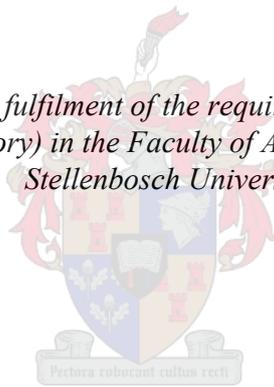


**'South African Missions, Methodism,
Identity and Agency in the Cape, with
reference to the Klipfontein Mission Station,
ca.1800s - 2010s'**

by
Annemieke B. Nel

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Supervisor: Prof. William R. Nasson

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Declaration

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English Abstract

The development of an individual's personal and community identity forms an intrinsic part of how that individual views the world around them and directs their choices and actions within that context. The nature of one's interaction with their external environment and community affiliation, tied in with their personal values and beliefs, encompass all that defines a person and their community. In modern times, personal identity can be found to be more fluid – especially due to the increased amount of exposure that any single person experiences to the world and its global cultures and traditions. Historically, some communities were more isolated to an extent that a student of history can more clearly trace the various elements that influence identity development. In this thesis, a community on a mission station is chosen as the case study for exploring identity formation and the presence of agency over an extensive period, along with the presence of substantial external influences. Officially, Klipfontein was an out-station established by the Methodist (then called Wesleyan) Church. By its nature, mission stations in South Africa were homes to indigenous occupants of South Africa, but governed by Western religious values and traditions. This meeting of two different “worlds” and cultures, provided an interesting milieu in which community identity developed and evolved. The history of the Methodist Church and its roots, as well as its policy surrounding the evangelisation of so-called *native* people in South Africa (specifically the Cape) is of importance in order to understand the context in which the inhabitants of some mission stations developed their identity over their lifetime. Additionally, the racial climate and a consideration of how and why the nomadic Khoisan came to settle in the Cape and on mission stations, specifically, may contribute to a better understanding of Western-Cape based Coloured identity in the present day. A brief history of Klipfontein and its inhabitants is recorded, drawing on the limited resources available, as well as on stories told by the elders who reside on the remaining land. Lastly, the theory of identity formation is discussed, along with parallels between the elements of an individual's cultural identity and the Klipfontein community. Over the last almost two centuries, generations of ‘*Klipfonteiners*’ have exhibited acts of agency in an attempt to secure their future on the land and preserve their historical and cultural roots that have evolved over a considerable period. The community's connection to the land they live on and the symbolic importance of their ‘place’ in the world, has surpassed the conventions of the church and the physical borders on a map and remains just as prominent as when their forebears first discovered the stone from which a fountain flowed and decided to call this place home.

Afrikaans Abstract

Die ontwikkeling van 'n individu se persoonlike- en gemeenskapsidentiteit vorm 'n intrinsieke deel van hoe daardie individu die wêreld om hulle sien en hulle keuses en aksies binne daardie konteks rig. Die aard van 'n mens se interaksie met hul eksterne omgewing en gemeenskapsverhouding, gekoppel aan hul persoonlike waardes en oortuigings, sluit alles in wat 'n persoon en hul gemeenskap definieer. In die moderne tyd kan persoonlike identiteit gevind meer vloeibaar gevind word - veral as gevolg van die toenemende hoeveelheid blootstelling wat enige enkele persoon ervaar in die wêreld en sy wêreldkulture en -tradisies. Histories was sommige gemeenskappe meer geïsoleer, dat 'n student van die geskiedenis die verskillende elemente wat identiteitsontwikkeling beïnvloed, duideliker kan opspoor. In hierdie tesis word 'n gemeenskap op 'n sendingstasie gekies as die gevallestudie om identiteitsvorming en die teenwoordigheid van agentskap oor 'n uitgebreide tydperk te ondersoek, tesame met die teenwoordigheid van aansienlike eksterne invloede. Amptelik was Klipfontein 'n sendingstasie gestig deur die Metodiste (toe Wesleyaans genoem) Kerk. In sy aard was sendingstasies in Suid-Afrika huise vir naturelle-inwoners van Suid-Afrika, maar beheer deur Westerse godsdienstige waardes en tradisies. Hierdie ontmoeting van twee verskillende "wêrelde" en kulture het 'n interessante milieu voorsien waarin gemeenskapsidentiteit ontwikkel het. Die geskiedenis van die Metodiste Kerk, sowel as die kerk se beleid rondom die evangelisering van inheemse mense in Suid-Afrika (spesifiek die Kaap) is van belang om die konteks waarin die inwoners van sendingstasies hul identiteit oor hul lewensduur ontwikkel het, te verstaan. Daarbenewens sal die rasseklimaat en 'n blik op hoe en waarom die nomadiese Khoisan in die Kaap en op sendingstasies kom vestig het, spesifiek bydra tot 'n beter begrip van Kleurlingidentiteit in die hedendaagse Kaap. 'n Kort geskiedenis van Klipfontein en sy inwoners word aangeteken, gegrond op die beperkte hulpbronne wat beskikbaar is, asook stories wat deur die oudstes wat op die oorblywende grond woon, vertel. Laastens word die teorie van identiteitsvorming bespreek, tesame met parallels tussen die elemente van 'n individu se kulturele identiteit en die Klipfontein-gemeenskap. Oor die afgelope twee eeue het generasies van Klipfonteiners uitstallings van agentskap getoon in 'n poging om hul toekoms op die land te verseker en hul historiese en kulturele wortels wat oor 'n lang tydperk ontwikkel het, te behou. Die gemeenskap se verbintenis met die land waarop hulle leef en die simboliese belang van hul 'plek' in die wêreld, het die konvensies van die kerk en die fisiese grense op 'n kaart oortref en bly net so prominent soos wanneer hulle voorvaders die klip waaruit 'n fontein vloei, vir die eerste keer ontdek het en besluit het om hierdie plek 'huis' te noem.

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2. Introduction

The purpose of this study is focused on exploring the development of individual and community identity on a mission station, as well as the consequent appearance of acts of agency. Klipfontein Methodist mission station is used as a case study. This thesis will show the strong connection between physical spaces such as the land on which the mission station is located and the community's strong sense of belonging to it. It is important to understand the geographical background and environment of Klipfontein, in order to better appreciate how much the community values their home and the history connected to it.

2.1 Klipfontein, its geographical background and the premise of this thesis

Upon entering the Philippi area of Greater Cape Town through Stock Road, one is greeted by a bustle of traffic, markets selling various products that range from home grown vegetables, off-cuts of carpets and semi-broken tiles to car exhausts and old items of clothing. From afar, Philippi looks like an industrial area with big grey buildings looming in the distance. Yet, whilst driving down Iman Haron (formerly Lansdowne Rd) Road, there are open areas of thick green bushes, grasslands and sand dunes on which horses and goats graze amongst the many makeshift houses, also called shacks, built from tin, metal sheets, cardboard, tiles, corrugated iron and any scrap material the inhabitants find to reinforce their shelters and housing from the harsh Cape winds. Discarded trash, tyres and broken furniture also litter the area. A bus is left unattended by the side of the road, its flickering hazard lights the only indication that it will not be moving soon; pick-up trucks and cars of the models that one rarely sees in the city anymore, hoot and navigate the roads and sometimes the crumbling pavements. Every few hours an airplane flies overhead, apparently as if about to land right on top of the shacks. The people do not seem to notice as they are used to the air traffic by now, since the Cape Town International Airport and landing strips flank the area, directly across from the N2 national highway separating the two. One cannot begin to imagine how many people inhabit this area as the shacks are observed as far as the eye can see.

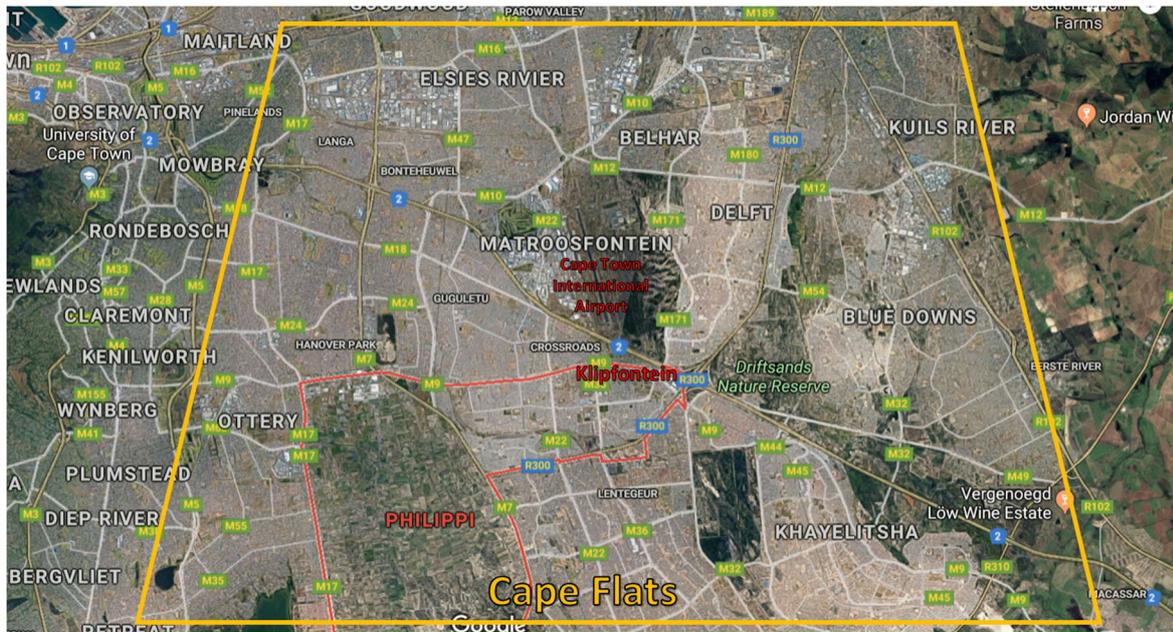


Figure 1: Map of Cape Flats area, indicating the location of Philippi township, Klipfontein and Cape Town International Airport¹

There does not seem to be any order to the layout of the dwellings that accumulate and form part of the extensive Cape Flats. Yet, if you know the directions to Klipfontein, you will find your way to a community of people settled amongst the area that is generally referred to as the ‘Philippi Township’ with the outskirts of the sprawling settlements such as Nyanga and Khayelitsha meeting here. These families, of which there are around 1500 today, have been here for a long time and the elders of the community speak of a time when they were surrounded by *veldt*² and dunes and recollections of their grandparents travelling the 20 kilometers to Cape Town in ox wagons, taking a whole day to reach their destination.

The name Klipfontein might evoke a familiar recollection, yet this is to be expected since there are many places and farms with the same name in South Africa. This vagueness, paired with the fact that the Klipfontein community in Philippi Township is barely discernible from the rest of the settlements, contributes to the problem of the sense of the ‘buried’ identity of the Klipfontein people and the ever-looming dread of relocation. During the course of interviews conducted with the inhabitants, a recurring sentence was uttered by both old and the youthful: “*Ons is al lank hier, dis ons land die*” (We have been here for a long time, this is our land).³

¹ Image downloaded from Google Maps on 14 April 2012.

² Uncultivated grassland in South Africa.

³ Baarthies, Yvonne. Interview by Annemieke Nel. Personal interview. Klipfontein, 2012

The Klipfontein *glebe*⁴ was founded by the Wesleyan Methodist church in the early 1800s as an outstation and formed part of the church's efforts to reach out to the non-European "natives" and spread the gospel of what is today known as the Methodist church of South Africa.⁵ Gradually, families began to settle around the church and the school buildings. At that time the small Wesleyan congregation was surrounded by shifting sands and a few farms.

By studying some of the written records of the Cape Downs – what is today known as the Cape Flats – the descriptions of the surroundings and the geography are often expressed with the same image and feeling throughout the sources, that of a desolate and unwelcoming milieu. Lizette Rabe has written extensively about the earliest German settlers in Philippi who arrived at the Cape in 1877 and managed to cultivate the land, though it was not an easy task.⁶ John Xavier Merriman, then the Minister of the Crown Lands of the Cape Colony, had a vision to convert the Cape Downs into the main source of vegetables and food produce for Cape Town.⁷ One of the biggest contemporary challenges was to try to stop the sand from being moved around by the incessant winds of the Cape. Merriman, believing that the ground was fertile, had the idea of persuading the farmers in neighbouring areas to attempt to plant trees and bushes to act as windscreens so that the sands would not shift around as much, but none of the farmers could be persuaded.⁸ When studying the varied imagery to be found in historical sources, one is not surprised to learn of the reluctance of the farmers to oblige Merriman. One of the most striking descriptions was recorded by a botanist, C.J.F. Bunbury in 1838:

I botanised [...] on these Flats, a wide and level expanse of loose white sand, covered with a vast variety of heaths, and other low shrubs. There is not a hill nor a rock to be met with in the line between two bays – nothing but this dead flat of sand.⁹

An article in the *Cape Times*, written on the German settlers' 50th Anniversary at Philippi, portrayed the flats as a "wild, desolate waste of land unbroken by tree or shrub and covered with sand dunes".¹⁰ According to earlier sources, however, the Flats were not always as barren as it was found to be then. Before evidence of European occupation in the area, the Flats were recorded to have been covered with a light growth of shrubbery and *fynbos*.¹¹ The effective extermination of these low growths has been attributed to the grazing of the cattle owned by Dutch Free Burghers living in the region, who

⁴ The term 'glebe' refers to a plot of cultivatable land belonging to an English parish church or ecclesiastical office

⁵ *Shack/Slum Dwellers International* DVD, Cape Town, CORC, 2006.

⁶ L. Rabe, *Bete und Arbeite*, 12.

⁷ W. Hellberg, *The German settlements in South Africa since the middle of the nineteenth century*, 34.

⁸ *Ibid.*

⁹ Rabe, *Bete*, 21.

¹⁰ Anon., *The Cape Times*, 27 February 1933, 7

¹¹ Fynbos is a small-leaved plant or shrub that is predominant in Western Cape and Eastern Cape.

possessed grazing licences, and also to the impact of generations of slaves who collected the branches for firewood.¹² This gradual destruction of the undergrowth led to the destabilisation of the sands and resulted in the Flats transforming into a form of desert.¹³

Another geographical feature of note regarding the Cape Flats, was that although it was a desert in the summer, it was transformed into a muddy morass during winter due to the heavy rains around the month of August.¹⁴ The reason for this annual flooding of the Flats has been credited to the manifestation of a geographical element: the reality that the whole area was once a sea straight.¹⁵ In fact, according to a geographer in 1949, the Cape Peninsula was once “entirely fenced in by the ocean and only became a real peninsula after the coastal elevation of 60 feet took place”.¹⁶ This elevation took place due to the rising dunes and the piling of sand by the wind. Today, the water table in many parts of the Flats is still above ground and the people who reside there are affected by the rains and flooding every year. Present day Klipfontein has been featured in various articles in the *Cape Argus*, *Cape Times* and *Die Son*, demonstrating the water damage that is rendered to their homes since there are no defences that help to prevent the rising waters during the winter months.

In 1993, a study was done on the viability of Philippi as an agricultural area. The author of this study, Lize Giliomee, noted the existence of various natural elements and factors that negatively affect the life quality of the people who live on the Cape Flats. The first and most prominent factor is the high water table, mentioned above, which leads to the flooding of the Cape Flats during winter. The high water table also leads to dampness of the houses and both this damp and abundance of still-standing water can be the cause of health problems and diseases. The second negative factor is the extremely cold temperatures during the winter. Cold air is collected on the low-lying areas between cold fronts, and temperatures fall as low as five degrees at night. Lastly, the Cape Flats is exposed to gale-force winds during the summer due to a natural wind tunnel that is formed between the Hottentots-Holland and Cape Peninsula mountains. The results of these winds are erosion of the soil and piling up of sand around built structures. An additional consequence of the strong and constant winds during the summer is that everything becomes covered in dust and can be the cause of throat, nose and eye irritations for the inhabitants.¹⁷

Before the arrival of the German settlers in the later nineteenth-century, the flat of sand stretched from Table Bay to False Bay and became the responsibility of Minister Merriman after it was sold and leased twice in the two hundred years since Jan van Riebeeck’s arrival, each time becoming part of

¹² Rabe, *Bete*, 11.

¹³ *Ibid.*

¹⁴ W. Blumer: *A garden in the Dune Sands*, 28.

¹⁵ Rabe, *Bete*, 8.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁷ L. Gilliomee, *Die behoud van Landbou in Stedelike Omgewings: Philippi as stedelike landbou-area*, 47 – 48.

the Crown lands again shortly after its sale.¹⁸ Merriman was convinced that the land was fertile and that it was the ever-shifting sands which were responsible for the ruin of any germinating life within the soil. As aforementioned, the Minister of Crown Lands wanted to develop the Flats to be the source of vegetables for the population in Cape Town and he also wanted to strengthen the white population.¹⁹ Merriman was motivated to seek German settlers, specifically, because he was highly impressed by the progress that had been made by the Germans in *Kaffraria*, an Eastern Cape area that had also been labelled as too unfertile and desolate to cultivate.²⁰ Where the Scottish settlers had been unsuccessful in their efforts to farm the land, the Germans had managed to ‘turn a desert of stone into a paradise’, and Merriman decided that they were most likely to succeed in a challenge to do the same with a desert of sand. A deal was made with Wilhelm Berg, the local representative of the Hamburg shipping company, *Godeffroy and Son* to transport more German immigrants to the Cape and consequently the first ‘wave’ of Germans arrived in 1877.²¹

The greatest imaginable disillusionment was experienced amongst the settlers themselves, as they had not been prepared for what awaited them upon their arrival. Hellberg explained that these settlers had come to South Africa to establish a new ‘fatherland’, in which their offspring and future descendants could live and flourish. It is no surprise to learn that they were disappointed to be directed to their property on the unwelcoming Flats, determined by the drawing of lots.²² The immigration agent, Captain Risler, had portrayed the Cape as a place of beauty and even as the ship entered Table Bay, the settlers had no reason to doubt his words until the truth of their future homestead was revealed. Surely, none of the settlers would have freely chosen to start their new lives on the Flats, had they known what the location looked like before they had left Germany. Nevertheless, they were resolved to make a living in this new and foreign country, a place in which they were determined to succeed in their endeavours.²³

As already noted, Merriman was convinced that the land on the Flats would be found to be fertile, just as soon as the problem of the shifting sands could be solved. Accordingly, he placed a notice in the *Government Gazette* in May 1877, announcing that prize money to the amount of 100 Pounds would be awarded to the first settler to successfully plant 50 acres of trees in the Flats or *die Duine* (the dunes), as the Flats was often referred to at that time.²⁴ Both ironically and tragically, the German settlers could not read, write or understand English and since the announcement was made a few months before their arrival at the Cape, they had little chance of knowing about this standing offer of reward. The Germans did, however, know that the roots of trees would act as good screens for the

¹⁸ Hellberg, *German*, 38.

¹⁹ Anon., *The Cape Times*, 27 February 1933, 7

²⁰ Blumer, *A garden*, 31.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 32.

²² *Ibid.*

²³ *Ibid.*, 33.

²⁴ *Ibid.*

wind and that their roots would help to bind the sands, so they planted the seeds of willow trees. Merriman managed to buy the seeds of the Australian Port Jackson tree from a passing ship due for England and he distributed this to all who wanted them.²⁵ Even at present, one can still find many Port Jackson trees amongst the flora of the Cape Flats, especially in the *Vaalbos* (the area on the opposite side of the N2 national highway which flanks the Cape Town International Airport and that is known to the Klipfontein people by this name).

Although the written histories of the Flats have claimed that the district was not used for permanent occupational or agricultural purposes before the European settlers arrived, this thesis will attempt to show that the first families that would grow to become the Klipfontein Mission Station and community had established themselves on the Flats as early as the 1800s. The so-called ‘ownership’ of the Cape Flats, before it was claimed by the British colonial Empire, has been attributed to the indigenous inhabitants. Sources have indicated that the Khoisan were already resident in the southern parts of the country from the beginning of “the Common Era”.²⁶ These nomadic people used the land for grazing and hunting purposes.²⁷ Today, it is difficult to imagine the Cape Flats as an area where wild animals roamed, especially since it is now almost completely occupied by humans in formal houses and mostly informal settlements. Yet, in one of Jan van Riebeeck’s diary entries regarding his plan to dig a channel from Table Bay to False Bay, consequently transforming the Cape into an island, Van Riebeeck wrote that the team of experts, who were sent out to investigate the possibility of a channel, experienced a very uncomfortable night out on the Flats. The many wild animals including hippopotami and lions, kept the fearful expedition from their sleep.²⁸ Even in the present day, upon venturing into the *Vaalbos*, one may occasionally still find some springboks roaming in the tall grass.

Within the sources of the German settlers themselves there are scattered references to be found of the inhabitants of the Flats upon their arrival. In one such source, there was mention that a few “Cape Coloureds”²⁹ and four Dutch farmers were found to be living in the large district which was provided for the settlement of the German settlers. The source also pointed out that these few tenants barely managed to plant and grow a meagre amount of vegetables to provide for themselves and their families.³⁰

In the past, the nomadic tribes of the indigenous inhabitants such as the San and the Khoisan travelled across the Flats, but it was unusual and unlikely for any of these groupings to settle in one area for a

²⁵ Blumer, *A garden*, 33..

²⁶ Villa-Vicencio, C. and Grassow, P., *Christianity and the Colonisation of South Africa, 1487-1870*, 41.

²⁷ Rabe, *Bete*, 8.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 10.

²⁹ The term “Coloured” is a name given to a cultural group in South Africa, that consist of people with mixed ethnic descent. The majority of this cultural group resides in the Western Cape, hence them being historically referred to as ‘Cape Coloureds’.

³⁰ Blumer, *A garden*, 13.

long period of time. The discovery of ancient bones in 1928 provided evidence that the space had once been inhabited by prehistoric people. A Professor M.R. Drennan found what is today known as the ‘Cape Flats skull’, a thighbone and tools that he dated back to the middle stone age, in a sand quarry on the Flats.³¹

It has been argued that the early Coloured inhabitants, who were found to be living on the Cape Flats by the time the German settlers arrived, could have been the herdsmen of grazing cattle belonging to the few farms on the outskirts of the Flats, and were the descendants of earlier herdsmen. The earliest mention that was made of a farm in the district was documented in 1703 in the form of a grazing licence issued by Governor W.A. Van der Stel to Beatrix Verwey, owner of the German settler farm, *Graauwe Heuvel* (Grey Hill).³² Other farms in the area included *Vaderlandsche Rietvlei*, Jan Bestbier’s *Fontein*, *Duynfontein*, *Manenberg* and *Dieprivier* – all of whom appear on the grazing registers around the early 1700s.³³

Another reason why the Flats were so inaccessible for many decades, was the fact that there were no roads going through the land. Some settlers travelled across the sand and dunes with their oxwagons and mule carts, often getting stuck along the way. In 1844, the first “hard” road was completed and ran from Cape Town, across the Flats, via Saltriver, Bellville and Eersterivier.³⁴ Indigenous sourfig was also planted on the sides of the road in order to protect it from being covered by sand.³⁵ The sourfig plants would later spread across the Flats and also become a source of food and labour, since the local Coloured inhabitants would pick and sell the figs, as well as use them for their own consumption.

The origin of the Coloured population in the Cape is said to have been partially from the nomadic Khoisan tribes who travelled from the northern regions of South Africa, some also believing that it was an attempt to flee the unrest that existed amongst Bantu African tribes. Whether the reason for the “Hottentot” or Khoisan migration was to escape conflicts and battles that were not their own, or because of their nomadic agricultural nature, the result was that the Western Cape became populated by Coloured inhabitants from a very early period.³⁶ Sources from German and Dutch settlers, such as

³¹ L. Rabe, *A Cultural Historical study of the German settlement Philippi on the Cape Flats*, 10.

³² Rabe, *A Cultural*, 14.

³³ *Ibid.*, 13.

³⁴ Rabe, *Bete*, 11.

³⁵ Rabe, *A Cultural*, 14.

³⁶ Khoisan (meaning ‘men of men’) historically denotes those original inhabitants of South-Western South Africa, who owned livestock such as cattle and sheep in the pre-colonial era. The Khoisan referred to those who did not own stock as ‘San’ and though the term was originally meant as an insult, it was later used to define all hunter-gatherers in southern Africa. In modern academic writing the hybrid term ‘Khoisan’ is used to describe the two groups together. Going forward, the term ‘Khoisan’ will be used to describe both descendants of Khoisan and San people. See: R. Ross, *These Oppressions Won’t Cease: An Anthology of the Political Thought of the Cape Khoesan, 1777 - 1970*, IX – IVII.

diaries and letters, mention the existence of settlements of rural people depicted as Coloured from well before the first established colonial settlers arrived in the Cape.³⁷

This suggests that the first generation of the settled Cape Coloured people in the locality covered by this study traded their nomadic ways for a sedentary, established way of life. The environmental and economic reasons for this change in livelihood may have been because of the nature of the resources that people found available around them, likely to have been sufficient to suit their needs for grazing and cultivation. This theory becomes striking when considering the many sources that have described the Cape Flats as a vast expanse of desert. The obvious question then arises: why would groups choose to settle in an area considered barren and infertile? Possibly, they established themselves in what is today known as the Cape Flats as early as the time of the earliest written records of where the sandy planes were once covered by *fynbos* and shrubbery, sufficient to provide grazing for animals and arable resources for human subsistence. If this theory can be accepted as plausible, then the arrival of the original, earliest, “Coloured” inhabitants of the Western Cape’s flatlands can be traced back even further than the archival sources of the early 1800s.

It is also worth taking into consideration the fact that many of the most elderly inhabitants of the Klipfontein community today believe not only that their ancestors were of Khoisan descent, but also that some of them were once slaves, finding their way to the Klipfontein area after the emancipation of slavery in 1836.³⁸ Should this be accurate, it would contribute to the possibility that once nomadic, so-called “Hottentots” were introduced to a Western way of living and the habit of residing in a single setting during their earlier nineteenth-century years as slaves and labourers – be it offshore on a colonial island in the region, or on a local Cape farmer’s smallholding.

Due to a shortage of adequate archival sources specifically regarding the incoming rural migration of the Coloured inhabitants of the Cape peninsula locality, especially before the arrival of the missionaries, it is uncertain when the initial settlement of Klipfontein was established as a distinctive cluster of people. There is a fair probability that a comprehensive number of inhabitants were already living in the vicinity of the Cape Flats (or the Cape Downs as it was called in the early nineteenth century) and that a missionary such as Reverend Barnabas Shaw, who devoted most of his time to working amongst indigenous people, thought it viable to establish a Methodist outstation after having happened upon the community during his travels between Cape Town and Somerset West as he made his way across the Cape Downs.

³⁷ Rabe, *Cultural*, 15. See also: Guelke, L. and Shell, R., “Landscape of conquest: frontier water alienation and Khoikhoi strategies of survival, 1652-1780”, *Journal of Southern African Studies*, p. 803.

³⁸ Baarhies, Yvonne. Interview by Annemieke Nel. Personal interview. Klipfontein, 2012.

Indeed, one of the earliest references to the Klipfontein mission station that was uncovered during the research for this thesis was in the diary of Reverend Barnabas Shaw in 1836. He mentioned the outstation in such a manner that suggested it had already been in existence for a time, possibly even a few years.³⁹ It is also clear that by the time of the mention of the missionary church, a substantial number of converted people were part of the Christian congregation.

The matter of the community name, Klipfontein, also arises. From oral interviews and spoken histories, the people of Klipfontein claim that their ‘ancestors’ came up with the name.⁴⁰ This can possibly be supported by the fact that the outstation was grouped along with Dieprivier and Mowbray in the earlier Methodist Church archival sources, but came to be identified later as the Klipfontein mission station. According to the local inhabitants, this name was based on the existence of a fresh water fountain that flowed from under a large rock that was located nearby. Klipfontein today is only about 60 morgen⁴¹ in total size, but almost 200 years ago, long before the Cape Flats became what it is known as today – a vast expanse of mostly informal settlements – the families were scattered across the vast expanse of the Flats. The land on which the Cape Town International Airport was built was also once inhabited by families of the Klipfontein community. The N2 national highway runs essentially through what was known as Klipfontein land by these people, decades ago. The open *veldt* adjacent to the airport is where the “Klip (Stone) Fountain” was located. Although most of the younger generations of Klipfonteiners do not know the actual location of the stone fountain, it was once said, apocryphally, that only a so-called true Klipfonteiner would be able to locate it.⁴²

The challenge with researching the history of Klipfontein, particularly the Klipfontein Methodist missionary outstation, lies largely in the quality of archival sources. Not only are the oral histories told through generations of Klipfonteiners diluted and often “coloured in” by the storytellers themselves through years of over-telling, they are also difficult to cross-reference with the available archival sources - of which the biggest source consists of the histories and diaries written by the Methodist missionaries themselves, letters of correspondence between missionaries, and official documents of the Methodist Church of South Africa. Tellingly, Du Plessis, for instance, wrote in his local missions book, *The History of Methodism*, of the difficulties of mapping out the history of the Coloured Cape inhabitants amongst whom the missionaries laboured, given the nature of the records:

³⁹ B. Shaw, *Memorials of South Africa*, 27.

⁴⁰ Baarthies, Yvonne. Interview by Annemieke Nel. Personal interview. Klipfontein, 2012.

⁴¹ Morgen was the legal unit of measurement of land which has a conversion factor of 1 morgen = 0,856 532 hectares.

⁴² Baarthies, Yvonne. Interview by Annemieke Nel. Personal interview. Klipfontein, 2012.

It is a task of peculiar difficulty to trace the history and estimate the progress of Wesleyan Missions, since in the reports rendered no distinction is drawn between work on behalf of natives and work on behalf of Europeans, In the division of circuits and the allocation of spheres of work the mission station and the European congregation, the missionary and the colonial pastor stand up on equal footing. In consequence, the historian experiences considerable difficulty in disentangling the threads of history, and distinguishing clearly between the European pastorate and the purely missionary enterprise.⁴³

After spending some time in present day Klipfontein, what is striking is the inhabitants' strong sense of belonging to the land they live on and their determination to remain living there. In recent years, there have been developments that involved the possibility that Klipfontein land could be sold off, but the majority of community members vehemently opposed this prospect. There were rumours of a mass relocation of all inhabitants to an area about thirty-five kilometres away, and during this time it became especially clear how adamant the community was to stay on the land that their generations of parents and grandparents have lived on.

This strong and shared sense of belonging to the land is what prompted questions relating to why exactly the community members feel such a powerful connection to the land. Klipfontein long ago ceased to be a vast expanse of cultivatable land in the Cape Downs and has today been reduced to a small area surrounded on all sides by sprawling townships, informal settlements, industrial buildings and busy roads. It would be prudent to look into the history of the community and its establishment as a mission station to find out what the connection is between their sense of identity and belonging, as well as the reason for their stubbornness in refusing to move.

The Klipfontein community as an outstation, serves as a case study to explore the history and identity formation of a mission station during the 1800s and 1900s within the milieu of the Methodist Church ethos. The cultural integration that took place between the indigenous Khoisan and other Black inhabitants who settled on the mission station and the Western missionaries who embarked upon a religious enterprise to evangelise and to 'civilise' the locals, certainly had a very significant impact on the community's identity. Along with identity, the issue of agency also appears as an important matter for consideration. Until more recently, historical sources regarding the colonisation of the Cape often used to cast the indigenous inhabitants into a socially constructed category as absent and silent, at the mercy of impersonal forces. Academic research from the later twentieth century has, however, started to address the matter of agency and specifically the initiative of those who lived on church missions. Once again, Klipfontein as a case study will feature here and the argument will be made that, among other examples, the act of purchasing their own land on the Klipfontein glebe was an assertion of their

⁴³ J. Du Plessis, *A History of Christian Missions in South Africa*, 294.

agency and that their agency has been translated into a strong sense of belonging to the land that their forebears worked for and bought.

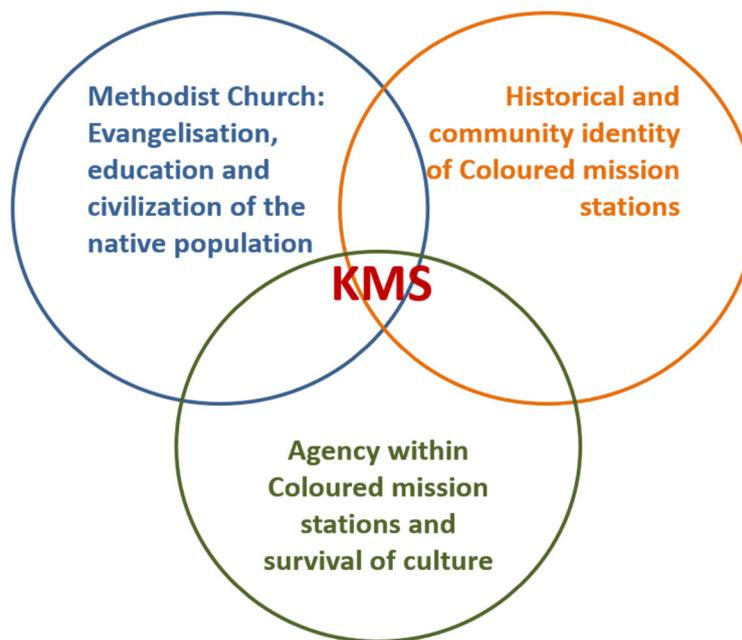
The following chapters will be based on ‘three spheres’ of research. Firstly the stance of the Methodist Church on the education and evangelisation of the indigenous inhabitants of South Africa and more specifically, of the Cape, will be considered. This background will assist in exploring the identity formulation of a community and the influences of church dogma. This chapter will also explore continuities between old and new religions that assisted in religious integration on mission stations and other influential factors such as Western civilisation, agriculture and politics in the overall development of a colonial identity within the Cape and a broader South Africa.

Secondly, the history of the Coloured communities in the Cape and the events that led to the Khoisan settling on mission stations, will be explored. Klipfontein and its history, based on the limited archival sources available, as well as the reclaimed popular memory of the people, will be discussed.

The third chapter will discuss individual and community identity development on a mission station. Its focus will be on the theory of identity formation and how it can be used to explore the community and cultural identity that is present in the Klipfontein community.

Lastly, in the fourth chapter, acts of agency in the early nineteenth century and more specifically, the agency of Coloured mission inhabitants in the Cape, will also be discussed. Additionally, this exploration will touch on the survival of old traditions and cultures within the realm of adopting new Western traditions, and how this survival might also be translated to a sense of agency.

The following image summarises the three areas of research and their points of reference within which the Klipfontein community’s identity, history and agency can be observed:



***KMS = Klipfontein mission station**

2.2 Brief personal feedback

My attention was first drawn to the Klipfontein community several years ago, during a coincidental encounter with a friend of a friend, who at the time was involved with property development in the general Philippi area. Upon hearing that I had started to study towards the completion of my Masters degree in history, this new acquaintance told me that he knew of a community that he was certain would interest me. His first words were bound to hook me instantly; he said, “There is a matriarchal community in Philippi that has existed for centuries.” At the time, I was looking for an intriguing topic to write about, and the idea of a historical community that has survived for such an extensive period of time, amidst a rapidly changing and developing environment was, I felt, sure to be a remarkable topic to research. Additionally, the suggestion that this unique society was also presided over by a matriarchal figure confirmed to me that I had found the subject matter I would be able to write my Master’s thesis about.

I was introduced to Yvonne Baarthies, the informally appointed community leader (and ‘Matriarch’) over a cup of coffee at the Cape Town International Airport – a location I would later realise to be historically relevant to the Klipfontein community itself. I soon learned that the Klipfontein community was not necessarily a formally ritualised matriarchal society, but that the women and especially Yvonne, played a very prominent role within their society. Yvonne had been collecting information about Klipfontein from the resources available to her and she happily shared her research with me. My second meeting with Yvonne took place within her house on the outskirts of Klipfontein,

and from that day I frequently visited the community and surrounding area under the guidance of my knowledgeable hostess.

The Klipfontein community is a very close-knit one and I realised from the beginning that I would not have gained access easily, had I not been introduced to Yvonne first. The community members were open to meeting and talking to me because they clearly trusted her, and I was grateful for the warmth with which I was greeted and invited into homes. I managed to do interviews with some of the prominent and older members of the community, some of whom have passed by the time of completion of this thesis.

My archival research validated that the community itself has existed since at least 1816, even though the physical land they are currently occupying is a much smaller portion of the original size of the Methodist Mission Station and glebe that is known as Klipfontein. There exists a great sense of common contribution and interdependent support amongst the inhabitants, and a clear sentiment of shared belonging. Yvonne has taken responsibility of organising community events and initiatives such as soup kitchens, care for the elderly, enterprises that involve collecting and selling scrap metal, nightly border patrols of the inhabited land for security purposes (along with the help of her sons) and programmes to help keep the youth occupied and off the streets.

It was this overwhelming sense of togetherness that stood out to me from my first encounter with Klipfontein, and I soon discovered that this has been a key element to the survival of the community for almost two centuries.

2.3 Focus and problem statement

Through this thesis I will attempt to explore how the shared sense of identity of the people of Klipfontein and their forebears who lived on the same land before them have played a crucial role in the historical survival of their community and culture, whilst focusing on the religious background and influence of the Methodist Mission Station on community identities. The practices of the Methodist Missionary Society will be explored in order to ascertain the influence these had in the shaping of the communal identities of the incoming inhabitants who settled on the mission stations. Additionally, this thesis will examine the Klipfontein community's sense of belonging to the physical land they live on, and how the acts of agency of their predecessors contributed to this.

2.4 Literature review, sources and methodological challenges

The history surrounding the Wesleyan Church and its missionary society in South Africa, and specifically the Cape Colony, is largely available through documents that were produced by the Society itself, or by the individual missionaries involved with the churches, mission stations and

outstations.⁴⁴ The Cory Library for Humanities Research in Grahamstown houses the archive of the Methodist Church of Southern Africa. The documents in this archive comprise a collection of missionary diaries, society calendars, annual reports, brochures and pamphlets, publications, letters, maps and many more. The missionary diaries, although written from a very biased and Western perspective, provide the reader with a valuable insight into the relationship between the missionaries and the indigenous inhabitants of South Africa. The Western and Protestant religiously-grounded perspective from which many of the sources are written acts as a colonial lens which, naturally, needs to be deciphered critically by the historian.

There are two difficulties that arise during the examination of the Methodist sources. The first problem has to do with investigating sources surrounding the ‘Non-European’ population and their experience on mission stations. When it comes to statistics and reports, the missionaries “never made a distinction between their colonial and their mission work, but [...] have always grouped both together”.⁴⁵ Thus it is up to the historian to ascertain the written work pertaining to the ‘native’ inhabitants. The second problem relates to the partiality of the records and accounts written by the missionaries themselves. As a comment in one of the ‘house’ journals of the Methodist Historical Society suggests:

It has been said of the South African Methodism that we are so busy “making” history, there is no need to record it. In our long domicile in this land our workers have been stretched out in a tenuous line. None of our missionaries enjoyed a settled pastorate which gave ample time for recording manifold activities of the church. Some, after their return to Britain wrote down their African adventures, but many of our original documents from which they shaped their stories, have disappeared. [...] There are many wide gaps in our knowledge of the growth of what has become one of the largest and most missionary of the Christian communions.⁴⁶

Once literacy was established on mission stations, this would have helped with the recording of journals and histories, but in the case of the Coloured mission populations who sought to assimilate with Europeans, these communities did not necessarily distinguish themselves politically as a separate race and community until well into the twentieth century.⁴⁷

One of the themes that has possibly been most neglected in mission studies is the history of agricultural mission schools. This could possibly be explained by the fact that it has been the least

⁴⁴ The name of the Wesleyan Church originated from its founder, John Wesley. Later the members of the Wesleyan society were called ‘Methodists’ in reference to the methodological and disciplined manner in which they approached the practice of their faith. For the purpose of convenience, this thesis will refer to the Methodist Church and the Methodist Missionary Society, with the exception of Chapter 2 where the origins of the church are discussed.

⁴⁵ Du Plessis, *A History*, 258.

⁴⁶ *Journal of Methodist Historical Society of SA*. Oct 1952 Vol 1, No 1 – Archival Reference BP 34, Bound Pamphlets, 34(4)

⁴⁷ See: I. Goldin, *Coloured Identity and Politics in Western Cape*

documented of the three main foci of missionary social and economic development work, namely education, health care and agriculture.⁴⁸

It is even more difficult to uncover primary sources that relate to the Cape's Methodist outstations, especially those that were situated far away from the administrative hub of the colony. With the exception of the Annual Conference Reports in which Klipfontein is mentioned, there are very few references to the remote outstation. In 1816, Rev. Barnabas Shaw recorded a visit to the Klipfontein mission during his visit to Cape Downs (one of the names used when referring to what is today known as the Cape Flats) in his diary.⁴⁹ This could be one of the earliest references to Klipfontein, which is also significant to the members of the Klipfontein community since to them it serves as proof that they have been residing on the land for at least two centuries.

Another specific reference to Klipfontein can be found in correspondence letters between Rev. Ridgill and Rev. Boyce in 1868.⁵⁰ The Title Deed pertaining to the purchasing of the land by five Klipfontein members is one of the most historically significant documents for the community in that it serves as evidence that their forerunners purchased the land for themselves. For the community, there is an emotional connection and sense of pride towards this act of autonomous agency.⁵¹

Due to the oral cultures of local indigenous populations, there are no written histories in existence and it is up to the historian to interpret the sources and to try to understand the meaning of subordinate 'voices' beneath the veil of colonial assumptions. The rise of oral history as a historical field of study has contributed to unearthing accounts and perspectives from 'below', but there is also a race against time in some circumstances to preserve these histories from disappearing. This is due to the fact that many of the elders of the communities, upon whom the responsibility fell to recall and share oral histories with their fellow community members and younger generations, are aged, and many have been passing away. As the younger generations have integrated more into modern western values, the stories are becoming lost and many are buried along with the elders who remembered them.⁵²

For the purpose of context and memory, interviews for this study were conducted with some of the oldest members of the Klipfontein community. It became apparent that there are many shared stories and memories that can be traced to a fluid oral tradition. After consulting

⁴⁸ D. L. Robert, 'Historical Trends in Missions and Earth Care', *International Bulletin of Missionary Research*, (35), (3) July 2011, 125

⁴⁹ Shaw, Memorials, 173

⁵⁰ Letters from Rev Ridgill to Reverend Boyce, 1868

⁵¹ Baarthies, Yvonne. Interview by Annemieke Nel. Personal interview. Klipfontein, 2012.

⁵² *Ibid.*

archives and other sources to substantiate these oral histories, it became apparent that some memories had become embellished creatively over time. Another challenge that presents itself with what Neal Norrick refers to as ‘elderly storytellers’, is that they represent “multiple past identities even within the scope of a single account”.⁵³ These narrators find themselves projecting their identity based on the past experience they recollect, additional to injecting the perspective and experiences of other into their remembrances. Since the audience of such stories also form their own opinions and reflections on the information they receive, their own influence will be imprinted on the very same ‘memory’ once they, in turn, retell it.⁵⁴

Historically, the mission stations were inhabited by displaced Khoisan and after the emancipation of slaves, some of the freed slaves found their way to mission stations and settled there. In a sense, the self-proclaimed ancestry of the Klipfonteiners is correctly linked to freed slaves and Khoisan descendants, but what is interesting is that an individual Klipfonteiner will relate to both ancestries at separate times of recalling their community’s history. They will say that they are descendants of the slaves and explain that by virtue of that past of exploitation they are survivors of suffering and by nature are thus highly adaptable. With the telling of another story, they will identify with the Khoisan people, elaborating on their knowledge of the surrounding land and medicinal uses of local fauna. They do not specifically know which ancestors were slaves and which were Khoisan, but they claim a share to a collective identity and past with their fellow community members.⁵⁵

The secondary sources relating to the history of the Methodist Church and Missionary Society that were largely consulted for the purpose of this thesis, included comprehensive histories that focus on the Methodist Church specifically, such as *History of the Wesleyan Methodist Church of South Africa*, by J. Whiteside and *The History of the Wesleyan Missionary Society* by W.W Holdsworth. Other studies that covered the broader missionary enterprise of all Missionary Societies active in South Africa consisted of works such as *A History of Christian Missions in South Africa*, by J. Du Plessis and the written work of Rev. W.W.Holdsworth, who wrote five volumes of the *History of the Wesleyan Missionary Society*. The various articles and books by the academic historian, Elizabeth Elbourne, who has written extensively about Christianity and missions in South Africa, also demonstrated numerous themes that can be found in this thesis, including the colonial context of Christianity, agency on mission stations, and Coloured identity. There are only a few publications that cover the Methodist church specifically, and many of the sources that look at the broad and chronological history of missions and

⁵³ N. R. Norrick, ‘The construction of multiple identities in elderly narrators’ stories.’, *Ageing and Society*, (29), (6) August 2009, 903.

⁵⁴ Norrick, *The construction of multiple identities*, 905.

⁵⁵ Baarhies, Yvonne and Rosaline. Interview by Annemieke Nel. Personal interview. Klipfontein, 2012.

Christianity in South Africa are older; it was also found that more recent articles either focus on specific events such as rebellions, wars and Acts that were passed, or take a broad approach to issues of social, economic and political identity.

The chapter on identity formation warranted the use of psychological theory surrounding the formation of identity in an individual. Benchmark literature such as the work of Erik Erikson was of significant use during the investigation of how individual and communal identities are formed within the colonial rules, religious values and general environment of a mission station. *The Power of Identity* by Manuel Castells, a more recent publication, also provided a foundation for the investigation.

Themes on cultural identity and agency have become more prominent within academic research in the last two decades. The aspect of Coloured identity in particular, is another theme that has only been explored more intensively relatively recently in terms of academic publications. There have been significant contributions in terms of the exploration of Coloured identity within academia by scholars such as Zoë Wicomb, Mohamed Adhikari, Zmitri Erasmus, Crain Soudien and Ian Goldin. There does, however, still exist a great need for more examination of the topic. An issue that can be found in relation to much of the more recent research that has been done surrounding the Coloured population in South Africa, is that it often continues to be depicted as an “insignificant minority of little consequence”.⁵⁶ It is thus imperative that Coloured histories be given greater voice from the grassroots level. Yvonne Baarthies, the community leader of Klipfontein, is proof of what can be achieved. She has attempted to research and preserve the Klipfontein history and that of the community’s ancestors in order to educate the youth in the community and also in order to leave behind a written history of the highly distinctive Klipfontein people.

The available older sources that cover the history of the Coloured people in South Africa during the eighteenth and nineteenth century are written by non-Coloured people and also adopt an inevitable colonial tone. Still, *The Cape Colour Question: A Historical Survey* by W.M. Macmillan and *The Cape Coloured people: 1652 – 1937* by J.S. Marais do not only provide a broad coverage of the history of the Coloured population in the Cape Colony in the early period of colonial South African history, but also afford the reader insight into the perspective of a historian within this period, one through a very judgemental or condescending European lens, although liberal in tone.

⁵⁶ W. Isaacs-Martin, ‘Issues of Race, Ethnicity, Socio-Economic Position and Spatial Acknowledgement In South Africa: How Spatial Access And Expression Still Perpetuate Notions Of Difference, Separation And Uncertainty Amongst The South African Coloured Population’, *International Journal of African Renaissance Studies - Multi-, Inter- and Transdisciplinarity*, 125.

2.5 Further fields of study

Political mobilisation and socio-economic developments that took place in the height of the Apartheid era are not included in the scope of this thesis. There is certainly room for research to be done that concentrates on Coloured history and identity within this time period and this could possibly serve as a topic for another research enterprise. Although this thesis focuses specifically on the development of Coloured identity on mission stations, there is an opportunity for the exploration of the experience of other ethnic groups such as Christianising Hindu Indians on mission stations, considering the manner and extent to which their community identities have been shaped, and how their traditional cultures have been absorbed and adapted to be incorporated within the values and rules of a rural mission existence.

2.6 Terminology

With regard to terminology it should be noted that the term ‘Coloured’, ‘Black’ and ‘African’ is capitalised to define the group as possessing a unique identity and ethnicity. In order to stay true to the dialogue of the period, while at the same time providing the reader with a historical lens, the racial descriptors used will remain the same as used in the original source.

3. The Wesleyan Ethos regarding the Evangelisation of the “natives”

Many of the Coloured people were slaves, and spoke a Dutch patois. Numbers of the Hottentots, though not slaves, were treated as such by the Dutch, who tenaciously clung to the belief that social inferiority was the Divinely appointed lot of the aboriginal races.⁵⁷

In order to better understand the shaping of identity within the coloured communities surrounding mission stations, it is necessary and of importance to study the Wesleyan Methodist church's ethos regarding the evangelisation of the 'native races' in South Africa and, more specifically, of the Coloured people in the Cape. The general first impression and limited knowledge the settlers and later missionaries had of the culture and habits of the native people whose occupation preceded that of the Western cultures, had an enormous impact on how they perceived the native inhabitants to be and consequently how they treated them.

It is not necessary to go into too much detail regarding how the non-Europeans were treated in the early decades of western occupation by the European settlers at the Cape, as an abundance of historical data already exist on the topic. It is, however, worth mentioning some examples and extracts from missionary sources to create a context within which the influence on community identity within the Coloured missionary stations can be understood.

The archive of documents and sources of the Methodist Missionary Church is quite extensive and consists of Annual Reports, letters and correspondence between missionaries in England and South Africa. Probably the source that is able to give the most detailed insight into events and interaction within the realm of mission stations between the Europeans and non-Europeans, are the diaries written by the missionaries themselves. Although the historian Andrew Bank does criticise these “travel narratives” for not being the most accurate of sources, due to them conveying “subjective and personal encounters with African landscape and people”, there are certainly aspects and information that serve as useful when trying to understand the relationship between missionaries, the church and the natives.⁵⁸ This does, however, require a fair amount of digging on the historian's part since, in the case of the Wesleyan (now known as Methodist) Missionary Society, no distinction is made between the sources of missionary work amongst the European or white congregations and their work amongst the native mission stations and outstations. As the quote at the beginning of this chapter suggests, the Coloured and African people (then often collectively referred to as natives) were treated as inferior, not least when it came to the religious arena. Natives who practised Christianity attended separate sermons and were often at separate venues for worshipping. Established custom within the dogma of

⁵⁷ J. Whiteside, *History of the Wesleyan Methodist Church of South Africa*, 63.

⁵⁸ A. Bank, 'The Great Debate and the origins of South African historiography', *The Journal of African History*, (38), (2), 1997, 262.

Christianity in a colonial context accepted a clear divide between the social hierarchy of white Europeans and native inhabitants or non-Europeans. This came to be criticised later in the twentieth-century. Thus, in 1947, Mary Attlee, the wife of Britain's Labour Prime Minister, delivered a lecture to the Union of South Africa's women, during which she expressed her concerns regarding the fact that "coloured and native people [were] spoken about and spoken to so contemptuously".⁵⁹ Her concerns included the limitations of work, education, service delivery and property rights for them. Attlee also referred to their moral duty as Christians to assist in this matter.⁶⁰

The Methodist church was not the first to undertake mission work among the 'natives', but it devoted the largest amount of its resources to its missionary efforts, and grew to become the church with the largest Black membership in South Africa. In present-day South Africa, the Methodist Church makes up 7.3% of the population – the largest mainline Protestant denomination in the country.⁶¹

3.1 John Wesley and the origin of Methodist ideology

John Wesley was the founding father of the Methodist Church ethos. It is of interest to briefly explain the origin of the name 'Methodist'. In 1729, John and his brother Charles - sons of the rector of Epworth – were students at Christ Church, Oxford. They were both devout and gathered around them some students who were like-minded – they were known as the 'Holy Club' of which John was chosen as the president. The members of this club would meet six evenings per week during which they would study the Scriptures and pray. They were ridiculed by their fellow irreverent collegians and called 'Bible moths' (referring to their habits of feeding on the Bible as moths would feed upon cloth). Undaunted, John Wesley and his fellows would declare that "the Bible is the whole and sole rule of Christian faith and practice".⁶² This is also the doctrine to which John Wesley and the church he founded has always been faithful.

The 'Bible moths' were not extravagant in their actions and were disciplined in the practice of their faith. It was this behaviour that earned them the name of 'Methodists', though originally it was meant as a reproach:

They [the Bible moths] had set hours for reading the Bible, for self-examination and prayer, and they regularly attended the services of the Church. They systematically visited the sick and the prisoners in gaol. They were methodical in all they did, and, in derision, the college students gave them and their followers the name of 'Methodists'.⁶³

⁵⁹ M. Attlee, 'The Coloured people of South Africa', *The Royal African Society*, (46), (184) July 1947, 148.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

⁶¹ D. Forster, *Prophetic witness and social action as holiness in the Methodist Church of Southern Africa's mission*, 19; T. Stone, 'Building the Church', *Dimension Methodist Newspaper*, 1 June 2007.

⁶² Whiteside, *History*, 3.

⁶³ Whiteside, *History*, 3.

This name would become the identity of a church which would grow to become the most dominant faith perspective in present day South Africa.

John and his brother Charles continued to preach the gospel to any and all who would listen. Initially they were met with alarm and accusations of being papists by the Church of England. They were regularly mobbed by parties protesting against their teachings – often headed by clergymen.⁶⁴ As they were excluded from the churches, they preached in the open “on public highways, on village greens, at market crosses, on hillsides, in churchyards”.⁶⁵ This meant that they frequently received the audience of the masses of people who were not religious, did not attend church and were often regarded as ignorant. The main focus of the Wesley’s beliefs was that all men were ruined by sin, but that they could be saved by faith in Christ and their repentance of their sins so that they could take pleasure in a joyful and holy life through Christ.⁶⁶ This dogma was not a new one, but as Whiteside explains: “they were hidden beneath cold, lifeless sermons on the sovereignty of God, and confined in catechisms and creeds.”⁶⁷

As the followers of the Wesley’s ethos grew in number, so their gospel was spread throughout the country and later, globally. Many of the converts of ‘Methodism’ became lay preachers as they were unordained laymen. This counted in their favour initially, since they were not restrained from preaching for the very reason that they had not been ordained – though they were not able to preach within churches, they could preach anywhere else in the open air, granting them a much bigger audience.⁶⁸ Equally, this did not mean that they were free from persecution; in fact, many of the first Christians were mobbed, stoned and imprisoned because they were seen as interlopers due to the fact that they were not been ordained officially by a Bishop of the Church of England.⁶⁹

The first Methodists were people from humble backgrounds. They came from the working class and were amongst others, miners, fishermen, mechanics, soldiers and traders.⁷⁰ These men and women were mostly unlearned, but their lack of formal education did not render them unable to do spiritual work. In fact, one might even say that this apparent deficiency would become the very key to the effectiveness of the spreading of Methodism. For the unconverted members of the uneducated masses

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 5; K.G.C. Newport and T. Campbell, *Charles Wesley: Life, Literature and Legacy*, 141.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 6.

⁶⁶ J. Wesley and J. Emory, *The Works of the Rev. John Wesley A.M., Volume 1*, 155-156.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 5.

⁶⁸ W. Walker *et al.*, *History of the Christian Church*, 603. See also W. C. Holden, *A brief History of Methodism, and of Methodist missions in South Africa: with an appendix on the Livingstonian Mission*. London: Welseyian Conference Office, 1877.

⁶⁹ Whiteside, *History*, 3.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 20.

and working class could relate more easily to them and their testimonials. In a typically romanticised observation:

The carpenter could leave his bench, the smith his forge, the tradesman could step from behind his counter, and each in his way could testify: 'I have found peace with God; there is salvation in Christ for all'. In this manner the Gospel was carried to many and distant lands.⁷¹

In this popular 'commonplace' way, Methodism spread rapidly from Britain across countries by means of the travelling converts who preached the gospel freely, as an expanding Wesleyan 'church' rapidly surpassed the physical limits of the Wesley brothers. In 1747, eight years after the first Methodist chapel was erected in Bristol, John Wesley sailed to Dublin and there he found that a congregation of Methodists had formed and grown to about 300 members.⁷² More congregations (referred to as societies at the time) were formed in mainland Scotland, the Shetland and Orkney Islands, overseas in Antigua and North America, and further afield as the Methodist society grew. The "seeds of Gospel" were carried across the globe by emigrants, soldiers and merchants who had converted during Methodist services in England and continued to preach the Wesleyan ethos when they landed in other countries.⁷³ Due to the fact that the Methodist teaching was based on all men being equal sinners before Christ, little if any distinction was made between race and culture on spiritual grounds. Many of the Methodist converts-turned-missionaries addressed the slaves in their communities – much to the despair and enraged opposition of their slave-owning neighbours.⁷⁴ Thus, the Methodist church effectively became a missionary church and its mission stations spread far and wide to regions and countries such as North America, the West Indies, New Zealand and eventually Southern Africa.⁷⁵

By 1799, the London Missionary Society had already initiated missionary efforts within the Cape Colony. The Wesleyan missionaries were, however, widely regarded as the society responsible for laying the groundwork for missionary efforts that originated in Britain, but then spread globally. As Marais put it, "[the foundation of the London Missionary Society], like that of its sister societies in Britain, may be directly traced to the great Evangelical Revival heralded by the Wesleys". This revival gave rise to a surge of shared humanitarian spirit that found its purpose in missionary and philanthropic endeavours. By its charitable nature, this humanitarianism eventually found its sympathy to be focused on "backwards and oppressed peoples in distant lands". One of the greatest

⁷¹ Whiteside, *History*, 23.

⁷² *Ibid.*

⁷³ Whiteside, *History*, 24. See also N. Etherington (ed.), *Missions and Empire*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005; E. Stock, *The History of the Church Missionary Society*. London: The Society, 1899.

⁷⁴ Whiteside, *History*, 3.

⁷⁵ Anonymous. *Missionary Herald*, (37), December 1841, 65.

victories of the missionary effort across all societies is considered to be the emancipation of slavery within the British Empire in 1834.⁷⁶

3.2 Early Methodism in South Africa

The formation of a Methodist society in South Africa began much the same as it did in countries that preceded South African conversion. George Middlemiss, a soldier of the 72nd regiment of the British Army, was the first recorded Methodist preacher in South Africa. He gathered a small group of Methodists in the Cape, which steadily grew to number about 142 members by the time another lay preacher, Sergeant John Kendrick, arrived in 1812. Fourteen of the 142 members were of mixed race.⁷⁷ This is important to take note of since it was a characteristic of the Methodist church that largely influenced the implanting of its missions. Whilst many of the other denominations that were present in South Africa in the nineteenth century focused largely on one racial group – that of the white settlers or the indigenous African people – the Methodist church was openly and enthusiastically multi-racial. Consequently, the Methodist Church of Southern Africa also grew to have the largest Black membership compared to other denominations in the country, and also grew to become the largest English-speaking denomination.⁷⁸ Notably, when the wave of British settlers arrived in the Cape in 1820, Methodism had already taken root in South African society.

The Dutch Reformed Church (DRC) was the prevailing church doctrine at the Dutch East India Company (VOC) settlement at the Cape in the early eighteenth century, as implemented by Jan van Riebeeck under the order of the Dutch government's religious policy. These orders were based on a stipulation of the Second Charter of the Netherlands government of 1622, which "required the VOC to promote and protect 'public religion' – namely, the Dutch Reformed orthodoxy."⁷⁹ Essentially, Van Riebeeck was expected to sustain peaceful associations with the traders who frequented the Cape refreshment station, as well as the native inhabitants. The implementation of the DRC beliefs was also another way for the VOC to maintain control in the realm of "religio-political" Dutch imperialism.⁸⁰ The VOC was adamant about preserving its commanding authority over the Colony, including the issue of colonial religious expansion, and as a result it was very strict towards members of other denominations such as the Roman Catholic Church, Lutheran Church and the French Huguenots.

⁷⁶ J. S. Marais, *The Cape Coloured people: 1652-1937*, 141. For examples see M. Turner, *Slaves and Missionaries: The Disintegration of Jamaican Slave Society, 1787-1834*. Jamaica: The Press University of the West Indies, 1998; O. Ojo and N. Hunt, *Slavery in Africa and the Caribbean: A History of Enslavement and Identity since the eighteenth Century*. London: I.B. Tauris, 2012; D. G. Mathews, *Slavery and Methodism: A Chapter in American Morality, 1780-1845*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1965.

⁷⁷ W. G. Mears, *Methodism in the Cape*, 6.

⁷⁸ J. de Gruchy and S. de Gruchy *The Church struggle in South Africa: 25th Anniversary Edition*, 14; J. W. Hofmeyer and G. J. Pillay, *Perspectives on Church history: An introduction for South African Readers*, 253.

⁷⁹ C. Villa-Vicencio and P. Grassow, *Christianity*, 3.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*

Members of these churches were initially not permitted to engage in public worship, nor were they allowed to establish separate congregations. This firm grasp on the religious activities of the VOC's officials and also of the settlers of the colony, also extended as far as the indigenous inhabitants and specifically the Khoisan.⁸¹ For this reason, any form of missionary work was limited during this period.

The very first native mission station established on South African soil was that of the Moravians in 1737. Georg Schmidt initiated this mission at *Genadendal* (meaning Vale of Grace) in the Caledon district, after reading about the “degraded condition of the Hottentots”.⁸² Schmidt's presence was met with much opposition from the ministers of the DRC who felt that he was threatening the authority of their church and infringing on the ministry, after they received word that Schmidt was baptising his converts. They wrote a letter of complaint to the Classis (governing body) of the DRC expressing their concern that Moravian baptisms were not permissible by unordained persons.⁸³ Though the Classis responded with instructions that the clergy of the DRC were to stop persecuting Schmidt, the Moravian missionary returned to Germany in 1744, and the mission station was abandoned for 50 years before it was taken up again.⁸⁴ Missionaries from the London Missionary Society subsequently entered Southern Africa in 1799 and dedicated their efforts to the conversion of inhabitants in, amongst other places, Bechuanaland and Greater Namaqualand.⁸⁵

In 1806, the Cape became confirmed as British colonial territory and, as a consequence, increasing numbers of British soldiers arrived in the Colony – one of whom was Sergeant John Kendrick, mentioned earlier in this chapter. Kendrick acted as a local lay preacher for a collection of converted soldiers.⁸⁶ They gathered for prayer at the foot of Table Mountain in order to escape the harassment of their officers and fellow soldiers. This hostility was due to a misguided belief among military officers that “if soldiers became Christians they would be spoilt as fighting-machines”.⁸⁷ Sergeant Kendrick's journal entries not only allow the reader to form a picture of the frustration and challenges they were faced with when publicly practicing their religion, but also provide a glimpse as to the animosity of the authorities specifically towards the principles of Methodism. From a journal entry dated 2 November 1810, Sergeant Kendrick accounts a conversation he had with the military Chaplain, after he and his fellow members of the informally created Methodist society were called in to be

⁸¹ C. Villa-Vicencio and P. Grassow, *Christianity*, 3.

⁸² Whiteside, *History*, 35; R. Viljoen, ‘Soil Once His Own’: The Colonial and Christian World of Lebrecht Hans Ari: A Khoikoi and Moravian Convert at the Cape, 1774-1864’, *South African Historical journal*, (59), (1), 2007, 206-207.

⁸³ C. Villa-Vicencio and P. Grassow, *Christianity*, 24.

⁸⁴ Whiteside, *History*, 35.

⁸⁵ T.R.H. Davenport & C. Saunders, *South Africa: A Modern History*, 186.

⁸⁶ J. Kendrick, *Journal of Sgt John Kendrick*, 82-85.

⁸⁷ Whiteside, *History*, 37.

‘examined’ by the chaplain. The Sergeant was called in first and his answer to the question regarding what he had been doing was “...it is my desire to do the will of God”, to which the chaplain responded: “I desire you will not go canting about and be an enthusiast, for the Methodists are enthusiastic.”⁸⁸ On another occasion, Sergeant Kendrick was reprimanded for associating and conversing with a low rank private, and his impudent response was, “I would rather keep company with a private who feared God, than with a Prince who did not.”⁸⁹ As the society’s desire for Methodist instruction increased, the Sergeant sent a request for a Methodist Minister to the Wesleyan Missionary Committee, which in response sent Rev. J. McKenny to Cape Town in 1814.

Rev. McKenny’s instructions were to preach to the soldiers, but also to focus especially on the spiritual improvement of the slave population and the indigenous inhabitants. Meanwhile, the British had conveniently adopted certain Dutch rules, one of which was that official religious services would only be permitted if approved by the Governor. McKenny applied to Lord Charles Somerset, but was met with a refusal, stating in particular that the ministers of the DRC could be offended if he preached to the slaves.⁹⁰ Even the Governor of the Cape Colony was closely watched, for as Whiteside put it, “[the Dutch’s] exclusive occupation of the Cape for 150 years had made them intolerant, and they were slow to grant others the freedom they promptly claimed for themselves”.⁹¹ After several months without the restrictions being lifted, Rev. McKenny left for Ceylon. In a second attempt, the Methodist Missionary committee sent Rev. Barnabas Shaw, who arrived in Cape Town in 1816.⁹²

After Rev. Barnabas Shaw landed, he was met with the same refusal of permission from Governor Somerset that had virtually extinguished his predecessor’s spirit, but he decided to continue without it. As he wrote in his diary “If His Excellency was afraid of giving offence to the Dutch ministers and the English [military] chaplains, I had no occasion to fear either the one or the other.”⁹³ Rev. Shaw’s congregation initially consisted of soldiers, but he soon directed his focus to the evangelisation of the ‘heathen’, which he considered to be his main purpose in the Cape. His labours would lay the historical foundation for ‘native’ and missionary interactions within the Methodist Church, and would also pave the way for the missionaries who came after him.

3.3 Evangelisation of the slaves at the Cape

It is of interest to note that with regard to the slave population of the Cape, and the VOC by extension, that the DRC had its own motives for religious (and consequently, ideological) control in the Cape

⁸⁸ Kendrick, *Journal*, 82-85.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*

⁹⁰ Whiteside, *History*, 36.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*

⁹² *Ibid.*, .37.

⁹³ W. Shaw, *Journal of W. Shaw*, April 1816, 122.

that influenced its position against the conversion of slaves. The guiding philosophy of the DRC beliefs was laid out within the charter of the VOC. The religious foundation within this charter originated from the doctrine as decided after the Synod of Dort in 1618, known today as the Five Points of Calvinism.⁹⁴ One of the principles that was cemented after the Synod of Dort was the principle that slaves who converted to Christianity were to be set free. This principle legally manifested itself in the Cape in 1770, whereby Christian slave owners were required to liberate Christian slaves.⁹⁵ Additionally, the slave-owners were obliged to educate these newly converted slaves about Christianity and also have them baptised. Naturally, the slave-owners and the VOC, fearing the gradual decline of the bonded labour force, were not in favour of this decree and generally did not adhere to it.⁹⁶ This also added to the increasing resistance the slave masters displayed towards the intended evangelisation of slaves by the missionaries.⁹⁷

Due to the VOC policy against the enslavement of indigenous people in a place of settlement, slaves were imported into the Cape Colony from various parts of India, West Africa, Mozambique, Bali, Timor, Madagascar, the Malayan Peninsula and China. The slave population of the Cape Colony was, accordingly, never as united as the slaves on the cotton plantations in the United States. The differences of origin and of cultural, linguistic and social divisions made overall solidarity very difficult. There also existed a distinct divide between the ‘domestic slaves’ who were skilled craftsmen and artisans, allowed to hire out their skills, and the common farm slaves who were considered least privileged, even within the slave communities.⁹⁸

The arrival of Islam at the Cape Colony contributed significantly to the emergence of a layer of social unity among some bodies of slaves. The Islamic religion entered the Cape Colony in the seventeenth century, when the first Malay slaves were imported.⁹⁹ Initially, the Christians of the Reformed Orthodoxy were rather indifferent to the religion of slaves – this was largely due to the doctrine of the church surrounding the principles of the Synod of Dort mentioned earlier. It was only after the arrival of the missionary societies at the Cape that an awareness started to grow around the ‘concerning’ number of slaves who were practising Islam.

There existed many factors of, and teachings within, the Muslim faith, that slaves could relate to and which also attracted numbers of them to convert to Islam:

⁹⁴ C. Villa-Vicencio and P. Grassow, *Christianity*, 6.

⁹⁵ Sir John Cradock, letter to Lord Bathurst in Theal, G.M., *Records of the Cape Colony*, (9), 103 – 132.

⁹⁶ C. Villa-Vicencio and P. Grassow, *Christianity*, 7.

⁹⁷ W. Shaw, *Journal*, 122.

⁹⁸ C. Villa-Vicencio and P. Grassow, *Christianity*, 5.

⁹⁹ Marais, *Cape Coloured*, 172.

[...] the adoption by Muslims of neglected and abandoned children, the provision of marriage ceremonies for slaves (often denied them by the church), the availability of burial services (again neglected by the Christians) and the teaching of the Qu'ran in the schools provided by the Islamic community. Not least, slaves were attracted to Islam by the promise of freedom, a promise made real as the emerging Muslim culture in the Malay (or Coloured) community promoted the well-being and liberation of slaves.¹⁰⁰

The Wesleyan missionaries and their sister-societies also advocated for the education of slaves and played an important part in championing the emancipation of slavery, but they were, obviously, not fellow-travellers of Islam. By the time that they arrived in the Cape Colony, they found the Muslim faith to be widespread amongst slaves, and naturally put considerable efforts into attempting to reverse the trend of conversion to Islam. The legacy of that trend remains conspicuous. In present-day South Africa, the largest Muslim communities are still be found within the Western Cape.¹⁰¹ Although the growth of Islam within the Cape eventually slowed down after the emancipation of slavery, there can be no doubt that the Muslim faith contributed significantly to bridging the gap between free-born people and slaves in the Colony – more so than contemporaneous Christianity.¹⁰²

After the emancipation of slavery, a large proportion of the freed slaves went to settle on the mission stations. These then became a home to many Khoisan, ex-slaves and other non-European people, who would work on neighbouring farms and in the surrounding villages as agricultural labourers. On some mission stations, providing that land was available, families were able to cultivate their own small plots of land. The children received basic education in mission schools and continued their religious instruction in the school and the church.¹⁰³

3.4 Religious factions and Anti-Slavery

The abolition of the Atlantic Slave trade by the British Empire was a lengthy campaign that spanned many years. Between 1791 and 1805 many motions were made to end the trading of humans as slaves, but they were all unsuccessful. Complete abolition of the slave trade was only achieved in 1807. It would take three more decades of further campaigning for the complete emancipation of all slaves in the British colonies to be accomplished.¹⁰⁴

¹⁰⁰ C. Villa-Vicencio and P. Grassow, *Christianity*, 6.

¹⁰¹ Staff Writer, 'The most popular religions in South Africa', *Business Tech*, 10 June 2016. See also H. Kettani, 'World Muslim Population in Africa: 1950 – 2020', *International Journal of Environmental Science and Development*, (1), (2), June 2010, 154-164.

¹⁰² Marais, *Cape Coloured*, 173.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*, 191 – 192.

¹⁰⁴ C. D. Kaufmann and R. A. Pape, 'Explaining Costly International Moral Action: Britain's Sixty-Year Campaign against the Atlantic Slave Trade', *International Organization*, (53), (4), autumn 1999, 644.

It is important to note the role that religion and religious organisations played in the anti-slavery movement. In the early eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the rising urban middle classes began to feel alienated from the Established Church. The result was the increase of what became 'Protestant Dissenter' movements which included already existing nonconformist factions such as the Quakers, Baptists, Congregationalists, Unitarians and the more recent Methodist groups. The abolitionists drew their primary support from such Protestant Dissenter factions, although there were also sects within the Established Church that supported anti-slavery campaigns. In the year that slavery was abolished in the British colonies (1807), Britain's Dissenter faction was made up of about three and a half percent of the adult population and grew to about six percent by 1830. The three largest groups within the Dissenter sects were the Methodists, Congregationalists and Baptists.

Despite the fact that the government defeated the Emancipation Bill in 1823, the support for the emancipation of slavery campaign continued to gain support as the nonconformists grew in numbers. This group was concentrated among the 'middle classes, artisans and yeoman farmers, many of whom gained the vote by the Great Reform Bill' and by the next vote for the Emancipation Bill, they made up twenty one percent of the electorate.¹⁰⁵ Once again, the Methodists featured here in an important way. As Kaufmann and Pape have explained:

Perhaps most decisive was the swing in the vote of Wesleyan Methodists, the largest Dissenter sect and somewhat more than eight percent of the electorate. Although most Wesleyans tended to support relatively conservative causes and candidates, they were always solid supporters of anti-slavery, and in the elections in the early 1830s they voted mainly based on this issue [...]¹⁰⁶

The shared conviction of the Dissenter factions that led to their unwavering support of the anti-slavery campaign was based on the belief that "God's plan for a divine order on earth is revealed through the human faculty of reason [and that] individuals must rely on their own reason, not on fallible authorities (such as Church hierarchy) and pursue their own moral betterment".¹⁰⁷ African people who, like all people on earth, were 'God's children' and also possessed the capacity to reason, were being withheld from attaining redemption. The treatment of slaves as less equal than other humans also concerned the Dissenters because they feared for the moral state of the British Empire.¹⁰⁸

The religiously zealous anti-slavery advocates dreaded that Britain would face some sort of divine retribution if they did not better their ways regarding enslaving other human beings who were on

¹⁰⁵ Kaufmann and Pape, 'Explaining Costly International Moral Action, 655.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid*, 656 – 657. See also I. Gross, 'The Abolition of Negro Slavery and British Parliamentary Politics, 1832-3', *The Historical Journal*, (23), (1), 1980, 66, 84; R. T. Anstey, *The Atlantic Slave Trade and British Abolition, 1760-1810*, 214 – 221.

¹⁰⁷ Kaufmann and Pape, 'Explaining Costly International Moral Action, 646.

¹⁰⁸ Anstey, *The Atlantic Slave Trade*, 214 – 221.

equal standing, religiously speaking. This is particularly interesting since the principle of anti-slavery was that all humans were equal before God, yet the Dissenters themselves still believed their own understanding of ‘the will of God’ to be superior.¹⁰⁹ This becomes very clear once the missionaries’ approach to evangelisation and civilisation is examined.

There are many factors that contributed to the success of the abolitionist campaign. Politically, their advantage came after the Great Reform, which added significant electoral numbers and political power to their cause. Ultimately, the national feeling of moral obligation and the consistent placing of moral responsibility of the ‘civilised nation’ towards the ‘poor savages’ from faraway and ‘backward’ countries by the Dissenters had an enduring power. As Martha Finnemore has eloquently summarised the impulses of a liberal British humanitarianism, “Once people begin to believe, at least in principle, in human equality, there is no logical limit to the expansion of human rights and self-determination.”¹¹⁰

3.5 The focus on social transformation of ‘the natives’

The essence of John Wesley’s teaching was the concept of Christian ‘perfection’ and the purpose of moving towards it. Wesley distinguished between “holiness expressed in personal piety and holiness expressed by social holiness”.¹¹¹ He proclaimed that there could be no personal holiness without social holiness, but rather that Christian perfection was attained by aspiring to a balance between acts of piety and acts of mercy. Social holiness was conveyed by Christians’ interactions with the people and world that surrounded them and to contribute to the restoration and transformation of society in general.¹¹²

Thus, it can be surmised that the foundation of Wesley’s understanding of Christian perfection could be found within social holiness. Looking at the context within which John Wesley and his brother grew up and also the classes of people they preached to whilst in the field, an ideal of upliftment and development can be readily detected. The type of people who the Wesleys converted were of the working class and also often broadly of the “poor and disenfranchised in eighteenth century England”.¹¹³ As mentioned previously, Wesley and his fellows’ exertions encountered considerable obstacles from the dominant order. The members of the upper classes of British society criticized and

¹⁰⁹ Kaufmann and Pape, ‘Explaining Costly International Moral Action, 659; Gross, ‘The Abolition, 66.

¹¹⁰ M. Finnemore, ‘Constructing Norms of Humanitarian Intervention’, in P. J. Katzenstein (ed.), *The Culture of National Security: Norms and Identity in World Politics*, 174.

¹¹¹ Forster, *Prophetic witness*, 3.

¹¹² *Ibid.*

¹¹³ *Ibid.*, 4.

actively attempted to persecute them due to the fact that they treated members of the lower classes as equally human. They were seen as essentially threatening the social order.¹¹⁴

For this reason, the theology of the Methodists was developed into a very pragmatic ministry. This affinity towards the less fortunate, humble people and servants in Britain, served as a powerful foundation that also influenced the Methodist missionaries who found themselves facing different and more diverse challenges and opportunities on other continents and in foreign countries.¹¹⁵

John Wesley's legacy and the basis of his theology clearly remained a significant influence on the contexts in which Methodism was established within the new realms of missionary work in South Africa, and among the indigenous peoples. This legacy included the fact that the groundwork was focused on practical care, social engagement and transformation. As Forster has put it:

John Wesley's heritage of practically addressing both the needs of people and the abusive and oppressive structures in society that bring about these needs.¹¹⁶

With this fundamental theology in mind, it is not surprising that Wesley was strongly opposed to slavery and later, within the specific South African context, to racial categorization and discrimination. The efforts of the earliest Cape missionaries expanded from fighting for the rights of slaves to be converted and for the improvement of their working conditions, to actively protesting against slavery and to fighting for its total abolition. Methodism supported the notion that emancipation into individual freedom was the right of all humans, regardless of their race.¹¹⁷ This was also evident in its multi-racial approach to evangelisation. The fact that the Methodist missionaries did not formally distinguish between races, at least until the mid-1800s, also influenced the overall recording of their histories, with the inevitable consequence that scholars may encounter difficulties when attempting to locate sources that might assist with specific 'racial' histories of branches of the church.¹¹⁸

The reading and studying of the scripture was a central part of Methodism and within the previously mentioned balance between personal and social 'holiness', it formed part of the former. In line with the goals of social transformation, the Methodist missionaries established schools on the mission stations. Education of native people carried almost equal weight to that of their evangelisation. These

¹¹⁴ Anonymous, *The Methodist Ethos*, Wesley School of New Zealand.

¹¹⁵ M. V. Clarke, *British Methodist Hymnody: Theology, Heritage, and Experience*, 66; H. Woodcock, *Piety among the Peasantry: Being Sketches of Primitive Methodism on the Yorkshire Wolds*, 106.

¹¹⁶ Forster, *Prophetic witness*, 8

¹¹⁷ P. Storey, *And are we yet alive: Revisioning our Wesleyan heritage in the new South Africa*, 78.

¹¹⁸ E. Beasley, *The Victorian Reinvention of Race: New Racisms and the Problem of Grouping in the Human Sciences*, 45-48.

schools focused on, amongst other things, the literacy of non-Europeans so that they could not only read from the Bible, but could also be aided in furthering their upward ‘civilization’. As Foster observes, “Some of the attempts at social transformation and development had a decidedly Western, and even blatantly colonial, slant to them.”¹¹⁹ This was of course unavoidable, not least for the missionaries, given their European background and the moral platform from which they were prone to view those seen as heathen. Fundamentally, the development of literacy was an attempt to better their understanding of the faith that the Methodists were trying to teach them.¹²⁰

Some of the Methodist projects in the nineteenth century included the building of schools, the translation of the Bible into African languages, the offering of medical care to all mission station inhabitants, the provision of homes for orphans and elder community members and the writing and subsequent publication of Christian literature.¹²¹

3.6 Navigating the notion of racism and racial superiority

Despite the missionaries’ best efforts to ‘uplift’ the native population in South Africa and specifically the Cape, the footprint of colonialism and the perceived superiority of the European settlers was deeply imbedded in society. The abolition of slavery was opposed by a majority of the local settlers, and the same reaction was prompted in later years when the missionaries called for equal rights for the Black population. From its inception on South African soil, the Methodist Church - as with many of the other churches that devoted manpower and money to their missionary efforts – continued to navigate around what has been called the ‘great obsession of South Africa’, namely, race.¹²² Racial superiority, segregation and discrimination were a reality that made the efforts of the missionaries in the field all the more difficult. The victory that they might have felt after the abolition of slavery would have been eclipsed just over a century later with the rise and implementation of Apartheid. For Foster, racial ideology in South Africa was “one of the most significant social and political forces that the church had to contend with”.¹²³ Of course, the workings of racism within colonisation is hardly a new concept, though perhaps the creation and recognition of the meaning of the actual terminology took time to evolve. As the prominent South African Methodist clergyman, Peter Storey, has noted:

The word ‘racism’ had to wait until the 20th century to be invented, indicating how long the European world remained supremely unconscious of any pathology in its attitude to people of colour.¹²⁴

¹¹⁹ Forster, *Prophetic witness*, 5.

¹²⁰ Anonymous, *Methodist Ethos*.

¹²¹ Forster, *Prophetic witness*, 5. See also R. Moffat, *Missionary Labours and Scenes in Southern Africa*. London: John Snow, Paternoster-Row, 1842.

¹²² Forster, *Prophetic witness*, 7.

¹²³ *Ibid.*, 5. See also J. Wesley, *Thoughts upon Slavery*. London: R. Hawes, 1744.

¹²⁴ Storey, *And are we yet alive*, 77.

Accordingly, the missionaries themselves were scarcely without fault in their intentions to civilise and evangelise the non-European races. In comforting earlier imagery, missionaries are more often than not portrayed as selfless individuals who risked travelling to foreign and often dangerous countries, driven by the selfless intention to show compassion and mercy to those who had not been enlightened by religion or civilised European ways. Yet, this is also not to say that the work of the missionaries did not contribute to the development of indigenous people and their remote rural communities. Viewed broadly, their interaction and involvement facilitated integration into a dominant Western social order. This integration, arguably, had both positive and negative effects on members of indigenous communities, which will be examined and discussed in the final chapter of this thesis. When it comes to the missionaries themselves, a reasonable historical contention would be that their humane intentions could not be labelled as selflessly egalitarian, given that the very notion of superiority is based on the assumption of unequal standing when one culture or value-system is juxtaposed against another, judged as inferior and requiring improvement or betterment. Granted, the Methodist missionaries might well have viewed all humans as spiritual equals, but not as equals in culture, traditions and values.

The simple way in which the indigenous groups lived appeared to European settlers, colonial officials and missionaries to be primitive and unsophisticated. One only has to consult a few sources composed by missionaries and other scholarly observers in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries to discover the use of words such as ‘backward’, ‘lowly’ and ‘barbaric’ when describing the ways in which non-Europeans lived. Because of this apparently simpler way of living, the missionaries “assumed that locals were devoid of any meaningful religious and cultural life [and that] it had to be erased and replaced with their Christian religion and related social values which were couched in western cultural robes”.¹²⁵ Thus, it can be argued that the missionaries’ intentions of evangelising and civilising the native of the ‘less developed’ countries were motivated by a seemingly noble moral cause, but they laboured in wilful ignorance of the value and importance of the culture and traditions of the people they were working amongst. In other words, the flaw was European-centred ethnocentrism. Just as the colonial state’s pursuit of the economic development of African territory was impelled by one kind or another of self-interest, so the missionaries’ self-interest was the purification of morals whilst driven by the belief that their superior or higher moral power was a result of the fact they were speaking the words of God.¹²⁶

¹²⁵ D. J. Bosch, *Transforming Paradigm shifts in Theology of Mission*, 170.

¹²⁶ N. B. Musisi, ‘Morality as Identity: The Missionary Moral Agenda in Buganda, 1877 – 1945’, *Journal of Religious History*, (23), (1) February 1999, 57, 72.

At the same time, some account has to be taken of the fact that in some ways, missionaries did incorporate the traditions and cultural aspects of the indigenous population into their teachings. Looking at the Khoisan (and later freed slaves) who settled on mission stations and on Methodist missions specifically, it becomes clear how communal identities were developed and shaped as part of the principles of the religion and European beliefs. Musisi, for example, has noted that, “Christian missions were concerned with defining, restoring and reinforcing the basis of personal and communal identity that they saw emerging from the centuries of ‘darkness’”.¹²⁷ This re-alignment of lifestyles and values was driven by the conviction that one had to be pious and strive to personify Christ in order to be deemed a good Christian. For the non-Western people on mission stations, the result was a total transformation in order to be congruent with Western European Christianity.¹²⁸

3.7 Influences on identity at a South African mission station

The establishment of a mission station included many factors that influenced the community identity of the inhabitants. Looking specifically at Khoisan mission stations and taking their cultural history into account, some prominent aspects of life on a mission station stand out.¹²⁹ Another key aspect that must be considered lies in the very definition of a mission station. Mission stations were established as a base away from the location of the main church in Britain. Generally, the infrastructure would include a chapel and school, both managed by preachers and/or missionaries. These stations possessed the ability to function independently from the main church buildings in the nearest town and often had a resident preacher who worked with, and lived with, or close to, the local members. Outstations were even more isolated due to their remote location and instead of a resident preacher or missionary, they would be visited by different preachers based on a schedule.¹³⁰

In the early eighteenth century when the Cape Colony was still relatively small compared to its development in later years, these mission stations were somewhat isolated from a larger urban settlement. This separation from the nearest neighbouring town also had an impact on the role that the church played in the influencing of community identity formation. The following information will also show that often there existed points of continuity between old and new religious systems and that these points assisted the process of interaction and engagement between the missionaries and

¹²⁷Musisi, *Morality as identity*, 58.

¹²⁸ M. Mukova and F. Mangena, ‘Ethical Implications of Missionary Christianity and the Emergence of the Chibarirwe African Initiated Church in Colonial Zimbabwe: A cultural Rights Discourse’, *The Western Journal of Black Studies*, (36), (2), 2012, 170.

¹²⁹ W. M. Freund, ‘The Cape under the transitional governments, 1795-1814’, in R. Elphick and H. Giliomee, *The Shaping of South African Society, 1652-1840*, 343-344. See also R. Elphick and T. R. H. Davenport (eds.), *Christianity in South Africa: A Political, Social and Cultural History*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997; R. S. Viljoen, *Jan Paerl, a Khoisan in Cape Colonial Society, 1761-1851*. Leiden: Brill, 2006.

¹³⁰ R. Ross, *The Borders of Race in Colonial South Africa*, 87-88; R. J. Houle, *Making African Christianity: Africans Reimagining Their Faith in Colonial Southern Africa*, 90-91.

indigenous mission inhabitants.¹³¹ The intent of the missionaries might have started out as an attempt to convert the indigenous population to the Christian religion, but the effects of mission life had a much more deep-seated influence on these communities that affected their cultural and social ethics and essentially their identity as individuals and as a community.¹³²

The term ‘community’ involves the multifaceted milieu in which its members exist in terms of physical location, past events, shared histories and also spirituality. John Mbiti has asserted that, in general, the lives of Africans revolve around the notion of community and that they place a higher value on communal identity than they do on individual identity. Traditional religious beliefs are collectively held since there is not one person, but all members as the community collective are the custodians of these beliefs. By virtue of being a member of a community, one would accept and follow the shared beliefs that are handed down from one generation to the next.¹³³ The extent of an idealised traditional community has been summarised aptly by Tarus and Lowery:

Community has both vertical and horizontal dimensions. The vertical aspect is the people’s relationship with their Supreme Being and the spirit world. The horizontal dimensions include relationship between individuals and social groups i.e. clans, individual families, the departed, and the unborn. Death does not destroy community but animates it. One is related to the visible community as well as maintaining relationships with the invisible world. Furthermore, community also includes harmony with the nonhuman world because ideally, in the African worldview, nature is “sacred” and human beings have a priestly relationship with it.¹³⁴

3.8 Evangelisation

The most fundamental first ambition of the Methodist church in South Africa was, self-evidently, to preach the Methodist doctrine to all inhabitants of the Cape Colony. The conversion and evangelisation of all ‘sinners’ – and all people were considered spiritual equals as per the Methodist doctrine - was its primary purpose. Due to the focus on equality and social upliftment and also taking into account Methodism’s origin of focusing on the lower classes, it is not surprising that missionaries focused specifically on the evangelisation of the slaves and the “free” non-Europeans who were living in poverty. The fact that the Methodist church later grew to have the country’s largest Black denomination should not necessarily be interpreted as a racial preference, but rather as a reflection of

¹³¹ E. Elbourne, ‘Early Khoisan uses of the Mission Christianity’, in Bredekamp and Ross, R. T. (eds.), *Missions and Christianity in South African History*, 14.

¹³² C. J. Korieh, ‘Conflict and Compromise: Christian Missions and New Formations in Colonial Nigeria’, in C. J. Korieh and R. C. Njoku (eds.), *Missions, States and European Expansion in Africa*, 147, 154; F. Vernal, *The Farmfield Mission: A Christian Community in South Africa, 1838-2008*, 18-19.

¹³³ D K. Taurus and S. Lowery, ‘African Theologies of Identity and Community: The Contributions of John Mbiti, Jesse Mugambi, Vincent Mulago and Kwame Bediako. De Gruyter Open, *Open Theology*, (3), 2017, 305 – 312.

¹³⁴ *Ibid.*, 312.

the established colonial social hierarchy. Thus, although the Methodist church held multiracial services, it was European settler congregations which often insisted on segregated sermons.¹³⁵

Equally, Methodist missionaries – and some liberal missionaries from other denominations for that matter – were not saintly human beings who looked at inhabitants of the Cape Colony through lenses which were free of prejudicial assumptions. Their world was, understandably, that of a Christian ‘upliftment’ project. In essence, then, evangelisation proved to be a useful tool and played an integral part in colonisation and in European expansion, not to mention cultural assimilation.¹³⁶

It was not unusual for the missionaries who arrived at the Cape in the early nineteenth century to have preconceived ideas regarding the spirituality of the native inhabitants. The common term, ‘heathen’, with which they referred to them already placed the Europeans on a ‘superior’ platform from the outset. This, along with others such as ‘savage’ and ‘barbaric’ set the tone in diaries and in other contemporary narratives. There is an inescapable irony in the fact that people who proclaimed to wish to erase racial oppression and went to great spiritual lengths to discourage the notion of superiority and inferiority, did so from a stance of social supremacy. This point does not necessarily minimise the impact of the honest and zealous efforts of those such as Reverend Barnabas Shaw and his successors, but it is rather to acknowledge the impact that this contradiction would perhaps have had on how they were received by incoming converts, based on the attitudes with which they first made contact.

The journey from the first encounters between a missionary and a ‘native flock’ (in the case of this study, specifically the Khoisan) and the eventual successful establishment of a mission station was a crucial one in terms of first impressions on both sides. The history of first encounters between Europeans and the Khoisan show that the latter were very suspicious and grudging in consent. Accordingly, the manner in which people were introduced to the practices of Christianity played a very important role in their acceptance and eventual spiritual and social attitude towards it.¹³⁷

As with other African tribes, the Khoisan were not ‘empty vessels’, spiritually speaking, that needed only to be filled. They had their own set of beliefs involving spirituality before Christianity came to the shores of South Africa. Some missionaries were under the impression that this was in fact not the

¹³⁵ R. L. Watson, *Slave Emancipation and Racial Attitudes in Nineteenth-Century South Africa*, 67-68, 69-70; C. Strobel, *The Testing Grounds of Modern Empire: The Making of Colonial Racial Order in the American Ohio Country and the South African Eastern Cape, 1770s-1850s*, 66.

¹³⁶ Watson, *Slave Emancipation*, 87; A. Porter, *Religion Versus Empire?: British Protestant Missionaries and Overseas Expansion, 1700-1914*, 8, 192. See also Villa-Vicencio, *Christianity*.

¹³⁷ R. Elphick, ‘Introduction: Christianity in South African History’, in R. Elphick and T. R. H. Davenport, *Christianity in South Africa: A Political, Social and Cultural History*, 3-4; J. N. Gerstner, ‘A Christian Monopoly: The Reformed Church and Colonial Society under Dutch Rule’, in R. Elphick and T. R. H. Davenport, *Christianity in South Africa: A Political, Social and Cultural History*, 27-28.

case, some even describing them as “truly a wretched and miserable people [who] have no divine worship at all”.¹³⁸ Of course, this could not be farther from the truth; the pre-colonial African inhabitants – Khoisan and Bantu-speaking – had their own religious beliefs, albeit very different from the doctrine that the missionaries were teaching. This offered a very complex arena in which the missionaries came to evangelise a people that they hardly understood in modern-day sociological or anthropological terms.

The earthly Khoisan people believed in a deity they called Tsui-//goab (or a version of this name, depending on the linguistic grouping) which was known to them as “the creator, the guardian of health, the source of prosperity and abundance, and above all the controller of the rain and its associated phenomena of clouds, thunder and lightning”.¹³⁹ The Khoisan also believed that this deity would appear to people in many forms, including that of animals or of their ancestors. Still, the Khoisan’s religious beliefs were in fact not wholly dissimilar to Christianity, in that they also believed in a higher power, an omnipresent god that was powerful and wise and ‘good’.¹⁴⁰ Spiritually, there also existed an opposite of a ‘good’ entity, known as a version of //Gaunab, connected to evil and death.¹⁴¹ It is clear that the Khoisan had their own autonomous ideas about a powerful divine being – one that encompassed goodness, kindness and wisdom and another that was for destruction and wickedness.

[...] many Khoisan attracted to Christianity at the turn of the century tended to see Christianity as a particular revelation from a God in whom they believed already, whom they already worshipped and whom many thought could and did intervene in the affairs of humanity.¹⁴²

The similarity of this very fundamental basis of Christianity and Khoisan religious beliefs was an exploitable entry point for missionaries during the phases of evangelisation.

Another important aspect of the shaping of, and influence on, community identity on a mission station was the effect of time and the birth of new generations. As the years passed, Khoisan descendants were born and bred into a community of Christian converts. By converting, the Khoisan gave up certain of their traditional beliefs and customs to accept those of Westernised missionaries. Apart from the different customs they grew up with, the young Khoisan were not exposed to the old Khoisan religious faith and a substantial portion of their old customs were unknown to the following generations. In Genadendal in 1808, Dorothy, a midwife, explained to missionaries that the Khoisan

¹³⁸ Villa-Vicencio and Grassow, *Christianity*, 88. See also: Marais, *Cape Coloured*, 5.

¹³⁹ T. Hahn, *Tsuni I//Goam: The Supreme Being of the Khoi-Khoi*, 38.

¹⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 59.

¹⁴¹ J. Hodgson, *The God of the Xhosa: A Study of the Origins and Developments of the Traditional Concepts of the Supreme Being*, 69. See also I. Schapera, *The Khoisan peoples of South Africa: Bushmen and Hottentots*, 385.

¹⁴² Elbourne, ‘Early Khoisan’, 7.

belief in a supreme being or God whom they called ‘Sita’, was unknown to those ‘Hottentots’ who grew up among the Christians.¹⁴³ Elbourne has suggested that this meant that Khoisan members lacked the knowledge of the religion of their forefathers. During the late eighteenth century and early nineteenth centuries, they were also excluded from the religious practices of the farmers they worked for and consequently the only religious source that was available to them was that of the Christian missions.¹⁴⁴ The generations that followed thus found themselves removed from their traditional heritage and as a result they were more easily converted by missionaries and influenced by their converted elders. The colonial transmission therefore also found a useful foothold from which to influence the shape of their community identity.

3.9 Prayer and Sacred Song

Similarities can also be found between the Khoisan religious worship and that of Christianity. The old Khoisan custom also involved praying directly to Tsui-//goab. They would do so in the *veldt* at dawn whilst facing the east – a quality relating to the belief that Tsui-//goab was “present in the eastern dawn”.¹⁴⁵ Worship by means of music was also present in both Khoisan and Christian religions. It was through song and the act of singing that the indigenous people felt closer to their creator.¹⁴⁶ The Khoisan singing of sacred songs was central to their devotion to deities, often displayed by all-night singing gatherings accompanied by music and usually under the light of a full moon.¹⁴⁷ These singing practices were eventually absorbed into the Christian traditions introduced by missionaries.¹⁴⁸ It is not difficult to understand that the Khoisan inhabitants of mission stations could relate to the singing culture due to their musical history. As interaction with, and the presence of the church, increased among the Khoisan inhabitants, their all-night dancing festivals were exchanged for all-night religious meetings and sacred songs were traded for Christian hymns.¹⁴⁹ Elbourne and Robert Ross have attributed this to the “fluid religiosity” of the Khoisan people which allowed them to absorb symbols from other cultures easily.¹⁵⁰

¹⁴³ Moravian Church, *Periodical Accounts relating to the missions of the Church of the United Brethren, Diary of the Mission of the United Brethren, at Gnadenthal, Cape of Good Hope, 1809*, Volume IV, 426.

¹⁴⁴ Elbourne, ‘Early Khoisan’, 13.

¹⁴⁵ Elbourne, ‘Early Khoisan’, 14. See also Hodgson, *God of the Xhosa*, 27; Hahn, *Supreme Being*, 65.

¹⁴⁶ K. Mtshali and G. Hlongwane, ‘Contextualizing South Africa’s Freedom Songs: A Critical Appropriation of Lee Hirsch’s *Amandla!*: A Revolution in Four-Part Harmony’, *Journal of Black Studies*, (45), (6), 2014, 512.

¹⁴⁷ E. Elbourne and R. Ross, ‘Combating Spiritual and Social Bondage: Early Missions in the Cape Colony’, in R. Elphick and T. R. H. Davenport (eds.), *Christianity in South Africa: A Political, Social and Cultural History*, 33.

¹⁴⁸ M. Jorristma, ‘The Hidden transcripts of sacred song in a South African Coloured community’, *Journal of the International Library of African Music*, (8), (2), November 2008, 61.

¹⁴⁹ Schapera, *Khoisan Peoples*, 202

¹⁵⁰ Elbourne and Ross, ‘Combating’, 33.

Hymn-singing formed an important part of traditional Christian sermons, as they do in present day, and churches published and distributed hymnbooks with these collected songs for use in churches and missions. The Rhenish Missionary Society also published a hymnbook specifically for Coloured mission congregations in the mid-nineteenth century, entitled *Geestelijke Gezangen ten Gebruike van Evangelische Gemeenten uit de Heidenen in Zuid-Afrika* ("Spiritual Songs for Use by the Evangelical Congregations Formed from the Heathen in South Africa").¹⁵¹ When Barnabas Shaw wrote in his diary about his encounter with the Klipfontein outstation in 1834, he described hearing the congregation singing a Dutch Hymn to the tune of the national anthem of England, as he approached.¹⁵² This substitution of one melody for another official hymn melody is called *liederwysies* and it formed an essential source of early hymn melodies in mission congregations, as the tunes of oral sources were also used.¹⁵³

In the present day, music still plays a pivotal role in 'traditional' Coloured cultures in South Africa and specifically in the Western Cape, where the majority of the country's Coloured population resides. Studies that have looked at music within Coloured communities, often centred around Cape Town, have usually touched on topics such as the New Year's festival previously referred to as the "Coon Carnival", the Cape jazz tradition, Malay choirs and Christmas bands – all part of the musical representation of Coloured people.¹⁵⁴ Until recently, a widespread stereotype existed that Coloured people did not possess an authentic identity in terms of culture, history and race due to their mixed racial heritage and that this fluidity or hybridity added to the creation of a social category that was widely perceived as absent or silent and lacking in a clear ethnic identity. This negative perception is, of course, largely due to the fact that up until the last few decades, the existing information surrounding the history of Coloured people and their Khoisan antecedents has been filtered through the 'top-down' voices of colonists, settlers, missionaries and officials. One writer who has tried to correct this is Marie Jorritsma. She studied music and hymnody within three of the oldest Coloured churches in Kroonvale and identified a prominent legacy of colonial and missionary influence on the music of the churches, yet also a strong sense of musical history that could lead to further exploration of oral history, community memory and cultural identity.¹⁵⁵ She argues that the church music of the Coloured congregation displays the influences of Khoisan, Xhosa and colonist traits, and, consequently, creates a rich audio archive of community history. According to Jorritsma:

¹⁵¹ Jorritsma, 'Hidden transcripts, 62.

¹⁵² Shaw, *Memorials*, 173

¹⁵³ Jorritsma, 'Hidden transcripts, 62.

¹⁵⁴ *Ibid.*; See also D. Martin, *Coon Carnival: New Year in Cape Town Past and Present*. Cape Town: David Philip, 1999; C. A. Muller, *South African Music: A Century of Traditions in Transformation*. Denver: ABC Clio, 2004; S. Bruinders, 'Performance of Place: How Musical Practices in Cape Town Recreate a Displaced Community', in A. Tracey (ed.), *Papers Presented at the Symposium on Ethnomusicology*, 18, 17-20.

¹⁵⁵ Jorritsma, 'Hidden transcripts, 69.

The "hidden transcripts" of congregational singing in this community suggest a refusal to comply with the existing negative perceptions that Coloured people had no cultural history or identity. Instead this community archived its history and thus preserved its musical identity within the sound of its sacred song.¹⁵⁶

This is a good example of how the mission stations and Christian hymnody in the early nineteenth century influenced and shaped the community identity of those who not only inhabited the land, but also attended the congregations. At the same time, it becomes clear that the Khoisan's "fluid religiosity" enabled them to essentially move through the influences of the Methodist church and to retain one of the cores of their identity of the Khoisan culture, which was singing and praise through singing. This also indicates a form of resistance to externally-imposed authority and, as a result thereof, of agency, which will be elaborated upon in chapter five of this thesis.

3.10 The power of dreams and prophecies

The interpretation of dreams and the notion that meanings can be ascertained from them, is present in many cultures – African and European included. Dreams formed an important part of Khoisan beliefs as they believed these dreams contained messages and prophecies from the mystical or spiritual world.¹⁵⁷ Thus they were seen as a channel for communication between the deities they believed in and themselves in the living world.¹⁵⁸ Elizabeth Elbourne, who has written extensively on Khoisan uses of mission Christianity, has observed that "many British and American evangelicals of the period, especially Methodists, also believed in dreams as a means of divine communication, even if theological leaders disagreed", and this was exactly the type of continuity between the old religion of the Khoisan and the 'new' religion of the missionaries that contributed to the conversion of Khoisan and other non-European inhabitants on mission stations. In fact, to the benefit of the missionary efforts, dreams and the perceived messages they carried with them were often used to validate the adoption of Christianity.¹⁵⁹

Missionaries recorded the dreams of the mission inhabitants and they were sometimes approached for advice as to what the interpretation could be. Based on the fact that dreams were considered a form of communication from the sacred beings in the spiritual world, their content was considered as a message of guidance or prophecy directly from a higher power which coincided with the Christian notion of God or Jesus. Elbourne describes this as a "spiritual technique which could be used across what a Western missionary would have perceived as doctrinal lines".¹⁶⁰ Other dreams were experienced after conversion and were seen as a verification of conversion by the dreamer, for

¹⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁷ Schapera, *Khoisan peoples*, 393.

¹⁵⁸ Elbourne and Ross, 'Combating', 33.

¹⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 15.

¹⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 16.

example, historian Jane Sales noted as late as 1975 that there still existed churches in Coloured communities where youth members of catechism were asked whether they had dreams that validated their conversions.¹⁶¹

The prophetic tradition of the Khoisan by means of dream prophecies often assisted the arrival of the missionaries. An example of this can be found from the arrival of missionaries at Genadendal who met with a local man who declared that he had dreamt they would come to teach them and that he discussed this with his fellow Khoisan and that they all hoped it would come true.¹⁶² Another example of how the indigenous prophetic tradition integrated the advent of missionaries can be found in the recollections of Caffer Magerman in 1806:

When I was quite young my father used often to address us thus: Children, I have a kind of presentiment, as if some time hence good people would come to us heathen from a great distance, who will tell us, that after this life our souls will go either to a bad or a good place. Now if you should hear that such people are to come, do not stay here, but go and hear them. Many years after this, therefore, when we heard of Baviaanskloof we remembered the words of our father, and determined not to rest till we came hither.¹⁶³

The source of these prophecies and prophetic dreams may well have originated from contact that the people had with some of the first missions in the eighteenth century or from stories that they heard from other Khoisan groups and African tribes. The oral transmission of messages and stories between Khoisan communities was a powerful means of communication, as the following subchapters will suggest. Based on research that has been done in the last century on the psychoanalysis of dreams, a point can be made that Khoisan dreams involving the missionaries or elements that could be connected to missionary practices and the Christian religion years ago, could represent a manifestation of stories, experiences and contact with other missions and tribes, in their subconscious minds. According to Tedlock, “the images [of the dreamer] may have connections with the dreamer’s distant and recent past experiences” although dreaming often involves the future within its interpretation.¹⁶⁴ The dreaming experience of an individual is greatly influenced by that individual’s culture, which also sets the social context within which the dream is interpreted. Simultaneously, dreams reflect ideas of life and death and can best be interpreted out of an understanding of the culture, social institutions, traditions and religious beliefs of the dreamer.¹⁶⁵

It is interesting to note how old Khoisan religious beliefs were influenced by Christian convictions and how these influences not only guided many Khoisan to conversion but also continued to essentially shape and change their traditional beliefs as integration developed and increased on the

¹⁶¹ J. Sales, *Mission Stations and the Coloured Communities of the Eastern Cape 1800-1852*, 40.

¹⁶² Elbourne and Ross, ‘Combating’, 15; see also Bredekamp and Pliddemann, *Genadendal Diaries*, 1 1 Sept. 1793, 134.

¹⁶³ Moravian Church, *Periodical Accounts relating to the missions of the Church of the United Brethren, Diary of the Mission of the United Brethren, at Gnadenhal, Cape of Good Hope, 1809*, Volume IV, 227.

¹⁶⁴ B. Tedlock, *Dreaming: Anthropological and Psychological interpretations*, 87.

¹⁶⁵ J. Lewis and E. D. Oliver, *The Dream Encyclopedia*, 15.

mission stations. Continuities between the Khoisan religion and Christianity can be found within methods of worship, prayer, purpose of dreams and omens and the dualism of good and evil, or rather God and the devil.¹⁶⁶ Thus, it can be said that early Khoisan interaction with Christianity was informed syncretically by existing Khoisan beliefs.

3.11 Indigenous Evangelisation, lay preachers and oral transmission

Oral tradition has firm roots in the indigenous cultures of South Africa. The transference of news and historical “gossip” was dependant on an oral culture. This is also a reason why the notion of community played such a big role within these cultures. Unlike literate (and in the case of the Cape, Western) cultures, knowledge was acquired and shared within illiterate societies by means of oral transmission. Although many document-centred modern historians often shine a sceptical light on the trustworthiness and accuracy of oral sources, for these indigenous formations the content of orally transmitted information was received and circulated with confidence.¹⁶⁷

The difference between oral societies and literate societies lies in the acquisition of information and the sharing of knowledge. Within literate societies, information is acquired selectively. This is mainly because knowledge is captured within books, manuscripts and other written sources and there exists no guarantee that every member of a literate society will ever read the same publications or documents. In more bounded oral societies, we find that common culture incorporates much more information that is commonly shared by members of the community, who obtain current information that is generally known within their societies.¹⁶⁸

From a historical perspective, the value of oral sources should not be underestimated as it holds within it the history and culture of these indigenous societies. Similar to other African cultures, the Khoisan also passed on their ‘records’ and ‘accounts’ of the past from generation to generation by means of songs, stories and poems.¹⁶⁹ Therefore, in order to properly study these societies, one has to also study their historical ‘data’ in unwritten form.

As mentioned earlier, during the early stages of the Europeans’ arrival at the Cape and first encounters with the indigenous inhabitants, news of their arrival often preceded them. There are accounts of missionaries who made contact with tribes for the first time, only to realise that people had heard

¹⁶⁶ Elbourne, ‘Early Khoisan’, 16.

¹⁶⁷ J. M. Vansina, *Oral tradition as History*, 120

¹⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 125. See also J. Goody (ed.), *Literacy in Traditional Societies*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1968.

¹⁶⁹ E. Boonzaier *et al.*, *The Cape Herders: A History of the Khoisan of Southern Africa*, 35.

accounts of them and had, in some cases, even been expecting their arrival.¹⁷⁰ This was most likely the result of oral tradition in action. As mentioned earlier, these rumours of their arrival also had an influence on local prophetic traditions and dreams, and consequently sometimes even assisted the missionaries in their spiritual endeavours. As Pobee has argued:

In Africa [...] the society is predominantly non-literate and lives on oral tradition and history. Africans come to the church with all their skills of oral communication inherited down the ages. The majority of the Christians live in the rural areas, where the majority are unschooled and non-literate [...] And yet the very existence of the church in such areas [...] is evidence that their integrity, history, experiences and responses to the faith in these fellowships are being preserved and handed down orally. The very aliveness of these village churches, predominantly non-literate, is evidence of a people whose relations to the Christian gospel is being energized by oral tradition.¹⁷¹

Indigenous evangelisation contributed considerably to the spread of the Christian gospel and subsequent conversions. On mission stations and outstations congregants often took it upon themselves to preach the gospel to their fellow community members – keeping with the manifestations and characteristics of an oral tradition. The spread of early Methodism by means of lay preachers could also have assisted the integration and conversion of people with a background of oral tradition on mission stations. The preaching of the Methodist doctrine by laymen and not necessarily ordained preachers (who were taught by means of formal education) often enabled the gospel to reach those who did not have access to a church and its sermons and also facilitated a connection to grassroots people who could relate more easily to such individuals. The image of the early followers of the Methodist dogma in England, who stood in town squares and in the open air and travelled from farm to town to city to spread the gospel, is similar to that of lay preachers in the Cape and elsewhere in Southern Africa who spread the indigenous versions of Christianity by means of oral transmission. Their sermons did not take place within official churches, but under trees and in the *veldt*; within barns and huts and shelters.

Elbourne points out that the language barrier between Westerners and indigenous inhabitants proved to be a difficult obstacle that could initially only be overcome with interpreters. Naturally, the click language of the Khoisan was notoriously difficult for European missionaries to master. Numbers of Cape Khoisan people were able to speak Dutch due to their contact with early settlers, and they were used to interpret and to convey messages from the missionaries to their people. Thus, early evangelisation was very much dependant on those locals who could translate, as Elbourne has stressed:

¹⁷⁰ Moravian Church, *Periodical Accounts*, 10.

¹⁷¹ J. S. Pobee, 'Oral Theology and Christian Oral Tradition: Challenge to our Traditional Archival Concept', *Mission Studies*, (6), (1), 1989, 88.

Even when a missionary was present, far more of the actual work of evangelisation would have been carried out by Khoisan assistants in the earliest days than was the case later on.¹⁷²

Tisani has referred to these native lay preachers as “unsung heroes who made the spreading of the Word possible” because they were indispensable to the spreading of the gospel of the missionaries.¹⁷³ Due to the existing language barrier, male converts (gender barriers in schooling did not yet consent to woman and men receiving the same education) were afforded the opportunity to receive instruction. By acting as translators and interpreters first and then later on, as teachers and catechists, these men began to “wield the little power missionaries cared to dispense in the wider society”.¹⁷⁴ These lay preachers ‘prepared the ground’ for many missionaries and were vitally important for the establishment of ‘native churches’, as they were able to communicate the gospel to their fellow community members by means of their already existing tradition of oral theology. They were able to influence conversions to Christianity and to “stay with the people at grassroots”.¹⁷⁵ From another perspective, the indigenous evangelisers were also deemed to have more credibility amongst their community members, in comparison to the newcomer missionaries. They were therefore able to convey the virtue of the gospel to their ‘native brethren’ more successfully.¹⁷⁶

The first ‘African’ to be ordained in the Wesleyan Methodist Society in 1822 was Jacob Links. He had started out as an interpreter of the Methodist gospel on the Lilyfountain mission station. After he was taught to read and write there, his family moved onto the mission station when he turned seventeen. Links became a teacher to his fellow mission inhabitants and also developed into a Methodist evangelist and assistant missionary during his time at the Lilyfountain Mission. He also went on to study and learn the English language after having mastered the Dutch language. Links’s commitment to the Methodist cause and his patience with the instruction of the children and adults on the mission station led him to being ordained by the Wesleyans and also paved a pathway for other Khoisan and Nama mission inhabitants to become actively involved in the church.¹⁷⁷

Inhabitants with such communicative qualities were incorporated into the church, and members of mission station communities were given opportunities to preach to their fellow congregants. This transition provided credibility and purpose to the missionary cause amongst the local members. Over

¹⁷² Elbourne, ‘Early Khoisan’, 10.

¹⁷³ N. Tisani, ‘The Shaping of Gender Relations in Mission Stations with particular reference to stations in the East Cape Frontier during the first half of the 19th Century’, *Kronos*, (19), November 1992, 96 – 71

¹⁷⁴ Tisani, ‘Gender relations’, 71.

¹⁷⁵ Pobe, ‘Oral Theology’, 90.

¹⁷⁶ M. Ndletyana, *Middle-Class in South Africa: Significance, Role and Impact*, 6.

¹⁷⁷ B. Shaw, *Memorials*, 272.

generations, this religious element has become a significant part of the identity within communities which developed on mission stations and still plays an important role today.¹⁷⁸

3.12 Education

According to the African social and cultural historian, Leroy Vail, ethnic consciousness determined identity and could coexist with other forms of consciousness, such as religious consciousness, without apparent unease since it was cultural and involuntary. People were members of a particular ethnic group, and “it was simply a fact of existence”.¹⁷⁹ Furthermore, ethnic consciousness was not stagnant but flexible in that it developed depending on the impact of a range of variables.¹⁸⁰ One of the three main variables that influenced ethnic consciousness and implanted ethnic identity was a group of European culture brokers (these acted as middlemen or mediators to assist in facilitating the link between two different cultures). Secondly, local intermediaries were used to administer the subordinated peoples. Thirdly, ordinary people needed “traditional values” during a time of rapid social change, which also provided for the acceptance of such new ideologies.¹⁸¹

The influence of these variables on the development of various people’s ethnic consciousness that determined their identity within the colonial setting can be seen when considering education through mission schools. Traditionally in pre-colonial society, the Khoisan educated themselves, not through reading or writing but through oral tradition. Women were responsible for teaching the younger generation about family history, family praises and other genres of the local oral tradition. Oral education was also usually reserved for the evenings. Thus, education was more centred on identity, community and heritage. During the early colonial period their repertoire as educators expanded to also include Christian teachings in addition, traditional gender roles were also altered. Traditional evening oral education came to be accompanied with evening prayer that was led by not only women, but men as well. This mode of orality was further extended over time to include extempore prayer in African women, allowing them to become highly articulate.¹⁸²

The earliest mission schools were opened in the late eighteenth century, first by the Dutch Reformed Church and later by the London Missionary Society in the Cape Colony. With the arrival of more missionaries and the intensification of the colonising aims of imperialism, the number of mission schools increased. One shared trait of all mission schools was that evangelisation and scholastic education were always to be intertwined. As J.S. Marais noted:

¹⁷⁸ Baarthis, Yvonne. Interview by Annemieke Nel. Informal interview. Klipfontein, Philippi. 2011.

¹⁷⁹ L. Vail, ‘Introduction: Ethnicity in Southern African History’, in L. Vail (ed.), *The Creation of Tribalism in Southern Africa*, 10.

¹⁸⁰ Vail, *Ethnicity in Southern African History*, 10.

¹⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 11.

¹⁸² Tisani, ‘Gender Relations’, 72.

Like marriage, education in the early decades of the nineteenth century was bound up with the church. Such education as the slaves [and Hottentots] received was designed to fit them for church membership.¹⁸³

Meanwhile, intellectuals, or culture brokers, were instrumental in defining the characteristics of members of various ethnic groups.¹⁸⁴ European missionaries fell into this category. As Vail argued:

The role of missionaries was especially crucial in at least one – and sometimes all – of three ways, and it is evident that their influence upon the development of African history in the twentieth century has been far greater than they have been given credit for over the past two decades.¹⁸⁵

One of the roles that missionaries played was that they were instrumental in providing the cultural symbols that could be organized into a cultural identity. This was especially the case with the creation of a written language and a researched and written history.¹⁸⁶ Missionaries played an integral role in determining the “proper” form of the language, thereby seeing to the advancement of unity amongst that group and establishing divisions from others.¹⁸⁷ In addition, missionaries also contributed to the creation of identities by specifying discrete “customs” and “traditions”, and by writing the “tribal histories” of a group of people. These elements formed the cultural foundation of a distinct new, a-scriptive ethnic identity.¹⁸⁸

Missionaries’ views on masculinity, family structure and economic obligations also came to influence members of the mission communities. According to one missionary, in pre-colonial African society there was little appreciation amongst men of the need to cultivate the land, however the:

[...] Christian religion had aroused in them a conviction that it was unmanly to leave the sole cultivation of the land to be done by women, many of them with infants on their backs. The new man, who can understand the value of trade and the benefits of civilization, is a Christian product.¹⁸⁹

Similarly, another missionary also believed that one of their roles was the inculcating of industry and that even their predecessors were all in agreement that pupils would realise that through the “dignity

¹⁸³ Marais, *Cape Coloured*, 171

¹⁸⁴ For other studies that promote this argument see P. Harries, *Labour migration from Mozambique to South Africa* (D.Litt et phill thesis, University of London, 1983); T.O. Ranger, ‘Religious and rural protests: Makoni district, Zimbabwe, 1929 to 1940’, in J. Bak and G. Benecke (eds.), *Religion and Rural Revolt*. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1985; L. White, “‘Tribes’ and the aftermath of the Chitembo Rising,’ *African Affairs*, (83), (333), 1984, 511-541; A. F. Roberts, *History, Ethnicity and Change in the “Christian Kingdom” of Southeastern Zaire*, in L. Vail, (ed.), *The Creation of Tribalism in Southern Africa*, 193-214.

¹⁸⁵ Vail, ‘Ethnicity in Southern African History’, 11.

¹⁸⁶ For the significance of language in the fostering of ethnic identity and how this led to these groups’ acceptance by others see L. Smith, *Making Citizens in Africa: Ethnicity, Gender and National Identity in Ethiopia*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013.

¹⁸⁷ Vail, ‘Ethnicity in Southern African History’, 12.

¹⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 11.

¹⁸⁹ Whiteside, *History*, 322.

of work that he will attain to racial manhood”.¹⁹⁰ This, according to Holdsworth, seemed a difficult task as “that principle runs counter to the natural disposition of all African tribes”, since such work had traditionally been left to women, whereas fighting and hunting was the “fitting occupation of men”.¹⁹¹

Missionaries also played another important role in that they incorporated the idea into the curricula of mission schools that pupils had a clear ethnic identity. Such lessons were supported with studies of language and “tribal custom” in their vernacular. As a result, mission education socialised youths into acceptance of membership of a prescribed group, and the sense of belonging to a group or “tribe” became both modern and almost ‘fashionable’ through its close association with education.¹⁹²

Missionaries were generally influenced by the views of governing colonial officials that it would be dangerous to allow the local population “to continue in ignorance”.¹⁹³ Such perspectives, adopted by missionaries, were further entrenched by the colonial authorities’ awarding of annual grants to allow for the opening, running and maintenance of missionary day schools. Multiple schools were opened at various locations at such a rate that soon there was a lack of teachers available to teach.¹⁹⁴ According to Beck, these mission schools had difficulty in attracting good teachers since they offered low salaries, and therefore the level of education tended to be poor.¹⁹⁵

After the 1870s, Cape Methodist missionaries came to hold the perception that local inhabitants such as the Khoisan and Nama people, were beginning to place greater value on more secular education. Consequently, there seems to have been an improvement in literacy levels as individuals were more inclined to learn to read, write, and do arithmetic and to sing. Furthermore, prevailing missionary accounts made observations on the increased material wealth and the gradual attenuation of the power of what was considered to be primitive superstitions amongst schooled individuals. Most missionaries believed in their main objective of seeing to the “uplifting of Africans” and argued that in this “the wisdom of the spiritual guides of the last century is conspicuous”.¹⁹⁶

Lastly, missionaries also educated local people who in turn also came to play an important role in shaping new ethnic ideologies and identity.¹⁹⁷ As one missionary, Rev. Moister, noted:

¹⁹⁰ G. G. Findlay and F. G. Holdsworth, *The History of the Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society*, 320.

¹⁹¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁹² Vail, ‘Ethnicity in Southern African History’, 12.

¹⁹³ Whiteside, *History*, 79.

¹⁹⁴ Whiteside, *History*, 279.

¹⁹⁵ R.B. Beck, ‘Monarchs and Missionaries among the Tswana and Sotho’, in R. Elphick and T. R. H. Davenport, *Christianity in South Africa: A Political, Social and Cultural History*, 118.

¹⁹⁶ Findlay and Holdsworth, *The History of*, 320.

¹⁹⁷ L. Vail, *The creation of tribalism in Southern Africa*, 12.

It is a pleasing fact that 'Christian schools for the instruction of the rising generation have been 'established in –connection with each station, where many have been taught to read the Word of God for themselves.¹⁹⁸

Missionaries had hoped that once pupils had been educated they would then also begin to evangelise others who did not have access to mission schools.¹⁹⁹ For instance, another missionary stated that one of their main objectives was to see to the training of teachers and church ministers who could preside over their own people.²⁰⁰

Despite the importance placed on scholastic education by missionaries, there was a simultaneous fear that if education was not coordinated with moral and religious instruction, then it could lead to mission school pupils becoming “restless and ambitious”. Contradictory as such views might have been, the colonial authorities wanted to maintain local inhabitants in their lower ranking social and economic positions, yet also have them “civilised”. As Lord Selborne argued in the 1890s, while “knowledge is tools”, the acquisition of knowledge in the absence of religious instruction would result in the development of an individual’s “character lagging behind”.²⁰¹ Similarly, Whiteside noted that “tools in unskilful hands may inflict serious injuries”, implying that it could lead mission school pupils to strive for a higher socio-economic status and challenge the existing status quo. Consequently, it was almost universally argued that scholastic education should be accompanied by teachings that would lead to the “cultivation of reverence, self-reliance, humility, independence of thought and integrity” that would allow the mission school pupils to apply “knowledge aright”.²⁰²

Yet an unintended result was not so much that youths found themselves being evangelised, but that these pupils – usually male – were made aware of various forces and factors that were disrupting various societies. Part of their mission school education was teaching of the development of nationalism in Europe, which some used as examples of how to create similar local movements. Mission adherents adapted these Western-style lessons and reconstructed these in a new cultural idiom, aimed at being more understandable and accessible to general audiences. Through this, they formulated their own new ideologies and incorporated historical accounts received through their own oral educational traditions about their areas and a people’s past that could serve as raw material for the formation of a new intellectual ‘bricolage’. This would later come to serve as one of the means of confronting the burdens of colonialism as well as the impact of industrialisation.²⁰³

¹⁹⁸ W. Moister, *The History of the Wesleyan Missions, in all parts of the world, from their commencement to the present time*, 250.

¹⁹⁹ Tisani, ‘Gender Relations’, 69.

²⁰⁰ Findlay and Holdsworth, *The History of*, 320.

²⁰¹ Whiteside, *History*, 322.

²⁰² *Ibid.*

²⁰³ Vail, ‘Ethnicity in Southern African History’, 13.

3.13 Industrial Mission

However, despite such educational opportunities, handicrafts and practical skill development would have been more important to a struggling race to “escape from barbarism”, than even the most elementary scholastic education. Therefore, it could be argued that missionaries’ enthusiasm for education was, to some extent, misdirected.²⁰⁴ As noted, the Methodist Church began its major work with the arrival of Rev William Shaw with other British settlers in 1820. The first missionary outreaches were established in 1823, with the first mission station being established in Wesleyville. In contrast to other mission schools that offered elementary school education, Shaw envisioned a more practical school curriculum that would prepare students more practically to later enter the industrial work force. The first plans for such a school were developed in 1834 in Grahamstown, and the Watson Institute was the first Methodist school of industry to be founded in the Cape. The envisioned school was founded on Farmerfield around 1838 and was intended to advance pupils’ evangelical and civilising goals, more than the existing mission schools were doing. Shaw’s pioneering Methodist industrial and educational experiment was to be later duplicated by the colonial government and similar schools were also opened in other areas.²⁰⁵

Despite some missionaries’ enthusiasm and emphasis on a more practical education, parents’ own views on education were initially opposed to the idea that their children should receive a more practical education that would have prepared them for work as masons, carpenters, wagon-makers, or housework. This proved to be convenient for the funding of mission schools, since industrial training was expensive as it required workshops and skilled tradesmen to teach, whereas book-learning was far more affordable in comparison. Consequently, elementary education gained an exaggerated value as opposed to being educated in more practical skills that would have allowed better opportunities for children for employment in the future. Despite such practical realities, members of mission communities were eager to have their children learn to read and write in English, and to be able to complete calculations in arithmetic since they believed that this would give their offspring a greater advantage in the sphere of the labour market. Parents believed that such an education might allow their children to be employed as civil servants, teachers, and preachers that had traditionally been reserved and would remain the domain of Europeans in succeeding decades.²⁰⁶

3.14 Agriculture Missions

At the peak of European colonialism, the “agricultural missionary” became a fundamental part of the “industrial missions” discussed previously. These missionaries were often to be found within the

²⁰⁴ Whiteside, *History*, 280 -281.

²⁰⁵ Vernal, *Farmfield Mission*, 112.

²⁰⁶ Whiteside, *History*, 281.

context of “land grant” mission stations. Their purpose was to increase local people’s capacity and ability for producing their own food and becoming more self-reliant.²⁰⁷ As J.S. Marais recorded:

The institutions within the Cape Colony differed from the missionary stations established on its outskirts in one important respect: they were quite unable to support their inhabitants [...] most of the inhabitants had in one way or another to supplement their income from the soil.²⁰⁸

Similarly, H.G. Schneider of the Genadendal mission station, which also aimed to see the Khoisan people attaining a settled existence, stated that “Under the missionaries’ influence [...] the Hottentots were making the difficult transition from a nomadic to a more settled life.”²⁰⁹

With this aim in mind, missionaries introduced people to modern farming methods, and taught them about drought-resistant seed varieties, and varieties of vegetation that could supply them with food, for instance, fruit trees such as mangoes, guavas, and papayas. Agricultural missionaries introduced crop rotation, contour ridges, and reforestation projects, with the added result that it also enabled the mission to becoming self-sustaining through the production of its own food.²¹⁰

For example, Rev. Shaw also believed that with passing on more practical skills, certain groups could also learn how to become more self-sufficient and settle in their own areas. One such group was the Namaqua who had led until that time a nomadic life and had subsisted almost entirely on hunting and gathering. To induce them to settle, he gave them lessons on becoming agriculturists by introducing them to other agricultural equipment that he had brought from Cape Town, such as ploughshares, coulter, and tools. In addition, in one account given by a bystander, Rev. Barnabas Shaw taught them how to make a plough. He roughly constructed a forge as people observed and showed them how to melt iron into an implement and to hammer it into shape.²¹¹ Barnabas described people’s reaction to this process:

When the iron was taken out of the fire and submitted to the strokes of the hammer, they fled before the sparks, exclaiming: * We never saw anything like this before ; the fire flies after us!' When the plough was finished and put to work their astonishment was unlimited. They laughed and shouted : ' Look ! look at its mouth, how it bites and tears up the ground !'²¹²

²⁰⁷ Robert, ‘Historical Trends, 125.

²⁰⁸ Marais, *Cape Coloured*, 152.

²⁰⁹ H. G. Schneider, *Gnadenhal: Die Erste Evangelische Missionstation in Afrika: Erster Teil*, 157-166. For more on how the former mission station developed into the Coloured people community see B. McCusker, W. G. Moseley and M. Ramutsindela, *Land Reform in South Africa: An Uneven Transformation*. Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield, 2016.

²¹⁰ Robert, ‘Historical Trends, 125.

²¹¹ Whiteside, *History*, 43.

²¹² *Ibid.*, 45

After demonstrating how the implement could be used, six more ploughs were made and used.²¹³ However, despite this excitable account illustrating people's enthusiasm, more contemporary scholars such as Vernal have emphasised that Shaw and his missionary colleagues later complained of equivocation and a lack of interest from various individuals in learning to become agriculturists, as well as apathy amongst their potential converts.²¹⁴

Much like other missions and mission schools, education was accompanied with evangelisation. This formed the basis of what is often referred to as the "pastoral-ideal" of the nineteenth century.²¹⁵ This concept is partially reflected in a statement made by J.S. Marais:

The only practicable way of giving the Hottentots 'a stake in the land' was to utilize the assistance of the missionaries, who were prepared to try and convert the nomadic Hottentot pastoralists into agriculturists on the limited lands which were all that a poverty-stricken Government could make available as 'institutions'.²¹⁶

Such Protestant missions have often been critiqued alongside the Protestant missionary faith that prescribed the spiritual and moral power of modern farming. One historical figure who has often been used as the stereotypical example of such missionaries and used in this historical controversy is Robert Moffatt, of the London Missionary Society. Moffatt has often been referred to as "God's Gardener", a description that has been associated with him since he was literally a gardener before he went to southern Africa. When Moffatt left for his missionary service in 1817, he took with him his gardener's tools and books on botany and agriculture. In studies produced by the anthropologists, Jean and John Comaroff, they documented how Moffatt used modern methods for the production of crops as a means by which he attacked traditional religion and authority structures. For example, he did this by introducing irrigation to water his gardens, which weakened the power of the chiefs by rendering their rain-making customs as unnecessary. Furthermore, through such irrigation schemes he also challenged the traditional authority of women since their power was based on their control over agricultural production. Other means by which he did so were through his sermons on God's providence, since in his preaching Moffatt would try to drive a wedge between traditional religious authorities and control of the natural world.²¹⁷

However, apart from such limited support given to local inhabitants in a colonial setting, there were also some beneficial ramifications that stemmed from agricultural missions. Apart from medical assistance given, one of the other more visible and obvious benefits of their presence in colonial

²¹³ *Ibid.*

²¹⁴ F. Vernal, 'A Truly Christian Village': The Farmerfield Mission as a Novel Turn in Methodist Evangelical Strategies, Eastern Cape, South Africa, 1838-1883', *South African Historical Journal*, (61), (2), 407.

²¹⁵ Robert, 'Historical Trends, 124.

²¹⁶ Marais, *Cape Coloured*, 123.

²¹⁷ Robert, 'Historical Trends, 124.

settings was their work to ensure food security.²¹⁸ Missionaries' attitudes towards land were similar to that of other Europeans during this era. Nonetheless, what distinguished them to a notable extent was that they had received professional training in agricultural topics, and their empirical observations had often allowed them to accommodate local conditions. Equally, their educational background, attitudes and past experience in different environments did result at times in mistakes or at times being captive to modern scientific farming and management techniques. Still, despite such errors and shortcomings, according to Robert, agricultural missionaries filled one of the first formal conservationist roles in the non-Western world. In addition, these missionaries also passed on valuable ecological information between Europe and the localities where they operated.²¹⁹

²¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 125.

²¹⁹ Robert, *Historical Trends*, 125.

4. The Khoisan, the Coloured people and the Klipfontein mission station: surrounding historical events

4.1 Wandering into servitude: The transition of the nomadic Khoisan into a settled proletariat

4.1.1 The significance of land

Every Mission station [...] is an asylum for the oppressed and afflicted, as well as a school of Christ, in which may be learned the lessons of His love; and every Missionary is a friend of the persecuted outcast. Often has the life of the poor doomed victim been spared at the intercession of the man of God ; and many a time has the homeless fugitive found shelter in the ‘city of refuge’.²²⁰

Physically, mission stations consisted of a building or buildings from which the church and mission schools operated.²²¹ Naturally, the indigenous population who attended the teachings settled close by and as their numbers grew, communities were formed. The studies of identity formation within communities indicate that physical space can also have a deep psychological impact on an individual or group. The mission stations that were established by the churches and more specifically, the Methodist Missionary Society, played a significant attachment role for those indigenous people who moved to these centres of stable settlement. By having established their permanent residence around the mission buildings, these people were identifying the land and space as areas that would, over time, become home to them. By its very definition, a home is a place of refuge and security and the value of a place that is considered a refuge should not be underestimated.

After 1806 the Cape Colony Government continued dual policy of providing land for Hottentot settlements and of regulating the conditions under which the Hottentots served the farmers. Land for Hottentot settlements was made available only in one way, namely in the form of grants to missionary societies.²²²

By the time the Methodist mission stations and especially outstations were established in the western Cape, the indigenous inhabitants consisted mostly of the Khoisan people. There are many references towards the Khoisan or “Hottentots” (as they were called by the Dutch colonists) to be found within missionary diaries. It is clear that the Khoisan diminished in number as the occupation of the Cape Colony increased. Two reasons for the dwindling of Khoisan groups should be noted – the inland conflicts between them and larger expanding African societies, the impact of the three smallpox

²²⁰ Moister, *The History of the Wesleyan Missions*, 250.

²²¹ L. Vail, *Tribalism in Southern Africa*, 14.

²²² Marais, *Cape Coloured*, 116.

epidemics in the eighteenth century, and their consequent loss of land which led the remaining Khoisan people into the servitude of the European population, especially the farmers.²²³

4.1.2 The loss of land and the impact of the smallpox epidemics at the Cape during the eighteenth century

During the eighteenth century there were three smallpox epidemics that broke out in the Cape Colony. The first epidemic took place in 1712 and had the largest impact on the indigenous and colonial inhabitants. In 1755 a second epidemic followed and though it was as destructive as the first, the effects thereof were limited to the Cape Colony and its surrounds. Twelve years later, in 1767, the third and last smallpox epidemic broke out within the Cape Colony for the last time in the eighteenth century and its impact was the least severe of the three epidemics.²²⁴

It was during the first smallpox epidemic of 1712 that a large portion of the Khoisan population died. Some sources estimate that about thirty percent of the Khoisan population were killed by smallpox.²²⁵ The Khoisan clans were ravaged by the disease, in some instances whole *kraals*²²⁶ were lost due to their lack of medical knowledge and ignorance of the disease and how to treat it. Some among the Khoisan even believed that Dutch settlers had bewitched them, while others suggested the illness was a wicked or evil affliction, attributing to it a spiritual dimension.²²⁷ The Khoisan had never been exposed to such a disease before, and did not have indigenous remedies that could have assisted them from possibly either contracting or surviving it.²²⁸ Many of the Khoisan residing in the Cape Flats area fled from their *kraals* inland in an attempt to escape the disease. Tragically, when Khoisan in the interior encountered fleeing clans, some migrating bands were killed out of fear of becoming infected through contact.²²⁹

This abandoning of their land and also their cattle led to the depopulation of the Khoisan in the Western Cape – an opportunity that was seized on by the *trekboers*²³⁰ who soon settled in the hinterland areas.²³¹ Those members of the Khoisan population who did return to their former lands found that not only had their abandoned huts and *kraals* been burnt down by colonists and *trekboers*

²²³ T. Smith, *South Africa Delineated; or, sketches, historical and descriptive, of its tribes and missions, and of the British colonies of the Cape and Port-Natal*, 8.

²²⁴ R. Ross, *Smallpox at the Cape of Good Hope in the eighteenth century*, 424.

²²⁵ *Ibid.*

²²⁶ Dutch/Afrikaans word that refers to traditional enclosures for sheep and cattle.

²²⁷ R. Viljoen, 'Medicine, Medical Knowledge and Healing at the Cape of Good Hope: Khoisan, Slave and Colonists', *Medicine and Colonialism, Historical Perspectives in India and South Africa*, 32 - 34

²²⁸ Guelke and Shell, *Khoikhoi strategies of survival*, p. 823.

²²⁹ D.J. Potgierer, 'Smallpox epidemic strikes at the Cape', 13 February 1713, *Standard Encyclopaedia of South Africa*, 378.

²³⁰ Nomadic farmers of Dutch descent, who left the Cape Colony in an attempt to escape British rule.

²³¹ Viljoen, 'Medicine, 44 – 45.

in an attempt to reduce the spread of the smallpox virus, but that what was once their land was now occupied by farming colonists. This was the biggest blow for the Khoisan population in the Western Cape, and also marked the beginning of a period of accelerating impoverishment and marginalization.²³² These events also contributed to the platform from which Dutch-Khoisan tensions would escalate towards the end of the eighteenth century.²³³ As Bala has summarised the severe impact of the epidemic, “The disintegration of Khoisan society in the light of periodic smallpox outbreaks, together with the loss of land and livestock, fractured Khoisan way of life to such an extent that survivors were left very little choice but to seek employment and refuge on white farms.”²³⁴ Thus, those Khoisan people who survived the smallpox epidemic and were unable to find a viable existence elsewhere in the interior, found themselves in the position of landless labourers who had to work for colonists on the very lands that their ancestors’ cattle had once grazed on.²³⁵

The crucial significance of land and its impact on a group’s sense of belonging should, of course, be accorded particular importance when considering the overall influence of mission stations on the consciousness of resident adherents. Over time, the mission station would become an intrinsic part of the communities’ identities relating to religious, social and educational elements. As Alan Mountain has described the mission stations:

The mission stations in the Cape became important places of refuge for the indigenous [Khoisan]. Dispossessed of their ancestral grazing lands and other natural resources by the Dutch and unable to compete for land with the technologically advanced English settlers, the former herders moved to the mission stations – the only places where relatively large groups of [Khoisan] still lived in the south-western Cape during the nineteenth century.²³⁶

The dispossession of the Khoisan people inevitably contributed to their pressurised inclination to settle on the land of the missions institutions. This brought opportunity for mission clergy. Dr Van der Kemp, one of the most prominent figures in the early history of the London Missionary Society and a staunch supporter of the rights of the ‘Hottentots’, expressed the opinion that it was considerably easier to influence the Khoisan on mission stations, than what he had experienced in his encounters with Xhosa people.²³⁷ Van der Kemp credited the comparative ease with which the Khoisan settled on mission stations under missionary supervision to the fact that other African tribes still retained strong traditional structures and the leadership of strong chiefs. Whereas Khoisan

²³² Viljoen, ‘Medicine’, 46. See also: Ross, *These oppressions*, XVII – XVIII.

²³³ B.Sundkler and C. Steed, *A History of the Church in Africa*, 65.

²³⁴ Viljoen, ‘Medicine’, 51.

²³⁵ J.S. Marias, *The Cape Coloured people*, 7.

²³⁶ A. Mountain, *The first people of the Cape*, 59.

²³⁷ Marais, *Cape Coloured*, 144.

people had lost their established leadership and institutions and were subsequently more susceptible to new cultural influences.²³⁸

4.1.3 Coloured Servitude and the labour laws of 1809 - 1819

As already noted, apart from Moravian missionaries, the earliest Cape missionaries arrived in the southwestern region early in the nineteenth century. The London Missionary Society and the Wesleyan Missionary Society (later the Methodist Missionary Society) were the first societies to start working amongst the 'native' inhabitants. The political climate which arriving missionaries entered was oppressive towards the position of non-Europeans. In 1809, for instance, a 'Hottentot Proclamation' labour law was passed by Governor Caledon, with the main purpose of controlling the mobility of the colony's labouring Coloured population.

Between 1809 and 1819, a number of the laws and regulations that were implemented had a deleterious effect on their working and living conditions. As part of the regulations of the 'Hottentot Proclamation', 'Hottentots' were required by law to have a "fixed place of abode". This section of the proclamation obliged those who were not residing on mission stations to enter into labouring servitude under the authority of white farmers or other settlers. Furthermore, all 'Hottentots' were required to carry a pass with them at all times when travelling outside of their place of residence that was either signed by their employer, or by the missionary of their mission institution.²³⁹

In 1812, an Apprenticeship of Servants Act was passed by Governor Cradock which added more restrictions. This law stipulated that children of 'Hottentots' who had lived with their parents on their employer's property and had subsequently been maintained by the employer by means of food and clothing up to the age of eight years, were legally required to serve the employer as an apprentice for an additional ten years.²⁴⁰ By its nature, this addition to labour legislation further bound labouring parents to their employers since they would not easily leave employment if it meant leaving their children behind.

These essentially coercive 1809-1819 labour laws were strongly opposed by missionaries, who took the view that the regulations unfairly oppressed 'Hottentots' by forcing them to become labourers on white farms, restraining their freedom of mobility, and reducing their wages.²⁴¹ Supporters of the legislation, on the other hand, insisted that the 'Hottentot Proclamation' also made some provision for the protection of Coloured people. This was based on the fact that a few clauses were written

²³⁸ J. Read, *The Kat Rivier Settlement in 1851*, 56 – 57.

²³⁹ W. Dooling, 'The Origins and Aftermath of the Cape Colony's 'Hottentot Code' of 1809'. *Kronos*, (3), (31), November 2005, 50.

²⁴⁰ Theal, GM. *Records of the Cape Colony*. Vol XXXV, 230 – 232, 1897 – 1905.

²⁴¹ W.M. MacMillan, *The Cape Colour Question: A Historical Survey*. Chapter XII, 182.

into the legislation stipulating that all labour contracts between farmers and employees that exceeded one month had to be registered “with full particulars” before authorities such as the Landdrost or the Fieldcornet. Farmers would not be allowed to detain their workers after the period of a contract had expired on the basis that they were in debt with them. Additionally, no wages were to be deducted “on account of the necessities which had been supplied during the period of service”. Any disputes would have had to be taken up with the authorities to be resolved through judicial processes.²⁴²

Provision was also made for ‘Hottentots’ to address any concerns they had or to report abuses of power on their employers’ part, to the courts. Such stipulations led Marais to argue that the labour laws actually “marked a distinct advance in the status of the Hottentots”. The fact that provision was made for protective clauses within the ‘Hottentot Proclamation’ indicated that “the Hottentots had rights as free men which were enforceable by the courts and that in prosecuting and punishing breaches of the law, the courts could be no accepters of persons”.²⁴³ Therefore, Marais concluded, although at first glance the colonial labour laws positioned ‘Hottentots’ in an inferior position to Europeans, it also guarded them in a paternalistic fashion. When it came to practice, though, while in principle protective legal clauses seemed effective, in reality the sheltering regulations were poorly enforced and generally did little to curb abuse by both white masters and colonial officials.²⁴⁴

4.1.4 Post-emancipation of the Coloured population

Missionary societies were at the forefront of the philanthropic and humanitarian movement to improve the rights of Coloured people and of slaves. In Britain, the movement in support of the abolition of slavery was fought “with special reference to the West Indies where the vast majority of the British slaves were held” in the form of the Slavery Abolition Bill.²⁴⁵ Within the Cape Colony, there was a simultaneous, locally-focused movement for the rights of ‘Hottentot’ or Coloured people, with the backing of missionary interests.

The ‘emancipation’ of the Coloured people of the Cape Colony was realised in 1828 with the implementation of Ordinance 50. It was, in part, the result of the determined efforts of missionary societies in Britain, headed by one of the most outspoken critics of the ‘Hottentot Proclamation’ or Code – Dr John Philip of the London Missionary Society in conjunction with the pressure that was

²⁴² Marais, *Cape Coloured*, 116 – 117.

²⁴³ *Ibid.*, 120 – 121.

²⁴⁴ Dooling, ‘Origins and Aftermath’, 51. See also R. Elphick and V. Malherbe, ‘The Khoisan to 1828’, *The Shaping of South African Society 1652-1840*, 41.

²⁴⁵ Marais, *Cape Coloured*, 155

placed on the British Government by philanthropic members of the House of Commons.²⁴⁶ The 50th Ordinance revoked the oppressive regulations of the ‘Hottentot Proclamation’. Under Ordinance 50, the Khoisan people’s right to obtain property was confirmed, they were no longer obliged to work for European employers, and could only be tried for acts of vagrancy if it was decided upon as an outcome by a fair trial under law. Another noteworthy change in the 50th Ordinance was that the conditions of employment – referring to labourers’ wages and contracts - and also the proclamation regarding the apprenticeship of the children of workers, were adjusted to be made less discriminatory.²⁴⁷

Although Ordinance 50 did not place “Hottentots and other free persons of colour” on an equal level with white colonists, it did offer equal protection under law. Predictably, the abolition of oppressive regulations incensed many colonists who petitioned for the introduction of a punitive vagrancy law, but this was blocked as it would have violated the 50th Ordinance.²⁴⁸

The Slavery Abolition Act was officially passed in 1834, but full freedom was only granted to Cape slaves in 1838, following a transition period of four years. On a humanitarian level, the achievement of a liberalising freedom for all people of colour in the Cape Colony was a victory for the notion of human rights. Equally, at another level, there were also other consequences. Once labour was no longer compulsory, a considerable number of rural colonists found that they had lost their workforce. Following the implementation of Ordinance 50 in 1828, many ‘Hottentots’ left farms to settle on their own in towns and villages or on missionary institutions:

Along with the slaves and the relatively few Hottentots who were there already, these newcomers formed the nucleus of the large Coloured proletariats of the Colony’s present-day towns, particularly in the Western Cape.²⁴⁹

After 1828, annual labour contracts were also largely replaced by monthly labour contracts.²⁵⁰ Freed ‘Hottentots’ exploited their new personal mobility as best they could, with some of them surviving sufficiently by living off *veldkos* (food from the environment or *veldt*) and cutting wood or picking wild figs to sell. Of those who did enter into shorter contracts with farmers, some did not work the full term and left without notice. Although this was a punishable offence, it was not easy to chase down absconders in rural areas. Colonists and officials made numerous complaints about labour shortages and about the unreliability of workers who broke work contracts. According to numerous sources, ‘Hottentot’ vagrancy and stock theft increased significantly after the repeal of labour

²⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

²⁴⁷ V.C. Malherbe, ‘Colonial Justice and the Khoisan in the immediate aftermath of ordinance 50 of 1828: Denouement at Uitenhage’, *Kronos*, (24), November 1997, 77.

²⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 89 – 99.

²⁴⁹ Marais, *Cape Coloured*, 184.

²⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 181.

laws.²⁵¹ As Marais saw it, “to many of them freedom meant, not unnaturally, the opportunity of doing just enough work to keep body and soul together.”²⁵²

There were a great many disgruntled colonists who pressed for a ‘Vagrant Act’ to keep in check ‘Hottentot’ vagrancy and unlawful squatting, and to ease increasing labour scarcity.²⁵³ Such legislation was actually prepared for consideration in 1834, but was rejected by the Colonial Office on the basis that it would partly have reversed the more humanitarian terms of Ordinance 50. Moreover, in the aftermath of slave emancipation, slave-owning colonists experienced financial loss through the removal of their labouring ‘property’, aggravated by a decrease in labour supply and an increase in the unreliability of freed workers.²⁵⁴ Compensation for the loss of working ‘assets’ following emancipation was patchy, reducing large numbers of colonists to poverty and ‘beggary’.²⁵⁵

4.1.5 Challenges of the Missionary Institution after emancipation

Although the significance of missionary institutions as places of sanctuary did decline after the emancipation of ‘Hottentots’ in the 1820s and the abolition of slavery in the 1830s, they remained important in a historical sense for groups of people who would form what would come to be known as the Coloured people.

After their emancipation, a large portion of newly-freed slaves left their former masters and migrated towards towns and villages, earning a living in the same way as did many of the ‘Hottentots’. Of those slaves who did not move to towns or beyond the borders of the Cape Colony, a significant number made their way to mission institutions, with others becoming wanderers. The influx of slaves into missions placed substantial pressures on the societies and their limited financial resources.²⁵⁶ Still, acceptance served as an affirmation that these institutions were once again fulfilling their reputation as ‘sites of refuge’ for the landless and the leaderless. Indeed, “even such poor homes as were furnished by the Institutions had an economic function; as a ‘refuge’ they afforded the Hottentots some vestige of a base from which to bargain and stand out against unduly bad conditions of service. At worst, as many of them did, they could ‘squat’ with their fellows at the Institutions.”²⁵⁷

²⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 181 – 182.

²⁵² *Ibid.*, 192. See also: MacMillan, *Cape Colour Question*, 6.

²⁵³ MacMillan, *Cape Colour Question*, 224.

²⁵⁴ R.L. Watson, ‘I Will Gather All Nations and Tongues’: Christian Missions and Racial Integration in the Cape Colony in the Aftermath of Abolition’, *Kronos*, 119. See also: J.S. Marais, *The Cape Coloured people*, 188.

²⁵⁵ Findlay and Holdsworth, *The History of*, 275.

²⁵⁶ MacMillan, *Cape Colour Question*, 270.

²⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 278.

The establishment of the South African Mission society in 1799 had sparked the formation of local missionary societies in southwestern Cape Colony towns, such as Worcester, Tulbagh and Stellenbosch. Initially, missionaries were supported by some of the local slave-owners who were sympathetic to their cause. The colonist-supported missionary societies also provided financial support towards the maintenance of rural missions. However, in the aftermath of slave emancipation, colonial feeling turned against the institutions that were seen to have had an impact on the loss of slaves and so “the local societies ceased to exist and with them the support of the European colonists”.²⁵⁸

The combination of reduced funds and overcrowding due to the influx of ‘Hottentots’ and slaves after emancipation, placed great pressures on missionary institutions. Not only were resources limited, but the conduct of many inhabitants was becoming a problem for the missionaries who were trying to regulate a disciplined, ‘work-ethic’ driven environment:

The thirty years following the abolition of slavery were a difficult period for all the institutions and especially for those of the L.M.S. [London Missionary Society] and for Genadendal. In the colonists’ opinion they were a ‘regular lock’ upon labour. That undoubtedly lay at the root of their antipathy towards the institutions, but they also found fault with the way in which they were managed. As far as the older “grant” institutions are concerned, there were some ground for complaint. Those of the L.M.S. were undoubtedly overcrowded, and some reform in their administration was becoming urgently necessary. Dr Philip had complained in the 1820’s that ‘the means of the industrious were eaten up by the idle, and the laborious man has no motive to industry’, and had ordered that ‘all vagrants and such as will not work should be excluded from our institutions’. It seems that by the 1840’s this injunction had been forgotten.²⁵⁹

As the colony’s judicial system did not accept that the regulations governing missionary institutions were legally binding and therefore did not assist in enforcement – some missionaries had a hard time in controlling the wayward behaviour of certain inhabitants.²⁶⁰ Reports of drunkenness and ‘immoral’ conduct were a source of great concern, and although missionaries regularly threatened to evict troublesome people from their institutions, they were often unable to get them to vacate the land. The consequences of many institution inhabitants who shunned work and relied instead on the provision of bare welfare resources, contributed to the decline of missionary societies’ involvement in more marginal institutions – as Macmillan put it: “Squatting’ is but a poor resort; if habitual, it must depress the general economic standard, since it is a drain on the slender resources of those who

²⁵⁸ L. Von Rohden, *Geschichte der Rheinischen Missions-Gesellschaft*, 109 – 110, 116. See also: J.S. Marais, *The Cape Coloured people*, 247.

²⁵⁹ J.S. Marais, *The Cape Coloured people*, 249.

²⁶⁰ Villa-Vicencio and Grassow, *Christianity*, 88. See also: J.S. Marais, *The Cape Coloured people*, 250.

entertain the squatters.”²⁶¹ A number of Institutions did not survive the troubles of the years following emancipation.

During the second half of the nineteenth century, missionary institutions lost even more of their already dwindling local support following the ‘Hottentot’ rebellion of 1851. Disgruntled ‘Hottentots’ at the Kat River settlement and Theopolis institutions in the interior were joined by African groups in a rebellion. This unprecedented joining of ‘Hottentots’ and Bantu forces demonstrated how desperate and frustrated some inhabitants had become with their deteriorating circumstances. For Macmillan, “the outbreak was obviously a reckless and unconsidered protest against unsatisfactory conditions by people who had only too little to lose.”²⁶²

Colonial interests which had strongly opposed emancipation, including those who had once been sympathetic towards missionary work, had now lost confidence in the missionaries’ ability to control a restive rural Coloured population. Instead, their classic fears of a ‘native uprising’ seemed to be justified. Ultimately, the fright of the ‘Hottentot’ rebellion damaged the standing of local philanthropic and liberal lobbies and fuelled white criticism. Furthermore, many of the colonists living in the surrounding areas of the Kat River particularly blamed the ‘seditious teachings of the missionaries for the outbreak of the rebellion’.²⁶³ The tensions and distrust that were rife during this period were generated by mutual antagonisms. Migrating labourers shared information, news and grievances about white farmers. Additionally, as second generation mission inhabitants, a number of them could read local publications, including the *Grahamstown Journal*. It is thus reasonable to assume that they were well aware of the deepening discontent among colonists and of their petitions for a Vagrant Act. This fear of oppression and awareness of antagonism from colonists served as further incitement to join in a rebellion.

This excerpt from the *Grahamstown Journal* on the 15th of March 1851, demonstrates colonist hostilities with its alarmingly menacing tone:

On the Eastern frontier a contest between stern justice and mistaken philanthropy has been raging upwards of thirty years’ . . . the Home Government and the British people being ‘ influenced by certain powerful, presumably religious associations ’ . . . There has ‘never been so important a crisis as is now at hand, and each party, finding it bears very much the aspect of a death-struggle, is preparing its weapons accordingly. The voice of every Colonist must be loud in demanding that every Institution where a number of the coloured races are, or can be drawn together,

²⁶¹ E. Elbourne, ‘Race’, *Warfare, and Religion in Mid-Nineteenth-Century Southern Africa: The Khoisan Rebellion against the Cape Colony and Its Uses, 1850-58*, 32. See also: Macmillan, *Cape Colour Question*, 278

²⁶² MacMillan, *Cape Colour Question*, 280.

²⁶³ *Ibid.*, 282.

shall be broken up, and restricted from reassembling. If we destroy, or prevent the building of the nest, we shall not be liable to invasions of the brood.²⁶⁴

4.1.6 Withdrawal of the missionary institutions

In the aftermath of the ‘Hottentot’ rebellion, missionary institutions received instructions from their headquarters in Britain to withdraw from their more vulnerable mission stations. The smaller “subordinate” stations, especially the outstations, were the first to be affected.²⁶⁵ The decision to withdraw was based on a few key factors. Foremost was the fact that available funds had become very low and missionary societies could no longer sustain the growing number of inhabitants in their institutions. Furthermore, the influence of philanthropists and of missionary representatives was no longer as forceful as it once been, in a political climate of reduced sympathy and resentment from rural colonists. Dreams of acculturation and of eventually incorporating Coloured inhabitants into colonial society on the basis of common social and political freedoms, withered. Tellingly, a number of smaller mission stations ceased to exist after an exodus of missionaries.

Discussions surrounding the withdrawal of missionary societies from all but their main congregations – in the Cape Town District these were in Somerset West, Stellenbosch and Cape Town (including the District of Wynberg) – had already started in the 1840s. The general opinion was the Cape congregations had to become self-sufficient and autonomous since the management and administration of mission institutions that were located thousands of miles from their central authorities had become too difficult a task. The missionary, William Elliot, made a standard argument for the departure from the Cape of mission institutions, in which a sentiment of disillusion was prominent:

The rights and liberties of the Hottentots are now recognised and protected by law: he, like any other man, may go where he pleases without a pass, and take his labour or his produce to the best market. He needs no city of refuge. In proportion as the necessity of our missionary institutions has been superseded by the altered state of things, the evils incident to them have increased. The authority of the missionary has been diminished; the population of the missionary institutions has become injuriously dense by a vast influx of late apprentices and other persons of colour, who prefer abundant leisure and unrestrained freedom to those habits of industry and those salutary restraints which must be sustained and submitted to in ordinary social life; and multitudes of young persons are growing up in habits which render them as incapable of useful and profitable employment, as they are indisposed to it. A vast amount of labour is thus withdrawn from the towns, villages and agricultural districts, without any corresponding advantage being realised by the labourers themselves. The present state of our missionary institutions, then, points

²⁶⁴ *Ibid.*

²⁶⁵ Findlay and Holdsworth, *The History of*, 310.

to the extreme desirableness, not to say the absolute necessity, of a complete change in their construction and management.²⁶⁶

The process of withdrawal lasted over two decades, during which the society's board still maintained a relationship with many of its stations and occasionally provided temporary financial aid when needed. In 1873, the Missionary Institutions Act was passed and brought with it complete independence of all support. Mission lands were gradually transferred to inhabitants and some of these congregations have survived until the present day. In 1883, the newly-autonomous churches were handed over to the custodianship of the Congregational Union of South Africa.²⁶⁷

4.1.7 Handover to the Rhenish Missionary Society

Wesleyan mission stations (along with London Mission Society stations) passed into the hands of the Rhenish Missionary Society by 1850. As noted earlier, supporting widely scattered stations had put considerable financial strain on home resources and it was decided that Rhenish missionaries, who had displayed patience and tenacity with their outreach, would be entrusted with the care of stations. Rhenish missionaries had started their work in the Cape Colony in the heat of the struggle for the emancipation of the Khoi and the freeing of slaves.²⁶⁸

The reputation of the Rhenish Missionary Society rested in large part on its robustly industrious principles and practice. Its missionaries went to great effort to instruct institution inhabitants in the cultivation of arable land. The first Rhenish mission station was established at Wupperthal, and provided an example of German missionary values and determination in teaching adherents how to sustain themselves through the development of a mixed 'garden' economy. In his 'History of Christian Missions in South Africa', Du Plessis, typically, noted how the "garden and the fields were brought under cultivation, a mill was erected, industries such as tanning, blacksmithing and carpentry were begun."²⁶⁹ German missions were also particularly austere and disciplinarian in the administration of their overseas institutions. In contrast to the more liberal, humanitarian approach of the London Missionary Society, the German societies – Moravian, Rhenish and Berlin – were clearly distinguished by their more rigorous environment of discipline and industry.²⁷⁰

In the contemporary views of J. Du Plessis, in his description of the handover of mission stations between the Wesleyan and the Rhenish movements, he extolled the beneficial effects of the dogged German character:

²⁶⁶ Du Plessis, *A History*, 281 – 282. See also R. Lovett, *The History of the London Missionary Society 1795-1895*, 233.

²⁶⁷ Du Plessis, *A History*, 283.

²⁶⁸ R.O. Herbst, *Die Rynse Sendinggenootskap en grondkweesie in die kareeberggrensgebied in die neentiende eeu – met spesifiek verwysing na die amandelboomsending*, 43.

²⁶⁹ Du Plessis, *A History*, 203.

²⁷⁰ H. De Wit, *Die Berlynse Sendinggenootskap in die Wes-Kaap, 1838 – 1961, met spesiale verwysing na die sosio-ekonomiese en politieke omstandighede van sy lidmate*, 156.

It seems as if the toilsome effort of carrying the Gospel to a nation so fickle and shallow as the Hottentots had needs be entrusted by God to the patient and persevering German brethren... among whom the Gospel was slower indeed in taking root, but richer in final and permanent results.²⁷¹

This passage evokes something of the perseverance and determination with which German settlers worked to cultivate the ground in Philippi after their arrival at the Cape. Tirelessness and patience would again be held up as the key to effective success with evangelisation.

Primary sources relating to the history of the Rhenish Missionary Society are difficult to come by locally, since all correspondence and other archival materials were moved to an archive in Barmen, Germany in 1972. The task of researching the full history of Klipfontein is thus hampered since the mission station was in the care of the Rhenish Missionary Society for a significant period.²⁷²

In 1932, the majority of the mission stations for which the Rhenish Missionary Society was responsible was handed over to the Dutch Reformed Church. It had become financially draining for the Rhenish Society to maintain all of their stations, and the better endowed Dutch Reformed Church was in a stronger position to assume custodianship. Interestingly, despite of all of these changes in terms of denominations and societies, the Klipfontein community has continued to identify with Methodism into the present day. Arguably, because Klipfontein has always been a fairly independent outstation, its community members had the latitude to continue their daily existence in a style that remained largely unaffected by these changes in administration and authority.²⁷³

During the nineteenth century, as the level of missionary efforts in the wider region rose, the number of clergy from various societies naturally increased, as can be depicted in Figure 2.

²⁷¹ Du Plessis, *A History*, 257.

²⁷² Herbst, *Rynse Sendinggenootskap*, 3.

²⁷³ De Wit, *Berlynse Sendinggenootskap*, 151.

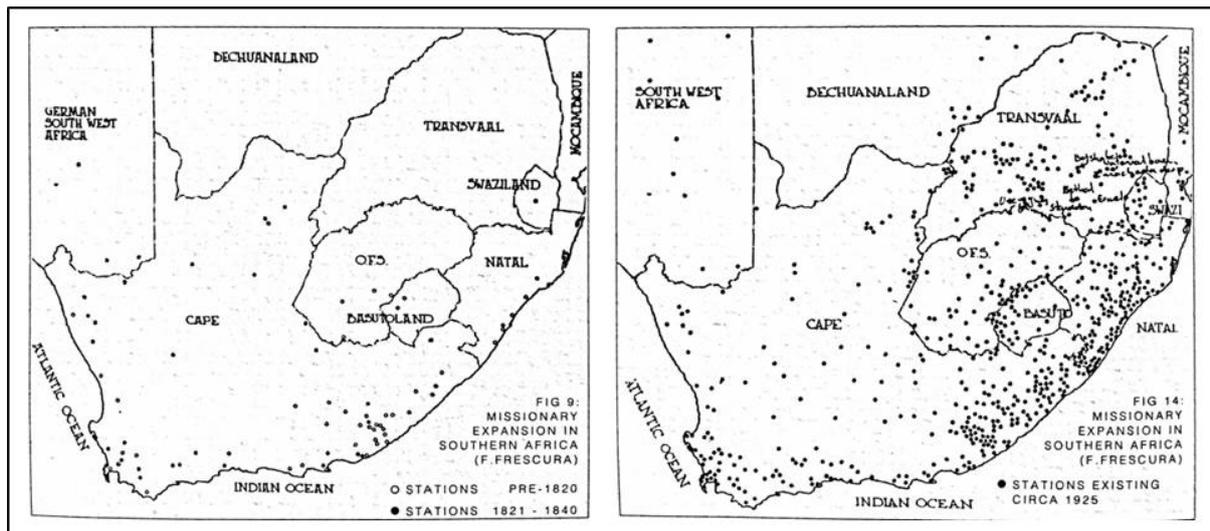


Figure 2: Expansion of mission settlements Pre-1820 - 1925²⁷⁴

²⁷⁴ D. Japha et al, *Mission Settlements in South Africa*, 6, 18.

YEAR	SOCIETY	STATIONS	OUTSTATIONS	FIELDS
1737	Moravian	23	139	Cape, Transkei, OFS
1799	LMS	41	141	Cape, N Cape
1814	Wesleyan MS	52	1853	British SA
1820	U F Church of Scotland	28	509	Natal, Native Terr.
1824	DRC	92	56	British SA
1829	Paris Evangelical MS	15	210	OFS, Basutoland, Barotseland
1829	Rhenish MS	35	28	Cape, Namibia
1834	Berlin MS	55	249	Cape, Natal, Tvl, OFS
1835	American Board Mission	15	27	Natal, Zimbabwe
1835	Church of England	134	301	British SA
1844	Norwegian MS	12	63	Natal, Zululand
1854	Hermannsberg M	47	133	Natal, Tvl
1869	Swiss Romande M	14	65	Natal, Mozambique
1873	Church of Norway M	5	31	Zululand, Natal
1876	Church of Sweden M	6	60	Natal, Zululand, Zimbabwe
1885	Free Methodist Church M	6	28	Natal
1889	South Africa General M	25	50	Natal, Native Terr., Swaz.
1890	Swedish Zulu M	2	8	Natal
1890	Hanoverian Free Church M	9	34	Tvl
1892	Scandinavian Alliance M	2	8	Natal
1892	Scan. Indepen. Baptist Union	2	-	Natal
1892	SA Baptist MS	4	28	Transkei
1896	SA Compounds and Int. M	14	23	Jhb, Mocambique
1896	Hepzibah Faith M Assoc	3	1	Natal, Jhb
1899	Norwegian Free M	1	-	Natal
1904	Presbyterian Church	2	20	Tvl, Zimbabwe
TOTAL		644	3969	

Figure 3: The Extent of Mission Settlements 1737 - 1904²⁷⁵

Given such variation and range, it followed that every missionary society had its own approach to the task of evangelising, educating and civilising. In a classic contemporary summary:

...the societies, though not working in perfect unison for the attainment of a clearly defined object, had each made a perceptible impression upon the mass of heathendom. Each Society had, according to its own genius, contributed its share towards solving the question of the evangelisation of South Africa. The London Society had aimed at awakening in the native a feeling of self-respect, and at developing his dormant power of self-government. The Wesleyans with their vigour, their initiative and their complete organisation, had inspired the native with

²⁷⁵ Japha et al., *Mission Settlements*, 22.

something of their own brisk energy. [...] The German Missionary Societies - Moravian, Rhenish and Berlin - emphasised the need of discipline, order and industry. [...] The Dutch Reformed Church typified the cautious attitude of the older colonists who knew that, even in the best type of native, the old Adam is frequently too strong for young Melancthon, and while unobtrusively pursuing its missionary purpose, was careful as to whom it admitted to membership in the visible Church of Christ. Plainly, there were great diversities of gifts among the various bodies at work in the South African mission field, but they were animated, nevertheless, by one and the same Spirit.²⁷⁶

This history overview, however quaint in its doctrinal conception of European shepherd and native flock, is of relevance for the Klipfontein mission station experience, given its exposure to successive missionary societies throughout the nineteenth and twentieth century. The following section of this chapter will turn to the limited historical sources that are available regarding the station to try to illuminate how the transition between mission societies played an important role in reinforcing the Cape Flats' inhabitants' sense of belonging to the land on which they came to live.

4.2 Deciphering the sources concerning the Wesleyan Mission Society stations

4.2.1 Challenges of racial terminology

The history of the Klipfontein mission station is one that can accurately be described as 'lost in translation'. The reason for this is twofold, and rests within the spheres of written history and language.

As pointed out in the introduction of this study, the earliest Wesleyan clergy did not always make a distinction between their endeavours amongst 'natives' and 'Europeans' when they documented their experiences or wrote up reports. Later, they would refer to all indigenous inhabitants, whether African or Khoisan, as 'coloured' and generally used this term for any non-Europeans. As J. Du Plessis noted, "It must, however, be clearly understood that the Wesleyans have never made a distinction between their colonial and their mission work, but in giving statistics have always grouped both together."²⁷⁷ In the later nineteenth century, the Methodist Missionary Society started publishing annual reports of their activities in South Africa and in these initially they only differentiated missions by the language in which they were run – English or Dutch. It is safe to assume that the Dutch-speaking missions were generally those where specifically the Khoisan congregated, given that many of them had learned the Dutch language through labouring for settlers.²⁷⁸

²⁷⁶ Du Plessis, *A History*, 261.

²⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 258.

²⁷⁸ Annual Methodist Conference reports circa 1883.

Another complicating factor is a relative paucity in missionaries' documentation of their experiences. Today, we have little more than a small insight into missionary life by means of journals that were kept by a few, such as the diary of the pioneering Barnabas Shaw. Some missionaries who returned to Britain after their time in South Africa often only recorded their workings after they had left the Cape, thus increasing the likelihood of having omitted details.²⁷⁹

The use of language and choice of terms that were used by missionaries of the Methodist Missionary Society can also pose some interpretative difficulties. In the mid-nineteenth century, the term 'Coloured' emerged, but clearly it was not the same definition that has become familiar in more recent historical time. In the Cape Colony, the term was used to refer to slaves, to the Khoisan and 'Hottentots', as well as to a range of marginalised people of mixed race. Ian Goldin, for example, is one of a number of scholars who have observed that up until the fairly late nineteenth century, the term 'Coloured', commonly referred to all 'native' inhabitants, including Africans. The Cape Census of 1875 placed all inhabitants into two categories: European/White and Coloured. Thereafter, in the early twentieth century, the Cape Census of 1904 distinguished between three racial classifications: White, Bantu and Coloured.²⁸⁰ Given its history of imprecision in the history of Cape Town and of the colonial southwestern Cape, the term 'Coloured' is less than straightforward when dealing with the categorisation of ethnic groupings.

4.2.2 What's in a name?

Another knotty aspect of the use of language in any recording of the history of the Klipfontein community, is the naming of the outstation when referenced in sources. The nature of Klipfontein as a small and relatively isolated community, combined with the fact that it was considered an outstation resulted in it often not being identified as a separate mission station. Typically, reports and records would group the outstation together with larger surrounding congregations such as Dieprivier and Wynberg on the southern Cape peninsula and Raithby in Stellenbosch.²⁸¹ Today, the developmental distance between these stations and churches are significant enough to regard them naturally as separate locations, but for a missionary in the 1800s and 1900s, travelling between mission stations, the whole area would often be grouped together as a contiguous mission chain.

²⁷⁹ *Journal of Methodist Historical Society of SA*, Oct 1952, Volume 1, No 1 – Archival Reference BP 34, Bound Pamphlets, 34(4)

²⁸⁰ I. Goldin, *Making Race: The Politics and Economics of Coloured identity in South Africa*, 243.

²⁸¹ R. Ridgill, Letter to W. Boyce, 4 December 1868.

The historical origin of the actual name of Klipfontein has also been accompanied by uncertainty, as the limited sources available confirm. As noted earlier in this study, the present-day community believes that the name came from a fountain sprouting from a stone in an area which is now adjacent to Cape Town International Airport. To an extent, a ‘foundational’ mythology around this fountain has been developed amongst members of the community. In some sources, Klipfontein is also referred to as Duinfonteyn, denoted from the original farm on which the mission station was built, *Duinefontein*. During the mid-nineteenth century Klipfontein became included under Diep River or Diep Riviere as an outstation.²⁸² Official sources such as reports and surveys often subsume Klipfontein under neighbouring larger mission stations - however, in personal letters such as those of Reverend Ridgill and the diary of Barnabas Shaw, Klipfontein (sometimes called Klip Fountain) is mostly mentioned distinctly by its local community name, reflecting missionary familiarity with its location.

4.3 Introducing the people of Klipfontein

The first inhabitants of Klipfontein were made up of Khoisan families who had established themselves in the area. Some were employed as labourers on neighbouring farms. Those who were not employed by white farmers lived off the *veldt*. The men would typically cut down bushes and trees to sell as firewood to local farmers; the women in the community would pick the sour figs in the area and sell these as well.²⁸³

The existence of a fountain or spring as a source of fresh water would help to establish why the first Khoisan families would have chosen to graze around the spot, since the rest of the Cape Flats was a flat and arid expanse of rocks, sand and *fynbos*. It is reasonable to assume that the Wesleyan Missionary Society was motivated to establish an outstation (sometimes referred to as a sub-station) due to the presence of clusters of people living on the Cape Flats. Following the abolition of slavery, rural ex-slaves made for Cape Town in search of work. Numbers ended up settling on surrounding mission station lands. In due course, the Klipfontein institution absorbed some of the newly-freed slaves.

The present-day Klipfontein community traces its heritage from that deposited by the endeavours of freed slaves and Khoisan agriculturalists, and views their efforts in self-sufficiency with pride, stressing that their ancestors were people of the land and through the land. Many of the stories they fondly relate about the Klipfontein generations before them, have an underlying tone of relish in the transmission of exclusive knowledge of the surrounding lands and *veldt*. Similar to the original

²⁸² Annual Methodist Missionary Conference, Volume 42, 27.

²⁸³ Baarthies, Yvonne. Interview by Annemieke Nel. Informal interview. Klipfontien, Philippi. 2011

location of the fountain which, according to legend, can only be found by a ‘true Klipfonteiner’, there are ‘voetpaadjies’ (foot paths) around the area, and a mysterious ‘Vygebos’ (Fig bush) that is hidden in the *Vaalbos* (pale bush) and has reputedly been harvested by their ancestors ‘for centuries’.²⁸⁴ These stories form part of the local mythology of the Klipfontein people and are told with pride by the community members.

Once the Wesleyan outstation was established, further Khoisan or ‘Hottentot’ families started settling on the surrounding land or what was known as the “glebe”, a term referring to a plot of cultivatable land belonging to an English parish church or ecclesiastical office²⁸⁵. One of the earliest documented mentions of Klipfontein within archival material can be found in the diary of Barnabas Shaw, the second Methodist missionary to be sent to the Cape Colony in 1816. Shaw made an entry in his diary of 1834 describing his encounter with the Klipfontein glebe and reflected that the mission station was already well populated by that year. Indeed, his familiarity of tone is suggestive of prior visits to the community:

Klip Fountain [...] is in the midst of the Cape Downs, and surrounded by sand hills; yet here we have an exceedingly attentive congregation, some of whom travel six or eight miles to attend divine worship.²⁸⁶

Shaw was delayed by the “deep sands and intense heat” on his way there, and upon his arrival he heard the congregation singing a Dutch Hymn to the tune of the national anthem of England. He was very touched by the contrast of the music and the surrounding area, and described the experience:

I listened with intense delight. Indeed the melody of a number of voices, male and female – the situation of the place being adjacent to huge hills of sand, which were the very picture of barrenness – and the fact that the favourite tune of Great Britain was being sung to the honour of the Redeemer in such a wilderness, produced on my mind so powerful an effect.²⁸⁷

It is fair to assume that by the year 1834, the community had already become well established, which suggests that Klipfontein today is close to two centuries old. In proximity to an expanding city and major surrounding suburban growth over the last century, it is quite striking for a community to have remained rooted in the same location, with its members actively remembering the preceding generations who had walked the same footpaths as their descendants do in the present-day.

In the early 1800s, some of the Wesleyan missionaries residing and administering in the surrounding Cape localities passed through Klipfontein occasionally. This is evident from brief reference to a ‘native’ community on the Cape Flats or *Die Duine* to be found in the diaries and letters of missionaries such as Reverend Ridgill, Reverend Shaw, Reverend Cameron and some compilation

²⁸⁴ Dawies, Anita. Interview by Annemieke Nel. Informal interview. Klipfontien, Philippi. 2011

²⁸⁵ Webster’s Dictionary, Vol. 4, 1995.

²⁸⁶ B. Shaw, *Memorials*, 173.

²⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 174

records.²⁸⁸ Unlike congregations at Plumstead, Wynberg and Dieprivier, the Klipfontein congregation was referred to as an “outstation”, due to its small size and its considerable distance from the town.

Wesleyan mission clergy preached at stations according to a quarterly roster that can be seen in the figure below. In this 1835 quarter’s table, Klipfontein is listed under the congregations and a note is also made of a meeting at the outstation on New Year’s Day. It is also evident that Reverend Barnabas Shaw and Reverend James Cameron were the attending preachers during this period. The roster also serves as an example of how the Wesleyan Society did not differentiate between its ‘native’ or white colonial congregations, but intermittently indicated the language in which services would be conducted.²⁸⁹

Preaching Places.		A QUARTER'S PLAN OF THE WESLEYAN PREACHERS.											
		NOVEMBER, 1835.					DECEMBER, 1835.				JANUARY, 1836.		
		1	8	15	22	29	6	13	20	27	3	10	17
Cape Town, Wesley Chapel, 9½	3	3	1	1	3	3	1	2	3	3	5	1	3
„ Dutch, 11½	3	3	1	1	3	3	1	2	3	3	2	1	3
„ English, 6½	3 s.	3 c.	1	1	3	3 s.	1	2	3	3 s.	2	1	3
„ Monday, Catechising, 7	3	3	1	1	3	3	1	2	3	3	2	1	3
„ Thursday, Dutch, 7	3	3	1	1	3	3	1	2	3	3	2	1	3
Old Chapel, English, 6½	4	5	6	4	5	7	4	5	7	4	6	*	4
„ Tuesday, Dutch, 7	3	3	1	1	3	3	1	1	3	3	1	1	3
„ Wednesday, Eng, 7	3 m.	5 l.	*	1	3 m.	4 l.	2	1	5	3 m.	7 l.	5	1
Wynberg, 9½	7	1	5	3 s.	4	6	7	3	5	6	4	3	5
„ Friday Evening, 7	7	1	5	3 c.	4	6	7	3 s.	5	6	4	3	5
Simon's Town, 9½	1		3		2				6		3		1
„ Monday, Mountains, 6	1		3 s.		2 c.				6		3		1
„ Monday Evening, 7	1		3		2				6		3		1
Somerset, 2	2	2	2	2	1	2	2	2	2	2	1	2	2
Klip Fontein, 10	2	2	2	2	1	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2
Stellenbosch, 7		2		2		2		2		2		2	
Kool Kraal, Week-day,		1		3		6		3		6		3	

Places which may be occasionally visited, on Sabbaths or Week Days, as most convenient:

Eppendorp. Hermans Kraal. Rogge Bay. St. John's-street.

Rondebosch. Drooge Valley. Kromme Ellenboog. Paulsen's.

Names of Persons.

- 1, Shaw.
- 2, Cameron.
- 3, Giddy.
- 4, Curry.
- 5, Lawton, T.
- 6, Smailes.
- 7, Lawton, J.
- *, a Friend.

s. Sacrament. l. Leader's Meeting. m. Missionary Collectors meet. c. Collection for the Kingswood & Woodhouse Grove Schools.

Christmas Day, a Lovefeast in the Afternoon, New Chapel.
New-Year's Day, a Missionary Meeting at Klip Fontein.
Quarter Day, Jan. 12th, when the Local Preachers will meet as usual at 11 o'Clock A. M.; and the Leaders and Stewards at 2 P. M.

Hymn Books to be had at the Wesleyan Mission House, adjoining the Chapel.

N.B. Every Preacher is expected to supply his own place, or provide an accredited Substitute.

Figure 4: Quarterly Roster of the Wesleyan Preachers, November 1835²⁹⁰

Archival sources indicate that the Klipfontein community was transferred to the care of the Apostolic Union in 1845.²⁹¹ Contact and work within the community continued under the leadership of Reverend George Willem Stegman and the treasurer, Mr P. D. Morgenrood, until the disbanding of

²⁸⁸ What is today known as the ‘Cape Flats’ was referred to as *Die Duine* (The Dunes) due to it being a vast expanse of sand and dunes before the German settlers arrived in the Cape Colony and started the strenuous process of cultivating the land. In present day, apart from the fact that the Cape Flats are now covered in informal settlements, the vegetation and trees make it almost difficult to imagine that it was once an open wasteland where (it was thought) no patch of soil could be cultivated

²⁸⁹ Quarter’s Plan of the Wesleyan Preachers, 1835. Cory Library Ref: MS17 165/2

²⁹⁰ *Ibid.*

²⁹¹ Klipfontein Community Survey, 1991, 8

the Apostolic Union in 1857.²⁹² In the mid-nineteenth century, the outstation was also transferred for a period to the Rhenish Missionary Society, as noted earlier in this chapter. By this period, though, the Klipfontein community had become fairly independent, employing its own chosen teacher and religious instructor.

4.3.1 “Our fathers bought this land, it is our heritage and our pride”

A significant act of independence predated the handover of the Methodist church’s mission stations to other denominational mission societies. In 1849, an opportunity arose for some of the community inhabitants to take ownership of the land they occupied. Five families approached the treasurer of the Apostolic Union, Mr P.D.Morgenrood, to assist them in buying some land from Mr Carl Liebetrau, who had 1320 morgen of land from government as part of a Cape Quadrant Award.²⁹³ The land was part of a large farm known as Duinefontein. Confronting legal difficulties, the families requested the assistance of the church, as a trusted and sympathetic body of authority. Morgenrood bought 320 morgen for the amount of 60 Pounds on behalf of the five families. A contract was drawn up and signed between Morgenrood, the Apostolic Union and four of the five donors. The contract stated that the purchased land would be for the use of the Apostolic Union as a mission station, and that the church would serve as a trustee once the full amount had been paid. Furthermore, the trustees agreed that they would act in the best interest of the community and would ensure the protection of their tenure rights. The purchased land was duly occupied by the families and the inhabitants who were renting and living on small patches of the property. Rent collections were deposited in a church fund from which the missionary was paid a monthly stipend of 5 Pounds. Maintenance of the church and its adjoining house was paid for, and any additional charitable endeavours were covered within the scope of the fund.²⁹⁴

The representatives of the five families were Abraham Januarie, Cupido Manuel, Karel Adriaan, Daniel Adriaan and Piet Gideon. These five men can be considered to have been the “founding fathers” of the Klipfontein community. Their descendants still live in the community at present.

²⁹² *Ibid.*, 12

²⁹³ Klipfontein Title Deed, 1849 – Deed 183 (22/01/49)

²⁹⁴ *Ibid.*

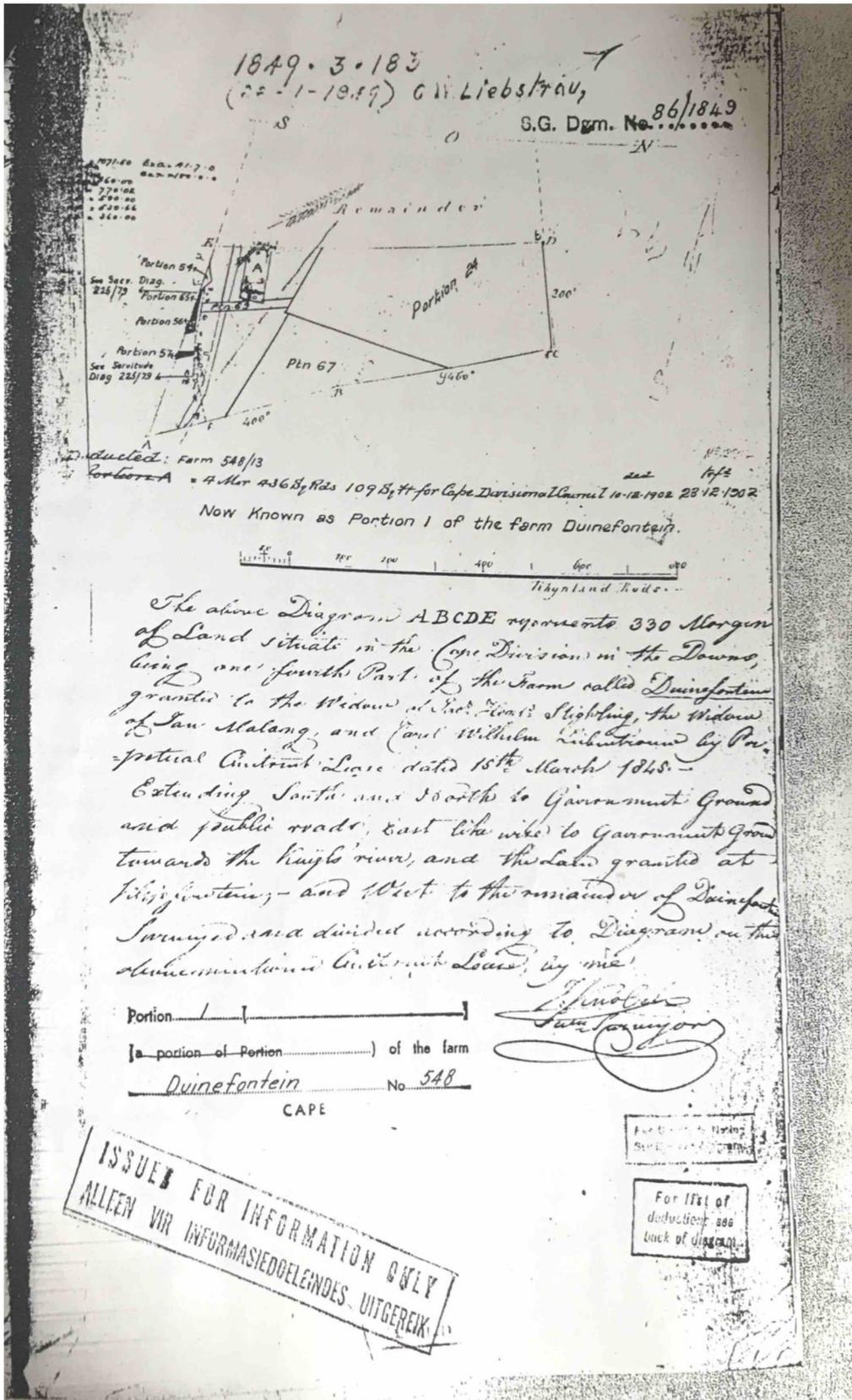


Figure 5: Surveyor General Diagram of Klipfontein Title Deed, 1849 – Akte 183 (22/01/49)²⁹⁵

²⁹⁵ Klipfontein Title Deed, 1849 – Deed 183 (22/01/49)

A new small chapel and missionary house were built shortly after the sale was completed. After the chapel had been erected, other coloured families started to settle around the church. Barnabas Shaw married the first three couples in the chapel and provided the first rings for the brides, bringing the English token of union into their culture of the Klipfontein community. Friends and other inhabitants of the Cape Downs came from afar to observe the wedding ceremonies.²⁹⁶ Credit went to the attending mission clergy:

The Wesleyans, with their vigour, their initiative and the complete organisation, had inspired the native with their own brisk energy.²⁹⁷

That, though is only part of a complex picture. By the second half of the nineteenth century, missionary communities could be divided into three categories. Firstly, there were the mission churches in larger towns. Many of these can be identified as the origins of modern denominational churches, with congregations spread throughout urban localities. Secondly, there were the mission stations commonly referred to as ‘institutes’, where inhabitants settled over time and remained under the governorship of churches through their missionary societies. Thirdly, there were the mission stations that were furthest away from prominent towns, also sometimes referred to as outstations. These would later come to resemble small villages, which often tended to develop a distinctively independent nature given their remoteness from close supervision. Thus, there were no dedicated religious supervisors or missionaries allocated to them, leaving them instead to mature into communities that were internally self-supported, while sharing a collective Christian adherence.²⁹⁸ In 1878, the Committee of the Rhenish Missionary Society further developed the financial independence of its missions by handing over responsibility for the remuneration of missionaries to their congregant communities. This relieved fiscal pressures on the society. But it also contributed to further cementing a sense of mission station independence.²⁹⁹ And, as we have seen, Klipfontein preceded the Rhenish introduction of a self-supporting provision. As the Reverend Ridgill reported on Klipfontein affairs in December 1868:

Klipfontein as an outstation, was under our care many years ago. We could not attend to it properly and it passed into the hands of two or three other churches successively. A few years ago, the people thought it better to return to their first love, and undertook, with government aid, to pay the salary of a schoolmaster who should conduct religious services, while we afforded them certain ecclesiastical privileges and ministerial oversight. So far the arrangement has worked tolerably well, though of course, class and ticket money and all other funds, so to make for the teacher a very moderate salary. There were 40 members, and two day schools (Klipfontein and Modderfontein) attended by the children. Situated in the midst of

²⁹⁶ B. Shaw, *Memorials*, 173.

²⁹⁷ Du Plessis, *A History*, 261.

²⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, 341.

²⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 241.

barren and shifting sand hills, we find these four scattered families, etching out a scanty subsistence, who hear with gladness the word of God.³⁰⁰

Klipfontein also reached beyond the boundaries of its own community of congregants. Another, undated, letter from Reverend Ridgill related the appearance of a Reverend Tindall who delivered an address, “To make sunshine in a shady place”. There, Reverend Ridgill described a missionary meeting where the audience was too large for everyone to gain admittance, with some peering in through windows as, “He delivered an address to the parents and others present. The children of the day school also listened with interest. There were also people present from Diep Rivier, Cape Town and elsewhere.”³⁰¹

After the Apostolic Union became defunct in 1857, Morgenrood transferred the land to the Wesleyan Missionary Society as a deed of gift. A Memorandum of Agreement was drafted, giving the Society trusteeship, but not ownership of the land. Outlined within this agreement was the right of the owners or “founding fathers” of Klipfontein to enjoy their land, and confirming that they would be able to bestow the same rights and privileges on their respective wives and children.³⁰² Additionally, the agreement permitted the Klipfontein owners to sell or otherwise dispose of their houses, with the consent and concurrence of all the trustees and the appointed missionary ‘in charge’.

One stipulation within the agreement has remained prominent within the popular memory of the community inhabitants and which underlines a sense among many of the Klipfontein elders that they consider themselves to be entitled to the land they live on, despite various changes in trusteeship. This provision declared that mission station land would not be encumbered or alienated in any way. This sense of ownership of the land was not limited to the original “founding fathers”, but passed into wider consciousness to be shared within the whole community, and it duly passed down through later generations of Klipfonteiners.³⁰³

³⁰⁰ R. Ridgill, Letter to W. Boyce, 4 December 1868.

³⁰¹ R. Ridgill, Letter to W. Boyce, (undated) 1868.

³⁰² Deed of Transfer, 1901, Cape Town Archives, KAB/CSC, Vol 2/6/1/209 Ref 643

³⁰³ Peter “Katja” Januari, Interview by Annemieke Nel, Informal interview, Klipfontein, Philippi, 2011.

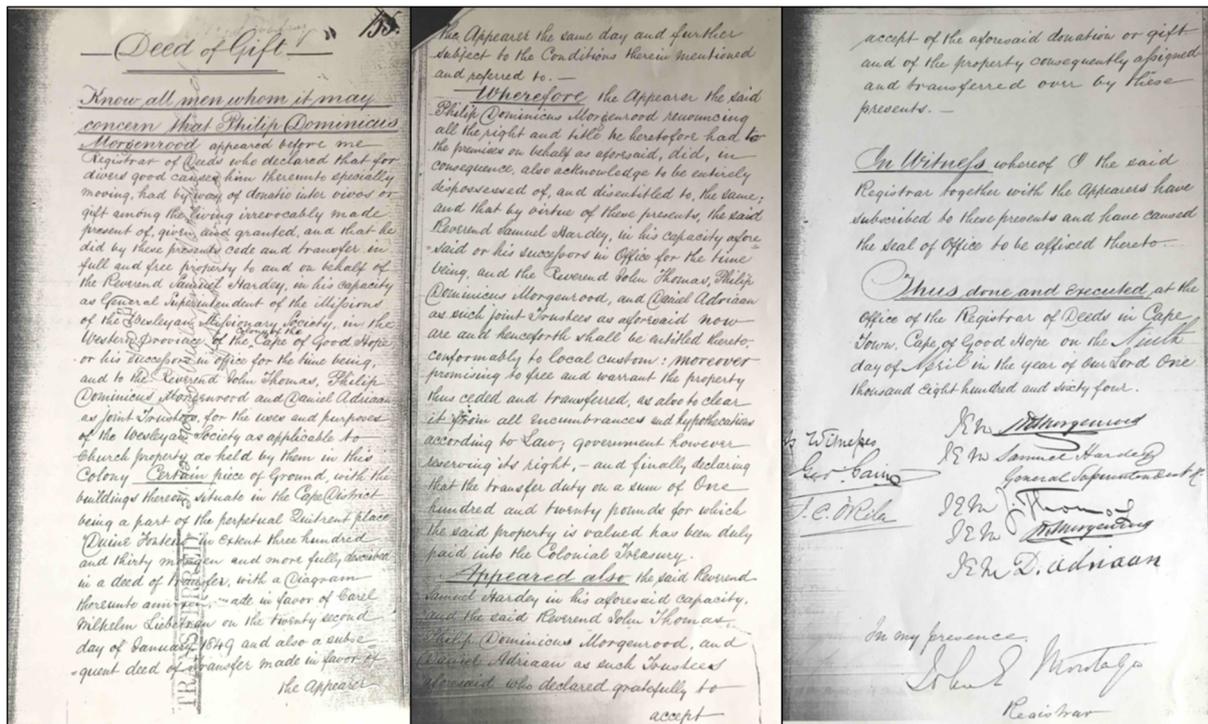


Figure 6: Deed of Gift of land to the Wesleyan Missionary Society, 1864³⁰⁴

In December 1901, the Methodist Church appealed to a Court to transfer the full trusteeship of the land to the President of the Methodist Church of South Africa. This was motivated by the fact that all of the original trustees (the Klipfontein founding fathers) had passed away by that point and had also, to the detriment of their families and community members, failed to nominate successor trustees. The transfer was granted and the property was subsequently registered in the name of Ezra Nuttall (Chairman of the Cape of Good Hope district of the Wesleyan Methodist Church of South Africa) and his successor, Reverend George Robson (Superintendent of the Cape Town and Mowbray Circuit). One specific passage within the Deed of Transfer would come to have a substantial impact on the future of the land and on its position and significance within popular community memory. What was once thought to have been permanent and inviolate was now insecure:

...declared or issued by authority of the said conference with all power to the said Ezra Nuttall and George Robson, or their successors in office for the time being, with the consent of the said conference to alienate, encumber or otherwise deal therewith for the benefit of the said Wesleyan Methodist Church of South Africa.³⁰⁵

In the years following the transfer, large portions of the original Klipfontein land were sold to the state by the church. Tracts were also expropriated for local government purposes, such as road construction, and Cape Town's D.F. Malan Airport which would later become Cape Town International Airport.

³⁰⁴ Deed of Transfer, 1901, Cape Town Archives, KAB/CSC, Vol 2/6/1/209 Ref 643

³⁰⁵ *Ibid.*

Altogether, over time, 270 morgen of land has been sold or expropriated and what remains of present day Klipfontein is merely sixty morgen of land.³⁰⁶



Figure 7: Ruins can be found of some of the original Klipfontein houses (built from clay and stone) in the *veldt* (grasslands) directly next to Cape Town International Airport³⁰⁷

³⁰⁶ Klipfontein Community Survey, 1991, 13

³⁰⁷ Image taken by Annemieke Nel during an interview session and tour of Klipfontein land, Klipfontein, Philippi, 2011.

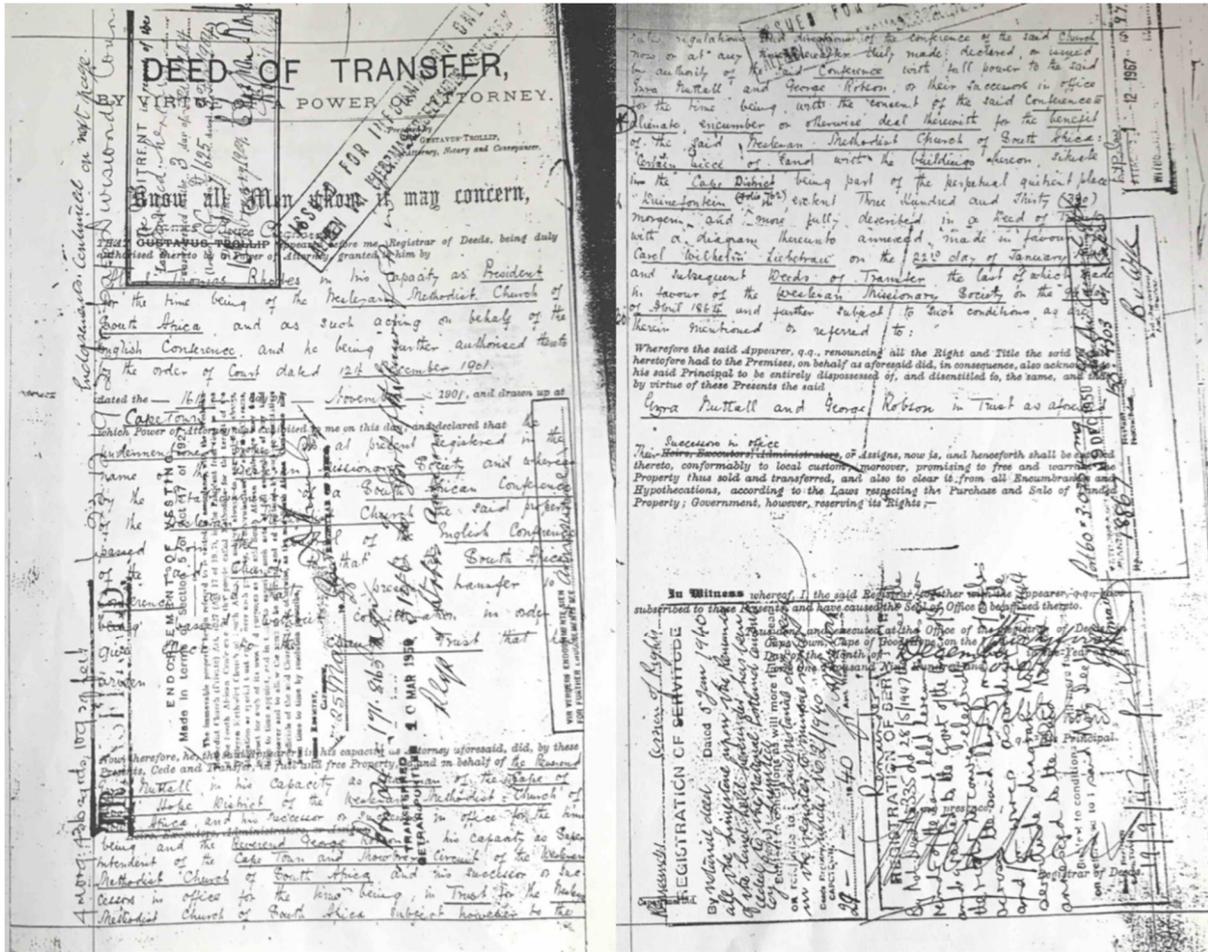


Figure 8: Deed of Transfer – 1901³⁰⁸

³⁰⁸ Deed of Transfer, 1901, Cape Town Archives, KAB/CSC, Vol 2/6/1/209 Ref 643

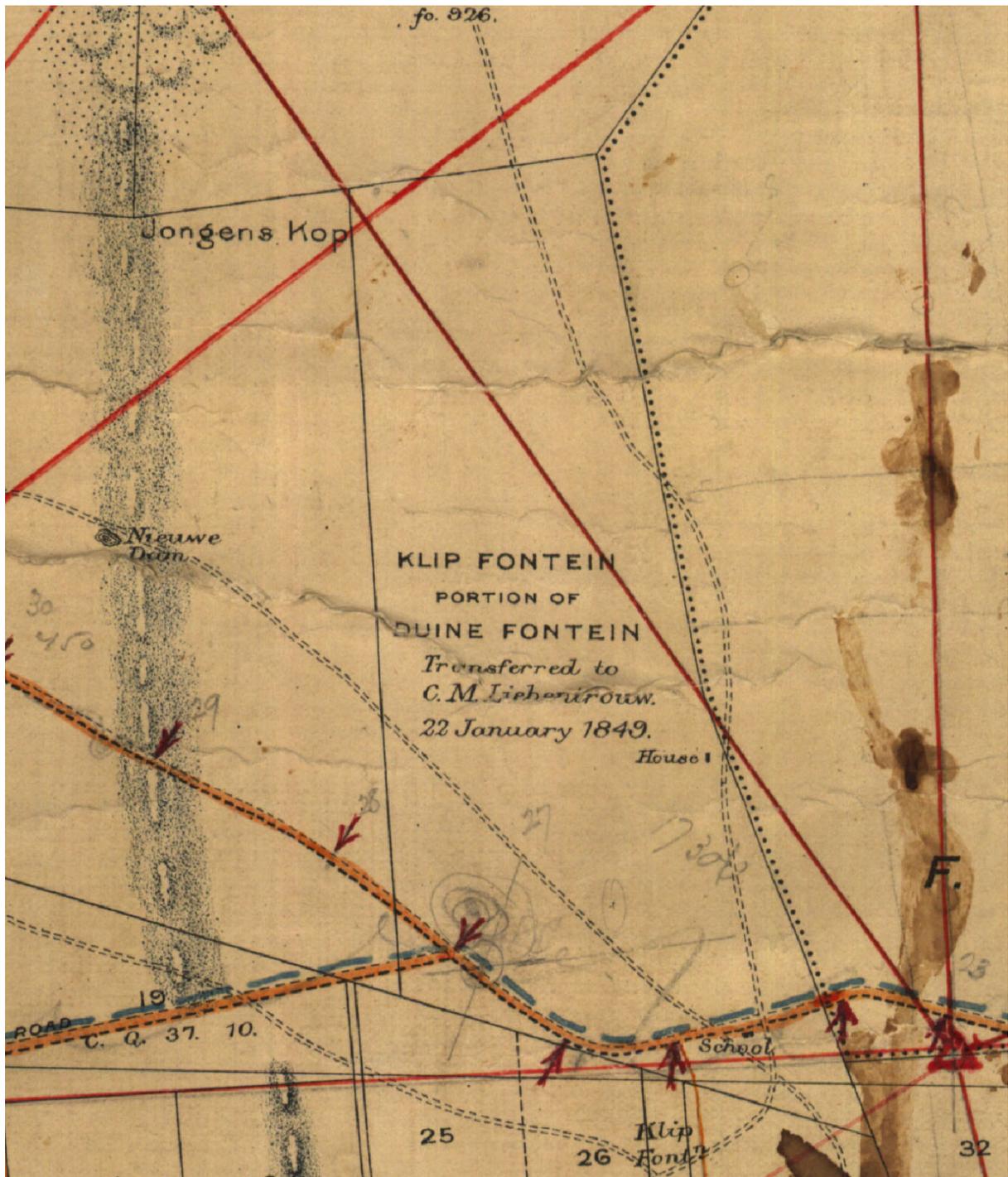


Figure 9: Map of Klipfontein, 1898³⁰⁹

³⁰⁹ Map compiled by Heinrich Scholms, Vinpro on 21 November 2016.

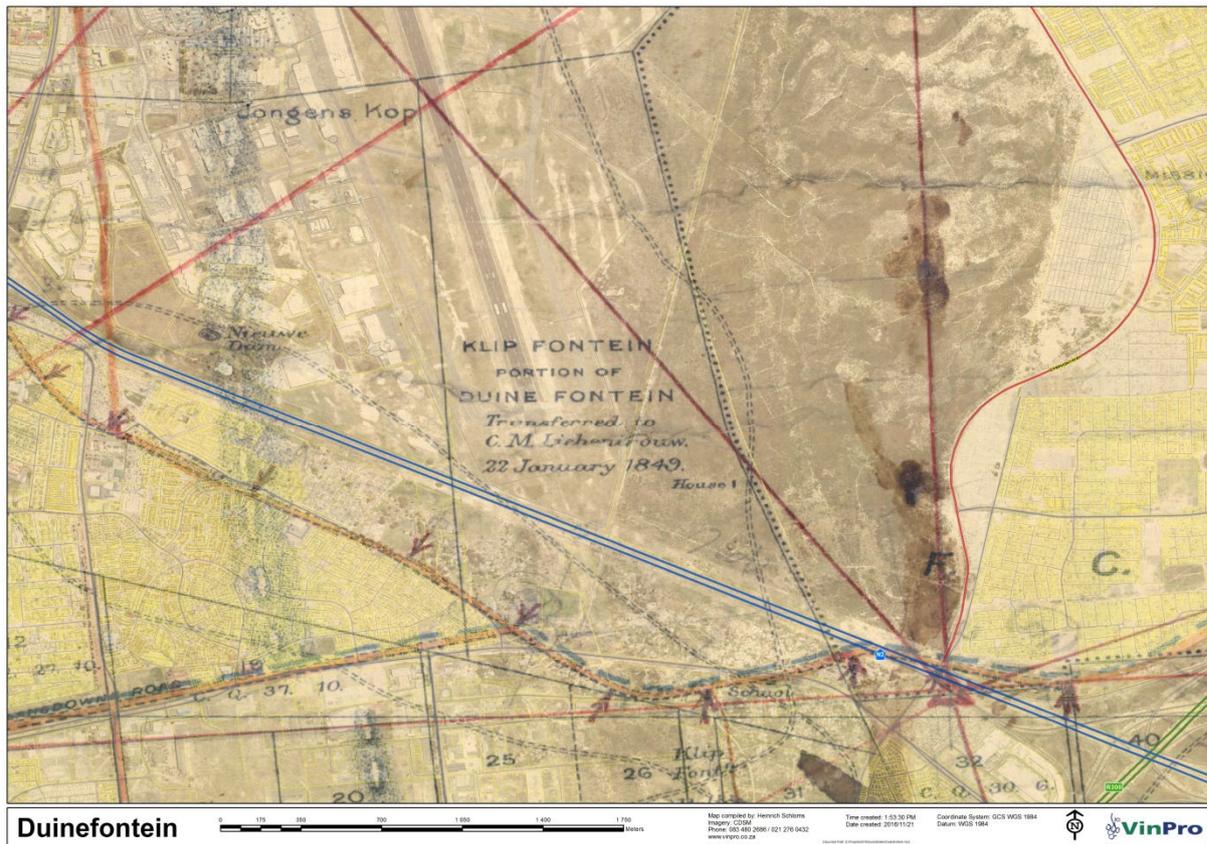


Figure 10: Modern map of N2 Highway, superimposed upon the 1889 map of Klipfontein³¹⁰

³¹⁰ Map compiled by Heinrich Scholms, Vinpro on 21 November 2016.

5 Identity on a mission station

The focus of this chapter is the significant role of identity with specific reference to the Klipfontein community. It will seek to answer a question posed in the introduction of this work – what is the mainspring of the people of Klipfontein’s sense of belonging to the land they live on, and how has that attachment shaped the communal identity and sense of belonging over the almost two centuries that the place has existed? The agency that can be found within the community will also be discussed as it contributes to its awareness of shared ownership and pride in this 60 morgen *lappie* (small piece of cloth) of land that it has called home.³¹¹

5.1 Formation of Identity

In order to understand how identity is influenced by external factors, it is useful to take a brief look at the theory behind the formation of identity. Needless to say, theories of identity are a complex matter which has been written about extensively from a variety of disciplinary perspectives. For present purposes, Erik Erikson’s “tripartite nature of ego identity” will serve as a useful foundation for consideration of the formation and workings of social identity. Ego identity refers to “a conscious sense of self that we develop through social interaction”.³¹² An individual’s ego identity is never static, but is continuously developing, based on new information that is received. The term ‘identity’ refers to “all of the beliefs, ideals and values that help shape and guide a person’s behaviour”.³¹³ Based on this definition, it can be easily established that we are all a product of our surroundings and of our personal experiences with those surroundings. Fundamentally, then, our identities are subject to outside influences. Essentially, our identity is what makes us identifiable within and outside of our environment and is connected to the idea of ‘permanence through time’, which Beller and Leersson explain as “something remaining identical with itself from moment to moment”.³¹⁴

This perspective can be of explanatory value when we turn to consider how the individual and collective identities of Klipfontein community inhabitants have been shaped by their environment and influences of living on a mission station. Or, as Kendra Cherry has put it, how “Our sense of personal

³¹¹Directly translated from Afrikaans, this word means a small piece of cloth. In this reference it refers to a small, almost insignificant, piece of land.

³¹² K. Cherry, *Erik Erikson’s Stages of Psychosocial Development*, 09 July 2006.

³¹³ *Ibid.*

³¹⁴ M. Beller and J. Leerssen, *Imagology: The cultural construction and literary representation of national characters. A critical survey*, 335.

identity is shaped by our experiences and interactions with others, and it is this identity that helps guide our actions, beliefs and behaviours as we grow and develop throughout life”.³¹⁵

Erik Erikson’s theory on the ‘tripartite nature of ego identity’ reflects that a person’s ego identity is formed by three interacting components: biological characteristics, psychological characteristics and the cultural milieu where that individual lives.³¹⁶ Biological characteristics refer to a person’s physiological attributes such as appearance, abilities and constraints, gender, and those aspects that give one a sense of “bodily self”. The psychological characteristics have to do with emotions, interests, desires and fears that are unique to every individual and make up their inner self. The third characteristic – cultural milieu – is the environment in which expression is given to the first two characteristics. It is also important to note that as an individual’s biological, psychological and cultural milieu (or societal circumstances) is adjusted throughout their life, so their identity will also be influenced.³¹⁷

The three characteristics that influence and shape identity formation, according to Erikson, make up a person’s whole personal reality. Of course, no person exists entirely on his or her own. People require other people to interact with in order to develop their identities and sense of self and community. This is why the term ‘identity’ can denote either personal identity (on an individual level) or social identity (when more than one person or a group shares similar aspects from the three characteristics).³¹⁸ On the other hand, an individual or group is only able to become aware of an identity when juxtaposed with another, different individual or group identity – what is called the ‘Other’. For it is only when we are faced with people who are different to us, that we are conscious of our own sense of self or ego identity. Additionally, once our environment or culture (that influences and forms our identity) is threatened, we become acutely mindful of the importance of our definitions of ‘us’. As mentioned earlier, ideals and values are part of our identities and when these are placed in danger of being changed or offended by another party, we perceive that threat as a potential enemy.³¹⁹

There are various existing theories and approaches to the conceptualization of ‘identity’, which is often described as a ‘sociocultural construct’.³²⁰ By its very definition, an identity is a social construct because individual and social identities are constantly influenced by their surrounding milieus. When studying identity formation, it would be sensible to ask, “how, from what, by whom and for what [are identities constructed]”.³²¹ Consequently, identities may also be constructed ‘from above’ as with

³¹⁵ Cherry, *Stages of Psychosocial Development*.

³¹⁶ J. Kroger, *Identity Development: Adolescence Through Adulthood*, 8.

³¹⁷ *Ibid.*

³¹⁸ C. Voicu, ‘Crossing borders: Journey into Otherness’, *Journal of Cultural and Linguistic Communication*, 323.

³¹⁹ *Ibid.*

³²⁰ Voicu, ‘Crossing borders’, 324.

³²¹ S. Bekker *et al*, ‘The emergence of new identities in the Western Cape’, *Politikon*, 222.

authoritative organisations such as states or governments, or ‘from below’, where “a basic human need for solidarity with members of an in-group is accomplished through affiliation, assimilation and shared sentiments of security”.³²²

[Identity is the] matter of ‘becoming’ as well as of ‘being’. It belongs to the future as much as to the past. It is not something which already exists, transcending place, time, history and culture. Cultural identities come from somewhere, have histories. But like everything which is historical, they undergo constant transformation. Far from being eternally fixed in some essentialised past, they are subject to the continuous ‘play’ of history, culture and power. Far from being grounded in mere ‘recovery’ of the past, which is waiting to be found, and which when found, will secure our sense of ourselves into eternity, identities are the names we give to the different ways we are positioned by, and position ourselves within, the narratives of the past.³²³

Since it is generally agreed upon that identity is a social construct, the term ‘cultural identity’ is used, which has been defined by Sysoyev as “an individual’s realisation of his or her place in the spectrum of cultures and purposeful behaviour directed on his or her enrolment and acceptance into a particular group, as well as certain characteristic features of a particular group that automatically assign an individual’s group membership.”³²⁴ There are a number of elements that influence the shaping of cultural identity. The following diagram indicates these elements, which represent categories to which every individual has specific ‘membership’.³²⁵

³²² Bekker *et al*, ‘The emergence of new identities’, 222.

³²³ S. Hall, ‘Cultural Identity and Diaspora’ in J. Rutherford (ed), *Identity: Community, Culture, Difference*, 435.

³²⁴ P.V. Sysoyev, *Individual’s cultural identity in the context of dialogue of cultures*, 37-38.

³²⁵ Voicu, ‘Crossing borders’, 323.

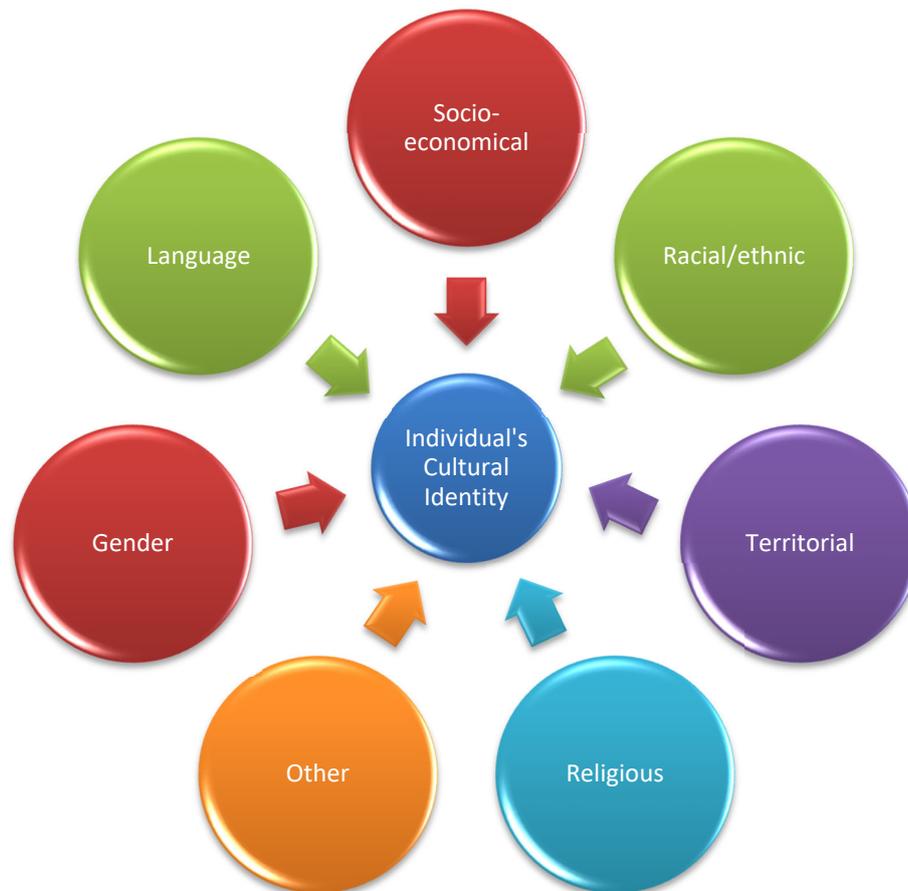


Figure 11: Elements that shape cultural identity.³²⁶

The remainder of this chapter will explore mission stations and Klipfontein as a case study of elements that serve to shape cultural identity.

5.1.1 Race/ethnicity

The Klipfontein community inhabitants can be racially categorised as what is today termed *Coloured*, in which historically they possess a multi-cultured ethnic background. Some of their family ancestors were of Khoisan. Others were of freed slave background, who were also of mixed descent, with roots in India, Indonesia, the Malayan peninsula, and elsewhere. Others of the first-generation inhabitants were also 'half-caste', encompassing the offspring of unions between Europeans and either slaves or Khoisan. As Mohamed Adhikari has summarised the picture of racial/ethnic descent in what is today termed 'Coloured':

Contrary to (now perhaps increasingly outmoded) international usage, in South Africa the term 'coloured' does not refer to black people in general. It instead

³²⁶ Sysoyev, *Individual's cultural identity*, 37-38.

alludes to a phenotypically diverse group of people descended largely from Cape slaves, the indigenous Khoisan population and other people of African and Asian descent who had been assimilated into Cape colonial society by the late nineteenth century. Being also partly descended from European settlers, Coloured people have popularly been regarded as being of 'mixed race' and have held an intermediate status in the South African racial hierarchy, distinct from the historically dominant white minority and the numerically preponderant African population.³²⁷

The Coloured population in South Africa has long remained a marginalised society – marginalised by both history and, until relatively recently, by many of their country's scholarly historians.³²⁸ Given the segregationist past, official identities have been categorised phenotypically due to the fact that “the concept of identity was legislated during Apartheid as a natural and biological singularity.”³²⁹ Wendy Isaacs-Martin has identified this as a “pre-democratic nationalist agenda” that served the purposes of the minority white population. The Coloured population lacked a requisite racial and ethnic cohesion due to their ‘mixed’ descent, and this consigned them largely to the sidelines of national history. For Isaacs-Martin, unlike in the case of wholly ‘indigenised’ black Africans or Bantu, “The classification that stood apart as lacking in these [ethnic] characteristics was the Coloured population, claimed to have no heritage, language or religion that was not derived from the Europeans.”³³⁰ In some views, then, the concept of ‘Colouredness’ represented an essentially artificial identity imposed on an apparently weak and susceptible segment of the population by a white supremacist government, reducing people to an unconscious product of historical miscegenation.³³¹ In another perspective, Coloured inhabitants have internalised an imposed identity, one dictated by long years of racial categorisation and internal colonialism.³³² And, on occasion, it could be used instrumentally to prop up a political position of ‘apartness’:

Ethnic divisions were not natural, but social and political devices. In other words ethnicity was either strategically useful for resistance practices or an ideological obstacle to more politically radical social categories such as ‘black’, ‘working class’, or ‘African’.³³³

Equally, it should be borne in mind that prescribed racial or ethnic categorisation is not solely responsible for the creation and existence of community and group identities. For there are other

³²⁷ M. Adhikari, ‘Fear, Shame and Frustration: Coloured Identity in White Supremacist South Africa, 1910-1994’, *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 468.

³²⁸ L. Switzer, review of M. Adhikari, ‘Let Us Live for Our Children: The Teachers’ League of South Africa, 1913 - 1940’, *Journal of African History*, 338.

³²⁹ Isaacs-Martin, ‘Issues of Race’, 120.

³³⁰ *Ibid.*, 123.

³³¹ Adhikari, ‘Fear, Shame, Frustration’, 467.

³³² Isaacs-Martin, ‘Issues of Race’, 123.

³³³ T. Reddy, ‘The politics of naming: The constitution of coloured subjects in South Africa’ in Z. Erasmus, *Coloured by History, Shaped by Place*, 67.

powerful elements that can cause people to identify with each other, including religion, locality and nation.³³⁴ These can co-exist with conventional, long-established notions around a sentiment of exclusion, that the Coloured population of South Africa finds itself to be ‘neither white enough, nor black enough’.³³⁵ In the argument advanced by the sociologist, Zimitri Erasmus:

“respectability and shame are key defining terms of middle class Coloured experience... the pressure to be respectable and to avoid shame created much anxiety. [...] Being coloured often means having to choose between blackness and whiteness. When one lives aspects of both these cultural identities, having to choose one means the denial of some part of oneself.”³³⁶

At the same time, ethnicity remains a salient factor in an individual or a group’s identity. As Castells has asserted:

“Ethnicity has always been a basic attribute of self-identification. Not only because of shared historical practice, but because “the others” remind people everyday that they are “others” themselves. This generalized “otherness,” be it defined by skin color, language, or any other external attribute, characterizes the reality of our multi-cultural world.”³³⁷

Ultimately, there are more elements to identity formation than just ethnicity or race, and it is through these additional elements that those who form their own identities have a sense of agency in recognising and affiliating themselves to wider communities of belonging.

People form a sense of meaning on the basis of culture – here, this term may include tradition, language, religion, locality and so forth – and identities are formed from people’s sources of meaning and experience.³³⁸ In this sense, “it is probable that South Africans are developing for themselves multiple identities, some of which may be based neither on historically inherited labels nor on national sentiment. It may be that local place and local culture, language, and minority status are being employed to construct a new shared form of identification which is able to transcend other identities in many domains of daily life.”³³⁹

It would, therefore, be at least questionable to construct Coloured identity in terms of a racial categorisation; rather, it might be better represented as an historical experience of a social and cultural

³³⁴ M. Castells, *The Power of Identity*, 69.

³³⁵ M. Adhikari, *Not White Enough, Not Black Enough: Racial Identity in the South African Coloured Community*, 176.

³³⁶ Z. Erasmus, *Coloured by history, shaped by place*, 13 – 14.

³³⁷ Castells, *Power of Identity*, XXV.

³³⁸ *Ibid.*, 6.

³³⁹ Bekker *et al*, ‘The emergence of new identities’, 221.

past rooted in slavery, colonialism, segregation, Apartheid and a further post-Apartheid evolution under processes of democratisation, following Isaacs-Martin.³⁴⁰ Moreover, as Erasmus has argued in her critique of an adoption of an ethnic foundation:

[C]oloured identities are not about ‘race mixture’. Attempts to define these identities in terms of mixture buy into notions of ‘racial purity’ that can be traced to nineteenth century European eugenicists. Since cultural formations involve borrowing from various cultural forms, and thus all identities could be seen/read as culturally hybrid, it should not be difficult to conceive of coloured identities as such, rather than in terms of ‘race mixture’ or ‘miscegenation’. They are cultural formations born of appropriation, dispossession and translation into the colonial encounter. [...] Coloured identities are distinguished not merely by the fact of borrowing *per se*, but by cultural borrowing and creation under very specific conditions of creolization. I here use creolization to refer to cultural creativity under conditions of marginality. Creolization involves the construction of an identity out of elements of ruling as well as subaltern cultures. This *bricolage* does not invalidate such identities. Although it is true that Apartheid has played a key role in the formation and consolidation of these (and other) identities, coloured identities are not simply Apartheid labels imposed by whites. They are made and re-made by Coloured people themselves in their attempts to give meaning to their everyday lives.³⁴¹

The people of Klipfontein have created their communal identity by ‘borrowing’ from the variety of cultures they and their ancestors have been exposed to over the course of almost two centuries. As the above extract from Zmitri Erasmus’s *Coloured by History, Shape by Place* suggests, cultural formations necessarily involve borrowing and hybridity. In a similar vein, Stuart Hall, amongst other influential scholars, has suggested that social construction is an ongoing thing - never completed - always ‘in process’.³⁴² As with numerous Coloured communities of the Cape, the Klipfontein families have Khoisan, slave and European ancestors. Their exposure to mission station experience and to Wesleyan values also served to impart Western and Christian strains deep into their community culture:

Mission stations were multi-cultural centres by virtue of the ethnic diversity of the residents. In addition, there were sub-cultures comprising escaped and, after 1838, liberated slaves. Non-Xhosa-speaking Africans who were victims of slaving activities along the south-eastern coast of Africa and had found themselves wanderers, gravitated towards the stations. Then there were those who straddled the major cultures of European and African - the group which was referred to as ‘Hottentots’ by the colonial settlers. Mission stations were in a way melting pots in which new cultural alloys were being fashioned.³⁴³

³⁴⁰ Isaacs-Martin, ‘Issues of Race’, 126.

³⁴¹ Erasmus, *Coloured by History*, 16.

³⁴² S. Hall, ‘Introduction: Who needs Identity?’ in S. Hall and P. Du Gay (eds.), *Questions of Cultural Identity*, 2.

³⁴³ Tisani, ‘Gender Relations’, 66.

Though there are scholarly claims that this mixture of customs and traditions has been the source of general identity confusion, in the case of Klipfontein, a rounded sense of pride can be detected in the oral histories which have been passed down generationally. A consciousness of ancestral roots from slaves and the Khoisan carries an awareness of significant historical links to surrounding lands. Knowledge of the medicinal use of local Cape Flats plants has also been passed down generationally, traced back to the Khoisan. Some of the Klipfontein community's ancestors were freed slaves who subsisted independently off the land or who worked as free labour for local farmers, combining this with the extraction of mission station resources. Again, this has come to constitute part of a 'free' heritage. And then there are those elements of European culture that have become absorbed into Klipfontein culture – mostly connected to the Wesleyan church's influence, expressed through annual community festivals, events on the church calendar, education and religion. Again, Zimitri Erasmus provides an apt sociological sketch:

In re-imagining coloured identities we need to move beyond the notion that coloured identities are 'mixed race' identities. Rather we need to see them as cultural identities comprising detailed bodies of knowledge, specific cultural practices, memories, rituals and modes of being. Coloured identities were formed in the colonial encounter between colonists (Dutch and British), slaves from South and East India and from East Africa, and conquered indigenous peoples, the Khoi and San. This encounter and the power relations embedded in it have resulted in processes of cultural dispossession, borrowing and transformation. The result has been a highly specific and instantly recognizable cultural transformation – not just 'a mixture' but a very particular 'mixture' comprising elements of Dutch, British, Malaysian, Khoi and other forms of African cultures appropriated, translated and articulated in complex and subtle ways. These elements acquire their specific cultural meaning only once fused and translated.³⁴⁴

Against this, it can be seen that racial/ethnic and cultural elements of the Klipfontein people are similar to those to be found within the general Coloured population, but there are further factors that are unique to Klipfontein and have influenced its individuals and residing group – specifically, a location which has remained constant.

5.1.2 Territorial influence on identity: Geographical 'Ownership'

People identify themselves primarily with their locality. Territorial identity is a fundamental anchor of belonging that is not even lost in the rapid process of generalized urbanization we are now experiencing. The village is not left behind; it

³⁴⁴ Erasmus, *Coloured by History*, 21.

is transported with its communal ties. And new urban villages are constructed, shrinking the size of the human experience to a dimension that can be managed and defended by people feeling lost in the whirlwind of a destructured world.³⁴⁵

Geographical and territorial settings are an important element in identity formation. Identities are often intrinsically linked to physical locations. For the same reason, an individual would have nostalgic feelings for a ‘home town’ or place where they grew up and spent their formative years. The same goes for a house in which a person lived for a significant period of time or over a significant period in their life – physically it may just be a few walls and a roof, but the memories that were created within and around it create an emotional connection. Psychologist Peter Coleman has suggested that “memory is much more than recall of past stimuli. It involves emotion, will and creativity in the reconstruction of the past to serve present needs.”³⁴⁶ For a community, popular memory and shared experiences form part of its collective identity and these are rooted in the past and present which rely on the foundation of physical location:

The places and spaces in which people played, worked and lived over time are crucial to their development as individuals and as communities. For example, the areas or spaces which children turn into their ‘stomping grounds’ are deeply symbolic to growing up and becoming a confident and secure adult. A sense of togetherness at home, in the street, and in the neighbourhood is fundamental to creating a community identity. It is the sense of belonging that people develop through these experiences that is central to the construction of identity.³⁴⁷

In the aftermath of the implementation of the 1950s Group Areas Act, numerous communities were forcibly removed from their homes and relocated. The emotional impact was deep and traumatic. The oral historian, Sean Field, interviewed victims of compulsory Group Areas removals, concluding:

“the impact of forced removals and social engineering is not simply about the loss of physical houses, property and land; it is also significantly about the loss of a sense of home and community. Losing a home and a community is about a loss of security, stability, autonomy and even a sense of family, friendship and self.”³⁴⁸

Identity is closely linked to a sense of belonging and in a geographical sense, that belonging is connected to the physical space in which a group or community find themselves. Historically, it has also been argued that ties to land stand at the very centre of many group ideologies.³⁴⁹

The Klipfontein community escaped Cape Town’s removals not merely through its location on the Cape Flats. Being on the mission glebe and registered as Methodist Church land kept it secure,

³⁴⁵ Castells, *The Power of Identity*, 64.

³⁴⁶ P. G. Coleman, *Ageing and Reminiscence Processes: Social and Clinical Implications*, 2

³⁴⁷ S. Field, ‘Fragile Identities: Memory, emotion and coloured residents of Windermere’ in Z. Erasmus, *Coloured by History*, 100.

³⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 102.

³⁴⁹ Vail, *Creation of Tribalism*, 14.

ensuring that Klipfonteiners remained where they had been for almost two centuries. This continuity of territorial location has come to reinforce a sense of rooted communal identity, through a continuity of shared memories and experiences. Even though the tangible ground on which they have been living has not been ‘possessed’, it has still imparted a distinctive sense of secure autonomy.

In very recent years, community-based activism has been articulating the Klipfonteiners’ strong sense of territorial ‘ownership’, and of communal identity within the realm of what might be termed neighbourhood politics. Castells’s sociological analysis is, again, suggestive:

However, I do not think it would be inaccurate to say that local environments, per se, do not induce a specific pattern of behavior, or, for that matter, a distinctive identity. Yet, what communalist authors would argue, and what is consistent with my own cross-cultural observation, is that people resist the process of individualization and social atomization, and tend to cluster in community organizations that, over time, generate a feeling of belonging, and ultimately, in many cases, a communal, cultural identity.³⁵⁰

In interviews, community members identify ‘true Klipfonteiners’ as members of families who have lived there for their whole lives, and who share a steely territorial protectiveness of the collective ‘us’. Thus, the current Klipfontein community has an informal territorial protective stance against unwanted intrusion from ‘the others’. It has patrol groups, for example, which work to secure boundaries against uninvited newcomers, and which will dismantle any new makeshift house built on their land. One of the residents’s leaders has also established an informal fund-raising society to maintain welfare outreach. Soup kitchens and the maintenance of some local buildings are part of this communal effort.

Meanwhile, the Klipfontein community has been threatened periodically with possible relocation for over a decade in the early 2000s, owing to official plans to widen the major N2 highway between Borchard’s Quarry and the secondary R300 thoroughfare.³⁵¹ This prospective relocation has met with strident local opposition, as voiced by the prominent community leader, Yvonne Bathies:

“I said there is no way that anybody is going to move us here because this is our inheritance. This is our heritage. The land belongs to a certain group of people. The land has always belonged to our ancestors.”³⁵²

To many locals, the looming threat of removal is reminiscent of the 1960s forced removals of the Group Areas Act. Left to its own devices by the politics of the Apartheid era, fear of interference by the development planning of the post-Apartheid era is widely spread.

³⁵⁰ Castells, *Power of Identity*, 64-65.

³⁵¹ S. Mzantsi. *The Cape Times*, 6 Aug 2015.

³⁵² *Ibid.*

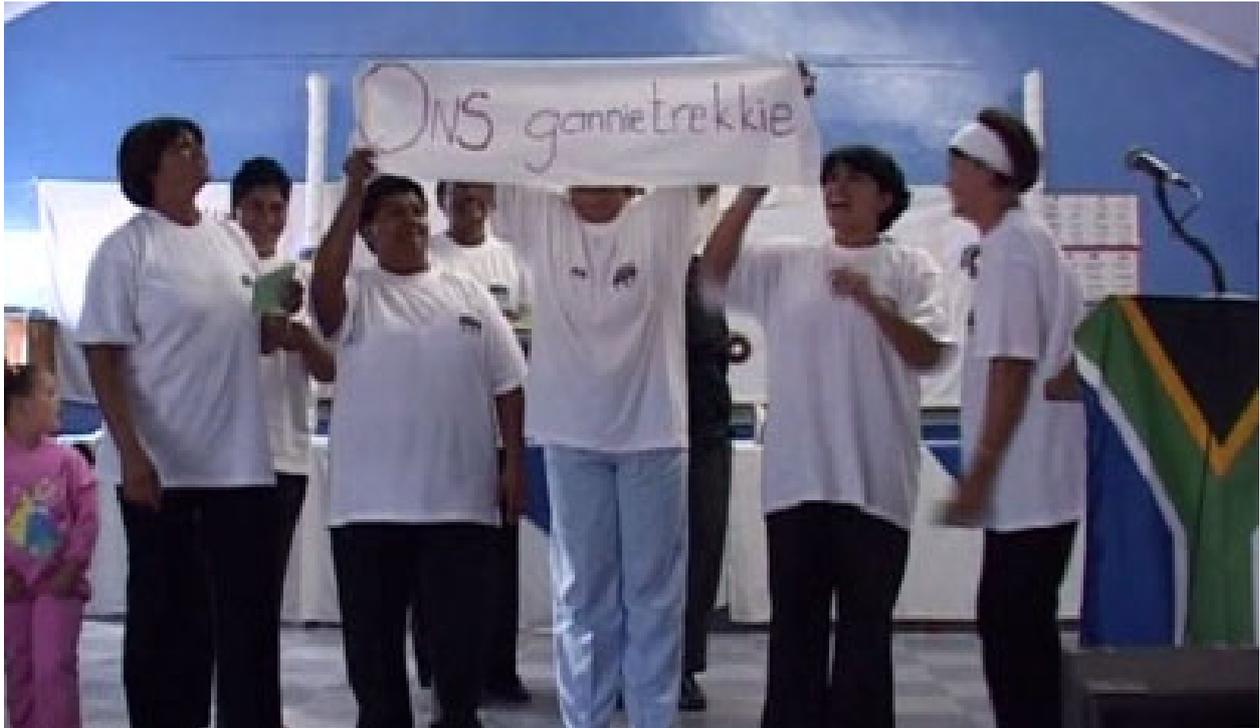


Figure 12: Klipfontein residents showing their disdain for possible forced relocation by waving a banner proclaiming: “We refuse to move”.³⁵³



Figure 13: Image of Yvonne Baarthies.³⁵⁴

Many of the Klipfontein elders have known no other place, descendants of parents and grandparents who grew up on the same land, and in the very same houses. Stories circulate about different Klipfontein family set-ups throughout history, and some elders use the local graveyard as a sort of remembrance road map in relaying these intricate family stories.³⁵⁵ The English-language inscriptions

³⁵³ *Shack/Slum Dwellers International* DVD, Cape Town, CORC, 2006.

³⁵⁴ S. Mzantsi. *The Cape Times*, 6 Aug 2015. Picture by Armand Hough.

³⁵⁵ Baarthies, Yvonne and Januari, Peter “Katja”. Interview by Annemieke Nel. Informal interview. Klipfontein, Philippi. 2011

at burial portray the mission station bilingualism of an otherwise Afrikaans home-language community.



Figure 14: Graves of some of the descendants the Klipfontein founding members.³⁵⁶

One specific resident, ‘Antie Annie’, recalls a time when the Cape Flats – now bursting with informal housing – was just an expanse of open *veldt* and farms. One can only imagine how it must have been to witness this fill up with factories and informally-built dwellings, roads, traffic and people.³⁵⁷ It almost seems as if Klipfontein remained in a time capsule whilst everything around it developed and filled up. The construction of the N2 National Highway and the Cape Town Airport brought particularly large changes to the environment. New suburbs formed in Philippi and its surrounds, new families migrated to Cape Town and settled in the Cape Flats area. In the midst of all this change, Klipfontein continued to endure. On its remaining ancestral land, some families are still working in ways pursued by generations before them – gardening, wood-cutting and small farming in a place with boundaries known through a kind of customary *knowing*. For, although Klipfontein’s literal territorial boundaries may be difficult to discern as an outside visitor, it is clear that the local ‘Klipfonteiners’ have an almost innate conscious knowledge of the lie of their ‘*lappie grond*’ which is at the core of their communal identity. While it is poor, it is also treasured as a protective screen in the sense elaborated by Castells:

... local communities, constructed through collective action and preserved through collective memory, are specific sources of identities. But these identities, in most cases, are defensive reactions against the impositions of global disorder and uncontrollable, fast-paced change. They do build havens, but not heavens.³⁵⁸

³⁵⁶ *Shack/Slum Dwellers International* DVD, Cape Town, CORC, 2006.

³⁵⁷ Dawies, Anita. Interview by Annemieke Nel. Informal interview. Klipfontein, Philippi. 2011

³⁵⁸ Castells, *Power of Identity*, 68.

5.1.3 Religion as an influence on identity

Historically, religion has long had a substantial impact on communities and populations and has had the capacity to bring about social change, as can be seen, not least, in the history of the Cape Colony. Religion can be seen to have acted as an umbrella under which to unite the beliefs, actions, ideas, and social lives of people.³⁵⁹ Religious groups have come to provide a community in and of itself to which people can belong and feel connected. In one typical study of immigrants, it was found that a religious grouping such as a church or a society provided a space in which they adjusted more easily to their new surroundings. A religious grouping could serve as an extension of an individual's family and culture, and consequently could help to create a shared sense of security.³⁶⁰ The shared culture and experiences found in religious societies can duly form part of a greater group identity. In the early Cape, the Dutch Reformed Church had a particularly strong influence on society and politics through its active underwriting of the policies and practices of the Dutch East India Company. Following the introduction and growth of other church denominations, religion became an influential agent in trying to influence social change on the basis of varying humanitarian and philanthropic influences which fuelled evangelisation and upliftment, and acculturation. Later, some churches in South Africa added their energies to another cause of human transformation:

As a force for social change, the mainline churches have experienced two peaks. First, in the colonial era, undoubtedly played a role as a channel of westernization through education and co-optation of indigenous peoples into the market economy. Much more recently, these churches made significant contribution to the overthrow of apartheid and the transition to democratic rule in 1994.³⁶¹

In that respect, there is a lengthy pre-history to circumstances in present-day South Africa, in which there is a clear relationship between religion, ethnicity and nationality. Because it can be absorptive, religious affiliation can potentially “bridge barriers of tribe, family, nationality and race.”³⁶² Owing to the relation between social change and religion in the eighteenth and nineteenth century Cape, politics and religion could be seen, as Elbourne has argued, to have become inseparably linked.³⁶³ Churches in support of emancipation became havens for the non-European downtrodden, and their accommodating influence would go on to forge a bond that has lingered into the present.

³⁵⁹ J. C. Erasmus, ‘Religion and social transformation: A case study from South Africa’, *Christianity and Change*, 143. See also: M. B. McGuire, *Religion - The Social Context*.

³⁶⁰ C. Yeh and M. Inose, ‘Difficulties and Coping Strategies of Chinese, Japanese, and Korean Immigrant Students’, *Adolescence*, 75.

³⁶¹ R. C. Garner, ‘Religion as a source of social change in the new South Africa’, *Journal of Religion in Africa*, 313.

³⁶² Erasmus, ‘Religion and social transformation’, 144.

³⁶³ Elbourne, ‘Early Khoisan’, 4.

Christian evangelisation was, self-evidently, the moving missionary society force. And, equally obviously, conversion was accompanied by other elements of the Methodist Church and its Western Christianity. A pillar of mission station institutions was the important tie between religion and education, with inhabitants being taught to read and write in English or Dutch. Although the key purpose of education and literacy was to read and study the Bible, this also served integration into the world of colonial life, particularly through the inculcation of notions of respectability and civilisation. As Robert Ross has outlined it, a learnt Christian way of life consisted of:

“regular labour for monetary rewards, monogamy, chastity outside marriage, sobriety, attendance at church on the Sabbath, and a thoughtful rather than emotional demeanour in church, literacy, European-style clothing and housing in which possessions could be kept and decency maintained.”³⁶⁴

Christian converts took pains to observe what they saw as their civilised respectability. As Ross has again pictured it:

Others, at all levels of society from the Cape Town elite to the ex-slaves and the Khoisan, were anxious to preserve the impression of sobriety and chastity upon which their reputations and standing in society depended. Indeed, even as early as 1841, the missionary William Elliot reported [that people] considered the profession of Christianity to be 'a necessary badge of respectability', and he was not entirely sure that they were becoming Christians out of inner conviction, and not just to acquire a worldly status. Probably, though, he need not have bothered, as the two were very closely tied into each other.³⁶⁵

At another level, there is the lubrication of community solidarities provided by religious bonding. Castells, for instance, refers to communities which engage in “collective survival [in order to build] networks of solidarity and reciprocity, often around churches”.³⁶⁶ Within communities which experience levels of deprivation and extreme poverty, evidence can be found that members engage with, and integrate into, organisations, as a mutually beneficial exchange to secure their survival. In the context of a nonconformist Protestant church with a religious doctrine that includes a focus on ministering to uplift the poor and destitute, it is hardly surprising that it would attract surrounding adherents. A shared identity can then develop around common religious affinities, as Castells again explores:

A communal identity does emerge, although very often it is absorbed into a religious faith, to the point that I would risk the hypothesis that this kind of communalism is, essentially, a religious commune, linked to the consciousness of being the exploited and/or the excluded. Thus, people organizing in poor local

³⁶⁴ R. Ross, ‘Missions, Respectability and Civil Rights: The Cape Colony, 1828-1854’, *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 338.

³⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 341 – 342.

³⁶⁶ Castells, *Power of Identity*, 66.

communities may feel revitalized, and acknowledged as human beings, by and through religious deliverance.³⁶⁷

At the same time, though, Klipfontein may not represent an ideal, ‘professing’ type of Christian religious commune, even while it maintains an awareness of the importance of religion and the church. Thus, not all Klipfonteiners are Methodists anymore. Yet they do still continue the celebration of ‘*volksfeeste*’ together as a community.³⁶⁸ These *volksfeeste* or “community festivals”, were established by missionaries in the past and have become part of community tradition. It is also interesting that so many of the Christian moral codes according to which the people of Klipfontein profess to live, continue into the present day, even though the church is no longer the responsible agent for the education and sustenance of its ‘congregation’. In interviews, one community member identified some Klipfontein families as *kerkmense* [church people], identifying and emphasising their recognised respectability in the wider community.³⁶⁹ The church building itself is important and still serves as the hub of the community in which regular festivals and events such as weddings, birthday parties and christenings still take place. Religion forms an intrinsic part of the identity of the people in Klipfontein.



Figure 15: Religious Festival: Western Cape Blood Warriors Bible Run 2017.³⁷⁰

³⁶⁷ Castells, *Power of Identity*, 66.

³⁶⁸ “Volksfeeste” are often western festivals that were celebrated by the whole community based on their shared traditions.

³⁶⁹ Valie, Rosaline. Interview by Annemieke Nel. Informal interview. Klipfontein, Philippi.

³⁷⁰ Klipfontein Methodist Church Facebook Page.

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/436535916693111/permalink/452691268410909/> Picture by [Ernie Steenkamp](#).



Figure 16: Wedding being held at Klipfontein Methodist Church - Cornelia and André Louw.³⁷¹

5.1.4 Socio-Economic (Class, finance and education) influence on identity

The impact of oppressive institutions and repressive legislation such as slavery and the ‘Hottentot Proclamation’ in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries ensured that the Cape Colony had a non-European labour force that in general received relatively little education and little opportunity for skilled labour mobility. After emancipation, options for the freed were still very limiting, with the only education available in rural districts being that on mission stations. Meanwhile, as African labour migration into Cape colonial territory deepened, competition and struggles between groups for place and preference increased. In Adhikari’s encapsulation:

It was, however, in the decades after the freeing of both the local Khoisan in 1828 (from colonial restrictions on their labour mobility) and the imported slaves in 1834-38 (with the empire-wide emancipation) that various components of the heterogeneous, but generally non-Bantu-speaking, black labouring class in the Cape Colony started integrating more rapidly and developing an incipient shared identity. This identity was based on a common socio-economic status and a shared culture derived from their incorporation into the lower ranks of Cape colonial society. The emergence of a fully-fledged coloured identity as we know it today was precipitated in the late nineteenth century by the sweeping social changes that

³⁷¹ Klipfontein Methodist Church Facebook Page.

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/436535916693111/permalink/452691268410909/> Picture by [Ernie Steenkamp](#). Picture by Cornelia Louw.

came in the wake of the mineral revolution. Not only did significant numbers of Africans, especially Xhosa-speakers, start coming to the western Cape from the 1870s onwards but assimilated colonial blacks and a wide variety of African people who had recently been incorporated into the capitalist economy were thrust together in the highly competitive environment of the newly established mining towns. These developments drove acculturated colonial Black people to assert a separate identity in order to claim a position of privilege relative to Africans on the basis of their closer assimilation to western culture and being partly descended from European colonists.³⁷²

After democratisation in 1994, the new government introduced varying measures aimed at lessening inequality, but these focused on the position of black Africans, those at the bottom of the previous Apartheid pecking order, and Coloured people derived disproportionately little gain.³⁷³ Unsurprisingly, resentment over jobs and housing sharpened the popular ethnic refrain among many Coloured inhabitants of the Cape Flats, that of being ‘not white enough and not black enough’. This was a fairly widespread sentiment in the Western Cape among those in the region who constitute over two-thirds of the country’s total Coloured population. The long-established status quo appeared to be unchanging, as in Adhikari’s judgement that, the Coloured people “[lack] significant political or economic power [...] and have always formed a marginal group in South African society”.³⁷⁴ Their most prominent shared characteristics were their “intermediate status within the social order, their relatively small number and their less significant economic and political power.”³⁷⁵ As Klipfontein shows, even access to land or a desire to remain attached to it, has long co-existed with a history of proletarianisation, something which will be touched on the next section.

5.1.5. Economic factors that influence Coloured identity

Historically, many inhabitants of Klipfontein mission were dependant on field employment from surrounding white farmers in the Philippi area. Many others laboured as wood-cutters, as transporters and as other general unskilled workers. Some Klipfonteiners currently continue in the same sort of work as their forebears.

³⁷² Adhikari, ‘Fear, Shame, Frustration’, 469.

³⁷³ M. Amberger, ‘The Situation of the Coloureds in South Africa’, *International Reports*, 1.

³⁷⁴ Adhikari, ‘Fear, Shame, Frustration’, 469.

³⁷⁵ C. Fransch, ‘We Would Have No Name’: The Porosity of Locational and Racial Identities Amongst the Coloured Communities’ of Stellenbosch, c. 1890–1960s’, *Journal of African Studies*, 407.

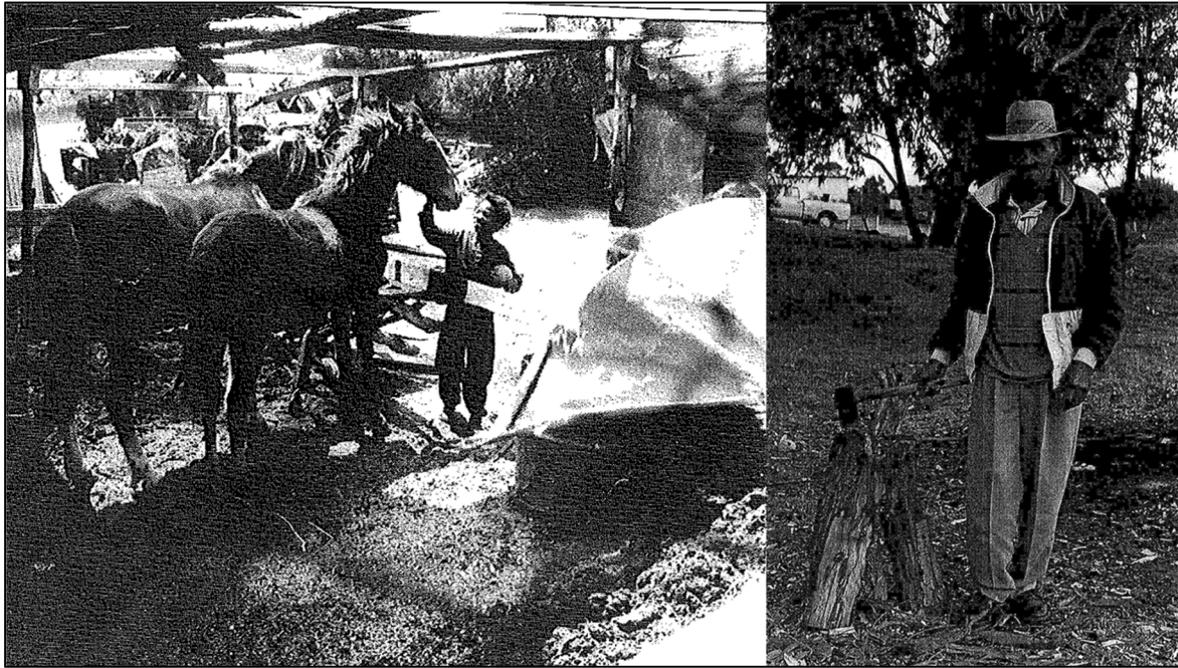


Figure 17: A Klipfonteiner tending to the horses (left) and a traditional wood-cutter (right)³⁷⁶

As with other poor communities, there are a large number of unemployed Klipfonteiners. Many of the younger men are dependent on lowly-paid jobs, either seasonal or contract, for neighbouring farmers and factories. Women typically work as domestic workers or in nearby factories. Those who do not work stay at home to watch over young children.³⁷⁷ To try to alleviate unemployment, Yvonne Baarthies started a scrap metal business in her yard a few years ago. Members of the community are encouraged to collect scrap metals and to sell them to the business that in turn sell this on to junk yards. Some of the unemployed inhabitants take turns to work in the yard for a small daily wage. Baarthies explained that the scrap metal dealership not only creates a few jobs, but also encourages local inhabitants to clean up their surrounding environment by picking up scrap and bottles for recycling. This innovation and commitment to improvement of the local community reflects, in however modest a way, a Klipfontein sense of ‘pulling together’ that flows from a strongly shared identity. Unemployment is most marked among Klipfontein’s younger males. The shortage of work has led to an increased incidence of idleness, roving and begging practices, to the alarm of the older community, whose members also fear the consequences of youth ‘degeneracy’ through alcoholism, drugs and gangsterism.³⁷⁸ In efforts to counter such threats to the fabric of the community, Yvonne Baarthies and other parents have tried to organise sports and recreational events to provide younger Klipfonteiners with organised activities, but this is hampered by a lack of resources.

³⁷⁶ Klipfontein Community Survey, 1991, 4.

³⁷⁷ Baarthies, Yvonne. Interview by Annemieke Nel. Informal interview. Klipfontein, Philippi. 2011

³⁷⁸ *Ibid.*

5.1.6 Social factors influencing identity

On small, isolated mission outstations such as Klipfontein, families were close-knit and mutually supportive. Individual histories have underlined the closeness of sustaining networks, through which extended families pooled food, money and childcare, and attended to the welfare of the elderly. Older Klipfonteiners are also recognised as the informal “record keepers” of the community’s history, and as the repositories of special knowledge. In thesis interviews, younger respondents would often point out which ‘aunt’ or ‘uncle’ would know about hidden footpaths, be able to identify certain family lineages, would have the best folklore knowledge, or would be proficient in natural healing remedies with medicine plants from the *bossies* (shrubs).

The church itself always served not merely as a place of worship but as a place of assembly where festivals were celebrated. Even in the present, where the Methodist church is no longer the only denomination in the area, these harvest and other cultural traditions continue to be celebrated.³⁷⁹In a sense, even though the Klipfontein community has transcended the space of the church, it remains a physical focal point.

The church and its hall are also the only space in which larger gatherings can be held. Few inhabitants live in what remains of earlier tiny mission houses (built from clay and reeds). The majority live in informal housing, consisting of shacks. In winters, the church hall is also the only secure place where youth activities can be arranged.

To the Klipfontein community, the encroachment of surrounding black African informal settlements is a constant fear. With jobs scarce, the fear is market competition from cheaper labour, and there are also protective anxieties about the spillover from outside of crime, drugs and gangsterism. Community leadership protects the boundaries of their land by organising night-patrols to ensure that no outside or intruding individual from settlements across the road (Lansdowne) is able to erect a structure to live in.³⁸⁰ The social space in which Klipfonteiners live is closely linked to a sense of exclusive possession of their glebe land.

5.1.7 Gender as an influence on identity

The explicit purpose for the existence of mission stations was mainly for the nurturing of the young church that missionaries were establishing among the

³⁷⁹ Januarie, Peter “Katja”. Interview by Annemieke Nel. Informal interview. Klipfontein, Philippi. 201

³⁸⁰ Baarthies, Yvonne; Januari, Petr “Katja”; Davies, Anita “Antie Annie”. Interview by Annemieke Nel. Informal interview. Klipfontein, Philippi. 2011.

indigenous people. It can be assumed that tenets on human relations were based on the Christian doctrine. But it needs to be pointed out as well that 19th century Christianity was subsumed in European culture as well. The basic principles propagated by missionaries on gender relations were in reality a Euro-Christian compound.³⁸¹

The gender relations structure of Christian doctrines naturally shaped the role of women in mission station contexts, most powerfully through a patriarchal order. Although pre-colonial societies had their own patriarchal value systems before the advent of missionaries at the Cape, these were reinforced by the Euro-Christian patriarchy which governing mission station life.³⁸²

The mission station was a highly gendered environment. Methodist pastors were all male and exercised church authority. The education of mission inhabitants was entrusted exclusively to men. Since educated missionary men were also responsible for recording the history of their religious enterprise, the absence of independent female voices within historical records is unsurprising:

The problem of the absence of women from sources is an old one. [...] Early church writers were mainly men and they naturally recorded their own voices and those of other men; women received scant mention and no say, except for a few testimonies. Available documentation on early church history in Africa is thus male-produced and inevitably lopsided, dominated as it is by images of women that amount to little more than masculine perceptions.³⁸³

Although even from early missionary years, education was available for all mission inhabitants as basic literacy was a common requirement for proper Bible study, further and more formal church education was reserved for men, with women consigned to effective duties in domestic spheres:³⁸⁴

[In] the defining of zones of operation, females were allocated responsibility elsewhere, away from the formal education field. Mission communities were socialised into perceiving education as a male province, with females relegated to peripheral domains. This was a practice 'rooted in European gender roles'.³⁸⁵

That history notwithstanding, changes in traditional family structures, especially a noted decline in nuclear-family households within low-income communities, has had a significant impact on the gendered balance of power and authority. As Seekings and Thaler have estimated, about two-thirds of

³⁸¹ Tisani, 'Gender Relations, 66.

³⁸² *Ibid.*, 68.

³⁸³ *Ibid.*, 67.

³⁸⁴ J. Cock, *Maids and Madams: A study in the Politics of Exploitation*, 284.

³⁸⁵ Tisani, 'Gender Relations, 69.

children in South Africa's poor communities live without fathers or father figures in their family.³⁸⁶ Accordingly, space opens for increasing numbers of women to take on roles and some of the responsibilities that have traditionally been held and exercised by male community members. The Klipfontein community leader, Yvonne Baarthies, is female, and her leadership has been playing a significant role in fostering community cohesion. Of particular note is Baarthies's valuing of the history of Klipfontein and her efforts in educating community members about the local past. Yvonne Baarthies has also been a spokesperson in very occasional media reports in which Klipfontein has featured. Small community projects aimed at alleviating acute deprivation and providing casual work for unemployed youth have mostly been initiated by women and are female-run.³⁸⁷ Yvonne Baarthies proudly declares that Klipfontein women are "very strong", and have a reputation for standing up for themselves against over-mighty men. The community's elders are also supported through informal care from female neighbours.³⁸⁸

A Methodist mission station developed from a customarily patriarchal foundation, it is striking to observe the degree to which in Klipfontein women have stepped into leadership and organisational roles that have traditionally been occupied by men. In a way, the mission has almost become a 'matriarchal' space.

5.1.8 Language as a factor that influences identity

No cultural identity is produced out of thin air. It is produced out of those historical experiences, those cultural traditions, those lost and marginal languages, those marginalized experiences, those peoples and histories that remain unwritten. Those are the specific roots of identity; identity is not in the past to be found, but in the future to be constructed.³⁸⁹

Language plays an important role in shaping identity – it is the vehicle through which an individual communicates with the people around them. This shared interaction forms part of their culture, which has a direct impact on their sense of identity.³⁹⁰

Language has played a substantial role in the history of colonisation. The language of the coloniser was not only imposed upon indigenous societies through exposure to elementary education and religious instruction, but was also developed as a language of contact and communication – in the

³⁸⁶ J. Seekings and K. Thaler, 'Socioeconomic conditions and violence in Cape Town, South Africa', *The Economics of Peace and Security Journal*, 36.

³⁸⁷ Baarthies, Yvonne. Interview by Annemieke Nel. Informal interview. Klipfontein, Philippi. 2011.

³⁸⁸ *Ibid.*

³⁸⁹ Voicu, 'Crossing borders, 337-338.

³⁹⁰ Castells, *Power of Identity*, 6.

Cape, Dutch and then English. In colonial South Africa, the language of the Khoisan people was clearly most adversely affected, unlike in the case of Bantu languages such as Pedi, Zulu or Xhosa. It was all but lost.³⁹¹

Already exposed to Cape Dutch colonists before some began to experience mission station life, for Khoisan people the language of communication on most stations was Dutch, including British church establishments.³⁹² It is, therefore, no surprise that mission residents absorbed Dutch-Afrikaans and subsequently one or other form of ‘Cape’ or ‘Coloured’ Afrikaans.³⁹³

In his liberal classic of almost a century ago, *The Cape Colour Question*, Macmillan asserted that the “general superiority of many Coloured people” compared to other ‘non-European’ societies in South Africa lay in the ready acquisition of, and facility in, the Dutch language. This linguistic proficiency was then subsequently also transposed to English, aided by face-to-face colonial contact.³⁹⁴ This acquisition, coupled with the historical loss of a ‘native’ language, has contributed significantly to the shaping of some community identities. In Bertie van Wyk’s explanation:

Under colonial rule the Khoisan languages were prohibited or suppressed. This was devastating to the oral tradition, according to which cultural knowledge is passed on from generation to generation through practices, stories and the narration of important events. Sadly, with the loss of language there also was a loss of knowledge cultures.³⁹⁵

This ‘loss of culture’ aided the path of cultural assimilation, as it became supplanted by the ‘borrowing’ of European culture in Zimitri Erasmus’s notion of the “specific conditions of creolization”.³⁹⁶ Through the course of the twentieth-century, the working class Coloured population developed a unique Afrikaans dialect to which associations of poverty and ‘roughness’ became attached and, until recently, even stigmatising attributions of shame. The leading writer, Zoë Wicomb, has described the social journey that Coloured Afrikaans dialect has taken from being a “shameful” language, to being, in more recent years, romantically “valorised as ‘Kaaps’”, and eventually to being asserted as an authentic strand of Coloured identity.³⁹⁷

³⁹¹ B. Van Wyk, ‘Indigenous Rights, Indigenous Epistemologies, and language: (Re)construction of Modern Khoisan Identities’, *Knowledge Cultures*, 44.

³⁹² J. Fourie, R. Ross and R. Viljoen, ‘Literacy at South African Mission Stations’, *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 784 – 785.

³⁹³ Van Wyk, ‘Indigenous Rights’, 43.

³⁹⁴ Macmillan, *Cape Colour Question*, 266 – 267.

³⁹⁵ Van Wyk, ‘Indigenous Rights’, 44.

³⁹⁶ Erasmus, *Coloured by History*, 16.

³⁹⁷ Z. Wicomb, ‘Shame and Identity: the case of the coloured in South Africa’, *Writing South Africa: Literature, Apartheid and Democracy, 1970 – 1995*, 92. See also M. Marais, ‘Passing Women’: *Gender and hybridity in the fiction of three female South African authors*, 46 and I. Hofmeyr, *Building a Nation from Words: Afrikaans language, literature and ethnic identity*, 104.

During interviews conducted in Klipfontein, it was noticeable that younger community respondents preferred to speak in English since they felt it to be more formal. Communication with Yvonne Baarthies was also in English initially, but she switched to Afrikaans once a relationship had been established. Perhaps this reflects the fact that the community perceives Afrikaans not merely as an intrinsic 'folk' part of their identity, but also as the familiar language spoken between family and friends – an instinctive, informal, and shared language of trust. English seems to be preferred in a more formal environment such as at community meetings, and in ward meetings and with 'outsiders'.

6 Agency of ‘native’ mission station inhabitants

Human agency among the evangelised receives scant mention within sources authored by missionaries. More modern church historiography, especially within the arena of social history, has, nonetheless, despite original documentary source limitations, begun to explore these silent histories at the bottom, with oral history playing a pioneering role in unearthing hidden voices. Previously, accounts have been ‘top-down’, with evangelised communities seen as being largely passive or acted upon, despite such active qualities as infusing Christian beliefs with aspects of their own pre-Christian religious universe.

6.1 ‘Role players’ within South African Historiography

The historian, Andrew Bank, has explored aspects of earlier South African historiography through the notion of a “Great Debate” around racial politics in the Cape Colony during the early nineteenth century. He identifies three leading white ‘role players’ who each created their own accounts of colonial history to validate their positions. Firstly, Cape liberals aligned themselves with Cape missionaries and pro-abolitionists such as the Reverend John Philip, whose ‘Researches of South Africa’ was received as a humanitarian narration of the oppression of the Khoisan by both Dutch and British settlers.³⁹⁸

The second role player or protagonist comprised Cape Dutch conservatives who constructed their own version of the history of the Cape as a direct response to Reverend Philip’s claims. Within their historical narrative, colonists were portrayed as noble and valiant “bearers of civilization and Christianity to degraded and ignoble Africans”.³⁹⁹

Bank’s third role player within the “Great Debate” was identified as the conservative British settler interest which depicted a “narrative of the progress of European civilization in a benighted continent”. What these schools of historical thinking all had in common was a depiction of indigenous groups of people as overwhelmingly passive, without attempting to exercise choice in the face of the forces of colonisation and the Christian evangelisation which accompanied it.⁴⁰⁰

6.2 The cost of conversion on mission stations

The scholar James Axtell has studied the ethno-history of missions in the United States with specific reference to the history of the Native Americans who converted to Christianity on rural mission stations. There are interesting similarities to be found in the experience of colonisation for the Native

³⁹⁸ Bank: ‘The Great Debate’, 281.

³⁹⁹ *Ibid.*

⁴⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, 282.

Americans in America and the Khoisan people in Southern Africa. Both were considered to be uncivilised and primitive by the colonisers and were the victims of extreme ethnocentrism. Their cultures and beliefs were spurned as inferior to Christian doctrine, and they were oppressed economically and socially. Their numbers were severely reduced through warfare with dominant colonial forces, through illness and disease such as smallpox, and through the loss of their traditional lands as a result of colonial expansion. Inevitably, both Native Americans and the Khoisan were reduced to survival through menial servitude. Christian mission stations offered a place of relative safety and some form of stability, but came with obligatory evangelising conditions.⁴⁰¹

Here, Axtell's argument is that the very choice of living on a mission station and converting to Christianity displayed agency in the sense that vulnerable people made an active choice to integrate into Western culture and practices. Thus, it can be argued that groups of Native Americans and Southern African Khoisan recognised that their best chance of security and endurance lay in accepting the values and beliefs stipulated by missionaries in exchange for shelter. As Axtell concludes:

So in large numbers, led in many cases by traditional leaders of the "blood," they converted to Christianity and the English way of life that accompanied it. Rather than achieving a nativistic revitalization at the hands of a charismatic prophet, they used the religion of Christ to the same end. Even though it entailed wholesale cultural changes from the life they had known before contact, it preserved their ethnic identity as particular Indian groups on familiar pieces of land that carried their inner history. At the cost of a certain amount of material and spiritual continuity with the past, their acceptance of Christianity, however complete or sincere, allowed them not only to survive in the present but gave them a long lease on life when many of their colonial landlords threatened to foreclose all future options. Ironically, the acute English sense of cultural superiority—which was coloured by racism before the eighteenth century—helped the Indians to maintain the crucial ethnic core at the heart of their newly acquired Christian personae. In colonial eyes, they were still Indians and always would be, no matter how "civilized" or "Christian" they became.⁴⁰²

Today, the combined elements of traditional Khoisan cultures and the various cultures of emancipated slaves, mixed in with those of Western cultures, form many of the building blocks of what various commentators define as Coloured identity.⁴⁰³ In Zimitri Erasmus's view, "These processes of creolization involve agency. Coloured identities are productive subjective realities shaped and re-shaped by people under the conditions given them by history."⁴⁰⁴

⁴⁰¹ R. Elphick, *The Cape Khoi and the first phase of South African race relations*, 152.

⁴⁰² J. Axtell, *After Columbus: Essays in the Ethnohistory of Colonial North America*, 36 – 37.

⁴⁰³ O. Greene, 'Coloured Identity in the Rainbow Nation: Historical Narratives of the Durban Coloured Community', *Independent Study Project (ISP) Collection*, 14. See also: M. Adhikari, *Burdened by Race: Coloured Identities in southern Africa* and D. Martin, 'What's in the Name "Coloured"?' in Z. Abebe (ed.) *Social Identities in the New South Africa: After Apartheid*, 99 – 124.

⁴⁰⁴ Erasmus, *Coloured by History*, 23.

Europeans who encountered the Khoisan at this time made little effort to understand their religious beliefs or their value systems. Suffice it to say, the Khoisan were willing to assimilate Christian beliefs and practices with a view to appropriating the benefits of healing, education and protection which the missionaries offered, without necessarily denying the essentials of their own belief systems.⁴⁰⁵

At another level, too, the Cape's mission stations offered a permanent place of residence, so that regular seasonal or other farm labourers were not permanently beholden to surrounding landowners for such things as shelter. They could combine selling their labour with independent wood-cutting or small cultivation, while others on missions lived off the land. Undoubtedly, opportunities were very limited, but stations still provided a space of limited freedom, limited choice, and limited *agency*. With this came a sense, again, however partial, of responsibility and independence. And with it came a cultivation of voluntary welfare duties, through the organised support of the elderly and infirm, which of course relieved government authorities of a financial burden.⁴⁰⁶ Thus, in addition to serving as short-term shelters, and offering advantages as a secure living base from which inhabitants could pursue economic activities, as is shown by the position of Klipfontein, living on the mission station could mean it becoming a permanent place of residence for many generations of families.

6.3 Various uses of evangelisation and civilisation

The opportunity for male mission inhabitants to become preachers provided them with access to a certain level of education and by extension, empowerment. Elbourne, for instance, has described this as the “[importance of] the Khoisan to be able to claim their own covenant with God” as a sense of agency and an assertion of the right to preach the gospel. Given the background of an early colonial history of considerable settler resistance to Khoisan evangelisation and slave conversion, the autonomy bestowed by mission congregant preachers could be unsettling, as it represented a form of resistance with implicit political connotations:

Khoi preachers upheld a Christianity of equality, arguing for access to the moral community through grace alone, rather than through skin colour. By becoming missionaries among dependents of the patriarchal household, or even to the patriarch himself, Khoi preachers were also establishing an alternate source of authority to that of the white patriarch. They were writing themselves into a narrative which had previously excluded them, and asserting authority through one of the few avenues left open to them.⁴⁰⁷

⁴⁰⁵ J. De Gruchy, *Christianity and the Modernization of South Africa 1867 to 1936*, 2.

⁴⁰⁶ Marais, *Cape Coloured*, 153.

⁴⁰⁷ Elbourne, 'Early Khoisan', 24.

Although the primary purpose of missions was to attract adherents to be instructed in Christianity and to inculcate European culture, practices and habits, there other personal consequences which developed under missionary guardianship, sometimes small material gains, sometimes attributes not merely to propound a set Christian spiritual perspective, but to do so by interpreting its meaning in potentially subversive ways. A legacy of ‘autodidactic’ popular preaching in public spaces, as Tisani has suggested, still remains very much present within the modern traditions of poorer working class Coloured people.⁴⁰⁸

6.4 Agency visible in the case of Klipfontein

The Klipfontein community’s identity is tied intrinsically to the land on which its people live. Talk of relocation and of potential land loss have been a source of anxiety for much of the past two decades. The fact that their forebears bought some of the land through the church, stands out in community memories and deepens a sense of belonging to their land; since it has remained church land, that symbolic protectiveness of the Klipfontein mission title has also remained. An active sense of possession can also be seen in local community work projects and security initiatives being taken to protect what is considered a birthright. At the same time, Klipfontein is something of a paradox. Its community resides there as a long-term investment, while intermittently living with the uncertainty that they may end up losing the historical foundation of their identity as Klipfonteiners.

7 Epilogue: Yvonne Baarthies – amateur historian and guardian, and the future of Klipfontein

Yvonne Baarthies was born in Klipfontein as Yvonne Januarie and has lived in the community since her birth. She went to the Methodist primary school as a child and has dedicated her adult life to improving and securing the land for the community that is Klipfontein. As part of what she calls her “political responsibilities” she attends ward council meetings, is in contact with various governmental agencies, and is always looking for new organisations that can help her and by extension, the community, to survive financially. Yvonne organises activities and events for the youth, especially during winter months to “keep them off the streets and away from gangs”. She runs a soup kitchen whenever she has enough surplus money for produce and has also started a scrap metal business with her sons, also living in Klipfontein. This business employs unemployed Klipfonteiners, and profit is ploughed back into various kinds of community improvement, from renovating public amenities and deteriorating buildings, to planting vegetables in makeshift garden patches in which they have planted tyres filled with dirt and compost. Yvonne’s sons are likewise closely involved with community affairs. Her eldest is a clergyman, while the wife of her second son is also a pre-school teacher.

⁴⁰⁸ Tisani, ‘Gender Relations’, 78.

Combining as a family together with Yvonne they organise children's parties and collect educational materials for common distribution and use by local children.

Upon meeting her for the first time, her passion and knowledge surrounding the history of Klipfontein is highly impressive. The information that she has managed to collect with very limited means reflect her determination to collect and guard the history of the community, not only for inward preservation for the benefit of its inhabitants, but also as a stand against threatening external elements with designs upon the locality.

Over the past two centuries, the Klipfontein community's identity has remained closely tied to the land on which they live. In the shadow of an international airport but still with a feeling of rooted local belonging, this old and little-known Methodist outstation has endured far away from the heritage gaze directed towards the southwestern Cape's well-known Moravian missions of Genadendal, Elim and Wupperthal. It rests in the hands of Yvonne Baarthies and those around her to continue exploring ways of protecting their *lappie*, and of trying to enhance life prospects for themselves and for the future generations of Klipfonteiners still to come.

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