

# INFORMING HISTORY STUDENTS/LEARNERS REGARDING AN UNDERSTANDING AND EXPERIENCING OF SOUTH AFRICA'S COLONIAL PAST FROM A REGIONAL/LOCAL CONTEXT

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## ***Abstract***

*South Africa has delivered several voices of standing on the country's colonial historiography. The impact of especially 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century colonialism on the southern tip of Africa is deeply rooted in all spheres of life, and its visibility mostly surfaced in former apartheid South Africa. In this paper, the historiography of colonialism in South Africa is concisely introduced with, as a second key aim, the discussion of a way in which FET history learners and HET history students could practically understand and experience South Africa's colonial past by exploring a regional/local colonial or post-colonial legacy. By using colonialism as topic, it is also argued that it is possible to teach any history content (whether from the FET-CAPS History curriculum content or from the variety of HET history module content) more efficiently if the topic, phenomenon or concept is studied in the light of regional/local examples.*

**Keywords:** Colonial history teaching; Regional history; Local history; NWU Vaal Triangle Campus; Colonial historiography; South Africa.

## **Introductory remarks**

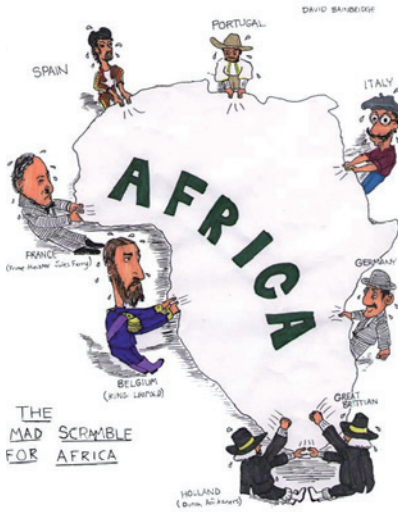
Uncountable critical discussions exist on colonialism worldwide<sup>1</sup> as it happens to be a global historical legacy – whether it affected countries and peoples in a direct or in an indirect way. The history of colonialism, its impacts, consequences and outcomes are reflected in several conceptual thoughts like anti-colonialism, post-colonialism and a resistance to the

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<sup>1</sup> Compare A Memmi, *The colonizer and the colonized* (1969).

Eurocentric colonial way of thinking and dominance.<sup>2</sup> Additionally, the colonial historiography of Africa is often referred to as dominant reflections by “non-Africans”,<sup>3</sup> pioneered by explorers, Christian missionaries, travellers,<sup>4</sup> anthropologists, ethnographers<sup>5</sup> and historians.<sup>6</sup> These impressions can be complemented by many others, inclusive of Funso Afolayan who, in 2005, remarked that a study of African history as an autonomous scholarship is but only a recent development. This development also marked rejections by Africanists of mainly Eurocentric time colonial history,<sup>7</sup> though it appears as if there is an acknowledgement of Islamic and Arabic views of African societies<sup>8</sup> as recorded in pre-colonial times.<sup>9</sup> However, as this is a debate for another day, the two broad aims of this paper is to concisely deliberate on the South African colonial historiography, followed by an explanation of how to utilise the regional/local context in meaningfully teaching history curricula content on either FET or HET level.

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- 2 Compare PSS Howard, “On silence and dominant accountability: A critical anticolonial investigation of the antiracism classroom”, GJS Dei and A Kempf (eds.), *Anti-colonialism and education. The politics of resistance* (Netherlands, Sense Publishers, 2006), Introductory notes and pp. 43- 63.
  - 3 Compare TL Eriksen, “Modern African History; Some Historiographical observations”, Research Report No. 55 Scandinavian Institute of African Studies, Uppsala 1979; F Cooper, “Conflict and connection: Rethinking colonial African history”, *The American Historical Review*, 99(5), Dec. 1994.
  - 4 See for example L Koivunen, *Visualizing Africa in nineteenth-century British travel accounts* (UK & New York, Routledge, 2011 issue in paperback), pp. 351.
  - 5 See P Manning, “Africa in World history and historiography”, *Historically Speaking*, 6(2), 2004, pp. 14-15; African historiography as discussed in [www-sul.stanford.edu](http://www-sul.stanford.edu).
  - 6 See “Historiography of Africa” in <http://patachu.com/historiography-of-africa/> as retrieved on 26 May 2013; A Roberts (Ed.), *The colonial moment in Africa. Essays in the movement of minds and materials, 1900-1940* (London, Cambridge University Press, 1990), pp. 139; O Kalinga and Joey Power, “African intellectuals and decolonisation in colonial Malawi” (paper, Conference South African Historical Society (University of Botswana, 27-29 June, 2013), pp. 1-20.
  - 7 Compare with AD Roberts, “The earlier historiography of colonial Africa”, *History in Africa*, 5, 1978, pp. 153-167.
  - 8 Compare F Afolayan, “African historiography”, *Encyclopedia of African history*, vol. 1 (New York, Fitzroy Dearborn, 2005), pp. 626-633 (Edited by Kevin Shillington); TV McClendon, *White chief, black lords. Shepstone and the colonial state in Natal South Africa, 1845-1878* (USA, University of Rochester Press, 2010), pp.170.
  - 9 See Compare with “Historiography of Africa” in <http://patachu.com/historiography-of-africa/> as retrieved on 26 May 2012; African historiography as discussed in [www-sul.stanford.edu](http://www-sul.stanford.edu).



Source: The Afrikakonferenz (Berlin) as in commons.wikimedia.org

Source: Risingafrica.blogspot.com



Source: Map of Africa showing the colonial divisions after the Conference of Berlin (1885) as in mhhe.com

## **What is the status of South Africa's colonial historiography and of a general understanding of its colonial roots and impacts?**

### ***Early writings on South Africa's colonial past***

The pioneers of colonial historiography in Southern Africa are said to be Alexander Wilmot, John Chase, George Theal and Harry Johnston. They are labelled as pro-British settlers who presented "Afrikaners" as conservative oppressors of the indigenous peoples. This orthodox impression was soon challenged by a series of publications by Afrikaners documenting British injustices and the accumulative grievances of the Boers. Amongst others, there was the 1877 contribution of SJ du Toit, *The History of our land in the language of our people*,<sup>10</sup> followed by the outspoken views in 1902 by General JC Smuts in *A century of wrong*.<sup>11</sup> The impression of these contributions and others that followed was summarised as white-centric:<sup>12</sup>

*The main features of these histories are clear: Almost without exception, they all focus on the South African white settlers, their conquests, and industrialisation. The African majority was regarded as non-population, a part of the landscape to be occupied, used, dispossessed, and discarded... In the rare cases where African societies received attention, their history was distorted. Their ways of life were presented as monolithic, static, and unchanging. Overworked clichés such as listless, impudent, fractious, thieving, savage, harmless, docile, and others were applied to describe black Africans. The oppressive, dehumanising, and racist nature of white rule was often ignored, while its debt to the indigenous population, especially the Khoisan, was rarely acknowledged.*

A change in focus and perspectives on South Africa's colonial history during the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century departed from the norm with the refreshing contributions in the two-volume publication by Leonard Thompson and Monica Wilson as editors, entitled *The Oxford History of South Africa* (these volumes were published respectively in 1969 and in 1971). Contributions by African elite on the impacts of colonialism mostly came from other African countries rather than from South Africa, thus producing a history of Africa from multidimensional angles. However, the socio-political crises of the 1960s, embedded in the reality of political failures in establishing governments in Africa and perceived as "outside the sphere of colonialism", resulted in a spirit of negativity as most of the "independent" African countries still appeared to bathe themselves in European economic experiments and models (labelled neo-colonialism).

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10 As quoted from: F Afolayan, "African historiography", *Encyclopedia of African history*, vol. 1.

11 As obtained from: F Afolayan, "African historiography", *Encyclopedia of African history*, vol. 1.

12 F Afolayan, "African historiography", *Encyclopedia of African history*, vol. 1.

Thereafter, the Marxist approach to history followed (emphasising materialists' insights and regarded as a holistic model for studying colonialism), tailed by the nationalist-liberalist approach. Afolayan observes that contributors in this field vigorously attempted to write history from below. As a very specific example from South Africa, he refers to Charles van Onselen's "Sharecropping in apartheid South Africa" in *The seed is mine*.<sup>13</sup> There were several other "history from below" contributions at the time that were not necessarily written in a spirit of being Marxist by nature.<sup>14</sup> In retrospect, they may be reviewed as either politically inspired *Alltagsgeschichte* reflections<sup>15</sup> on South Africa's colonial and post-colonial history and/or local/regional history contributions in a typical British-European model that mainly complemented white community developments in South Africa in colonial times.<sup>16</sup> Despite all these efforts and trends, the crisis in the Africanist historiography remained. A reflexive deconstructionist approach (also known as "postmodernism") was seen as an effort to review the past from a present-day ideology and understanding. All these, in addition to new thinking, still shape the history of Africa in post-colonial times,<sup>17</sup> amidst global trends of a growing urge for democracy. The collapse of communism in Eastern Europe and of the Soviet Union, for instance, as well as the failure of socialist experiments in Africa, started to provoke revisionist responses from neo-Marxist historians of Africa. Ethnicity as a major specialty in African study gained some field.

### ***Recent observations on colonialism: a South African view***

It appears from the historiography on colonial discussions and debates with regard to South Africa, that the late 20<sup>th</sup> century (mid-nineties) became a perfect timing and platform in South Africa to review and deliberate the

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13 See complete title as C van Onselen, *The seed is mine. The life of Kas Maine A South African sharecropper*, 1894-1985 (China, Hill and Wang, 1997), pp. 1-649. Earlier issues are from David Philip Publishers.

14 Compare W Visser, "Trends in South African historiography", *Social History*, 36(1), 2011.

15 Alltagsgeschichte was founded by A Luedtke and H Medick of Germany. It enhanced a form of history from below. See A Luedtke, *The history of everyday life. Reconstructing historical experiences and ways of life*. Translated version from the 1989 publication by W Templer (USA, Princeton, 1995), pp. 1-323.

16 Compare ES van Eeden, "Regional, local, urban and rural history as nearby spaces and places: Historiographical and methodological reflections towards modern day practice", Special Edition, *New Contree*, 63, January 2012; ES van Eeden, "Exploring local histories in the use and appreciation of Heritage and History in history curricula", *Yesterday & Today*, 5, Oct. 2010; DV Cohen & ESA Odhiambo, *Siaya. The historical anthropology of an African landscape* (Kenya, Nairobi, Heinemann Kenya Limited, 1989), pp. 1-55.

17 Compare the recent discussion by Rob Gordon on the German Moritz Bonn's view of colonialism in R Gordon, Moritz Bonn, "Southern Africa and the critique of colonialism", *African Historical Review*, 45(2), 2013, pp. 1-30.

country's colonial legacy from a refreshed angle, with visible efforts to strip it<sup>18</sup> from representing only a Eurocentric view<sup>19</sup> of African colonialism. In many ways, this approach also coincided with South African historians further exploring regional and local histories. In this process of recording research, they dealt with a local heritage and history intertwined with past colonial thinking and establishments visible in economy, settlement patterns and other social practices.

A swift Google Scholar search regarding the colonial, decolonisation and post-colonial historiography status of South Africa at the time of writing, offered about 14 400 entries of scientific publications. Ironically, the most prominent one for South Africa *per se*, cited 21 times, is that of J Crush on "The discomforts of distance: post-colonialism and South African geography, published in the *South African Geographic Journal* of 1993. F Cooper's article on "conflict and connection: Rethinking colonial African history published in *The American Historical Review* in 1994, has been cited 342 times. Yet another publication in book format, published in 1996 (UK, David Phillip), and which quite extensively and passionately covers colonial South Africa in a broader global context, is that of Timothy Keegan. The title of the publication, namely *Colonial South Africa and the origins of the racial order*, rightly serves the content Keegan deals with. He departs from a colonial chronology regarding South Africa's history by discussing the Dutch beginnings prior to 1652 and subsequently – perhaps familiar to most South Africans. Then Keegan continues with the colonial ordeal when Britain colonised the Cape Colony in 1806, and decades later other parts of the interior (Natalia and the two Republics known as the "Zuid-Afrikaansche Republiek" or ZAR, as well as the Orange Free State). Keegan observed that the early British governors of the Cape in some ways ruled more autocratically than their Dutch predecessors.<sup>20</sup> He critically reviews the status of economic relationships and the enmeshed penetrated-like<sup>21</sup> approach to evangelical humanitarianism as strong pointers

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18 See for example an upcoming summer school, organised by the College of Human Science at the University of South Africa (UNISA) from 13-17 January 2014, titled: "Decolonizing knowledge, power and being". Former President Thabo Mbeki has also been invited as key note speaker.

19 The repertoire of sources related to, or reflecting the colonial history of South Africa, is expansive. To mention only a few: IE Edwards, *The 1820 Settlers in South Africa. A study in British colonial policy* (London, Longmans, Green and Co., 1934), pp. 1-207; N Etherington & P Midgley, *Grappling with the Beast: Indigenous Southern African responses to colonialism* (Brill, Leiden, 2010); P Limb, "Terence Ranger, African Studies and South African historiography", *Historia* 56, 1, Mei/May 2011.

20 T Keegan, *Colonial South Africa and the origins of the racial order* (UK, David Phillip, 1996), pp. 47-128.

21 T Keegan, *Colonial South Africa and the origins of the racial order*, p. 131.



to how colonialism was steered then,<sup>22</sup> but only understood better in post-colonial times.

In a broader context, Nobel Prize winner Wangari Mathaai<sup>23</sup> complained about the very same impacts Keegan referred to, especially the growing spiritual inferiority among African peoples in the heydays of colonialism. Most of Keegan's examples with regard to groups and regions mostly reflect the Cape Colony. Skilfully, Keegan also points out several myths regarding the settlers and colonial authorities. One such myth is that the Trek by the "hardy pioneer" Boers into the interior "wilderness" from especially 1836 was politically driven, to be as far as possible from the "hated British". Instead, he argues that they "never wanted to break ties with the colonial market", but rather wanted to extend the "geographical range".<sup>24</sup> An observation Keegan has made with regard to colonial expansion in the interior, close to nowadays Lesotho, and which relates to the formidable chief Moshoeshoe, is insightful:<sup>25</sup>

*Settler imperialism had failed in its immediate objectives, not least because imperial expansion evoked massive resistance from both Boers and black peoples. Policies of aggression and dispossession aimed at independent chiefdoms evoked in fact not support, but rebelliousness and sedition from the Boers on the frontiers of settlements, and contributed to a crippling crisis of legitimacy for the colonial government. Most of the Boers saw no reason to throw in their lot with British imperialism against black chiefdoms, and many of them, including those who lived closest to the centre of Sotho power, openly chose the patronage of Moshoeshoe rather than that of the British...*

To come to all these conclusions and to assess the colonial years of South Africa, Keegan strongly relied on the numerous regional and very local contributions of historians in various fields of history. These findings are supported by various standard publications on South Africa's history and backed by global contexts, inclusive of colonial histories on Africa in general.<sup>26</sup> Former and present-day regional history study contributions on, for example, the Cape and KwaZulu Natal, are still regarded as representative of the best

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22 Compare with Chapters 5 and 6 in T Keegan, *Colonial South Africa and the origins of the racial order*.

23 Compare W Maathai: *The challenge for Africa- A new vision* (Knopf Doubleday Publishing, 2009), pp. 25-47; 111-128.

24 T Keegan, *Colonial South Africa and the origins of the racial order*, pp. 195-196.

25 T Keegan, *Colonial South Africa and the origins of the racial order*, p. 278.

26 For example compare AD Roberts, *The colonial moment in Africa. Essays on the movement of minds and materials, 1900-1940* (New York, Cambridge University Press, 1990), pp. 1-323.

value in the country,<sup>27</sup> and sufficiently informative to utilise in a framework of understanding and debating of the pre-colonial, colonial and post-colonial phases of the region.

The colonial legacy that present-day South Africa inherited from its past masters in its entirety was not and could not possibly have been summarily disposed of with the country becoming a democracy in 1994. As it took more than 300 years to create a mentality and world view<sup>28</sup> of being colonial and subordinate, historical time was inevitably needed again to change the historical avenue by searching for a midway between the done – but not gone – past and how to rise to the new democratic expectations of the South African nation, very much embedded in the amicable example and courageous intellectual thoughts of the late president, Mr Nelson Mandela.<sup>29</sup>

For many years, most thinking about democracy involved a policy and style of government with no room for racism as that experienced in the tenure of the past apartheid government.<sup>30</sup> The post-1994 government and broader South African community also barely allowed themselves to think about how the past British colonial system of Indirect Rule in South Africa may have contributed to racism in the country or have paved the way for services inequalities experienced countrywide.<sup>31</sup> However, the majority of present-day South Africans appear to want to democratically rectify the situation in the most viable ways.<sup>32</sup> It is sensed that this cannot be done if the leadership mentality is still colonial (which can include an authoritative style of power that may lead to corruption, resulting in a lack of communities' right to daily

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27 As examples Compare N Worden, *After race and class: Recent trends in the historiography of early colonial Cape Society*, *South African Historical Journal*, 62(3), 2010; EK Akyeampong, HL Gates(jr) (eds.), SJ Niven, *Dictionary of African biography*, Vols 1-6 (sa., 2012); W Kermode, *Natal, its early history, rise, progress and future* (General Books, 2012), pp. 1-92; A Duminy & Bill Guest, *Natal and Zululand from earliest times to 1910: A new history* (Natal, University of Natal Press, 1989), pp. 1-489.

28 For expert insight on the concept and impact of one's world view, see DK Naugle, *Worldview: The history of a concept* (United Kingdom, Wm.B. Eerdmans Publishing.co., 2002), especially Chapter 11 .

29 Mr Mandela's wisdom and history has been captured in several publications. Compare N Mandela, *Long walk to freedom: The autobiography of Nelson Mandela* (Little Brown, 2008), pp. 1-300; J Crwys-Williams (ed.), *In the words of Nelson Mandela* (Great Britain, Profile Books Ltd., 2010) ; P Limb, *Nelson Mandela: A biography* (USA, Greenwood Publishing Group, 2008).

30 See as examples A Lester, *From colonization to democracy: A new historical geography of South Africa* (USA, New York, I.B. Taurus & Co Ltd, 1998), pp.1-252; U Pillay, R Tomlinson & J du Toit (eds.), *Democracy and deliver: Urban policy in South Africa* (Cape Town, HSRC Press, 2006) , ch. 5; UJ van Beek, H-D Klingemann, *Democracy under construction: patterns from four continents* (Bloomfield Hills, B. Budrich, 2005), pp. 1-496.

31 Compare J Rossouw, "South Africa: Not yet post-colonial", *SAHO*, 13 August 2013, pp. 1-8. Retrievable on the SAHO website; RL Watson, *Slave emancipation and racial attitudes in nineteenth-Century South Africa* (USA, Cambridge University Press, 2012), pp. 1-288.

32 See J Lee & J Lutz, *Situating: Critical essays for activists and scholars* (McGill-Queen's Press-MQUP, 2005), pp. 1-256; R Ross, *Beyond the pale: Essays on the history of colonial South Africa* (New England, Wesleyan University Press, 1993), pp. 1-270.



service needs and even an unhealthy class division). One such an example of frustration about democracy's state in South Africa against the backdrop of its colonial history is that of journalist Johann Rossouw. He recently reviewed the state of South Africa as being far from democratic due to the reality that South Africa is not yet post-colonial. He emotionally writes in a salutation before debating his argument in 2008:<sup>33</sup>

*The rainbow nation dream was just an illusion. South Africa: not yet postcolonial. Recent violence between the poor and the poorer in South Africa was the by-product of the country's stagnation – it has achieved what it set out to do racially, but not economically or socially. The old colonial model of modernity is still the basis for power.*

Rightly so, Rossouw continues that: “To understand what is happening in South Africa, we need a much longer timeline than the few decades of apartheid, namely the colonial era, which hasn't yet ended. It was from the British colonisation of the Cape after 1806 that the main characteristics of the modern South African political economy evolved... Possibly the highest price paid for the establishment of the modern colonial political economy was the cultural humiliation and economic weakening of its indigenous communities. (This is not to say that the pre-colonial era was a peaceful idyll.) Indigenous norms of cultural and economic excellence were damaged to the point that the humiliated quietly accepted South Africa's imported, colonial modernity as the norm.” He adds: “Instead, new elites used the state as a vehicle of patronage (often for their ethnic constituencies), replacing the former colonial elites as the outside world's gateway to local riches, and changing very little in the lives of most of the citizens”.<sup>34</sup> These insights are applauded by several intellectuals.<sup>35</sup>

From recent research, conducted since 1994, with as its focus or its contextual focus the colonial legacy of South Africa, it appears that this wide and complex topic embedded in colonialism remains a vibrant field.<sup>36</sup> The

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33 J Rossouw, “South Africa: Not yet post-colonial”, *SAHO*, 13 August 2013, pp. 1-8.

34 J Rossouw, “South Africa: Not yet post-colonial”, *SAHO*, 13 August 2013, p. 2.

35 Compare JC Myers, *Indirect Rule in South Africa. Tradition, modernity and the costuming of political power* (USA, University of Rochester Press, 2008), pp. ix-xiii; 1-15; 55-69.

36 See WK Storey, *Guns, race, and power in colonial South Africa* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008) pp. 1-378; F Mirafab, “Colonial present: Legacies of the past in contemporary urban practices in Cape Town, South Africa”, *Journal of Planning History*, 11 (4), Nov 2012, pp.283-307; Papers delivered at the 2013 biennial conference of the SAHS also allowed colonialism to strongly surfaced with the theme “All for one and one for all? Leveraging national interests with regional visions in Southern Africa, 27-29 June”, 2013.

foci mainly relate to themes such as:<sup>37</sup>

- Property, family, identity, slavery;
- Reconstructing a post-apartheid state;
- Comparative colonialism studies;<sup>38</sup>
- Religious divides;
- Colonial administration and development;<sup>39</sup>
- Missionary teaching and teaching white literature;<sup>40</sup> and
- Drama and theatre.<sup>41</sup>

At, for example, the University of KwaZulu Natal (KZN), academics in History not only contributed extensively to the region's colonial history, but some also ventured to deliberate on teaching African History in particularly a post-colonial era. The University is also associated with the *Alternation Journal*, a journal that publishes pdf content consisting of colonial themes and usable in teaching colonial discourses. This can be accessed at [alternation.ukzn.ac.za/docs/04.2/16%20Att.pdf](http://alternation.ukzn.ac.za/docs/04.2/16%20Att.pdf). By searching a few keywords on this site myself, the following results were made available:

- On “Colonial South Africa”: 320 000 entries;
- On “Post-colonial South Africa”: 42 000 entries; and
- On “Indirect rule South Africa”: 156 000 entries.

Educators in History and other related disciplines should explore the value of colonial narrations such as the KZN electronic colonial repository.

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37 See LJ Mitchell, *Belongings: Property, Family and identity in Colonial South Africa* (New York: Gutenberg-e, Columbia university Press, 2009), pp. 1-232; W Dooling, *Slavery, emancipation and colonial rule in South Africa* (Ohio, University Research in International Studies, Africa Series, 2007), pp. 1-249; MF Ramutsindela, “Down the post-colonial road: Reconstructing the post-apartheid state in South Africa”, *Political Geography*, 20 (1), Jan. 2001, pp. 57-84; AW Marx, *Making race and nation: A comparison of South Africa, the United States, and Brazil* (UK, Cambridge University Press, 1998, 2003) which also focusses on Colonial South Africa and the origins of the racial order .

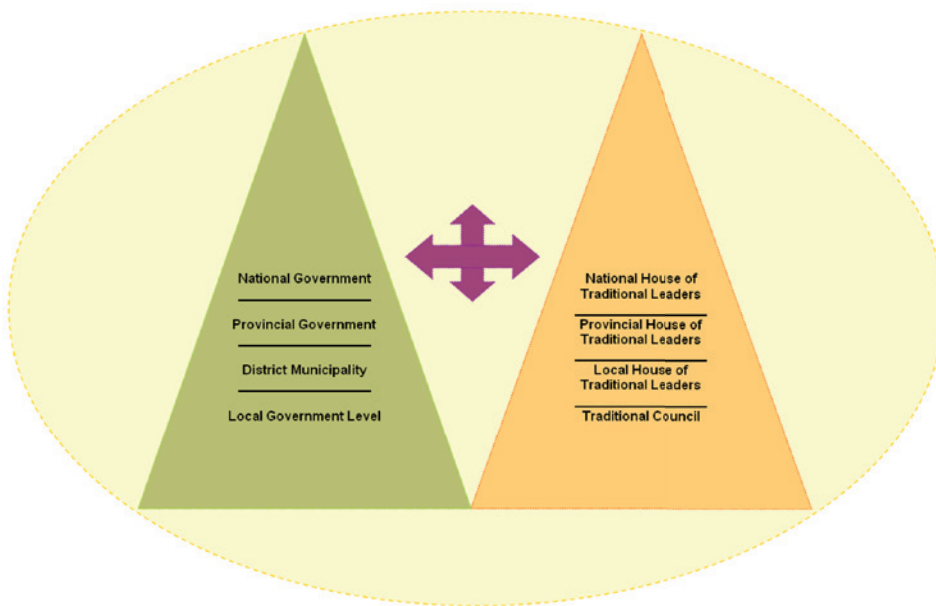
38 Compare M Meredith, *The state of Africa. A history of fifty years of independence* (Jonathan Ball Publishers, Johannesburg, 2005), pp. 378-411; A Thomson, *An introduction to African politics*, 3rd Edition (Routledge, London, 2010), pp. 188-214; 275-285.

39 WB Worsfold, *South Africa: A Study in Colonial Administration and Development* (UK: British Library, 2011), pp. 1-326.

40 Compare A Batzer, “Teaching white South African literature in high school: The legacy”, (2008).

41 Compare MSirayi, *South African drama and theatre from precolonial times to the 1990's* (USA, Xlibris Corporation, Bloomington, 2012), pp. 1-180.

SF Khonou also recently endorsed the current colonial mindset “operational” within the ANC echelons.<sup>42</sup> In essence, the vehicle of running the ANC government remained based on regarding government as in the “indirect rule” days of Britain (two governing systems in one country in which both are functioning with sets of laws). While the one is perceived to be authoritative and mind ‘its own way’, levels of being subordinate to the other “unconsciously and consciously” were in place.<sup>43</sup> See, for example, the thinking of Khonou<sup>44</sup> as visually explained here.<sup>45</sup>



Source: SF Khonou, “Traditional Leadership and Independent Bantustans of South Africa: Some Milestones of Transformative Constitutionalism beyond Apartheid”, *Potchefstroom Electronic Law Journal*, [2009].

An inability, and most definitely a difficulty so far to efficiently serve minorities and majorities within a broader constitutional model in the present, with a centuries long colonial heritage, has allowed for remarks like Rossouw’s, and then also the thoughts of Mandisi Majavu in 2011 on Higher Education in South Africa, but this time based on a 2008 report entitled the Charter for Humanities and Social Sciences (CHSS). Amongst others, this report, grossly

42 Also compare with JC Myers, *Indirect Rule in South Africa. Tradition, modernity and the costuming of political power* (USA, University of Rochester Press, 2008), pp. 1-15.

43 The author’s interpretation of Khonou’s writing.

44 Available in <http://www.saflii.org.za/za/journals/PER/2009/19.html>.

45 SF Khonou, “Traditional Leadership and Independent Bantustans of South Africa: Some Milestones of Transformative Constitutionalism beyond Apartheid” [2009], as accessible in [www.saflii.org.za](http://www.saflii.org.za).

skew and one-sided as it may turn out to be, outlines the following:<sup>46</sup>

*As has been pointed out by African thinkers such as Mahmood Mamdani, the enduring apartheid intellectual legacy at South African universities is the “paradigm of the colonial academy”... Thus many universities across post-apartheid South Africa continue to study white experience as a universal, human experience; while the experience of people of colour is seen as an ethnic experience... Additionally, in many cases, students are taught a curriculum that is premised on the notion that Africa has no intelligentsia worth reading. This pedagogical approach is more pronounced at former white universities... Dissenting black voices that refuse to bow down to the oppressive paradigm of the colonial academy are caricatured as “polemicists”, or lacking “theory” in their scholarship... Obviously, this is a universal problem.*

Hopefully, an explanation of the History 211 module assignment on colonialism, offered at the NWU Vaal Triangle campus, will accentuate the contrary.

### **Module History 211 at the North-West University and the regional/local colonial history of South Africa**

At the North-West University (Vaal Triangle Campus), the facilitating of colonialism as a multi-layered concept in the History 211 (Hist 211) course, inclusive of “anticolonial” and “antiracism” perspectives, is challenging but equally rewarding. Canadian Phillip SS Howard has recently critically deliberated on both concepts in the modern-day classroom, in which he suggested that consideration should be given to:<sup>47</sup>

*... trying to create a comfortable identity space for either the White body in multicultural society and/or the White antiracist body in antiracist circles... that is the system of white dominance, privilege and supremacy...*

Howard observes shortcomings in this regard as the “ineptness of postmodern and/or post-colonial theoretical stances for adequately analysing privilege, and for articulating the agency of the non-white body”.

My educational point of departure to the teaching of, for example, colonialism and colonial themes in Africa – particularly related to South Africa – is to provide a multidimensional critical perspective as context towards

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<sup>46</sup> M Majavu, “The oppressive paradigm of the colonial academy”, The South African Civil Society information Service, 17 November 2011 as accessed on <http://www.sacsis.org.za/s/story.php?s=676>, April 2013.

<sup>47</sup> See PSS Howard, “On silence and dominant accountability: A critical anticolonial investigation of the antiracism classroom”, GJS Dei and A Kempf (eds.), *Anti-colonialism and education. The politics of resistance*, p. 44.

understanding this topic and related phenomena. In the process of scrutinising the knowledge pool, black and white actions in the past are scrutinised equally in literature and debate. The knowledge pool provides insight into colonial legacies in positive and/or negative ways. As regional/local historian, I find it an even better option still to further allow my students to engage with the familiarity of the colonial heritage by exploring the historical precipitation of colonialism in their immediate modern-day surrounds. The unfettered focus and purpose, apart from students being informed and equipped with historical knowledge, is to observe the outcomes of past colonial-related doings or decisions surfacing in present-day circumstances, thinking and living. Complicated issues that may affect a student's response, like the level of his/her own racial privilege and other forms of identities (like gender, and sexuality)<sup>48</sup> are not the key points of debate on a second-year level. Rather, the ability to identify with and relate to past colonial trends, inclusive of a personal local community experience within a personal worldview of ideas and beliefs,<sup>49</sup> is the key outcome. That the student as individual or his/her community world view may have become distorted due to external exposures like the psychological impact of political ideas and ideologies, is not contested, but instead acknowledged in the process.

To have some historical sense of the background from which many students come, as well as to have some understanding of the student profile of the North-West University Vaal Triangle Campus, the next section serves as a concise discussion to provide contextual background. The History 211 (Hist 211) module outline and practical assignment are discussed subsequently.

### ***A concise history of the Emfuleni municipal area***

The current Emfuleni Local Municipal Area within the Sedibeng district municipality covers three local municipalities and several townships, namely Vereeniging, Bophelong, Evaton, Vanderbijlpark, Sebokeng, Sharpeville, Boipatong and Tshepiso. Nine other smaller settlements also exist within the 45 wards. The total population is close to 722 000 people. It is viewed that most of the bigger townships lack infrastructure and facilities that one generally would have associated with towns of their size. The majority of inhabitants are black Africans (85.4%), followed by 12.0% white with a very small Coloured and Indian/Asian group, each of which is 1% and less.

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48 PSS Howard, "On silence and dominant accountability: A critical anticolonial investigation of the antiracism classroom", GJS Dei and A Kempf (eds.), *Anti-colonialism and education. The politics of resistance*, pp. 57-59.

49 See the reference to Naugle's source earlier.

Sotho is the language mostly used, followed by Zulu, Afrikaans and Xhosa. The unemployment rate in 2011 was 34.7%, whilst youth unemployment turned out to be 45%.<sup>50</sup> Before South Africa transformed into a democracy in 1994, the area was known as the Vaal Triangle and known for its immense contribution to the iron and steel industry of South Africa in which the current city centres, namely Vereeniging and Vanderbijlpark, prominently featured.<sup>51</sup> Other unpublished and published sources regarding, for example, Sedibeng and Boipatong, also gradually featured.<sup>52</sup> A host of oral and archival research material is currently in the record-management supervision of the University of the Witwatersrand.<sup>53</sup>

### **Student profile**

The North-West University's small but rapidly growing Vaal Triangle Campus currently accommodates the following number of students:<sup>54</sup>

<b>Race</b>	2013
<b>Asian</b>	115
<b>Black</b>	4 914
<b>Coloured</b>	108
<b>White</b>	1 397
<b>Grand Total</b>	6 534

The majority of students come from deprived historical and educational backgrounds, but display an eagerness to improve their educational levels and to obtain a degree. A healthy level of tolerance and camaraderie is observed among students, at least as personally experienced in the Hist 211 lecturing meetings of 2013. The 72 Hist 211 students' entry level of knowledge about

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50 Republic of South Africa, Statistics South Africa for 2011 as available in [http://beta2.statssa.gov.za/?page\\_id=993&cid=emfuleni-municipality](http://beta2.statssa.gov.za/?page_id=993&cid=emfuleni-municipality) (retrieved in September 2013).

51 Compare RL Leigh, *The story of a South African town recording its growth during 75 years from a riverside colliery village to a major centre of South Africa's industry* (Vereeniging, Vereeniging Town Council, 1968); MC van der Merwe, Vereeniging: Industrial giant: A Study of its industrial (University of Natal, 1975), pp 206; PJJ Prinsloo (red.), "n Historiese oorsig van die Vaaldriehoekse industrialiseringsproses, 1880-1950" (Verslag, NIVG, 1994), pp. 353; "Die geskiedenis van Vereeniging" (Verslag, NIVG, Stadsraad van Vereeniging, 1992), pp. 548; "Die geskiedenis van Vanderbijlpark" (Verslag, NIVG, Stadsraad van Vanderbijlpark, 1994), pp. 660; "Yskor Vanderbijlpark-werke, 1943-1993" (Verslag, NIVG, YSKOR, 1993), pp. 206. As accessed from: Source: [http://www.vaaltriangleinfo.co.za/history/vereeniging/chapter\\_16/65.htm](http://www.vaaltriangleinfo.co.za/history/vereeniging/chapter_16/65.htm).

52 Some examples are: P Noonan, *They're burning the churches* (Bellevue, Jacana, 2003); JGR Simpson, "The Boipatong massacre and South Africa's Democratic Transition", *African studies Centre, African studies collection*, 35, 2011; IE Joseph, *21 Years of Progress* (Felster Publishers, Johannesburg, 1940).

53 E-Mail conversation ES van Eeden with Prof N Nieftagodien, 15 November 2013.

54 Information obtained by the author from the NWU Vaal Triangle, Vice Rector Research: Prof L du Plessis, 29 November 2013.



African history is limited, and equally so their knowledge of the topographic locations of African countries and the geographic positioning of Africa with regard to other continents. Because of these limitations, it takes a great deal of extra preparation and lecturing to ensure that the students actually achieve the required skills that Subject Group History at the Vaal Triangle Campus wishes them to have acquired when completing a module.

### **Module information**

Hist 211 consists of 16 credits. The module covers themes on Africa and South Africa, as well as politics. As far as the reference to “politics” in the module title is concerned, its meaning relates to Aristotle’s understanding thereof, namely the “affairs of the cities” in ways of governing and in governments.<sup>55</sup> Though the key focus in the Hist 211 module is to historiographically recall the level and status of application of democracy in Africa, the students are first introduced to how democracy developed outside Africa’s borders. A next outcome is to trace the introduction and development of democracy in Africa by departing from nineteenth century colonial practices to post-colonial trends in a limited selection of regions and countries. Time and the credit level of the module unfortunately do not permit enough meetings to cover the whole of the African continent in depth with the students.

An important theoretical and practical assignment outcome to be achieved by the students is to identify traces of regional/local colonialist practices (perhaps derived from the British governing system of indirect rule, and its possible culmination into racist nurturing, also possibly allowing/having allowed for distorted local democracies). In essence, the semester module programme for Hist 211 is as shown below. Note the last outcome as a practical assignment with a theoretical basis:

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55 See R Congreve, *Aristotle/Aristotelous Ta Politika: The politics of Aristotle* (Longmans, Green & Co, 1874), pp. 524; D Lambin & G du Val, *Aristotelous Politika Kai Oikonomika*, Volume 2 (BiblioBazaar, 2011), pp. 396. (Previously published in 1923).

## SEMESTER PROGRAMME

### HIST 211 module

16 credit module

#### Key outcomes to cover in *Africa and South Africa and politics*:

- √ An orientation with regard to 20<sup>th</sup>-21<sup>st</sup> century Africa;
- √ Traces of democracy from early times through the pre- to the post-colonial era – reviewing its impact on Africa;
- √ Assessing the benefits, detriments and pitfalls of colonialism and colonial systems in Africa;
- √ Re-rooting present-day problems in a selective region or/and local community to post-colonial decision making. [*In a semester-assignment format, and simultaneously covering a theoretical yet practical approach to observe post-colonial legacies in the immediate local/regional environment.*]

As general sources for an orientation regarding Africa taken from selective chapters:

- *Richard J Reid, A history of modern Africa 1800 to the present (Wiley-Blackwell, USA, 2009);*
- *Alex Thomson, An introduction to African politics, 3<sup>rd</sup> Edition (Routledge, London, 2010);*
- *Martin Meredith, The state of Africa. A history of fifty years of independence (Jonathan Ball Publishers, Johannesburg, 2005).*
- *Wangari Maathai: The challenge for Africa – A new vision, pp. 25-47 and pp. 111-128.*
- *E van Zyl, Leadership in the African context, pp. 40-60.*
- *JC Myers, Indirect rule in South Africa. Tradition, modernity, and the costuming of political power (USA, Rochester Press, 2008), pp. 1-15.*

#### Articles on:

Johan Rossouw, *South Africa: Not yet post-colonial*, SAHO, 13 August 2008.

### Hist 211 module major assignment and focus

The way in which colonialism is positioned in Hist 211 as a semester module programme locally at the NWU-Vaal Triangle Campus, and how colonialism as theme – amongst other past practices – eventually find its way as a regional/ local past and day-to-day experience for students should improve the insight

of students from the theoretical to the practical and demonstrative in order to improve their insight into the theoretical. The particular assignment structure is shared as it is believed that this experience will serve as a valuable framework for educators of History in similar environments. As it serves as a basis, there obviously is always room for improvement:

Some colonial-related criteria in a nutshell to serve as a guideline for searching some of these features in a present-day local community:<sup>1</sup>

- Race as factor permeated the social orders established by colonial regimes;
- Racial hierarchies were present from the beginnings of settlement at the Cape;
- European colonisers brought with them stereotypes and prejudices that had much more to do with an inherent ethnocentrism than a racial ideology (therefore the irony of racial intensification and consciousness and spread of racial supremacy).<sup>2</sup> The irony may very much relate to the system of (British) Indirect Rule, which strengthened the racial factor, and further divided the country with regard to governance and communities by distinguishing between tribal chiefdoms and colonised areas.
- Chiefdoms and colonised areas as colonial territory were activated into a social system of racial hierarchy as a struggle for control of resources against groups of peoples (and inclusive of labour systems in which they operated);
- “British influence tended to harden the hierarchies of race rather than dissolve them”;<sup>3</sup>
- A substantial white settler population established itself as dominant class (a very class-conscious community), with control of resources, of land and dispossessed labour.

To assist the students with the major assignment, a substantial amount of detail on the assignment framework (structural approach and literature) is provided on the University’s eFundi system and discussed twice during the semester. Students are also invited to make appointments with the lecturer to discuss the assignment and/or ask the Supplemental Instruction (SI) assistants that also provide the Hist 211 students with support concerning any learning difficulties and disabilities. The assignment for students on South Africa’s colonial legacy from a modern-day perspective in any regional/local context is as follows:

HIST 211  
**AFRICA and SOUTH AFRICA AND POLITICS**  
**ASSIGNMENT FOR .....(date)**

**PRACTICAL PART OF THEME 3**

**ASSIGNMENT FOCUS**

Practically i) explore a legacy (past or current) in the Sedibeng region and ii) argue to what extent it could be related to or/and associated with colonialism or/and an absence or distortion of democracy.

It is your task to combine your own ASSIGNMENT TITLE, covering a locality in i) and a specific formulated choice of topic in ii).

**For example:**

**Violence in Sebokeng during 1984-1986:** A reflection on its relatedness to **colonialism**

or

**For example:**

A glance at the **current socio-economic** status of **Sharpeville** as personally experienced, and arguing how its condition is **colonial-related** or associated with a distortion of **democracy**.

**The general assignment structure to be covered:**<sup>59</sup>

*Provide the theme and your name on the first/cover page.*

*Contents page + page numbers + section numbering + footnotes (sources)*

**Introduction** (as a subheading)

Motivation for the choice of theme (must be on i); ii) the resource material you have located and its value/difficulties; iii) the structure of the rest of the text to follow) [half a page].

***Suggestion:*** Map for orientation with regard to your area – very specific locality (it must have a title and a source).

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<sup>59</sup> The Hist 211-students are supported with ideas on the structure because it is experienced that they are still uncertain on a second year level how to exactly (and structurally acceptably) approach an assignment.

**Concept clarification** (as a subheading, but list the concepts as suggested in the subheading)

A concise but clear understanding of the (two) concepts that you are going to use/discuss in the rest of the assignment (for example violence and colonialism OR, for example, socio-economic and democracy distortion) [1 page].

*Suggestion:* If you can efficiently link the visibility and meaning of the sections after the history section, you may expect a favourable assessment.

**A history of your area** (As a subheading – identify the area. Use an understandable and related subheading.)

This history must concisely cover the history of your area, but mainly expose the time frame of its history on which you have decided [2 pages].

*Suggestion:* If you make use of a combination of sources in an archive and/or a personal archive and/or an oral interview of one or two people from older generations who have first-hand knowledge of a phenomenon or a topic in a particular area and/or articles from sources such as books or newspapers, you may expect a favourable assessment. Use “professor” Google in a VERY responsible way and refrain from believing and quoting Wikipedia knowledge as if it’s the only truth. If you are caught out on a “cut & paste habit” and if you don’t properly reference the sources you have used, you must simply bear the consequences. If you pioneer and originate your own combination of your area’s history, you may expect a favourable assessment.

**Discuss the specific history of the local phenomenon/theme** (as a subheading)

(For example: “Recalling the violence in Sebokeng, 1984-1986”) [3 pages]

*Suggestion:* You can make use of a combination of sources.

Link the theme you have decided on with your choice of focus: either place A & phenomenon/theme B with a distortion of democracy OR place C & phenomenon/theme D with colonial legacy features (as a subheading... revise to fit as subheading.)

Check out the tree images on eFundi to guide you in your debate.

### Conclusion

A concise summary of the assignment content and your critical analysis of the ... the visibility and possibility to connect the theme/phenomenon you cover with the historical roots of colonialism and/or distorted democracy [1 Page].

Sources: [1 page]

### Assignment prerequisites:

- 81/2 pp. (max: 2 pages as illustrations/appendixes additional to the 81/2 pages):
- 13 pages cover the full content (front page, content page and source references, footnotes, etc. excluded)

### Content:

- Chronology must be fluent;
- Prevent repetition of sentences;
- Don't over-utilise one source;
- Avoid factual errors and one-sided emotional discussions.

### FOOTNOTE & Harvard Style of referencing in the text:

- The footnote style is preferred. See the examples below (note technical care in punctuation and be consistent. If you still experience problems, make an appointment with me. I will gladly guide you.).

#### *Referencing a book:*

R Bedsprings, A history of understanding student's studying habits (Timbuktu, Me-Publishers, 1999), pp. 10-18.

#### *Referencing an article:*

R Bedsprings, "The ultimate solution to get students excited about Hist 211", Journal of Wishful Thinking, vol. 2, no. 10, 2014, pp. 10-18.



*Referencing an interview:*

Interview B Masiea (student or the credentials of anybody else)/P. Pitso (veteran Boipatong Massacre), 22 May 2013.

*Using sources from the internet:*

Anon., "Understanding the Boipatong Massacre of June 1992", <http://www.sahistory.org.za/topic/boipatong-massacre-17-june-1992>, accessed on 22 May 2013, pp. 1-4.

The following assessment rubric (see next page), covering a value of 100 marks, is used for the Hist 211-students:

Basic Technical care: 10 marks

Low-order content requirements: 20 marks

High-order skill requirements: 70 Marks

TOTAL: 100 marks

**2013 assessment**

**ASSIGNMENT ASSESSMENT HIST 211**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Assessment value: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Date: \_\_\_\_\_  
 ASSIGNMENT THEME: \_\_\_\_\_

**BASIC TECHNICAL/GENERAL 2<sup>nd</sup> year: 10**

A B C D E F

- \* *Table of contents* (visibility):
- \* *Introduction* (visibility):
- \* *References to sources* (visibility):
- \* *Page numbers* (Included):
- \* *Language* (no basic mistakes):
- \* *Appearance & neatness*:


**CONTENT (LOW-ORDER REQUIREMENTS: 2<sup>nd</sup> year: 20**

A B C D E F

- \* *Introduction* (Cover the suggested approach):
- \* *References to sources* (Citations technically correct):
- \* *Theme-focussed* (do not repeat; shows basic content progress):
- \* *Basic visuals added as appendixes/in text that applies*
- \* *Conclusion* (Cover the suggested approach to the conclusion):


**CONTENT (HIGH-ORDER REQUIREMENTS: 2<sup>nd</sup>: 70**

- \* *Theme-focussed* (in the main content outline):
- \* *Facts* (Correct and sufficient utilising of sources):
- \* Argumentation:  
*Chronological, logical, critical without repetitions & an innovative lesson discussion*
- \* *A valid/substantial conclusion covering a concise summary of the assignment and an assessment*


A B C D E F

**Key assessment indicators:**  
 A = Uitstekend/Excellent (90-100)  
 B = Baie goed/ Very good (75-89)  
 C = Goed/Good (65-74)  
 D = Bevreidigend/Satisfactory (50-64)  
 E = Onbevreidigend/Insufficient (40-49)  
 F = Swak/Poor (0-39)

**ASSESSMENT CRITERIA DETAIL ANALYSIS:**

## Conclusion

In 2009, the Nigerian economist, Samuel Wakok, wrote<sup>60</sup> as follows:

*Africa must rise up to the challenge, we must claim this 21st century which was earlier proclaimed the African Century at the turn of the last century. We should take a cue from the Latin American and Asian countries who themselves were colonized. Today many of them are a success story. We cannot continue to bask in the euphoria of colonialism and pretend that we can escape with its curses as excuses. Africa must chart a development-oriented course built on viable institutional frameworks. Our African leaders must see themselves more as Statesmen, who think of the next generation rather than mere politicians who only think of the next election.*

In essence, Wakok verbalises the thoughts of several others, whether intellectuals and/or African leaders of the past and the present. Its understanding lies within past doings and practices. An exposure of students and learners in History in the host of past doings is relatively easy. It is more stimulating and equally rewarding to allow HET students and FET learners to experience the past regionally and/or locally as a means to bridge the gap between understanding the past and the present right now.

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<sup>60</sup> SS Wakok, "The fecklessness of Africa and the wider world", 11 November 2009, as accessed in <http://www.afrikangoddess.com/fecklessnessofafrica.htm>.