', in G.J. Schutte (ed.), *Het Indisch Sion: de Gereformeerde Kerk onder de Verenigde Oost-Indische Compagnie* (Hilversum: Verloren, 2002), p. 73.

13 The procedure is described in W. Frijhoff, *Wegen van Evert Willemsz.: Een Hollands weeskind op zoek naar zichzelf, 1607–1647* (Nijmegen: SUN Memoria, 1995), pp. 545–46.

14 In this latter respect the VOC was not unusual: in the Dutch Republic, municipal authorities also had a representative on the local church councils, although he did not have as much influence as the political commissioner of the VOC congregations.

15 For some of these disagreements, cf. Boxer, *The Dutch seaborne empire*, pp. 133–36 and, in greater detail, C.W.Th. van Boetzelaer van Asperen en Dubbeldam, *De Protestantsche Kerk in Nederlandsch-Indië* (The Hague: Marthinus Nijhoff, 1947), pp. 50–78 & 168–76.

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seen as the messenger of God and the Church, which function he should fulfil primarily through opening up the Word of God to his flock—to this end he needed to have the 'tongue of learning'. This learning needed to be both secular and sacred; in the latter he would be led by the Spirit of God. Thus the job of a DRC minister required immense theological and emotional investment, as the incumbent was expected to become the saviour of sinners through his service, learning and piety.[16] Almost all of the ministers who were sent out in the service of the VOC were trained at Dutch universities (for a very short period there was a theological seminary in Batavia, but even then the candidates had to finish their studies at a European university), mostly—though not exclusively—at Leiden. Here the curriculum focused on theology and the languages of the Bible, Hebrew and Greek, in addition to Latin (knowledge of which was a prerequisite for studying at university).[17] Through their study at university, Dutch ministers were not only philologically well trained but, given the immense debates which characterised Reformed theology, especially in the 17th century, were also at least aware of some of the new ideas developing in Europe. This academic background of ministers of religion made them highly unusual in the VOC world, where the vast majority of the people they encountered had little or no academic training—in fact, the only people with university training they were likely to encounter in their careers in the VOC would have been the small number of legal officers. Academic training among senior officials in the VOC was unusual—the Company was characterised by its meritocratic structure, and most of its senior staff members were people who worked themselves up through the ranks. Thus, it is no surprise to find that a sizeable number of VOC ministers engaged in scientific and linguistic research while in the East.[18] It was particularly in the latter field that they created new knowledge for the Republic of Letters: with their philological training, it was possible for ministers to turn the practical knowledge of local languages, which many VOC servants had, into a systematic scientific study. In addition to writing many teaching aides and books for acquiring languages like Malay (the *lingua franca* of the Indonesian archipelago) and Sinhala (in Ceylon), some ministers took this further by translating the Bible into Malay (such as François Valentijn) and creating the first scientific grammar of that language (Georg Werndly in 1736), which formed the foundation of the study of Asian languages at Dutch universities. These texts were sent back to the Netherlands where they were normally printed at the expense of the VOC

16 Frijhoff, *Wegen van Evert Willemsz.*, p. 543, following the influential 17th-century theologian, William Perkins.

17 Van Lieburg, 'Het personeel van de Indische kerk', pp. 79–81.

18 For a discussion of these activities, see Boetzelaer, *De Protestantsche Kerk in Nederlandsch-Indië*, pp. 118–26 & 248–61.

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and (in the case of religious material) under the supervision of the classes.[19] Although the inspiration for this was originally practical, the scientific way in which this philological activity was performed would not have been possible without the presence of university-educated ministers of religion. In this way they straddled both the worlds of European learning and the practical world of the VOC empire.

III. Books at the Cape

One way of spreading information and knowledge is through individuals, another is through written material. We have seen how the VOC as an empire made the diffusion of knowledge possible and what role Dutch ministers played as mediators in this process. We now move to the Cape of Good Hope and look specifically at the role of books here. What sorts of books were available in this small outpost of the VOC empire, and who read them?

The colonial population at the Cape of Good Hope can be divided into two parts: the vast majority who were free burghers making a living on their own but remaining subjects of the VOC, and the VOC servants.[20] The latter consisted of a small elite of administrators and a much larger group of soldiers who formed the garrison. In this context, ministers of religion formed an intriguing mediating group: they were paid employees of the VOC and as such formed part of the governing elite, yet the bulk of their activities were oriented towards the burgher population. As far as literacy among the burgher population is concerned, studies have found that around the beginning of the 18th century about 50–60 percent of burgher men and 30–40 percent of women could write. These rates compare, at least as far as the literacy of men is concerned, rather badly with the Netherlands, where the literacy rate during the same period was 70–80 percent. Most of the men at this point in the history of the Cape received their education in Europe before they moved to the Cape: among their descendants later in the 18th century, the literacy rate was likely to be lower,

19 H.M.J. Maier & J. van der Putten, 'Van Tolken, papegaaien en predikanten: het Maleis en de VOC', in L. Blussé & I. Ooms (eds), *Kennis en Compagnie: De Verenigde Oost-Indische Compagnie en de moderne wetenschap* (Amsterdam: Balans, 2002), pp. 110–12.

20 I am leaving aside issues relating to the indigenous population, the Khoikhoi and the slaves. Although there were a few Khoikhoi children in the first school at the Cape in the 1660s, and the missionary Georg Schmidt taught reading to his Khoikhoi followers during his brief tenure at the Cape in 1737–44, there is no known reference to literate Khoikhoi at the Cape. Slave children belonging to the VOC had their own dedicated teachers and received religious education, which included basic literary skills. Yet no example of slave writing is known from the 17th- and 18th-century Cape, except for the exercise book used by one of these slave teachers, viz. Jan Smiesing. On education to VOC slaves and Smiesing, see K. Schoeman, *Armosyn van die Kaap: die wêreld van 'n slavin, 1652–1733* (Cape Town: Human & Rousseau, 2001), pp. 540–43, 568–89 & 658–59.

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considering the bad provision for education in the colonial Cape, although this topic has not been studied for the later 18th century.[21] In general, however, the ability to read was probably higher than the ability to write, considering that in the early modern period children were first taught to read and only then to write.[22] In general terms, it would be safe to assume that insofar as there was a reading or intellectual culture at the Cape, it was to be found among the administrative elite in the service of the VOC.

The study of books and reading in early colonial South Africa is still in its infancy. The future for this field does not look rosy either, considering the limitations of our sources — unlike the colonial societies of the Americas, so-called ego documents (diaries, letters and memoirs) are very scarce.[23] This is in contrast to the vast archives left by the VOC administration. The most important source for the study of book ownership at the Cape comes from documents relating to deceased estates. The only systematic study of these with reference to book ownership was done by Vybeke Pieters for the period 1691–1768.[24] She found that in about half the estates which were auctioned off during this period, books formed part of the goods sold. But this included estates which owned only a Bible and no other book. Although the ownership of books — which includes religious books such as Bibles, hymn books and catechisms — seems to have been spread throughout the population, with the single largest occupational group being the Cape farmers, the people who owned the largest numbers of books were professionals (such as surgeons, notaries and ministers, but also artisans), particularly high-ranking VOC administrators.[25] It seems as if, in general, books were considered luxury items and that reading anything but religious material was restricted to the social elite.[26]

21 On literacy at the early Cape, see A. Biewenga, 'Alfabetisering aan de Kaap de Goede Hoop omstreeks 1700', *Tydskrif vir Nederlands en Afrikaans* 3/2 (1996), pp. 110–14 and G.C. de Wet, *Die vryliede en vryswartes in die Kaapse nedersetting, 1657–1707* (Cape Town: Historiese Publikasie-Vereniging, 1981), pp. 153–56.

22 Biewenga, 'Alfabetisering aan de Kaap', p. 115.

23 For instance, for the whole VOC period at the Cape, only two private diaries of burghers are known to exist, while surviving letters of private individuals tend to concern business matters.

24 Vybeke Pieters studied only auction rolls, not inventories. Not every estate was inventoried — only those in which there were minor children as heirs. Even fewer estates were auctioned off. The study of these records causes immense methodological problems, some of which are addressed by V. Pieters, 'Boeken aan de Kaap: een onderzoek naar de Dessiniaanse Bibliotheek in haar sociaal-culturele context' (unpub. doctoraalscriptie, University of Amsterdam, 1997), pp. 55–59.

25 Pieters, 'Boeken aan de Kaap', pp. 66–73.

26 This finding is also confirmed by Biewenga's study of book ownership in the Stellenbosch district; Biewenga, 'Alfabetisering aan de Kaap', pp. 116–19. Pieters, 'Boeken aan de Kaap', p. 75, also found that books tended to fetch a high price at auctions.

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Where did these books come from? There were no bookshops in Dutch colonial Cape Town, although the VOC did import large numbers of Bibles, catechisms and other religious works, which could be bought from its stores in Cape Town, and at times placed orders in the fatherland for religious material on behalf of the local church congregations.[27] Some wealthier people ordered the occasional book or learned journal from Europe, often via an acquaintance.[28] But by far the most common form of obtaining books at the Cape was through buying from the collections of deceased persons at auctions.[29] In this way the high-ranking VOC administrator, Joachim von Dessin, managed to build up over a period of three decades a collection of some 3 856 books by the time of his death in 1761.[30] The fact that most books at the Cape were obtained through auctions meant that overall the pool of books at the Cape was fairly limited, and books circulated among a small number of readers. It was only when someone of high rank (who had greater baggage allowance on VOC ships, where space was at a premium) was stationed at the Cape and brought his collection of books with him that the pool was significantly increased. Prime among these were the learned ministers of religion who came out to the Cape in VOC employ.

IV. The intellectual world of Cape ministers

Our focus now shifts to the ministers who served at the Cape of Good Hope during the VOC period. Some 45 ministers of religion were stationed at the Cape between 1665 (the year in which the first permanent minister was sent to the Cape) and 1795 (the end of the VOC reign). An overview of their tenure and background reveals interesting changes in patterns over time. The vast majority of these ministers (35 out of 45) were born in the Netherlands or in Friesland, while three came from the Calvinist parts of the German lands and one was born in the Dutch colony of Surinam. Only two came from a French-speaking background: the Frenchman Pierre Simond, who came to the Cape with the Huguenot refugees in 1688 and Engelbertus le Boucq, a

27 Schoeman, *Armosyn*, pp. 377–78.

28 For example, the wealthy free burgher Adam Tas, cf. ibid., pp. 379–80. The book collecter Von Dessin also at times ordered books from overseas, although this was by no means the main way in which he built up his collection; see below.

29 Pieters, 'Boeken aan de Kaap', pp. 54–55.

30 At his death, he left this collection to the Church with some money for a public library to be founded. This was done, and the Dessinian collection formed the basis of what became known in the 19th century as the South African Library and is now the National Library of South Africa in Cape Town. On Von Dessin's career at the Cape and his book collection, see Pieters, 'Boeken aan de Kaap', pp. 82–123 and J.L.M. Franken, 'n Kaapse huishoue in die 18de eeu: uit von Dessin se Briefboek en Memoriaal', *Archives Year Book for South African History* 3/1 (1940), pp. 1–87.

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French-speaking Catholic from the southern Netherlands (modern Belgium) who converted to Calvinism. During this period there were also four ministers who were born in the Cape, studied in the Netherlands and returned to their homeland to pursue their chosen professions: the first of these was Petrus van der Spuy, who was a minister at the Cape from 1746 to 1781. A generation later, three more South Africans returned as ministers during the 1780s–90s: Christiaan Fleck, Petrus Johannes van der Spuy (a nephew of Van der Spuy senior) and Michiel Christiaan Vos — all of whom continued their service here until well into the 19th century. This change in the origins of Cape ministers is related to another one: during the first half of this period, many ministers tended to remain here for short periods before continuing their calling elsewhere, but from the middle decades of the 18th century a group of ministers emerged who served at the Cape for several decades, often marrying into the local burgher elite, and thus providing greater stability to church affairs (see Appendix for details).

Of the 45 ministers at the Cape, we know where 37 received their university education. Some of them attended two universities, one for their formative humanistic training (in languages and philosophy) and another for their theological training, but most did their training at one university. Of the 37, 34 studied at one of the five main universities of the Dutch Republic, but the distribution was not equal and moreover changed significantly over time. The majority (18 ministers) studied at Leiden, with three more training at one of the smaller universities: Franeker (Friesland) or Harderwijk (Gelderland). Ten trained at Groningen, but only three attended Utrecht, the most famous Dutch university after Leiden. Of further significance is that during the first half of the period almost all the ministers at the Cape were alumni of Leiden or Franeker; those from Groningen only started to be placed at the Cape from the mid-18th century onwards, while almost all the ministers who came to the Cape after about 1780 were trained at Groningen or Utrecht (see Appendix for details).

There are a number of obvious reasons for Leiden's supremacy: it was the largest of the Dutch universities, it was the only university in the two provinces from which the VOC operated, and it fell under the jurisdiction of the Amsterdam classis, which was responsible for examining and accepting ministers for VOC service. However, the preponderance of Leiden-trained ministers in VOC service until the mid-18th century had significant results for the intellectual and spiritual life of the colonies.

For most of the second half the 17th century, and for the first decades of the 18th century, intellectual life in the Dutch Republic was dominated by a struggle between two different theological camps (which coincided with

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a similar political divide). This intellectual turmoil was partly the result of the development of the early Enlightenment in the 17th-century United Provinces, associated with the activities of Descartes (who lived and worked there from the 1620s onwards) and the fact that the Republic published the bulk of the books which revealed new ways of thinking.[31] The spread of Cartesian ideas to the Dutch universities also impacted on Reformed theology. At Leiden there developed a more rationalised, moderate approach towards theology, under the leadership of Johannes Coccejus, which took cognisance of Cartesianism. This direction was vehemently opposed by the Utrecht professor of theology, Johannes Voetius who, under the influence of English Puritanism, advocated a more orthodox, fundamentalist interpretation of Reformed doctrine and started a movement known as the *Nadere Reformatie* ('closer' or 'further reformation') — the idea being that the Reformation was not complete (i.e. that too many concessions had been made to the world) and should be continued further. Unlike the Cocceians, who accepted secular involvement in church affairs, the Voetians advocated a strict separation between the two and believed in a 'practical piety', which meant a close, personal relationship with God and a rejection of worldly ostentation. While the debate had become less heated by the early 18th century, the differences between the more orthodox proponents of the *Nadere Reformatie* and their more moderate co-religionists remained, and could be seen in everyday life in matters like dress and lifestyle. Although by the late 17th century Cocceianism was increasingly being criticised for its soft approach towards Cartesianism, Leiden remained more moderate theologically, even though pure Cocceian theology was no longer taught there. Utrecht, on the other hand, always remained the stronghold of Voetian theology. Groningen originally tried to remain neutral in the theological minefields of the late 17th century, but eventually came closer to the Voetian approach to Reformed theology.[32] Ministers who came to the Cape were — due to their training — acutely aware of these debates. At the very least they were expected to be able to defend the orthodox position on certain debated issues, as is witnessed by the fact that before the classes would approve a minister

31 For a magisterial exposition of the development of the Dutch Republic as the hub for the early and radical Enlightenments, see J.I. Israel, *Radical Enlightenment: philosophy and the making of modernity, 1650–1750* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001).

32 For an overview of the Cocceian–Voetian struggle and how it played out in the Dutch universities, see J.I. Israel, *The Dutch Republic: its rise, greatness, and fall, 1477–1806* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), pp. 660–69 & 690–99.

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for service in the VOC, the candidate first had to sign a declaration rejecting certain controversial theological positions.[33]

Given their training and their isolation at the Cape, it is safe to assume that most ministers who came here brought their book collections with them. Certainly, it is clear from the auction lists and estate inventories that Cape ministers were generally the people with the largest libraries.[34] At the auction of the estate of Henricus Beck, who lived at the Cape for more than 50 years and served as minister for 30, some 187 individual books and 20 'groups' of books were sold. Likewise, the estate of Eduard Arentz, who died in 1749, produced one group of books and 365 individual books.[35] At these auctions, books were often sold in small groups or packs containing a number of different titles. A particular interesting case is that of the Stellenbosch minister Willem van Gendt. His books were sold at two different auctions in 1744 and 1745: in addition to two Bibles and seven groups of books, some 352 individual titles were sold, normally also in small groups of anything from 3 to 12 titles. A large amount of writing paper and what amounted to notebooks were also sold.[36] These books were mostly bought by VOC administrators, such as Von Dessin and Josephus de Grandpreez, the secretary of the Council of Policy, and even by the governor, Rijk Tulbagh.[37] However, some of these books were also bought by ordinary burghers and even 'the Chinese Onjako', who bought some 11 books from Van Gendt's estate.

Unfortunately, the auctions do not list the titles of the books sold. But since a catalogue of the Dessinian collection exists, it is sometimes possible to deduce which books were owned by individual ministers. Where this is not possible, as in most cases, the Dessinian collection does at least afford us the opportunity to note which books were in circulation at the Cape during the middle decades of the 18th century, especially considering that the collections of deceased ministers seemed to have been the main source of Von Dessin's accumulation of books at the Cape.[38] An unusual case in this regard is Willem

33 The Stellenbosch minister Hercules van Loon at first did not arrive for his examination by the classis since he was not prepared to reject publicly the teachings of his teacher at Franeker, Professor Roël, who was a full supporter of some of Coccejus's more controversial positions; cf. S.P. Engelbrecht, *Die Kaapse predikante van die sewentiende en agtiende eeu* (Cape Town & Pretoria: H.A.U.M.–J.H. de Bussy, 1952), p. 30.

34 Pieters, 'Boeken aan de Kaap', p. 69.

35 Ibid.

36 Cape Archives Repository, MOOC 10/5 no. 57 & 57½ (per TEPC).

37 These three men were mentioned by Abbé de la Caille, who visited the Cape during 1751–53, as the most learned and intellectual ones he encountered here; Franken, ''n Kaapse huishoue', p. 71.

38 Reflected by the fact that the single largest (about 28 percent) category of books in the Dessinian collection consist of theological works; Pieters, 'Boeken aan de Kaap', p. 103.

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van Gendt, who left so many books at his death. He was exceptional among Cape ministers of this era in that he was a well-known theologian with several publications to his name and who continued his research while stationed at Stellenbosch. Before coming to South Africa in 1738, he was minister in the small university town of Harderwijk. Here he published two translations of German theologians as well as two original works, one dealing with the Roman Catholic Mass and other rituals, while the other covered the doctrinal differences between Lutherans and Calvinists. This latter study he continued while at Stellenbosch, and it resulted in another big work on this same topic, published in 1740. After his death in 1744, some of his sermons were also published. In an article on Van Gendt's books in the Dessinian collection, F.C. Fensham argues that a number of obscure theological works, written by two Harderwijk professors during the time of Van Gendt's tenure there, must have come from Van Gendt's collection. Both of these professors were Cocceians, which was reflected in Van Gendt's own theological works and sermons. It is also plausible that the several books by Coccejus in the Dessinian collection, including his complete *Opera* in Latin, were derived from Van Gendt's collection.[39]

The catalogue of the Dessinian collection well reflects the impact of the various theological debates and controversies which were such a feature of the 17th-and early 18th-century Dutch Republic. At any rate, it proves that ministers — and probably some other members of the intellectual elite with access to books — were at the very least aware of new developments in thought. It is no surprise to find all the major works of both Coccejus and Voetius in the Dessinian catalogue.[40] What is perhaps more surprising is to find a copy of Balthasar Bekker's *De Betooverde Wereld* ('The World Bewitched')[41] — a four-volume work from the 1690s which is generally regarded as the most controversial text of the early Enlightenment. It built in great detail on Spinoza's statement that Satan and the devils could not exist, and sought to show that all belief in witches, demons and other supernatural phenomena were in reality superstition. The book caused a public furore in the Netherlands, which continued well into the early 1700s with numerous calls to strip Bekker of his pulpit and ban his work (which was unsuccessful, although his work was banned in some Dutch cities).[42] Knowledge of this

39 F.C. Fensham, 'Die boekery van Ds. Wilhelm van Gendt en Joachim von Dessin se versameling', *Quarterly Bulletin of the South African Library* 38/4 (1984), pp. 161–67.

40 J.H. von Manger & J.R. Kaufmann, *Catalogue of the Dessinian Collection* (Cape of Good Hope: no publisher, 1821), pp. 108, 114–21, 194 & 196.

41 Ibid., p. 57.

42 For a discussion of the debate, see Israel, *Radical Enlightenment*, pp. 375–405.

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debate must have existed at the Cape, as is witnessed by another volume in the Dessinian collection: *Verscheidene Gedichten, zoo voor als tegen het boek genoemd De betooverde wereld* ('Various poems, both for and against the book called The world bewitched').[43] Awareness of this furore was certainly not restricted to whoever owned this book: the controversy was extensively reported in the Dutch journal *De Boekzaal der Geleerde Wereld* ('The Hall of Books of the Learned World'), which was imported to, and read at, the Cape by people as diverse as the official Joachim von Dessin and the free burgher and farmer, Adam Tas, while the latter also ordered from Amsterdam in 1705 a copy of Bekker's sermons.[44] Knowledge of the Enlightenment ideas behind these theological debates must also have existed among some of these intelligentsia, since all of René Descartes' major works in Latin editions, as well as Thomas Hobbes in both Dutch and French translations, made it into the Dessinian collection by the mid-18th century.[45]

As indicated above, a major change occurred concerning the background of Cape ministers by the 1780s, by which stage several of them were Cape-born and most had studied at either Groningen or Utrecht where they had come under the influence of Voetian pietism. Foremost among these ministers was Helperus Ritzema van Lier, who was probably the most famous Cape minister in his day. He was a true child of the high Enlightenment; before the conversion which resulted in his decision to become a minister, he had read widely in the French *philosophes* and the English sentimentalists, and published several works dealing with pure science. After his conversion he developed a deep identification with the aims and ideas of English Evangelicals like John Newton and the Methodist, George Whitefield. Van Lier corresponded with Newton in Latin, and these letters became a best-selling volume when they were translated by the renowned English poet, William Cowper, and published in 1792 as *The Power of Grace Illustrated in Six Letters from a Minister of the Reformed Church to John Newton.*[46] Along with his colleagues, Christiaan Fleck, Meent Borcherds and Michiel Vos — who all became published authors during their lifetime — he represented a fresh breath at the Cape in the 1780s–90s. Van Lier initiated numerous reforms, many of which were inspired

43 Von Manger & Kaufmann, *Catalogue of the Dessinian Collection*, p. 90.

44 Cf. Franken, *''n Kaapse huishoue'*, p. 68 and Schoeman, *Armosyn*, p. 380.

45 Von Manger & Kaufmann, *Catalogue of the Dessinian Collection*, pp. 56–57: Descartes, *Opera philosophica*; *Principia philosophiae*; *Meditationes de prima philosophia*; p. 132: Hobbes, *Les Fondements de la Politique* and p. 175: Hobbes, *De Eerste Beginselen van een Burgerstaat.*

46 On Van Lier's early life and conversion, see T.N. Hanekom, *Helperus Ritzema van Lier: die lewensbeeld van 'n Kaapse predikant uit die 18de eeu* (Cape Town & Pretoria: N.G. Kerk-Uitgewers, n.d. [1960]), pp. 38–91 and ibid., pp. 249–63, on his letters.

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by both knowledge of Enlightenment ideas and deep commitment to the new pietism.[47]

Unfortunately no list of Van Lier's books at the Cape survived his early death in 1792, but we are in the lucky position that at the death of his colleague, Christiaan Fleck, in 1820, a full inventory, with titles, was drawn up of his book collection. An analysis of these 558 titles (many of which consisted of multiple volumes) reveals how dramatically the world of Cape ministers at the turn of the 19th century differed from that of the first half of the 18th century.[48] First of all is the language of the books: although there are French and Latin dictionaries, there are no books in these languages, and only a handful of texts in German. About 10 percent of the books are in English (reflecting the fact of the Cape becoming an English colony after 1795, but also the influence of English Evangelicals on Fleck), and the rest are in Dutch. Except for the obligatory Josephus and several works on Jewish history, the collection is also unusual in its lack of anything classical. The period's interest in novels is also not reflected in Fleck's collection — he does, however, seem to have had a penchant for travel descriptions since there are numerous works in this genre, including the books of the explorers Mungo Park and Captain James Cook. But most surprisingly are the theological and philosophical works: Fleck owned nothing of Voetius or Coccejus *cum sociis*, while there is a remarkable absence of any works directly associated with the mainstream Enlightenment — the only two works with 'Voltaire' in the title are in fact works attacking his ideas (in addition to a work against Deism). Instead the collection abounds with works associated with the English Evangelical school: numerous texts by and about John Newton are scattered throughout the list, as well as important books by Jonathan Edwards, the American pietist who was a leading light in the Great Revival movement. Fleck also owned books by Isaac Watts (both his *Hymns* and his popular *Logic*) and several by the Scottish minister and professor of rhetoric, Hugh Blair, whose sermons and works on rhetoric were very influential.[49] The vast bulk of his books were, however, everyday working texts such as biblical commentaries. Gone were the days of heated and learned debates; Fleck and his colleagues seem to have chosen firmly the side of the pietists and Evangelicals.

47 Cf. ibid., pp. 158–62 on the reform initiatives of Van Lier; and G. Groenewald, '*Een spoorloos vrouwspersoon*: unmarried mothers, moral regulation and the Church at the Cape of Good Hope, circa 1652–1795', *Historia* 59/2 (2008), pp. 5–32 on how new Enlightenment and sentimentalist ideas regarding public morality and the role of mothers in society impacted on the conduct of this group of ministers towards their flock.

48 The inventory is in the Cape Archives Repository, MOOC 8/34 no. 44 (per TEPC).

49 Cf. R. Porter, *Enlightenment: Britain and the creation of the modern world* (London: Allen Lane, 2000), pp. 68 & 245.

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V. Cape ministers using their knowledge

Finally, the most interesting, but also the most difficult, aspect of this study is the question: did the Cape ministers' learning and reading have an impact on the public at the Cape as regards the spread of new ideas? As we have seen, ministers of religion in the colonial world were in many ways mediators between the Republic of Letters in Europe — where, during their training, they were exposed to new ideas, even if only in fighting them — and the isolated and fairly non-intellectual inhabitants of the Cape of Good Hope. In addition, while — at the Cape certainly — they mainly dealt with free burghers, they were still paid employees of the VOC and allied with the powers-that-be. In this sense, too, they were mediators with feet in two different worlds. Unfortunately the relationship between church and society in Dutch colonial South Africa has hardly been studied, so it is not yet possible to present findings from a systematic investigation. But there are some revealing cases which seem apposite to the topic of this chapter and which deserve some brief discussion.

A case that indicates how vigilant ministers were about possible doctrinal differences occurred in the Drakenstein (Paarl) congregation in 1732. The newly arrived minister, Johannes Hertzogenraedt, and his church council were alarmed when they learned of the existence of a pamphlet (or 'little book') which had recently been brought to the Cape by a Danish ship and which was to be sold 'in public'. Written by one Hector Masius and translated into Dutch by a 'lover of the Evangelical truth', it was entitled: 'A Short Account of the differences between the True Evangelical Lutheran and Reformed Doctrine.' The Drakenstein church council was amazed by the 'libel, lies, misrepresentations and falsifications of our Reformed Christian doctrine' found in this pamphlet and felt that it served no other purpose but to incite disagreements and quarrels between the Reformed inhabitants of the Cape and their Lutheran brethren.[50] The reason why this danger existed was because a very sizeable part of the male population of the Cape during this period was of German origin and were raised in the Lutheran church. The VOC, however, would not allow a Lutheran congregation at the Cape, and since most of these men were married to Dutch women who belonged to the DRC, they tended to support the DRC as well. It was, however, precisely during the 1730s–40s that the German population at the Cape increased and that there

50 C. Spoelstra, *Bouwstoffen voor de geschiedenis der Nederduitsch-Gereformeerde Kerken in Zuid-Afrika* (2 vols, Amsterdam & Cape Town: Hollandsch Afrikaansche Uitgevers Maatschappij, 1906–7) vol. 2, pp. 451–52.

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developed a vocal movement among them lobbying for a Lutheran church.[51] But of interest here is the fact that there was a real fear that the pamphlet, which was clearly theologically mistaken in the eyes of Hertzogenraedt (who, as a German Calvinist, may have been particularly sensitive to a Lutheran 'threat'),[52] could easily spread and cause real harm. Hertzogenraedt wrote to the church authorities in the Netherlands, who answered with alacrity, praising the vigilance of the Drakenstein council but asking whether the problem was restricted to that congregation or whether or not it was more widespread. This they needed to know since experience had shown that it is difficult to suppress such texts. To this the Cape Town church council answered, peeved that they had been bypassed by the Drakenstein council, assuring their superiors that there was no problem in Cape Town, where the majority of Germans resided, and intimating that Hertzogenraedt may have overreacted.[53] This is a very minor incident, but it does show clearly how ministers could use their knowledge and position as mediators to interfere in affairs which they thought would affect the central position of the Dutch Reformed Church in colonial society.

A similar, though somewhat more dramatic, case happened in the Stellenbosch district in 1769 when Johannes Appeldoorn served as its minister. Minister Appeldoorn had learnt that N.A. de Beer, a schoolteacher working for the local *heemraad* J.B. Hofman,[54] held 'most dangerous opinions about Holy Scripture' which Hofman was spreading 'to the detriment of virtue-loving Christians'. In order to prevent this, the minister visited Hofman and instructed him that should he have any doubts about anything regarding religion and the Bible, he should come to the minister and the church council. He also wanted to talk with the teacher in question, who willingly informed the minister of his opinions concerning 'the deluge, Noah's ark, the miracles of Moses in Egypt, Saul's consultation of the witch of Endor, and so on'. Apparently De Beer further declared, 'what horror! [wrote Appeldoorn] Moses to be a murderer and David a thief and robber'. The minister realised that he could not convince De Beer of the contrary, and went straight to the council to ask their advice on the matter. The council at once ordered Hofman to stop De Beer from teaching. They also wrote to the governor to ask him to punish this 'God-dishonouring creature'. To this the governor acceded readily, banishing

51 Cf. J. Hoge, 'Die geskiedenis van die Lutherse Kerk aan die Kaap', *Archives Year Book for South African History* 1/2 (1938), pp. 21–61.

52 Hertzogenraedt grew up in Westphalia and at first worked in the Reformed Duchy of Cleves; Engelbrecht, *Die Kaapse predikante*, p. 55.

53 Spoelstra, *Bouwstoffen* vol. 1, pp. 173–75 and vol. 2, pp. 51–52, 54 & 58.

54 A *heemraad* served on the local governing body of a district, which also served to hear minor legal cases. Serving as a *heemraad* was clear indication of wealth and status.

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De Beer at once from the Cape. He also decreed that henceforth all teachers working for private individuals had to be examined by the Cape Town church council. If they were to work outside the Cape district, they had to show an attestation from the Cape Town council to the local minister in order to be allowed to teach in that district.[55]

This incident is significant for a number of reasons. It is a very rare case that clearly indicates that some of the critical Enlightenment ideas developing in Europe from the late 17th century found their way to the Cape. We know nothing of De Beer's background or the source of his ideas, but the tenor of his opinion is clear enough. What is relevant to this paper is how this case illustrates the role of ministers as arbiters of knowledge in the Cape world: Appeldoorn had the knowledge to recognise De Beer's ideas as dangerous. He also had the authority to interfere. The Church Ordinance for ministers in the VOC empire, after all, expected of them 'to govern with the elders and deacons with good discipline and order, and to keep everything in accordance with God's Word and in conformity with the Dutch Church, its Confession and the Christian Catechism'.[56] Ministers at the Cape also had a dual role: they acted as servants to their flocks, but also formed part of the governing elite. In this case, Appeldoorn was powerless to do anything against De Beer as the latter was not a member of his church, but he could, and did, use his influence with the secular authorities to act against this perceived threat to the reigning order.

These two cases indicate how ministers at the Cape could use their knowledge and influence to *prevent* ideas from spreading—to keep new or different ideas from the people under their influence. The new generation of ministers who came to the Cape in the 1780s–90s did however have a positive influence on the spread of ideas, albeit ideas which they supported and actively promoted. Ministers like Van Lier, Fleck, Borcherds (in Stellenbosch) and Vos (in Roodezand, modern Tulbagh) used their influence and knowledge to improve the religious, but also the material (e.g. improved schooling and welfare), lives of their followers. To this end, they actively encouraged the spread of pietist literature in South Africa and took up the pen themselves to help spread their ideas and beliefs. The new ideas about an individual's relationship with God had real effects, not only for the many people who found joy and solace in such relationships, but also in the active spread of the Word among previously ignored constituencies, viz. the slaves and the indigenous Khoikhoi. It was thanks to the pietist movement

55 Dutch Reformed Church Archives, Stellenbosch, G 2 1/3: Stellenbosch Notulen, 1755–1804, ff. 68–70.

56 Dutch Reformed Church Archives, Stellenbosch, G 1 5/6: Inlandse Ingekomene Brieven, 1700–1779, no. 34.

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started by these ministers that some Christians at the Cape finally, after 150 years of 'Christian civilisation', established the South African Missionary Society in 1799. This marked the start of the missionary endeavour in South Africa, which, over the next few decades, would radically alter the history of the country.[57] No longer were ministers of religion, caught up in their theological debates, actively preventing the Word from being spread.

Appendix: Ministers who served at the Cape of Good Hope

Name	At the Cape	Nationality	University
Van Arckel, Johan	1665–66	Dutch	Leiden
De Vooght, Johannes	1666	Dutch	Leiden
Wagtendorp, Petrus	1666–67	Dutch	?
De Vooght, Adrianus	1667–74	Dutch	Leiden
Maerlandt, Rudolphus	1674–76	Dutch	Leiden
Hulsenaer, Petrus	1676–77	Dutch	Leiden
Overney, Johannes	1678–87	Frisian	Franeker
Van Andel, Johannes	1687–89	Dutch	Leiden
Simond, Pierre	1688–1702	French	Die
Terwolt, Leonardus	1689–93	Frisian	Groningen
Van Loon, Hercules	1694–95 1700–4	Dutch	Franeker
Kalden, Petrus	1695–1708	Dutch	?
Beck, Henricus	1701–31	Dutch	Groningen & Leiden
Le Boucq, Engelbertus	1707–8	Belgian	Leuven
D'Ailly, Johannes	1708–26	Dutch	?
Van Aken, Petrus	1714–24	Dutch	Utrecht
Slicher, Lambertus	1714–30	Dutch	Leiden
Le Sueur, Franciscus	1729–46	Dutch	Leiden
Hertzogenraedt, Johannes	1731–36	German	?
Cock, Henricus	1732–42	Dutch	Groningen
Van Echten, Salomon	1732–53	Dutch	Groningen
Van Gendt, Wilhelm	1738–44	Dutch	?
Meiring, Arnoldus	1743–57	Dutch	?

57 On the rise of the pietist movement, the role of these ministers, their writing and the importance of reading to the movement, see K. Schoeman, *Dogter van Sion: Machtelt Smit en die 18de-eeuse samelewing aan die Kaap, 1749–1799* (Cape Town: Human & Rousseau, 1997), pp. 253–339.

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Weerman, Rutger Andreas	1745–48	Dutch	?
Cloppenburg, Ruardus	1746–48	Dutch	Leiden
Van der Spuy, Petrus	1746–81	Cape	Groningen & Leiden
Arentz, Eduard	1747–49	Frisian	Groningen
Voltelen, Christiaan	1750–58	Surinam	Leiden
Kroonenburg, Henricus	1752–78	Dutch	Leiden
Appeldoorn, Johannes	1753–72	Dutch	Harderwijk
Croeser, Gerhardus	1754–70	Dutch	Groningen
Harders, Remmerus	1758–75	Frisian	Groningen
Bode, Johannes Fredericus	1758–84	Frisian	Groningen
Serrurier, Johannes Petrus	1760–1804	Dutch	Leiden
Goldbach, Daniel	1774–83	Dutch	?
Kuys, Johannes	1777–99	Dutch	Leiden
Kuys, Philippus	1777–85	Dutch	Leiden
Fleck, Christiaan	1781–1820	Cape	Leiden
Aling, Robert Nicolaas	1784–1800	Dutch	Lingen
Borcherds, Meent	1785–1832	Frisian	Groningen
Van der Spuy, Petrus J.	1786–1807	Cape	Groningen
Van Lier, Helperus R.	1786–93	Dutch	Groningen
Von Manger, Johan H.	1792–1839	German	Utrecht
Vos, Michiel Christian	1794–1818	Cape	Utrecht
Ballot, Hendrik Willem	1797–1814	German	Leiden

Source: S.P. Engelbrecht, *Die Kaapse predikante van die sewentiende en agtiende eeu* (Cape Town & Pretoria: H.A.U.M.–J.H. de Bussy, 1952).

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15



Occurrences and Eclipses of the Myth of Ulysses in Latin American Culture

José Emilio Burucúa

Introduction

The oceanic expansion and the conquest of America by Europeans from the end of the 15th century produced an intense 'return to life', expressed in Warburgian terms, and the adaptation of the old Mediterranean myths to the completely new experiences of the sailors, explorers and occupants of the overseas territories. Pagan and Christian myths became refracted in tales or in onomastics imposed by the conquerors — the manatee was called the Siren, the rhinoceros was mistaken for the famous unicorn, the ape was the *homo selvaticus*, and the names of Florida, California, Patagonia and the Amazon still evoke the names of ancient sites or legendary warriors. We can say that such procedures helped Europeans to begin to understand, by means of the assimilation of ideas and well-known tales, anything that was new and unprecedented for them. This mechanism assisted comprehension but, at the same time, made it difficult for them to get the idea of how radically different the animals and peoples they encountered could be from the moral and ontological systems that the classical and Christian traditions had established.

Moreover, in the space of two or three generations, the indigenous populations that came under the European domain had their wishes, mental categories and religions (and what perhaps might be called today their subjectivity) captured by the values and ideas of the European cultures that were subjugating them. Mediterranean myths also spread, competing all over the globe with domestic myths, to such an extent that the stories of Homer and Virgil, Dante's voyage to the underworld and the adventures of the knight-errant (to name only the most remarkable examples) became a kind of universal patrimony, at least of cultivated people. Since the construction of dependence theories, from the 1960s onward, this process has been examined and questioned, and I propose to continue describing

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the process of planetary acculturation carried out by Europe since the 16th century, a process that goes on under the protection of globalised capital and its new technology.

In this context I developed the suspicion that the phenomenon of navigation and the discovery of unknown places — most as horrifying as the island of Polyphemus (the Cyclops), the kingdom of the cannibal Laestrygonians or the cliff of the Sirens — must have induced a permanent reference, in the Chronicles of the Indies and in the first American literary creation, to the *Odyssey* and its hero. However, I made a crass error of judgment. Ulysses was practically absent from the imaginative poetic horizon of the Spanish conquerors and settlers (though the Portuguese case is very different, as we will explain shortly). We know very well the adage, *negativa non sunt probanda*[1], which emerged from 17th-century legal theory and was later adopted by the social sciences dialectics, mainly history. So the absence of Ulysses and his adventures from the corpus of the Spanish Indies should not generate in us the useless and somehow absurd impulse to explain. We would surely find ourselves pushed into reasoning against the facts. Nevertheless, it seems that some hints of the figure from Ithaca appear indirectly and irregularly in Spanish mythological fantasy in America. On the other hand, the contrast between the absence of Ulysses in the New World and his permanent remembrance in the narrations associated with Portuguese empire construction in Asia is so huge that those few hints can help us to understand the almost complete vacuum in Spanish historical memory around the *Odyssey* and its creatures up to the 18th century.

I. Ulysses in Vespucci's writing

Ulysses's topos was, indeed, sporadically quoted in the case of the chroniclers' historiography and Spanish rhetoric, as demonstrated in the studies of Maria

1 The expression, in fact, comes from the field of law, and refers to the lack of possibility of providing proof of what does or did not exist. Johann Jacob Speidel, an imperial jurist of 17th century, seems to be the first author to give the present form to the apothegm, in a big compendium called *Thesaurus practicus* (XIII: 'De Probationibus') on the law that was in force in the Holy Roman Empire. Later, the principle spread to the historical field, in reference to the absurdities that can be generated while trying to explain the reasons of the lack of occurrence of certain historical facts in a given place given that the same facts occurred in other places. See Ernst Gombrich, 'Topos and topicality in Renaissance art', Annual Conference of the Society for Renaissance Studies, University College, London, 10 January 1975, at www.gombrich.co.uk/showdoc.php?id=21 (accessed 19 May 2010).

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Muñiz Muñiz,[2] Juan Gil,[3] Mario Pozzi[4] and Vanni Bramanti[5] (1992). On the contrary, in the Italian literary culture of the Late Renaissance and Baroque that model was part of the mythical figured basis used in historiography and poetic creation to reveal America to the Europeans. For example, we can see in the authentic papers written by Amerigo Vespucci, and also in others ascribed to him (usually addressed to his most illustrious countrymen, Lorenzo di Pier Francesco de Medici and Pier Paolo Soderini, perpetual Florentine flag-bearer), that he confirms a supposition that would be obvious for a cultivated Tuscan man. The supposition, that the sender and the addressees of his *Lettere* should thoroughly know Dante's *La Divina Commedia*, becomes immediately evident from the letter of 18 July 1500, sent from Seville to Lorenzo di Pier Francesco, in which Vespucci stated how he had studied the sky of the southern hemisphere (an experience that enabled him to infer the radical news of the world to be explored beyond the Atlantic). At the same time he reminds *in continenti* and literally quotes the two tercets of the first canto of *Purgatory*, in which Dante referred enigmatically to the 'four stars of the other pole',[6] identified there by Vespuccci as the Southern Cross.[7] In the letter, addressed to the same Lorenzo, from Lisbon, Vespucci takes pride in his literary and humanistic knowledge when he quotes Petrarch with regard to the arms 'shot to the wind': arrows, darts, pikes, which were handled with great skill by the inhabitants of the Brazilian coast.[8] But the key moment arrives in the *Lettera* 'on the islands recently found in his four voyages', probably addressed to Soderini and published in Florence between 1505 and 1506; its text, translated into Latin and edited as *Quatuor Americi Vespucci navigationes* by the erudite cartographers of Saint-Die in May 1507, was the origin of the

2 Maria de las Nieves Muniz Muniz (ed.) *Espacio geografico/espacio imaginario. El descubrimiento del Nuevo Mundo en las culturas italiana y espanola*, Actas del Congreso Internacional, Caceres, 5–7 May 1992 (Caceres: Universidad de Extramadura, 1993), p. 8. She has successfully synthesised the Italian conscience of the discovery as a Copernican pre-figuration and a 'projection of Ulysses Myth', opposite to Spanish conscience that understood the event principally as the 'conquest of a place like Eldorado, inhabited by pagan people'.

3 Juan Gil, 'Los modelos clasicos en el Descubrimiento', in Muniz Muniz (ed.) op. cit., pp. 13–27

4 Mario Pozzi, 'Realta e schemi letterari nelle relazioni di viaggio del Cinquecento', in Muniz Muniz (ed.) op. cit., pp. 29–45

5 Vanni Bramanti, 'Cent'anni dopo: l'America a Firenze', in Muniz Muniz (ed.) op. cit., pp. 215–25, mainly 220–21.

6 Dante Alighieri, *Purgatorio*, Canto I, lines 22–27.

7 Amerigo Vespucci (Americo Vespucio), *El Nuevo Mundo. Cartas relativas a sus viajes y descubrimientos*, preliminary study by Roberto Levillier (ed.), with Italian, Spanish and English texts (Buenos Aires: Nova, 1951), p. 102.

8 Ibid., pp. 148–50.

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naming of the New World.[9] Vespucci never tires of quoting Petrarch, the scholar being one in this case who questions his ego and finds inside himself a 'different man from the one I am',[10] evoking the Dante–Ulysses tandem at the moment of emphasising the lands and peoples he has discovered in the southern hemisphere:

> [...] *Even though I remember having read in some* [book] *that such Ocean sea was considered as being empty of people and it is from that opinion that our poet Dante pretends the death of Ulysses, in chapter XXVI of Inferno.*[11]

The quotation is distinctive: when Vespucci says 'pretends', he is conscious that Dante invented the story of Ulysses's end. Nevertheless, it is possible that he felt like a sort of Christian Odysseus accomplishing a mission unattainable for the ancient pagan hero. This identification must probably have been made by Vespucci's posthumous portrait painter, Jacopo Stradano, a Flemish artist who worked for the great dukedom of Florence in the 1570s. He made three portrait drawings of Vespucci that were engraved by Hans Collaert (1585) and published in Antwerp (1589) by Philippe Galle in an album of illustrations showing the new discoveries and inventions of the 16th century (*Nova Reperta*).[12] The first engraving shows our seafarer on a vessel sailing to the Occident on a sea full of marine divinities. Behind him, Minerva is helping and offering him one of her most cherished creations: the olive tree branch of work and peace. The connection between the scene and Ulysses's voyage accompanied by his protective divinity is crystal clear. The second engraving shows Vespucci observing the Southern Cross, making calculations and measuring, intellectually discovering the New World. Besides the instruments, papers, the lighthouse that illuminates the working table, there is a crucifix that reminds us of the adventurer and the Christian wise man. The third engraving is the most famous one, known in post-colonial studies as the visual manifest of European imperialism.[13] It shows Vespucci, having disembarked in the coast of the unknown continent, discovering a nude woman lying on a hammock, who represents America's allegory; the savage land of cannibals can be hinted at in the background. Perhaps Vespucci/Ulysses is facing a new Polyphemus.

9 Ibid., pp. 198–99.

10 Ibid., p. 203. It deals with the deepest Petrarch of the *Secretum*, referring to the family letter to Dionigi di Borgo San Sepolcro and to *De sui ipsius et multorum ignorantia.*

11 Ibid., p. 205.

12 J.-C. Margolin, 'La decouverte de l'Amerique dans une vision manieriste de Fracastor et de Stradan', in *Renaissance, Manierisme, Baroque, Actas del XI° Stage internacional de Tours, 'De Petrarque à Descartes'* (Paris: Vrin,1972), pp. 187–212.

13 Prof. Ed Gallagher, for example at www.hnet.uci.edu/mclark/library.htm (accessed 19 May 2010). See also Eduardo Subirats, *El continente vacio. La conquista del Nuevo Mundo y la conciencia moderna* (Madrid & Barcelona: Anaya & Mario Muchnik, 1994), pp. 451–54.

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In our search for a reinforcement of the probable projection of the *Odyssey* in the engravings analysed, we should point out that Stradano also worked in Florence's Palazzo Vecchio. There, he painted a set of frescoes and a very important picture relating to the myth of Ulysses: the paintings that represent Penelope at the loom and the descent of the hero to the Hades, among other stories, decorated the Room of Penelope in the apartments of the Grand Duchess Eleonora of Toledo. The picture is part of a series of tableaux, painted for the *Studiolo* (study) of Grand Duke Francesco I of Medici, representing the arrival of Ulysses on the island of Circes: the sorceress has just turned the sailors into swine, and is surrounded by her former suitors transformed into ferocious animals. The hero is shown in close-up profile while he is advised by Mercury, who gives him the moly plant to exorcise Circe's enchantments. The picture should have been used as a support for the armoire door, where the Grand Duke, who practised alchemy and other magic arts, kept samples for the distillation of philtres and special remedies.

The topos of the vicissitudes of Ulysses can hardly be seen in the work of the Spanish chroniclers of the Indies. Fernandez de Oviedo, in his *Historia general y natural de las Indias* (General and natural history of the Indies) starts making reference to it, but he discards it later, together with Jason's voyage and the Labours of Hercules, saying they are 'mere fiction or metaphors', useless when we are trying to imagine the real misadventures experienced by Alvar Nuñez when he arrived at La Florida.[14] Las Casas gives much more importance to this model in his *Historia de las Indias* (History of the Indies). For him — a Dominican priest — Homer is an authority worthy of discussion, even if he had talked about the Ethiopians or was mistaken about the lack of possibility of living in the torrid zone.[15] For Fray Bartholomew, the most attractive place was in a passage from Book IV of the *Odyssey*, where Proteus describes to Menelaus the delicious site identified by Homer as the Elysian Fields or Fortunate Islands.[16] Las Casas speculates that it could have been the occidental extreme of Spain or the Canary Islands, and quotes eight verses of the Latin version of Raffaele da Volterra. (Bear in mind that the Dominican priest wrote his *Historia de las Indias* between 1527 and 1566, the year he died, so he could easily have read any of the already mentioned Florentine editions.) Las Casas insists on this point by means of a paraphrased quotation: in that

14 Libro XXXIII, 4, quoted in Gil, op. cit., p. 22.

15 Fray Bartolome de Las Casas, *Historia de las Indias*, Agustin Millares Carlo (ed.), introductory study by Lewis Hanke (Mexico & Buenos Aires: FCE, 1965), vol. I, pp. 42 & 39. Even though the text of Las Casas remained unpublished up to the end of the 19th century, Hanke has demonstrated the wide dissemination of the handwritten work among Dr. Hernandez's circle around 1570.

16 *The Odyssey*, IV, lines 385–594.

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ad ultima region, 'the good soil easily provides people with meal; there is neither snow, winter, tempest nor too much rain but occidental winds, soft and tender, produced by the same Ocean sea that make the bodies bloom and feel healthy, etc.'[17] But the Ancients were wrong, because 'the Indians were very close to Elysium. We will talk about them later in this Coronica [Chronicle], as we had specially decided to do and hope to do if God is on our side and gives us time.'[18] In the end our topos weakens again after its confrontation with the direct experience of what is radically real and new. Therefore, we do not have to feel strange about the eclipse of the *Odyssey* in the analogical American imagination. Acosta, the Jesuit, hardly quotes Homer to refer to the very ancient habit of the exchange or, just to show an example taken from the classical tradition, about the universal sense of 'some' kind of knowledge about God that was so cherished to the Society of Jesus.[19] And such eclipse spread, not only to the poets but also to the Italian historians of European maritime expansion. The case of Ramusio's book is a paradigm because he asserted Homer's authority profusely and took Ulysses as a model — 'wisest and eloquent' hero who deserved the greatest praise 'because he had watched the habits of many men and many countries'[20] — in the sections of his study devoted to European travels to Asia and Africa. But Ramusio only made a slight and circumstantial reference to the poet at the beginning of the third volume referring to the long and complex American *Navegaciones* (Navigations).[21]

We have already said that the Italian poets persisted in using the myth of Ulysses as a sort of lens in order to make the incorporation and domination of America by Europeans more understandable. Perhaps the most enthusiastic participant in this mythopoeic operation was Torquato Tasso: in Canto XV of *Gerusalemme Liberata* (Jerusalem Delivered) he says that when Carlo and Ubaldo, the Crusaders, abandoned the Ascolana's magician cave, they sailed on Fortune's vessel and carried on the search for Rinaldo up to Armida's Palace. Fortune takes them to the Ocean and reminds them about the 'audacious flight' of Ulysses to the Occident of the Pillars of Hercules; thus the goddess's prosopopoeia is tied to the tale of the Greek hero in Dante's *Inferno*. But Fortune denies that the lands hidden on the other side of the hemisphere are sterile or

17 Las Casas, op. cit. vol. I, p. 114.

18 Ibid., p. 116.

19 P. Joseph de Acosta, *Historia natural y moral de las Indias*, Edmundo O'Gorman (ed.) (Mexico & Buenos Aires: FCE, 1962); vol. IV, pp. 3, 144; vol V.

20 Giovanni Battista Ramusio, *Navigazioni e viaggi*, care of Marica Milanesi, 6 vols (Turin: Einaudi, 1978–88). (Electronic edition: http://www.liberliber.it); vol. 1 1, pp. 378–79, and also p. 451 (referred to 'jardin maravilloso de Alcinoo'); vol. 3, p. 6 (comparison between Ulysses's return to Ithaca and the return of the Polo to Venice); vol. 4, pp. 144, 159 & 170.

21 Ibid., vol. 5, pp. 6–7.

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uninhabited. She confirms the existence of pagan people across the ocean who will 'receive Peter's faith' some day. And then, she prophesies that the ocean route will remain unrestrained forever after that first voyage of a 'competitor of the sun', the 'Ligurian man', 'Columbus'—the deity mentions him—whose 'flight' 'will live for long in history's memory, to be a praiseworthy poem.'[22]

At the beginning of the 17th century a fashion, widely spread in Florence, originated several projects of poems on the American topic. Giovan Battista Strozzi (1601) tried to compose an epic piece referring to Vespucci, 'a dignified work full of grandiosity and wonder, something better than Ulysses novels'.[23] Rafffaello Gualterotti also searched for inspiration in the discoveries of the Tuscan Vespucci, while Giovanni Villifranchi edited (1602) the two first chants of a *Colombo* (Columbus). Even the Modenese Alessandro Tassoni (1618) started his *Oceano* (Ocean) by moving the Ulysses topos to the centre of the scene, once again, in the poem's introductory letter. Tassoni protested: '[...] they all insist in trying to imitate Tasso in *Jerusalem* and Virgil in *Aeneid* but none of them remembers *Odyssey* which, if I am not misled, should be taken as a beacon by those who have been assigned to reproduce Columbus's navigation to the Occidental Indies in an epic poem.'[24] Notwithstanding in that time, Tommaso Campanella, in one of his madrigals, 'To the Italians who are in charge of making poems with the Greek fables', was already making fun of the absurd reiteration of the erudite stratagems that were refracting through the crystal of the Ancients the adventurous discoveries of the Moderns. Even if Vespucci had baptised the New World with his own name, he did not deserve the poets' attention, being all of them fascinated by the 'fabulous ball of fleece of the false Greek gods and the deceitful heroes'.[25]

II. Ulysses in the Portuguese language

Let us remark, at this point, on the importance of the Ulysses figure for Portuguese figurative culture and for the epic in the Portuguese language, in contrast to the Spanish case. Remember that Ulysses was considered the founding father of Lisbon, according to the tradition established by Saint Isidore in the Middle Ages. The hero is named as the founder of Lisbon—Olissipona—in *Etimologias* (Etymologies), where 'as per the historians, the sky detaches from the earth and the seas from the dry earth'[26]

22 Torquato Tasso, *La Gerusalemme liberata*, Canto XV, verses 25–32.
23 Bramanti, op. cit., p. 220.
24 Ibid., p. 221.
25 Pozzi, op. cit., pp. 44–45.
26 San Isidoro de Sevilla, *Etimologias*, bilingual Latin-Spanish edition, Jose Oroz Reta and Manuel A. Marcos Casquero (eds) (Madrid: BAC, 1994), vol. XV, p. 1, 70; vol. II, p. 224.

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(a reference that applies to Pliny).[27] A similar tradition was followed by Luca, Bishop of Tuy, precisely called the 'Tudense', in his *Chronicon* (Book I, Chapter 42) written in the the mid-13th century.[28] Alphonse X took up again such tradition, making some modifications to his *First Chronicle* (I.9) because he attributed the foundation of Lisbon to a grandson and great-granddaughter of Ulysses. In the 16th century, the printed editions of the *Geografia*[29] (Strabo) and *Polyhistor* (Julius Solinus)[30] revealed that Isidore had drawn on a very ancient tradition in relating 'Odysseus' to Lisbon. The city on the Tagus was still named Ulisbone in *Orlando Furioso* by Ariosto, (XIV, 13). Even Gracian in *El Criticon* (The Hyper-Critical), examining the cities of the peninsula to decide which would be the home of the wise and cautious Artemia, names Lisbon first, confirming that it is 'noble, rich, healthy and plentiful, because there was never found any fatuous Portuguese. That is a proof that Ulysses the Cunning'[31] was its founder.

The idea, transmitted by Saint Isidore and ratified during the Renaissance had, of course, a wide development and powerful political effects on the 16th-century Portuguese civilisation. Sylvie Deswarte-Rosa has recently indicated that in 1534 Andres de Resende made a passionate apologia in his poem *Vincentius Levita et Martyr* about the origin of Lisbon coming from Odysseus. Deswarte-Rosa has also discovered the appearance of the Ulysses figure, and his role as fundamental hero, in the literary-pictorial work of Francisco of Holland, an erudite, theoretical art expert and painter.[32] Under the intellectual guidance of Andres de Resende, Francisco of Holland composed (1545–1573) the text and made the watercolour drawings of the *De Aetatibus Mundi Imagines*, the manuscript of which is kept at the National Library in Madrid.[33] The Bible naturally provided the sequence of the ages, so that in each image, as announced in each title, a great drawing represented an episode of the Hebrew history and, in a stripe at the lower part of the page, two or three small *tondi*, with

27 Pliny, *Historia Naturalis*, 4, p. 113.

28 There the Tudense says: '*Hac etate Vlysses nauigio in Hispaniam uenit et ciuitatem Vlisbonam condidit*'. I owe this piece of information to Jose Antonio Pascual Rodriguez, *La historia como pretexto*, www.unidadenladiversidad.com/historico/opinion/opinion_ant/2002/marzo 2002/opinion_270302.htm (accessed 19 May 2010).

29 Strabo, *Geografia*, III (devoted to the Iberian peninsula), pp. 4, 3.

30 Julius Solinus, *Polyhistor* (Basel, 1534), chap. XXXVI.

31 Baltasar Gracian, *El criticon*, (Madrid: Renacimiento, 1913), Part I, Crisi X, p. 1.

32 Sylvie Deswarte-Rosa, 'Le Portugal et la Mediterranee. Histoires mythiques et images cartographiques', Arquivos do Centro Cultural Calouste Gulbenkian, V. XLIII: *Le Portugal et la Mediterranée* (Lisbon & Paris: Centro Cultural Calouste Gulbenkian, 2002), pp. 97–147. I owe this reference to the kindness and erudition of my colleague Dr. Fernando Bouza Alvarez.

33 Francisco de Holanda, *De aetatibus mundi imagines. Livro das Idades*, facsimile with analysis by Jorge Segurado (Lisbon: 1983).

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inscriptions, referred to mythical facts and characters of the Greek tradition that were presumedly contemporary with the principal events. In the page devoted to the life of Samson, there are three pagan *tondi*: two have portraits of pairs of Sibyls (Libyan and Phrygian, Cumaean and Persian) and the third *tondo* shows Troy on fire on the skyline and Ulysses's trireme approaching the Portuguese coast, an indication of the potential location of Olissipona.

We might suppose that in the cases of Resende and Francisco of Holland, the Sibylline prophecies, the story of Samson and Delilah and the voyages of Odysseus were facts that happened at the same period, a little after the death of Moses, an image theme that precedes the one we have just analysed. In the famous atlas, *Civitates Orbis Terrarum*, published in Antwerp in 1593, the Lisbon map, drawn by Joris Hoefnagel and engraved by Franz Hogenberg, retained the title 'Olissipona, which is now called Lisbon, enormous city of Lusitania, at the banks of the river Tagus'. Deswarte-Rosa has pointed out an engraved view of New Amsterdam — that is to say the future New York — dated 1672, which exactly reproduced the image of ancient Olissipona taken from the atlas of Heofnagel and Hogenberg.[34]

On the other hand, the great poem *The Lusiads* mentions once and again the Lusitanian capital as an 'Ulyssee' city,[35] and the king of Ithaca, in his condition of ancestor of the Lusitanian lineage, appears embroidered on the banners of the Portuguese fleet which Paulo de Gama shows and describes to the Malabar's Catual (governor of Calicut).[36] But simultaneously, let us say that the real and true voyage to the Indies must be located, in the poets' opinion, very much above the epic fictions of Ancients:

> [...] *You can sing, praise, and write extraordinary things about your heroes and, according to their caprice, imagine magicians, Circes, Polyphemus, sirens who send the sailors to sleep and prevent them to follow their travel. Ciconians can make them escape by dint of sails and rows to a land where they forget their homeland after they eat the lotus flower.* [You can] *Imagine that later the heroes lose their pilot in the sea, the winds concealed in the wineskin by* [Aeolus] *are released.* [Imagine] *there are Calypsos who become in love with them and harpies that touch their meals to contaminate them. They themselves descend to the world of the nude shadows of the death: And even you* [strive] *to write their vane fables, well dreamt: it is the truth, bare and pure, that I relate what can overcome any of those written records!*[37]

Not even, then, where myth seems the basis of history can Ulysses's character escape the shadow of the lie and the tale of ambiguities that the hero sung in

34 Deswarte-Rosa, op. cit., pp. 145–47.

35 Luis Vaz de Camões, *The Lusiads*, Canto III. verse 57, lines 1–4; Canto III, verse 58, line 8; Canto IV, verse 84, line 1.

36 Ibid., Canto VIII, verses 4 & 5.

37 Ibid., Canto V, verses 88 & 89.

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the world of the happy Phaiakians (Phaeacians). Joao de Barros, a Portuguese chronicler, published in Venice (1562) the Italian version of his study about Portuguese exploration and conquests in Asia,[38] expecting the book to compensate for the Portuguese lack of glory by providing the grand testimonial that their venture deserved. Barros declared that he was telling authentic and fair things about immense events, feats and huge dangers never seen before. He said he did so even 'without naming the fabulous Hercules tiredness when he positioned his columns, without depicting any Argonautica on the Greek Captains navigation — so short and safe as it is [the route] from Greece up to the Faso River, having always the earth at sight, having lunch in one port and dinner in another'. He did not include any description of Ulysses's errors, having never left only one climate, nor did he tell of the vicissitudes of Aeneas on such a short route, nor about other fables of the Greek and Roman 'gentiles' who, with great inventiveness, celebrated and chanted in their writing and poems the venture that each of them lived. They were happy to give the authors of such works the title of illustrious Captains, not only on earth, but also wanted to give them the names of deities, and set them in Heaven.[39]

Strictly speaking, Barros thought that the Portuguese were so used to the dangers of the sea, the hunger and thirst, tiredness, the ravages of illness and the duplicity of peoples in the new lands that they used to become impatient at the moment of setting themselves to tell such adventures and they cultivated a diametrically opposite laziness to their speed in performing them. 'It is really a serious and pious matter to listen and watch a nation that received so much courage from God that if he had created other worlds they could have put there as much strength of spirit of victory as received as nation. And also prove that, in posterity, his name is being forgotten as if there was not the same reason for praise in increasing his glory with the quill than in conquering it with the lances. (See note 40.) Portugal would find in Camões a modern Homer more trustworthy than the ancient. *The Lusiads* would be a true *Odyssey* and Vasco da Gama an authentic hero, greater than Ulysses.

Nevertheless, even if the parallel between the real facts of the Portuguese exploration in the Occident and Orient at the end of the Renaissance would come to an ironic end in the Lisbon of the 19th century, the Ulysses myth of the hero-founder of the city persisted in the form of poetry sung by

38 *L'Asia del s. Giouanni di Barros, consigliero del christianissimo Re di Portogallo: de' fatti de' Portoghesi nello scoprimento, & conquista de' mari & terre di Oriente. Nella quale oltre le cose appartenenti alla militia, si ha piena cognitione di tutte le citta, monti, & fiumi delle parti orientali, con la descrittione de' paesi, & costumi di quei popoli. Nuouamente di lingua Portoghese tradotta. Dal s. Alfonso Vlloa.* (Venice: Vincenzo Valgrisio, 1562).

39 Ibid., Book III, chap. XI, p. 79.

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street theatre and printed in widely distributed *in-16°* booklets. Ulysses was transmuted into an exacerbated *polytropos*, who took up a multitude of jobs and professions, imaginable for a Portuguese of the past and present, but always remained a *trickster* while practising any of them. An extraordinary example of the genre, *The true tale of Ulysses, copied from the originals recited by Teodorico, ancient actor of the National Theatre of the Calle de los Condes, enlarged with some decimas*, was printed by the typographer Cobellos in 1850.[40] Ulysses becomes a sailor, farmer, warrior, editor, orchard worker, merchant, shoemaker, procurer, founder, architect, toreador, burglar, musician, theatre actor, circus entrepreneur, usurer, governor, revolutionary, gambler, medical nurse, bartender, fisherman, barber, draper, sacristan, engineer, painter, lover in the mould of Don Juan, stucco decorator, pharmacist, water carrier and professor. Every endeavour happens or ends with a trick, some gallantry or lascivious double sense, 'at the top of the Cotovia'—the hill in Lisbon where the Jesuits had their novitiate, the noblemen their Royal College and which was later the seat of the observatory and several scientific cabinets. This was, therefore, a place of erudition, of which our hero is a polymorphic and eccentric example, a veritable Proteus who dies and is reborn with the same cunning but a hundred different guises: giant or small, lion or mouse, beautiful or ugly, grotesque or seductive, ascetic or glutton, eternal picaresque and immortal, like the people clung to life.

Ulysses was poor and rich
Was wise and gossipy,
Was hero, rapacious and arrogant.
He was everything [...] *Higher than the highest peak*
Became Pygmy one day
He was noble and villain,
Was burglar and honest,
Got married and cuckolded
At the top of the Cotovia.[41]

III. The ascendance of Telemachus

Both Louis XIV's France and the Spanish Empire during the reign of Philip V had in common the figure of Telemachus as the model of the courtier—a strange, paradoxical and antagonistic model. This meant that the aristocratic imagination preferred to slide, on both sides of the Atlantic, from the prudent

40 *Verdadeira fabula d'Ullisses, copiada dos proprios originaes recitados por Theodorico, antigo actor do Theatro Nacional da Rua dos Condes e augmentada com decimas novas* (Lisbon: 1850). I owe my acquaintance with this unique source to the generosity of my admired colleague, Prof. Fernando Bouza Álvarez.

41 Ibid., stanza 109, 59.

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and mature governor — no doubt embodied in Ulysses — to his young son, trained by Mentor, and to set him as an ideal prince, anti-absolutist and a pious as well as contumacious lover. *Las aventuras de Telemaco* (*Les aventures de Télémaque*, The Adventures of Telemachus), written by the Abbé Fénelon (1699),[42] combined passages inspired by the battles in the *Iliad* and the virile combats and erotic affairs of the *Odyssey* — good nourishment for the epic eagerness of noble readers coming from the long interventions of Mentor–Minerva/Athena that made a kind of political and moral handbook for the prince's good education. In 1728, with Fénelon's work as a horizon, Jose Bermudez de la Torre y Solier composed in Lima a poem in the style of Gongora, *Telemaco en la Isla de Calipso* (Telemachus on Calypso's Island). Dedicated to the Count of Monclova, the Viceroy of Peru, the text remained in manuscript until 1998.[43] The magnificence of the metaphor turned the *Telemaco* from Lima, whose principal character has an anachronistic mixture of dresses — 'Ofir dresses him, Potosi provides his shoes',[44] — into one of the most extravagant and aristocratic transpositions of the figures of the Ulysses myth to the habits of the modern courts. The music of the verse creates an eroticism of visual allusions and auditory resonance that impregnates not only the historic episodes but also the objects that made the scenery of the action. In this way, the repeated ekphrasis describe pictures, sculptures, silver and gold work, porcelain, rich tapestry, which remind us of masterpieces, like Bernini's sculpture of Apollo and Daphne — 'Apollo, following Daphne through the splendour of the light, gets tired, he runs over the zephyr when he finishes his harshness without touching the beautiful appearance of the foot that is escaping'[45] — and which find their compensation and final outcome in the embrace between one of Telemachus's fellows and a nymph of Calypso's entourage:

> [...] *they were so tightly bonded*
> *That the chest whose ardour covered with ice,*
> *from two bodies and two souls knotted*
> *only one body and one soul could make.'*[46]

42 F. Fénelon, *Aventures de Télémaque, suivies du recueil des fables, composees pour l'education de Monseigneur le Duc de Bourgogne* (Paris: Firmin Didot Frères, 1866); on the anti-absolutism of the text, see specially pp. 75–78, 86–91, 206–212, 227.

43 It was published that year by Cesar Debarbieri, in the collection 'El manantial oculto', run by Ricardo Silva-Santisteban (Lima: Pontificia Universidad Catolica del Peru, 1998). I thank my colleague Jose Kameniecki for this reference.

44 Jose Bermudez de la Torre y Solier, Telemaco en la Isla de Calipso … op. cit., p. 35.

45 Ibid., p. 63.

46 Ibid., p. 64.

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It would be difficult to prove that the public that read this lovely epic poem was feminine in its major part.[47] Although it is true that, during the period that the Peruvian *Telemaco* was composed, an *Ofrenda politica* (political offering) was in circulation in Lima, written by Laurence de las Llamosas, in which poetry was proclaimed as an 'ostensible nullity' not apt for the virile preparation for politics.[48] The same Bermudez thus finished with a touch of sensibility, better ascribable to the feminine world, by sending some verses of his poem to the Marquis of Sotomayor, prosecutor of the Royal Audiencia (high court) of Lima:

Even though at simple sight of heroic ardour
Love can find adoration and not simulation
There are faints that can pass for encouragement.'[49]

These considerations about the probable feminine delight for the *Telemaco* figure are certainly relevant. A century after that love epic poem was circulated in Lima, in October 1931, an Italian painter settled in Buenos Aires, Carlos Enrique Pellegrini, made a watercolour portrait of a young lady, Lucia Carranza de Rodriguez Orey, in which a copy of the *Las Aventuras de Telemaco* can be seen. A precise line unwraps the delicate arabesque of the young woman, from her long hair, headdress flowers, the peineta, the swelling starched sleeves, the strange leather cord worn as a necklace, her slim fingers. In dressing style, gesture and habits, Lucia shows Romantic manners, and has a slightly melancholic look as she interrupts her reading of a book that is left in her lap, under a not-so-womanlike wasp waist. We can clearly read the title: *Las Aventuras de Telemaco*, the Spanish translation of Fénelon's famous book.[50] The octavo volume shows italic typography, characteristic of the 1750–1830 period.

A Spanish edition existed since 1713 at least, printed in The Hague. Another was edited in Antwerp in 1743. And a very well-cared-for quarto edition, for Don Fernando, the Prince of Asturias, was prepared by Joseph de Covarrubias using the type of the Imprenta Real de Madrid (Royal Print House of Madrid) between 1797 and 1798, in two volumes. I have registered at least six Spanish editions corresponding to the format and type shown in Pellegrini's watercolour, dated prior to the painting, which belong to the mentioned period. The first edition was published in Madrid in 1758 by Ibarra in two volumes; the second in Madrid in 1787 by Benito Cano, also in two volumes. The four subsequent editions were translated by Francisco de Rebolleda. Three of them were edited in Madrid: 1803 (Mateo Repulles Editor), 1805 (Villapando Editor)

47 Ibid., p. 19.
48 Ibid., Introduction of Debarbieri, p. 14.
49 Ibid., p. 142.
50 For an accurate description of the picture, see Eduardo Schiaffino, *La evolucion del gusto artistico*, Godofredo Canale (ed.) (Buenos Aires: Francisco A. Colombo, 1982), p. 36.

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and 1827-1829 (Fuentenebro, also two volumes) and one edition in Barcelona in 1820 (Sierra and Marti Editor, also two volumes). Dona Lucia has in her right hand one of these six copies. I am inclined to think that it is Volume I of Fuentenebro's edition.

Anyway, the wide and persistent circulation of *Telemaco* in the River Plate area has been precisely recorded by James Peire in his study of late colonial libraries.[51] Peire has registered an explicit testimony of the interest for Fénelon's work among the colonial readers, for example, the copy left by Saturnino Segurola of a conference fragment that was supposed to be delivered 'in times of the old monarchy to listeners of the Paris Library'.[52] The lecturer named by the canon outlined an apology of the Archbishop of Cambrai (as Fénelon became in 1696), based on the political usefulness and excellence of its text, as a modern continuation of the *Odyssey:*

> *Oh you, whose unique name softens my heart, who at the same time unifies the enchanting and interesting language of the Poet's father, you express the language of all the Socrates and Plato; you who designs the duties of the kings just as if they had been left at your efforts. Which is the incense I could offer to your immortal work? Never has a poem been written more beautifully out of a man's hand,* [never] *more pathetic, more instructive, more suitable for the monarchs and the civilians. Never virtue has been presented with more beautiful colours! Nobody has made a kinder* [work]. *Nobody has spoken to the imagination as delicately as to the heart! Oh Fénelon, how happy must be the heart who likes you! He will own the noble taste for your writings, that majestic character of Ancient times, embellished by modern gracefulness! Should this Telemaco never leave the hands of the Princes who are born to reign; you were born out of Heaven to be mentor and friend many times.'*

Nevertheless, was this political rapprochement to the *Aventuras* of Ulysses's son the way of approaching and appropriating the text, the reading guide of the charming Lucia Carranza? Perhaps indeed if we accept the opinion of Elisa Sansinena, in turn supported by a comment of Vicente Fidel Lopez, related to the encouragement showed by the *'porteñas'* (as natives of the port city of Buenos Aires are known) ladies for the books of Benjamin Constant, Jeremy Bentham, Guizot or Madame de Staël, and who debated over these authors in their literary salons during 19th century (particularly during the 1820s and 1830s).[53] But it is also possible that female readers of *Telemaco* also paid attention to the poetic details of the story, to the love affairs of that young hero

51 Jaime Peire, 'Leer la Revolucion de Mayo: bibliotecas tardocoloniales en el Rio de la Plata', *Eadem utraque Europa*, no. 6 (June 2008), pp. 109–55.

52 Peire, op. cit. pp. 145–46.

53 Alejo Gonzalez Garano, 'Introduction', in Elena Sansinena de Elizalde and Carlos Ibarguren, *C.H. Pellegrini. Su obra, su vida, su tiempo* (Buenos Aires: Amigos del Arte, 1946), pp. 269–70. The comments about Pellegrini's pictures were written by Elena Sansinena de Elizalde.

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who, in obvious substitution of his father, inspired the resentful Calypso and the Nymph Eucharis while his shipmates surrendered to the other nymphs' embrace on the island of Ogygia. This was such that the cautious Mentor, the old man behind whose face was Minerva/Athena, had to throw himself into the sea, clinging to Telemachus in order to definitively pull him away from the dissipation of the life of a lover.[54] We have to admit that Dona Lucia Carranza, nostalgically and softly fascinated, is shown reading the love affair passages of Fénelon's book. We can also deem that the details of such a book tell us something about the painter. Such a cultivated allusion was perhaps a deliberate decision of the artist, superimposed on the young lady's poetic appropriation. The meaning of the appropriation of Telemachus could then be spread to an unexpected horizon. Let us investigate which one.

IV. Mentor and agrarian reform

There is a triptych of watercolour portraits painted by Pellegrini in which the following effigies may be seen: General Juan Jose Viamonte in the centre, Manuel Jose Garcia at his right and Tomas Guido at his left.[55] The painting creates the illusion that the portraits are limited by a frame: a rectangular one in the case of Viamonte and two circular ones for the other two characters. All these devices cast shadows over a wall that become mixed with the general surface of the whole picture. An inscription, written in French at the bottom of the faked paintings, reads*: O modération, tu as eté et tu seras la gardienne eternelle de tout!'* ('Oh moderation, you have been and you will be the eternal guardian of everything!') The watercolour represents General Viamonte in his period of governor of the province of Buenos Aires, flanked by two ministers. Viamonte twice took up duties as the highest magistrate of the province: the first time from June to December 1829; the second from November 1833 to June 1834. On both occasions, Garcia and Guido were part of the Cabinet, but during the first period there was a third minister, Manuel Escalada, who does not appear in the picture. The politics of a state of emergency that made Viamonte take office as Governor in 1833 obliged him to concentrate the ministerial portfolios in only two persons. Thus it seems reasonable to date the work to the first months of 1834.

The inscription seems to make reference to the conciliatory role that voters were searching for in this prestigious general of the Wars of Independence, in the shaken Buenos Aires of the period (1833–34). The province had been torn apart by factional strife within the Federal Party between the Apostolics, followers of General Juan Manuel de Rosas, and the Cismatics, moderates

54 Fénelon, op. cit., book IV, 53 and 55.
55 Gonzalez Garano, op. cit., pp. 294–96.

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inclined to the writing of a definitive constitutional text. This text, aimed at founding a federative republic, would come from an understanding with the defeated opponents, some of whom were anxious to arrive at a political reconciliation. Viamonte tended to identify himself with such opinions that would imply his immediate separation from the political power. But it is clear that, at the moment of painting this triple portrait, the commissioners and probably the artist shared the hope that moderation would prevail.

Although I have not found an explicit quotation from Fénelon, French could not be more suitable for the political advice and counsel that the character of Mentor prescribes to Idomeneo and Telemachus in *Las Aventuras*. Moreover, the words 'moderation' and 'moderate', applied to the government carried out by a good monarch as an antidote to absolutism, can be seen again and again in Mentor's speeches. For example, among the recommendations given to Idomeneo, who had founded a new kingdom in Italy, far away from his native Crete, Mentor explained how to act to preserve the people's prosperity together with their training for a 'moderation' exercise that kept away the voluptuousness and the corruption of the customs.[56] The model, glorified by the divinity hidden by the clothing of the old man, was the antithesis of absolutism. This antithesis was courageously presented by Fénelon at the height of the reign Louis XIV (the first edition of *Aventures de Telemaque* is dated 1699). The archbishop, in Mentor's voice, had dared to express a radical criticism of the French monarchy:

> [...] *To think that the safety* [of the governor] *resides only in the people's oppression, not leading them to virtue, not ever inspiring their love, pushing them through the terror up to desperation, immersing them in horrifying necessities, not letting them ever breathe freely or removing the servitude of your tyrannical domination: is that, perhaps, the real path leading to glory? What a detestable maxim!*
>
> *Remember that the countries where the power of the sovereign is the most absolute are those where the sovereigns are the least powerful ones. They seize and ruin everything, they alone own the whole State but thus, the State languishes, the lands lie fallow and almost desert, the cities become smaller day after day, commerce comes to a standstill.* [...] *The* [king's] *absolute power turns his subjects into slaves. We flatter him, we pretend to adore him, we tremble facing the least of his glances but ... Await for the slightest revolution: such atrocious power, driven to the most violent excesses, is unable of lasting and will lack of any resource in the people's heart* [...][57]

There are two central features of the good governance programme that Mentor proposed to Idomeneo: land sharing, with strict limitations to agrarian property, and encouragement for farmers and artisans to settle in the new

56 Fénelon, op. cit., pp. 225 & 228.
57 Ibid., pp. 226–27.

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kingdom that Idomeneo was planning to found in Salento. Mentor reasoned this way:

> [...] *Earth is only asking its inhabitants to become rich here, but there are currently very few inhabitants in Earth. Therefore, let us take the superfluous artisans living in the city whose professions will only serve to customs' disruption and take them to those prairies and hills to cultivate them* [...] *It is necessary to share among them the vacant lands and call the neighbouring people to help.* [These people] *will do the rudest work under their dominium. Such people will do that if they are promised a convenient reward coming from the fruits of the very same lands they themselves will cultivate. Shortly, they will also be able to own part of* [the lands] *and thus they will be incorporated to your population which is not too large.*[58]

This policy of demographic encouragement demanded that a limit be put on the accumulation of real estate:

> '[...] *In order to keep your people enjoying such moderation, it is necessary, from now on, to regulate the surface of land that each family will own* [...] *according to the class it should not be allowed to each family to own more land that the absolutely necessary to feed the number of people in each one. Making this rule invulnerable, the nobles will not be able to purchase at the expense of the poor; everybody will have their land, but everyone will have very few so that they will be stimulated to cultivate in a good way. After a long period, if there is need for more land here, some colonies would be established to increase the power of such State.*'[59]

All this might indicate that a connection between the programme imagined by Fénelon — that the physiocrats and erudite people would read as the work of a precursor[60] — and the practices of agrarian reform that Viamonte promoted in his role as Chamber of Representatives' deputy for Buenos Aires Province in 1828 as well in his first period as governor in 1829. In January 1828, Viamonte protected the Law of Emphyteusis, applicable to the grazing lands owned by the government, and proposed the approval of a clause of obligatory occupation eight months before the request for the land, according to the regime already established. If not, the legislator said 'all the contrary will happen: the foreign people will seize those lands taking advantage of the natives who do not even know how to fill their denounces. This is something I want to make

58 Ibid., p. 221.

59 Ibid., pp. 225–26.

60 I did not miss the fact that this interpretation made an almost violent clipping on the semantic horizon of Telemachus, which was restored in all its original complexity by the study of Jacques Le Brun on Fénelon's work (Paris: Gallimard, 1995). Prof. Le Brun has shown the contrast between social utopia and Christian pessimism over which the Archbishop of Cambrai set his story and its allegorical and moral interpretation (ed. cit., pp. 17–24). Readers in the 18th and 19th centuries passed over the tension arising from such a situation to concentrate on political reform, emerging from Mentor's exhortations.

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them understand because, otherwise, they will lose everything.'[61] It is clear that, regarding the prohibition for the emphyteutic leasor to purchase other lands, Viamonte insisted on the government not giving 'more than 12 square leagues as emphyteusis. Not more than that.' But he was fighting for the possibility of allowing individuals '[...] to freely inherit, acquire and purchase in order to keep something for their children'.[62] The withdrawal from Fénelon's reform proposal would point at satisfying the demand for land generated in the increase and progress of the rural population as well as warranting the expansion of the small property regime. The vastness of the Argentine pampas, in contradiction with the results obtained in the Old World, would make this double movement possible.

On 19 September 1829, once Viamonte took office as supreme authority of the province, he put into force one of the most comprehensive decrees of the agrarian reform, and the most meaningful in terms of social promotion, that can be remembered in the 19th century in Argentina. Regarding the lands next to the border, parcels measuring half a league in length by one and a half wide were given to potential settlers who did not own other lands. The beneficiaries were obliged to move to the place with their family, build a thatched hut and dig a well, and to have at least a hundred head of cattle in place at the end of a year; or to seed and crop a product equivalent to the capital of a hundred heads. They were not to sell the land before 10 years of occupation, and, if so, only to a buyer who complies with the same obligations demanded of the first occupant. The state was obliged to immediately draw up a title deed, to measure the property and mark its boundaries; also to exonerate the settler and his family of any military service except for the defence of the border belonging to his settlement.[63] It is not arbitrary to find in all this legislation an echo of Mentor's advice to Idomeneo regarding the colonisation of Salento. Let us add that, after the fall of Rosas, Carlos Enrique Pellegrini would turn to journalism, founding the *Revista del Plata* (River Plate Magazine), where he would express his ideas of agrarian legislation, similar to the programmes of Fénelon (the fictional and utopian one) and to Viamonte (the legal and experienced one).[64]

The triple portrait of Viamonte and his ministers, imbued with the quality of 'moderation', is an iconographic statement that refers to the model of the good governor. By means of an implicit process of intellectual and emotional

61 Armando Alonso Pineiro, *Historia del general Viamonte y su epoca*, preface by Carlos Sanchez Viamonte (Buenos Aires: Mundonuevo, 1959), p. 219.

62 Ibid., p. 220.

63 Ibid., p. 246.

64 Gonzalez Garano, op. cit., p. 28.

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antithesis, the portrait gives us a warning about the threats of despotism. Fénelon's text, represented without any ambiguity in Lucia Carranza's portrait, is shown allusively in the triptych like a silhouette behind the scenes, dense of meanings and the bearer of conflictive concepts (moderation vs. despotism; emphyteusis vs. latifundia; prosperity vs. stagnation). The commissioners of the work and the artist of the triple portrait could consider an identification of Viamonte as Idomeneo, the governor being instructed by Mentor's teachings. Or even think about a metaphor that could put Viamonte and Mentor together. And then, Rosas perhaps could be seen as an auspicious Idomeneo or even a mature Telemachus. We know that, some time later, Rosas and his supporters would grab a very different *topos* from Ancient classical repertoire: the figure of Cincinnatus, model of the heroic republican agrarianism, similar to the ideas of a state of emergency and salvation of the society by means of dictatorship.[65] The symbolic horizon of ancient times and its modern humanistic refractions retained their hold on both sides of the Argentine political trenches during the 19th century, during the period of the civil wars. We should not be surprised that, departing from the refined fragility and the epic daydream of a young lady reading, we have ended up in real and bloody combat among men.

V. Latin America and Ulysses in the 20th century

In the 20th century, the Ulysses mythic complex, his adventures, his relatives, friends and enemies experienced important appropriations of a different nature in Latin America. The first connection with the revolutionary development of cultural crossbreeding comes in Mexico, at the beginning of the century. It concerns *Ulises criollo* (Creole Ulysses), published in 1935, whose author — José Vasconcelos, Minister of Education of the government that emerged from the Mexican revolution — formulates from the 'warning' of the book a series of purposes for its autobiographical text, in parallel with the history of the Greek hero:

> *The current work* [...] *contains just the experience of a man. It does not aspire to exemplarity but to knowledge. The mystery of each life can never be explained. We can hardly rescue from oblivion just a few scenes of the intense prospect in which our moment developed.* [...]
>
> *The name given to the entire work is explained by its content. A comet destiny which suddenly glitters and later fades away in long stretches of shadows, and the air of the murky present Mexico justify the analogy with the classic Odyssey. As far as I am concerned, I selected the qualification of criollo* [creole] *as a symbol of*

65 See Jorge Myers, *Orden y virtud. El discurso republicano en el regimen rosista*, (Buenos Aires: Universidad Nacional de Quilmes, 1995), pp. 45, 49–52.

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the defeated ideal in our country since Poinsett[66] *days, when we betrayed Alaman.*[67] *My case is that of a second Alaman who put himself aside to please Morrow.*[68] *The Hispanic type of culture called Criollismo, in its fervour for an unequal combat against falsified Indianismo and Saxonism disguised by the make-up of the worst civilization known in History, represent the elements that have fought inside this creole Ulysses soul, as well as in that one of each of his compatriots.*[69]

This Ulysses is a newly coined *polytropos*, an encoded traveller of several cultural worlds: the indigenous remote past, the Hispanic tradition and revolutionary modernism. He is a hero who has also passed through his Iliad during the civil war period and, after having seen 'the cities and the customs of many men', has returned to Mexico, to his Ithaca to build a new way of education and collective life. Vasconcelos's Ulysses would not probably want to depart again and therefore would seek to leave the prophecy of Teiresias, collected by Homer, unaccomplished.

The second Latin American appropriation of the Odysseus topos is that of the Brazilian Haroldo do Campos, whose poem 'End of the world, the last voyage' included in the book *Crisantempo*,[70] presents, at least, a kind of two-faced Ulysses. His first facet is placed diametrically opposed to Vasconcelos's Creole version because it revives the Dantesque vision of the hero who, in his old age,

66 Joel Roberts Poinsett (1779–1851), an American lawyer and diplomat, was agent for his country (Mexico 1822–1825). In 1825 he was appointed Mexico's first ambassador to the United States, where he became involved in disorders of internal political matters. He was recalled, and served as War Secretary between 1837 and 1841.

67 Lucas Alaman y Escalada (1792–1851), Mexican politician and historian, he studied in the Real Seminario de Mineria (Royal Mineralogy Seminary) of Mexico, and in Freiburg, Göttingen and Paris. In 1812 he represented his country before the Cadiz Courts in order to promote the split of the Spanish Empire from the self-government of the regions, according to Count Aranda's 18th-century projects. He was Foreign Affairs Minister in President Guadalupe Victoria's cabinet, after Emperor Agustin Iturbide's fall in 1825. He resigned shortly after because of misunderstanding with other ministries. But he was back again as Canciller [Foreign Secretary] (1830–1832). Then he distinguished himself on account of his support of the industry, the European colonisation and the signature of a border treaty with the U.S. In his Disertaciones [Lectures] (1844), Alaman made a defence of the Spanish cultural heritage. In his *Historia de México* [History of Mexico] (5 vols, 1849–52) he criticised Hidalgo and Morelos's first independence movement, while he pleaded for European support to defend the Mexican freedom and independence, after the defeat and territory dispossession in the war against the U.S. The supporters of the crowning of Maximilian of Habsburg as Mexican Emperor in the 1860s sought, to a certain extent inspiration and fundamentals in Alaman's ideas.

68 Dwight Whitney Morrow (1873–1931), ambassador of the United States in Mexico (1927–30). Through clever diplomatic action, he restored the relationship between the two nations after the nationalisation of companies and other American interests in Mexico.

69 Jose Vasconcelos, *Ulises criollo*, in Antonio Castro Leal (ed.), *La novela de la revolucion Mexicana* (Madrid, Mexico & Buenos Aires: Aguilar, 1964), vol. I, p. 543.

70 Haroldo de Campos, *No espaço curvo nasce un Crisantempo* (São Paulo: Perspectiva, 2004), pp. 55–59.

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disdains the delights of returning to his homeland, to Penelope's enjoyment and to the embrace of Telemachus in order to embark upon knowledge of the world, up to its limits. It is clear that Haroldo do Campos's Odysseus aspires to go further than Dante's, always limited to the earth's sphere.

Haroldo's Odysseus is still more daring: he wishes to trespass the 'forbidden Eden geography' on his way, to transmute the '*destino*' (destiny) into '*desatino*' the (nonsense) of exploring the '*Finismundo* not included in the maps there, where the frontier with the extra-sky, never explored, starts'. Haroldo says that Ulysses has lost his men and his boat is wrecked. But it seems that the hero has survived the myth: he has transformed himself into an 'urban', the inhabitant of a city which could easily be the megalopolis of São Paulo. An immanent technology has replaced the desired 'extra-sky'. Such is the second facet of the *Finismundo* Ulysses, that of a man condemned because of his *hybris*, that replicates the figure depicted by Dante in the *Divine Comedy*.[71] Nevertheless, the Brazilian Ulysses's hell of today is not that of the obscure infra-world but such of the 'computerised hazard' city in the light of a 'fluo [brilliant] green colour liquid crystal', devaluated Eden postcard where the *hybris* surrendered. The torment is not originated by the flames that wrapped up the materialised souls of Ulysses and Diomedes in a small whirl like in the Commedia: it is rather the product of the labour of the 'bluish sirens [that] penetrate everybody's indifferent everyday hearts'.

I have left for the end two Argentinean authors for whom the *Odyssey* was more than a model, and was instead a recurrent obsession. Leopoldo Marechal wrote his novel *Adan Buenosayres* in 1948[72] as a parody woven of several canonical texts of European literature, among them Homer's epic poem about the voyages and return of Ulysses to his homeland. To a large extent, the metamorphosis of the characters and episodes of the *Odyssey* represent the funniest moments of *Adán Buenosayres*, a vast funniness that spreads from the emotional empathy that the tender figure of Polifemo, the blind and beggar guitarist[73] causes, up to the hilarious grotesque of a *nekya* that takes place in '*bajo de Saavedra*' (Saavedra lowlands), the descent to the city of Cacodelphia,[74] undertaken when the story's main protagonists have the 'foolish idea of

71 Dante Alighieri, *Infierno*, Canto XXVI, lines 90–142. A very detailed philological analysis of Haroldo do Campos's poem, his allusions to Dante and Homer, as well as to Boccaccio's *la Amorosa visione*, and to Joyce, Mallarmé and Melville, can be found in the beautiful book by Piero Boitani, *Sulle orme di Ulisse. Figure di un mito* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 1998), pp. 165–72.

72 Leopoldo Marechal, *Adán Buenosayres* (Buenos Aires: Sudamericana, 1948).

73 Ibid., pp. 81–82.

74 Ibid., p. 471.

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following the traces of Ulysses, Aeneas, Alighieri, and other infernal tourists.[75] Suffering love nostalgia during the whole novel, the young Adam may be essentially a post-figuration of Ulysses, more than any other infernal tourist.

Jorge Luis Borges is the second Argentinean author to take into account. We can possibly say that he captured the universal literature and made his own creation from certain poetic receptacles, similar to some of the categories of Kant. The history of literature offered Borges a kind of lens to observe and act in the art of the words: the Norse Eddas, Dante's *Commedia*, *The Thousand and One nights*, the poems and narrations of Lugones, poetry of the gauchos, *Don Quixote* and the *Odyssey*, so that Homer, Ulysses, Ithaca, always appear in his verses, his critical essays and his fictions. Such manifestations may be classified into three types: 1) the temporary but persistent allusion, among other habitual ones, to some Homeric or Dantesque element related to Ulysses (found mainly in Borges's poetry); 2) Homer as author of the *Odyssey* or Ulysses as the topics of a poem or short fiction; 3) the comparative exercise of literary criticism to reveal meanings and styles in stories about Ulysses (Homeric and Dantesque elements compete again, on an equal footing) or links between them to other texts.

I would like to sum up these three occurrences of the Ulysses myth in the works of Borges. For that purpose, I will observe the chronological order established in the two volumes of his *Obras completas*[76] (Complete Works) published by Emecé. From the volume titled *Obras completas en colaboracion* (Complete work in collaboration) I will only quote the two occasions in which Borges mentions some of the monsters or imaginary beings in the *Odyssey*: Scylla and, of course, the Sirens.[77]

1) A thousand and one times, like the nights of Scheherazade, the *Odyssey* and Canto XXVI of the *Inferno* have shone in the texts of Borges. The *'Arte Poética'* ('Poetical art'), from the book *El hacedor* (*The creator*, 1960), proposes an exercise of poetry as a representation of what is obvious, hidden, forgotten and desired. Ulysses's unequalled emotion while returning to his kingdom offers a possible formula of simplicity and emotional intensity:

> *They tell that Ulysses, sick of marvels,*
> *Cried out of love while sighting his*
> *green and humble Ithaca. Art is such Ithaca*
> *of green eternity but not of marvels.*[78]

75 Ibid., p. 471.

76 Jorge Luis Borges, *Obras completas* (Buenos Aires: Emecé, 1974); *Obras completas. 1975–1985* (Buenos Aires: Emecé, 1989); hereafter Borges, *Works I*, Borges, *Works II*.

77 Borges, Jorge Luis, *Obras completas en colaboracion* (Buenos Aires: Emecé, 1979), pp. 626 & 696–97.

78 Borges, *Works I*, p. 843. For more details about this poem, see the analysis of Boitani, Piero, *L'ombra di Ulisse. Figure di un mito* (Bologna: Il Mulino,1992), p. 213.

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In the 'Poema del Cuarto Elemento' ('Poem of the fourth element'), a tribute to water from *El Otro, el Mismo* (The Other, the Same, 1964), the Dantesque Ulysses is quoted when the sea's labyrinth is described,

> *Without walls or windows, whose grey roads*
> *Deviated the desired Ulysses for a long time*
> *to a definite death and an indistinct Hazard.*[79]

The contemporary adventures of the astronauts filled Borges with enthusiasm, and in '1971', a poem from *El oro de los tigre* (The gold of the tigers, 1972), he was compelled to ascribe to 'the Odyssey of those magic friends' the energy of an immemorial day, the moment when no man on earth did not became 'braver and happier'.[80] Certainly, if mankind is only one according to the continuity of his talent and his creations, if a unique man is the one who established the constellations, for the immense eternity, the one who built the first pyramid, 'Voltaire's gardener, Darwin on the prow of HMS *Beagle*, a Jew at the lethal chamber', the first name of that [human] being has been Ulysses, as it is pronounced in the poem 'Tu' (You), also from *El oro de los tigres* (The gold of the tigers).[81] Nevertheless, the reality of a figure that is a kind of historical acme does not prevent the poet, in 'El sueño' (The dream, included in *La rosa profunda* [The deep rose, 1975]), from boasting about going 'further than Ulysses first rowers', to that oneiric country, 'unapproachable to the human memory'.[82] In 'Proteo', from the same collection of poems, Borges takes pleasure in guessing the unattainable shapes of that god 'before Odysseus rowers/got tired down in the wine-coloured sea'.[83] In spite of his devotion to the Dantesque Ulysses who would have sailed the open sea south of the Equator, Borges had doubts, at the time, about transferring the hero to the southern hemisphere, opposite Haroldo de Campos. In 'Reliquias' ('Relics'), a poem from *Los conjurados* (The conspirators, 1985) he said that a man searched there the traces of an Epiphany 'under his algebra of the stars/ignored by Ulysses'.[84] Moreover, in the same book, the possibility of a moment in which the memory of the hero does not exist is suspected: 'Somebody will dream' that 'an actual day in Ulysses life could be more fruitful than the poem that relates his labours. He will dream on human generations who will not recognize Ulysses' name.'[85] But that absence could be misleading because Borges also

79 Ibid., p. 869.
80 Ibid., p. 1104.
81 Ibid., p. 1113.
82 Borges, *Works II*, p. 81.
83 Ibid., p. 96.
84 Ibid., p. 462.
85 Ibid., p. 473.

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foresaw, some pages ahead, that the myth transmutations might have made it imperceptible at first approach. Given that 'there will not be a thing that is not/a cloud' 'the *Odyssey* is what changes like the sea.' This means that the *Odyssey* is one of those architectures created by the hazard, capriciously perennial for the glory of Homer and all men. One of the clouds that

> [...] *Perhaps God needs them*
> *To the accomplishment of His infinite*
> *Labours and they are the threads of the obscure woof.*[86]

2) In *El Aleph* (The Aleph, 1949) Borges imagined a traveller, a chronicler of Diocletian's time, visitor of the immortals' land. The first of these beings appeared to the ancient adventurer as a troglodyte, incapable of uttering a word. His misery and humbleness were such that the imaginary narrator immediately remembered Argos, Ulysses's dog. He called the troglodyte by that name and tried to make the man learn to repeat it, without success. Unexpectedly one day the troglodyte said, not only 'Argos' but also added 'Ulysses's dog.' As time passed, the narrator learnt that the troglodytes were immortal and Argos was just Homer, who had forgotten his work while living his immortality and was remembering it again, right in that moment. He remembered it exactly like it had been, to re-write it later in the adventures of Sinbad. 'Homer and I parted at the gates of Tangier; I do not think we said goodbye' And they actually have not. How could they? If, to tell the truth, the ancient traveller had realised that he himself was also immortal. Moreover, that he himself was Homer. But he felt renewed hope for dying towards the end of the narration: 'Shortly, I shall be No-one, like Ulysses; shortly, I shall be Every-one: I will be dead.'[87]

In the book *El hacedor* (The creator, 1960), the homonym short narration presented a brave battling man, a persistent traveller who had known 'the men's cities and their palaces' and 'had listened to complicated stories'. Little by little, blindness seized him and obliged him to pause on the folds of his memory. Finally, he discovered that his destiny was 'to sing and leave resounding, in a concave way, in the human memory' 'a rumour of men who defend a temple that gods will not save and of black vessels that are searching through the sea a cherished island'. These Odysseys and Iliads are the things we know about the '*hacedor*', about Homer, 'but not the ones he felt when he went down to the last shadow'. It is easy for us, readers, to understand that Homer has transmuted into Borges who, by 1960, had started his own Katabasis to blindness. Such

86 Ibid., pp. 478–79.

87 Borges, *Works I*, pp. 538–44. See note 78 Borges, where Boitani, *L'ombra di Ulisse*, is mentioned, pp. 208–11.

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identification must not be considered the product of an occasional enthusiasm; it is rather one of the clues that Borges has given us to elucidate all this work, in the way of an Odyssey a thousand times reflected, always the same but always different. And also for us to see in himself that Homer, the blind bard who, the same as the first and the most ancient one, sums up for us today in his chant and in his narrations, the knowledge of theology, constellations, mathematics, geography of the already known world, the countries, the men and the monsters. In *El Otro, el Mismo*, there is a poem entitled '*Odisea, libro vigesimo tercero*' (Odyssey, XXIIIth book). After the vengeance against the suitors, after mocking an adverse and very powerful god, Ulysses had made love to Penelope but he does not rest because he keeps wondering:

[...] *where is that man*
Who in the days and nights of exile
Was roaming around the world as a dog
And was saying that No-one was his name?[88]

The reply is just a wish of lasting forever that is mentioned in the poem 'El desterrado' (The exiled, from *La rosa profunda*). Ulysses as a person is fragmented into: the present man appeased in Ithaca, 'a happy man perhaps' (mentioned in the third person and thus contradictorily the most distant) and the adventurer of the past who arrived in Hades and consulted the shadow of Teiresias (denoted as 'I, Ulysses' halfway through the verse), who desires and builds his hopes of becoming his own replica in the future:

Somebody is passing by Bolivar and Chile
And he might be happy or he might not
I wish I could be him.[89]

Such a somebody could not be other than Borges, who used to roam around that '*porteño*' neighbourhood so much that he could easily have evoked another corner, very close to the one that Ulysses guessed: Piedras and Chile corner, in two poems. The first was from *Atlas* (1984),[90] the second from *Los conjurados* (The conspirators, 1985).[91] If we take into account that, before his blindness, the Homer of *El hacedor* was sometimes Achilles and sometimes Ulysses, we can say that Borges, through that Odysseus who dreams and wishes to walk the streets of Buenos Aires, is Homer once again, and his work a torrential *Odyssey* through all the known worlds.

88 Borges, *Works I*, p. 897. See note 78 Borges, where Boitani, *L'ombra di Ulisse* is mentioned, pp. 211–13.
89 Borges, *Works II*, p. 107.
90 Ibid., p. 421.
91 Ibid., p. 494.

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3) The differences of meaning among the English translations of the *Odyssey* caught the attention of our writer very early. In *Discusion* (Discussion, 1932), Borges compared several versions, starting from that of Chapman (1614) to that of Samuel Butler (1900). He concluded that the determination of a greater or lesser fidelity to Homer in each of them turns out to be, finally, a matter of paradoxical beauty. None of them can be faithful for us if we expect to grasp 'the poet's imaginations' and 'the irretrievable men and days he played the role', while, from the same perspective, all of them would have been ⌜faithful⌝ for a contemporary of Homer.[92] However, it is probable that Borges would have preferred the oldest one (Chapman), because a reference is made in the *Historia de la eternidad* (The history of eternity, 1936) to the impression produced by the obvious enjoyment of composing strange words ⌜he found in⌝ 'las *Odiseas* de Chapman' (Chapman's *Odysseys*)[93] and in the collection of poems *La rosa profunda* (The deep rose, 1975). 'The two volumes of Chapman's *Odysseys*' are, no doubt, part of the *Talismanes* (Talismans) of Borges, together with a sample of the first edition of an *Edda* of Snorri, the five volumes of Schopenhauer's works, 'la memoria de una mañana' (One morning's memory) and 'la voz de Macedonio Fernandez' (Macedonio Fernandez'voice). All of them are talismans but, as Borges says, 'they are useless against the shadow I cannot mention, against the shadow I should not mention.'[94]

Regarding the refraction established by the *Odyssey's* model, our author hinted at another paradox, given that in *Historia de la eternidad* (History of Eternity) he declared to sense nothing but 'insignificant contacts' between the poem and Joyce's *Ulysses*. But in *Otras Inquisiciones* (Other Inquisitions, 1952), he understood that the intimate organisation of the *Odyssey* reverberates in the novel *The Purple Land*, a text about Uruguay's civil wars, written by the Anglo-Argentine William Henry Hudson.[95] And he also believed that its destiny to serve as entertainment for gods and men has a multiplied echo in Mallarmé's declaration about the world that exists with the only aim of becoming a book.[96] In short, Ulysses has replicated much more in Sinbad the sailor of *The Thousand and One Nights* than he has in Leopold Bloom, according to Borges's statement in *Otras Inquisiciones*,[97] in the page of 'Alguien' (Somebody) of the *Historia de la noche* (Night's History, 1977)[98] and in the poem 'El Mar' (The Sea) from *El oro de los tigres* (The gold of the tigers, 1972):

92 Borges, *Works I*, pp. 241–43.
93 Ibid., p. 377.
94 Borges, *Works II*, p. 111.
95 Borges, *Works I*, p. 733.
96 Ibid., 713.
97 Ibid., 733.
98 Borges, *Works II*, p. 171.

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The sea. The young sea. Ulysses' sea.
And that one of the other Ulysses that the people
From Islam famously dubbed
Es-Sindibad from the Sea [...][99]

The highest peak in Borges's critical writings on Ulysees can be found in a passage of the *Siete Noches* (Seven Nights, 1980), in the night devoted to the *Divine Comedy*,[100] and in the third of the *Nueve ensayos dantescos* (Nine Dantesque Essays, 1982) referring to Canto XXVI of the *Inferno*.[101] The ideas and arguments are practically the same in both texts, and they of course deal with the Dantesque Ulysses, and likewise Vespucci, Tasso and Haroldo de Campos. To the episode, interpreted in terms of punishment for the arrogance shown at the *Sapere aude* (Dare you to know), which refers to the last voyage of Ulysses to the south of the unknown Ocean, Borges adds the idea that Dante has seen himself, an audacious pilgrim from the afterlife, in the figure of the Ithacan and fears to suffer the same annihilation. Hence the strange sympathy that Alighieri feels for that creature that lives in the *Inferno*, compassion only comparable to that the Florentine experienced for Paolo and Francesca. But Borges discovers the difference: it is not so much in the blessing that Beatrice receives from the traveller of the *Commedia* than in the fact that Ulysses has made his way towards death because of his excessive personal appetite for knowledge, while Dante's purpose has been to write and to publish a book. There we can see his undertaking shines with his gift of charity. Dante's excess is justified by the creation of the poem, the really gratuitous but human action of producing art.

Conclusions

Historiographical inspiration has certainly led me away from the initial purposes of this paper: the reason, if any, for the eclipse of the myth of Ulysses in the imaginary world of the Spanish conquerors of America. We have discovered that reference to the myth in Portuguese sources has been made to escape any possibility of comparison between the fantastic adventures recounted in the *Odyssey* and the authentic facts of Portuguese exploration and land acquisition in South America, Africa and Asia. Let us say that Ulysses's story was already in the minds of the Portuguese historians and poets. It was powerful enough to encourage the parallel between the myth and reality. In the Spanish mind, something different happened. Perhaps Ulysses represented an adventurer, curious and talented indeed, with a spirit sufficiently open to change and

99 Borges, *Works I*, p. 1118.
100 Borges, *Works II*, pp. 217–20.
101 Ibid., pp. 354–56.

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learning from the unknown. But all this happened in spite of him, meaning that he never gave up his aspiration to return to his homeland and grow old there (at least according to Homer's version, which circulated in Spain during the Renaissance in much greater numbers than the work of Dante, judging by the number of editions of the *Odyssey* available in Castile compared to those of the *Commedia*).[102] In America, the Spanish settlement and colonisation pattern was not at all compatible with the character of Ulysses, but it did fit with the Portuguese system of factories in Asia and Africa, though not in Brazil. But let us keep in mind that Ulysses first appeared in narrations and comments related to Portuguese expansion in the Indies. It was the same in Spanish America up to the moment when the Spanish societies became settled and gave way to a courtesan style of life — as in the Viceroyalty of Lima, in the early 18th century, where the society parallelled the style of aristocratic culture of European absolutist monarchies. Hence, perhaps the interest in Fénelon's *Telemaco* arose in Peru and later, in the River Plate. In 1730, in Peru the courtly aspects of Fénelon's fables were more interesting than the political matters proposed by that text. In the potential Republican Argentina of 1830, it seems that the situation was the other way around, although Telemaco's love affairs should not seem to be indifferent to a lady like the one portrayed by Carlos Enrique Pellegrini. Finally, in the 20th century we are witnesses to a double process: on one hand, the figure of Ulysses figure changes territory in a definitive way, becoming a creole for Vasconcelos, São Paulist for Haroldo de Campos and a restless immigrant on the outskirts of Buenos Aires for Marechal; on the other hand, with Jorge Luis Borges we see the temporal split of the character, and his disquieting metamorphosis in the eternal cycling of literary time and dreams.

Latin-American civilisation has given an unexpected turn to a myth that Horkheimer and Adorno considered as the bourgeois and enlightened myth *par excellence*.[103] According to other recoveries of the *Odyssey* made by Wole Soyinka, Derek Walcott and Anita Desai, as analysed by Piero Boitani,[104] those accomplished in Spanish America have contributed to the opening

102 *La Commedia* was known in Spain mainly through the translation by Pedro Fernandez de Villegas, (Burgos, 1515). Italian editions of Dante's poem (1564–1596) circulated with comments by Landino and Vellutello. Regarding the *Odyssey*, bilingual Greek–Latin editions (Paris 1530, Köln 1534, Basel, 1535 and Basel 1551) circulated widely. These data have been collected through my research on the *Catalogo Colectivo del Patrimonio Bibliografico Espanol* [Collective Catalogue of the Spanish Bibliographical Patrimony].

103 Max Horkheimer & Theodor W. Adorno, *Dialectica del Iluminismo* (Buenos Aires: Sudamericana, 1969), pp. 60–101.

104 Piero Boitani, 'Ulisse 2001: mito, letteratura e storia fra due millenni', in Anna Maria Babbi & Francesca Zardini, *Ulisse da Omero a Pascal Quignard* (Verona: Fiorini, 2001), pp. 33–55.

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of the possibility of considering Ulysses as a new type for non-European peoples. This is especially apt for today's migrants who, trailed by the hate and vengeance of who knows which unknown deity, begin each day as an adventurous voyage like that narrated in the *Odyssey* and, like Ulysses, dream of returning to their native lands.

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