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The things in between: photographs from the Mariannhill Mission in KwaZulu-Natal and other objects in situations of intermediality
Rippe, C.

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Author: Rippe, C.

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CHAPTER FOUR

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African Histories, Photographic Occasions, and Material Encounters.

Introduction: Photographs and their Occasions

In the last chapter I discussed Mariannhill Monastery as a space, and more specifically the occasions of guided tours as contact zones. While the last chapter presented the frontstage scenario for tourism, this chapter considers backstage scenarios in a double sense. Not only does it show the colonial and mission encounter at the grassroots, but equally their manifestations and enactments in the form of photographs. In the previous chapter, I discussed photography as a *product* within the spatial setting of Mariannhill Monastery. In this chapter I discuss photography as a *process* within four other spatial settings (cf. Wingfield 2012b). Mariannhill's photographic oeuvre was not an attempt to document a *status quo* in all its dimensions, but to establish the extremes on both ends of a developmental spectrum. I presented this in the First Part, as well as in the main introduction through the quotes by Alfred T. Bryant and Sr. Adelgisa Hermann. It is therefore impossible to reassemble the extended colonial society in Natal and East Griqualand between the 1880s and 1915 in a holistic manner through Mariannhill's remaining photographic collection. Nevertheless, I hope to show that it is at least possible to approximate specific situations through the entry points constituted by those photographs I have called "buoyant images" in the introduction.

This I will do by addressing four stable spaces that emerged during photographic occasions; stable in the sense that the involved actors repeatedly constructed these spaces through cooperative performances. First, I consider the African non-Christian homestead in its opposition to the one of Christian Africans, and both in their relation to the monastic space. Secondly, Mariannhill's mill and its compound; as an intermediary space between the monastery and the "native reserve" it allowed both Trappists and Africans to approach each other outside the restrictions inflicted by the monastery. Thirdly, the photographic occasion of a branch-court hearing at Centocow Mission in 1912 is the only photographic trace we have for the interaction between Africans, the missionaries, and government representatives. As a fourth scenario, I discuss the photographic studio at Mariannhill as a performative space in its own right. Distinctly nested within the monastic space itself, this involved the different materialities of architecture, backdrops, and props. In fact, just like the studio, each of the four spaces either restricted or allowed for different ways of photographic performance through their specific social and material setups.

The photographs related to these four occasions can hardly be quantified. Only few similar examples exist within Mariannhill's oeuvre, and can therefore not be categorised as photographic genres. Instead, they allow us to treat historical subjects and objects in a most empirical way. Also regarding depicted objects it will not suffice to cover them by generalised object histories, as they exist for many musealised objects (cf. Chapter Five). Instead, I hope to show how such generalised and deductive object histories cause productive friction with Mariannhill's photographs. Before I approach these spaces, I first lay out the various intersecting formats of writing about Africans at the time. In Chapters One and Two I already covered

stylistic elements of Mariannhill's propagandistic publications, which, as we will see, easily fused with historical and ethnographic publications. The only way to learn more about why some subjects would engage with the missionaries in photographic occasions, while others did not, is to tease apart the existing published historiography regarding Africans near Mariannhill, and eventually relate it to available unpublished archival sources, and in particular to the photographs themselves.

Jean and John Comaroff describe the ongoing interactions of nonconformist missionaries with their subjects in South Africa, as well as related forms and negotiation of consumption, as a "long conversation" (1991:199). In the social field of Mariannhill, this entailed both formal and informal interactions and conversations with other protagonists, such as government officials, civilians, ethnologists, and traders. These interactions did not merely involve conversations, but at the same time the mutual exchange of consumer goods and other trade objects (cf. Comaroff and Comaroff 1997). In the case of Mariannhill, such exchanges contributed to a sociability, which was otherwise subdued by the official rule organising Trappist discipline. In particular the practice of photography is an exchange, which at the time required conversation, explanation, and likely material compensation. As I already showed in Chapter One, Mariannhill's photographers were able to establish a certain familiarity and trust, in order to take photographs of their subjects. Photographs do not simply represent social relations, but were at the same time shaped by them (cf. Edwards 1992, Wingfield 2012b). Photographs also were consumer products, and as such part of social interactions.

Barbara Wolbert was probably the first to bring together photography, material culture, and Latour's symmetric approach to anthropological study (Wolbert 1998a, 1998b, 2000). The title of my study, *Things in Between*, implies the interconnectedness between photographs, other images, texts, social spaces, as well as objects and subjects. Within this "photography complex" (Hevia 2009), which does not discriminate between Western and African uses of photography, also images and objects may be considered, if not as actors, nevertheless as acting entities. As such they left specific traces throughout their social involvements, during which they changed the course of actions. Due to the evidence I presented in the previous Part, Mariannhill's photographs cannot be considered as straightforward representations of historical situations, but only as traces that may lead to other sources. In combination they nevertheless allow us to approximate a historical situation. Despite these circumstances, Mariannhill's photographic representations are still historically valuable in the sense that they are results of encounters between missionaries, their subjects, other colonial actors, as well as the performance of a shared material culture in front of a photographic still camera.

Following particular controversies or crisis, not only allows to retrace the networks such occurrences established (Latour 2005), but it also allows to follow the constitution of images and objects as mimetic capital. The most eminent example for Natal and Zululand may be objects taken away as war booty during the looting of Zulu homesteads in the Anglo-Zulu War of 1879 (cf. Stevenson 2005). In mutual interdependence, photographs allow for analysing the activation

and re-activation of such objects in micro-historical accounts. In this chapter and the next, I shall consider photographic performances involving, for example, a fly whisk, snuff spoons, and a very particular kind of necklace. All objects mediated power during the respective photographic occasion they were involved in. Their existence, as it appears to us through the photograph, is intrinsically connected to the historical and material presence of the photographic apparatus. We must therefore consider such objects as both theatrical props and agents within both the historical and present performance of power relationships.

According to what I discussed in Chapters One and Two, we can assume that sitters and models were well aware that a photographic occasion was taking place, and that they willingly cooperated in the performance of the proposed *tableaux*. Whether they were indeed fully aware of their photographs' future circulation is yet another question. In all interactions with their African contemporaries, Mariannhill Missionaries depended on their skills to quickly learn, speak, and write in other languages. As many of them were German-speakers, they had to master English, as well as several Zulu dialects, depending on the location of the respective mission. As writers of song books, catechisms, Bible translations, as well as Zulu dictionaries, they had to perform extensive translation work. Missionary scholars, like Fr. A.T. Bryant, also carried out interviews and rendered these into English. But also the photographers, and in particular Br. Aegidius Müller, needed to articulate their ideas in Zulu during photographic occasions. The complex topics of genre scenes, which we have seen in the previous Part needed to be communicated, in such a way that all actors were able to relate to each other and understand their respective roles within the composition's narrative. In order to better explain the process of such encounters, I shall deal with the formation of "photographic occasions" in this chapter.

The starting points for my analysis so far have been photographs that often bear no other information than the image content. Sometimes it is complemented with a caption, even a name, or the often unrelated text surrounding it in a mission periodical. But unless one more independent parameter or coordinate is available, it is unclear whether the information provided in the caption or text is indeed an outcome of the very same occasion as the photograph itself. There is thus always a potential antagonism between image and text. In order to analyse this systematically, I will reconsider methodologies of how to reconstruct the production of (textual) ethnographies and colonial knowledge (Pels and Salemink 1994, 1999; Pels 1994) for the particular representational ontologies of photographs. When dealing with the process of *photography* as a form of description like *ethno-graphy*³²⁰ it is possible to delineate the same stages of knowledge production (Rippe 2007, also see Hayes et al. 2002:110). The three-step of *préterrain*, an ethnographic occasion, and an ethnographic tradition, as developed by Pels and Salemink, can thus be adapted as *préterrain*, photographic occasion, and photographic tradition.

If we perceive the photograph and the monograph, or the article in a mission periodical, as documents and objects at the same time, it is possible to write their biographies, from the point of their first inscription during an occasion, towards instances of later appropriation as

³²⁰ The "writing *with* light" vs. the "writing *about* other nations".

photographic traditions. As I showed in the last chapter, with photography we must consider the possibility that the content was not only created in the situation of the photographic occasion, but may have been additionally inspired by other imagery, or even have been derived from a textual description, thus a preexisting tradition. A reconsideration of the photographic *préterrain*, occasion, and tradition must therefore involve the wider contemporary visual economy.

Ethnographic texts often did not rely on a particular occasion, but on earlier texts, and thus created an “ethnographic tradition” (Pels 1994:323). But other than texts, photographs necessarily relied on actual encounters and experiences before a camera. Even if they had been posed, heavily retouched, or were collages of multiple photographs, they can most often be related to one dominant place in space and time. Nevertheless, the “occasion” is always more complex than what is obviously depicted. We have already seen *depictions* of photographic occasions at the beginning of Chapter Two. Even if missionaries and their subjects co-produced photographs to some extent, and even if Africans may have had agency as photographers, these staged genre compositions showing Africans as photographers relied on particular image traditions of colonial humour and caricature.

In this chapter instead, I present photographic occasions of a kind, which were only partially possible to stage in the first place. This was due to the social gravitas of the involved protagonist, such as African chiefs, magistrates, and policemen, who could not be directed as easily as common people. Due to the particularity of those occasions and the professions of the involved protagonists, also other traces emerged that help us to further explore the photographs. Photographic productions thus created very particular social occasions. Nevertheless, just like Pels argued for the case of “ethnographic occasions” (1994:322, 345), the *historical* “photographic occasion” is rarely considered and analysed sufficiently. I will do this for the above-mentioned four scenarios. Having introduced the monastic space in Chapter Three, I move to even more distinct spaces as contact zones in this chapter. In later chapters we will see that the related photographs were repeatedly picked up and rethought, thereby creating photographic traditions, which no longer related to the original occasion.

As I shall argue further in this chapter’s second section, photographs as objects may thus create an occasion *as past* for viewers at a much later point. We must then look at a succession of “photographic occasions” involving the same photograph over time. Even once the depicted person is long dead, his or her photographs may still live an afterlife. Due to their production date, all of the photographs I deal with exceed living memory. After the occasion of its initial production, meaning is always re-produced during later occasions in relation to experiences, subjects, and objects existing in the new timeframe as reference points for the interpreting person. If a viewer has not been present during the original photographic occasion, he or she must again draw other information alongside to make sense of a particular photograph. This may be texts, oral history, or material objects, which are visible in the photographs from which meaning can be extrapolated: common material culture, clothing, buildings, topographical landmarks are some examples. This train of thought, evolving around experiences of

intermediality, has its validity for the remaining chapters of this study.

A common format for the tactile handling of photographs since the 1860s was the so-called “*carte de visite*”, and since the 1880s the “cabinet card”.³²¹ During my research I experienced that photographic images may indeed still serve as actual *carte de visite*, or calling cards in social relations: even if digitally reproduced and reprinted in an enlarged format, photographs became objects that allowed me to gain temporary access to communities, and in turn to be identified with knowledge about, and the access to images (Rippe 2007). As I oscillated between the archive and the field exterior to it, it was possible to connect information to the photographic image, as well as the photographic object. Such a photographic entry point was the portrait I discuss in the second section (Figure 79).

³²¹ Photographers commonly pasted the thin and light-sensitive photographic paper on cardboard, which was often decorated and embossed with the name of the respective studio.

Mariannhill's African Historiography

Some day will turn out a sensational author who will find among the few threads of Zulu history sufficient stuff wherewith to weave a romance worthy of providing the youthful lovers of fiction with a pabulum [food, dish], which, though somewhat sanguinary and coarse, will nevertheless be stimulating in its way and tasty to those for whom it is prepared. Such a vocation, thanks to Providence, has not been allotted to us. To relate facts rather than invent fiction is our task here, and that we will do, not, it is true, serving it up like Chinese tea, but seasoned here and there with a dash of milk and sugar. (Sihlobosami [A.T. Bryant] 1887:239)

Alfred Thomas Bryant (1865-1953) was one of Mariannhill's first and most prominent members, who, after all, did set out to become the "sensational author" he denied to be in 1887. Bryant also continued to "season" his textual accounts, just like his contemporary, Br. Aegidius Müller, "seasoned" his photographs. Bryant should not be mistaken for an "anthropologist" or an "ethnologist", but was first of all perceived as a Zulu linguist and historian by his contemporaries. When he and Fr. Willibald Wanger applied for the chair of social anthropology at the University of Cape Town in 1921, both were dismissed for their lack of training in the discipline (Schapera 1990). Bryant is today mainly remembered for his *Zulu-English Dictionary* (1905), and even more so for his historical account of the region's early African politics, *Olden Times in Zululand and Natal* (1929). Despite the fact that Bryant left the Trappist congregation after 10 years in 1894, he maintained personal correspondence with several members at both Mariannhill and Centocow.³²²

Amongst other protagonists, Bryant will serve as a baseline to study the production of knowledge on Africans. We must then realise that some written accounts on Africans did not rely on the writer's own encounter with an informant, but rather on other texts and in so far continued "ethnographic traditions". Some writers even committed straightforward plagiarism (cf. Chapters Six to Eight). The historian Clemens Gütl (2005) found it difficult to trace single biographies of Africans, who either opposed or engaged with Mariannhill. I will show that several of Mariannhill's photographs provide unique entry points to study not only the interactions of Trappists and Africans, but also the nature of photographic production. In this section I focus on how scholars, missionaries, and government officials described Africans in the periphery of Mariannhill Monastery and Centocow Mission. The next section then deals in more detail with the creation of Mariannhill's community of converts, the *Amakholwa*. "Creation" is to be understood both in the sense of how they were established politically as a "tribe", as well as how their descendants later reassembled their existence during my fieldwork.

In 1887, at the age of 24, Bryant wrote Mariannhill's first history, from which I quoted above. It has the extensive title *Roman Legion on Libyan Fields, or, the Story of the Trappist*

³²² While Bryant was a member of the Reformed Cistercians at Mariannhill Monastery between 1883 and 1894, he held the religious name Fr. David. *Roman Legion on Libyan Fields* is the only known work he ever published under the Zulu pseudonym *Sihlobosami*. I agree with historians, such as John Wright, that there is almost no substantial information available on Bryant's biography, either during or after his time at Mariannhill. Even though I have written up what could be traced, Bryant's biography would not add valuable information to better understand the production of photographs.

Missionaries among the Zulus in Natal, South Africa: The Establishment of their Monastery at Mariannhill. Printed in a highly portable, smaller than A5 pocket size, it was Mariannhill's first propaganda brochure for an English-speaking audience. In 1950 and 1953, Fr. Francis Schimlek published the very last account of Mariannhill's propaganda publications, which recognised Africans by name as historical actors and interlocutors. Schimlek was the editor of the Zulu newspaper *Umafrika* between 1950 and 1963 (Kneipp 1982:67). His two books, however, are in many parts unacknowledged rewrites of, and updates on Bryant's 1887 publication *Roman Legion*, as far as historical information on the beginnings of Mariannhill is concerned. Both of Schimlek's accounts overlap, as the one focuses on Mariannhill's history in general, and the other on "Medicine vs. Witchcraft".

Unlike most of Mariannhill's German publications at the time and in the decades to come, Bryant did not focus on the agency of Abbot Pfanner. He only mentioned him by name one time in the third part of the book. Instead, Bryant was much more concerned with his own agency as teacher, critic, ethnographer, and indeed as a writer *par excellence*. In 1887, he collected such stories, which he may have considered as the most entertaining ones. His writing style is polemic and ironic throughout, but nevertheless provides several threads for further inquiry. *Roman Legion* appeared just one year after Mariannhill had founded its first mission station Reichenau, and the mission was therefore in need of new personnel. As Bryant was one of Mariannhill's first members to become proficient in Zulu, he stressed the initial role of African informants and intermediaries. As one of the first encounters between Trappists and Africans, Bryant recounted an episode involving a former "great induna" of the *Amanganga* Chief Manzini ka Makalela. This *induna* had turned his back on his chief, and instead defected to the Trappists:

Another little affair was one in which the little man called the Spade, *Fotsholo*, figured as the hero. At a time when the monks could scarcely discern the difference between a Zulu word and the bull's foot, this Kafir from his professed knowledge of English, was prized by them as a brilliant of the first waters. He was the medium, the solitary link that bound the people to the monks and these to the people, He was the interpreter, the *aide-de-champ* [sic], so to say, of the Trappist *inkosi*³²³, Secretary for Native Affairs, aye, Governor, if you like; and had one seen him praying in the front row in the church during service, he might have believed him a saint also. But there were some,—and they among those who ought to have known him best—who branded him an impostor from head to foot. Nor was it long that this assertion became sufficiently manifest to the missionaries as to lower him a degree or two in their estimation. His knowledge of English, it turned out, was just enough to be able to understand the burly blacksmith for whom he had previously worked. His interpretations were, to the original, as chalk is to cheese, while the faithfulness with which he clung to his masters was of the species classically known as Carthaginian ["Carthaginian faith"=treachery]. (Bryant 1887:140-141)

Intermediaries are essential to consider in the analysis of textual representations of colonial encounters. Still, they are often difficult, or even impossible to trace in the archival record (cf. Lawrance, Osborn and Roberts 2006, Habermas 2013, also see Chapter Seven). And so does Fotsholo neither feature again in any later narrative, nor is he ever identified in photographs.³²⁴ I shall still refer to him once more in Chapter Five. In a similar manner, the texts

³²³ Bryant's own footnote: "Chief, for so the Natives termed the Superior of the Monastery".

³²⁴ For the historical ambivalence of photographically represented intermediaries see for example Guy (2002).

underlying the published volumes of the “James Stuart Archive” have been co-produced in close interaction with certain intermediaries (cf. Hamilton 1998, 2011; Wright 2011). James Stuart, whom I introduced in Chapter Three, recorded oral accounts on 19th century Zulu history, by interviewing Africans in the Pietermaritzburg area between the 1890s and 1920s. One such account by Maziyanana ka Mahlabeni of the *Amandelu*, amongst others, speaks about two groups during the time of Shaka, who eventually settled near the place where Mariannhill was established in 1882, the *Amanganga* and the *Amapumulo*:

The Iziyendane, Mtetwa, amaNganga, amaPumulo etc. were those who attacked the tribes south. They adopted a Zulu chant, and if any stranger would hear them chanting, thus he would dash off and jump into a swamp or other hiding place. These men therefore were transformed into Zulus and were regarded as such by the tribes South.³²⁵

The *Amanganga* and the *Amapumulo* were thus not “Zulus” as such, but their vassals instead. Once fleeing from the Zulu during the *Mfecane*, they eventually became refugees on entering Natal. In the end, we cannot clearly reconstruct this ethnographic occasion involving Stuart and Mazinyana in 1905, as nothing more is known about Mazinyana’s biography, and the information he provided is rather fragmentary and foremost focused on genealogies. For the case of another of Stuart’s informants, the historian John Wright (2011) argues that it is only through the interviewer’s biography, and the relationships inscribed therein that we can learn about the person interviewed.

As I mentioned earlier, Hamilton and Leibhammer have identified the area and timeframe in which Stuart and many Mariannhill Missionaries worked as a “collection hotspot” for both information and objects (Hamilton and Leibhammer 2014, 2016b, also see Hamilton 2011). As they argue, information on Natal’s past and present, as well as “ethnographic” objects, were accumulated within a limited timeframe during the late 19th and early 20th century by a limited number of people. Mariannhill Missionaries contributed to the creation of such accounts on Africans in various ways. At Mariannhill Monastery, but also at Centocow and Lourdes Missions, the physical space of the station provided a logistic hub, which attracted Africans, as well as collectors. The stations thus directed the collection of information and objects, as well as their later re-distribution. This was for example facilitated through hosting branch courts, or by collecting and redistributing ethnographic information and objects (cf. Part Three). Before the First World War, this kind of knowledge production involved Fr. A.T. Bryant, Fr. Paschalis Boneberg, Frs. Emanuel and Alexander Hanisch, Br. Otto Mäder, Fr. Franz Mayr, Br. Aegidius Müller and Fr. Willibald Wanger. In later years, also Fr. Albert Schweiger and Fr. Bernard Huss played a crucial role.

All of these men had come to South Africa in order to join Mariannhill Monastery, where they gathered experience, and received at least a religious, catechetical, and linguistic training.

³²⁵ JSA-2:296: Evidence by Maziyanana ka Mahlabeni, 26.4.1905. According to this informant, in the 1820s the *Amatuli* Chief Ntaba ka Myebu had his homestead “Kwa Gobela” close to where Mariannhill Monastery was built in 1882.

The entire network of involved scholars, and the diversity of their roles at Mariannhill and beyond would require an additional study (but see Part Three). As became evident from the individuals and biographies mentioned already, influential people gravitated towards Centocow and Lourdes before 1914, which was the centre of Mariannhill's mission fraction, in opposition to the the monastic fraction at Mariannhill itself. Among these were Bryant, Wanger, and Fr. Emanuel Hanisch. The photographs I am concerned with were made in the timeframe when these people were most active, and must therefore be related to prevalent ideas, representational agendas, and the available knowledge of these years. I will however limit my analysis to those protagonists, who were actively involved with photographic occasions.

The production of knowledge around Mariannhill also involved government officials, scribes, policemen, and especially magistrates. As the Pinetown Court was only established by 1875,³²⁶ both the Pietermaritzburg, as well as the Durban archival repository of the South African National Archives only contain reports on the *Amanganga* from 1879 onwards. According to the system of indirect rule, Stuart and other colonial administrators recorded names of leaders, the names of their "tribes", as well as their locations. More or less detailed ethnographic studies of particular "tribes" were only carried out and recorded in so far as magistrates required them to solve politically relevant executive conundrums. These could involve what is often referred to as "succession disputes" and related homicides, struggles over land, "native unrest", and "faction fights". Magistrates thus created foremost instrumental knowledge, which must be understood within the intricacies of its "ethnographic occasion" (cf. Pels 1994, 1996). Below I will describe how one such occasion at Centocow Mission in 1912—usually performed to create textual records—turned into a photographic occasion.

Two years after the Trappist's arrival, in 1885, about 250 Africans³²⁷ lived on Mariannhill's 11.115 acres (approx. 55 sq.km). By 1894, the number had almost tripled to approximately 700 Africans.³²⁸ It appears that the chiefs of the *Shozi*³²⁹ clan, who headed the *Amanganga*, were the only African leaders in the Pinetown area, who interacted with Mariannhill Missionaries on a regular basis. In 1887, it was only the before-mentioned *Amapumulo* under Chief Mangcingci, who also had some of their members living on the mission's land. Fr. Gerard Wolpert explained in the mission's periodical that "both Kafir tribes were of very different characters". According to him, the *Amanganga* were "much more gentle and amenable" than the *Amapumulo*, whom he considered as "rough, defiant, and shifty". Therefore, so he wrote, the missionaries started to expel the *Amapumulo*, who had "given a bad example", so to make space for those who "were amenable to Christianity" (Wolpert 1887:45). In later narratives and records of Mariannhill, the *Amapumulo* no longer appear. The process of selecting suitable subjects was

³²⁶ DAR: 1_PTN-3/3/15-17/15/4. Draft version of the Pinetown District Record Book, 1939.

³²⁷ DAR: 1_UMB-3/1/4SNA-141/1885. No. 32, letter, Pfanner to Jackson. 25.2.85.

³²⁸ Blue Book of Native Affairs, 1894, quoted in *Natal Mercury*, Wed. 29.05.1895, p. 3.

³²⁹ Bryant referred to "*Lushozi*" as the "address-name", or *isiTakazelo*, of the "*emaNgangeni*". The latter designation he referred to as "*isiBongo*", or "clan name" (Bryant 1905:750, 1929:692). Today, Shozi is used as a family name of the Chief's lineage.

apparently still ongoing in 1898, as I described at the beginning of the last chapter through the correspondence between Fr. Ambrosius Hartes and the Durban Magistracy.

Unlike the *Amabhaca*, *Amakhuze*, and *Inhlangwini* near Centocow and Lourdes Missions, members of the *Amanganga* always remained relatively small during colonial times (approx. 1.000), and, unlike the *Amabhaca* in particular, were never split into multiple competing lineages. In 1903, the *Amanganga* were present in the Umlazi, Umgeni, and Ndwedwe Divisions of Durban County with 554 “huts”,³³⁰ with the majority of 364 in the Umlazi Division. Of these, 70 huts were in the reserve, while the majority of 294 huts were on private land.³³¹ Until 1909, the number of huts in the Umlazi Division increased to 527; 80 in the Reserve, and 447 on private land.³³² Unlike all other present communities, the majority of the *Amanganga* did thus not reside in the Umlazi Native Reserve (Location), South of the Umlazi River, but immediately to its Northern shore. A considerable number of huts must therefore have been on Mariannhill’s land, consisting of the two farms “Klaarwater” and “Zeekoegat”, which were only divided from the Native Reserve by two other farms, “Dassenhoek” and “Welbedacht” (cf. Imasson 1904).

Mariannhill Missionaries had made early attempts in the periodicals at describing their subjects in a quasi-ethnographic manner during the 1880s and 1890s. Only the photographer Br. Aegidius Müller, and the painter Br. Otto Mäder, published material in ethnographic journals before World War One, such as the Austrian *Anthropos* (cf. Part Three). In 1929, Bryant published the study, which is still today considered as the most detailed, though also much disputed account of the Natalian political past: *Olden Times in Zululand and Natal: Containing earlier Political History of the Eastern-Nguni Clans*. It is foremost an account of “tribal” histories and politics until the mid-19th century, however sometimes with remarks on a community’s past beyond 1900. Amongst these, Bryant recounted a history of the *Amanganga* (Bryant 1929:545-547, also see 1964:77-79), as well as of the *Amabhaca* (Bryant 1929: 352, 378ff). He probably assembled these stories during conversations he had with Africans as a missionary, already during his time at Mariannhill between 1883 and 1893, and at Centocow during 1894. Bryant also returned to Centocow at least once in 1919, apparently to do restudies for an unspecified book, possibly *Olden Times* (Gerold and Dlamini 1938:22).

At the same time, Bryant plagiarised other authors. While Bryant’s work was still admired by scholars like Max Gluckman (1940), the South African historian John Wright (1991) retraced Bryant’s accumulation of earlier histories via plagiarism of the work of Theophilus Shepstone. It is therefore impossible to say when Bryant relied on his own interviews, and when on already existing ethnographic traditions. It is nevertheless likely that Bryant collected his version of the *Amanganga*’s history himself during interviews. Gütl suggests that Bryant also collected earlier data on the *Amanganga* from informants at Mariannhill (2005:265). Gütl’s view can be supported via Mariannhill’s baptism registers, where three of the first converts in 1885

³³⁰ This is the general term used at the time. One homestead, or “*Kraal*”, may have consisted of multiple huts, depending on the kraal-head’s economic prosperity and the resulting number of his wives.

³³¹ PAR: Blue Book of Native Affairs, Ministerial Department of Native Affairs, Colony of Natal, 1903:25.

³³² PAR: Annual Reports, Department of Native Affairs, Colony of Natal, 1909:15.

were referred to as “a warrior of Shaka”, an “old soldier of the Chief (King) Chaka”, and generally as “Chaka’s men”.³³³

Manzini’s *Amanganga* initially made their way from Zululand to Natal as refugees during the *Mfecane* in the course of the 1830s. This grand narrative of Natalian history is considered a social disturbance and assimilation process caused by the large-scale expansion of the Zulu kingdom under Shaka (Chaka) ka Senzagakona during the 1820s. The first contact of Africans with a greater force of Europeans took place when the Boers had arrived from the Cape during the 1830s. This conflict escalated under Shaka’s successor Dingane, eventually to the defeat of the Zulu, leaving them behind with an increasing image of militarism and savagery (Hamilton 1998). This period was followed by the annexation of Natal as a British Colony in 1843, and accordingly Europeans initiated a long process of restructuring the life of Africans. Initially, Theophilus Shepstone, the first Secretary of Native Affairs of the Natal Colony, officially recognised 56 chiefdoms (Lambert 1998:25, also see maps in Guy 2013:246-247). This account was made according to the status quo of those Africans, whom Shepstone identified inside the boundaries of the Natal Colony at the time of annexation. Some of these he labelled as “aboriginal tribes”, others he appointed as tribal chiefdoms, which had accumulated from the remnants. Manzini’s *Amanganga* were among these “aboriginal tribes”.

During the reign of Shaka’s brother and successor Dingane in the early 1840s, the *Amanganga* finally fled to “The Bluff”, a large peninsula that forms a natural harbour for the city of Durban. Manzini ka Makalela, the last survivor of the main line of the *Amanganga*, joined his people only at a later point, because he was still serving in one of the regiments of Mpande, another brother of Shaka, and successor to Dingane (Bryant 1929:546). The *Amanganga* finally reached their present place of residence, once

[...] in later years, the British Government [had] permitted their removal in a body, under Manzini, to a spot on the northern side of the middle Mlazi river. That locality being afterwards demarcated as farms for European purchase, Lokotwayo, heir to Manzini, and his people were relegated to the broken country on the opposite side of the river (just above the Richmond road drift), with another section of the clan at the Ndwedwe (near Verulam). (Bryant 1929:547)

This was, and still is, the wider area southwest of Mariannhill, to the North and South of the Umlazi River around Dassenhoek, Kwandengezi, and Zwelibomvu (also see Bryant 1964:79). By 1886, when Mariannhill Missionaries officially started their mission activity with the first station Reichenau, Natal’s Umlazi Division alone contained twelve governmentally recognised “tribes”, so the official jargon, of which the chiefs were paid between £6 and £15 *per annum*, under Law 13 of 1875. This was considered “as a recognition of their good conduct and services [...] so long as they conduct themselves to the satisfaction of the Government”.³³⁴ The Zulu

³³³ Leo Mkonto (70 y), Filip Mancioele (70 y) and Joseph Mcanti (85 y) were baptised on 8 February 1885, and 4 March respectively. All three resided in walking-distance from the monastery and died between 1887 and 1889. I will discuss the baptism register below.

³³⁴ DAR: 1_UMB-3/1/4-SNA-80/86: Minute paper, SNA to Magistrate of Umlazi, Jackson, 29.01.1886.

Kingdom under its last King Cetshwayo ka Mpande eventually ceased after being defeated during the Anglo-Zulu war in 1879, and Cetshwayo's death in 1884 (Guy 1979). Cetshwayo's son Dinuzulu was no longer recognised as King by the British, and instead searched for new allies, such as the Boers. But at the same time, he also was in contact with Mariannhill, first during late 1887 and once more in 1889 (cf. Guy 2002b:187-88). Mariannhill Missionaries had in fact attempted to establish stations in Zululand, and for this purpose Fr. Gerard Wolpert and Br. Nivard Streicher had visited Dinuzulu in early 1887. However, due to Dinuzulu's banishment for his resistance to the annexation of Zululand, these plans were never followed up. Even if Wolpert's and Streicher's trip to Zululand was unsuccessful after all, coincidences on the way back to Mariannhill brought them to discover the farm Trinity in the Polela District, where Wolpert should establish Centocow Mission soon after in 1888 (cf. Mäder 1914).

According to Mariannhill's hagiographies, it was Chief Manzini of the *Amanganga* himself who had called the Trappists to the area in 1882, so that they could "teach [his] people to hear what the black flies on the white sheets of paper tell people" (Schimlek 1953:57). This contact had initially been made by the Protestant minister Posselt of the Lutheran Berlin Mission at Clermont near Pinetown. In the course of 1882, Posselt wrote in his mission's periodical that he had known Manzini for many years and that eventually, "one day", a messenger of Manzini appeared to request that he may teach his people (quoted in Gütl 2005:263-264).

As Mariannhill Missionaries bought up the land between Pinetown and the *Amanganga* in the same year, Posselt instead decided to leave the *Amanganga* with the Trappists. But from the beginning, there had been quarrels over several issues and tense encounters with Manzini, which concentrated on the patronising behaviour of the Trappists, primarily in regard to the education of children and their permanent residence at Mariannhill's boarding school. In addition, there were claims to land, which is confirmed by the Trappists themselves, contemporary media, and also the current *Inkhosi* of the *Amanganga* (Bryant 1887:151, also see *The Natalian*, 30.07.1887, Gütl 2005). African families accused the Trappists of detaining their children in their schools. They were especially concerned about their female children, for the potential loss of *lobola* (brideprice): marrying off girls in a Christian way would have eliminated the payment of cattle to the bride's family.

Manzini's descendants told me that these disputes had finally caused Manzini to move his homestead further away from the monastery. It was initially about eight miles from the monastery (Schimlek 1953:59), on the farm Dassenhoek, which was between Mariannhill's farms and the Umlazi reserve.³³⁵ The place where Manzini established his second residence is today known as the township Kwandengezi. Manzini still appeared for the occasions of branch court hearings at Mariannhill before 1887 (cf. Bryant 1887), but his relationship to the Trappists had soured by the end of the 1880s, when contact was only maintained through the Chief's *izinduna*. In a similar way, the Trappists' relationship to the chief at Reichenau Mission declined

³³⁵ This is again confirmed by the entries on the residence of Manzini's baptised children in Mariannhill's baptism registers of the 1880s.

around 1890. Like Manzini, Sakajedwa and his followers left the mission's land before the establishment of the professionalised photographic studio in 1894. This seems to be the reason for the fact that no photographs of either Sakajedwa or Manzini exist, but only of the latter's prominent *izinduna*, and eventually of his son Lokothwayo.

As one of the "hereditary" chiefs, opposed to the "appointed" chiefs, Manzini received the relatively high payment of £10. Amongst the 12 chiefs recognised in 1886, Manzini ranked on place six of the payment list.³³⁶ By 1896, the *Blue Book of Native Affairs* counted five hereditary and five appointed chiefs within the division, although the situation was far more complex: by now also several other chiefs had their followers in the same division, who were represented by their respective *izinduna*. By 1898, the number of chiefdoms had increased to 17, either directly or indirectly represented. Manzini had by then dropped to rank 10 in terms of payment.³³⁷ In 1891, the *Natal Native Code* introduced the possibility for mission stations to install their own chiefs for their communities of converts (*Amakholwa*) and thus to form their own "tribes" (see below). These started to appear in the area over the following years. This general increase of competing parties under the colonial system of "indirect rule" may partially account for the growing friction between Africans and the resulting violent conflicts within the division during the 1890s (cf. Gütl 2005, Lambert 1995, Mahoney 2012, also see Pels 1996).

Manzini, the *Amanganga* Chief near Mariannhill, died in 1899. Only a while before his death, a delegation of three Trappists had paid him a last visit:

Manzine [sic], the old Chief living near us was, as we were told, seriously ill. We therefore decided to pay him one more visit. He had so far not shown any attempt to become a Christian. But, could not the approach of his death possibly change his mind?³³⁸ (Anon. 1899:84)

Even after 17 years, the Trappists could still not convince Manzini to convert, and he "showed [them] the door, with the words: 'He, the King, is not an *umfana* (boy)!'" (Hanisch 1903:29). Manzini's death was reported by a messenger of his son Lokothwayo to the Secretary of Native Affairs on 25 August 1899 (Gütl 2005:343). As Manzini's position had been defined by Natal's first secretary of Native Affairs, Theophilus Shepstone, as "aboriginal" and thus "hereditary", his title was passed on to his son Lokothwayo, whom he had already declared as his legitimate heir and successor in 1884 (ibid.:344). On 1 February 1900 Lokothwayo ka Manzini of the *Shozi* started to rule over a people whose descendants still today refer to themselves as *Amanganga*.

Like the *Amanganga* living near Mariannhill Monastery, the *Amabhaca* near Centocow Mission were refugees of the *Mfecane*. But, unlike the situation at Mariannhill, the area around Centocow saw extensive succession disputes and prolonged correspondence about them. One reason for this difference is that at Mariannhill, the *Amanganga* under Manzini and Lokothwayo only had one line of succession.³³⁹ For Centocow the case was very different: since colonial

³³⁶ DAR: 1_UMB-3/1/4-SNA-80/86.

³³⁷ DAR: 1_UMB-3/1/11/98-SNA_UD_218/98.

³³⁸ My own translation from the German original.

³³⁹ But see Gütl (2005) for some inter-familial disagreements regarding the succession of Manzini.

presence in the wider area from the 1830s onwards, the Umzimkhulu area was to various degrees inhabited by African groups identifying themselves as *Amakhuze*, *Amabhaca*, and *Inhlangwini* (cf. Bryant 1929, Hammond-Tooke 1962, Van Warmelo 1935). Once Mariannhill Missionaries arrived at Centocow in 1888, these groups still populated the region. As inscribed in governmental maps, as well as Mariannhill's own maps, the land between Centocow and Lourdes was exclusively inhabited by communities identified as *Amabhaca*. This may be the straightforward reason why Mariannhill Missionaries initially interacted with (and photographed) the latter. They only started approaching and representing the *Amakhuze* (living in the location to their West) some fifteen years after their arrival. As I explain in the next section in relation to the baptism and marriage registers of Lourdes Mission, the missionaries kept close track of their converts' "tribal" affiliations in relation to the fear of faction fights. Like at Mariannhill, at Centocow the missionaries distinguished between reluctant and more approachable subjects: according to Br. Adrian, the *Amabhaca* were "pugnacious [*rauflostig*]", while the *Amakhuze* were "roguish [*verschmitzt*]" (Pellazino 1914a:35).

A similar uncertainty regarding categorisation and representation also troubled government representatives. In this particular area, the colonial governments of Natal and the Eastern Cape had more difficulties than elsewhere categorising and confining groups, due to a long history of extensive migration and changes of affiliation.³⁴⁰ Still in the 1930s, the government ethnologist Nicolaas J. van Warmelo apologised for not being able to give any detailed numbers on the population, as "to properly clear up the tribal tangle in Umzimkulu District will require more time than I have at my disposal" (Van Warmelo 1935:24). In an earlier archival statement from 1915, tribal identities and their origins were likewise far from certain for government officials: most likely in order to determine rail fares, a superintendent of the South African Railways inquired with the Secretary of Native Affairs whether the "baca tribe" belonged to the "Natal or to the Cape Natives".³⁴¹ After some to and fro of letters, he was assured that "the members of this tribe are natives of the Cape Province". Due to the evident migration in the area, African identities cannot be determined through general ethnic glosses, but must be clearly situated within the historical discourse. This will become even more evident with Gerard Bhengu in Chapter Seven.

In the case of Centocow, conflicts even brought magistrates and their informants to pen extensive accounts of "tribal history", which were collected in a long succession of interviews, and various related correspondences between 1910 and 1914. From 1910 onwards, the political landscape between Centocow and Lourdes was seriously disturbed. The *Amabhaca* Chief Bhekukupiwa ka Cijisile had died in 1910, and his brother Magxuma was installed as acting chief.³⁴² Three more chiefs, some of *Amakhuze* origin, died in the area at the same time, all under mysterious circumstances. Through speculations that all incidents were related political murders,

³⁴⁰ I will not deal here with the history and migration of the previously mentioned groups, as it is highly complex. For overviews see for example Bryant (1929), Hammond-Tooke (1962), and Scully (1909).

³⁴¹ PAR: CNC 787/1915.

³⁴² PAR: SNA 3645/1910 [-1914].

Africans, government, and missionaries alike developed an increasing anxiety in the resulting “*indaba enkulu* [great debate]” (Hanisch 1910). In 1913, Magxuma, too, died under unknown circumstances, and again in 1914 the next potential heir to the hereditary chieftaincy of the *Amabhaca*, Bhekukupiwa’s son Mvovo, deceased, not even having reached adulthood.³⁴³ A major succession dispute had broken out, which eventually had reverberations into the 1920s and beyond, even until today. The acting *Amabhaca* Chief in the late 1920s, Nyongwane ka Bhekukupiwa shall concern us again in Chapter Seven.

Entries in Mariannhill’s baptism register for the late 1880s indicate that new arrivals came, for example, from Pietermaritzburg, Johannesburg and other places, as far as Basutoland. Other than the neat division into “tribes” and nations may suggest, the African and European population around Mariannhill was much more diverse, and the immigrants to the area had certainly more complex biographies of migration than can ever be reconstructed. The colonial ascription of “tribe” is still employed by some African communities today, but one cannot uphold that these had ever been stable units. Rather, they must be seen as conglomerates of at times rapidly shifting affiliations. Also the Black Catholic community of *Amakholwa* around Mariannhill must be considered in this way: browsing the early baptism registers of Mariannhill Parish for the 1880s and 1890s, one quickly realises that Mariannhill’s *Amakholwa* were not only formed by converted *Amanganga*, but also by more recent migrants (cf. Gütl 2005). In July 1887, Fr. Gerard claimed that there was “no shortage of Kafirs”, who were open to Christianity and desired access to Mariannhill’s farms, especially as winter was approaching (Wolpert 1887:45). Africans arriving in the metropolitan area around Durban, and looking out to make a living, had limited alternatives: instead of suffering the insecurity of dwelling independently near cities, they could only associate themselves with various Protestant mission societies, such as the Berlin Mission at New Germany, or they may have joined a local chiefdom.³⁴⁴

³⁴³ PAR: CNC 1126/1915.

³⁴⁴ We remember that Mariannhill was the only active Catholic mission congregation at the time, as the French OMI did not engage in active mission work. A history of interactions between missionary denominations in Natal has not been written so far, and also cannot be provided here.

A Crisis of Identity: Umpathwa or Umdamane—*Amakholwa* or *Amanganga*?

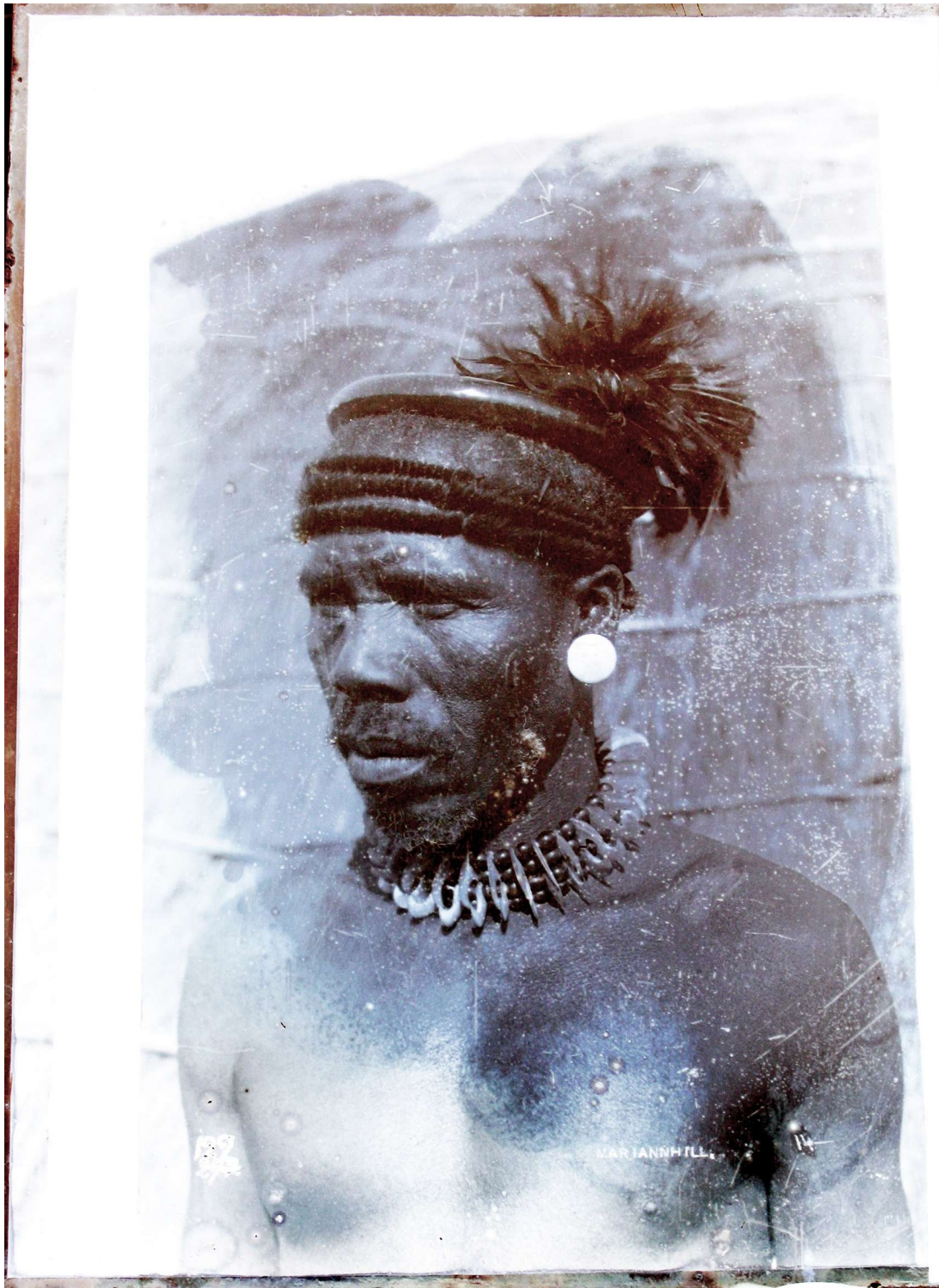


Figure 79: original caption on the glass plate negative: “122. Umdamane”, 1891 (digitally inverted glass plate negative, CMM Archives).

The historian Norman Etherington dates the rise of a “*kholwa*” identity, of African Christians in Natal to the early 1850s, and the establishment of *Amakholwa* chiefdoms to the 1860s and 70s, which were however “ill defined” (1978:113). The earliest inscription of their governmental recognition as individual “tribes”, which I was able to find, is the *Natal Native Code* of 1891:

8. The word ‘tribe’ signifies a number or collection or body of Natives forming a political organisation or community, and composed of not less than 20 kraals, under the government, control, or leadership of a chief, and which organisation or community has been recognised or established by the Supreme Chief. The communities existing now, or hereafter to be formed in connection with mission stations, may be regarded as tribes. (Mitchell 1893[1891]:4)

Representations of mission work usually describe the movement towards, and the first encounter with unknown people. However, these representations can hardly be separated from the already established work of ministry involving the *Amakholwa* community: such daily work at Mariannhill involved the ongoing selection, registration, and classification of already known individuals (cf. Pels 1994, 1999). For administrative purposes Mariannhill Missionaries routinely documented such religious interactions. By analysing one particular photographic occasion in relation to the earliest baptism registers and a historical map, I hope to show that the production of photographs, but also the collection of objects I describe in Chapter Five, was embedded and even determined by the various social relationships of Mariannhill’s colonial, political, and religious encounters.

Figure 79 depicts a bearded senior Black man, portrayed in a three-quarter perspective, in front of a beehive-shaped homestead. Such buildings were conventional during the 1890s in the area around Mariannhill. It is yet another version of the same photograph I already presented in the introduction and Chapter One. The high sun reflects off the man’s polished head ring and his forehead. At the bottom of the image, running across the sitter’s chest, the imprint “Mariannhill” is clearly visible. The photograph must have been taken either by Fr. Isembard Leyendecker, or Fr. Desiderius Fresen in the course of the year 1891.



Figure 80: The inscribed side of the glass plate negative of Figure 79 (CMM Archives).

This photograph serves as an extended case, which will occupy us in this chapter and the next. The fact that multiple identities have been related to this one photograph, allowed me to connect their biographies between several discourses and timeframes. In early 1898, Müller offered this photograph, among many others, to several European ethnographic museums. His correspondence with a curator of Berlin's ethnological museum, Felix von Luschan, eventually prompted him to compile a booklet with descriptions for 114 photographs (Müller 1899). Here he introduced the depicted man as an *induna* ("minister or advisor"), of Chief Manzini. The text also locates the man close to the *Umhlatusane* River near Mariannhill Monastery. By retrieving the original glass plate negative in the archive of Mariannhill Monastery, I came to know the man's name: Umdamane. As a very rare exception, the photographer considered this name important enough to inscribe it on a paper strip glued onto the negative (Figure 80). It was this very object of the glass plate negative, which allowed me to connect the space of the archive to the historical space near the Umhlatusane River. As a material object it was the negative which had once shared spatial proximity with Umdamane, as well as the photographer, who was therefore able to inscribe the plate with the sitter's name. In this particular case, there appeared to

be no reason for me to question this claim to indexicality.

In 2007, the three coordinates of Umdamane's residence, his name, as well as his social position, brought me in contact with several members of the Phewa family. This family is known to have had *izinduna* in their lines, who served under the local chief Manzini. Without help of annotations, but according to the facial resemblance of the depicted, they identified the person on the photograph as a potential ancestor. Remarkable about this identification was that they selected him with absolute certainty from almost a hundred photographs I had brought along. Once a photographic *resemblance*, and thus the man's identity had been established, the portrait photograph, as well as the rest of the collection I had brought along, began to develop evidentiary power. In Chapter One I explained that not only within its own time, but in particular over temporal distance, photographic resemblance must be considered a claim used to justify identity. The members of the Phewa family did speak about several of the visible material culture items, but never referred to the man's extraordinary necklace. As we discussed the photograph's production date (1891), they applied the name Mpathwa Phewa to the depicted person, who allegedly was the head-*induna* of Chief Manzini. Manzini was Chief of the *Amanganga*, responsible for the people on the land where the mission station is now situated. The most striking authentication for the family, other than the resemblance, were Müller's annotations. These located the depicted person at the Umhlatuzane River. Also close to the Umhlatuzane River, at a place known as Emaus, so they told me, their ancestor Mpathwa was one of the first Africans, who had built a European-style house.³⁴⁵

The name Umdamane instead, written on the negative, did not sound familiar to any of the family's members. They justified the name with the persistent European practice of misspelling African names and concluded that the name could be a misinterpretation of one of Mpathwa's praise names: for example "Udubane", indicating that Mpathwa's influence reached as far as Durban. Furthermore, they thought that the wider collection of Mariannhill's photographs from the 1890s gave evidence that the local population was not starving or suffering in any way. Therefore they never were in need of the missionaries' presence or help. The collection of photographs we discussed, included depictions of African artisans, such as blacksmiths. For the family, these indicated the existence of autonomous technological production. This led to several perspectives on the relationship between Africans and Trappists, such as their economical cooperation, rather than a one-sided dependence on materials and knowledge from Europe. Obviously, so they stated, the missionaries also depended on African labour; co-dependence was a common phenomenon with Christian missions (Pels 1999), but neglected in Mariannhill's own hagiographies.

The family considered the fact that the missionaries had photographed "Mpathwa" as evidence that the historical relationship really existed. The initially positive relation was—according to Mpathwa's descendants—only violated during the implementation of the "Group Areas Act" of the 1950s. The Act led to the family's removal from the land where their ancestors

³⁴⁵ Not to be confused with Mariannhill's filial station by the same name in East Griqualand.

had lived and which had been bought by Mariannhill Monastery in the 1880s. After 1994, the family accused Mariannhill Monastery of not having provided the proper title deed to secure the property for the African community. At the time of our encounter, the family was running a court case for a land claim against the monastery. This was settled in 2009 with leaving the claimants a part of land to the North of Mariannhill. By this time, however, the photograph could no longer be used as evidence, as it had already received a more dominant identification, which I describe below.

As a direct reaction to the sudden appearance of the photograph in 2007, the family had quickly appropriated a copy of “Mpathwa’s” photograph in form of a telling montage. They had photocopied the portrait together with an image of the mission’s founder, Abbot Franz Pfanner on an A4-size paper, thereby uniting them on one image surface as contemporaries in their own rights. Pfanner’s image came from the cover of the only hagiography ever translated into Zulu (Balling and Khumalo 1983).³⁴⁶ The family considered Pfanner as an ally of Mpathwa, as Pfanner had his own issues with European authorities. The ambivalence in Pfanner’s standard hagiography appealed to the family, as he is said to have resigned in defiance, before his superiors could make him resign in 1892. For the family, this montage of two portraits on the same carrier served to inscribe, and to re-assemble a relationship that had allegedly existed in the past. Two photographs, both originally produced to propagate adventure and dependence across continents, had been re-appropriated within the current socio-political microcosm as evidence, as well as an object of empowerment.

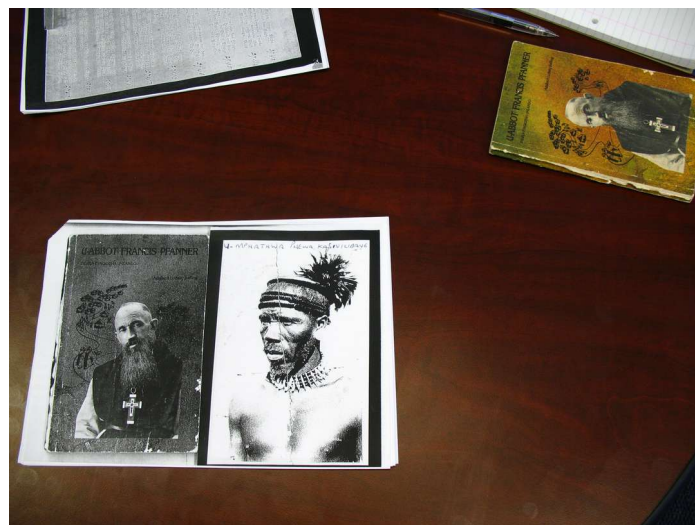


Figure 81: Abbot Franz Pfanner and “Mpathwa Phewa”. To the right, the book by Balling and Khumalo (1983) from which the copy had been made (photograph by the author, 2007).

³⁴⁶ The booklet had originally been published in German in 1960, before the first beatification process, and was republished in the late 1970s (Balling 1979). It was then translated into English (Balling 1980), from which the Zulu translation was crafted for the occasion of Mariannhill’s centenary.

Several weeks after I had met the Phewa family, who had identified the photograph as their ancestor Mpathwa Phewa, I was able to meet the present *inkhosi* of the *Amanganga*, E. Bhekamanganga Shoji (Cf. Chapter Eight). Here I was introduced to his eldest *induna*, who, even before seeing the photograph, claimed to be the grandson of Manzini's *induna* by the name of Umdamane Zungu. Henceforth, more information accumulated around the photograph. *Induna* Zungu—most likely in his 80s—was, like his grandfather, an *induna* of the current *inkhosi* of the *Amanganga*. He recited the following story about his grandfather: Umdamane was a well known doctor and rainmaker among his people, which brought him great fame and influence; so much influence that it was beyond the liking of his chief. One day, when one of the chief's wives was sick, Umdamane had taken her to his homestead in order to treat her—without informing Chief Manzini. When she died unexpectedly, the chief's family decided that this was a legitimate motive to get rid of the potential usurper, and killed him.

In 1907, Müller published an article about rainmakers in the *Mariannhiller Kalender* (1907a), in which he presented a strikingly similar narrative about Umdamane: “Eight years ago [1898], close to Mariannhill, the Trappist Mission amongst the Kafirs, the famous doctor and rainmaker Umdamane was poisoned at the instigation of the former Chief Manzini, for no other reason than the fact that he achieved too much prestige with the people through his successes in rainmaking (Müller 1907a:90)”.³⁴⁷ It is very unlikely that *Induna* Zungu ever read Müller's version of the story, which is not only written in German, but also printed in gothic script, and never had a wide local circulation. Therefore the narrative of *Induna* Zungu appears to be an independent oral tradition, rather than being sourced from later textual accounts.

Eventually, the same photograph, which had previously been identified as “Mpathwa Phewa”, received a second identification as “*Induna* Umdamane Zungu”. This second identification even accommodated the inscription from the glass plate negative, and was finally approved of as authentic by the current *inkhosi* of the *Amanganga*, the great-grandson of Lokothwayo ka Manzini. It does not matter whether the application of the earlier identity was “correct” or “incorrect”, “true” or “untrue”. Crucial for the analyses of photographs is that they may accrue a certain strength of conviction by being positioned within social relations, depending on how they correspond with other photographs and traces. By bringing the photographs of the mission's founder Pfanner, and the *induna* cum doctor into spatial proximity, the family gave space to new narratives on two figures, who had initially been captured for Mariannhill's conversion story.

Had I not experienced this ambivalent identification of a photograph, I may never have made the acquaintance of *Inkhosi* Shoji, and I may have asked very different questions about Mariannhill's social past. I may never have learned about the existence of Mpathwa Phewa, an equally real and important character for the area's history, which I now briefly recount. Clemens Gütl (2005) studied the social and economic relationships between the Trappists and Africans at Mariannhill, and also described the establishment of the *Amakholwa* around Mariannhill. After a

³⁴⁷ My own translation from the German original.

first failed attempt in 1891, a “Joseph Pfanner” was installed as the *induna* of Mariannhill’s *Amakholwa* community in 1893. “*Induna*” thus not only denotes the “headman” of a chief or “*inkhosi*”, as it was applied and understood within the governmental discourse, but the same term was equally applied to the early leaders of *Amakholwa*, ie. the “foremen” at missions, even before they had been established as proper government-recognised chiefdoms.

In cooperation with Gütl, I was able to confirm that “Joseph Pfanner” was in fact the baptismal name of Mpathwa Phewa. The Christian name may have been directly given to him by the Abbot, Franz Pfanner (also see Gütl 2005:282, 350).³⁴⁸ Both the Zulu name and the European baptismal name were apparently used interchangeably, also with variations in spelling. Mpathwa also appears in Mariannhill’s archive, as a recurring figure in the accounting books, receiving payments, made for work carried out at the monastery. In his capacity as “bricklayer” a “Joseph Pewa” was even summoned temporarily from Mariannhill to Centocow in 1889, as mentioned in Centocow’s chronicle. And indeed, Pfanner had announced to the monastery council in July 1889 that he will send “Joseph Pfanner, one of our Black Christians, to East Griqualand, to use him there as supervisor, ranger, and missionary etc.” (Zürlein 1999:25). Mpathwa will also return as collector of “ethnographic” objects in Chapter Five. The most intimate relationship between Mpathwa Phewa and Abbot Franz Pfanner, however, evolved through the story told by his descendants. In 1909, Phewa was sent to collect Pfanner’s dead body from his place of retirement at Emaus Mission in East Griqualand, in order to return it to Mariannhill. Mpathwa Phewa thus was a prominent historical person, and may even have been photographed by the Trappists. But other than Umdamane, he has never been identified in a photograph.

Once Chief Manzini of the *Amanganga* had died in 1899, there was less opposition to the Christian “separatists”. The area was repeatedly struck by several draughts in the early 1890s, locust swarms from 1894 onwards, influenza in 1895, and eventually the devastating rinderpest zoonotic of 1897 (Lambert 1995:143ff). Gütl argues that due to the resulting impoverishment in the Umlazi Location to the South of Mariannhill, inter-tribal friction increased. Some Africans envisioned a solution to this complex problem by joining Mariannhill’s *Amakholwa*. At this point, Fr. Ambrosius Hartes and Abbot Gerard Wolpert also succeeded in 1900 to install a Alois Cele as the “chief” of the Mariannhill *Amakholwa*, so that they could become an officially government-recognised chiefdom (Gütl 2005:394).

The missionaries initially selected converts on the basis of their capabilities, as defined by whether they were judged as reliable, trustworthy, and sincere in their faith. Potential friction in this regard was monitored by collecting and recording particular data. At Mariannhill Parish, as well as at the monastery’s former outstations, such as Lourdes and Centocow, baptism-, marriage-, and death-registers from the earliest decades are still kept. Also canonical interactions, such as “stipends”, payments made by people to priests for including their prayers in the sermon, or people who worked for the mission, entered respective records.

³⁴⁸ Alternatively the name may have been taken on from someone of the abbot’s family in Austria, who may have served as a name patron.

At Mariannhill's largest outstations Centocow and Lourdes Missions, book keeping practices differed according to the social circumstances at the respective mission. At Centocow, priests kept a so-called *liber familiarum*, of which copies remain for the 1920s and 1930s. Here the superior monitored the developments and relationships within those particular families, whose members had married at the mission. At Lourdes, priests developed a shared practise during the first decade of the 20th century, to meticulously enter into the marriage register whether the spouses were of "Zulu", "Baca", or "Inhlangwini" origin. The two local scenarios differed from the one at Mariannhill Monastery in so far that politically loaded tribal identifications abounded, and one saw a need to monitor the various antagonistic and competing groups and their relationships with each other, as well as those to the mission.

By conversion to Christianity, the previous identifications were eventually supposed to be absorbed in one *Amakholwa* identity. In the particular case of Lourdes Mission, the attempted transformation of people was in fact arrested in the very act of registering one of its stages (marriage as one of the holy sacraments). Instead of erasing the complex tribal relationships, the missionaries re-inscribed them. Some twenty years later, the government ethnologist Jacobus van Warmelo still considered the Umzimkhulu area, the land between Centocow and Lourdes, as a "tribal tangle" (1935:24). He had been in a close working relationship with Mariannhill's mission staff, and most likely also discussed these issues with them (cf. Chapter Seven).

The missionaries also registered Africans on photographs, but only in few cases, as the one of Umdamane, were they identified as individuals in the institutional privacy of the photographer's personal registration system. The social positions of Manzini's two *izinduna*, Umdamane Zungu and Fothsolo Dube, becomes clearer when we look at the earliest baptism register of Mariannhill Parish for the years 1884 to 1891.³⁴⁹ These can be complemented with contemporary reports from the periodicals, governmental reports, as well as a contemporary map. This analysis will also clarify why Umdamane received photographic attention.

Umdamane already was *induna* of Manzini before the Trappists' arrival in 1882. He lived in "[his] own Kraal on the Umhlatuzana [River] beyond Pinetown". So did Umdamane state himself via an interpreter in 1881, when he appeared as witness in an investigation about a murder of an infant twin at the Umlazi Resident Magistrate's court.³⁵⁰ He was approached as an authority and expert on "tradition", with the question whether the death of one of the children must be dealt with as accident, or as intentional infanticide according to "native custom". Next to his residence, Umdamane also identified himself as "an 'Induna' of Manzini".³⁵¹ The area to the West of Pinetown and north-west to Mariannhill is still today referred to as "*Zungu* Bush" by residents. Some Indian landowners told me that still today one could find "Zulu artefacts" in the undergrowth. As we already know, *Zungu* was Umdamane's "address name" or *isitakazelo*, and is today used as the family's surname. Like Umdamane's photograph, events like his

³⁴⁹ See Gütl (2005:353-364) for a partial analysis of the registers.

³⁵⁰ DAR: 1_UMB-3/1/3-SNA_442/1881.

³⁵¹ Quotation marks as they appear in the original handwritten protocol.

interrogation present us with an impression of direct access to Umdamane. However, similar to the photograph, it is merely mediated through a textualisation of his speech, and the interpretation and translation from Zulu into English. Umdamane himself was illiterate. Like his chief Manzini, and even the *induna* of the *Amakholwa*, Mpathwa Phewa, he signed his transcribed statements with an “X”.

What appears to be an early spectre of Umdamane, is narrated in a story by Pfanner, titled “*Sensation*”. It was published in the precursor to the *Vergißmeinnicht*, the first edition of the periodical *Fliegende Bätter aus Südafrika*. Pfanner recounted a conversation with a “lesser chief”, immediately two days after the Trappist’s arrival on the farm *Zeekoegat*, in late December 1882. Pfanner claimed jokingly to have recognised the visitor “as someone important” on first sight, for his “European dress, his spurs and his nice horse”. He further described the man’s exuberant excitement when he told him that his and other children will be instructed at the Trappist’s school, but will also be trained in handicrafts, and all that free of costs. The man then immediately rode back to his homestead, so Pfanner, where he lived with his six wives. The homestead was “in some distance on a hill, looking down onto the monastery” (Pfanner 1883). According to the local topography, this could have only been the homestead of Umdamane, as I will deduce further below. This conversation was once more confirmed by Pfanner’s secretary Biegner, even 30 years later. Biegner confirmed that the man’s name was “u’Damani, a Kafir ‘doctor’”(Biegner 1911:225).

Umdamane next appeared in an article in May 1885, as a “pighead, who also calls himself a doctor, has 10 wives, and soon wants to take two more. He generally lives in the expectation to become an important man one day” (Pfanner 1885a).³⁵² Pfanner did not mention Umdamane by name. He was however the only individual on Mariannhill’s farms at the time, who matched all described characteristics. After “the pighead” had conceded to let two of his 12 year old sons attend Mariannhill’s school, two priests took them from Umdamane’s homestead. They were supposed to remain at Mariannhill within the newly introduced boarding system, and to be “educated, and christianised respectively”. Indeed, one of Umdamane’s sons was the only 13-year-old to be baptised in the months previous to the publication, and also the third person ever to be baptised at Mariannhill. As the idea of a boarding school was unclear to Umdamane, he approached the monastery two days later, with the hope to retrieve his children. Remaining unsuccessful himself, he soon sent the children’s mothers. But also to them, so Pfanner, he would not return the children. When another father visited to claim his children, it came to a physical confrontation between the man and several Trappists, involving a *knobkerrie*: a wooden stick, which Pfanner eventually had to “confiscate”.

Even if multiple cases of “abducted children” appeared over the following years, and even made it into the local press, as well as claims before the local magistrate (Gütl 2005), Umdamane continued to have his children baptised at Mariannhill over the next decade. His motives remain unclear, but he apparently considered the advantages to outweigh the

³⁵² My own translation from the German original.

disadvantages. Pfanner's description of Umdamane as "polygamous doctor" however would stick beyond the latter's death. Umdamane maintained a low profile over the following years and can only be traced two more times, apart from still existing photographs. Before we approach these occasions, I need to introduce the baptism register.

The very first person ever baptised at Mariannhill was a European male of 32 years from Berlin, Germany. He, and also the second baptised African woman, both were "re-conversions" of a previous Lutheran and a Wesleyan. The third person was the before-mentioned African boy of "approx." 13 years, holding the baptismal name Bonaventura Aloys Engel. The baptising priest, "Fr. Franz Prior", also noted the "*Locus ex quo oriendus*", the "place where he originated": "*vom Semering*". The register further indicates for "*Parentes ejus*": "*Damani (Priester oder Doctor) Ethnicus, ejus mater ethnica*". The name of the father reappears in various spellings, which I believe to be early textualisations of the name Umdamane. Umdamane himself is indicated as father, but labelled with the common Latin term *Ethnicus*, thus "heathen" (cf. Lewis and Short 1958). In several instances the baptising priest added Umdamane's profession as "*Ethnicus Doctor*". Umdamane is the only person with such a detailed description in the entire baptism register.³⁵³

Also other baptisms of Umdamane's children, mainly girls, are recorded, and eventually even Umdamane's mother is listed among the early converts of his homestead. The children are listed with their new Christian names, and only occasionally with their original Zulu name. Other "*Parentes*" are identified as "*Wesleyani*", or "*Catholici*", instead of "*Ethnicus*", but always defined with or against a religious group in one way or another. The baptisms were never carried out individually, but up to 14 at a time. Pfanner occasionally described the organisation and performance of these mass conversions in the early periodicals, and at the same time presented similar information to the local magistrate. The missionaries presented such information in a straightforward way, and never adjusted it for respective audiences. As "*testes*" (witness) of the first baptisms, often served a Benjamin Makhaba from Basutoland (cf. Gütl 2005:302). Next to Fotsholo, Makhaba was another intermediary, whom Bryant (1887) mentioned as crucially instrumental, together with Fr. Hyacinth Salomon, during the first attempts of instruction and ministry.

On the register's second page, the category "*locus ex quo oriendus*" is changed into "*locus ubi habitat*", the place, where the baptised person lived. It is restricted to Mariannhill's two farms, "Zeekoegat" and "Klaarwater". As I explained at the beginning of Chapter Three, at least since 1884 the missionaries started naming every single hill and valley on their farms after Biblical, European, Middle Eastern, and Asian topographic formations. Eventually, in 1888 one of the missionaries drew a very detailed map of the farms (Figure 67) with the by now

³⁵³ The earliest baptism register exists in at least two versions. At one point after 1907, Mariannhill Monastery transferred a copy to the nearby Parish church, once it had become independent from the monastery. In this process, the original Latin register was translated, and then transcribed into a new volume. But in the process crucial information was dropped, such as the Latin identifications I just described. The original Latin register was transferred to the CMM Archives in Rome.

established nomenclature, but also indicating African homesteads: a clear distinction was made by marking “traditional” dome-shaped “beehive-huts” as circles, and European-style houses as squares. We thus find in the register that baptised people (not only children) resided at the *Himalaya*, *Karpathen*, *Schafkopf*, or like Umdamane’s children, at the *Semmering*. The latter name refers to a mountain pass and holiday resort in Austria, and was applied by Pfanner to an elevation exactly one and a half miles to the West of Mariannhill Monastery, with a walking distance of maybe 45 minutes. The baptism register indicates that most of Umdamane’s children lived at this homestead. Today the same elevation is still the highest point in the area, and for this reason holds several water reservoirs. In the 1888 map, the *Semmering* instead features a homestead with nine huts, one of only two homesteads of such dimension on both farms. This was Umdamane’s main residence.³⁵⁴



Figure 82: original caption: “*Mariannhill Süd Africa. Heidnischer Kraal 123*”. Umdamane’s homestead, approx. 1891 (NMVW-A15-111).

³⁵⁴ Children of Umdamane also lived at the *Kap*, a bend in the Umhlatuzane River, just underneath Mariannhill’s table mountain, about one and a half miles to the North-West of Mariannhill Monastery.

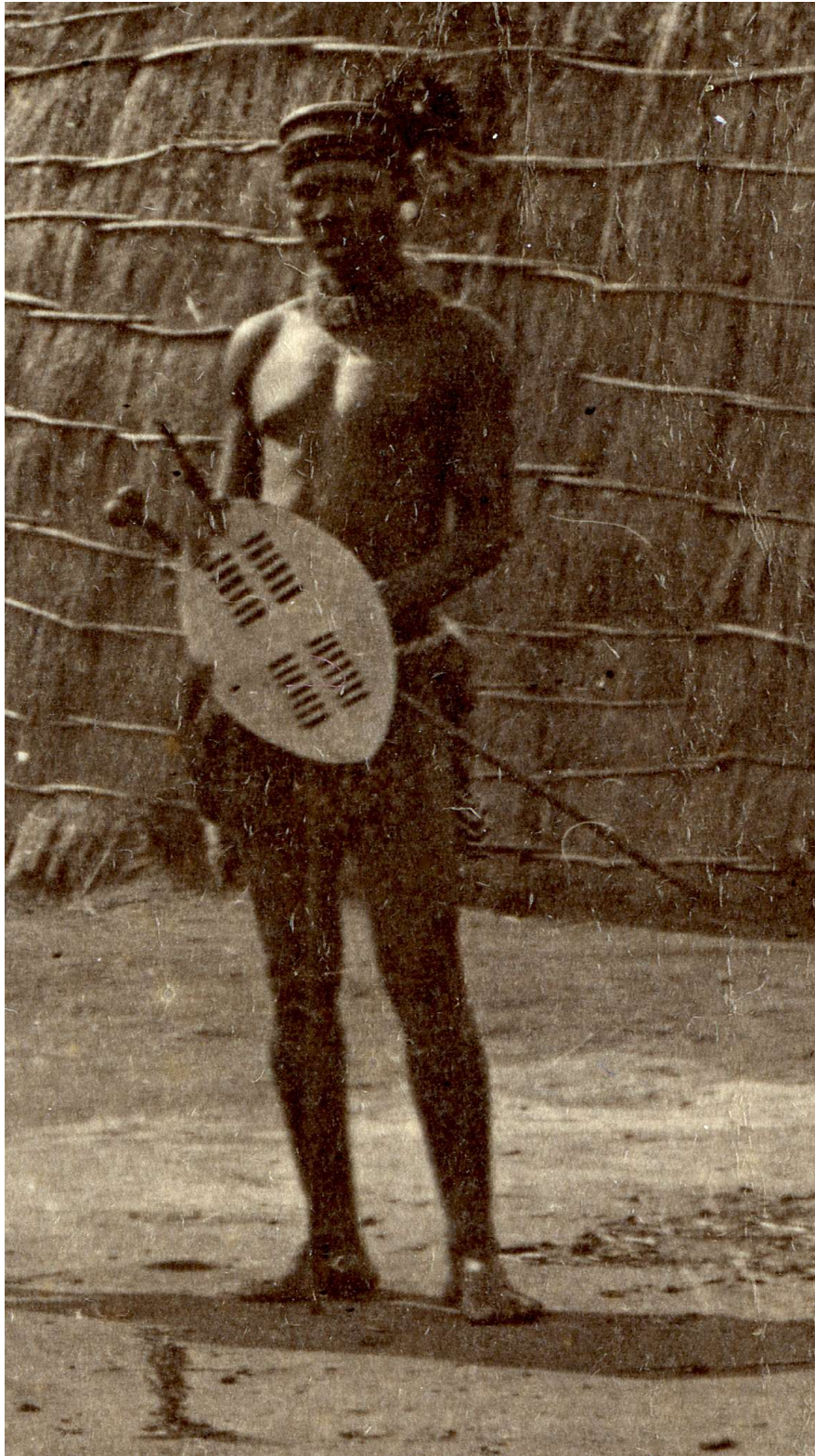


Figure 83: detail of Figure 82.



Figure 84: detail of Figure 82.

The combination of sources also enables us to identify a photograph of Umdamane's homestead on the *Semmering* (Figure 82). Here we can see Umdamane to the very right, holding a small shield (Figure 83). In his catalogue (1899), Müller counted 11 huts for this homestead, and presented Umdamane (without mentioning his name) as the "*umnumzane* [Kraal head]". Umdamane is wearing the exact same head gear as in the photograph above (Figure 79). Also the light conditions and the original numbering system do match. We can therefore be certain that both photographs were taken during the same occasion. To the left of Figure 82 we see the homestead's cattle enclosure, and in the centre, four children engaged in stick fights.

The most curious element of the image, however, is a faint trace just to the left of the two smaller fighting boys. Close examination of the print reveals the silhouette of a retouched figure, whose outline matches a monk's cloak (Figure 84). This is the only case with such a drastic intervention I was able to trace so far. It is therefore exceptional that the photographer went to such an effort as to laboriously eradicate a confrere from the negative, while he let them be on others. The representation of the relationship between missionaries and their subjects as necessary co-dependence, which I described in Chapter One, was thus not desired in all instances. In this case the presence of a priest in a homestead—to teach, baptise, or to take photographs—apparently did not fit the caption of a "heathen kraal", which is inscribed at the photograph's lower right. When Müller sold this photograph to ethnographic museums in 1899, it came together with others that indeed showed encounters between missionaries with Africans in similar homesteads. Therefore we may also consider it as an experiment, which turned out to be too laborious and time-consuming in order to be repeated. As I explained in Chapter One, Müller soon learned that it was much easier to stage his photographs according to his own ideas, rather than to rely on the insecurities of snapshot photography and extensive retouching.

The photograph allows the localisation of Umdamane's portrait (Figure 79) in the spatial environment of his homestead, and again the localisation of his homestead on the map and in textual descriptions. This map, combined with the baptism register, not only indicates that Mariannhill (at least for the first ten years) tolerated non-Catholics on their ground, but also that spatial and social relations to Umdamane were extremely close for some time. The textual proximity of the written record in form of baptism registers can thus be correlated to the spatial, as well as the visual proximity of the photographic image. Umdamane depended on the Trappists benevolence to tolerate him on their farm as a non-Christian. According to this fact, he conceded to have his children baptised, and to engage with the missionaries on the smallest common denominator. Even though Umdamane never converted to Catholicism himself, those proximities made the photographic engagement possible.

The Phewa family initially did not recognise Mpathwa's role as *induna* of the *Amakhowla*, but instead conferred with the at the time apparently more attractive identity inscribed by Müller as *induna* of Manzini. As we will see, historically both "*induna*-ships" were in some way antagonists. Mariannhill Missionaries considered the *Amanganga Induna* Umdamane Zungu as antagonistic "pagan traditionalist", while the *Amakholwa induna* Mpathwa

Phewa was an antagonist to the non-Christian *Amanganga* Chief. It was thus the double-identification of a single portrait, which introduced me to the constructions of these past and present binaries. The photograph had literally served as an imagined “contact zone”, between the Phewas, the Shozis and myself; as such it opened up new historical spaces.

Snuffing with Lokothwayo



Figure 85: original caption: “391. Kafferchief Lokotwayo & Indunas”, approx. 1895 (CMM Archives).

Just like the last, the next three sections deal with photographic occasions in particular contact zones involving the Trappists, their potential and actual African subjects, as well as government representatives. Each zone’s particularities allowed for the production of different knowledge, during the time of the photographs’ production, as well as during my fieldwork. Traces accumulating around the following photographs make it even clearer that familiarity during a photographic occasion could only be established outside of the restrictive monastic compound, or inside of the photographic studio. The monastery’s and mission’s ground were instead controlled by the script of the guided tour, the discipline of the Trappist rule, and the discipline of governmental rule. Away from the monastery and the mission stations, a certain sociability could manifest itself in the act of sharing certain pastimes and consumption goods. Also inside of the studio, whatever seemed appropriate could be performed, and even recreated with the help of props and backdrops.

Distinguishing such spaces will enable us to connect photographs and individuals, but also to explore the mediating role of objects within their relationships, either as social objects, or as theatrical props. In this Chapter I only deal with the explicit role of objects in social

relationships and their photographic performance, their “backstory” before entering a repository (Hamilton 2011, also see Chapter Five). One may of course argue that also photographing an object is an act of archiving, thus arresting the “backstory” as part of an object’s biography. Photographs may still provide us with traces of an everyday object’s social life, in order to reassemble aspects of the relationship between Africans, Trappists, and other social actors. In such situations, we will not be able to rely on existing material culture studies, as these commonly discuss objects in ethnic categories. Instead I hope to tease out the relational dimension of these objects during photographic performances. When discussing Mariannhill’s museum in Chapter Five, I instead deal with the institutionalised process of collecting, exhibiting, and consequently photographing objects in a musealised state.

The photograph under discussion only exists once as a contemporary print in the Roman CMM archives. The print is captioned at the bottom of the image as “391. *Kafferchief Lokotwayo & Indunas*”. The first and only time the photograph has been published was in the booklet for the monastery’s 25th anniversary (Frey 1907:153). Not only was it published without a caption underneath the photograph, but even the caption in the image had been erased for this purpose. Although the photograph is not dated, it is possible to place it in a chronological narrative, due to various instances of resemblance. It is one of only two photographs in the collection that depicts a meeting between Trappists and a leader of an African community.³⁵⁵

We can see eight men, five Africans and three Trappists. Two of them are lay brothers, while the man in the white habit is a priest. The central three Black men are wearing long coats, and the two sitting elderly men even wear head rings. Their difference in dress led many of my interviewees to the conclusion that they were dignitaries of some kind. Descendants of Umdamane and Lokothwayo eventually identified the standing man in the centre as Lokothwayo, by cross-referencing resemblance of face and objects in other photographs. Lokothwayo had officially succeeded his father Manzini as *inkhosi* in 1900 (see above and Chapter Eight). The identification of Lokothwayo by his descendants, however, contradicted other opinions that he must be either one of the two sitting men. Others thought that the two men’s senior standing is indicated by their head rings. But as I will explicate in Chapters Five and Seven, a head ring was foremost a sign of the wearer’s relationship to, and his dependance on his chief. The chief himself was apparently not obliged to wear a head ring. Lokothwayo’s descendants eventually identified the two elderly men with head rings as two of Lokothwayo’s *izinduna*.

³⁵⁵ The second photograph was taken at Mariazell Mission near Matatiele, but due to the fact that it was not possible to trace the identity of the chief, I will not discuss it here.



Figure 86: detail of Figure 85: man resembling Umdamane.

I was told that Lokothwayo would have inherited the two *izinduna* from his father, who then guided him while gathering experience. The *induna* to the left constitutes yet another familiar presence: he has an unmistakable resemblance with Umdamane, the *induna* of Manzini, whose identity was finally attributed to the portrait photograph, which had first brought me in contact with the descendants of Mpathwa Phewa (Figure 79). For the occasion of this photograph, Umdamane did not wear his leopard claw choker, or any other detachable adornment, which he had worn for his portrait in 1891.

Equally through cross-referencing of photographs, the Trappist to the left could be identified as Fr. Hyacinth Salomon (1867-1904), a Polish priest, who was one of the first Mariannhill Missionaries in Zimbabwe (then Southern Rhodesia). Salomon had joined the monastery three months before A.T. Bryant in 1883, and is like the latter known as one of the first members to be proficient in Zulu. According to Bryant, Salomon was the first to catechise at the school, and was thus together with Bryant and Benjamin Makhaba one of Mariannhill's first active missionaries (Bryant 1887:76, 80-81). Probably his early acquaintance with the *Amanganga* and a proficiency in Zulu were the reasons for his involvement in the photographic occasion of Figure 85.

But after all, there is a problem to reconstruct the photograph's production date: both Umdamane and Manzini are said to have died in 1898 and 1899 respectively: Manzini's death has been recorded in governmental records, such as Lokothwayo's report to the local magistrate (Gütl 2005:343). According to Müller, Umdamane was murdered at the instigation of Manzini in 1898 (Müller 1907a). Lokothwayo's official inauguration as Chief by the British Government took place in 1900, after Manzini had declared to the government already by 1884 that Lokothwayo would be his rightful successor (Gütl 2005:344-345). Also Fr. Hyacinth's presence constitutes a temporal constraint. He was ordained, and therefore wearing his full Trappist habit only in 1892. After 1895, he served at other stations than Mariannhill, and eventually died in April 1904. It is therefore most likely that the photograph was taken during these years of his presence at Mariannhill until 1895. The fact that Lokothwayo is here identified as chief, while his father was still alive, may be simply explained with the possibility that the caption was only applied after 1900.

I further suggest that the photograph was taken on the ground of the Mission's mill and workshop, which still exists a few kilometres to the South-East of the monastery. This can be concluded from the fact that two of the lay brothers are wearing aprons of the type that was used at the mill. Also, one of the brothers can be recognised on another photograph taken in front of the mill. It follows that the photographer and his equipment were not readily available at the mill, but had to be summoned from the monastery. To reach the mill with his equipment would have taken him at least 45 minutes. This indicates that the meeting must have been planned beforehand, or that the photographer happened to be at the mill by accident. In any way, the occasion was considered as important enough to be captured photographically.

Several photographs taken in about 1900 show women delivering maize to the mill. Even

decades later, so I was told by locals, women still took their “mealies [maize]” to the mill, where they could have them ground. The place was thus approached for practical and economic reasons. Africans were of course long involved in a money economy, but may have paid their “hut tax” to the Trappists in form of mealies, or may have bartered for other goods (Gütl 2005:368). The buildings of the mill were not only used for grinding corn, but also housed the printing press and other artisan workshops.

Some of the *Amanganga*, those along with Manzini, who did not intend to become *Amakholwa*, withdrew early to the native reserve South of the River Umlazi, several miles from Mariannhill. Others, who were not eager to leave their plots, but at the same time did not conform to Trappist conduct, were expelled in an increasingly forcible process during the 1890s. Thus while some people were attracted, and others kept at bay, the mill constituted an intermediate space between the mission as centre and the periphery of the native reserves. At the same time, this would also have given the missionaries the possibility to better monitor who dwelled in their realm, who entered it, and who left it (cf. Gütl 2005:395-301). According to the various interests of the involved communities, the mill was an important point of encounter, or a “contact zone” (Pratt 2008 [1992]) in the relationship of Trappists and Africans, where goods, but also ideas were exchanged.

As performed in the photograph, and exemplified by the act of taking it, meetings between missionaries and their interlocutors were not only religiously motivated. Next to economic exchange, the contact zone of the mill allowed for social interaction and the exchange of luxury goods. Intimate contact is closely connected to the act of performance, and was often intended by the missionaries in this regard, in order to prove good deeds. One may think for example of photographs of attending to the sick in medical care or ministry, the act of baptism, or religious sisters handing out bread and soup, and caressing children (cf. Pels 1999).

In this particular case, however, we still do not know what the conversation was about, or why the photograph was taken in the first place. While it is obvious in other photographs, there is no indication for the photograph under discussion to what degree people perform for the camera. Despite this uncertainty, I consider the image as a historical social situation, and therefore analyse various details as being captured unintentionally. The three Trappists, the Chief, and the two senior sitting men seem to be engaged in conversation. The two African bystanders, and the senior man sitting to the left, are looking directly into the camera. The Trappist priest is depicted addressing the chief, who himself appears to be reclining and receptive. The sitting *induna* to the left, whom I believe to be Umdamane, is holding up an unidentifiable object. The central sitting lay brother hands another object to Lokothwayo. To the right, the sitting *induna* and the standing brother each handle yet two more objects. Scrutinising the respective details in high resolution, reveals the main substance of interest as dried tobacco or “snuff”, as well as the paraphernalia required for its consumption. Lokothwayo takes a dash from the brother’s snuff container (Figure 87), which the latter holds out with his left hand. The *induna* to the right clearly handles a snuff spoon in his right hand (Figure 88). Also the lay brother to the right holds an object resembling a

snuff spoon of a darker material in his right hand (Figure 89).



Figure 87: detail of Figure 85. Lay brother presenting a snuff container to Lokothwayo.



Figure 88: detail of Figure 85. *Induna* to the right, handling a snuff spoon.



Figure 89: detail of Figure 85. Lay brother to the right, handling a snuff spoon.

Scholars have so far only discussed the consumption of snuff tobacco in 19th century Natal and Zululand regarding musealised snuff spoons and snuff boxes (Nettleton 2016; Wanless 1991; also see Krige 1965 [1936]; Shaw 1935, 1938). Whenever these authors attempted a social analysis, they have fallen back on, and generalised from the few existing textual sources of the mid-19th century. Instead, I attempt a brief interpretation of the photograph, taken around 1895 against several textual accounts of the following years. The photographic scene matches some of the contemporary textual descriptions of visits by Trappists to the homesteads of chiefs close to Mariannhill Monastery (eg. Anon. 1898:53, Anon. 1899:84). The Trappists brought along the highly appreciated substance as gift and social catalyser. Accordingly, they describe the distribution of snuff through the hierarchy of the homestead, along the chief's *izinduna* and his wives, thereby rendering visible the conventions of re-distribution and the submissiveness of commoners to their chief. Apparently, in one of the cases cited above, the offering Trappist had even brought along his own snuff spoon.

As far as the photograph is concerned, this suggests that the exchange and consumption of this particular substance was taking place in a situation of mutual interest and enjoyment. Ann Wanless (1991:132) states that with Natal Africans there was a clear connection between powerful men, the articulation of their power, and the distribution of snuff to their commoners. Tracing her account back via her citation of the anthropologist Eileen Krige (1965 [1936]:60), who again cited the British missionary Rev. Joseph Shooter (1857:224), we learn that “when a [powerful] man furnishes snuff for a party, he usually pours a large quantity into his left hand, and holds it for the others to take pinches as they may require, but without looking at them”. I am not indicating that the interaction of the lay brother and Lokothwayo—even though it matches the description perfectly—must be interpreted positivistically according to a narrative that precedes it for almost 40 years. Rather, I mean to say that the Trappists as hosts of the occasion, and in particular in their role as landowners, were indeed in a position to perform their power by distributing snuff. Many of Manzini’s, and later Lokothwayo’s subjects, had to rely on the Trappist’s goodwill, even if the chiefs themselves no longer lived on their land.

In total opposition to this practice of sociability, but nevertheless through a similar description, the retired Abbot Franz Pfanner lamented in 1900 about the Trappists’ own excessive use of snuff tobacco. Like smoking, snuff was forbidden by the Trappist rule, so Pfanner, and he considered its “passionate, lavish, and ostentatious” consumption since his deposition in 1892 as “unhygienic, annoying, and costly”. He added that “wherever the snuffers gather, the snuff box will soon play a role. Often with ridiculous gesticulations, it is presented to the bystanders [...]”. The Trappists’ open handling of the substance in front of their subjects, so he argued, eventually undermined any attempt to eradicate its consumption with the African converts during mass, who “blithely reach out for their boxes, once they consider the sermon as too tedious” (Pfanner 1900:44).³⁵⁶ Despite Pfanner’s criticism, and his claim that snuff was forbidden by the Trappist rule, the original Trappist rule itself includes snuff tobacco and containers in its sign language vocabulary (Bonaventura 1887:365). Had snuff not been part of a common practice at European monasteries, it would have hardly been included in a rather limited list of signs, which had been devised to deal with matters of a disciplined daily monastic routine.

These related discourses allow us to perceive the photographic occasion in its multiple dimensions: first, snuff would have eased both the photographic production and the conversation, even if we do not know its subject matter; if the conversation was not about snuff, then photography must have been part of it at some point. The distribution of snuff could also have eased the taking of the photograph in terms of an exchange, while in effect constituting the photograph’s subject matter. The same occasion may also have constituted one of the moments in which the Trappists acquired snuff spoons and snuff boxes for their museum, some of which are still there today (cf. Chapter Five).

³⁵⁶ My own translation from the German original.

The Performance of Colonial Power at Centocow Mission

Once the construction of Centocow's new church had started in 1911 (cf. Chapter One), Müller visited the mission at least twice to take photographs; first in February 1912, and once more in December 1913 to early 1914. Even though the missionaries of Centocow had regular contact with African authorities, as testified in the mission's chronicle and the periodicals, there is not one single named portrait of any of the local chiefs, or of any other identified individual, as they exist at Mariannhill.³⁵⁷ At the monastery, due to the photographic studio's proximity to the available contact zones I described earlier, the photographers were able to build closer relationships with chiefs and their *izinduna*. This allowed for "honorary portraits" (cf. Bank 2008, Sekula 1986), such as those of Umdamane and Lokothwayo (Chapter Eight). Like in the previous example of the snuff spoons, I will here attempt to render visible the agency of one particular object in social relations through its photographic performance.

The following photographic occasion is exceptional for both Mariannhill and Centocow for yet another reason. It is the only occasion of the entire collection depicting an encounter between government representatives and Africans through Müller's lens. It is also one of only two instances in which a chief was photographed at or near Centocow. However, these photographs were taken not as individual portraits, but as group photographs.³⁵⁸ Other than the undated genre photographs I described in Chapter One, and similar to the photograph of the meeting between Lokothwayo and the Trappists, such a datable photograph serves as an entry point to Centocow's micro-politics. At the same time, it allows us to understand the work of photographs and other objects in the social relationships between missionaries, government, and African subjects. The occasion in which the following three photographs were taken, was constituted within a *préterrain* of complex social relationships and negotiations of magistrates from two districts, the missionaries at Centocow, three different African chiefdoms, as well as the photographer Br. Aegidius Müller from Mariannhill. The reconstruction of this occasion was only possible because the interaction of participants in the event produced particular traces. Like in the previous case at Mariannhill's mill, an evolving social network determined the production of photographs. Reverberations of a "photographic tradition" from this occasion will appear in Chapter Seven.

On 21 February 1912, Müller took several photographs, of which at least the following three survived. Two articles in the *Vergißmeinnicht* (Pellazino 1912, Hanisch 1913) and one in *The Natal Witness* of 1 March (Clark 1912) reported on this occasion at large: the two magistrates, J.F. Clark of Bulwer, and F.A. Farrer of Ixopo³⁵⁹, visited Centocow Mission,

³⁵⁷ Few photographs of two other chiefs living near Mariannhill's stations close to the Drakensberg do exist. Only one of these chief has been identified. Although Müller's sojourns were relatively brief, opportune occasions must have presented themselves to take photographs of these men. As the involvement of these photographs in my discussion would have required extensive research on yet two more localities, I decided to focus only on Mariannhill and Centocow.

³⁵⁸ The second occasion was the "first-fruit festival" in 1899 (cf. Chapter One).

³⁵⁹ The very next day after the court hearing, Magistrate Farrer returned to Ixopo early in the morning. He had to

apparently for the purpose of holding a so-called “branch court”. Additionally, the missionaries organised a festive program in honour of their guests. Br. Adrian Pellazino explained their motivation as follows:

For obvious reasons every missionary wants to be on good terms with his magistrate, because the latter has a considerable influence on all things concerning the mission, directly and indirectly. On the indicated day, even two of these gentlemen honoured our mission station with their visit. Therefore, we considered it as appropriate to prepare a little ovation.³⁶⁰ (Pellazino 1912:222)

This “little ovation” in fact consisted of a “grand promenade concert”, including a brass band and choir, arranged by Centocow’s two resident priests, Fr. Thomas Neuschwanger and Fr. Emanuel Hanisch, who had earlier been responsible for the theatre choreographies at Mariannhill Monastery (cf. Chapter One). Next to “the large attendance of natives, numbering between two and three hundred people” (Clark 1912), “about a dozen white colonists” were present (Pellazino 1912). The event was rounded off with a performance of the British National Anthem.

The magistrates’ visit had to be planned some time ahead, in order to prepare the “ovation” accordingly. Therefore, also the photographer was able to anticipate the occasion, and accordingly arranged several things in advance. In a letter, sent one week ahead, Magistrate Clark proposed to Fr. Emanuel Hanisch “to drive to Centocow this time and [that he] shall pick up Mr. Farrer at Creighton” in the evening before the meeting. The key for the gate, so Clark, “might be left at the nearest Kafir kraal”.³⁶¹ In the same letter, Clark also reconfirmed with Hanisch that the mission’s “photographer had requested [of him earlier] to summon a rather large crowd of natives to show up at the mission station”. As a backstage scenario, this letter attests to considerable familiarity and trust between magistrate, missionaries, and Africans, as far as practical arrangements were concerned. At the same time, we also learn more about the purpose of the photographs on the frontstage: Müller intended to compose an interesting scenario for the mission’s propaganda periodicals.

attend to matters relating to the succession dispute I described in Chapter Three, for which he served on a committee.

³⁶⁰ My own translation of the German original.

³⁶¹ CMM-AR: Letter, Clark to Hanisch, 15.02.1912. It is unclear whether magistrate Clark drove a horse cart or a motor car. Mariannhill missionaries only acquired motor cars in the early 1920s.



Figure 90: original caption on glass plate negative: “Kaffr.[ische] Gerichtssitzung Centocow 1912”—“Kafir court hearing Centocow 1912”. Magistrate of Polela District, J.F. Clark, residing over a court case at Centocow Mission on 21 February 1912 (digitally inverted glass plate negative, CMM Archives, published in *Vergißmeinnicht* 1913:12).



Figure 91: original caption on glass plate negative: “*Gerichtssitzung Centocow 1912*”—“Court hearing Centocow 1912”. Second version, magistrate of Polela District, J.F. Clark, residing over a court case at Centocow Mission on 21 February 1912 (digitally inverted glass plate negative, CMM Archives, unpublished).

The first of the three photographs I wish to discuss was eventually the only one published in a short article by Fr. Emanuel (Hanisch 1913). It shows a court hearing, presided over by J.F. Clark, magistrate of the Polela Division. Seated behind a desk with a finely embroidered tablecloth, he points his pen at two accused men in long dark coats. Before him on the table are two file books and a glass of ink. He is accompanied by two White and four Black policemen.³⁶² In the ironic style common to the periodicals, Hanisch wrote that “as can be seen in the photograph” (Figure 90), Clark is just about to sentence the “two sinners” before him to six months in prison with forced labour, for having “appreciated the national beverage too much during a wedding feast, and for henceforth having beaten several holes into the skull of a tribal companion”.³⁶³ Through the illustrated article in their propaganda periodical, the mission could visually demonstrate to

³⁶² Hanisch identified the two White men as Policeman Labranche and Police Sergeant Collis (Hanisch 1913). Magistrate Clark identified them as “Sergeant Collis, N.P. [Natal Police], [and] Tpr. [Trooper] Terblanche” (Clark 1913). Assuming that Clark knew the men serving under him better than Fr. Emanuel, I will refer to the trooper as Terblanche.

³⁶³ My own translation from the German original (Hanisch 1913:12). I was not able to retrieve related documents on this particular court case in the National Archives.

audiences in South Africa and Europe their relationships with two groups: a relationship of discipline with the African subjects, and one of cooperation with the government.

Another unpublished photograph was taken during the same occasion and shows a very similar *mise en scène*: the same White protagonists and Black policemen perform in a similar way, but in a different location. As Clark apparently tried multiple cases over the day, other African men than in the previous case are on trial, and the audience now includes nine men with head rings, as well as two women. Like the previous photograph, this one appears to have been taken from a slightly elevated position, in order to guarantee the visibility of all vertically arranged protagonists. Both photographs are furthermore arranged according to Müller's balanced style of composition, suggesting that he had some say in the setting of the scene. In the second case, the location was apparently shifted for better lighting conditions, which may be gathered from the fact that the scene appears in bright sunlight. It may therefore be that the previous photograph (Figure 90) was taken at a later point, as the sky in it appears to be heavily clouded. Due to bad weather conditions, the following festive events eventually had to be relocated to the new church, which was still under construction at the time (Clark 1912, Pellazino 1912). The accompanying festive musical programme had been arranged for the visit of the two magistrates. It consisted of a concert, as well as speeches by both Clark and Hanisch to the gathered Black and White visitors, both stressing the positive relationships and the great success of the mission in educating their African subjects.

The relationships between the three groups of protagonists become apparent on various other levels than the often biased descriptions in the mission's periodicals. They can be retraced in the photographs, through the later circulation of the photographs, as well as through other relatable sources. In the first photograph (Figure 90), the two men before the table are guarded by an African policeman, who is shouldering a stick, a spear, as well as a *knobkerrie*. When on daily duty, Black policemen were not allowed to carry guns at the time.³⁶⁴ Three more Black policemen are observing the scene from the right of the table. To the left of the table and directly opposite of it, two groups of altogether 30 African men either squat or kneel in a semicircle. In the first photograph, most men are wearing full suits, while in the second, several men appear to have combined their *umutsha* with long dark coats. The latter was a minimum requirement "by police order" for the appearance before court, as Hanisch pointed out in his description of the first photograph (Hanisch 1913).

On both photographs, the same man can be seen seated on a chair next to the table. In his letter to Hanisch, Clark mentioned that he had "commanded" both the *Amakhholwa* Chief (Anton) Wofi (Duma), as well as Chief Mjila (Memela) of the *Amakhuze*, to attend the event, and to

³⁶⁴ Possibly restrictions were even tightened, once it was anticipated that armed black policemen would desert and join the rebels during the 1906 "Bambatha Rebellion" (cf. Stuart 1913:422). Already the 1906 *Revised Rules and Regulations*, issued by the Natal Police Forces, stated on page 8, under section 51, that "[u]pon ordinary duty and patrol revolvers only will be carried by the European District Police. Indian and Native Police carrying knobkerries or assegais should have Section 46 carefully explained to them." Section 46 explains their responsibility to justify any deadly use of the weapons carried.

“invite as many of their men as can spare the time to go to Centocow”, because “the photographer wanted a large crowd”.³⁶⁵ In his article, Hanisch identified the man on the chair as “the chief of the Centocow Christians”. Wofi was a former subject of the paramount *Amabhaca* Chief Bhekukupiwa of the Ixopo and Ipoleta Divisions, and had been appointed as chief³⁶⁶ of the *Amakholwa* community at Centocow in 1896.³⁶⁷ Due to his new affiliation with the Trappists—similar to Fotsholo at Mariannhill—Wofi was consequently shunned and harassed by Bhekukupiwa and his followers, as the chief still considered Wofi as “his dog”.³⁶⁸

Available sources on the political and social past of the Centocow region for the time before the first World War rest in official archives, or are scattered over the mission’s repositories. Oral history of the area, as I heard it, only starts with concrete events of the early 1930s, while genealogies indeed reach further back in time. Colonial texts, but also the stories I was told, were often the outcome of attempts to control, and even more often inscriptions of the resulting conflicts between African groups. These have often been labelled as “native unrest” or “faction fights” (cf. Hamilton, Mbenga and Ross 2010). The two photographs supposedly show moments of colonial domination and intervention, in which a magistrate creates the documents as a reaction to such moments of “unrest”. In the case of the first photograph, Hanisch further defined such a moment as a brawl during a wedding. Apparently, it would be such documents as photographed on Clark’s table that were later on archived, and thus available for interpretation. Our concern, however, is to determine the status of the discussed photographs as both source and trace. As I already explained, and further evaluate below, the photographs are themselves an outcome of the very particular social setup at Centocow.

Therefore we need to realise that the production of the discussed photographs had different conditions than the production of the textual documents such occasions usually brought forward. As we could see already, the photographs were not only an outcome of a disciplinary measure, but even more so of well-adjusted politics. All three parties, the missionaries, the representatives of government, and the *Amakholwa* Chief Wofi with his followers met—even if not exclusively for this purpose—in order to perform a court hearing for Müller’s camera. Even if an actual trial may have been held after all, it could only be turned into a good photographic performance due to the possibility for adequate preparations. As we could see, these preparations relied on the fact that the three parties had developed good (or at least working) relationships. These not only allowed for briefing the magistrates some time ahead, but also for having the local chiefs summon as many photographic protagonists as possible. *Amakholwa*, as well as *Amakhuze* were both antagonistic to the *Amabhaca*, and therefore could rely on the government and the missionaries, given that they complied with the latter’s demands. Both government and missionaries instead considered Chief Bhekukupiwa of the *Amabhaca*—as well as his successors after his death in 1910—difficult to deal with. This was the case in particular during the tense

³⁶⁵ CMM-AR: letter, Clark to Hanisch, 15.02.1912.

³⁶⁶ In the case of *Amakholwa* the title “chief” is often interchangeably used with the title “*induna*”.

³⁶⁷ PAR: SNA 835/1896.

³⁶⁸ PAR: SNA 731/1898.

period of multiple homicides of local chiefs at the time, which I described in the last chapter. Apparently for this reason, Clark did not consider the *Amabhaca* for cooperation. Instead, he relied on, and summoned the *Amakholwa*, and possibly also the *Amakhuze*, for the very purpose of taking a photograph.

The relationship of cooperation between mission and magistracy had intensified, when, in 1905, the Bulwer magistracy established a so-called “branch court” at Centocow.³⁶⁹ Such courts would convene once minor cases had to be tried in this relatively remote area. The magistracy thus used the Catholic Mission station as a logistic hub, and partially relied on the relationships, which the missionaries had already established with their African subjects (cf. Harries and Maxwell 2012:20). Issues that did not fall under legal or criminal law could be dealt with by the missionaries themselves, or by the Catholic Black *Amakholwa* chief, Wofi, who, like at Mariannhill, would have been suggested to the government by the mission (cf. Gütl 2005). The mission station was also an opportune location for the (unlikely) case that a magistrate himself was not fluent in Zulu. He then could rely on the missionaries or mission-educated Africans, who often chose a career as professional court interpreters (cf. McClendon 2006).³⁷⁰

In particular the magistrate of Ixopo, J.F. Clark, and Centocow’s superior, Hanisch, had developed a beneficial relationship since Clark’s inauguration as magistrate in 1909, even despite the twice-ambivalent identity of the missionaries as German Catholics.³⁷¹ The missionaries received benefits whenever they needed legal permission, such as for the building of schools and churches. Clark and his successors in return had loyal interlocutors and informants in the missionaries, whenever problems arose in the area regarding the “native population”. The relationship was apparently friendly to such an extent that Clark even took his wife along to Centocow for celebrations and recreative visits. Both sides indicate the nature of this relationship in correspondences and in the mission’s chronicle.

The involved individuals eventually performed this positive relationship in a group photograph. Either before or after the two court scenes, Müller arranged the present White authorities around a smaller table, which was covered with the same cloth as in the previous photographs (Figure 92). In the makeshift situation away from his studio, Müller had to improvise with the available props at hand. While he was actively involved in negotiating the two photographs of the court hearings beforehand, the group photograph may have been an outcome and continuation of the event, as well as a confirmation of the positive relationship of mission and government. For the group portrait, the three before-mentioned government representatives were joined by the magistrate of Ixopo, Frederik A. Farrer, the two resident priests of Centocow, Fr. Emanuel Hanisch and Fr. Thomas Neuschwanger, as well as

³⁶⁹ PAR: PWD 5431/1905.

³⁷⁰ Before becoming a magistrate, Farrer had been a “1. Class Zulu Interpreter” since 1883 (Anon. 1906:66). Likewise, Clark must have been fluent in Zulu, in order to fulfil his duties of trying cases on a frequent basis, or issuing warrants in Zulu. Zulu language skills were also a factor for the promotion of policemen (Natal Police Forces 1906:75). Most Mariannhill Missionaries would have been fluent in Zulu by 1912, as they had established the language as subject in their schools and in their various publications.

³⁷¹ Hanisch had been at Centocow already since 1908, but only became superior in 1911.

Mariannhill's museum curator, Fr. Alexander Hanisch.



Figure 92: original caption on glass plate negative: “*Gruppe Magistrat Cl.[ark] Centocow 1912*”—“Group with magistrate Clark, Centocow 1912”. Group portrait taken either before or after the previous two photographs. From left to right, seated: Fr. Emanuel Hanisch; J.F. Clark, Magistrate of Polela District; F.A. Farrer, Magistrate of Ixopo District; Police Sergeant Collis; Policeman Terblanche. Standing: Fr. Thomas Neuschwanger; Fr. Alexander Hanisch (digitally inverted glass plate negative, CMM Archives, unpublished).



Figure 93: detail of figure 92. The “fly whisk” held by trooper Terblanche. The crossed rifles on Terblanche’s left sleeve indicate that he was a “marksman, 1st class” (cf. Natal Police Forces 1906:16).

Eventually, it is a particular intentionally relational object that allows us to retrace relationships within, through, and beyond this photographic occasion. In all three photographs, Trooper Terblanche carries a “fly whisk” in his right hand, commonly also referred to as “switch”, or as “*i(t)shoba*” in Zulu.³⁷² In both of the photographs where it is visible, the whisk is tied around Terblanche’s wrist by a loop. The particular ways how he casually handles it, appear as expressions of long-term use and close familiarity with the object. In the first photograph, the whisk hangs by the loop, while Terblanche casually leans on a chair cross-legged. In the group photograph, he rests the whisk’s shaft in the space between thumb and index finger with an apparent and intimate pressure. In this way, the whisk constitutes a presence that is uncommon, and almost irritating: historical ethnographies commonly describe it as a distinctively “African” object, which makes it difficult to explain in this situation. Nevertheless, there are some traces to follow that may allow us to further reassemble parts of the photographic occasion with the whisk’s help. The irritation is partially constituted through friction with the ethnographic and

³⁷² In the second photograph of a court hearing the switch was probably still present in Terblanche’s right hand, but obscured by the body of the accused.

photographic record. Objects resembling this particular whisk are usually connected to two distinct discourses of the colonial South African *préterrain*: first, African diviners in Natal, and second, the Zulu Royal House and the so-called “Bambatha Rebellion” of 1906-07. In the following, I consider the object under discussion against these two discourses.

Commonly made from the white tail ends of cows (*itshoba*) or other bovines (eg. black wildebeest), fly whisks are foremost associated with diviners (*izangoma*) in the ethnographic and the photographic record of South Africa, and Natal in particular (cf. Hooper, Davis and Klinghardt 1989:350; Papini 1996:214; Shaw and Van Warmelo 1988:713). Used as paraphernalia during the performance of divination, they also appear repeatedly in Mariannhill’s photographic collection (cf. Chapter Eight). At Mariannhill and especially at Centocow just before and after the 1930s, fly whisks of converted diviners became “converted artefacts”, and in so far “trophies” of conversion (Thomas 1991, see my discussions in Chapters Five and Eight). As detached museum objects, fly whisks thus became generalised negative markers of divination, and consequently of the changing relationship between the mission and their African subjects.

The second dimension of the *préterrain*, which makes this particular appropriation confusing, starts in 1888 with the political activism of Harriette Colenso, the daughter of the Anglican Bishop John Colenso (cf. Guy 2002b). The South African historian Jeff Guy discussed several photographs of Harriette Colenso taken during her tours through England in the early 1890s. Here, Colenso poses with fly-whisk-like objects. Guy argued that, in order to lobby for the cause of Zulu King Dinuzulu, Harriette had herself repeatedly photographed with a so-called “*shokobezi*”, a particular symbol referencing the *Usuthu*, the Zulu Royal House. However, there are material, as well as empirical problems with this claim. In material terms, contemporary scholars like A.T. Bryant (1905) and James Stuart (1913) described the *shokobezi* merely as the tip of a cow tail attached to one’s head or garments.³⁷³ Furthermore, in no historical record, either text, photograph, or across both, is a whisk ever related to the concept of the *shokobezi*. Also, there are no photographs in circulation, which show any member of the Zulu Royal House with a whisk.³⁷⁴ Unlike in many other African countries, whisks have no historical record of being used as symbols of authority in Natal and Zululand.³⁷⁵ Only after the 1950s, political leaders like Gatsha Buthelezi re-appropriated whisks during political rallies (cf. Marks 1986, also see Chapter Five). To my knowledge, Harriette Colenso herself never referred to the whisk as *shokobezi*, or mentioned the *shokobezi* otherwise in her published work. The *shokobezi* eventually reappeared once more in its original form about a decade later as adornment during

³⁷³ Bryant (1905:579): “*um-Shokobezi* (s.k.),n.l. Wearer of ubu-Shokobezi ie. a warrior of the u-Sutu. or Cetshwayo’s army (not that of u-Zibebu), who adopted this custom. *ubu-Shokobezi* (s.k.),n. Head-ornament made of the bush of a cow’s tail and carried in two pieces erect on the top of the head”. Stuart (1913:Glossary): “*Tshokobezi*, properly *umtshokobezi*—Bushy portion of ox or cow-tail, usually white, worn about the head or neck by adherents of the Usutu faction among the Zulus; the wearer of such badge”.

³⁷⁴ I am grateful to the British historian Gwil Colenso for discussing this topic and for confirming my evaluation.

³⁷⁵ I am not aware of any photographs showing prominent Natal chiefs with fly whisks. But see Guy (2006:175) for a photograph of an unexplained exception.

the 1906 Bambatha rebellion. This time, supporters of the militant anti-tax movement appropriated it as a sign of open rebellion against the colonial government (cf. Carton 2000, Mahoney 2012, Stuart 1913). I do not want to deny the possibility that indeed contemporaries may have identified whisks as *shokobezi*, either in the early 1890s, in 1906, or eventually in 1912. Rather, I would like to open up the whisk in its full potential as mimetic capital, and the reproductive power it developed accordingly.

The question thus remains why Trooper Terblanche chose an object as an insignia of institutional hierarchy, which at the same time held such a highly ambivalent mimetic potential with *izangoma* on the one hand, and the Zulu Royal House on the other hand. Like in the First Chapter, peoples' collateral knowledge regarding one particular object in a photographic performance is highly uncertain. Due to this uncertainty of meaning, it may be helpful to briefly compare this situation to the photograph of the meeting between the Trappists and Chief Lokothwayo, where snuff tobacco and the spoons to consume it are likewise part of a photographic occasion. In both cases, the two kinds of objects appear as mediators between the two involved parties: as a social catalyser in the first occasion, and as a very prominent insignia of authority in the hand of law enforcement in the second. As an equivalent material culture existed around snuff consumption in Europe, and in particular with the Trappists, snuff spoons and tobacco may be considered as part of a shared material practice and experience.

The fly whisk, however, has no obvious direct European equivalent. In the following lines I suggest that it therefore appears as a conscious and intentional appropriation by trooper Terblanche. While Black African policemen were no longer allowed to wear any "African" adornment after at least 1906, the photographic record of the previous years—at large, as well as at Mariannhill—often shows ample evidence that it used to be a common practice for Black policemen to wear beaded necklaces or other adornment.³⁷⁶ But also European policemen were officially "not allow[ed] any deviation from the authorised uniform". In Chapter Seven I will provide evidence that at least by the late 1920s, any form of imitation of Africans carried out by Europeans, was suspicious to the White authorities. Nevertheless, in 1912 Terblanche presented the whisk openly in front of his superiors Sergeant Collis and Magistrate Clark, his African subordinate colleagues, the assembled crowd of Africans, and the *Amakholwa* Chief Wofi, as well as the missionaries hosting the event of the court hearing. Terblanche thus displayed the whisk with a performative intention during a photographic occasion, as an extension of his own position in the racialised hierarchy and power spectrum. His own hierarchical position was indeed precisely in between the Africans and the Europeans present during the occasion.

The South African historian Hlonipha Mokoena (2016) makes a similar point regarding an undated studio photograph of a White Natal policemen holding a "swagger stick" next to a Black policeman holding a "*knobkerrie*". Mokoena argues that the first is likely to be an appropriation of the latter, and that an appropriation may only work in this direction, in order to

³⁷⁶ The *Revised Rules and Regulations* of 1906 state under section 102 that "the wearing of beads or ornaments of any kind is prohibited" for "Native and Indian Police".

denote a White officer's domination over a Zulu police force, but not the other way round. According to Mokoena, the *knobkerry* thus cannot be appropriated by the Black policeman as a swagger stick due to the established racial and institutional hierarchy. Based on her study of the illustrated magazine of the Natal Police, *Nongqai*,³⁷⁷ Mokoena further suggested to me that "whenever white policemen were in charge of black units, they would symbolically express their attachment by creating an object that mimicked something 'Zulu' / 'native' / 'indigenous'".³⁷⁸

For the particular case of Terblanche at Centocow, however, we still have no contemporary confirmation of the fly whisk's role within the specific social relationships on 21 February 1912 at Centocow Mission. Due to the object's photographic performance and Mokoena's evidence, it nevertheless appears likely that Terblanche attempted to emulate an object (intentionally related to divinatory power and/or royal power) that would indicate his attachment to, and disciplinary control over a Black police unit. If we try to comprehend both objects—spoons and whisks—as non-human actors within social interactions, then the consumption of snuff as a social catalyser temporarily bridged between the Trappists as landowners and missionaries, and their African tenants and potential subjects. Here it would be unnecessary to involve ideas on imitation, due to the Trappists own background. The switch instead indicated a hierarchically and racially articulated relationship through intentional imitation. In the process, it created difference, rather than similarity, and thus "mimetic excess" (Taussig 1993).

When further retracing the roles of various human and non-human actors in the evaluation of the photographic occasion at Centocow in 1912, we have to take into account that there already existed an iconography, or rather a "photographic tradition" preceding this occasion. Such a tradition may have been known to Müller in form of circulating photographs. At least since the Anglo-Zulu War in 1879, similar photographs and engravings to those in Figures 90 and 91 circulated widely, and defined instances of interaction between government and Africans for contemporary public audiences, but also for later generations. One example is the engraved depiction of a "tax collection", originally published in the *Illustrated London News* on 28 June 1879.³⁷⁹ The occasion of magistrates collecting the "Poll Tax" or "Hut Tax" from Africans, once more received public attention during and after the 1906-07 Bambatha Rebellion, which was triggered by the raise of taxes for Africans.

Tax collections, however, would not have been held at Centocow Mission. Nevertheless, the presence of a whisk in a very specific position during the occasion of a court hearing in 1912, may still have evoked memories of the recent rebellion with the present African men. This

³⁷⁷ *The Nongqai: The Natal Police Magazine* was published since 1907. The term "*Nongqai*" also denoted members of the Zululand Native Police: "Policeman. Members of Z.N.P. Corps. The word, which really means 'watching,' is probably derived from *uGqainyanga*, a moon-gazer, i.e. night-watchman (Stuart 1913:Glossary). According to Stuart, the term was only used for the native policemen of Zululand, not those of Natal. According to Holt (1913:249), the term was also used by/for Black members of the Natal Police: "Meaning those who wander—the Zulus' name for the Natal Police".

³⁷⁸ Personal communication Hlonipha Mokoena, January 2018.

³⁷⁹ For example reproduced on the cover of the book *Betrayed Trust* (Lambert 1998).

assumption can only be upheld, however, if the whisk as material marker left behind by the rebellion was indeed as prominent as historians have claimed so far. As I mentioned in Chapter One, arguments over the implementation of this tax were present in the public sphere to such an extent that they were even presented as satiric stage performances at Mariannhill in 1907. Illustrations of “tax collections” and “court hearings” may indeed look very similar, and therefore easily cross over in their later receptions. For a historical evaluation, however, it is important to clearly distinguish illustrations according to the nature of their occasions. This will become even more important in Chapter Seven, where I reconsider Müller’s photographs of the court case being picked up as a “photographic tradition”. At least in the minds of Max Kohler and Gerard Bhengu these photographs still had currency by the late 1920s.

We can further follow the idea that Müller indeed had a certain iconography in mind when arranging the court cases. The two photographs may appear as common court scenes of the time, but nevertheless they bear traces of artistic arrangement. Another photograph of a “trial” in the same region, and at about the same time, appears in a history of *The Mounted Police of Natal* (Holt 1913:232-233). Here the photographer kept a considerable distance and did not intervene in the spatial arrangement of the group. This eventually was disadvantageous to his composition and the available lighting conditions. Both of the photographs at Centocow instead are arranged and enacted, not only according to the spatial script of a (probably more than ideal) court hearing, according to the aesthetic conventions I explained in Chapter One, but also according to the social script available to the involved protagonists. Müller arranged several groups of protagonists so that all important components were well structured and clearly visible from the camera’s vantage point. Therefore we are once more left with the slippery ground of the relationship between the photographic image and the question of a supposedly authentic experience, which participants might have had during the occasion.

Even if the missionaries of Centocow had permanent relationships with their subjects and magistrates, these relationships were not those of the photographer and therefore had to be mediated once he visited. This particular social condition, however, created particular traces, such as the letters exchanged between Clark and Hanisch in 1912, which eventually allowed for a closer analysis of this occasion. To make this even more explicit, we now turn to the photographic studio at Mariannhill as a contact zone: on the one hand this situation allowed for even closer relationships between the photographer and his sitters, but on the other hand it did not necessitate the correspondences and mediations, which would allow for a closer historical analysis.

Following an analysis of objects and their eminence all the way through, we must, in a first instance, also consider the photographic camera as a non-human actor. The camera influenced the human actors of the respective photographic occasion, who had to position themselves either before or behind it. After all, Müller had planned this occasion long ahead and even choreographed its setup, including the summoning of additional protagonists. In a second instance, this also holds true for the resulting photographs of this occasion, which eventually

became social objects themselves. In particular the group photograph of missionaries, magistrates, and policemen, would have been distributed amongst the participants, and in so far served to confirm the positive relationships. Such material aspects of photographic equipment and images will become even more explicit in the next section.

A Photographic Studio and its “Backdrops”

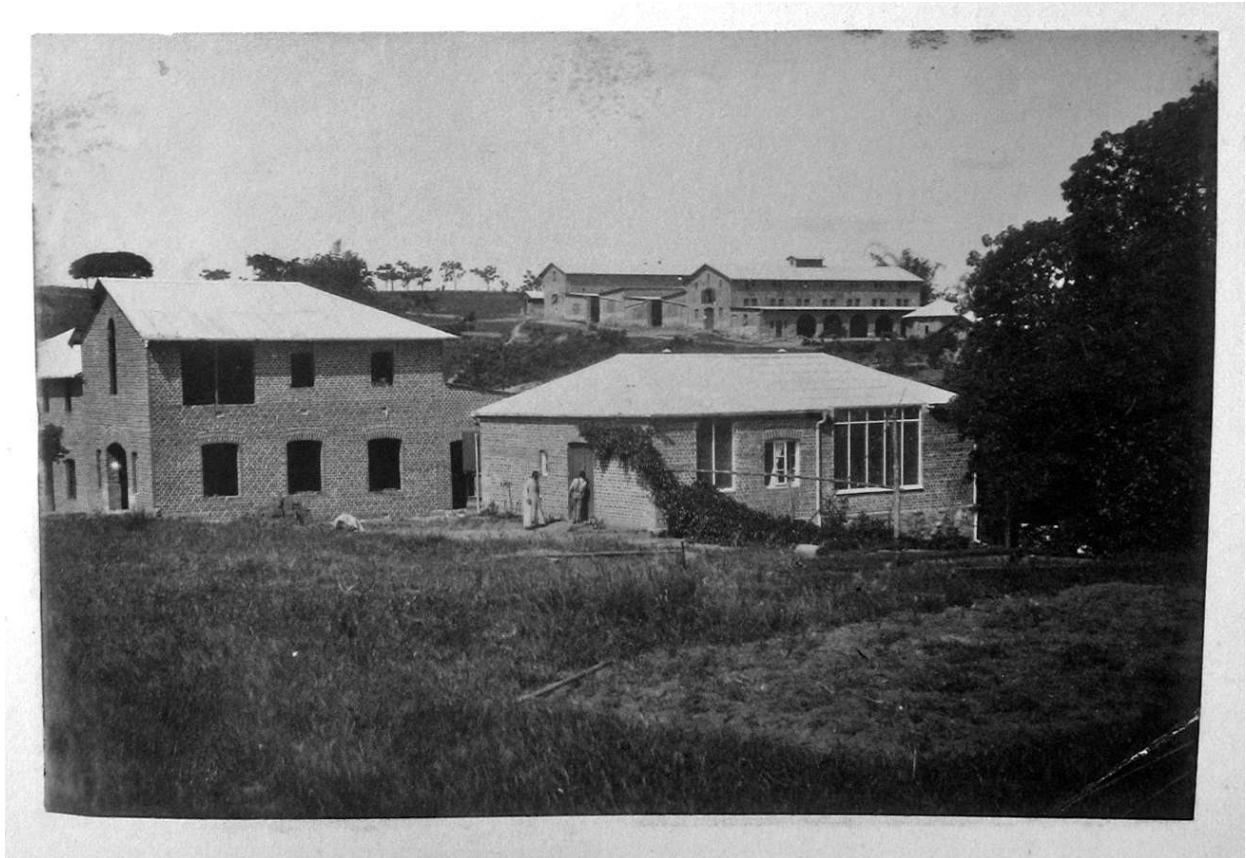


Figure 94: The photographic studio of Mariannahill, as seen from south-west in approx. 1900. The right part of the studio's roof is the headlight described in the quote below (CMM Archives).

In the previous chapter's last section I discussed Mariannahill's photographic studio as an economic institution. In this chapter's last section I discuss the studio as a performative space. This space was determined by architecture, props, and people, all arranged and posed in order to optimise the outcome of the photographic product. Other than in the previous photographic occasions I described, the involved actors in the studio positioned everything inside and outside of the camera's frame with the explicit purpose to benefit the photographic image. Also the sitters themselves would have considered their dress and poses, often long before arriving at the studio. In particular the studio's architecture and the layout of its rooms—designed for this very purpose in 1894—is important to consider in order to understand the interactions of photographer and sitters.

One of the most important factors influenced by the architecture obviously was the idea of light, as Müller remarked during a correspondence in 1907:

Question 213. Mariannhill-Studio. My studio [*Atelier*] has a single curtain of grey-blue colour, a riffled side window and a thick roof light of smooth window glass. In order to keep out direct sunlight, this window is painted with a thin layer of white oil colour. The resulting light is strong and soft [*weich*], as long as the coating is new. With time, however, it becomes dusty, smudgy, and yellowish, so that the exposure time has to be more than doubled. It is inconvenient to remove the coating and to redo it every year. Which coating would you recommend that is durable and remains well transparent at the same time? Is there any kind of paper, which could be used instead of paint? Where could it be obtained? What kind of glue would one use to fixate it?³⁸⁰

Br. Aegidius Müller to the editor of the *Photographische Chronik* (Müller 1907c:289).

It seems strange that Müller did not succeed in finding a solution to his lighting problem by involving South African colleagues, but instead was seeking expertise in a distant Europe. This either means that the expertise was thin on the ground, or that he did not trust it. As, for example, his correspondence with the Natal Museum in Pietermaritzburg shows, he had a very good command of English. Furthermore, there were multiple other photographic studios in Durban, Pietermaritzburg, and even one in Camperdown during the 1890s (Spencer 1982:84). Müller may have indeed consulted with colleagues in South Africa. Nevertheless, we can only trace his inquiries with the network of German-speaking lay people and experts, which the *Photographische Chronik* allowed him to access.

The journal's editor eventually suggested to Müller that the paper which he recommended would last longer in "the climate there" than in "our climate".³⁸¹ The editor apparently knew Mariannhill Studio, as Müller had posted questions to the journal at least since 1898. His inquiries were mostly related to chemical issues, which I will not elaborate on here. Apart from popular magazines and newspapers, Müller also was an active reader of German photographic literature and periodicals. Through them he corresponded with other overseas practitioners, and thus kept in touch with the technological, theoretical, and especially with the aesthetic pulse of Europe. As I shall explain in this section, the photographic studio not only was a commercial and artistic business, but a separate representative and performative space of its own. As a physical space it was supposed to further the photographic imagination by fusing a South African lifeworld with European aesthetic conventions. I will therefore draw together questions of how the physical possibilities and restrictions of the studio enabled or limited the performances and social interaction between photographer and photographed.

Next to cameras, glass plate negatives, and other earlier-mentioned photographic equipment, the spatial setup of the studio, and the social relations with sitters, four other factors were of every studio photographer's concern: as Müller indicated in his inquiry above, this was foremost the condition of lighting, next to the sitters' pose, the painted backdrop, and eventually the arrangement of props as the things in between. The latter served to bridge the artificial void between the photographic product on the one hand, and the sitter and the backdrop on the other hand. According to these eight dimensions, it was possible to control the situation inside the studio to a much greater extent than situations outside. All of these conditions left traces in

³⁸⁰ My own translation from the German original.

³⁸¹ The identity of the person answering the questions cannot be ascertained, but may have been the journal's earlier-mentioned editor Adolf Miethe (cf. Chapter One).

particular ways that allow us to reassemble parts of the experience in the studio. I will now discuss these dimensions in order to determine how they shaped the experience—and were shaped and adjusted at the same time.

The photographic studio of Mariannhill was well-equipped with multiple cameras. The only remaining inventory list of 1891 recorded one large studio camera, but also smaller transportable cameras, down to a very small camera, colloquially known as “secret camera”.³⁸² Some of the old cameras, tripods, lenses, and exposure frames for negatives are still kept in the archive of Mariannhill Monastery and the CMM museum in Würzburg.³⁸³ The photographic prints made at Mariannhill during the late 1890s and early 1900s were so-called “daylight collodion” prints.³⁸⁴ As so-called “contact prints” the glass plates were inserted into a custom-made wooden framework together with light-sensitive paper, and then exposed to daylight for a certain period of time. In a next step the paper had to be chemically fixated. Almost all of the still existing glass plate negatives produced before 1915 bear the photographer’s inscriptions, first on the image itself, and second on paper strip glued onto the plate’s longer edges.³⁸⁵

Comparably few of these inscriptions—both in the image and on the paper strips on negatives—indicate what and who can be seen on the image. Rarely Müller indicated when the plate had been made. Other references are of a more practical nature, such as which of his sometimes multiple attempts at staging a scene resulted into the “better plate”, either in a chemical or in a compositional and aesthetic sense. The remaining collection contains many plates presenting several shots of the very same *tableaux vivants* (inside and outside the studio), which are often almost identical. This means that while changing plates, several seconds passed and the sitters either remained in their poses, or had to recreate them once more for the next shot. Occasionally, Müller noted advisable exposure times on the plates, or remarks on certain oils he used to treat the plate.³⁸⁶ The plates are also inscribed with several numbering systems, which can no longer be reconstructed within a coherent system. A frequent and remarkable inscription on the glass plate negatives is once more the term “*Fremde*”, which I introduced in the last Chapter. Plates inscribed in this way show commercial customers, Africans, but also monks. Therefore, this caption may have either indicated that the depicted person was a foreigner to the monastic community, or that the respective photograph had been explicitly made to represent the monastic

³⁸² Alternatively these cameras were known as “*Detektiv Kameras*” or “*Geheim Kameras*”. I discussed the difference in sizes in Chapter One.

³⁸³ Two cameras are still in existence at Mariannhill’s museum in Würzburg, one of the German brand “J.F. Schippang & Co.”. It has so far not been possible to draw connections between glass plate negatives and the brands of camera they have been made with.

³⁸⁴ The photo conservator Clara van Waldthausen analysed the collection “A-15” at the Museum Volkenkunde in Leiden.

³⁸⁵ The style and colour of inscriptions within the image itself allows to date them approximately. If the writing appears white on the positive image it had been painted with lightproof paint onto the negative. Every fragment of the exposed paper, which was covered by the respective part on the glass plate remained white. If writing instead appears black on the positive image, it had been scratched mirror-inverted into the emulsion side of the glass plate. Light could thus penetrate the plate and darken the respective fragment on the positive print.

³⁸⁶ Dates on the negatives must thus be interpreted carefully, as they could either indicate when the image was taken, but also when it was further processed, maybe several months after the plate had been exposed.

world towards the outside world. Like the tour guide, the photographer Br. Aegidius Müller was an intermediary, who had to define and direct both insiders and outsiders to the monastery.

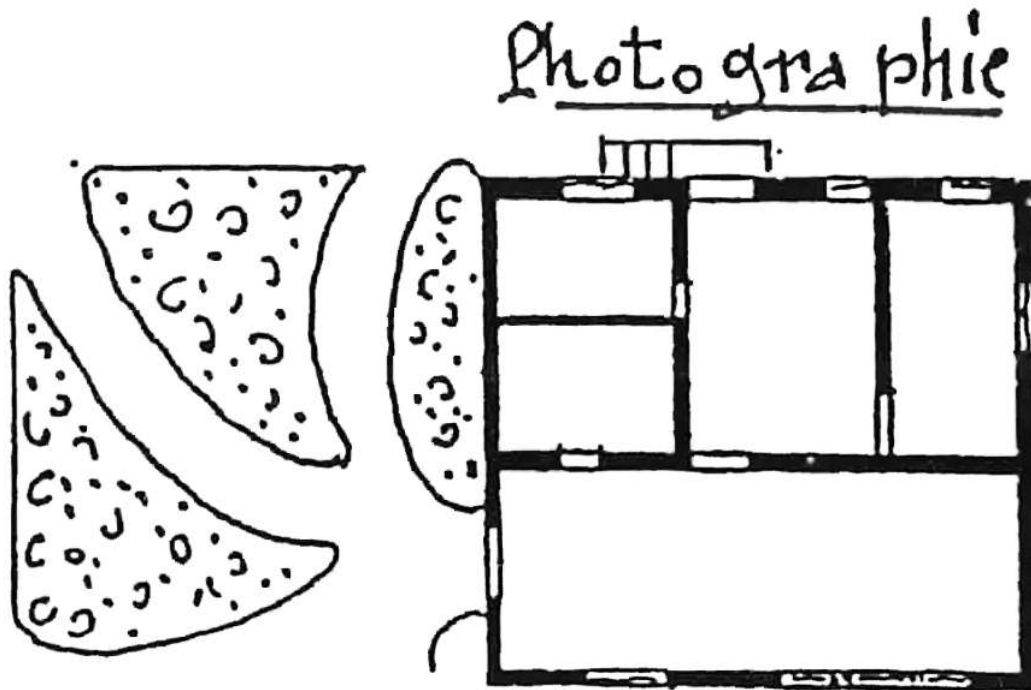


Figure 95: Floor plan of the photographic studio of Mariannhill. Detail from an architectural sketch by Br. Otto Mäder, 1901 (as reproduced in Balling 2003:131).

The still-existing studio building initially had five rooms, as an architectural sketch by Br. Otto Mäder from 1901 shows (Figure 95). Figure 94 shows the photographic studio in approximately 1900, and can be matched with the architectural sketch in Figure 95. Half of the building was occupied by the studio space, taking up the entire length of the building's wall, as visible in Figure 94. The studio's main entrance for visitors was the door on the south-western side. This is indicated by the lawn pattern directing a footpath towards the door. Most likely, the central room to the west provided an opportunity for customers to dress and groom. In particular some of the White women in the remaining photographic collection are unlikely to have arrived with the elaborate dresses and hairdos they were photographed with (cf. Figure 20). The other three remaining rooms must have been a darkroom, and possibly Müller's private rooms, which he could access alternatively through a second entrance in the north-eastern wall.

The front of the main studio must have served as a lounge, where customers could acquaint themselves with the products on offer through displayed albums. As a so-called

“*Pulldach-Atelier*”, the studio had a slanted top-light window, which Müller described in the quote above. A second window was almost seamlessly connected to this roof window, making up almost the entire surface of the right half of the south-eastern wall (cf. Figures 94 and 99). In Germany this particular form of studio was usually oriented towards the north, in order to provide most ideal light conditions (cf. Vorwig 2003). In the case of Mariannhill, however, the windows faced south-west. They were turned away from the sunrise, as well as other buildings, which might have overshadowed it. As a so-called “*Tageslichtatelier*” the studio only made use of available daylight, and there is no evidence that the photographers ever used artificial light sources, like magnesium flashes (cf. Chapter One). Even if there would have been sufficient light, also in the rear part of the studio, Müller never documented his working process inside of the studio, as he did outside of it (cf. Chapter Two).

Müller’s quote above describes the actual impression of light shed by both the top window and the lower window onto both the photographic sitters and the painted backdrops. Comparing Müller’s evaluation to the one I presented in Chapter One for the case of Mariannhill’s other photographers, it appears that all of them naturally developed a sense for the different qualities of light in South Africa. They also attempted to express this quality in words, in particular as to how the South African light compared to the one in Europe. As a shared experience over time, it was often this particular quality of light that has allowed me to recognise unidentified Mariannhill photographs in larger collections. This particular light—which Müller described as “soft [*weich*]”—creates a distinct impression of the photographed subjects, to which I indeed often applied the quality “soft” myself, even before I had discovered Müller’s inquiry.³⁸⁷ Eventually we have to clarify what the expression of “soft lighting” could possibly mean. The idea of “softness [*Weichheit*]” was also explored extensively in one of the books Müller had at his disposal, matching the following description (Arnold 1892:58-64).

The light in the studio could only be modulated by adjusting the blinds of the wall window (cf. Figure 99), as well as by applying white paint to the top window, even if the latter was difficult to control. As a desirable result, light was diffused and the shadows cast by the sitters onto the studio’s floor and backdrop thus reduced to a minimum. In this way the illusion of the backdrop’s potential reality was not broken. This was indeed the case in Walter Benjamin’s experience, who found that his kidskin hat had cast its shadow onto the backdrop (cf. Chapter One). As I observed at the beginning of Chapter Two for photographs taken outside, Mariannhill’s photographers preferred to photograph models with the light from one side, rather than photographing with or against the light. This allowed for an even accentuation between highlights and shadows across the model’s body. In the studio, this was necessarily from the right to the left. “Soft” lighting in the setting of Mariannhill’s studio therefore means that there is a balance between highlights and shadows with a very smooth graduation from the right to the left.

³⁸⁷ See Kratz (2011) for a discussion of issues around the general importance of lighting and its attributes across different media, such as museum exhibitions, film, and theatre.

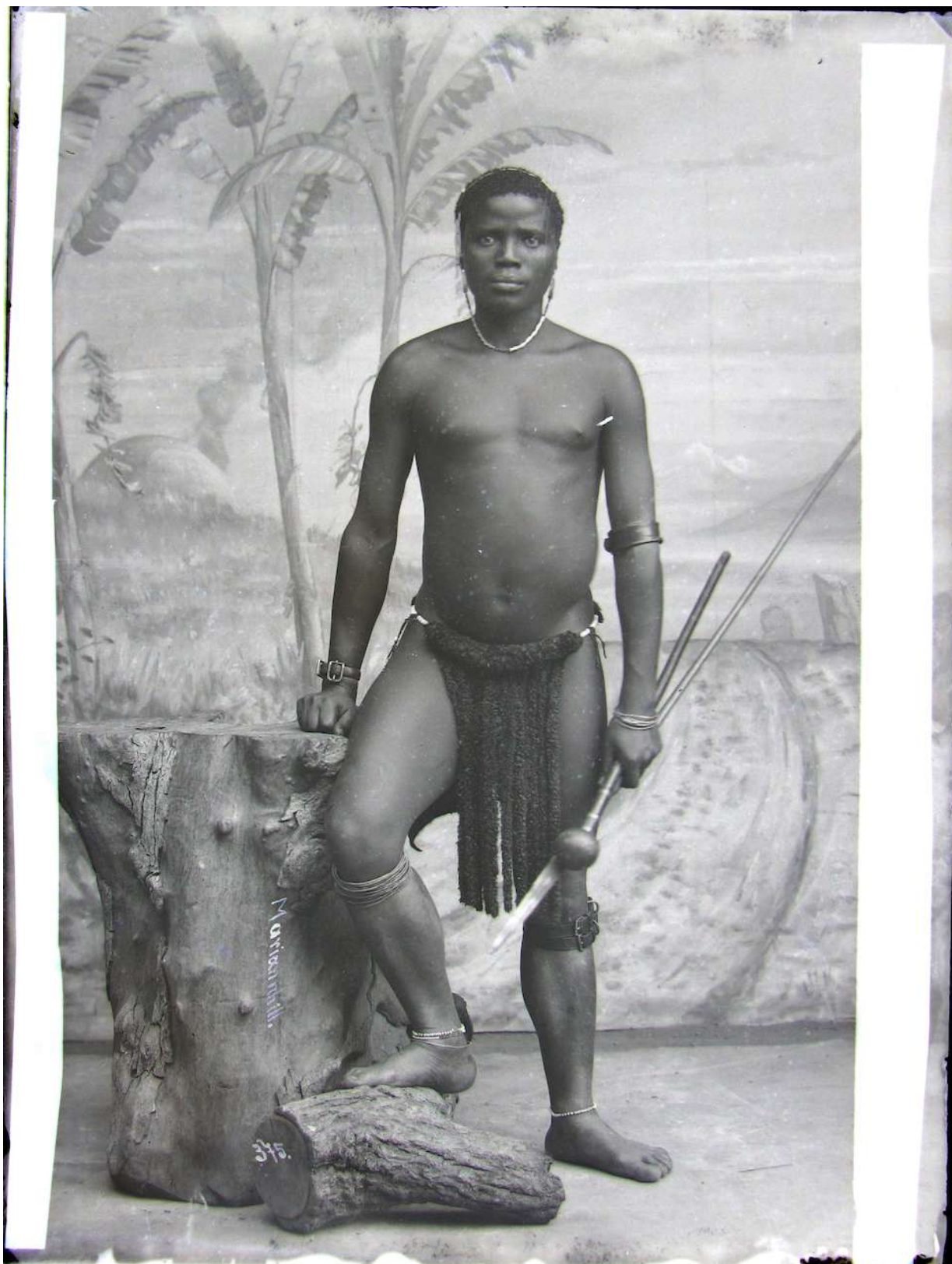


Figure 96: original title: “Bruder v[on] Lokotwayo”—“brother of Lokothwayo” (digitally inverted glass plate negative, CMM Archives).

This condition of lighting can for example be observed in the print showing Bulawayo, Chief Lokothwayo's brother, who poses in an *umuthsha*, with a *knobkerrie* and spear. Due to the obligation to dress upon approaching White settlements, Bulawayo must have arrived at least with an additional coat, similar to those worn by men during the photographic occasions I discussed throughout this chapter.³⁸⁸ He may have brought along his stick and spear, or they may have alternatively been supplied by Müller. We also recognise the backdrop with smoke curling from a hut, as it appears in Müller's portrait in orientalist style (Figure 15). While it is very hard to tell whether Müller dressed people up or not, his successor Br. Leonard Weber did so with certainty. During the 1920s and 30s, he supplied children and grown-ups, men and women, inside and outside of the studio, with "traditional" items and clothing, most likely from Mariannhill's museum. This is confirmed by the fact that he photographed different men with exactly the same arrangement of items and clothing. He also photographed women, first in "Western" dress, and once more in "traditional" attire.

Even if Müller never photographed Chief Lokothwayo in the studio, he engaged with several other members of the *Amanganga*, such as Lokothwayo's younger brother Bulawayo, one of his younger sisters, as well as residents from Umdamane's homesteads. During the years after 1900, several members of both families were photographed either inside or outside of the station. As Müller could build relationships with his sitters over time, he knew exactly whom he had in front of his lens, and occasionally even inscribed some of the sitters' names on either negatives or prints.

The going-out of the Trappist photographers, to record the periphery of the mission stations, thus paralleled a taking-in of Africans to the studio at Mariannhill Monastery. On the one hand, the photographers went outside the mission stations to picture both "heathen kraals" and "Christian homes". To both kinds of photographs the missionaries referred to as "mission life" (cf. Chapter One). On the other hand, they photographed Africans in both "traditional" and "Western" dress in the studio.

Several photographs exist in the remaining collection that show Africans wearing suits and dresses. While some dresses appear to be custom size, other sitters appear in ragged clothing of the wrong size, children are missing one shoe (cf. Chapter One), or women appear in dresses, but with bare feet. The latter cases may indicate that the clothing came from an overseas donation, or the children were dressed purposefully in shabby clothing to raise benefactor's pity. However, it still does not allow us to determine for certain which sitters were *Amakholwa* of the Christian community, and which were not. Figure 97 is one of the few photographs in Mariannhill's remaining collection that shows Black sitters confidently posing in style. Even though the five smartly dressed Black men may well have been either Protestant or Catholic Christians, they do not appear like farmers of Mariannhill's *Amakholwa* community. They

³⁸⁸ Africans were not permitted to approach any White settlement or town without proper dress further than fifty yards (eg. Bryant 1887:116).

present themselves very confidently in their demeanour and poses, more confident than someone who only wears a suit occasionally. Also the hair of every single men is finely groomed and put into shape, a process that would have been much too elaborate to be done only for the occasion of the photograph. In order to make such an identification, however, we would have to take into account the entire process of production, and reconstruct the photographic occasion as far as possible. As this is not possible for this case, we may nevertheless relate to the book held up by the man in the centre: *How it is Made: Describing in Simple Language how Various Machines and Many Articles in Common Use are Manufactured from the Raw Materials*. Published by Archibald Williams in 1907, this book relates directly to many of the trades performed at Mariannhill's workshops, including photography. Just like the man on this study's cover performed a book about the world's racial alterities, the African man in this case may have intended to display his knowledge about, and his close proximity to the making of the modern world and its products. This scenarios can be further connected to the following discussion of backdrops.



Figure 97: five African men in the Mariannhill Studio. The man in the centre presents the 1907 publication *How it is Made* by Archibald Williams (CMM Archives).

Just like photographs, studio backdrops have two distinct dimensions, as they are both image and object, both picture and prop. When closely examining the face of the studio's internal south-eastern wall today, one finds several places where the many layers of paint have flaked off. Underneath, it is possible to make out fragments of an original backdrop which had been painted directly onto the plaster. With the building of the new studio in 1894, it became possible to put up large-scale scenic landscape backdrops. While one backdrop was painted permanently onto the wall, others were painted on shiftable canvas frames, and could therefore be exchanged conveniently. At least eight distinct backdrops can be discerned on the remaining images in Mariannhill's archive. The earliest backdrops were not figurative, but merely curtains draped behind the sitters. Another early backdrop was mostly plain in a light colour, partially fading into cloudy structures. The already mentioned permanent image on the plaster of the studio's wall depicted a view on the sea with a sailing boat, from the perspective of a balcony. It not only covered the studio's entire south-eastern wall, but also extended to both adjacent walls (Figure 99). Two of the moveable backdrops instead suggest interior spaces: one shows part of a ruin to the left, fading into an interior space with a glass window to the right (Figure 98). The second shiftable backdrop showing an interior, appears to be a monastic courtyard (Figure 100). The remaining three moveable backdrops again depicted exteriors: a country road with palm trees and a beehive hut to the left (eg. Figures 15 and 96); another country road next to a forest scenery with leafed trees to the right; and eventually a lake scenario within a forest, mixing leafed trees and palm trees (Figure 99). Customers thus could choose from a varied selection of scenarios, and may have additionally requested to be photographed in front of a particular section of a backdrop. However, the sitters and models never engaged directly with the backdrops, but almost exclusively faced the camera in the case of portraits, or faced each other in the case of genre scenes (cf. Figure 101).

On the very same steamer as Br. Aegidius Müller in September 1889, arrived Br. Otto Mäder (1863-1937). He initially joined the monastery as a novice for the priesthood, but eventually became a lay brother. Mäder had been trained as a painter in Germany, but apparently had experience with several other artistic disciplines. Today, Mäder is foremost known for his elaborate copies of rock art (cf. Flett and Letley 2007). At Mariannhill he also worked at the glass window workshop and as a draughtsman at the "*Bauschaffnerei* [architectural bureau]" under Br. Nivard Streicher. In addition to this he was a published linguist since the 1890s and was interested in general ethnological matters (cf. Chapter Five). One photograph suggests that Mäder also painted the studio's backdrops (Figure 98). Here he can be seen either finalising or touching up one of the backdrop canvases in the studio. Mariannhill's photographers did not purchase random commercial backdrops, like their colleagues in Europe, West Africa, and elsewhere (cf. Hoerner 1989:41, Wendl and Prussat 1998:30, also see Starl 2009). Instead, Mariannhill's painters produced their own individualised painterly backdrops, which referenced their immediate surroundings. Mariannhill's studio photographs can therefore be easily identified in photographic collections other than the congregation's.



Figure 98: Br. Otto Mäder (standing right) working on a backdrop, assisted by a Fr. Petrus and an unidentified Black boy (CMM Archives).



Figure 99: original caption on glass plate negative: “303. *Religiosen* 03/08 1900”. A group of 33 Mariannhill priests with Abbot Franziskus Strunk of Oelenberg, and the newly inaugurated Abbot of Mariannhill, Gerard Wolpert (digitally inverted glass plate negative, CMM Archives).

Custom-made backdrops had the great advantage that the representation of light, as seen on the painted plants and objects, could be matched perfectly with the light actually available in the studio.³⁸⁹ This impression could additionally be modulated by adjusting the light illuminating the sitters. The relation between windows, the backdrop, and the sitters is most evident in the above example. The negatives of the old photographs often contain details not intended to be seen in the developed and commercially distributed positive print. In the case of this crowded group photograph, widening the image frame considerably could not be avoided (Figure 99). This photograph shows otherwise invisible and unintended “technicalities”, such as the alternate moveable backdrops, temporarily stored to the left, and the window with adjustable blinds to the right. We can also see the roof window Müller wrote about. Such photographs make the backdrop distinguishable from other elements of the studio space as a physical object and prop,

³⁸⁹ It was not uncommon that studios commissioned backdrops with artists, as discussions in journal. Future studies may want to compare Mariannhill’s painted studio backdrops to the painted church interiors for stylistic commonalities. Most of the church interiors were done by Mäder and his confrere Br. Ludger Janssen.

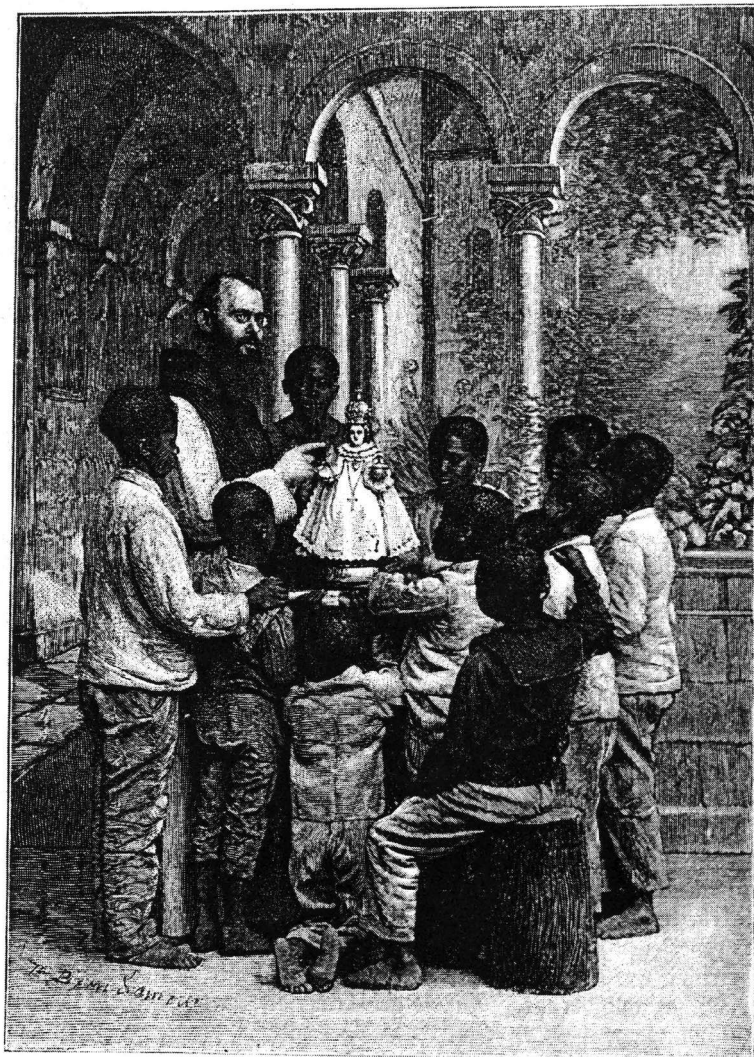
which had to be staged like any other object in visible photographic space.

The authors writing in a special issue of the journal *Afterimage* on “the photo backdrop and cultural expression” are amongst the few who have dealt explicitly with early photographic backdrops in non-European countries. Apparently there were no alternative sources, which would have allowed these authors to approach studio backdrops in another way than through the photographs themselves. Arjun Appadurai’s (1997) contribution nevertheless allows us to place the situation of the studio *within* a colonial experience. Appadurai distinguishes a studio’s contextual (invisible) backdrop from its physical (visible) backdrop. He calls these two backdrops a “double frame” (1997:6). These two backdrops relate to each other like the “préterrain” and the “ethnographic occasion”. According to Appadurai, the invisible backdrop are “the discourses and images that inform the eye of the photographer”, while the visible backdrop is the one that both photographer and photographed engage with in physical space. We may add to Appadurai’s account that also the sitter and models have particular images and discourses in mind when they pose and perform for the photographer. By relating these two kinds of backdrops, Appadurai points to a clear process of intermediality at play: “photographs, visual texts and verbal discourses—ethnological, touristic, bureaucratic and missionary—which, in various combinations, chains and packages, shape the reading competence of particular groups of intended viewers of these photographs” (1997:6). Eventually, also the previous occasions I described—Umdamane’s and Lokothwayo’s photographs, as well as the court scene at Centocow—relied on these discourses and the images they had produced.

Webb’s (1992) account of the Natalian photographic economy of the 19th century may further help us to clarify these processes of intermediality. She explores the idea that “studio photographs” have several different qualities and features, which distinguish them from “field photographs”. While the latter is per definition thought of as exterior to any urban scenario, the photographic studio enabled Mariannhill’s photographers to mimic such exterior spaces, as well as interior spaces. South African landscape and vegetation was obviously very different to what Europeans were accustomed to in terms of exteriors, as well as from the photographic backdrops they knew from European metropolises. While a certain degree of familiarity had to be upheld at Mariannhill’s studio in terms of conventions regarding backdrops and props, the exotic was manifested in form of distinctly South African features of landscapes, indigenous buildings, as well as plants. Many of the backdrops depict sceneries of lush vegetation, for example local plants like tree aloe (*aloidendron barberae*), which is yet another indicator that the backdrops were painted locally, rather than being imported.

Because Mariannhill’s studio was commercial, its clientele included Protestants from the nearby New Germany, followers of Indian and other non-Christian religions, as well as potentially non-religious visitors. These audiences necessitated religiously neutral backdrops, thus restricting any distinctly Catholic mural paintings as they existed in abundance in Mariannhill’s churches. The physical backdrops at Mariannhill had to be compatible with religious, as well as non-religious imaginary backdrops of White, as well as Black sitters and

models, in the sense of Appadurai. These physical backdrops thus derived their meaning from circulating imagery about, as well as the sitters' own experiences in, either South Africa or Europe. On the one hand, the ruin in Figure 98 and the courtyard in Figure 100 achieved their ambience of an exotic monasticism recalling a medieval Europe only in the South African context. As I explained in the last chapter, at least some visitors had described such associations during the guided tour at Mariannhill (cf. Powell 1899:65, Merriman 1905). On the other hand, the distinctly African backdrop with a beehive hut typical for Natal, would instead have accrued its greatest exotic potential only when viewed in an edition of the *Vergißmeinnicht* in a German middle class Catholic living room.



P. Prior gibt Unterricht vom gnadenreichen Prager Jesuskinde.

Figure 100: original caption: “P. Prior gibt Unterricht vom gnadenreichen Prager Jesuskinde”—“Fr. Prior teaches about the merciful Infant Jesus of Prague”. Engraving by Brendamour, Munich (as published in *Mariannhiller Kalender* 1899:42).

We briefly have to consider such very specific circumstances of viewing Mariannhill's photographs. In the case of print matter like the *Vergißmeinnicht* and the *Mariannhiller Kalender* with their often poor image reproductions, it may not have been possible at all times for consumers of Mariannhill's images to distinguish the two kinds of backdrop, as indicated by Appadurai. Until the late 1890s, the *Mariannhiller Kalender* reproduced photographs in form of engravings (eg. Figure 100). Photographic half-tone printing was only used sporadically and the *Vergißmeinnicht* did not present any images at all before 1907. Through the use of engravings, foreground and background/backdrop received the same depth-of-field, and as a result the two-dimensional backdrop became indistinguishable from the three-dimensional foreground. As I already explained in the last chapter, it was not always made explicit to the reader of the periodicals whether a photograph had been staged, or whether it had been taken inside or outside of the studio. Even if the effect was not at all times intended, the mechanical form of reproduction in this case gave the impression that the painted backdrop was as real as the foreground and that both formed one single space.³⁹⁰ Once the technological possibility was available after 1900, Mariannhill's editors nevertheless favoured the supposed objectivity of the photographic half-tone print over the possibilities of a realistic impression with the help of engravings.

As I already explained in the last two sections, material objects played a particular mediating role between models, backdrops, and audiences. In the process they became theatrical props. As much as religious objects were used to illustrate the teaching of Christianity (Figure 100), there was also a tendency to pose Africans, such as Bulawayo, on, or near "natural" props, such as tree trunks (Figure 96), or occasionally palm branches. Tree trunks, however, are not necessarily "exoticising" props *per se*, even if they may have been often interpreted as such in conjunction with the displayed African fashion. Also European studios at the time used such "rustic" or "romantic" props in combination with decorative furniture.³⁹¹ Once more, the impression of the "exotic" is related to the colonial backdrop and the situation of viewing. For all these reasons, backdrops can be regarded as part of the theatrical props available at Mariannhill's studio: these were mobile, interchangeable, and locally produced objects, which changed meaning according to how they were combined and viewed. The props of a photographic studio generally fused the backdrop's two-dimensional artificiality with the space of the studio. After 1900, Müller however restricted himself to a basic repertoire of props: the tree trunk, a rustic bench, chairs, a simple table, and occasionally books (see above and Chapter Six). Photographs in the studio of Mariannhill were thus determined by the specific arrangement of various components: architecture, specific lighting, locally painted backdrops, an array of props, as well as conventional poses involving these props. As the photographs' meaning was adaptable, depending on the respective audience and respective captions, Müller could photograph

³⁹⁰ When I discussed photographic prints with people around Mariannhill during my fieldwork, not everyone immediately realised that they had been made in a photographic studio.

³⁹¹ The studio of Nikolaus Leyendecker (the father of Mariannhill's photographer Fr. Isembard) in Bernkastel an der Mosel is one example (cf. Chapter One).

European and African sitters using the same backdrops and props.

In particular those studio photographs intended for propaganda purposes, not only depict sitters in standard poses of full body or portrait photographs, but also include more complex sceneries. According to the convention of genre photographs, as I explained them in Chapter One, the internal narrative of a photograph was supposed to be grasped instantly by the audience. A good example is the performance of three African women in a photograph from one of the albums which would have been on display in the photographic studio (Figure 101). According to the photograph's caption, the women are entrusting four children to the care of a CPS sister. The intended narrative is simply set up by the gazes of the members of each party, the positioning of the bodies towards each other, and the Black woman's gesture of pointing at the children. The Black women and the White CPS sister look at each other, while two of the children look towards the lens, possibly addressing a potential audience of benefactors (cf. Chapter Two).

The woman pointing at the children was one of Müller's regular sitters and models, not only in the studio, but also at her home close to Mariannhill. Like in only few other cases, Müller noted the woman's personal Zulu name, Unyembezi, on respective negatives. In one way or another Unyembezi was related to Umdamane, as his name appears on at least one of her portraits. As a result, Unyembezi was experienced with various photographic formats. She clearly understood the staging of the scene as the creation of a narrative, and accordingly consciously acted her part. Unyembezi and the other involved models reenacted a social interaction in the interior space of the studio, which the photographer imagined to have taken place outside of the mission ground, or at least at the mission's gate. In terms of Webb's (1992) terminology, a "generic field photograph" was recreated as a "studio photograph".

The studio thus may be considered once more as a theatrical stage, and in conjunction with the museum even as a "display cabinet" of the mission network at large. At the time, studio and museum were conveniently located next to each other, and were thus often visited in succession at the end of the guided tour. The photographic studio makes the working of the mission as a heterogenous space and exhibitionary complex even more explicit, as it renders and reveals every photographed gesture to be, per definition, a performance. As suggested by Appadurai, various imaginations are brought together in the studio, fusing physical and imagined backdrops. The latter were additionally fuelled by the imagery present in the studio itself, as I described it in the last chapter. The imagery presented and performed in the studio thus fused various spaces, the monastic world, the diversity of a colonial society, "native life", as well as steps towards conversion, as shown in Figure 101. All these images and discourses were accessible and visible to Black and White sitters of Mariannhill's studio in form of coffee table books, the mission's own photographic albums, and periodicals and journals. Possibly these images thus in turn influenced new poses and performances.



Figure 101: original caption: “Übergabe v[on] Heidenkindern z[ur] Schule”—“Transfer of heathen children for school”. The children and the sister are the same protagonists as in Figure 45 (digitally inverted glass plate negative, CMM Archives).

Conclusion

After introducing Mariannhill's own African historiography, I discussed four specific contact zones, which allowed for specific photographic performances, some involving particular objects, shifting back and forth between being everyday objects and theatrical props. According to the nature of each zone, these photographic occasions allowed for the production of particular knowledge, in the distant past, as well as during my fieldwork. Some of these occasions will play a role once more in the following chapters.

Even though we are not always able to pinpoint the exact historical circumstances of a photographic occasion, photographs have the potential to trigger important historical information. The double identification of a photographic portrait as both the *Amakholwa induna* Umpathwa and the *Amanganga induna* Umdamane allowed for situating both communities in their relationships to each other, and both to the Trappist community. Such an analysis shows why some individuals chose to be photographed while others avoided it, and why the photographer chose to identify some individuals while leaving others in anonymity. Also the episodes involving Mariannhill's mill and Chief Lokothwayo, the magistrates Farrer and Clark at Centocow, and the general situation at the monastery's photographic studio, allows to better understand why people approached spaces and institutions to engage in photographic occasions.

Accounts, such as those in the periodical *Vergißmeinnicht*, in combination with the baptism registers, are the most concrete available sources describing the relationship of Trappists and Africans. They can also be linked to other accounts via the coordinates of personal names, and accordingly to official government correspondences and records. This is impossible in the case of anonymised Africans in photographs and stories, as I presented them in Chapter One. Even the presentation of only their baptismal names often makes individuals untraceable in the colonial archive. The missionaries no longer reproduced memories of the early relationships with African individuals after the 1950s. On the one hand, White missionaries did not have any reason to revive them, and on the other hand, African members of the CMM community often lacked the interest and ability to read the available German scripts and letters.

The missionaries sold photographs at the studio as commodities, but also employed them as mimetic capital; capital that they invested in, and that was supposed to pay off in various forms. Without doubt, Fr. Emanuel Hanisch presented photographs to the magistrates Clark and Farrer as part of the "ovation" devoted to them at Centocow in 1912. As allies, both missionaries and magistrates were committed to a common project. The missionaries furthermore involved their benefactors by promoting the same photographic occasion in their periodical as a shared experience. The official information network of colonial Natal, constituted by such figures as Clark and Farrer, is hard to reconstruct because the exact nature and organisation of the area's administrative landscape is still under-researched, partially due to the nature of the available sources in archival repositories. Not much information is available on the biographies and careers of the various magistrates of the districts where Mariannhill Missionaries were present.

This view is confirmed through my correspondence with South African historians like John Wright and John Lambert. The episode at Centocow Mission nevertheless serves as a first impression of the involved social complexities of the involved relationships.

The photographic occasions I discussed were partially influenced by non-human actors, such as the photographic camera, (the anticipation of) photographic objects as commodities, as well as other objects and their constitution in social interactions. Apart from their role in Mariannhill's museum, several objects also had a prior use-value and thus a "backstory" (Hamilton 2011) running counter to the common museum narratives they would evoke during later parts of their biography (cf. Chapter Five). The difference between an "authentic" original and an appropriation only achieves meaning when it can be embedded in a social occasion. Photographic protagonists employed and performed both the snuff spoons and the fly whisk as explicitly social objects during photographic occasions. Trooper Terblanche, for example, employed his fly whisk as a power symbol to indicate his social position. As part of a photographic occasion, the fly whisk is continuously shifting between being a prop within a performance, a genuinely African object, and an appropriation in a situation of domination.

The social relationships presented in Chapters Three and Four also allow us to reposition the propaganda narratives presented in Chapters One and Two. We may for example conclude that the strong presence of children in the propaganda effort needs to be balanced by considering the Trappists' even stronger focus of establishing positive relationships with the outside world in South Africa (Chapter Three) and political interlocutors such as magistrates and chiefs (Chapter Four). Part Two made an attempt to place a selection of photographs in this historical social environment, rather than in the propaganda narratives presented in Part One. Some of the photographs in Mariannhill's oeuvre can be situated in time and space, not only production-wise, but also content-wise. This allows to connect the collection to a historical non-photographic situation. In their textual accounts, the Trappists often described African authorities like Lokothwayo as naive manifestations of inveterate paganism, while actual encounters on a grass roots level involved friendly conventional sociability, such as the consumption of snuff tobacco.

In a similar way, the next part deals with museum artefacts and photographs as commodities in the process of crossing between a religious and a scientific visual economy. In the process the missionaries established a similar rhetoric of cooperation. While many objects and photographs explicitly functioned within the particular space of Mariannhill's museum and exhibitions (Chapter Five), I discuss them separately within an international economy of ethnographic objects and photographs (Chapter Six). As much as it was necessary to perceive the photographs as constituting image spaces in Part One, and as locating them within the spaces of production in Part Two, in Part Three we now follow their constitution and certification while circulating between South Africa and Europe.

