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The things in between: photographs from the Mariannhill Mission in KwaZulu-Natal and other objects in situations of intermediality
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PART FOUR

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IMAGES AND SUBJECTS.

CHAPTER SEVEN

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**The Art of Segregation, or
“[...] no European can draw what is in a native’s mind”⁶²⁸**

⁶²⁸ Jacobus N. van Warmelo on the work of Gerard Bhengu in the introduction to Max Kohler’s *The Isangoma Diviners* (1941:5).

Introduction: From “Disappearance” to “Creativity”

More than 40 years after their production, photographs like the “Naiads of Natal”, for which Br. Aegidius Müller had received the first prize from *The State’s* photographic competition in 1909, were still much desired (cf. Chapter One). On 2 September 1946, the Durban-based attorney and art collector, A. de Charmoy, wrote to the superior of Mariannhill Monastery, Fr. Pius Rudloff:

Some eight years ago I had bought from a shop in Mercury Lane, Durban, a number of large photo prints of natives and native scenes e.g. one of a forest glade with a stream running through and some native girls with pots standing by the stream. A friend passing through Durban was anxious to secure some of these. I gave him my collection relying on being able to buy them again. But I was told the father who used to take those photos had died and then the war scarcity of material intervened. Having often been approached for similar photos and desirous of having some myself I phoned your Monastery and was told that if I wrote to you you might be able to sell to me some prints (if still available) or to print some more from your negatives now that photographic material is more easily obtainable. Those photos I refer to were larger than post card size and were artistically produced. Realising that they are now scarce, I would be prepared to pay a special price for those that you may still have or for any new prints, particularly of the forest scene I have described above.⁶²⁹

Rudloff duly complied with the request and wrote in his reply that “[w]e trust that these photographs are suitable for the purpose for which you require them”.⁶³⁰

Apparently, by the 1930s, Mariannhill’s photographs were still actively distributed through secular commercial circuits. They were sold at shops in Durban, even without the monastery’s involvement. Consumers nevertheless associated the photographs with Mariannhill, and still with Müller’s reputation, even though he had already passed away in 1921. Also other people sent requests for photographs to Mariannhill after the Second World War, but were mostly turned down with brief lines, such as: “I regret that we cannot be of assistance to you in the above mentioned matter, since we had to close down our photo studio on account of shortage of staff”.⁶³¹ The fact that the photographs were no longer produced at Mariannhill (and not even reproduced) made them even more valuable. Within only three decades, the original photographic prints had thus become scarce collectables, for which De Charmoy was “prepared to pay a special price”. This price was settled for at S10 per photograph, ten times their “original” value.⁶³² After having received the photographs, De Charmoy replied on 20 September 1946:

Your photographer is an artist. I was interested in that type of scenery photograph in order to suggest to Gerard Bengu [sic], the Zulu artist, a similar scene with native figures. Bengu is exceptionally talented as a portraitist and paints water colour scenery and trees very pleasingly. I happened to rescue him from two people who were exploiting him mercilessly and my friends and I have bought several of his pictures.⁶³³

⁶²⁹ CMM-MM: letter, De Charmoy to Rudloff, 02.09.1946.

⁶³⁰ CMM-MM: letter (copy), Rudloff to De Charmoy, 06.09.1946.

⁶³¹ CMM-MM: letter, Rudloff to East London Museum, 19.04.1948.

⁶³² As opposed to S1, for which they were sold around 1900. Of course one must take a certain inflation into account. The price for the service of a Black ambulant street photographer in the Johannesburg township of Benoni during the 1940s was far less than S1, or the equivalent of a bottle of beer. The average monthly salary of a worker in the township was £2 S10 (Personal communication, Sophie Feyder, September 2014).

⁶³³ CMM-MM: letter, De Charmoy to Rudloff, 20.09.1946.

Gerard Anton Bhengu (1910-1990) was born on the Dronk Vlei Farm near Mariannhill's Centocow Mission in 1910, and was baptised, as well as educated at the mission. He was well known to many of the missionaries, for whom he had produced commissioned paintings since the late 1920s. His first long-term patron was the mission doctor of Centocow, Dr. Max Kohler (1886-1948). By the 1940s, Bhengu had become successful in the secular art world, but was also put "on display" as somewhat of a "curiosity" at Payne Brothers, Durban's largest department store at the time. It is unclear whether it were Bhengu's employers at Payne Brothers from whom De Charmoy had to "rescue" Bhengu, as he wrote to Rudloff in late 1946.⁶³⁴ Be that as it may, in 1947 De Charmoy opened an exhibition at the Durban Art Gallery, where Bhengu presented his work next to the White artist Barbara Tyrell,⁶³⁵ as well as other male "Bantu Artists", such as Hezekiel Ntuli, Simoni Mnguni, and George Pemba (Zaverdinos 1995:15-16). Since then, Bhengu's career had only one more high point during the 1960s. He eventually received most recognition posthumously.

I was not able to trace a painting by Bhengu that resembles Müller's photograph, which De Charmoy desired so much in 1946. Among other things this could either mean that De Charmoy never showed the photograph to Bhengu, or that Bhengu did not approve of the theme. Nevertheless, Bhengu indeed copied Müller's and also Br. Leonard Weber's photographs throughout his career, beginning with suggestions by his first patron Max Kohler. This was not intended as forgery or plagiarism, but rather a part of artistic education, despite its later contradiction with a "native authenticity". Mission education indeed played a considerable role in the process of fostering Black artists in South Africa, in particular after the 1940s. Especially since the 1950s, Sr. Pientia Selhorst CPS at Mariannhill played an important role in this regard (cf. Leeb-du Toit 1993, 1995, 2005). Before this point in time, Bhengu appears to have been the only successful case to emerge from such a scenario (cf. Shaw 1949:630).

At least since the early 1920s, Mariannhill's educational institutions at Lourdes Mission, and in particular at Centocow Mission, were at the very centre of the Natal Government's attention. As we know from Chapter Four, Centocow Mission has a history of providing access and logistics for governmental administrators. In the 1920s, once again a network of government representatives and missionaries with scientific inclinations promoted the area around Centocow as yet another "collection hotspot" (cf. Hamilton and Leibhammer 2016a). In this particular case, the situation was not only based on ethnographic research and the collection of objects for Mariannhill's museum, but also on what respective social actors considered as the production of exceptional art.

In March 2011, the architect Robert Brusse invited me to join his surveying team to a

⁶³⁴ Bhengu worked for Payne Brothers at least until 1953. They paid him S2 D6 around 1940, and £4-8 by 1953 per painting (Schlosser 1971:146). The prices for which paintings were sold to the store's visitors are unknown.

⁶³⁵ As Tyrell exclusively painted Africans, this may have been the reason why her work was exhibited along with those of African artists producing works on "native life". The presence of Tyrell as a White *female* artist makes even more apparent that the early Black painters were exclusively *male* (cf. Stevenson and Bosland 2008:11).

project site at Centocow Mission, near the small town of Ixopo in the Ingwe Municipality of KwaZulu-Natal's Sisonke District.⁶³⁶ It was this trip that initiated my engagement with Bhengu and Kohler. Since 2003, the idea had grown between representatives of Ingwe Municipality and the Killie Campbell Africana Library (KCAL) in Durban to restore the mission's old church. With considerable financial effort the building was supposed to be turned into the "Gerard Bhengu Gallery & Museum" with the explicit aim to attract tourism in the area (cf. Kotze 2013). The relevance for both parties to invest into a gallery dedicated to Bhengu relied partially on the fact that, at least from the 1940s, Bhengu had gathered the reputation as a successful Black artist: at the time he was considered "prominent" among the "modern Bantu painters" (Shaw 1949:630-631). Still in the 1960s, Bhengu was known as an "outstanding painter using European techniques" (Gale 1971:868), and even established the reputation of being "the first Black South African artist, who earns his living as an artist in the European sense" (Schlosser 1971:121). This means that he did not depend on other sources of income for extended periods. The German ethnologist Katesa Schlosser further attested to Bhengu that he "inaugurated the profession of the artistic painter amongst the Bantu of South Africa" (Schlosser 1971:149).

The South African art historian Anitra Nettleton suspects that over the next twenty years after the 1960s, Bhengu was ignored in the art historical canon because his work did not lend itself to the anti-apartheid narratives of South Africa's political left, due to his early dependence on White patrons (Nettleton 1989:28). Olu Oguibe (2002), for example, portrays Bhengu as if he was not able to surpass the colonial dictum of assimilating to a distinctly "African style", and did therefore not develop a truly individual way of expressing resistance to colonial domination in both society and art. Furthermore, due to his romantic subjects and mimetic style, art historians and art dealers were not able to group Bhengu among the "modernist" African artists. Art historians writing after Schlosser thus instead identified other Black artists, like Moses Tladi, as "South Africa's First Black Artist working in the Western Tradition" (Caccia 1993, Lloyd 2013). Since the general (re-)establishment of South African Black artists since the late 1980s, and a retrospective solo exhibition at Pietermaritzburg's Tatham Art Gallery in 1995, Bhengu gained currency once more, in particular as a household name of the Killie Campbell Africana Library in Durban.

In previous chapters I already touched on the vexed question of African authorship in both photography and figurative art. In Chapters One and Two I showed that around 1900 "copying" and "imitation" were strong narratives in the White art discourse, in order to frame the artistic (non-)productivity of Black South Africans: this was the case with photography, the performative arts like theatre, as well as the production of adornment and craft objects for the tourist market. Commentators on objects produced by Black South Africans in Natal at the time observed the lack of a strong tradition of figurative art, such as sculpture. As I already discussed in Chapter Five, especially those people framed as "Zulu" were initially credited with the

⁶³⁶ Known as "Polela District" until the end of Apartheid. After my fieldwork, in 2012, the district was renamed "Harry Gwala District".

production of “material culture” or “crafts”, rather than a distinct “Zulu art” (Duffey 1999, Nettleton 1989, Sack 1988, Schlosser 1975). Especially portrait sculpture, even though there are examples, was not credited to the Zulu as “art” (Nettleton 1988:49, 2005:8). Nevertheless, just before the First World War, European popular perceptions of Africa more generally started to include figurative art, as well as paintings and drawings by Africans as representations of culture and history (cf. Chapters One and Five).

Research on Black South African individuals, who practiced photography either privately and/or professionally before the 1940s, or even before 1914, is still in its infancy (but see Feyder 2016, Chapter One of this study). Instead, the research on the development of Black South African fine art painters since the 1920s is more advanced. One reason is that contemporary White South African art patrons (including connoisseurs, educators, missionaries, and ethnologists) established a relatively well-documented discourse on the ingenuity of individual Black artists and the alleged authenticity of their work. Regarding a similar case in central Africa, Johannes Fabian tentatively asked: “Is it correct to say that the ‘creative native’ replaced the ‘disappearing native’?” (Fabian 1998:26). This indeed seems to be the case in South Africa during the 1920s, once we compare it to the “salvage paradigm” of the previous decades, which I discussed in the last chapter. The correspondence between De Charmoy and Rudloff epitomises this situation, as the Black artist Gerard Bhengu was supposed to creatively appropriate a romanticised photograph of what Br. Aegidius Müller had earlier considered a “disappearing” people. Even if the act of interpreting a photograph through painting is not straightforward “creativity”, White commentators nevertheless presented the ability of Africans to create fine art paintings in the European tradition as an achievement. De Charmoy apparently did not consider the possibility that Bhengu may have been able to paint the same scene with life models, possibly due to the assumption that such “scenes” had “disappeared” altogether. Like “disappearance” before it, “creativity” now became the new trope around which networks of those people formed, who had an interest in images of South Africa. In fact, at the same time yet another crisis developed around this trope.

We will see that indeed an ambivalent anxiety existed in the White South African art world about the paradox of the “unspoilt artist” (Sack 1988; Leeb-du Toit 1995; also see Stevenson and Bosland 2008:23, 28; Rankin 2011:105; Oguibe 2002). Despite the intention to employ European artistic formats and techniques, this “unspoilt artist” was supposed to develop an authentic and distinctly “African” style, free of European influence. I found this expressed most explicitly in a letter of recommendation by Mariannhill’s Sr. Pientia Selhorst CPS for the sculptor Franz Hodi: “Franz is well ahead in his profession and given opportunity he will be able to serve the Xhosa people well. His style is primitive in the good sense of the word. He is not europeanised but expresses himself originally and African”.⁶³⁷ In order to work effectively, this “testimonial” had to address the South African art world with a distinct and familiar set of framings. The “art of segregation”, as I use it in this chapter’s title, therefore has the additional

⁶³⁷ CPSA-GR: Selhorst, Sr. Pientia, 14.03.1966, “Testimonial for Franz Hodi”.

meaning of an explicit and elaborate strategy to keep European and African art apart. Within the discourse of segregation, the production of knowledge about the Other aimed at establishing this difference artificially. “Primitive art” was coaxed into existence, first in Europe around 1900 and then in South Africa during the 1920s. Both developments were an effort to establish the “native mind” in the work of ethnologists, anthropologists, psychologists, art historians, and eventually the public common sense.

As Lize Robbroeck (2003, 2006) has shown, some South African art historians and anthropologists continued to *write* this essentialising segregation of two distinct art worlds throughout and even beyond Apartheid (also see Wolbert 1998b). In the previous chapter we realised that Africans and their material culture were certainly not “disappearing” and that the statement of a “salvage paradigm” was rather a strategy to motivate allies within an international competition about “ethnographic” objects. Also, Africans have always been creative in the same way as Europeans—as much as Europeans have always been copyists and imitators. Br. Aegidius Müller is only one immediate example for this fact. We now need to consider what “creativity” is in this particular case and that an extended understanding of authorship always relies on pre-existing images. We therefore always have to deal with multiple authors, who are equally distributed beyond their own oeuvres. De Charmoy’s “suggestion of a similar scene” to Bhengu, is what Gell (1998) would have called a “weak protention”, the anticipation of a later work in an oeuvre. Other than a “strong protention”, a weak one had not been produced *explicitly* for this purpose. Moreover, De Charmoy did not know that Müller’s creations had already been “weak”, or even “strong retentions”, which therefore incorporated, or even copied preexisting images.

Since the 1920s, Black South Africans were able to increase public awareness for their own artistic potential and creative agency, not least because they were acknowledged as individual artists within specific artistic fora. But at the same time, White educationalists and art patrons attempted to influence and control the outcome. In a rigidly segregationist society, they attempted to achieve the paradox of disentangling “Native artists” from “White artists”. By making sure that Black artists remained uninfluenced by European artistic ideas, they hoped to maintain a clear perspective on “what is in a native’s mind”. With the establishment of academic social anthropology in South Africa and the increasing popularity of sociology and psychology by the early 1920s, various contemporary scholars, missionaries, and ethnologists alike, claimed that the “crisis” was no longer the looming loss of the authentic Other, but how to penetrate the “native mind” (eg. Huss 1931, Van Warmelo 1941, also see Grossert 1969, Schlosser 1952). To do so, new kinds of “working objects” were necessary, which could be interpreted even in the subject’s absence (cf. Daston 2015, Daston and Galison 2007, cf. Chapter Six). Bhengu’s paintings also appeared to be perfect “epistemic images” in the sense of Daston (2015): authentic manifestations of the authentic Other and thus by definition authentic representations of the Other’s “daily life”. Gerard Bhengu was the ideal medium to his first patron, Max Kohler, to produce such working objects in the form of paintings. However, while there was indeed the ideal of a simple and straightforward access route through these paintings to both the native mind

and lifeworld, we will realise that the actual practice of knowledge production through paintings, photographs, other objects, and texts at Centocow Mission was much more complex. It involved close cooperation and in fact the co-authorship of Gerard Bhengu and Max Kohler.

In the history of science and art, neither the medium of photography, nor the one of painting have ever been considered as absolutely objective evidence or as authentic representation. They must rather be scrutinised according to the epistemic regimes of very particular places, times, and relationships according to the potential intermingling of “epistemic virtues” (Daston and Galison 2007). I will show that there were at least six reasons for Kohler to stimulate Bhengu to paint. His primary intentions for both media were scientific, but at the same time they transgressed professional and private spheres. Kohler believed that due to Bhengu’s “native” perception and exceptional artistic faculty, his paintings had the extraordinary capacity to mediate ideas for various interests. Kohler’s intentions, the negotiations with Bhengu, and also unintended outcomes of these efforts, can be delineated by retracing the creation of several examples in concrete historical occasions.

The first four sections of this chapter explore Kohler’s and Bhengu’s relationship, as well as the epistemic premises for the paintings they co-produced. Sections five and six deal with the only traceable moment of Bhengu’s painterly production, which can be related to a concrete occasion. First, I approach the occasion itself, and in a second step, I consider the post-production and publication process of the resulting paintings. The last two sections eventually look at the two men’s painterly and photographic self-fashioning. These must be considered, not only according to the epistemic premises discussed in previous sections, but also through the extended social relationships of both men. Only in this way can we begin to understand art and segregation as connected efforts. Like photography before, it was now the medium of painting, which allowed colonial actors to even better represent Otherness, and to perform its production and producers at the same time.

Approaching Gerard Bhengu

My discussion will be restricted to the period of Gerard Bhengu's collaboration with Max Kohler up to 1931, when Bhengu moved away from Centocow Mission. This relationship brought forth some remarkable textual and visual works, which cannot be ascribed to merely one of them. Therefore we must analyse Kohler's texts, Bhengu's paintings, as well as the involved photographs in combination. In order to understand the cooperation of both individuals, I apply the extended notion of authorship, which I introduced in Chapter One. Kohler's published and unpublished texts and correspondence, as well as Bhengu's paintings at the archive of the Missionsärztliches Institut in Würzburg and the Killie Campbell Africana Library (KCAL) have so far not been evaluated in their entirety, and especially not in combination.⁶³⁸ Max Kohler provided the first stockpile of artistic images to inspire Bhengu. Some of these he sourced through connections in Munich, one of the centres of the European fine art world at the time. In Chapters One and Two we realised that, next to Mariannhill Monastery, Centocow itself had a considerable stockpile of photographs in place by 1914. This collection of images had been made possible and created within the very particular local relationships between the missionaries, Africans, and government representatives. These exceptional relationships and their photographic outcome enabled some of Bhengu's paintings through his equally exceptional relationship to Kohler and the contemporary art lobby.

Acknowledging this early circulation and wide availability of images to Europeans and Africans alike, in this case preempts research projects framed as "visual repatriation" (see Introduction). I have earlier addressed this issue and instead suggested an approach of "reconnection" (Rippe 2007, 2015), which acknowledges the fact that photographs had been circulating in South Africa since their production, including a presence among Black South Africans. The above mentioned project of the "Gerard Bhengu Gallery & Museum" has in fact addressed this question by employing the term "heritage" (Kotze 2013), however without much reflection beyond a touristic level, and no direct involvement of Black South Africans living around Centocow. Due to the complexity of this situation, it cannot be fully addressed here. It must therefore suffice to say that in order to study claims to historical representation or heritage, we have to consider a much more complex assemblage of image traditions. Claims have indeed been made by "returning" Bhengu to Centocow in form of an exhibitionary institution dedicated solely to him. Images currently displayed in the Bhengu Gallery exhibition, or the *préterrain* discussed by current scholarship on Bhengu, do not do justice to these complex assemblages. I hope to provide such a historical basis in this chapter by presenting a nuanced perspective on the production of images at Centocow around 1930.

Scholarly work on Centocow, Kohler, and Bhengu has so far not included all relevant archives and thus not been sufficiently transnational. Research on the work of Bhengu from a perspective situated in South Africa (eg. Savory 1965; Schlosser 1971, 1975; Zaverdinos and

⁶³⁸ But see Hölzl (2011, 2012) for an attempt to position Kohler within the wider culture of the AMI.

Leeb-du Toit 1995), or research on Kohler situated in Europe (Hölzl 2011, 2012), both did not follow important aspects of circulating mimetic capital between South Africa and Europe. Previous art historical works on Bhengu, for example by Leeb-du Toit, Nettleton, Savory and Zaverdinos, thus provide only a limited view on Bhengu's and Kohler's formative period at Centocow, and instead focus on his later work. By building on these authors, I explore the related production process against the data and theories of this study's previous chapters. In so far I hope to reassemble the intersecting networks of people, images, and objects, as well as the dependences and dependencies they created (cf. Hodder 2016).

Bhengu's own voice appears muted and passive in Kohler's published articles and private letters, because Kohler never addressed Bhengu directly and often refers to him only in passing. We have to consider the fact that Bhengu was only 16 years of age when meeting Kohler. Other than through his artwork, his possibilities to provide lasting commentary were thus limited. As these are the only available primary sources regarding the relationship of Bhengu and Kohler, the latter's person and perspective is dominant in my account. Indeed, there exists only one single textual ego-document by Bhengu, which I will address briefly below. Therefore, in order to understand Bhengu, we have to understand Kohler.⁶³⁹ I begin by positioning Bhengu in the evolving South African art world. After recalling the few things we know about his childhood at Centocow Mission, we shall also have a clearer picture on the ethnical construction of Bhengu as either "Zulu" or "Bhaca". In the next section I explore several episodes of Kohler's biography that were crucial for his own intellectual formation and in consequence for his influence on Bhengu.

In the previous three parts, I discussed the complexity of photographic authorship and the general importance of (potentially) Black African intermediaries for missionaries, their linguists, collectors, and photographers. In the case of Mariannahill's photographic production, there was indeed an international network in place that enabled Müller to produce, reproduce, and disseminate his photographs. But with the medium of artistic painting, which concerns us here, more questions arise: these include patronage, as well as the singularity and authenticity of the artwork. Therefore, not only the painting's semiotic relationship to the depicted subject becomes an even greater concern, but also the involved social relationships and co-authorship. The importance of intense long-term collaborations between producers of art and their social

⁶³⁹ See Wright (2011:345) for a similar argument on the role of interlocutors in the making of the James Stuart Archive. The only published sources on Kohler's and Bhengu's relationship, which are based directly on interviews, are the following: First, one article (1971, also see 1975) by the German ethnologist Katesa Schlosser (1920-2010). Schlosser interviewed Bhengu during visits to South Africa in 1953 and 1959, and also had contact with Kohler's widow Betty over the same time period. Second, a very short catalogue text by Phylis Savory (1965) based on interviews with Bhengu, as well as others. Third, the catalogue of an exhibition on Bhengu's work in 1995 by Annelies Zaverdinos and Juliette Leeb-du Toit (Zaverdinos 1995, also see Leeb-du Toit 1993 and 2003). Zaverdinos and Leeb-du Toit interviewed members of the extended Kohler Family in 1995. I complemented these sources through interviews with Kohler's daughter Elisabeth Weinberger and his grandson George Weinberger. Until 1932, Kohler and his wife had five children, of whom Elisabeth is the last surviving. The last surviving daughter of Gerard Bhengu was born in the early 1950s, and I only had a chance to meet her in passing.

networks (Becker 2008 [1982]), as well as between anthropologists and their subjects, have been widely acknowledged (Clifford and Marcus 1986; Lekgoathi 2009; Pels and Salemink 1994, 1999; Pels 2014; Sanjek 1993; Schumaker 2001; Tilley and Gordon 2007). The critique of the anthropological community against their predecessors was, however, that the contribution and even the presence of “native” collaborators had often been obscured in the published ethnography.

Following the work of Bronwen Douglas on indigenous agency in the creation of European art (1999), I ask how the relationships between co-producers shaped the processes of painting and writing. The “indigenous counter-signs”, described by Douglas, may however be harder to identify, excavate, and decipher than she suggests. Even if Bhengu’s paintings may be considered as what Douglas calls “ethno-historical texts” and therefore contain such signs, I rather scrutinise the influence of Kohler for traces of compromise between the two men. We may then be able to consider texts and images in combination as inscriptions in the process of their mobilisation for a particular purpose (cf. Latour 1990).

In stark contrast to this situation is the system of a European “art world” (Becker 2008), where the persona of the creative artist is the most prominent one. The fact that Bhengu was gradually drawn into this art world created excitement as well as resistance, and accordingly multiple traces. This allows us to study artistic production, as well as the production of anthropological knowledge as a process and social relationship. This was impossible in the case of Müller’s photographs, as his interactions with potential intermediaries and contemporaries hardly left any traces, other than the photographs themselves. There simply was no adequate forum allowing for such manifestations. Mapping the scenario of an “art world” onto the collaboration between a European lay ethnographer and his African research-collaborator-cum-painter may appear forced. But in fact, for the first time in 1926, exactly such a scenario began to emerge at Centocow Mission.

On a global scale, the engagement of non-Europeans with figurative drawing was not only considered noteworthy in the context of mission-related education, media, and propaganda, but also in the realm of academic ethnology and psychology. In his professional relationship with Bhengu, Kohler thus followed a tradition of animating research subjects to craft texts and paintings, which could then be interpreted as “working objects”. At least since the late 1880s, some ethnologists started analysing drawings by colonial subjects, in order to evaluate their representative capabilities. By requesting them to produce drawings of their surroundings, and then hearing their interpretations of them, ethnologists probed their capability to *perceive*, as well as to *re-produce* resemblances. During the early 1930s, Walter Benjamin referred to this two-sided process as “mimetic faculty” (1977a and 1977b). Ideally, these drawings were carried out in the ethnologist’s presence, so that he could follow the process.⁶⁴⁰ This often resulted in the

⁶⁴⁰ Joachim Rees and Christopher Pinney suggest this was the case most of all in German-speaking countries (Rees 2007:234). However, also examples from other countries exist, such as the British Alfred C. Haddon (1904). The most commonly discussed examples are from South America, such as Von den Steinen (1894) and Koch-Grünberg (1905). Also see Weule (1909) and Vierkandt (1912). This list of examples could be extended

inclusion of the ethnologist within the drawing. In the years prior to the First World War, drawings by “primitives” became of particular interest to ethnology in conjunction with applied psychology. The latter discipline considered drawing as a medium, which supposedly allowed for the comparative study of how children, the “mentally insane”, as well as the “primitive” processed information, and how they accordingly expressed the result visually. By 1914, this approach and the category of “primitive art” was also included in ethnographic research instructions directed towards non-professionals (Ankermann 1914). The scientific value of this methodology was only questioned explicitly by the 1930s (eg. Lips 1983 [1937]:48-49, also see Rampley 2000). The concern with “resemblances” in “primitive” art also entered the discussion of art history’s concern with “resemblance” in portraiture (see Waetzoldt 1908, Albien 1911). As I suggested in Chapter Two, at about the same time this concern was also refracted in contemporary caricature dealing with colonial situations.

Eventually, during the early 20th century, European artists such as cubists and expressionists discovered African art as inspiration for their own. In 1925, when expressionist artists were firmly established in Germany, the ethnologist Karl Weule announced in the journal *Jahrbuch für Prähistorische und Ethnographische Kunst* that the related interest of artists in “primitive art” may legitimise its re-assessed presentation to an academic audience (Weule 1926:87). At the same time, in 1926, the Natal Society of Artists introduced the “Karl Gundelfinger Award”. It animated the local White art scene to produce paintings or drawings “in any medium, descriptive of the domestic or tribal life, or the customs of South African Natives” (Natal Society of Artists 1926:31, also see Sack 1988:10). According to the South African art historian Alexander Duffey, the style on demand at the time was an “academic realism” (Duffey 1999:111). This was rather different from the modernism of the contemporary art scenes in the centres of Europe where one experimented with abstract arrangements and montages. But as a matter of fact, while maintaining a highly realistic style, Bhengu too created painterly montages by merging multiple images into one painting. Only few of the results can still be recognised as montages, and were never supposed to be recognised as such in the first place.

It was unavoidable that these contemporary artistic trends eventually influenced Kohler, and consequently Bhengu. Kohler had been immersed in the art scene of Munich between 1905 and 1922, which at the time was one of the centres of the expressionist movement and relied considerably on the inspiration through “primitive art”. Also members of Kohler’s wider academic circle, such as Richard Thurnwald, were ongoing proponents of studying non-European art from a psychological perspective. At least in one documented case Kohler analysed Bhengu’s work—and thus Bhengu himself—in psychoanalytical terms (see below). But at the same time between 1928 and 1941, he employed Bhengu’s paintings as illustrations and “objective” evidence for his medical and ethnographic writings. After the Second World War, the German ethnologist Katesa Schlosser was one of the first scholars to pick up the discourse on figurative art by Black South Africans (Schlosser 1952, 1971, 1975, 1977, also see Grossert

considerably.

1968, De Jager 1973).⁶⁴¹ With Bhengu being one of her prime examples, Schlosser still worked in the tradition of ethnological and psychological approaches of the early 1900s and 1920s, which distinguished European art from “naïve” art. Analysing Bhengu’s work accordingly, Schlosser stated that it showed “none of the mistakes of naïve illustrative painting”, such as misrepresentations of physical and spatial arrangements (Schlosser 1971:125).

Bhengu’s success in the South African art world since the 1920s was considerable, but still predated by some others, such as Simoni Mnguni’s inclusion in the annual exhibition of the Natal Society of Artists in Durban in 1925, or the creation of the new category “Special Exhibit by Native Artist” to accommodate Moses Tladi in the South African Academy exhibition in Johannesburg in 1930 (Sack 1988:12, also see Carman 2011:203). Already in 1928, Gerard Bhengu had his first solo exhibition at Mariannhill Monastery. But even if being credited as valuable art at the time, the work of Africans was still presented as if constituting a totally segregated art world. However, as we shall see, its boundaries were highly permeable.

While authorship had rarely been attributed to individual creators of “material culture”, craft, or performance around 1900, authorship in the case of Bhengu became the very centre of the discourse, almost more central than his artworks. Due to a continuous engagement and a growing reputation under various patrons, Bhengu’s painterly work became entangled in exactly the same chain of institutionalised discourses as the photographs of Mariannhill: mission propaganda, ethnology, and eventually art. In the process, his work was able to fulfil new claims to cultural authenticity, in particular for Bhengu’s first patron, Max Kohler. Like Müller before him, Kohler consciously reflected on the representative value of his protégé’s work, pondered its objectivity, engaged with certain modes of authentication, collected local material culture, and established and continued textual ethnographic traditions.

The South African art world considered Bhengu’s work as exceptional for “Black art” and thus brought it rhetorically closer to European “fine art”. Nevertheless, in practice, Bhengu’s patrons acted contradictorily by refusing to provide him with institutional art education, while at the same time having him copy European “fine art”. The medium of watercolour, which Bhengu employed exclusively, provided ample possibilities to freely assimilate available mimetic capital. Throughout her article on Bhengu, Schlosser used the German term “*zeichnen* [to draw]” alternately with “*malen* [to paint]”. “Drawing” she distinguished from “painting” regarding the accentuation of outlines and detail. She diagnosed a development in Bhengu’s work “*vom Zeichnerischen* [from the graphic] [...] *zum Malerischen* [to the pictorial]”, which, so she wrote, were eventually in balance. This balance, so she claimed, made his work “more valuable for their purpose as documentary illustrations of Bantu life” (Schlosser 1971:125). In their correspondences, Kohler and his superior Becker in Germany generally referred to Bhengu’s water colours as “*Zeichnungen* [drawings]”. In one of the cases I discuss, Kohler further distinguished between “*Skizzen* [sketches]” and “*Bilder* [pictures]”. In all cases, he referred to

⁶⁴¹ Mind that Grossert was an educationalist and De Jager an anthropologist. Apparently, the study of Black art was not yet deemed interesting by art historians at the time (cf. Van Robbroeck 2006).

Bhengu as “*mein Maler* [my painter]”. Throughout the text, I will refer to Bhengu’s works as paintings, as this seems to be most appropriate in the English language for the medium of watercolour. It may be that contemporary commentators generally tried to avoid the German honorific term “*Gemälde* [painting]”, as this would have brought Bhengu’s work too close to the alleged sophistication of Euro-American fine art painters. This relationship between “race” and “art” was established in the period of segregation, and became even more accentuated through the racial classifications under Apartheid.

With the acclaimed large format publication *Gerard Bhengu—Zulu Artist*⁶⁴² (Savory 1965), Bhengu eventually achieved the success that his first patron, Max Kohler, had envisioned for him in the late 1920s. In 1962, Phyllis Savory (née Willson) wrote to Bhengu’s patron Killie Campbell that “[t]he publication of a BHENGU [sic] book should put him ‘on the map’, and make his name throughout Africa and the rest of the world”.⁶⁴³ When attempting to do a “‘write up’ of [Bhengu’s] whole life from a small child” in early 1963, Savory did not consider Bhengu himself a sufficiently reliable source. In 1962 her preferred informant on Bhengu, “Danny” Malcolm, had died.⁶⁴⁴ Killie Campbell then pointed out that Savory now would have to rely on Bhengu himself. Savory nevertheless continued to search for other people, who had known Bhengu since his youth. She found such a person in the former District Inspector of Native Education, S. R. Dent.⁶⁴⁵

Bhengu’s promotion as “Zulu” had already been established when the collector De Charmoy referred to Bhengu as “the Zulu artist” in his letter to Mariannhill in 1946 (also see Shaw 1949:631). Only since Schlosser’s work (1971), Bhengu was referred to as “Bhaca” instead. Consequently, other authors perpetuated that he had initially portrayed his own people in an auto-ethnographic attempt. However, Bhengu was not born in the so-called “Location 3” near Centocow Mission, which was predominantly inhabited by people identifying themselves as “Bhaca”, but on the nearby Farm Dronkvlei.⁶⁴⁶ His parents had converted to Christianity and associated themselves with the *Amakholwa* community at Esibomvini near Centocow only a few years earlier. According to Yvonne Winters, the Bhengu family has a complex migration history, which rather points to an origin near the Natal coast.⁶⁴⁷ The ethnic construction of Bhengu as either “Zulu” or “Bhaca” (cf. Chapter Four) was a result of the increasing pressure for racial

⁶⁴² In the book the ascription reappears with the addition “the amazing self-taught Zulu artist”. Savory had cooperated with Bhengu earlier for the less popular *Xhosa Fireside Tales* (1963).

⁶⁴³ KCAL: letter, Willson (Savory) to Campbell, 20.12.1962. In the same letter Savory explains that she explicitly attempted to model “a book of Bhengu’s pictures on the same lines as the Tretchikoff book that Mr Timmins produced a few years ago. That book MADE Tretchikoff.”

⁶⁴⁴ Daniel McKinnon Malcolm was chief inspector of native education in Natal between 1920 and 1944.

⁶⁴⁵ KCAL: letter, Willson [Savory] to Campbell, 25.01.1963.

⁶⁴⁶ *Liber Baptisatorum*, Centocow Mission, 1910: The baptism register of Centocow recorded that he was born on Dronk Vlei Farm, to Timothy Bhengu and Eugenia Duma on 06. September 1910 (Nr. 1720), baptised on 26. September 1910 as “Gerard Anton” by Fr. Alanus [Weber]; confirmation on 03. XII. 1922. The name Gerard is exceptionally underscored with a wavy line. Bhengu’s father had only been baptised two years prior to Bhengu’s birth. Oral history around Centocow has it that Gerard Bhengu’s baptismal name had been inspired by Fr. Gerard Wolpert, Centocow’s first superior.

⁶⁴⁷ Personal communication Yvonne Winters, 2011. Also see Winters, cited in Leeb-du Toit (1995:40).

classification under Apartheid. Savory even considered it essential to consult the Chief Native Commissioner before publishing, as she did not “[...] want the Native Department to be left in the dark,—[as otherwise] they might not be too pleased!”.⁶⁴⁸ In the course of racial segregation, Apartheid, and the nostalgia for authenticity created for tourists and the general outside world, “Zulu” and “Bhaca” ethnicities became artistic brands. This segregated art world, however, did not attribute Black artists with the same inherent potential for artistic genius as accomplished White artists (cf. Robbroeck 2011).

Other than few marginal anecdotes about his parents and siblings, there is not much information about Bhengu’s early life at Centocow.⁶⁴⁹ After Bhengu’s father had died in 1920, his mother and three younger siblings must have been living under economic hardship. Savory mentioned that the first people to acknowledge Bhengu’s inclination to drawing—apart from his mother—were his teacher Adalbert Duma and the school inspector Harold Jowitt during a visitation in 1920. Both supplied him with drawing material, the first with crayon colours, the latter with water colours and a sketch book (Savory 1965:9).⁶⁵⁰ The station’s chronicle recorded that a teacher’s summer course took place at Centocow from 14 to 30 January 1920. Next to approximately 120 African teachers, it was attended by the before mentioned H. Jowitt, the Chief Inspector of Native Education Charles T. Loram, the District Inspector S.R. Dent, Loram’s successor D. McK. Malcolm, and the Mariannhill priest Fr. Bernard Huss. It may have been during this occasion that the department first became aware of Bhengu’s artistic talent, as the courses generally engaged with teaching methods, and at least since 1928 featured arts and crafts exhibitions. At the time, the education of Black South Africans was still almost exclusively in the hands of missionaries. During the restructuring of their project, the Natal Education Department therefore had good reasons to draw missionaries close as allies.

In the publication of his Columbia-based dissertation, *The Education of the South African Native* (1917), Charles T. Loram⁶⁵¹ (1879-1940) set out to provide a description and improvement of the educational situation in South Africa.⁶⁵² He explicitly did so as a response to the South African “native question” and how the situation had been dealt with in the USA. Here one can get a glimpse of the role of “drawing” just before the 1920s as a school subject within the general curriculum relative to other subjects, in particular the industrial training of Africans: the intention of the educational system was not to provide Black pupils with training in the fine arts, but with just enough visual skills to enable their performance in industrial work. The

⁶⁴⁸ KCAL: letter, Willson [Savory] to Campbell, 20.12.1962.

⁶⁴⁹ Today’s oral history around Centocow is mostly recollected from Bhengu’s only published biography in the English language (Zaverdinos and Leeb-du Toit 1995).

⁶⁵⁰ I took the liberty to correct Savory’s spelling mistakes regarding names.

⁶⁵¹ Loram is generally acknowledged as being “South Africa’s leading white authority on African education” at the time (Davis 1984:111). Between 1917 and 1920, he was the first Chief Inspector of Native Education in Natal. Between 1920 and 1928, he worked for the Union Native Affairs Commission. Since 1929, he once more served as Chief Inspector of Education and since 1930 Superintendent of Education, both at the Natal Education Department (Davis 1977:537).

⁶⁵² Once more it was A.T. Bryant, who had some impact on this situation as one of the three people commenting on the book’s manuscript (cf. Loram 1917:XII).

establishment of a strictly segregated art world was already hinted at in Loram's comments on the teaching of history as a subject: "The native also has traditions and it would be of great cultural value not only to him, but also to all of us, if he could be encouraged to develop and adapt the half forgotten arts and crafts of his forefathers." (Loram 1917:99, quoted in Moore 1990:87).

Even though Loram never theorised on the topic, the fact that he at least paid attention to how the subject of drawing was taught in the course of African teacher training, shows that it was treated with considerable importance. Despite being often referred to as a "liberal", Loram advocated segregationist and paternalistic ideas (Heyman 1972, Davis 1984). The full impact of Loram's, and later Malcolm's direct interactions with Mariannhill Missionaries, such as Huss, require further research.⁶⁵³ One departure point would be Loram's and Malcolm's frequent presence at both Centocow and Mariannhill during the 1920s. Even before and after 1920, members of the Native Education Department frequented Mariannhill Monastery, Centocow Mission, and Lourdes Mission for visitations and extended social courses. Loram, his family and entourage even spent their private holidays at Centocow Mission, on one occasion for almost three weeks over New Year 1921. The chronicle of Centocow Mission recorded visits by such influential government officials. It does not, however, contain information on Gerard Bhengu during his early formative period between 1920 and late 1925, when he eventually met his first long-term patron Max Kohler.

⁶⁵³ But see Rich (1993). For Loram's interaction with Protestant missionaries and ideas of segregation see Elphick (2012).

The Artist and his Patron—The Ethnographer and his Amanuensis

On 23 January 1886, Maximilian Joseph Kohler was born in Würzburg, Germany. He studied natural sciences (*Naturwissenschaft*) and medicine at the universities of Würzburg and Munich from 1905, received his approbation in 1913, and then opened a medical practice in Massing (Upper Bavaria). Until the end of the First World War, he served as a military physician (*Unterarzt*).⁶⁵⁴ During the war, he spent several months continuously in Munich between 1915 and 1916.⁶⁵⁵ After the War, in 1918, he opened a medical practice near Massing, in the village Neumarkt an der Rott (today Neumarkt-Sankt Veit), approximately 100 km to the east of Munich. The fact that he was already the second practical physician in the village did not augur well in terms of financial prospects. Immediately after the First World War, Kohler unsuccessfully tried to affiliate himself with a mission in South America. His brother had already emigrated to Chile before the war, and worked as a pharmacist near Santiago. One of Kohler's incentives to aspire to the relative economic security of mission work was the glut of medical practitioners after the First World War, the insufficient revenue from health insurances, and the dramatic financial inflation of the early 1920s.⁶⁵⁶ As a subsequent affiliation with a mission near Manila on the Philippines also failed, he eventually resorted to South Africa. In 1921, he married Betty Burger, and their first child Karl was born in 1922.

In the same year, Kohler contacted the newly-founded Catholic Missionsärztliches Institut in Würzburg, in response to a call for mission doctors by the institute's founder Fr. Christophorus Becker (Becker 1921). In 1922, the institute was established as a branch (*Ortsgruppe*) of the Katholischer Deutscher Verein für Missionsärztliche Fürsorge, which had been founded in 1921 in Aachen. German mission congregations, the Pontifical Mission Societies, the Catholic Diocese of Würzburg in cooperation with the hospital Julius-Spital in Würzburg, expressed the need to have a European base for the training of Catholic lay mission doctors. One of the aims was to disentangle the responsibilities and expertise of missionary and mission doctor, which was not at all times compatible with the Catholic doctrines for the conduct of priests, especially regarding the interaction with female patients (cf. Hölzl 2011:60). Various articles in the first issue of the institute's yearbook (1924) mention the headway of Protestant missionaries in terms of medical practice, which nevertheless were seen as exemplary (also see Harries and Maxwell 2012:14). The writers also stressed that the presence of a professional doctor would clearly attract potential converts, as did the schools usually provided by mission stations (Essen 1991, Hölzl 2011:58-61, also see Egger 2012).

Fr. Christophorus Becker SDS⁶⁵⁷ (1875-1937) was the institute's first director and made a

⁶⁵⁴ There is no information on his war experience and whether he was involved in any combat operations. However, he is known to have earned the distinction of the "Iron Cross" (Olsen 1933:145).

⁶⁵⁵ SM: PMB G/C/K 349, 13.XII.1915.

⁶⁵⁶ Kohler reflected on these issues in considerable detail in the family's "*Hausbuch*", which his daughter Elisabeth Weinberger and grandson George Weinberger kindly allowed me to read.

⁶⁵⁷ *Societas Divini Salvatoris* (Society of the Divine Saviour).

particular effort to maintain regular contact with the mission doctors abroad. His extensive correspondence is still preserved in the institute's archive today. Through his letters he tried to provide moral support for his protégées and negotiated their material needs with suppliers in Europe. He also mediated other professional contacts for them in Europe and the USA. Furthermore, he made sure to receive the doctors' frequent contributions to the institute's yearbook in the form of informative and entertaining articles. The institute's yearbook was similar to Mariannhill's contemporary annual propaganda publication *Mariannhill-Kalender* in terms of layout and content. Becker aimed for topics that would be scientific, but at the same time exciting, not only for medical specialists and new mission doctors, but for a broader German audience of potential benefactors. Whenever Kohler indicated to Becker that he may not be able to deliver material for the next issue, Becker repeated that Kohler may present something on the influence of "magicians and medicine men", as, so he wrote, this would always find interest. Like Mariannhill's periodicals, the yearbook thus functioned as Catholic propaganda, with the aim to entertain, raise funds, and recruit medical professionals. Bhengu's paintings, which Kohler used as illustrations for his articles in the yearbook until the early 1930s, must therefore be analysed against this background. Emphasising the general importance of images for the periodical, Becker's successor Bosslet reminded Kohler in 1938 that "photographs are the best propaganda material".⁶⁵⁸ We may therefore assume that Kohler's scientific interests, his approach to images, and his general publication efforts were at least in parts influenced by his early writings in the propaganda periodical.

Kohler's daughter Elisabeth told me that her father admired the Lutheran mission doctor Albert Schweitzer, who became popular in the 1920s through publications on his time in Guinea. Also the first issue of the institute's yearbook presented Schweitzer as exemplary. Kohler read Schweitzer's books, such as *On the Edge of the Primeval Forest: Experiences and Observations of a Doctor in Equatorial Africa* (1922).⁶⁵⁹ He was thus not only inspired by Schweitzer's medical activity as missionary, but may have also seen him as an example of one who combined a career as professional writer. Before Kohler could consider following such a career and leave for South Africa eventually, he first had to master the English language, study for a diploma in tropical medicine in Hamburg, as well as for an English medical diploma in Dublin.⁶⁶⁰

Kohler eventually became one of the first ten doctors to be sent to different parts of the world, and the first to be sent to the African continent. Several other members of the institute were stationed in South Africa after Kohler, with whom he had infrequent contact over the years. As Mariannhill Monastery was already served by the locally recruited Dr. McMurtry, Kohler was eventually relocated to Centocow Mission. The formal work contract involved the religious vow

⁶⁵⁸ AMI: letter, Bosslet to Kohler, 18.10.1938. My own translation from the German original.

⁶⁵⁹ Kohler owned a copy of the second edition's German translation (Schweitzer 1926).

⁶⁶⁰ These events and Kohler's time at Centocow are documented through regular correspondence with Becker since 1922. I thank the institutes archivist, Sr. Elisabeth Mager; the *Stadtarchivpfleger* of Neumarkt-St-Veit, Walter Jani, for information on Kohler's time thereat; as well as the *Ortschronist* of Massing, Albert Hüttner, on Kohler's time in the village.

to serve at Centocow for at least ten years. The spatial proximity of the Missionsärztliches Institut to Mariannhill's Pius Seminar in Würzburg enabled the close cooperation between these two organisations, in both Germany and South Africa.⁶⁶¹ In November 1925, at the age of 39, Max Kohler eventually left Würzburg for South Africa with his wife Betty and their three-year-old son Karl. After a few days at Mariannhill,⁶⁶² they arrived at Centocow Mission on 30 November.



Figure 126: text on verso of postcard: “[...] during consultation. The brother serves as interpreter for men, the sister as interpreter for women [...]”. Max and Betty Kohler after arrival, Easter 1926, unknown photographer (AMI).⁶⁶³

How exactly Kohler and Bhengu first met is unknown. According to Schlosser, it was approximately in March 1926 that Kohler discovered Bhengu's talent when he accepted one of his paintings of a football game in exchange for medicine (Schlosser 1971:123).⁶⁶⁴ Kohler then employed Bhengu to paint for him privately, as well as for professional purposes. He provided Bhengu not only with art materials, but also with a working space in his office, as well as continuous advice on style and content. A page with four photographs in one of Kohler's scrapbooks attests that Bhengu's paintings had a particular presence at Centocow and thus held

⁶⁶¹ Mariannhill's Pius Seminar is located in an adjacent building to the institute, and appears in the film described in Chapter Two.

⁶⁶² The chronicle of Mariannhill Monastery wrongly recorded the arrival of Kohler and family with “*Mitte April 1928*”.

⁶⁶³ AMI: Postcard, Kohler to Becker, 12.04.1926. My own translation from the German original. Also see Mariannhill's *Vergißmeinnicht* (1926:21-22).

⁶⁶⁴ According to other sources, Kohler treated Bhengu for tuberculosis (Jephson 1989, cited in Zaverdinos 1995).

considerable importance for Kohler. They not only decorated the interior of Kohler's office, but even its outside wall (Figure 127). In this environment and through a daily routine of office work, Kohler generally left Bhengu to work at his own pace. Perhaps this is the reason why Bhengu considered himself an autodidact. He also thought that Kohler could not show him much, because he was not an artist himself (Schlosser 1971:123-124).⁶⁶⁵ Next to Bhengu, who also assisted with dispensary work, Kohler employed several women, as midwife, dispensary assistant, and consultation assistant respectively (cf. Figure 128). For whatever reason, he never mentioned these employees in his letters to the institute, other than Bhengu and occasionally Karl's (by now called Charley) nanny.

⁶⁶⁵ Even before, Savory (1965:8), and later Leeb-du Toit (2003:75), wrote that Bhengu was "largely self-taught".



Figure 127: various photographs showing Kohler's office at Centocow. Page from one of Kohler's scrapbooks, titled "Glückliche Reise". Original captions: "[1] Die vorderen 2 Fenster sind Office; [2] Eingang; [3] Schrank; [4] Bilder von der Arzt-Office in Centocow"—"[1] The closest 2 windows belong to the office; [2] Entrance; [3] Cupboard; [4] Pictures of the doctor's office at Centocow" (KCAL).



Figure 128: original caption: “Dr. Kohler und sein schwarzes Personal: Maler (rechts sitzend), Hebamme (links), Apothekengehilfin und Sprechstundengehilfin (stehend)”—“Dr. Kohler and his Black staff: painter (seated right), midwife (left), dispensary assistant and consultation assistant (standing)”, unknown photographer (AMI, also published in Kohler 1930:19).

Kohler and Bhengu had an active working-relationship between 1926 and 1931, and less frequently up to 1934. Even though Schlosser (1971) stated that Bhengu worked for Kohler as early as 1926, it was only by October 1927 that Kohler started referring to him in his correspondence with Becker. Nevertheless, the accessioning book of Bhengu's work at KCAL dates the earliest works to February 1926.⁶⁶⁶ According to Schlosser, Bhengu produced more than 150 works while at Centocow, of which not even one sixth was published at the time with Kohler's articles and books. One such unpublished example is the following painting, currently in the collection of the Johannesburg Art Gallery (Figure 129). It depicts a group of 21 women, children, and men encircling a standing man holding a book in his left hand, while raising the index finger of his right hand high into the air. According to the caption, applied by the registrar at JAG, the man is a preaching catechist and reciting from a Bible or catechism. The women to the right appear in local "Bhaca" fashion and hairstyle, as Bhengu would often depict them in his early work. The backdrop is constituted by a succession of three very distinct houses, as they would not have appeared together in the Centocow area at the time. The dome-shaped house was typical for the Mariannhill area around 1900, while the round house with thatched roof was indeed common around Centocow and Lourdes. Rectangular huts, like the one to the very right were commonly pointed out in photographs of both places as the more "advanced" architecture to be found in Christian settlements. The mountain range in the far background was again typical for Bhengu's correct depictions of the landscape around Centocow (see my discussion below).

Comparing this painting to a photograph taken by Br. Aegidius Müller near Mariannhill in 1909 (Figure 130), allows us to consider Bhengu's painting as a sophisticated adaptation in form of a montage. Using several of Müller's photographs as templates, Bhengu shifted elements and introduced new ones. He copied the postures of many protagonists, for example the sitting man to the very left. Also several of the women to the right are painted in the same postures, but redressed according to the local fashion associated with the "Bhaca". Müller instead had identified the people he photographed as Christian converts in an article (Müller 1910).⁶⁶⁷ Bhengu furthermore replaced the beer receptacle with the preacher and thereby altered the image's main theme. On the one hand, Bhengu eclectically, yet creatively assimilated aspects of circulating images into his own painterly cosmos. On the other hand, he indeed painted mimetically "from life", as we will see in the next example. We no longer have access to all 150 works of Bhengu's oeuvre at Centocow and we also cannot provide photographic prototypes for all of Bhengu's paintings. The exact ratio of Bhengu's work regarding copies and montages on the one hand and mimetic depiction on the other, can therefore no longer be estimated. For the rest of this chapter, I shall thus describe Kohler's and Bhengu's co-productions of socially buoyant images.

⁶⁶⁶ This would have been not even three months after Kohler's arrival. While this may be the case, the listing also confuses an accession number applied by Kohler as "628" with the date "June 1928". This makes the accessioning book an unreliable source.

⁶⁶⁷ I discuss the respective photographic occasion involving several other photographs elsewhere (Rippe 2018).

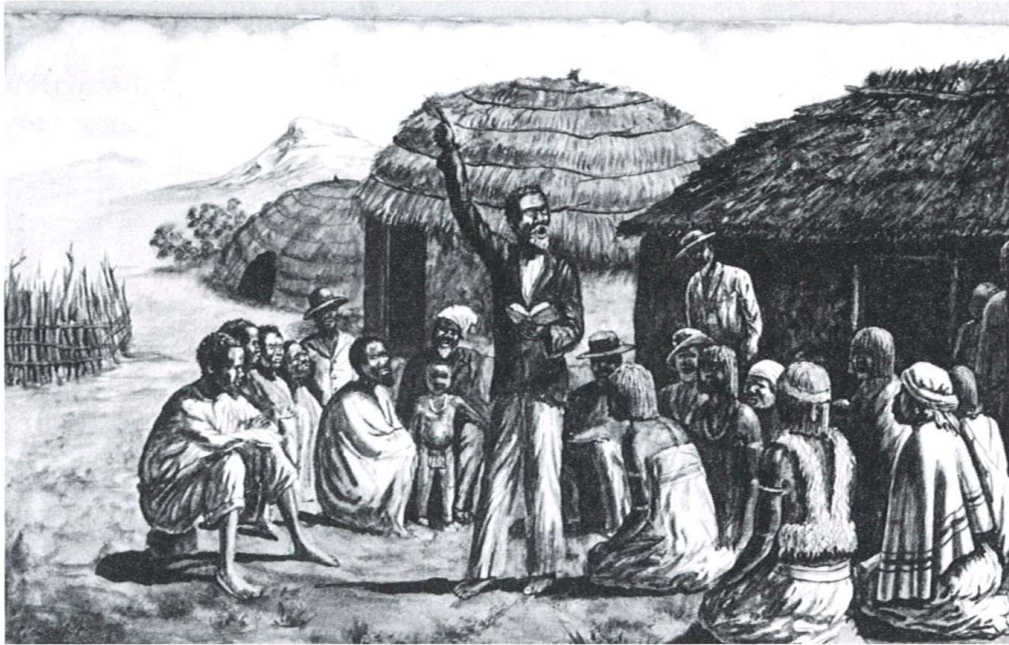


Figure 129: descriptive caption applied by the Johannesburg Art Gallery: “The Preacher” (Johannesburg Art Gallery, as published in Berman 1993:245).



Figure 130: original caption on glass plate negative: “Kaffern beim Biertrunk, 10. September 1909”—“Kafirs at a beer drink, 10 September 1909” (digitally inverted glass plate negative, CMM Archives).

For the first time in 1928, Kohler used 13 of Bhengu's paintings to illustrate an article for the institute's yearbook. According to Kohler's correspondence, Bhengu had produced these paintings before October 1927. Kohler's first illustrated articles were informative descriptions of the mission station and his medical practice to inform a German readership: "The office of the mission doctor [cf. Figures 127 and 131] is the centre of the entire endeavour. It consists of two rooms, which serve as counselling room, pharmacy, operation room, and as artistic studio [*Maleratelier*] for my assistant Gerard Bhengu" (Kohler 1928:18). In the same article, Kohler wrote about another painting by Bhengu that depicts the hospital where the sickest patients sleep:

The European reader will laugh at the fact that I report about such a rudimentary condition at all. The missionary instead will think that it looks a bit too much like painterly order: 'natives will not have themselves housed like this, the doctor is not going to trick me!'

Kohler retorted to this imagined critique:

The image is indeed faithful [*treu*]! After daybreak it does look like this. Even natives adjust to the hospital routine, even if, I do confess it, they have to be very sick to do so.⁶⁶⁸ (Kohler 1928:23)

Initially, Kohler felt the need to defend the paintings' authenticity, as they were supposed to work as mimetic representations within his narrative on his immediate environment and work routine. Only one original painting of this published series is left in the archives of the institute in Würzburg today. All others were sent back to Centocow once they had been reproduced for the yearbook, because Kohler needed them for an exhibition at Mariannhill Monastery. From 1-20 July, 1928 the "First South African Vacation Course" took place at Mariannhill. It was the first of Mariannhill's teachers' vacation courses, which were organised by the various South African Native Departments, and for the first time included both national and international participants. Kohler himself gave a talk in the English language. At the beginning of the course, Bhengu's paintings were exhibited for the very first time, and, as Kohler proudly reported to Becker, with "good success".⁶⁶⁹

⁶⁶⁸ My own translation from the German original.

⁶⁶⁹ AMI: letter, Kohler to Becker, 28.07.1928.

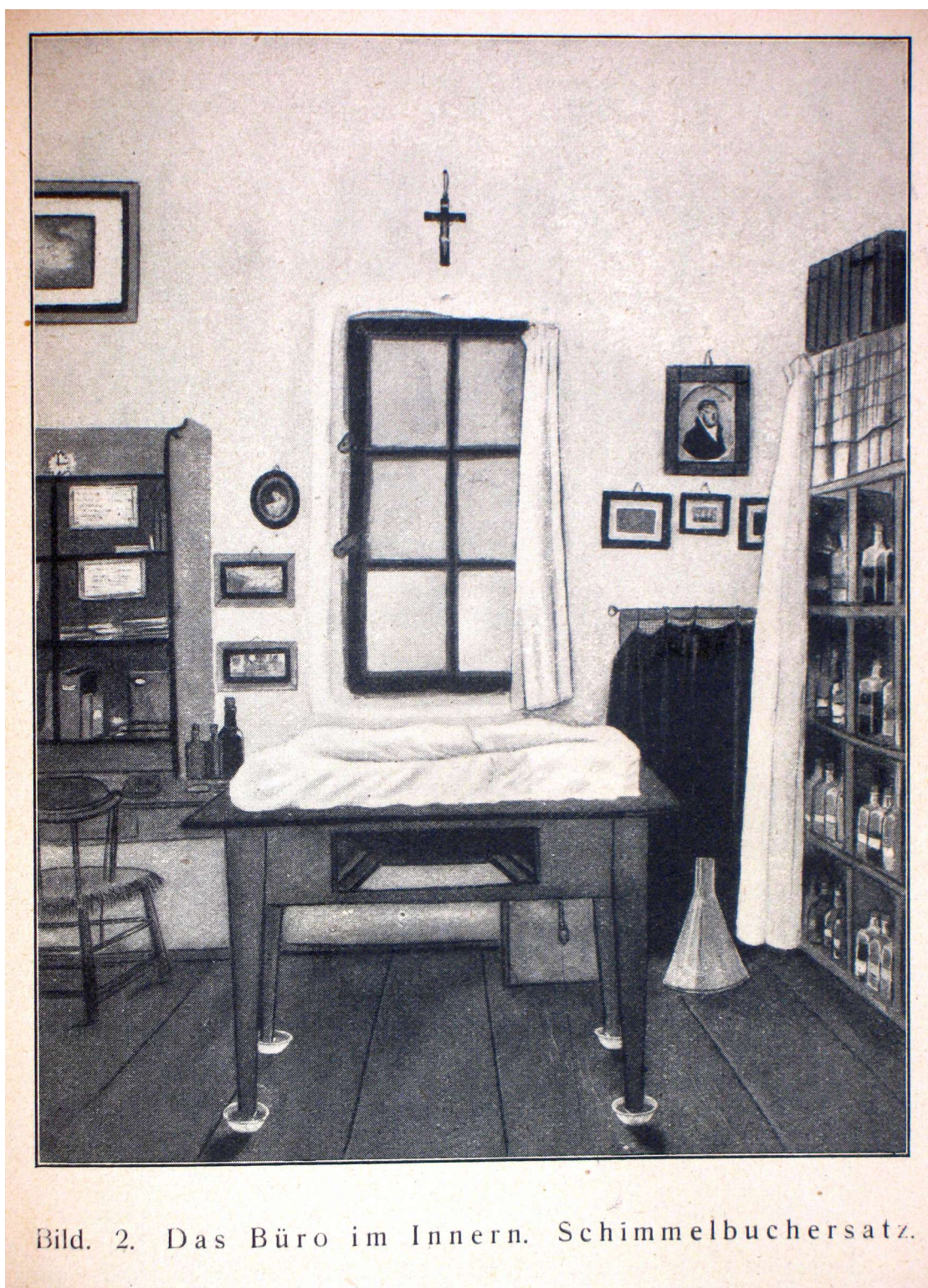


Figure 131: original caption: “Bild. 2. Das Büro im Inneren. Schimmelbachersatz [sic]”⁶⁷⁰—“Figure 2. The interior of the office. Schimmelbusch replacement” (as published in Kohler 1928:19).

⁶⁷⁰ Should be “Schimmelbuschersatz”. A replacement for a medical device to deliver an anaesthetic, conceived by the physician Curt Schimmelbusch.

Some of Kohler's articles eventually discussed medical problems at Centocow, and only by 1930 he started working on an article, which he himself considered as explicitly "ethnographic". This was a study of a so-called "first-fruits ceremony" for which Kohler and Bhengu carried out research together, and for which Bhengu produced several illustrations. It is the only documented occasion where Bhengu drew "from life" that can be localised in space and time. Before addressing this occasion, I discuss the background to ethnological studies in the next section, as well as Kohler's epistemological ideas bridging ethnology, medicine, and art.

Bhengu and Kohler had an intense working relationship of frequent conversations until 1931, when they parted for unknown reasons. Until 1935 they must have still met occasionally when Bhengu visited family at Centocow.⁶⁷¹ During their five years together at Centocow, the two men developed a particular form of interaction through artistic patronage and co-authorship: they interpreted and translated for each other their respective lifeworlds in regard to medical practice, religion, language, ethnography, and art. Kohler considered Bhengu as "his painter-boy" and introduced him to certain traditions of art, while Bhengu worked as his *amanuensis*.⁶⁷² his scribe, translator, Zulu teacher, "door opener", and informant for research. In this way, both men became indispensable intermediaries for each other, and both careers would have developed differently had this not been the case. In late February 1931, at the end of their cooperation, Kohler stated that Bhengu presented a "nice and stimulating avocation" to him, despite being "a lot of work at the same time, and a financial burden, which went into the thousands".⁶⁷³ for years Kohler had been supporting Bhengu's mother and siblings financially.⁶⁷⁴ On top of the school fees for his son Charley and the new car, this additional stress may have caused their separation in the course of 1931. Kohler payed £8 in total to his entire staff per month,⁶⁷⁵ of which Bhengu alone received £3. Bhengu himself considered this an extraordinary salary (Schlosser 1971:123).⁶⁷⁶

Eventually, Kohler wrote to Becker in 1931 that "the gentlemen of the Education Department were very interested in Gerard", and that he had had several possibilities "to get rid of him to Protestant circles", but that "he did not do it". In particular he mentioned "the millionaire Mr. Pim from Johannesburg", whom he had acquainted through Charles T. Loram. Kohler had first met Loram during the before-mentioned vacation course at Mariannhill Monastery in 1928. Loram must have seen Bhengu's exhibition and eventually made Pim aware

⁶⁷¹ In this year, Kohler's ten-year-vow ended, and he was free to leave Centocow. Sketches at the KCAL, which were eventually used in Kohler's 1941 publication, are dated to 1934 and 1935. Thus all "ethnographic" cooperations, which are of interest to me here, can be limited to the timeframe of five years, between 1930 and 1935.

⁶⁷² "A literary or artistic assistant, in particular one who takes dictation or copies manuscripts" (Stevenson and Lindberg 2010). This term was for example used by Van Warmelo to describe Kohler's research intermediaries (Kohler 1941:5).

⁶⁷³ Kohler probably counted in Shillings, not in Pounds.

⁶⁷⁴ AMI: letter, Kohler to Becker, 20.02.1931. My own translation from the German original.

⁶⁷⁵ MIA: letter, Kohler to Becker, ??.05.31.

⁶⁷⁶ CMMA-GR: statistical sheets on Centocow indicate that senior teaching staff at the mission's school received £ 1-6 during the early 1920s.

of Bhengu and his work. James Howard Pim (1862-1934) was an accountant, Johannesburg politician, philanthropist, and art patron.⁶⁷⁷ Since 1916, he had been on the committee of the Johannesburg Art Gallery, to which a part of his art collection was transferred after his death in 1934 (Gutsche 1968). By “getting rid” of Bhengu, Kohler seemed to suggest that he could have arranged for Pim to become Bhengu’s main patron instead.⁶⁷⁸ But Kohler had plans of his own for Bhengu at the time. He promoted him through exhibitions wherever he could, not only at Mariannhill, but also in Pietermaritzburg and Johannesburg. He even tried to establish contacts with the philanthropic Harmon Foundation in New York, in order to sell Bhengu’s paintings commercially in the US.⁶⁷⁹

While Bhengu received advice, guidance, and material support from Kohler regarding his development as painter, also Kohler benefitted considerably from Bhengu’s presence. Kohler kept notebooks on conversations in Zulu and had dedicated at least one of these remaining books to reflect on conversations with Bhengu. Even if his last-born daughter Elisabeth remembered that Kohler was not an active Zulu speaker, his research material and manuscripts at KCAL say otherwise. They point to a considerable effort to master the language. Kohler made extensive notes on Bryant’s *Zulu Dictionary* (1905) and other authors, from which he excerpted medical terminology and ethnographically relevant material on the area. He kept his notebooks in German, English, Zulu, and in a particular kind of shorthand. This shorthand he may have adopted from his mentor Jacobus van Warmelo, who is known for a very idiosyncratic style (cf. Kohler 1941:5).⁶⁸⁰ Kohler had started to learn Zulu within a few months after arriving at Centocow, as he wrote to Becker in March 1926.⁶⁸¹ By 1929 he mentioned that his son “Charley is a master of Zulu, but speaks lousy German. [...] If necessary, he can already act as an interpreter for me. I myself study the language persistently and have some hope to master it one day”.⁶⁸²

In letters to his friend and colleague Dr. Fritz Drexler in China, as well as to Fr. Becker, Kohler described Bhengu as “a gifted painter” and even “a genius”.⁶⁸³ Although Kohler was very fond of Bhengu, and probably also proud of having discovered his “painter boy”, he generally described Africans according to the racist attitudes and terminology of the established contemporary pseudo-scientific discourse. Even if he did not explicitly place Africans on an evolutionary ladder, he regularly applied a spectrum from “un-civilised” to “civilised” in his publications and letters. In an article titled “*Die Ärztliche Versorgung von Negeren*” (1935)⁶⁸⁴,

⁶⁷⁷ For the involvement of both Loram and Pim in the formation of South African racial politics see Dubow (1989) and Legassick (1995).

⁶⁷⁸ AMI: letter, Kohler to Becker, 20.02.1931. My own translation of the German original: “*Ich hatte schon Gelegenheit ihn an Protestantische Kreise los zu bekommen, [...]*”.

⁶⁷⁹ AMI: letter, Kohler to Becker, 07.12.1929. It is unclear whether this contact was ever established.

⁶⁸⁰ Also see the online documentation of the N.J. van Warmelo Collection, University of Johannesburg.

⁶⁸¹ AMI: letter, Kohler to Becker, 12.03.1926.

⁶⁸² AMI: letter, Kohler to Drexler, 20.04.1929. My own translation from the German original.

⁶⁸³ AMI: letter, Kohler to Drexler, 26.06.1928.

⁶⁸⁴ “Medical Care for Negroes”.

Kohler used no less than seven different nouns (most considered highly offensive, not only from today's perspective) interchangeably on one single page, in order to refer to Black South Africans: "savages [*Wilde*]", "inferior peoples [*tieferstehende Völker*]", "primitives [*Primitive*]", "negroes [*Neger*]", "Bantu negroes [*Bantuneger*]", "blacks [*Schwarze*]" and "natives [*Eingeborene*]". Judging from his earlier writings, he did so for the purpose of creating textual variety, and not in order to write in an exceptionally abusive way.

While Kohler commented on Africans at large, he focused on one specific group and occupation over the years: after the common tenets in contemporary science and religion, he considered the institution of the local African diviner and doctor as the central problem in what he thought to be a "primitive" society. While working at Centocow, Kohler had repeated encounters with such *izangoma* and *isinyanga*. As a medical practitioner he perceived them as competition to his own profession: the fact that many of the mission's subjects still consulted these African doctors in addition to his own services, repeatedly became part of Kohler's evaluations (eg. Kohler 1935:125). Nevertheless, he developed a strong fascination for them, which eventually resulted into a publications (Kohler 1941). In the process he developed ideas on authentic representations through the written word, but also on illustrating his texts with Bhengu's paintings.

In the following section I describe these ideas as they culminated towards 1931, when Kohler's interests in medical writing and illustration, propaganda, art, and ethnography began to overlap. Other than "photographic occasions", "painterly occasions" are by the medium's nature more complex to analyse. One reason is that we cannot know for sure whether a painting was indeed created in the co-presence of what it represents. In order to describe Bhengu's and Kohler's process of co-production over the next sections, I first analyse the experiences preceding the occasion, then the circumstances of one particular painterly occasion in 1930, and eventually the process of post-production of text and images for publication.

Reestablishing the “Native Mind”

This book did not convince me. It is an attempt to analyse the primitive mind psychologically. But essentially such an attempt is equal to a journey into outer space.

Max Kohler in an unpublished review of Lévy-Bruhl’s *How Natives Think*, (1925 [1910]), approx. in 1940.⁶⁸⁵

Perhaps the greatest difficulty which Europeans meet in their efforts to know the native mind is their inability or rather unwillingness to think ‘black’, to ‘slip’ mentally into the situation of the native and then think from that point of view.

Fr. Bernhard Huss, “The Evolution of the South African Native Mind”, in the journal *Africa* (1931:445).

These two quotes by Max Kohler and Mariannhill’s Fr. Bernard Huss express an anxiety about the existence of an alternative logic in the lifeworld of colonised people; or as Tambiah put it, “multiple orderings of reality”; these were even thought to exist within one person (1990:84-110). The British intellectualist school of anthropologists, represented by Tylor and Frazer, started to psychologise “primitive” thought during the late nineteenth century as a construct of individualistic associative thinking, which, according to them, occurred with both colonial subjects and peasant Europeans alike. We may want to consider, however, that the notion first appeared in colonial practice, such as administration (cf. Pels and Salemink 1999). As Dubow explains for the South African case, the effort to explore the “native mind” increased as the perspective of anthropologists and psychologists converged during the first decades of the 20th century (1995:203). From the 1910s, the French Lucien Lévy-Bruhl developed the idea that “primitive” *collective* thinking had a logic, which was radically different from Western “civilised” thinking, but could nevertheless be understood as being coherent in itself.⁶⁸⁶ The discourse about the Other’s mind as specifically “primitive”, “native”, or “African” continued to be a concern in the administrative colonial discourse in other African colonies for several decades to come (Pels 2011).

In the quote above Kohler commented on Lévy-Bruhl’s standpoint that the “primitive mind” and its logic was radically different from the one of the “civilised mind”. While Kohler acknowledged the alleged existence of this radical difference, we shall see that he struggled with the possibilities to approach and thus comprehend it. Huss, instead, focused on the increasingly difficult relationships, which South African missionaries, academic “social anthropologists and ethnologists”, as well as government representatives had with the “new native” (Huss 1931:446, also see Couzens 1985:32-37). This “new native”, in Huss’s account, wanted to partake in South African society and at the same time dared to talk back: by saying that in fact Black Africans themselves fully understood Europeans, while the latter in turn would never be able to fully

⁶⁸⁵ KCAL: In a listing of his library’s contents Kohler discussed the German translation *Das Denken der Naturvölker* (1921). My own translation from the German original.

⁶⁸⁶ See Evans-Pritchard (1934) for a contemporary overview of critiques.

penetrate their thoughts (cf. Chapter One). South African anthropologists, missionaries, and educators envisioned things similarly to their European peers, but necessarily had to devise a more practical and instrumental approach in direct interaction with African subjects. While Huss considered a mutual understanding between Black and White—given sufficient effort—as truly possible, Kohler did not want to “journey into outer space” himself and thus ruled out the possibility for an empathetic approach to study his African contemporaries. Instead, he employed Bhengu to translate for him, in particular by creating “working objects” in the form of paintings, which could then be studied independently from the event they represent and the person who made them. Even if Kohler never had the chance to publish on this matter extensively, he leaned to Freudian psychoanalytical ideas.

In February 1931, when corresponding about exhibitions and new publications, Kohler told his superior in Würzburg with an ironic inflection that “some ethnographic sketches by Bhengu would be appropriate, as ‘Bantu research’ is becoming a fashion in South Africa these days”.⁶⁸⁷ Already by 1933, the entry on Max Kohler in the *Who’s Who in Natal* mentioned only one single hobby: “Medical ethnology” (Olsen 1933:145). Kohler further wrote to Becker that—even though ethnographic writing may not be suited for the general audience of the institute’s yearbook—the South African government had indeed purchased the yearbook, especially for his ethnographic articles. Undoubtedly he referred to the interest and work of Nicolaas Jacobus van Warmelo (1904-1989), who had been appointed as “government ethnologist” on 7 March 1930 within the Ethnological Section of the South African Native Affairs Department. Throughout the following decade, Kohler and Van Warmelo would collaborate on two books: *Marriage Customs in Southern Natal* (1933) and *The Izangoma Diviners* (1941) were published in Van Warmelo’s series of short ethnological monographs, titled “Ethnological Publications”.

This engagement involved collaboration almost as close as the one between Kohler and Bhengu. But as with Bhengu, it is yet unclear when, where, and how Kohler first met Van Warmelo.⁶⁸⁸ There is a chance that they already had an encounter in Hamburg, when Kohler followed a course on tropical medicine at the Institut für Schiffs- und Tropenkrankheiten, from October to December 1924 (cf. Kohler 1925). Possibly with a temporal overlap, Van Warmelo studied under the linguist Carl Meinhof and Georg Thilenius⁶⁸⁹ for his doctorate between 1925 and 1929 at the Hamburgisches Kolonialinstitut (Hammond-Tooke 1997:109). Later in South Africa, the working relationship between Van Warmelo and Kohler must have been intense. Despite the fact that Kohler was 20 years Van Warmelo’s senior, the latter appears to have held the instructing position. Kohler’s daughter Elisabeth told me that Van Warmelo visited the family at Centocow and also at their later home in Tabankulu (Eastern Cape), where Kohler became district surgeon in 1936. During an undated visit to Centocow, Van Warmelo took a series of photographs. It survived in the Van Warmelo Collection at the archives of the University of

⁶⁸⁷ AMI: letter, Kohler to Becker, 20.02.1931. My own translation from the German original.

⁶⁸⁸ No original correspondence between the two has survived in Kohler-related archives, and Van Warmelo-related archives in Pretoria have yet to be evaluated.

⁶⁸⁹ Thilenius was the director of Hamburg’s ethnological museum between 1904 and 1935.

Johannesburg and consists of scenic shots of the mission, but also of several women and men identified as either *Amabhaca* or *Amakhuze*. Van Warmelo photographed some individuals in classic anthropological frontal and profile views with neutralised backdrops and used them for the co-publications with Kohler (1933, 1941). Kohler wrote the texts in German and Van Warmelo then translated and edited. The latter had a good command of German because he had studied in Hamburg and the family spoke the language at home. Even though Van Warmelo's wife was the daughter of a German missionary,⁶⁹⁰ Van Warmelo himself was not a practicing Christian (Hammond-Tooke 1997:115). Whether for the reason of his own distance to religion, or only for the purpose to create a straightforward scientific account, Van Warmelo eventually rearranged Kohler's manuscripts. In the process of editing and translating, Van Warmelo deleted "psychological explanations and perspectives on the missionary aspects".⁶⁹¹ As Kohler expressed to Becker in Würzburg, he disapproved of these alterations. According to Hammond-Tooke, Van Warmelo wanted to keep the series "essentially descriptive and non-theoretical. They were also ideologically neutral [...]" (1995:123-124).

In the same year, 1931, when Kohler first mentioned his interest in ethnography to his superior in Würzburg, he also published his only article in the journal *Anthropos* on a medical case study (Kohler 1931). At the same time he offered an ethnographic article to the popular German travel magazine *Atlantis*. Again three years later, in 1934, he hoped to publish an article on *iqondo*⁶⁹² in the London-based journal *Africa*. For this reason Kohler corresponded with the editor Diedrich Westermann, who had been, just like Van Warmelo, a student of Carl Meinhof. Despite these connections, both the popular and the academic publication never materialised. Kohler's writing career thus never developed any greater momentum, even though he was personally tutored by Van Warmelo. The constant quarrel with editors about his style of writing was summarised by Fr. Christophorus Becker: "One can see that you are not an innate writer [*Schriftsteller*], despite the valuable work as such, which you have delivered so far. [...] The language is often incorrect, and its meaning can only be determined with difficulties".⁶⁹³

The encounter between Van Warmelo, Kohler, and Bhengu took place at a time when considerable changes regarding the practice of medicine, moral, and representations by missionaries coincided with changes in South African social anthropology. Compared to the institutionalisation of German ethnology and British social anthropology at the respective universities and museums during the last decades of the 19th century, social anthropology was only institutionalised in South Africa with the election of Alfred R. Radcliffe-Brown for the first chair at the University of Cape Town in 1921 (Gordon 1990, Hammond-Tooke 1997, Kuper 1999, Stocking 1995). As we already know, two of his competitors had been the former

⁶⁹⁰ Hammond-Tooke only mentions that he had been a missionary to the Venda, and it is therefore likely that he was a Lutheran missionary of the Berlin Mission. This would mean that Van Warmelo was closely connected to the same religious milieu as Eiselen.

⁶⁹¹ AMI: letter, Kohler to Becker, 02.02.1934. My own translation from the German original.

⁶⁹² A Zulu term related to the social construction of venereal diseases.

⁶⁹³ AMI: letter, Becker to Kohler, 15.06.1932. My own translation from the German original.

Mariannhill priests Fr. Alfred T. Bryant and Fr. Willibald Wanger (Schapera 1990:6-7). Even if both of them were dismissed as merely linguistic experts, Kohler and many other scholars still relied on their work for the history and ethnography of Natal and Zululand.⁶⁹⁴

In addition to its late start in South Africa, already by the mid-1920s the discipline further split into several branches. Next to the two academic schools of English-speaking social anthropology and Afrikaans-speaking *Volkekunde* at their respective universities, there appeared a more “instrumental” strain of anthropology, which was represented by Van Warmelo as “government ethnologist”. British social anthropology in South Africa since Radcliffe-Brown increasingly promoted the study of Black and White within one social system (Gordon 1990:28-30). *Volkekunde*, as initiated by Werner Eiselen, instead maintained a study of separated cultures. Like Van Warmelo and Westermann, Eiselen had studied for a PhD in Hamburg with Carl Meinhof. Sarah Pugach (2004, 2012) shows how the German linguistic and ethnological tradition influenced this particular group of South African scholars, whose work eventually became crucial in the intellectual underpinning of apartheid (also see Bank 2015, Gordon 1988, Sharp 1981). Apparently, Kohler’s mentor, Van Warmelo, “was not an Afrikaner in a cultural sense” (Hammond-Tooke 1997:115) and his work as government ethnologist may thus be regarded as an alternatively organised strain to the two nationalistic orientations. According to what has been said so far, we can nevertheless state that Kohler was leaning towards a German tradition of ethnology, rather than British social anthropology.

In 1920, when recommending Radcliffe-Brown for the position in Cape Town, Alfred C. Haddon explained in a letter to the South African Prime Minister Smuts how useful ethnographic research would be, not only as a scientific endeavour, but especially for managing the Black population.⁶⁹⁵ In line with this assumption, the Department of Native Affairs founded an “Ethnological Section” in 1925 under Gérard Paul Lestrade, which Van Warmelo took over on 7 March 1930. He alone directed it for the first fifteen years (Hammond-Tooke 1997:109). Even though the section was “innocent of any clear policy”, the collection of ethnographic data was apparently useful for the formulation of “native law” and for resolving succession disputes (ibid. 1997:111). In his publication *A Preliminary Survey of the Bantu Tribes of South Africa* (1935) Van Warmelo eventually provided a manifestation of South African political entities regarding their ethnicities (“classification”), locations (“distribution”), and numbers. This study later served as a template in creating the “African Homelands” or “Bantustans” during Apartheid (Pugach 2004, 2012).⁶⁹⁶ According to Hammond-Tooke, who worked under Van Warmelo, the latter saw

⁶⁹⁴ Wanger returned to Germany immediately after applying at UCT, while Bryant stayed on and returned to England only in the course of the 1930s. I will further discuss their influence below.

⁶⁹⁵ Haddon, cited in Schapera (1990:4): (1) “the advancement of scientific knowledge” and (2) “the advantage which would accrue to the Government for the purpose of administration in having authoritative information concerning the sociology, manners and customs, and religion of the various tribes”. (Also see Stocking 1995:325, and Chapter Three of this study).

⁶⁹⁶ Pugach (2004:838, 2012:181-184) attributes this observation to Hammond-Tooke (1995, 1997). The crucial role of Van Warmelo’s publication (1935) is confirmed by Bank (2015). It remains nevertheless unclear how exactly the publication was eventually evaluated after the 1940s in an Apartheid context.

himself confronted with the problem that not many scholarly ethnographies were available by the late 1920s. Therefore he initiated the series of short and cheaply produced monographs called “Ethnological Publications”. This pragmatic approach even justified the contribution of non-professionals to the project, such as Kohler.⁶⁹⁷ Even though Van Warmelo lamented the lack of ethnographic work, he also considered earlier work by missionaries of all denominations as valuable data, including the articles by Br. Aegidius Müller and his confreres in *Anthropos* and even in Mariannhill’s *Vergißmeinnicht*. He eventually mined such journals and periodicals in his *magnum opus: Anthropology of Southern Africa in Periodicals to 1950: An Analysis and Index* (1977).

Van Warmelo’s focus on Centocow Mission already became evident in his 1935 *Preliminary Survey*. It is indeed the only mission station he indicated on the respective map for the entirety of the districts of Bulwer, Ixopo, and Umzimkulu. This was despite the existence of many other stations of various denominations in the area. The fact that he did not indicate them on his map does not mean that he did not visit or consult other mission workers, but at least it suggests the contemporary importance of Centocow. Once more a government representative made use of the already established social and scholarly network of Centocow as a logistic hub. Similar to the cooperation of Magistrate Clarke and Fr. Emanuel Hanisch 20 years earlier (cf. Chapter Four), this cooperation had a considerable outcome in the form of textual and visual documents.

On an international level, this development must be seen in relation to the foundation of the International Institute of African Languages and Cultures (IIALC)⁶⁹⁸ in 1926 and its journal *Africa*,⁶⁹⁹ for which Kohler planned an article. This institute notably developed with the considerable involvement of Protestant and Catholic missionaries (L’Estoile 2007, Smith 1934). Once the South African Government had withdrawn funding for Africanist research in 1931, it was the institute that made funding available for South African anthropologists through the Rockefeller Foundation (Kuper 1999). It was therefore no coincidence that Van Warmelo worked with Kohler, and that Westermann asked Kohler to provide an article for the journal *Africa*. Already in the first issue of 1928, the institute’s chairman (and architect of indirect rule) Frederick J.D. Lugard had pointed to the importance of missionary knowledge in Africa and its potential for the common interests of administration, education, and mission in Africa. Five out of 15 members of the institute’s executive council were missionaries (three Catholic, one Methodist, one Protestant), amongst them Fr. Wilhelm Schmidt, the founder of the journal *Anthropos*. Next to several others, members also included Carl Meinhof, Lucien Lévy-Bruhl, and Alfred Schachtzabel, the Africa curator of Berlin’s ethnographic museum (Lugard 1928:2, 10-11).

⁶⁹⁷ Also see the *Department of Native Affairs, Report, 1950–1957*, p. 15, cited in Lekhoathi (2009:74).

⁶⁹⁸ The institute still exists today as the International African Institute (IAI).

⁶⁹⁹ Also see van der Geest and Kirby (1992) for an analysis of the reception of mission influences in anthropological monographs between 1930 and 1965. They take the institute’s foundation as a starting point.

In the course of 1931, Diedrich Westermann⁷⁰⁰ and Richard Thurnwald followed with two articles providing advice explicitly for missionaries on how to conduct anthropological research.⁷⁰¹ Westermann introduced general problems of fieldwork and stressed the need for the cultivation of native intermediaries as informants, as well as the recording of texts in the vernacular (1931:168). Thurnwald further specified possible research in fields of economics, politics, family, social life, law, and personality. Both repeatedly suggested to study the respective changes in these fields of African contact with Europeans. Even if the relationship of missionaries and functionalist anthropologists at the time appears to have been still merely diplomatic (Pels 1990:87), there was no open antagonism to missionaries. A common tenet with actors of mission, anthropology, and administration was that “old traditions must not be pushed on one side and ignored, on the contrary they should be carefully studied to see if there is not embedded in them something that can be incorporated in the new order, or something that has to be transformed” (Westermann 1931:164). At least since 1931, also Kohler’s home institution, the Missionsärztliches Institut in Würzburg, included an “introduction to ethnology” in the preparatory courses for mission doctors, which was provided by Fr. Meinulf Küsters OSB (Essen 1991:154).⁷⁰² Küsters had been a missionary in South Africa until 1926, and was at the time of the courses employed as an assistant at the ethnographic museum of Munich. We will hear more about him and his relation to Kohler later.

For a short period in the late 1920s and early 1930s, a multi-layered relationship evolved: Meinhof mentored Van Warmelo, who mentored Kohler, who again mentored Bhengu. This complex constellation through several institutional backgrounds was unlikely to be one-directional, and for this reason still requires more detailed research. Even if Kohler never realised a career as writer, his attempts in this direction created multiple traces that bring us closer to an understanding of how discourses in German ethnology, British social anthropology, mission propaganda, and the transnational art world overlapped in the creation of Bhengu’s paintings. In order to find more such traces as entry points, we need to jump several years ahead, to a point when Kohler started reflecting on his time at Centocow, and the three kinds of collections he had created at the time: one of Bhengu’s paintings, one of objects, and one of literature.

In the early 1940s, Kohler reported to the institute in Würzburg that his physical constitution was declining. Probably due to this condition, he began to review his past engagements and drew up a catalogue of what he called “Zuluana” and “Bantuana”.⁷⁰³ it contains detailed lists of (1) his collection of 118 watercolour paintings (*Aquarelle*) by Bhengu;⁷⁰⁴ of (2) his museum collection of local objects; of (3) his library of ethnographic books; and eventually of (4) his own manuscripts, of which several had been published. Like the general term

⁷⁰⁰ Westermann was the journal’s editor, one of the institute’s first directors and also a former Protestant missionary.

⁷⁰¹ Both articles were even republished together as a special print in 1932, to be further distributed amongst missionaries.

⁷⁰² By 1936 the institute’s training even included photographic and cinematographic courses, provided by the photography company Agfa-Werke in Berlin (Essen 1991:27, 154).

⁷⁰³ KCAL: unaccessioned Kohler-collection.

⁷⁰⁴ Schlosser mentions that Betty Kohler’s collection consisted of 134 paintings in 1953 (1971:128).

“Africana”, the nouns “Zuluana” and “Bantuana” are idiosyncratic to the South African practice and discourse on collecting. They denote collectables of, or relating to African origin.⁷⁰⁵

In the accession list Kohler pointed out the general, personal, and monetary value of some items. Likely as a future guideline for his wife, he indicated that “the watercolour paintings should be sold off, as they are very difficult to store and preserve”. For almost every of Bhengu’s 118 paintings, Kohler drew up a monetary value in Shillings, ranging from S1 to S50. According to short descriptions, they depict foremost “rural” motives such as boys herding cattle, a mother with her child, or landscapes. Seven of the paintings, however, are marked with the symbol for infinity (∞), instead of a monetary value. Apparently, Kohler considered these paintings as invaluable. Two of these are the earliest of Bhengu’s paintings and depict football players; three are unidentifiable; one is called “*Polltax*”; and one “*Selbstportrait* [self-portrait]”.

After her husband’s death in 1948, Betty Kohler indeed tried to sell the collection and also gave some as gifts to friends in Germany (Schlosser 1971:128). 15 paintings and 2 pencil sketches she sold to Katesa Schlosser in 1959, who gave most of them away before her death in 2010. Only six remain in Schlosser’s inheritance.⁷⁰⁶ Some paintings, however, remained with the Kohler family and some of these were eventually donated to the KCAL in the 1990s. Due to the dispersal of Bhengu’s oeuvre, a complete reconstruction of the collection’s biography is impossible at this point. I will therefore only discuss the two before-mentioned examples *Polltax* and *Selbstportrait* in the last two sections, as Kohler produced concrete statements on both paintings. Because they had a very specific value and meaning for Kohler, they will serve as statements on the relationship between patron and painter, but also on their social environment.

According to his catalogue, Kohler also collected objects, which he compiled in a “museum”. Some of these he had additionally drawn by Bhengu. Unfortunately, the exact nature, location, and spatial arrangement of this museum is unknown. When the family moved away from Centocow in 1935, Kohler shipped a considerable part of this collection to Germany with his wife:⁷⁰⁷ he had compiled a “Native Museum” for Becker. Therefore only 40 objects of the 128 objects of his original collection remained with him in the 1940s, and it is uncertain whether Kohler continued to collect at Tabankulu. The institute had not yet started a collection by 1935, other than a few objects from Brazil. Even though Becker remarked that Kohler’s collection filled an entire cabinet at the institute,⁷⁰⁸ these objects are no longer there today. According to the list of the remaining 40 items, Kohler’s original Centocow collection included the full classic array of ethnographic objects, which we are already familiar with from Mariannhill: amongst these were snuff spoons, *isangoma* paraphernalia, adornment, and also one head ring.

Kohler’s third area of collecting was literature. His awareness of particular modes of

⁷⁰⁵ The OED defines “Africana” as: “books, artefacts, and other collectors’ items connected with Africa, especially southern Africa”. The “Killie Campbell Africana Library” thus indicates its historical collection profile in its name.

⁷⁰⁶ Personal communication with Schlosser’s second-cousin and heir, Michael Schlosser, February 2014.

⁷⁰⁷ AMI: letter, Kohler to Becker, 19.10.1935. Kohler mentioned “1 chest of cargo, 1 carton of cabin luggage, and 1 item of sacking”. It appears that the latter was a “bundle of spears”.

⁷⁰⁸ AMI: letter, Becker to Kohler, 03.08.1935.

ethnographic writing was based on South African examples and a wide reading of other contemporary psychological and ethnological literature. His small library contained more than 70 publications, including authors such as Sigmund Freud (1913), Lucien Lévy-Bruhl (1921), and Bronislaw Malinowski (1924), to mention but a few. At the same time, Kohler's imagination was fuelled by popular fiction, in particular Rider Haggard's novels. Apart from Catholic mission literature, Kohler also consumed Anglican and Lutheran mission periodicals.⁷⁰⁹ Correspondence in his collection at KCAL shows that at one point he went to great efforts to find a copy of *The Religious System of the Zulu* (1870). This publication by the Anglican Bishop Henry Callaway (1817-1890) was extremely rare during the early 20th century. The Mariannhill priest Fr. Willibald Wanger therefore saw a need to re-publish it (partially) in 1918 at Mariannhill Mission Press. One of the distinguishing characteristics of the publication was that Callaway placed transcripts of original conversations in Zulu next to their translations into English. Once Kohler had received a copy, he started to emulate this format. He considered it as a mode of objective representation, which he shared with Van Warmelo, to "let the native speak for himself" (cf. Hammond-Tooke 1997:114, also see Lekgoathi 2009:68).

But soon Kohler's editor Fr. Becker in Würzburg criticised him for this approach, in addition to comments on his sloppy writing style. The Zulu-German comparison was not suitable for Becker's purposes and a non-professional German audience. Nevertheless, Kohler succeeded to have one article published in this presentation style in the 1931 edition of *Anthropos* and also applied it in his co-publications with Van Warmelo. Here, Kohler put forward the same argument as he did for Bhengu's paintings: an account in the "native's own words" was superior to the description by an ethnographer. Nevertheless, he failed to problematise the multilayered processes of dictation to a scribe,⁷¹⁰ as well as his own laborious translations of the resulting Zulu texts into German. Although he indicated their presence, Kohler never identified these informants by name. As an exception, the earlier mentioned first-fruits ceremony became the only instance where Kohler asked Bhengu to orally describe an event for him in words, while painting it at the same time. Before we move on to this occasion, I delineate the epistemological ideas we can find in their preceding collaboration. Once we have established these, we can approach the "painterly occasion" of the first-fruits ceremony.

⁷⁰⁹ AMI: letter, Kohler to Drexler, 20.04.1929.

⁷¹⁰ Even if this scribe was "native" too, and both were left alone.

“Ethnographically Reliable Culture Documents”

Over time, Kohler developed more nuanced ideas in his articles and correspondences, why it was advantageous to have Bhengu’s paintings as illustrations in his books, instead of only photographs. Kohler did take photographs himself, which he also used for his second major publication *The Isangoma Diviners* (1941). His daughter, Elisabeth Weinberger, told me that her father did not possess a camera on arrival at Centocow. The first photographs (eg. Figure 126) had indeed been taken by Mariannhill priests. On one occasion in 1926, Kohler jokingly framed their attempt as an ethno-pathology: “The ‘Europeans’ Rev. Fr. Ludwig Tremel and Meinrad visited Centocow; the latter had a severe attack of ‘*photographitis*’. In case these shots turn out well, I will soon send some pictures”.⁷¹¹ This also shows that by 1926 photography at Mariannhill Monastery was no longer merely in the hands of Br. Leonard Weber, who ran the photographic studio between 1923 and 1939. Even though Kohler must have acquired a camera in the early 1930s, no exclusively private photographs remain of the family’s time at Centocow (cf. Geary 1991). Only rather formal portraits of family members exist, which were at the same time used in the yearbook and sent as postcards to Becker. Also from the time of the Kohler family at Tabankulu between 1936 and 1948 only rather formal family portraits remain, next to some few photographs of Kohler performing his work as district surgeon. At the same time, Kohler commissioned Bhengu to paint for the family privately, as I will show further below. It is therefore impossible to delineate which medium he preferred in the contexts of either family or work. For this reason I will focus only on those examples that can be reassembled in their historical occasions.

To this end I now consider some epistemological ideas behind the production and use of images for Kohler’s writing. I suggest that there were at least six reasons why Kohler valued and employed Bhengu’s paintings: first, a painting can represent fictional and unobservable phenomena, something a photograph can only provide with great artistic effort and manipulation; second, in the conventional tradition of scientific publications (botany/zoology/anatomy etc.) a painting was under certain circumstances considered more “objective” than a photograph; third, Bhengu’s artistic skills as an African allegedly enabled him to represent his own lifeworld “authentically”; fourth, Bhengu had privileged social access to local communities in the area; the last two reasons were on the one hand Kohler’s wish to provide a stage to promote Bhengu’s work in the art world, and on the other hand his enjoyment to present himself on the same stage as a patron. The last two reasons would also find their expression in photographic, as well as painterly self-fashioning—not unlike what Müller had done more than two decades earlier. In the remainder of this section I delineate the first two points. I then dedicate the second part of this chapter to the latter four points.

In the introduction to the catalogue where Kohler described 118 of Bhengu’s paintings, he stated that “they are no works of art, but are made very neatly and with inventive empathy

⁷¹¹ AMI: letter, Kohler to Becker, 12.03.1926. My own translation from the German original.

[*sind originell empfunden*] by a very talented Black man. They are ethnographically correct and show several things, which cannot be purchased in form of photographs”.⁷¹² Here Kohler thought of imaginative access on the one hand, and social access on the other. Some subjects of African life, Kohler did not even try to photograph: an *umthakati* (evil sorcerer) “doctoring” an *umkhovu* (golem-like creature) by boring a red hot awl into his head, Kohler would have considered as non-representable with the camera. Instead, he left this matter to the imagination and artistic skill of Gerard Bhengu (Figure 132). Colonial literature presented the *umkhovu* as a common phenomenon of South African folklore: a human corpse could be reanimated with the help of “bad magic” and thereafter function as a servant to the respective sorcerer (Kohler 1941: 35-36).

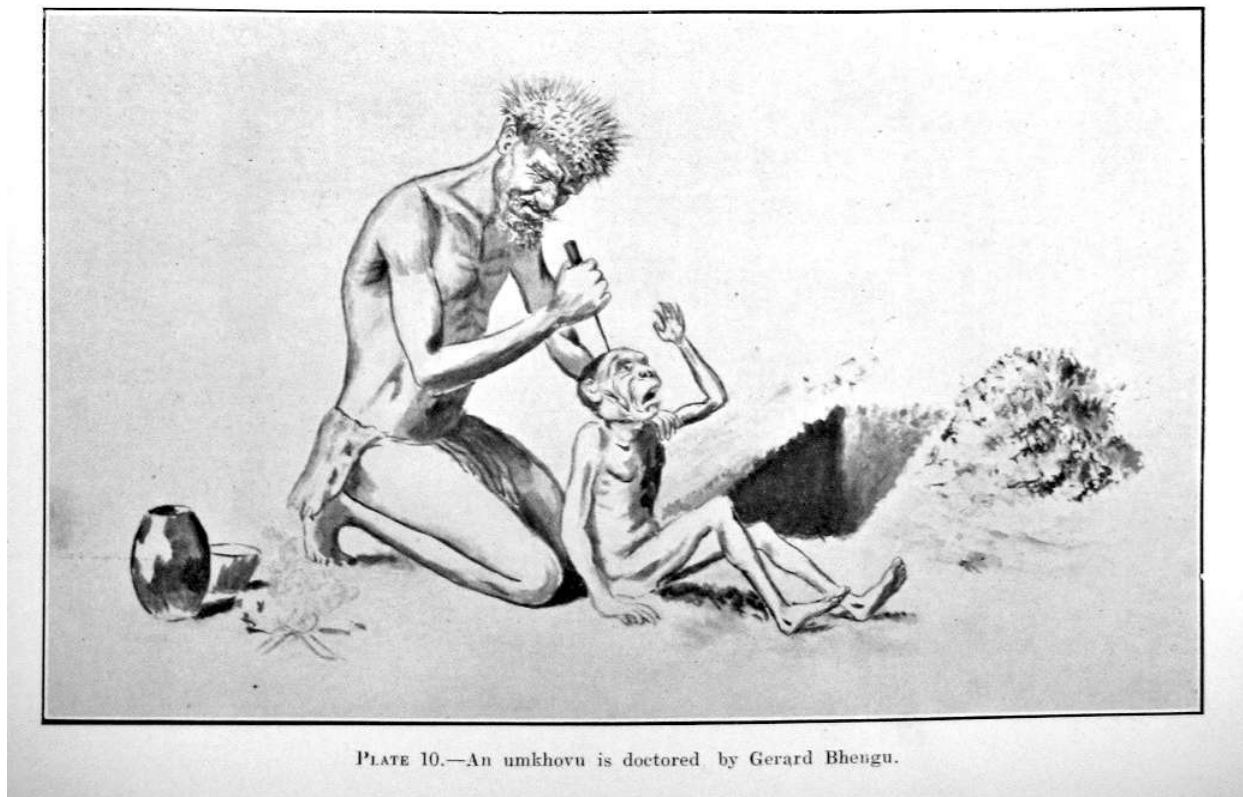


Figure 132: original caption: “Plate 10. An *umkhovu* is doctored, by Gerard Bhengu” (as published in Kohler 1941:74-75).

Similar to the *umkhovu*, Kohler discussed other phenomena in his medical work and writing, which were only partially visible: internal bodily symptoms are not representable photographically, other than in the case of an operation or dissection. But such illustrations would have been hardly suitable for a publication with a partially non-professional audience, such as the institute’s yearbook.⁷¹³ Kohler had several plans to publish about medical issues, but

⁷¹² KCAL: Kohler collection: list “*Aquarell Skizzen aus dem Nativleben und Suedafrika. ca. 114 Nummern.*” My own translation of the German original.

⁷¹³ Nevertheless, the yearbook occasionally presented considerably unsettling photographs of medical conditions

only one article could be realised in the yearbook with Bhengu's paintings. In the article "*Über Keloide bei Negern*" (1931a), he attempted to explain the pathology of extreme growth of skin tissue "ethnologically" through its potential dependance on local traditions of scarring and tattooing. He used photographs to show extreme keloid growth with two men sitting before white drapes, and instead two of Bhengu's paintings as examples for decorative scarring and tattooing (Figures 133 and 134).



Figures 133 and 134: original captions: "*Verzierungen im Gesicht, die durch Einschnitte in die Haut angebracht werden*"—"decorations on the face, which are applied through incisions into the skin". Signed: *Gerard Bhengu* (as published in Kohler 1931a:15 and 17).

In both cases Bhengu maintained a very light skin tone, while drawing the scars in stark contrast. These subtle decorative incisions would have been hardly visible in monochrome photographs, first, because of the general problem of photographing dark skin, and second, because Kohler considered the quality of the yearbook's coarse photographic reproductions as generally very bad. Having studied both natural sciences and medicine, Kohler was familiar with the convention of using drawings and paintings to illustrate botanical, zoological, and anatomical descriptions. Drawing the bodies of plants, animals, and people allows for the easy manipulation of colouring, contours, lighting, shadows, and contrast. This influences the visual impression of surface, structure, and the general rendering of the subject. It also gives the opportunity to eliminate

and disfigured bodies.

supposedly unnecessary visual information, while accentuating other details. Even if this approach was a clear reaction to the insufficiency of photography and had thus already worked through the “mechanical objectivity” attributed to the medium since the 19th century, such interpretations were not based on mechanical photographs and thus “trained judgment” (Daston and Galison 2007). This created “ideal types”, rather than mimetic copies. Daston and Galison describe this notion of image production as “truth-to-nature”.⁷¹⁴

This was the surface value of Bhengu’s paintings, in order to process and create “objective” scientific knowledge. According to Kohler, there was also a depth to Bhengu’s own “subjective” view and his particular vision through privileged social access. Kohler’s evaluations of Bhengu’s work may at first appear contradictory, but eventually show how he was torn between the racist conventions of the time, and his genuine appreciation of Bhengu’s work. As I explained in the previous section, he considered Bhengu a genius during the late 1920s. Looking back from the 1940s, he judged his paintings as being “no works of art”, but still having “inventive empathy”. This view corresponds with the following text, written by Kohler’s own mentor Van Warmelo as an introduction to *The Isangoma Diviners* in 1941. As a result of Kohler’s and Van Warmelo’s correspondence over ten years, it represents both men’s view regarding the value of textual and visual representations:

The subject is one upon which full information is not easy to obtain. Reference to existing literature bears this out. The present collection also leaves many of the questions that occur to one still unanswered. But the collection has a value peculiarly its own, inasmuch as it presents the natives’ own version of the matter. I believe that in preserving their own point of view one is avoiding a major source of anxiety to the anthropologist today, namely the anxiety that perhaps he is studying and collecting the wrong thing. But the very words of primitive man, talking about himself, are a source which can never lose its value.

Of the illustrations the same may be said. Apart from the photographs taken by Dr. Kohler at a seance which he attended at considerable risk, the illustrations were drawn by a promising young native artist of Centocow. This was Gerard Bhengu, who first developed his talent under Dr. Kohler’s eye and direction. He has illustrated certain conceptions familiar to all of his people, and has done in pictures what the other informants did in words. The best European artist could not have given us anything half as good, for no European can draw what is in a native’s mind. (Van Warmelo in his introduction to Kohler’s *The Isangoma Diviners*, 1941:5)

In this particular case, Van Warmelo and Kohler did not consider Bhengu’s work as a mimetic representation of reality. They were not supposed to fulfil a “mechanical objectivity”, as for example claimed by Müller when crafting his own racial atlas in 1909 (cf. Chapter One). Kohler and Van Warmelo rather saw Bhengu’s work in a similar way of Müller’s genre scenes, which presented a condensed and supposedly *typical* situation of “everyday life”. They perceived Bhengu and his work as a medium, able to represent in a kind of “native objectivity”. The two patrons suggested that Bhengu’s paintings provided a certain amount of objectivity, accountable for within the framework of Bhengu’s own “Other” lifeworld. According to the contemporary perspectives I introduced in the last section, the two scholars suggested that Bhengu’s paintings allowed them, if not to enter, at least to distinguish the “native mind”.

⁷¹⁴ According to their analysis this “epistemic virtue” was joined in around 1860 by “mechanical objectivity”, and in the early 20th century by “trained judgement”. However, according to them all three can exist simultaneously.

Bhengu was born in the area and therefore able to access many subjects and social events, which he accordingly painted for Kohler.⁷¹⁵ In the early 1930s, Kohler tried to photograph certain events involving *izangoma* himself (“at a seance which he attended at considerable risk”), but described the immense difficulties he had in short captions to his photographic scrapbooks. In one case he noted that a photograph shows the unwillingness of the subject to be photographed. As the *isangoma* tried to avoid the camera, Kohler had to take the image at a great distance. Eventually, he could only make the person recognisable through considerable enlargement of the image. While this indicates the potential invasiveness on the part of Kohler and his photographic camera, Bhengu’s presence with only pencil and paper was likely less suspicious. The same criteria for access are valid for the case of the first-fruits ceremony, which I discuss in the following section.

Three decades later, Katesa Schlosser still expressed a very similar opinion regarding Bhengu’s capacity: in 1971, she wrote that his “lively Bantu portraits are painted with such great capacity of mental empathy [*psychisches Einfühlungsvermögen*], as could never be done by a white man” (Schlosser 1971:121). In particular Bhengu’s earliest paintings under the mentorship of Kohler, Schlosser considered as “ethnographically reliable culture documents”, owed to “his exact knowledge of the tiniest details of Bantu life”. At the same time she insisted that “he never added ethnographically incorrect attributes” (1971:127).⁷¹⁶ It remains unclear, however, how she arrived at this conclusion and what she considered as “ethnographically incorrect”. Six years earlier, also Savory had claimed that Bhengu’s “delightful studies [...] were taken from actual life” (1965). Despite this claim, several of Bhengu’s portraits in her volume show appropriations of photographs from Mariannhill’s studio. Even if all of these observers argued that Bhengu’s works were authentic and thus objective representations, they did so for slightly different reasons. While Kohler and Van Warmelo considered the paintings as complex working objects relating to Bhengu as subject and his lifeworld, Schlosser indeed considered them as highly mimetic representations. Savory instead evaluated them within the contemporary art paradigm as skilfully made “from life”, which only establishes aesthetic value, not necessarily correct representation.

It is nevertheless unclear in all of these cases whether Bhengu’s paintings were either based on pre-existing artwork, synthesised from general experience, painted from direct observation, or entirely of his own imagination. To clarify this situation for parts of Bhengu’s oeuvre, I suggest that Bhengu and Kohler’s image-producing relationship may thus be considered as showing characteristics of at least one of Daston and Galison’s “epistemic virtues”. Even though these cannot be applied one to one in a colonial, or rather a segregationist situation (cf. Pels 2014), there are similarities which are hard to ignore. First of all, the situation differed

⁷¹⁵ Bhengu may not have been able to access every event, especially due to his affiliation with the mission and his identity as *kholwa*.

⁷¹⁶ My own translation from the German original: “*Dank seiner genauen Kenntnis aller kleinsten Details des Bantulebens sind vor allem seine ersten Arbeiten völkerkundlich zuverlässige Kulturdokumente. [...] Ethnographisch falsche Attribute hat Bhengu damals nicht hinzugefügt*” Schlosser (1971:127).

due to the fact that Kohler framed Bhengu explicitly as an exceptional image producer. Even where this was not the case, we can still retrace the intersubjective process. As I already indicated, some of Bhengu's paintings produced near Centocow can therefore be considered as what Daston and Galison call "reasoned images" (2007:42).

As such, Bhengu's paintings ranged on a spectrum between Bhengu's subjectivity on the one side and Kohler's on the other. In the rest of this chapter I develop the idea that Kohler and Bhengu occasionally worked in a fashion, which Daston and Galison call "four-eyed sight" (ibid.:84). They use this term to describe the cooperation of natural scientists and their illustrators in the 17th century, in which the mind of the scientist and the hand of the artist were supposed to coalesce. Daston and Galison explain for the case of typified ideal versions of botanical specimen drawings: "The reasoned image was authored: synthesized, typified, idealized by the intellect of the naturalist. In order to transfer that reasoned image to the page, the artist had to become something like a medium, not merely a subordinate" (ibid.:95). I am well aware that I address an epistemic virtue, which Daston and Galison discuss for a much earlier time period. But as they indicate themselves, epistemic virtues did not necessarily erase each other historically (ibid.:18). Unlike Müller and Von Luschan, who communicated over long distances in 1899, Kohler and Bhengu worked side by side. How they indeed influenced each other while writing and painting, we can only partially reconstruct for some examples, such as the case of a first-fruits ceremony, to which we now turn.

Re-tracing the *Ingcubhe*: From “Actual Life” to “Four-Eyed Sight”

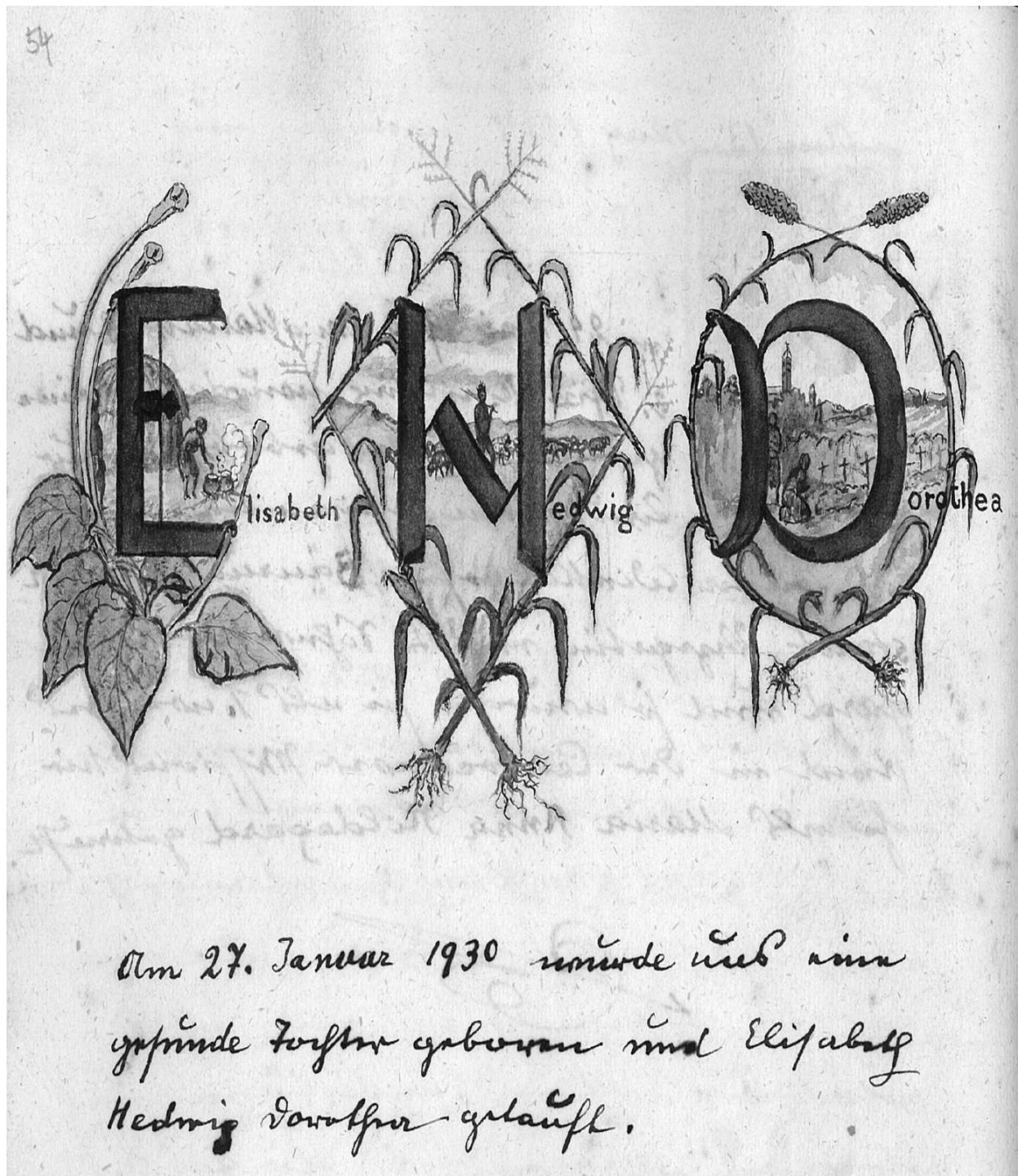


Figure 135: page from the “*Hausbuch*” of the Kohler family, showing the illuminated entry for the birth of Elisabeth Weinberger (née Kohler). Original in colour, 1930 (private collection, Kohler Family).

In June 2011 I met Elisabeth Weinberger and her son George for the first time. Elisabeth is the second daughter of Max Kohler and was born at Centocow Mission in January 1930. Once Max and Betty Kohler had died, Elisabeth and her family lived abroad for several years, but eventually resettled in Durban. I had contacted George several weeks earlier, and inquired whether he and his mother would be willing to speak about the family's time at Centocow and share whatever they knew about Max Kohler's work. During our conversations, Elisabeth was often concerned about the fact that she could not tell me much about her father: "We had a very Victorian relationship", she told me. Her father would discuss his work only with her older brother Karl (Charley), who was also training as a medical doctor. Elisabeth had never met Gerard Bhengu consciously, but they must have had several encounters during the short time both shared at Centocow.

The "*Hausbuch*" of the Kohler Family, for example, marks her birth with a painting by Gerard Bhengu.⁷¹⁷ Every first letter of Elisabeth's three names is illuminated with a different genre scene of life around the mission: a woman cooking, a man herding, another woman praying before burial crosses, with the new church of Centocow as a backdrop. It is the second image that Bhengu placed into the book (Figure 135).

Bhengu's illuminations are clearly mimicking those paintings in the *Hausbuch* predating 1925, including full-page colour images of religious figures. These paintings are signed by a "Konrad Maugsch", who must have been one of Kohler's acquaintances during his time in and near Munich, when he frequented the local art scene. From 1919 onwards, Maugsch was enrolled at Munich's Akademie der Bildenden Künste, one of the leading European art schools at the time.⁷¹⁸ According to Schlosser, Kohler even sent Bhengu's work to Munich, in order to receive professional commentary on how to advise his protégé (1971:124). And indeed, some of Bhengu's paintings bear short instructions in German on the verso, such as "one should have him work out details much better" (ibid.), or "more vividness for the colours / especially in the foreground".⁷¹⁹ Kohler also imported painting materials for Bhengu from Munich, together with the work of other Munich-based artist, such as Leo Samberger (cf. Leeb du Toit 2003:86) and possibly also Wilhelm Leibl.⁷²⁰ As both had been connected to the Munich Art Academy in previous decades, their works were likely teaching material.⁷²¹ On the one hand, Kohler directed

⁷¹⁷ The Kohler's "*Hausbuch*" or "family book" contains a genealogy of both lineages, and important events in the biography of the family, beginning with their marriage.

⁷¹⁸ 05786 Konrad Maugsch, Matrikelbuch 1884-1920, http://matrikel.adbk.de/05ordner/mb_1884-1920/jahr_1919/matrikel-05786 (accessed 13.01.14). SM: Maugsch's identity as "artistic painter [*Kunstmaler*]" can also be ascertained through the contemporary *Polizeiliche Meldebögen* at the Munich City Archive (PMB-M 52-1919).

⁷¹⁹ "*Mehr Klang der Farben / besonders im Vordergrund*". This inscription can be found on one of the paintings in the Bhengu collection of Mariannhill Monastery.

⁷²⁰ One sketchbook from the "purveyor of stationaries to the Bavarian court", Adrian Brugger exists at KCAL. It is however uncertain whether Kohler purchased these in larger quantities, or whether this was the only item. Bhengu is also known to have drawn on the versos of cheap advertisements. Also the content of the sketchbook cannot be clearly attributed to one single author. According to his daughter Elizabeth, Kohler himself was not an active artist.

⁷²¹ See entry "Ehrenmitglieder und Ehrensensatoren," <http://www.adbk.de/en/archiv-historisches/professorenlisten.html> (accessed 13.01.2014).

Bhengu towards the representation of the latter's own lifeworld, whether it was experienced by himself, or fictional folklore. On the other hand, he animated him to copy European art. The content of Bhengu's work had to be authentically African, while the form had to be conventionally Western.

In the same year that Elisabeth was born and Max Kohler became interested in ethnography (1930), the Kohlers also had their first crisis. This emerged in relation to the conflicting expectations regarding economic responsibilities between the missionaries, the CPS mission sisters, and the Kohlers; a phenomenon not uncommon with mission doctors of the Missionsärztliches Institut at the time (Essen 1991:127). As Max Kohler was not able to find alternative employment at any of the nearby missions, he was bound to his vow for another five years. Even though Bhengu left Centocow in the course of 1931, Kohler now turned to ethnographic work even more intensively with his mentor Van Warmelo, before he too left Centocow in 1935 for good.

In between his job, the births of four children, confrontations with the missionaries, and a heart condition, Kohler still found the time to explore the area together with Bhengu, and to write about it at the same time. According to Kohler's correspondence with his superior Becker in Würzburg, it must have been in either March or April 1930 that he and Bhengu attended the celebration of a so-called "*ingcubhe*", a "first-fruits ceremony" celebrated by a Bhaca community near Centocow. Some weeks after Bhengu had produced the illuminations for the birth of Kohler's daughter Elisabeth, he and Kohler visited the ceremony for only one day, even though it must have consisted of two more. In 1931, Kohler eventually published an article on this very experience in the institute's yearbook. It is titled "*Über Rythmus und Exaltierte Zustände am Fest der Ersten Früchte bei den Zulukaffern*".⁷²² The article comprises 14 pages in A5 format and is illustrated with two full-page monochrome reproductions of paintings by Gerard Bhengu. In the article Kohler did not identify his "native companion" by name. Only the remark that this companion produced several paintings of the occasion, identifies him as Gerard Bhengu.

Like with the occasion of the first-fruits festival in Chapter One, for reasons of space, it is not possible to discuss the full scope of these ceremonies in the 1930s, or the circumstances of this particular occasion. Briefly, *ingcubhe* ceremonies were—according to the ethnographic record—not only annual rituals to reinstate the chief, but also to ritually criticise him in order to generate catharsis. Additionally, the event served as platform for political debate, as well as general entertainment.⁷²³ The ceremony is built up of consecutive performances with a clear script, all evolving around the chief. Other than in the coastal region of Natal, where the ceremony takes place in November or December, the *ingcubhe* in the Umzimkhulu district is held in either March or April, due to the later ripening of the crops.

⁷²² "About Rhythm and Exalted States of Mind at the Feast of First Fruits with the Zulu Kafirs".

⁷²³ For contemporary accounts on the *ingcubhe* see Hammond-Tooke (1953, 1962). For a more general account for the wider Natal area Gluckman (1938).

At least since the mid 19th century, this ceremony had attracted the attention of the colonial government, ethnographers, missionaries, and of the popular imagination at large. Early ethnographic accounts often framed first-fruits ceremonies as aligned to superstitions. Even though they were described in earlier popular South African ethnographic accounts, it was James G. Frazer's *Golden Bough* (1890) that brought it to greater attention and ascribed it to "primitive people" more generally (cf. Gluckman 1938:39). Building on Gluckman's work "Rituals of Rebellion" (1953), Hammond-Tooke held "that the *ingcubhe* is primarily a socio-political ritual closely associated with the well-being of the tribe and army" (1962:182).⁷²⁴

In 1891, the colonial government of Natal formally codified "native law and custom" in the *Natal Native Code*. Thereafter chiefs had to apply for permission with a district's magistrate, in order to hold an "*umkhosi*", as first-fruit ceremonies were referred to in the *Code*. The major fear of Europeans was that such gatherings may lead to the fomenting of violence, thought to be fuelled by the excessive consumption of alcohol. Especially after the 1906 Bambatha Rebellion, all large gatherings were deemed suspect, given the rise of emergent political dissidence, nationalism, and resistance. After the *Code's* amendment in 1932, the specification as "*umkhosi*" was dropped and merely referred to as "native unrest" (also see Hammond-Tooke 1962:179). Nevertheless, applications by the Bhaca chiefdoms near Centocow were generally granted, including the one under discussion here. However, up to the 1930s, it was not uncommon that native police surveilled the ceremonies near Centocow.⁷²⁵

Missionaries were divided about the ceremony. In the mid 19th century, the Anglican Bishop Colenso saw it as a platform to approach Africans on their own terms (Colenso 1855). The Catholic Missionaries at Centocow instead consistently disapproved of the ceremony, due to the participants' consumption of alcohol, dance, and alleged promiscuous sexual activities. One Mariannhill priest, possibly Fr. Willibald Wanger, even referred to it as the "devil's wedding", and accordingly demanded that African Christians and catechists be discouraged from attending (Anon. 1911). Kohler still shared this view two decades later (Kohler 1933:31). Despite these misgivings, Mariannhill missionaries at Centocow and the nearby Lourdes Mission visited celebrations of the ceremony throughout the 20th century and repeatedly recorded it in photographs and text. Kohler's and Bhengu's account of 1931 therefore emerged amidst western ethnography and psychology, the distrust of the missionaries, and the codified control of the Natal Government. While Bhengu must have grown up witnessing multiple celebrations of first-fruits ceremonies, Kohler collected contemporary newspaper reports on the ceremony and was influenced by colonial popular discourse. Earlier experiences and accounts of various kinds thus conditioned both mens' agendas, expectations, and references.

Kohler and Bhengu described the particular ceremony in 1930 as consisting of several

⁷²⁴ Even if Hammond-Tooke studied first-fruits ceremonies with Bhaca communities in the Eastern Cape much further South, and almost two decades later, it may be the best material to compare to, due to its historical dimension (1953, 1962). Hammond-Tooke cited Kohler's article, but did not discuss it.

⁷²⁵ PAR: 1/BLR-4_3_6-N1_9_2-1931-1934. The National Archives Repository in Pietermaritzburg still holds multiple applications and concessions concerning *ingcubhe* and *umkhosi* ceremonies for various regions of Natal.

continuous performances. But the resulting script only partially matches the historiography of ethnographic accounts dealing with first-fruits ceremonies. It misses crucial elements, such as the ritualised killing of a bull, which may have already taken place on one of the other days, when both men had not yet been present (cf. Hammond-Tooke 1962). Most parts of Kohler's and Bhengu's script involve the chief, who emerges and disappears in and out of the ceremonial cattle enclosure, the so-called "*isibaya senkosi*".⁷²⁶ As one of the climaxes, the chief is the first to consume the first fruits of the year,⁷²⁷ prepared for him by an *inyanga*, a specialist for herbal medicines and concoctions. Even though we may be able to retrace a script through the comparison of the text and the paintings authored by Bhengu, we must realise that this only provides us with a limited perspective on the ceremony from the restricted temporal and spatial vantage point of the two ethnographers.

Kohler mentioned that his "native companion [...] made various drawings of the occasion". They spent almost the entire time near the entrance of the *isibaya senkosi* and even inside of it—a privilege, which is usually only given to the entourage of the chief. Kohler considered the enclosure as the central stage, thus as "the focal point [*Brennpunkt*] of the entire feast" (Kohler 1931b:119). Even though they were granted such unconventionally privileged access, they may not have been allowed to take photographs.⁷²⁸ Bhengu therefore not only functioned as "door opener" for Kohler, but also as his medium—a more appropriate replacement for a camera (cf. Daston and Galison 2007:346). In addition to being Kohler's painter, Bhengu was his amanuensis for the occasion: "whenever I gave him a nudge to the ribs he would write down the words sung" (Kohler 1931b:119). Kohler and Bhengu may have agreed on a similar sign to decide what should be captured in form of paintings, which Bhengu may have initially sketched with a pencil. Imagining him with watercolour equipment at the centre of a vibrant and crowded ceremony appears unlikely, even though it cannot be ruled out.

In the following paragraphs I briefly analyse the sketches and paintings by presenting several examples. Then I will relate the paintings to the experience as such, in order to scrutinise the accuracy of recording. Bhengu translated five consecutive scenes of the ceremony into 13 images: six initial sketches (or studies), and seven finished paintings based on the latter. Of the much cruder sketches three are in colour and three in sepia; of the more refined and detailed paintings, all seven are in sepia.⁷²⁹ According to the narrative of the article, which is partially

⁷²⁶ The *isibaya senkosi* is custom-made for the occasion of eucalyptus-branches, and left to fall apart after the event. While Kohler refers to it as *isibaya senkosi*, Hammond-Tooke refers to it as *isibaya sencubhe*.

⁷²⁷ The act is commonly referred to as *ukweshwama*.

⁷²⁸ When I visited an *incubhe* ceremony in the area in 2012, I was asked not to approach the *isibaya* and not to take photographs near to it. Today the event's main performances are of course captured by many participants with cellphone cameras.

⁷²⁹ Kohler prepared a summary of all images, and listed the respective differences of format and content. Eleven images were donated by the Kohler family to KCAL in the 1990s, while two originals are missing. Those are the ones that had been sent to Würzburg, and are reproduced in the yearbook. Kohler sent many of Bhengu's paintings to his editor Becker over the years, either for reproduction or as gifts. None remain at the Institute but one.

based on Bhengu's textual account,⁷³⁰ the five scenes can be arranged according to a chronological script.

The first scene depicts the return of the people from a ritual cleansing at the nearby river, driving cattle before them (wcp2860, wcp2861); the second scene shows the chief circumventing his homestead and spraying it with protective "medicine" (Figure 138 [wcp2857], Figure 139); the third scene depicts a "dance of delight" by the chief (Figure 136 [wcp2854], Figure 137, wcp2855, wcp2856);⁷³¹ the fourth scene depicts the eating of the first fruits (*ukweshwama*), administered by an *inyanga* to a commoner in front of the *isibaya*. This scene exists once as a close-up (wcp2852, wcp2853) and once from a wide-angle perspective (wcp2851); the fifth and last scene eventually shows a dance by several women in distinct *ingcubhe* dress (wcp2859, wcp2858).

Only two of the 13 paintings were eventually chosen by the editor Becker for publication in Kohler's article: the first with the title "Dance of Delight at the Feast of the First Fruits" (Figure 137), and the second as the "Walk of the Headman around his Kraal" (Figures 139). The first image seems to depict the indicated "exaltation" of the article's title, which is expressed in dance. Kohler referred to the second image in the text, when he described the chief's walk in order to spray the fields of his *umuza* (homestead) in the directions of all four cardinal points with frothy "medicine", which two attendants carry behind him in large pots. As Bhengu does not attribute much meaning to it in his own account, Kohler simply describes it as a "consecration of the fields" (Kohler 1931b:114).

⁷³⁰ KCAL: unaccessioned Kohler collection.

⁷³¹ While the occasions of the "*Freudentanz*" and "*Felderweihe*" appear in Bhengu's narrative in the given order, the respective paintings were published in Kohler's article in the reverse order.



Figure 136: original caption on verso: “*Der Arzt des Festes schaut zur isibaya heraus*”—“The doctor of the feast peeking from the *isibaya*”. Colour study to image in Figure 137, 18x23 cm (KCAL-wcp-2854).

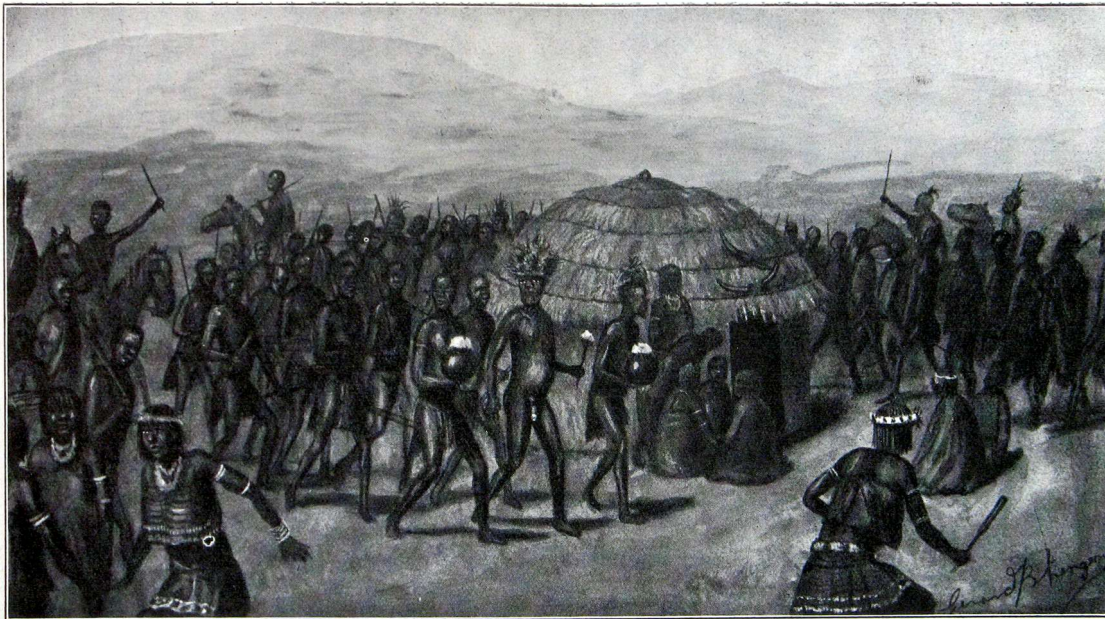


Freudentanz beim Feste der ersten Früchte
Diese Zeichnung wurde von dem Diener des Missionsarztes Dr. Kohler, einem ganz jungen Schwarzen, angefertigt

Figure 137: original caption: “*Freudentanz beim Feste der ersten Früchte. Diese Zeichnung wurde von dem Diener des Missionsarztes Dr. Kohler, einem ganz jungen Schwarzen angefertigt*”—“Dance of Delight at the Feast of First Fruits. This drawing was prepared by the servant of the mission doctor Dr. Kohler, a very young black man”, 10,5x18,5 cm (as published in Kohler 1931b:113).



Figure 138: original caption on verso: "*Die Felderweihe beim Fest der ersten Früchte*"—"Consecration of the fields during the Feast of First Fruits". Sepia study to image in Figure 139, 18x23 cm (KCAL-wcp-2857).



Rundgang des Häuptlings um seinen Kral (S. 116)
Diese Zeichnung wurde von dem Diener des Missionsarztes Dr. Kohler, einem ganz jungen Schwarzen, angefertigt

Figure 139: original caption: “*Rundgang des Häuptlings um seinen Kral* [...]”—“The chief walks around his Kraal [...]”. Signed “Gerard Bhenger”, 10,5x18,5 cm (as published in Kohler 1931b:116).

The chief is the central figure in six of the 13 paintings. Even if Kohler did not identify him by name, and he does not bear resemblance to existing photographs, it must have been Chief Nyongwane ka Bekukupiwa of the nearby Bhaca community. Kohler was on friendly terms with members of the chief’s family, who were amongst his patients (Kohler 1931b:119). The relationship is further attested by several photographs Kohler collected, and also by the research he carried out in Nyongwane’s “Location No. 3” for his first publication with Van Warmelo (Kohler 1933). The occasion of the *ingcubhe* in 1930 may thus have been the beginning of this relationship.

In order to confirm the chief’s identity and to answer the question whether Bhengu had really drawn “from life”, I attempted to compare Bhengu’s paintings to the actual landscape around Centocow. Such an exercise allows to match an analysis of the paintings to a history of the landscape, and both to a social history. When I explored the area with Fr. David Dlamini and Themba Mgegeba of Centocow Mission in 2012, they showed me the former location of Nyongwane’s homestead.⁷³² The site is on one of the last elevations before one crosses the Ngwangwane River, the historical borderline between Natal and East Griqualand. A historical railway line still follows the river’s left bank towards the historical trading post Riverside, which had already been operational as a train station for some twenty years when the *ingcubhe* took

⁷³² The current events and politics around the *ingcubhe* are too complex to sketch here. Due to succession disputes Nyongwane’s descendants have not held an *ingcubhe* in the recent past.

place in 1930. The railwayline is however not depicted in any of Bhengu's paintings. Almost on the same spot as the historical homestead, the Sonyongwana High School has been built, named after the former chief. Just behind the school's main building a circle of small boulders surrounds the chief's grave, indicating the approximate centre of the historical homestead.

Once I had repeatedly compared the four scenes showing distinct topographies to the actual landscape from various vantage points, it appeared that all four sceneries matched one of the views towards the four cardinal directions in the actual landscape. The two versions of each of the four themes (sketches and paintings) do differ, but they retain the very distinct shapes of the background's topographies.⁷³³ There is thus an unmistakable resemblance between the actual landscape, the sketches, and the paintings. The fact that all four cardinal directions are matching, even more confirms this assumption. These circumstances attest to Bhengu's ability for accurate observation and his consequent attempt for mimetic representation *in situ*. The high degree of detail makes it likely that at least parts of the sketches were carried out on site, rather than from memory at a later point. Assuming that I am correct, this confirms that this particular ceremony took place in 1930 at the homestead of Nyongwane, only a few kilometres North from the *ingcubhe* of 1899 (Chapter One).

Schlosser mentioned that Bhengu used to make pencil sketches. While he generally attempted to create generic representations of people, he also created resemblances (*Portraitähnlichkeit*). During a conversation with Schlosser in the 1950s, Kohler's wife Betty stated that she had recognised such resemblances between Bhengu's paintings and people she knew. She also remarked that Bhengu produced correct paintings of actual landscapes at Centocow (Schlosser 1971:124). However, as I will go on to show, these mimetic accuracies were consciously selective. The ensuing production process after the event of the *ingcubhe* was established through several other occasions of interaction between text and image. The ethnographic occasion must be reconsidered carefully regarding the use of texts and paintings, which Kohler and Bhengu eventually produced by "four-eyed sight". Even though Bhengu's paintings may be seen as "less authentic" within photographic conventions, they do reflect how Kohler and Bhengu selectively expressed their experience in "four-eyed sight", between experience, production process, and the finalised and published paintings. The privilege of access through Bhengu was thus doubled in so far that it allowed to participate in the event on the one hand, and to represent it in a structured way through the medium of painting on the other hand. Kohler and Bhengu did not have the restriction of being associated with a camera, which would have been difficult to conceal. Other than with photography, the production of paintings was stretched out over a considerable period of time, far beyond the occasion of the *ingcubhe* itself. It is this process of post-production we now turn to.

⁷³³ The proportions and distances between foreground and background, and the proportions between elements of the background are sufficiently similar to make this suggestion plausible.

“Drawing Things Together”: “Four-Eyed-Sight” and the Process of Postproduction

After their visit to the *ingcubhe* festival, Bhengu not only produced at least 13 water colour paintings, but he also provided a textual account of the event in Zulu, probably by dictating it to Kohler.⁷³⁴ Once they had returned to Kohler’s office, part of which also functioned as Bhengu’s studio, we may assume that they discussed and adapted the sketches and the text cooperatively. By doing so, they were able to establish parts of the *ingcubhe*’s “script”, something Müller’s photographs of an *ingcubhe* in 1899 could not achieve (cf. Chapter One). Müller was not familiar with the area and its people, as he only visited the outstations for several days or weeks at a time from Mariannhill. It was much harder for him to negotiate adequate access to the event, and once there, he clearly had no structured plan which aspects of the ceremony to photograph. Additionally, the colonial discourse on African culture had already been carried on for another thirty years since the *ingcubhe* in 1899. This influenced Kohler’s agenda, expectations, as well as available ethnographic traditions, of which I explore some below.

Kohler stated that he influenced all of Bhengu’s paintings as far as possible “for the sake of good taste” and that he thought that Bhengu generally depended on his advice (Schlosser 1971:127). The art historian Joachim Rees sees a possible explanation for German ethnologists’ preference for drawing as a research methodology in the strong emphasis on freehanded, yet accurate, mimetic drawing in the German educational system of the late 19th century. Void of technological support, freehanded drawing was considered as the most basic form of expression and representation. Asking the research subject to produce drawings, therefore allowed for an interpretation of the resulting drawings as evidence of the subject’s particular intentions and potential to visualise knowledge. According to Rees, German ethnologists projected such attitudes on their research subjects, based on their own art education. They even felt inclined to follow a pedagogical impetus to intervene by correcting the drawings and present themselves as privileged interpreters (Rees 2007:235).

This description comes very close to a colonial version of what Daston and Galison (2007) describe as “four-eyed-sight”, even if the intersubjectivity and its intricate details of cooperation in the field were rarely acknowledged in published ethnographies (cf. Pels 2014). Kohler, if not fully acknowledging Bhengu, nevertheless made allusions wherever he could to point out Bhengu’s artistic agency. Presumably relying on basic skills of free-hand drawing, as well as his training in both natural sciences and medicine, Kohler took it upon himself to direct Bhengu’s paintings. As this practice was not a direct reaction to the “mechanical objectivity” of photography, Kohler’s involvement cannot be considered as “trained judgement” in this particular case (cf. Daston and Galison 2007:318, 347), but rather as “four-eyed-sight”.

The production process of text and image took place between the occasion of the *ingcubhe* in March or April 1930, and December of the same year, when Kohler first offered his article to Becker. In this section I consider how the final images evolved in an ongoing process of

⁷³⁴ The Kohler collection at KCAL contains a rough version of the account in shorthand, written up by Kohler.

correspondence and intersubjectivity between Bhengu, Kohler, Becker, Chief Nyongwane and his councillors, as well as between text and image (cf. Pels 2014:228).

Today, the original manuscript of Kohler's article, as well as Bhengu's original paintings are housed at the Killie Campbell Africana Library in Durban. Here we can see that not only the paintings, but also the text exist in two different stages. Kohler's text exists as manuscript, as well as published article. Bhengu's drawings too exist in form of sketches, as well as elaborate paintings.⁷³⁵ While the typed manuscript of Kohler's article does not contain illustrations, the published version features two paintings by Bhengu. All five scenes painted by Bhengu are also described in the article. But instead of the paintings, the manuscript contains a descriptive account of the *ingcubhe* by Bhengu, consisting of 32 short paragraphs. Kohler had made the effort to meticulously translate Bhengu's Zulu text into German. In order to peruse Kohler's account, I asked Bheki Ntuli to translate the Zulu original into English,⁷³⁶ which confirms that Kohler's initial translation was indeed very accurate.⁷³⁷

During the course of the production, the images went through at least two, if not three stages of communal reviewing between ethnographer and artist: from the field sketches, probably in pencil, to the colour studies, and eventually to the finalised painting. In Würzburg two of the paintings were eventually processed for reproduction in the article. Between the studies and the paintings some modifications can be observed. In the sketch of the second painting for example (Figure 138), the chief is dressed with an *umutsha* (loincloth), but he is unclothed in the finalised published painting (Figure 139). In the article Kohler explicitly points to the detail of "nakedness" as immoral, but at the same time obscures this "obscene" content by writing in Latin, rather than German. Due to this explicit attention in the text, we can assume that both negotiated the adaptation from sketch to painting. Several less significant adjustments of detail, such as women's adornment can be traced in between both stages. Clear representational errors remain, such as peoples' shadows being projected in unrealistic directions.

Bhengu and Kohler must have also looked for inspiration in the photographs Müller had made of an *ingcubhe* celebration in 1899 (cf. Chapter One): as yet another element, Bhengu seems to have added the distinct dress, poses, and movements of women's dance choreographies captured in Müller's photographs (cf. wcp2859, wcp2858). As I have already shown with the example of the "beer drink" (Figure 129), Bhengu's appropriations were highly eclectic and combined minute details from various sources. I will provide more examples for this practice below. Through Kohler's and Bhengu's research cooperation, the medium of water colour, and a selection process during postproduction, they were able to selectively represent the ceremony's core elements involving the chief. In this process, Kohler and Bhengu established parts of the

⁷³⁵ Kohler referred to these as "*Skizzen*" and "*Bilder*" in the previously mentioned listing.

⁷³⁶ Bhengu's Zulu/Bhaca dialect today appears to be rather old-fashioned, so that a much younger translator, whom I had asked initially, was not confident to take on the task.

⁷³⁷ It is unnecessary to recount Bhengu's entire report, as it merely narrates around the five scenes depicted in his drawings (see description in the previous section), or involves details, which are otherwise unimportant for our concerns.

ingcubhe's common narrative or "script". Even if Kohler thought of Bhengu's *ingcubhe* paintings as "artistically less interesting", he nevertheless considered them as "ethnographically faithful [trey]".⁷³⁸ The painting's "faithfulness" to Kohler's final ethnographic text, however, was only established through the negotiations just described.

Kohler announced to Becker that the resulting article was intended to be "ethnographic", as well as "psychological".⁷³⁹ In this context the use of "exaltation" in the title could best be rendered as "ecstasy", resulting from rhythmical movements during dance. As much as Mariannhill Missionaries before him had rejected and "(de)moralised" the *ingcubhe* in catechisms and propaganda stories, Kohler presented the bodily rhythm performed during the *ingcubhe* as an "atavism" of human culture. He considered dance, its rhythm, and the state of mind it produces, as an equivalent to a "primitive" practice of prayer. But according to Kohler, "other than in the Christian context, it is not the content, but the form, which is essential and important to people themselves" (Kohler 1931b:116). He supported his resulting hypothesis—that rhythm was a basic human constituent—with the work of the German psychologist Emil Kraepelin. Kohler was strongly inclined to interpret form, thus dance, the only thing he could see and understand independently of Bhengu. Other than Bhengu's explanations to set up the general script, as well as his own limited possibilities of "participant observation", Kohler relied on three other sources for things he could not "see" himself.

First, they inquired with other attendants of the ceremony, who had initially not been able to explain the ritual's "deeper meaning" during the ethnographic occasion itself: "Even the chief's *indunas* could not explain everything. Only months later [...] the chief gave the final explanations" (Kohler 1931b:119). Kohler did not, however, indicate which explanations he had received from the chief. Secondly, Kohler relied on the work of former Mariannhill scholars, Fr. Alfred T. Bryant and Fr. Willibald Wanger. Both priests had spent considerable time in the same area during the 1890s, but also had dealt with the history of Zululand and Natal more generally. Bryant had been a resident at Centocow for one year during 1893, and Wanger for several more years at the nearby Lourdes mission. Bryant wrote about Zulu and Bhaca history in his *Zulu-English Dictionary* (1905) and eventually in his *Olden Times in Zululand and Natal* (1929). Wanger produced a compilation of ethnographic fragments between 1911 and 1912, titled *The Collector* (1913), which apparently circulated locally at the time, but today no longer features in any bibliographies.

When using these sources to analyse his own observations, Kohler was not entirely accurate with ethnographic detail. In the process he continued an "ethnographic tradition" (cf. Pels and Salemink 1994, 1999). He did this by transferring Bryant's general Zulu ethnography and Wanger's notes on first-fruits ceremonies under the heading "*umSizi*", from Zululand, North of Natal, to the *ingcubhe* of Natal's Polela District. Citing Wanger, Kohler stated that the *inkhosi* had already carried out "certain ritualised sexual practices" during the night previous to Kohler's

⁷³⁸ KCAL: unaccessioned Kohler Collection.

⁷³⁹ AMI: letter, Kohler to Becker, 07.12.1930.

presence (1931b:112). The information provided by Wanger, however, referred to the “Zulu King” and did not speak of “ritualised” practices. Furthermore, Wanger himself had already taken this information from Bryant’s *Zulu-English Dictionary*, verbatim, but unreferenced (see Bryant 1905:593-594, Wanger 1912:117-118).⁷⁴⁰ Kohler thus applied knowledge, which had been originally derived from spatially and temporally distant occasions to his own observations in 1930. The yearbook’s contemporary German audience would have been ignorant of such ethnographic detail. But the account later also entered more dominant ethnographic discourse, when Van Warmelo acquired the yearbooks in 1931, and Hammond-Tooke (1962) eventually certified Kohler’s entire oeuvre as integral part of academic Bhaca ethnography.

Even if both Kohler and Bhengu only became amateur ethnographers at best, their genuine interest in the topic can not be disregarded. The article is therefore essential to learn more about the discursive space of the *ingcubhe* and about the discursive space that existed between Kohler and Bhengu. Both had ideas about the event, which they negotiated accordingly. Fr. Christoph Becker instead never fully embraced Kohler’s enthusiasm about ethnography, art, and psychology, but considered the overtly elaborate bi-lingual accounts as unfit for the yearbook. At times, he strongly criticised Kohler’s articles and re-edited them accordingly. In the case of the *ingcubhe* article, Becker integrated Bhengu’s account indistinguishably into Kohler’s text and merged it with the latter’s annotations to Bhengu’s text. Occasionally Becker expressed gratitude for Bhengu’s paintings, which Kohler sent to him as gifts. Ultimately he was more concerned about filling the pages of his yearbook as quickly as possible. To Kohler’s disappointment, Becker eventually only chose two of four paintings for publication.

Kohler himself never stopped at simply appreciating and supporting Bhengu’s supposed ability to represent genuine information authentically. He went to great efforts to maintain, and even to improve upon the material form and appearance of Bhengu’s paintings, in order to maximise their impact. Whenever he sent Bhengu’s paintings to Germany, he tried to guarantee their safety and was particularly concerned as to how they were reproduced for publication. Repeatedly he mentioned that the printer must handle the originals with great care during the reproduction process. He also requested that they be sent back via “registered mail”, as they were of “artistic value”.⁷⁴¹

In a handwritten note from the early 1940s, Kohler remarked that the published version of his *ingcubhe* article contained several spelling mistakes, which he attributed to Becker’s editorship.⁷⁴² Kohler further noted that the title should actually have been “*Über Rythmus und Exaltation...*”, thus merely “exaltation”, and not “exalted states of mind”.⁷⁴³ But mostly he lamented the “bad and cheap reproductions” of Bhengu’s paintings, which he would have preferred as “*intaglio printing in copper [Kupfertiefdruck]*”. At the time, Kohler asked Becker to

⁷⁴⁰ As pointed out by Bryant and Wanger, the term *umsizi* has multiple meanings, relating to both medicines, as well as sexual diseases.

⁷⁴¹ AMI: letters, Kohler to Becker, 27.11.1927, 07.12.1930.

⁷⁴² KCAL: unaccessioned Kohler Collection.

⁷⁴³ Initial title: “*Rhythmus u. Exaltation beim Fest der Ersten Früchte bei den Amabhaca (Zulukaffern)*”.

submit a shorter version of his *ingcubhe* article to the popular journal *Atlantis*, which had just been founded in 1929. Kohler argued that the publisher of *Atlantis* would have the facilities to reproduce Bhengu's paintings in much better quality. Once the shorter version had been published, so Kohler, the publisher of *Atlantis* may be willing to supply the print matrices to Becker, in order to use them for the yearbook. But the publication in *Atlantis* never appeared, and therefore the superior prints were never realised.

Kohler's general efforts, however, were not restricted to Germany. He also exhibited Bhengu's work at least three times in South Africa: in 1928 at Mariannhill and in 1931 at an art exhibition in Pietermaritzburg and at the "World Service Exhibition Johannesburg" under the auspices of the "South African Institute of Race Relations". Unfortunately no details about these exhibitions have yet come to light. As suggested by Nettleton (2011), the rise of the African-American art and cultural scene in New York, now commonly referred to as "Harlem Renaissance", also had its influence in South Africa. This connection is evident by the fact that in 1929 Kohler had attempted to make contact with the Harmon Foundation in New York through Becker, and hoped to explore it as a market for Bhengu's paintings.⁷⁴⁴

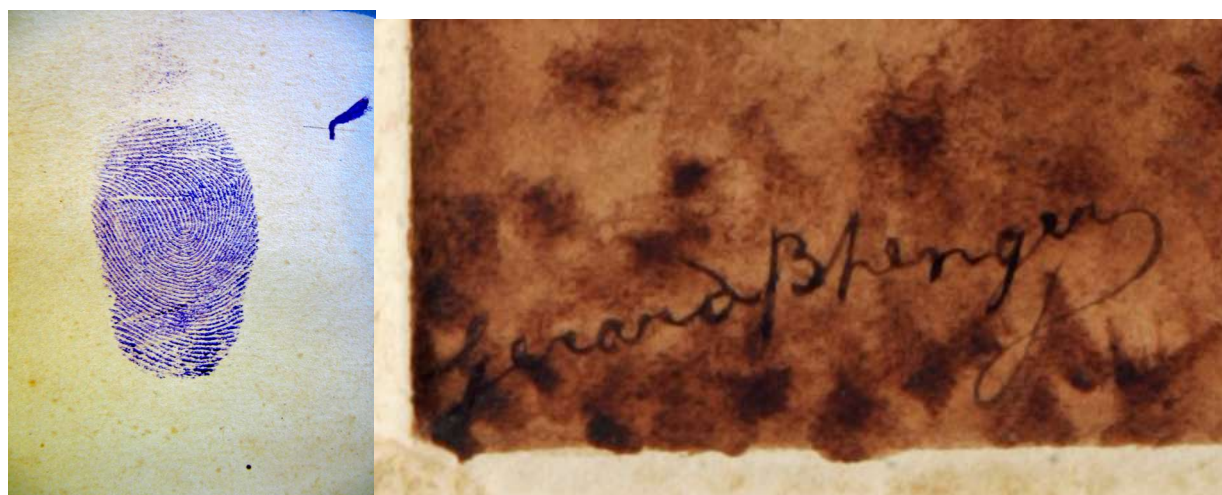


Figure 140: Bhengu's finger print. Detail from verso of WCP 2854 (KCAL).

Figure 141: Bhengu's signature, "Gerard Bhengu". Detail from the lower left corner of WCP 2853 (KCAL).

As this outlet eventually failed to materialise, Kohler hoped to promote the commercial value and potential of Bhengu's paintings otherwise on a local market. He attempted to transform Bhengu's identity as author by "authenticating" both person and work through two conventions of signature. All of Bhengu's paintings in the collections of the KCAL and Mariannhill Monastery bear a purple fingerprint on the verso (Figure 140). While the fingerprint certainly worked as an additional "signature",⁷⁴⁵ Schlosser wrote that Kohler had suggested the fingerprint

⁷⁴⁴ AMI: letter, Kohler to Becker, 07.12.1929.

⁷⁴⁵ As with many art historical studies, an artist's signature often serves as a way to authenticate his or her works. Bhengu is known to have signed with at least four different signatures: "GB", "Gerard Bengu", "Gerard

to Bhengu in order to stress and manifest the “appeal of the exceptional [*Reiz des Abnormen*]”. This additional artefact was supposed to attract European buyers. As this did not work, Kohler motivated Bhengu to “europeanise” his signature into “*Gerard Bhenger*” (Figure 141), as “otherwise nobody would ever buy these paintings from a native”. Even though Bhengu told Schlosser that he doubted the morality of this adaptation, he continued the practice for a while (Schlosser 1971:133).⁷⁴⁶ As Nettleton (2005) points out, Black South African artists of the mid-20th century exclusively produced for a White market, a market which Kohler attempted to target. Nettleton however identifies Bhengu as being possibly the only exception, as in his post-Kohler period he painted for clients such as Rolfes R.R. Dhlomo,⁷⁴⁷ an important early Black South African writer and nationalist (cf. Dhlomo 1947, also see Leeb-du Toit 1995, Zaverdinos 1995).

According to Katesa Schlosser, Kohler eventually claimed the “property rights [*Eigentumsrecht*]” for Bhengu’s paintings in his possession (1971:123). This may be a confusion of terms however. In a notebook with a collection of depictions of *izangoma*, Kohler assigned and captioned photographic reproductions of Bhengu’s paintings with “copyright Dr. M. Kohler, [eg.] 1934”. At the same time he also assigned the very same caption to some of his own photographs of *izangoma*. He thus retained the right to reproduce Bhengu’s work, being aware of others’ growing interest, such as the South African Native Education Department.⁷⁴⁸ On one occasion in 1930, the Chief Inspector of Native Education, Daniel McK. Malcolm “show[ed] some of Gerard Bhengu’s pictures to various people”, amongst them the Director of Native Agriculture, Russell W. Thornton. These pictures “seemed to strike Mr. Thornton [...] very much”, so much that he requested “a duplicate of an old native man’s head”.⁷⁴⁹

Bhengu’s paintings were thus repeatedly propped up with additional artefacts of authenticity and mobilised for circulation on a commercial market, through professional networks, and through various levels of intermediation: first through Bhengu’s alleged “mimetic faculty”,⁷⁵⁰ then through Kohler’s and Becker’s modifications, and eventually through Schlosser’s interventions. Katesa Schlosser was indeed the only scholar who had interviewed not only Bhengu extensively, but also Kohler’s widow Betty. As I described those interlocutors, we can follow their repeated inscriptions on, next to, and through Bhengu’s paintings and drawings. “Drawing things together” may then here be understood as two activities, as two even more explicit moves of *drawing* as described by Latour (1990): first, as a form of co-operative *inscription*, and second as a *pulling together* of ideas, artefacts, and other inscriptions around Bhengu’s paintings. Bhengu’s works are thus not only things *seen*, but things *visualised* in a complex process of cooperations (also see Rees 2007, 2013:20-23).

The *ingcubhe* of 1930 is therefore the only occasion where the cooperation of Bhengu

Bhenger” and eventually “Gerard Bhengu”.

⁷⁴⁶ The idea must have come up in the course of 1930, as both “signatures” appear on the paintings of the *ingcubhe*.

⁷⁴⁷ Rolfes was the brother of the earlier mentioned Herbert I.E. Dhlomo (cf. Chapter One).

⁷⁴⁸ AMI: letter, Kohler to Becker, 07.12.1930.

⁷⁴⁹ KCAL: Kohler Collection: letter, Malcolm to Kohler, 15.06.1930.

⁷⁵⁰ I borrow this term of course from Walter Benjamin’s essay of the same name (cf. Chapter One).

and Kohler can be related to one concrete occasion. Bhengu's sketches were developed, on the one hand into Bhengu's final paintings and on the other hand for Kohler's text. This particular event thus allowed to reveal several layers of a shared authorship: from Kohler's acquisition of additional expertise from Munich, his overall concern and care about reproduction of Bhengu's paintings, Bhengu's effort to maintain relative accuracy, the transitions from sketch to painting and the negotiation of content, the experimentation with colour and sepia, and eventually the selection and arrangement of motives, which mostly circle around the activities of the chief. In this particular case, both hands and minds were indeed entangled in a "four-eyed sight". In the last two sections I describe how Kohler and Bhengu expressed such experiences of collaboration through and against self-fashioning. This allows us to reconstruct how they consciously positioned the resulting images in order to influence and reflect upon their social relationships.

Bhengu's "Selbstportrait"

Before and after Bhengu's paintings were exhibited at Mariannhill Monastery in July 1928, Kohler had irregular correspondence with the monastery and occasionally he took Bhengu with him to the coast (Schlosser 1971:123). At the time, the monastery's photographic studio was still operational and Kohler had his portrait taken at least once by Br. Leonhard Weber, Müller's successor.⁷⁵¹ Kohler also selected particular photographs from the studio's pre-1914 production for his own collection and pasted them into his scrapbooks, which he kept next to the earlier-mentioned family book. Some of these he themed according to particular topics, such as *izangoma*,⁷⁵² or the general relationship between White and Black South Africans. Kohler thus kept a similar range of records as the mission. As I mentioned earlier, also the priests at Centocow kept a scrapbook and a photographic album. Both had been initiated by Fr. Emanuel Hanisch around 1908 and were continued by his successors until the 1950s. Bhengu therefore had a variety of possibilities to access photographic material and the pictorial landscape of the international art world. Either through the mentioned albums, through the Mariannhill Studio, or through publications illustrated with the studio's photographs. In this section I explore how Bhengu began early on to imagine himself as artist within the contemporary, if segregated art world.

It is common knowledge and a matter of countless art historical studies that Euro-American painters copied pre-existing artworks in various formats and even used photographs as "working objects". This practice nevertheless created discomfort about aesthetics and authenticity with artists and art critics alike. Particularly detailed studies do exist for the art scene of Munich in the late 19th century, involving the work of painters, such as Stuck and Lenbach (eg. Greif 2002). We already know that Bhengu was—just like Müller—a keen and good copyist. According to Savory, Kohler initially stimulated Bhengu to copy "a number of prints by the Old Masters", but stopped supplying these once he realised that Bhengu went as far as trying to emulate the appearance of oil paintings through his water colour technique. Deeming Bhengu too reliant on preexisting imagery, Kohler encouraged Bhengu "to seek his models from life in the villages of his own people, and also in the countryside around him" (Savory 1965:10). Bhengu only admitted hesitantly to his past attempts of copying when speaking to Katesa Schlosser in the 1950s, as these had even greater dimensions than suggested by Savory: he had copied from European art prints of religious motifs, alpine landscapes, (oatmeal) adverts (Schlosser 1971:124), and as I have already shown, from photographs (also see Zaverdinos 1995). In few cases, such as the ones of the *ingcubhe* described above, it is nevertheless obvious that parts of Bhengu's earliest work was indeed taken "from actual life" (Savory 1965:8). But also in the case of Bhengu's *ingcubhe* series, one may suspect that the last scene of dancing women is in fact

⁷⁵¹ Published for example in Schimlek (1950:72-73).

⁷⁵² The Kohler collection at KCAL contains several lists of Kohler's notebooks. Some of the mentioned items do not exist any longer. The scrapbook on *izangoma*, for example, is missing.

inspired by Müller's photographs of an *ingcubhe* ceremony in the same region held in 1899 (cf. Chapter One).

Once he had left missionary circles, Bhengu was refused art education by Professor O.J.P. Oxley at the Department of Fine Art at the Natal Technical College in Durban, who suggested "rather that he be encouraged to work in his own way and develop his own technique. This course was strictly adhered to and, pursuing his own methods, his distinctive style was not spoiled" (Savory 1964:9). Bhengu was apparently expected to remain an "unspoilt artist" and produce imagery in a style, which Leeb-du Toit identified as "ethnic realism" (1995:38-39). Instead, Bhengu's new temporary patrons, Dent and Malcolm, arranged for him to attend the Training College at Edendale in the mid 1930s. Paradoxically, his patrons at Edendale still stimulated him to copy from old Dutch masters (cf. Savory 1965:10, Schlosser 1971:134, Zaverdinos 1995:9). Art historian Steven Sack has pointed to this contradiction as holding true for the South African Black art scene of the 1930s more generally. Sack explains that it was influential members of the educational system like C.T. Loram, who advocated the separate development of Blacks through education (Sack 1988:11). As I explained above, Loram had close ties to Mariannhill and Centocow during the 1920s and thus not only influenced the art discourse in general, but also in specific places. Nevertheless, Bhengu continued to copy after the 1930s, not only other painters, photographs, and newspaper adverts, but also his own work. He also clearly copied faces and material culture items, such as diviners' paraphernalia from photographs such as those of Mariannhill.⁷⁵³

Remarkable in this relation is Bhengu's tendency—again very much like Müller—to produce self-portraits. This was of course a tendency and conventional genre of most artist and thus no surprise that also many Black African and South African artists aspired to it (cf. Stevenson and Bosland 2008). Bhengu not only intently portrayed himself, but he even imprinted parts of his own facial features and complexions—in particular his own smile—onto the male, as well as the female characters he portrayed. This goes in particular for the portraits compiled in Savory's 1965 edition (also see Nettleton 2005). Bhengu either worked with a mirror, or with photographs of himself. As I mentioned earlier, Katesa Schlosser bought several of Bhengu's paintings from Max Kohler's widow Betty in 1959. She eventually published three of these paintings as monochrome reproductions with her article in 1971.⁷⁵⁴ One of these paintings is with certainty the very first of Bhengu's still existing self-portraits, and it may even be the earliest identified self-portrait of the first generation of Black South African painters. It is dated March 1927, when Bhengu was sixteen years old and had been under Kohler's tutelage for about one year. Bhengu depicted himself standing in front of a complex landscape backdrop while drawing on a sketchpad. The painting shows him with a slightly rotated torso and the head raised from the sketchpad, facing the beholder directly (Figure 142). One can clearly recognise the figure on the

⁷⁵³ Compare, for example, the photograph of an *inyanga* near Mariannhill by Br. Leonard Weber in Schimlek (1950:88-89) to several of the images in Savory (1965).

⁷⁵⁴ She does not mention whether she ever bought any paintings directly from Bhengu. As she indicated, she may have considered his later work as less "ethnographically correct".

sketchpad as a Black woman carrying a pot on her head. Consequently it is most striking that the model itself is nowhere to be seen.

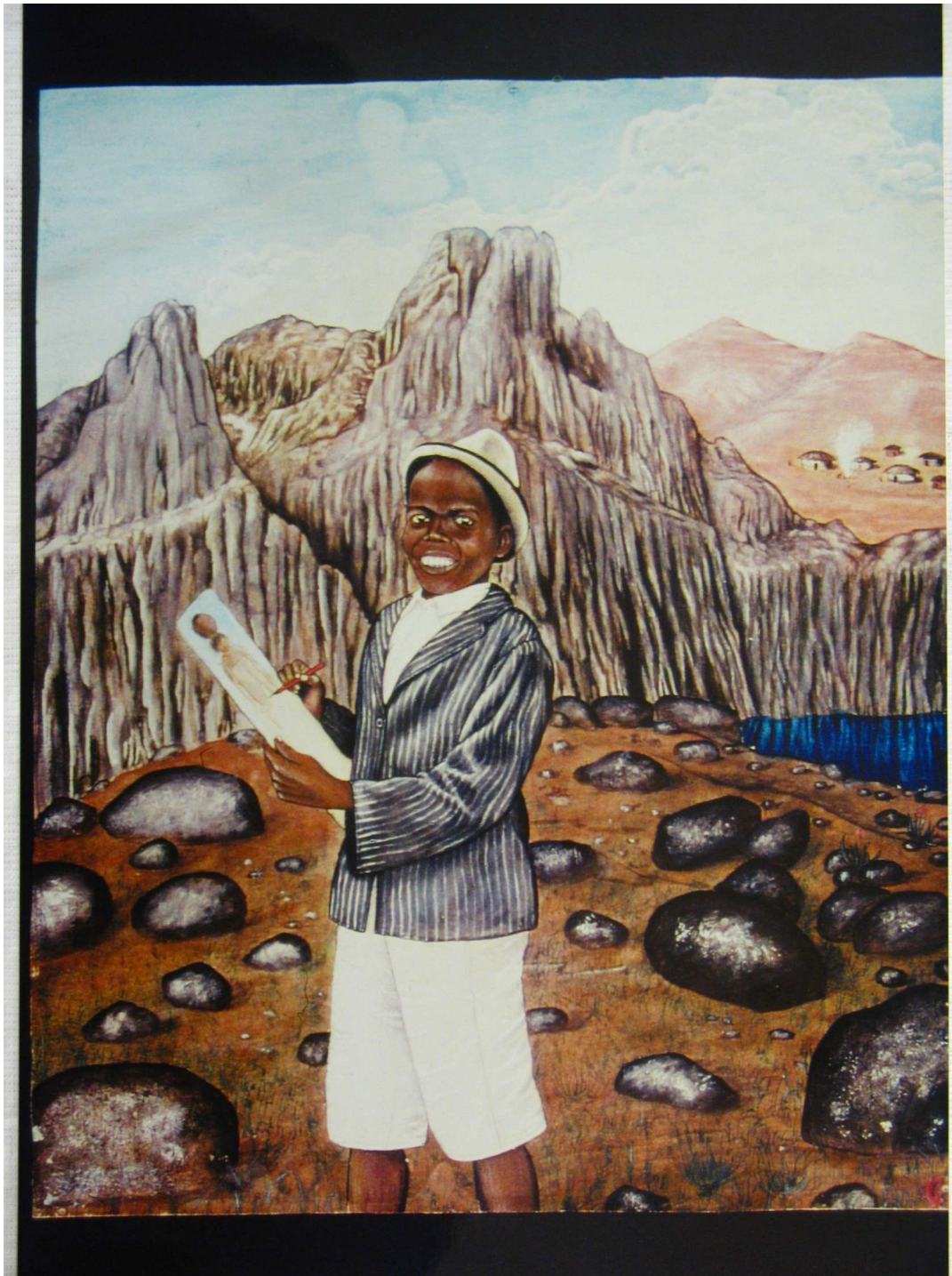


Figure 142: self-portrait by Gerard Bhengu, March 1927 (Schlosser Collection, British Museum, London. Published as a monochrome reproduction in Schlosser 1971:126-127).⁷⁵⁵

⁷⁵⁵ The image reproduced here was made by Christoph Rippe from a photographic print at the British Museum

Together with the image, Schlosser received a handwritten “*Erklärung zum Selbstportrait*”⁷⁵⁶ from Betty Kohler, which Max Kohler had compiled in approximately 1943. Already in February 1931, Kohler had written to Becker that “concerning his art, he [Bhengu] seems to require my guidance”.⁷⁵⁷ By 1943, Kohler stated retrospectively that he always made efforts to influence Bhengu’s paintings “for the sake of good taste”. But unlike all others, this self-portrait “was painted so quickly” that Kohler “came too late”. For Kohler the painting was therefore exceptional, because “from a psychological standpoint [Bhengu] will never again create anything of such originality, something felt so deeply; certainly something of better quality” (Kohler cited in Schlosser 1971:127). According to its perceived high degree of “scientific” value, Kohler evaluated the painting with the infinity symbol in the list I described earlier.

Schlosser stated that Kohler “generally attempted to interpret Bhengu’s work psychoanalytically” and that he explicitly did so in his “explanation of the self-portrait” (Schlosser 1971:127). She even praised this analysis as “a contribution to ethnic psychology [*Völkerpsychologie*]”.⁷⁵⁸ Kohler shared a general appreciation of Freudian ideas, such as dream interpretation, with contemporary missionaries at Mariannhill (cf. Schimlek 1952:92). Also the wider community of the IALC, such as Meinhof (cf. Pugach 2004:830), Thurnwald (eg. 1928, 1929, 1931), and Van Warmelo considered psychoanalysis regarding art as valuable in the study of African society. But even if Van Warmelo may have been the one who made Kohler aware of Freud in the first place,⁷⁵⁹ he erased some of Kohler’s psychological explanations and mission-related commentaries during the editing process. As I already explained, German ethnologists before 1914 relied on the comparative analysis of drawings by “primitives”, the “mentally insane”, and children for their research. All of these components seem to come together in Kohler’s interpretation of Bhengu’s self-portrait.

As listed in his library catalogue, Kohler owned a copy of Freud’s *Totem und Tabu: Einige Übereinstimmungen im Seelenleben der Wilden und der Neurotiker* (1913),⁷⁶⁰ where Freud anticipated his later use of “the uncanny” and its occurrence through the confusion of experience with imagination (1950:107). In the chapter *Animism, Magic and the Omnipotence of Thought* in *Totem and Taboo*, Freud explored “primitive ideas” in this regard by using concepts of Frazerian magic to describe (neurotic) attempts to interpret and replicate the world around

(BM)—Anthropology Library and Research Centre, “Schlosser Collection”. The collection consists of prints made from colour-slide positives, which Schlosser donated to the BM in 2001. The original slide may still be in a collection at the University of Kiel, while the location of the original painting is unknown. It may have been given away by Schlosser to an unknown relative.

⁷⁵⁶ “Explanations regarding the self-portrait”.

⁷⁵⁷ AMI: letter, Kohler to Becker, 20.02.1931.

⁷⁵⁸ The term is commonly associated with the work of Steinthal, Lazarus, and Wundt (eg. Zimmerman 2001:52), but also embraced by Freud in *Totem und Taboo*. It is either not translated, or alternatively framed as “social psychology”, “folk psychology”, or “ethnic psychology”.

⁷⁵⁹ In his introduction to Kohler’s book, Van Warmelo points to the author’s contribution in the field of psychology and dream interpretation, and indicates its value for future research (Kohler 1941:7).

⁷⁶⁰ First published in four parts in the journal *Imago - Zeitschrift für Anwendung der Psychoanalyse auf die Geisteswissenschaften* 1912-1913. First translated into English in 1918. I henceforth refer to the unaltered English version of 1950.

them. By 1943, when Kohler wrote the “explanation” of Bhengu’s painting, he also may have been aware of Freud’s later work “*Das Unheimliche*” (1919).⁷⁶¹ His analysis of Bhengu’s painting eventually led him to such a psychological tension: Kohler paid no attention to Bhengu’s self-depiction as such, but instead dissected the painting’s backdrop according to the symbolism of form and colour.

Kohler distinguished altogether three elements of importance and suggested that they were expressions of Bhengu’s subconscious mind: the stones, the dark-blue lake, and the kraal on a soft pink ground. He wrote that the stones represent “the native’s alienation from the land and its dispossession by Whites, who only left them the stony patches”. According to Kohler, the stones are thus “monsters threatening the native”. He further stated that the blue lake represents a harbour of mystical creatures and that water constitutes a “phylogenetic dream symbol (according to Freud)”. Kohler remembered that “[he] once had to protect the painter from a water sheep⁷⁶² (a particularly frightening one), when he was painting *en plein air* near a solitary lake”. Kohler continued to describe the self-portrait by explaining that “[Bhengu] places a lake and a mountain range hard and inartistically between background and foreground: this is the world of magic [*Zauberei*], where the evil powers and sorcerers live, the delusion, which indeed splits his people and their souls”. Eventually, the kraal (“on a subtle pink”), in stark contrast and in a far distance, represented “the native’s *Heimat*” (Kohler quoted in Schlosser 1971:127-28).

For Kohler, the tension between these three elements evoked something similar to Freud’s “uncanny”. Even if he did not employ the term, he described its logic, which at the same time attracts *and* repels, due to the estranged familiarity of an experience or imagination (Freud 1919:319). Bhengu’s painting appeared not necessarily uncanny to Kohler himself, but nevertheless startling. Instead, Kohler suggested that it was Bhengu who had manifested experiences in the painting, the logic of which may be considered as uncanny. “The uncanny”, as Freud described it, is aroused by associations that appear as magical to a perceiver, in the sense of Frazer (Freud 1950). While Freud described such perceptions for the case of neurotics, also Kohler used the term neurosis to describe the behaviour of Africans and their belief in magic (Kohler 1941:75-76). In the particular case of the self-portrait, Kohler described the very same behaviour as being carried out by Bhengu.

Freud described the production of the power of art as follows: “Only in art does it still happen that a man who is consumed by desires performs something resembling the accomplishment of those desires and that what he does in play produces emotional effects—thanks to artistic illusion—just as though it were something real. People speak with justice of the ‘magic of art’ and compare artists to magicians” (1950:113).⁷⁶³ Apparently, Kohler did not rely

⁷⁶¹ First translated into English in 1925 (cf. Freud 1955).

⁷⁶² German: “*Wasserschaf*”, or Zulu: “*imvu yamanzi*” (Schlosser and Madela 1971:22).

⁷⁶³ Projection or not, citing Yvonne Winters in a comment from 1984, Elza Miles wrote that “old people especially seemed reluctant to pose for Bhengu. They feared he would *tagathi* them by taking something from them in his image and using it for witchcraft” (1997:32). I will further explore the multidirectional and “magical” aspects of images in Chapter Eight.

on Bhengu's own commentary on his self-portrait, but interpreted the painting itself as Bhengu's mental expression. For Kohler, Bhengu's art was a materialisation of, and thus an entry-point into the "native mind". In his "*Erklärung zum Selbstportrait*", Kohler then projected his own perception of the painting onto Bhengu by asking: "What would be most appropriate to the actual situation? To impute such thoughts [psychoanalytical interpretations] onto a simple native boy, or to leave a composition [painting] like this to itself by considering it futile?" (Kohler quoted in Schlosser 1971:127). When Kohler discussed general ethnographic questions regarding sexuality with his editor, Fr. Christoph Becker in Würzburg, he polemically wondered "whether one should indeed leave those questions to the atheist [*ungläubigen*] ethnographers, who read into these things whatever they want".⁷⁶⁴ Despite such critique on others, Kohler himself freely read into Bhengu's self-portrait that it showed the artist's supposed division from "home" (the kraal on a subtle pink) by "interracial fear" (the stones), while at the same time still struggling with "superstition" (the dark lake). Kohler claimed that certain culturally established symbols embedded in the landscape inspired Bhengu to artistically manifest his experiences, which may be considered "uncanny".

Katesa Schlosser instead applied a rather uplifting interpretation. According to her, this and other self-portraits show Bhengu "striving towards social ascension" (1971:127). In her tracks, other scholars have considered Bhengu's self-portrait as an attempt to distinguish himself through "stylish western clothing" from the "traditional" subjects he portrayed, such as the woman on the sketchpad (Miles 1997:29, Van Robbroeck 2011:129). Others have framed this distinction in terms of "rural" and "urban" (Zaverdinos 1995:6, Jephson 1989:80 quoted in Zaverdinos 1995), despite the fact that Bhengu had had no "urban" experience by 1927, other than through print media. All authors apparently wanted to describe a supposed dichotomy and situate Bhengu within a world to which the profession of the "artist" supposedly related at the time: a "White", "European", "Western", and eventually "modern" art world that Bhengu may have aspired to.

Furthermore, all authors (except Zaverdinos) did not address Kohler's interpretation and the production of Bhengu's paintings more generally. But also Zaverdinos considered Kohler's interpretation as a historical account and missed that it presents a Freudian interpretation of a painting and Bhengu's subconscious mind. In his text, Kohler was not concerned with Bhengu's "mimetic faculty" of naturalistic and realistic observation, copying, and objective representation, but exactly with the opposite: his capacity to *genuinely* express and materialise his subjective—however unconscious—fears and fascinations. It can therefore be doubted whether Bhengu attempted to portray himself as "modern", as argued by the above authors. The depicted dress may have indeed been his daily outfit, possibly with improvements of the colour scheme. Eventually, we do not know what Bhengu himself thought or intended at the time. It is nevertheless likely that instead of merely "striving towards social ascension" or "modernity", he rather aspired the membership of an artistic community by imitation (cf. Ferguson 2002), as

⁷⁶⁴ AMI: letter, Kohler to Becker, 04.05.30.

indicated by the classic pose of the painter.

Like with Mariannhill's photographs showing the production process of photographs in Chapter Two, Bhengu's self-portrait attracted scholars' fascination with the phenomenon of "meta pictures". Like in the correspondence between Von Luschan and Br. Aegidius, an additional text in the form of Kohler's "explanation" had further certified the image as a "working object" for the discernment of information that could be analysed psychoanalytically. Katesa Schlosser was the first to refer to it as such. After all, she had selected and purchased this particular painting from a much larger collection. Eventually, she decided to publish it along with Kohler's account and thereby once more certified both text and image. The image was then chosen once more and reproduced from Schlosser's publication for the first major retrospective exhibition of Bhengu's work in 1995 at the Tatham Art Gallery in Pietermaritzburg. Also Miles encountered the portrait in Schlosser's article and Van Robbroeck found it again in the account of Miles. Scholars had long lost sight of the initial occasion of 1927 in which Bhengu created the painting, or the occasion of 1943 in which Kohler created his interpretation some 16 years later. Instead, they relied on established traditions of aspirations to modernism. But in fact, there had been yet another occasion, which even preceded the painting's production in early 1927.



Figure 143: Photograph of Gerard Bhengu, 1926/1927 (KCAL).

Kohler was well aware that Bhengu had copied his own portrait from a photograph, which can be found in one of Kohler's scrapbooks (Figure 143). Like Bhengu's sketches for the *incubhe*, this portrait photograph of Bhengu may have been intentionally created as a "strong protention" (Gell 1998). As such, it may have been made with the explicit idea to serve as a study for the painting, which Kohler later called "*Selbstportrait*". But being a mimetic copy of a photograph, Bhengu's figure as part of the painting did not constitute an expression of Bhengu's unconscious mind to Kohler. Therefore he did not include Bhengu's self-depiction in his analysis. The photographer is unknown, and also whether it was Bhengu's own decision to strike a pose as artistic painter. Other photographs in the same album show other people, similarly framed in front of the very same rock. This suggests that the pose was directed by Kohler, for example to promote "his painter" at work. One of the photographs in the same spot shows both Bhengu and Kohler together, two years later in 1929. Bhengu is dressed in a white coat, posing as if in the process of painting before an easel. One of Kohler's medical coats here serves as artist's dress for Bhengu. The doctor is posing as if commenting on Bhengu's work, reference material in hand, while both gaze towards the camera contentedly (Figure 144).



Figure 144: original caption: "*Dr. Kohler und sein schwarzer Maler*"—"Dr. Kohler and his black painter". Bhengu and Kohler in front of the same rock where Bhengu's photograph was taken (cf. Figure 143). Centocow, 1928 or 1929 (AMI, also published in Kohler 1930:18).

This photograph is not only a genre photograph through which Kohler and Bhengu perform the ideal of “four-eyed sight” (Daston and Galison 2007), it also shows the same kind of reflectivity as Mariannhill’s “meta photographs” (Chapter Two).⁷⁶⁵ The “native photographer” of the 1890s is likely to have been intended as a caricature. Bhengu’s performance as a “Black painter” or “Zulu artist” during the late 1920s, instead was an outcome of the very same discourse on African “imitation vs. creativity”, but of a branch that had developed in a different key. Between the 1890s and 1910s, the idea of the “native artist” had still been expressed polemically and ambivalently in popular culture. Nevertheless, in some cases German ethnologists considered “native drawings” as valuable “working objects”, even if they did not promote the producers as genuine artists. It was only in the 1920s that Black African authorship could be manifested in the South African art world with a focus on one single named individual, who was even supposed to have a prolonged career as professional artist. This was due to the fact that German ethnology, British social anthropology, psychology, medical practice, the South African educational system, mission education and patronage, the South African art world, and of course the two individuals Kohler and Bhengu, had all coalesced just before 1930 at Centocow Mission.

Bhengu’s career started in 1927 with the very idea of *making* him an “exceptional” artist. Br. Aegidius instead had only become an artist late in life, and even posthumously, as attested for example by the Natal pioneer farmer Baynes in 1901, the jury member of *The State* Ussher in 1909, as well as the collector De Charmoy in 1946. Like Müller’s self-fashioning was central to his photographic work, Bhengu was at the centre of Kohler’s imagination. At times, Kohler was more interested in the promotion of Bhengu as a person than in his painterly products. In specific cases, as the one discussed here, Kohler also used the paintings as entry points to Bhengu’s mind as a subject of “scientific” study. For example, Kohler thought of Bhengu’s self-portrait as an artwork of lesser quality: “the technique is raw, poor, and childish” (Kohler cited in Schlosser 1971:127). At the same time, he considered the portrait as a scientific object, in order to access Bhengu’s subconscious. Kohler nevertheless went to considerable efforts to promote Bhengu as an exceptional artist, either by lobbying for his paintings, or by adding particular forms of authentication to his paintings through his name and signature. It is crucial to observe, however, that this exceptionality was (and still is) based on the work of racial distinction: once this had been established as a fact, it served as context for Bhengu’s exceptional status in the first place.

Like the missionaries at Mariannhill had to perform together with their apprentices for photographs at the workshops, Kohler had to prop up Bhengu’s presence as artist through his own presence in his capacity as Bhengu’s patron. As such, “four-eyed sight” in fact became a performance of an ideal relationship. After all, Kohler was a medical doctor and considered ethnology, art, and also his project with Bhengu merely as hobbies. In the same way as Kohler presented Bhengu as (“his”) painter, he himself performed publicly and with delight as patron and even as tutor. Within the segregated art world, their relationship was necessarily expressed

⁷⁶⁵ In fact, Figures 142 and 144 stand in similar relation to each other as Figures 35 and 36.

and situated through concrete articulations of racial difference. Through these simultaneous articulations of exceptionality, which may have excited and even irritated some participants in the South African art world at the time, Bhengu's self-portrait appeared as an act of mimicry: Kohler's suggestion to introduce the signature "*Bhenger*" is one indication. Bhengu intended to become a professional artist "in the European sense" and therefore imitated what conventional imaginations of European artists looked like at the time. Kohler and several other contemporaries supported him in this effort, but within a segregated society they could only do so within the newly bracketed art world for Black South Africans. As the contemporary White art world only granted Bhengu very limited access at the time, his painterly social imitation generated even more reproductive power in later years. In order to comprehend the full complexity of this creative process between Bhengu and Kohler, I will close this chapter in the next section by acknowledging the flip side to this scenario of imitation.

Kohler's "Exlibris"



Figure 145: four photographs showing Max Kohler posing in the garb of Chief Nyongwane, 1930 or 1931 (AMI).

Like the previous section, this final scenario deals with an explicit performance of photographic self-fashioning. In a way, it may be thought of as something like a counter-image-act to Bhengu's self-portrait. As an intentional photographic performance it allows us to explore a formation of even more images that clustered around it historically. Thereby we can even further retrace an extensive network of relationships cutting across the private, professional, and public spheres of Kohler's and Bhengu's shared lifeworld.

About one year after the *ingcubhe*, in May 1931, Max Kohler sent a series of four photographs to Fr. Christoph Becker in Würzburg. All four show him posing in front of a beehive hut together with an African man. The first photograph shows Kohler standing in *contrapposto*, resting his left fist on his hip and the right hand on a *knobkerrie*. The Black man reclines against the hut, while holding on to a shield and spear. The second photograph depicts the two men acting out a fight with the same weapons. For the occasion, Kohler only wore an *umutsha* made of animal tails and a head ring. For the third and fourth photograph, however, he put on a pair of sandals, in addition to a shield and a spear. When I presented copies of these photographs to Kohler's daughter Elisabeth in early 2012, she commented with a smile that he would never have shown himself like this to her or her siblings; not even the photographs. While presenting himself rather authoritarian and closed within the family, Kohler showed a particular kind of humour in his letters to the institute in Würzburg and in the commentaries in his notebooks. This humour ranged from mild irony to strong sarcasm. In the letter accompanying these photographs, he wrote:

The enclosed photographs, which show me in the becoming garb of a Zulu Chief, will hopefully not offend you. The umutsha is indeed the one of a Chief, Nyongwana ka Zulu. The picture has been made by a Herz Jesu Priest.⁷⁶⁶ My

⁷⁶⁶ This name may have two origins: "*Herz Jesu*", or "Sacred Heart", is the name of the mission congregation Herz-Jesu-Priester (SCJ), who had a presence in South Africa since 1923 (cf. Essen 2010:89). "*Herz Jesu*" is also an alternative name for Inkamana Abbey, near Vryheid. It belongs to the Benedictine Mission of St. Ottilien (Missionsbenediktiner, a branch of the *Ordo Sancti Benedicti*, OSB). The Mission Benedictines settled in South Africa in 1922, once they had been expelled from East Africa after the First World War.

ex libris has been criticised from the standpoint of shamefacedness. It is not supposed to be published, because the “colour bar feelings” [Engl. in orig.] would go up in flames. To Fr. Meinulf Küster [sic] OSB I sent them with the comment: ‘an albino with the Amabaca’. Will he believe it?⁷⁶⁷

Kohler did not identify the Black man sitting next to him. A comparison to available photographs reveals that it is not Chief Nyongwane.⁷⁶⁸ Kohler’s relationship with Nyongwane was the intimate one of doctor and patient, which apparently allowed for the equally intimate gift or loan of the *umutsha*. According to photographs showing Nyongwane several years apart, Nyongwane himself never wore a head ring. He also was much stockier and at least in later years grew his facial hair. As a second potential identity, it may come to mind that this person was Gerard Bhengu. But also this assumption does not withstand comparison with identified photographs of a young Bhengu.

The letter and the photographs nevertheless bear various leads that help us to position Kohler next to his relation to Bhengu, within a wider social field. The four photographs constitute a node around which at least five other image occasions can be situated and which become comprehensible only in relation to each other. These occasions will explain this photographic occasion as an intentional performance, *in* the images and *of* the images. As I argued earlier, most of the topics in Kohler’s and Bhengu’s cooperation evolved from Kohler’s private and professional projects, rather than from Bhengu’s. Some were directed either at the yearbook’s scientific or popular audiences, while others were clearly private. The following extended case shows how Kohler’s use of images wove through relationships and thus connected him and Bhengu to various other people. Unlike with Müller’s orientalist portrait, where it was not possible to recover any motivation regarding its production, Kohler’s performance allows for a multitude of connections. Similar to the biography of Umdamane’s portrait, we can take the above photographic series as a vantage point to perceive a genealogy of statements (cf. Gell 1998:242). By tracing their interconnectedness, we can clarify some aspects of Kohler’s and Bhengu’s agency in relation to these statements. In this way, we also find more retentions of Müller’s work, which served as convenient “quotes” to both Kohler and Bhengu.

To begin with, as Kohler indicated in his letter, he indeed had several ideas on the “colour bar” and its various manifestations and implications. He repeatedly evoked these, for example in 1929 in a letter to his colleague and friend Fritz Drexler in China:

I am well and enjoy myself increasingly. Eventually, I have some solace, because also the number of my patients—all Blacks—increases by the day. White farmers I eliminated politely and gently. Nobody can serve two masters at the same time, and the Whites in this country do not want any contact with the Blacks. This is called “colour bar” [Engl. in orig.]. But entire South Africa relies on the Blacks, and that is called “native problem” [Engl. in orig.].⁷⁶⁹

⁷⁶⁷ AMI: letter, Kohler to Becker, ??.05.1931.

⁷⁶⁸ Nyongwane was photographed by Mariannhill Missionaries during festivities in 1937, as well as by the professional photographer Alfred M. Duggan-Cronin, also during the late 1930s.

⁷⁶⁹ AMI: letter, Kohler to Drexler, 20.04.1929.



Figure 146: One of four versions showing a “court hearing”/“tax collection”. Gerard Bhengu, approx. 1930 (KCAL, wcp2935).

The most distinct visual expression of Kohler’s ongoing concern about racial contact is Figure 146. I suggest that this painting by Bhengu is an interpretation of Müller’s photographs showing a “court hearing”, which I discussed in Chapter Four. At least four different versions exist of Bhengu’s interpretations in various archives.⁷⁷⁰ Bhengu and Kohler not only had access to Mariannhill’s various periodicals and to the photographic studio at Mariannhill itself, but in particular to one photographic album at the house of Centocow’s superior.⁷⁷¹ Yet again, Bhengu took the liberty to create a montage, culled together from various of the earliest photographs in this album, in particular those arranged around the three depictions of the 1912 court hearing. The general *mise en scène*, the position of the Africans, the gestures of the man behind the desk, the posture of the policemen and especially the most sophisticated details of the embroidered tablecloth resemble the photographs to a high degree (cf. Figure 90). Bhengu instead took the

⁷⁷⁰ One in the Kohler Family private Collection (published in Zaverdinos 1995), one in the Mariannhill Monastery Archives, and two at KCAL.

⁷⁷¹ The album has been transferred to the archives at Mariannhill Monastery after the Second World War and contains photographs taken at and near Centocow from approximately 1900 to 1944.

backdrop showing two very distinct forms of architecture from photographs on the album's preceding pages. He was still creative with several aspects of composition: he replicated the colonial trope of a "court hearing", but at the same time dramatised the original photograph's narrative. Adjusting Müller's statuesque *tableau vivant* of 1912, Bhengu placed one of the African men on his knees, pleading to the magistrate behind the table with one raised arm.

Kohler pasted another version of Bhengu's painting into one of his scrapbooks and captioned it as follows:

The proud Zulu before the authorities. Like this he goes to pay taxes or to court. He is not that smart; he is the *inja* (Zulu: "dog") of his own chief. However, [this attitude] wears off towards both sides [chief and government] with the progress of civilisation.⁷⁷²

Being aware that the 1912 photographs show a court hearing, Kohler nevertheless blurred the line between the common topic of the "court hearing" and the one of the "poll/hut tax collection". He thus used Bhengu's painting to illustrate his perception of the social situation at large. The "tax collection" in particular had accumulated political significance since the so-called Bambatha Rebellion in 1906 and 1907, which was a reaction to the implementation of poll taxes. As Bhengu reproduced the kneeling man in at least four different versions, it is likely that he attempted to conform to Kohler's narrative, instead of Kohler merely commenting on something that Bhengu had indeed experienced and painted accordingly. The "colour bar", as conjured by Kohler in this case, is epitomised in the very moment where White ruled over Black in separate courts from their own, and administered "justice". Kohler was aware that by performing "in the garb of a Zulu Chief", he himself had crossed this "colour bar", which is represented by the magistrate's table in Bhengu's painting. Kohler positioned himself consciously against political and religious authorities, and as we shall soon see, he refused to beg like the protagonist in Bhengu's painting.

In the course of the 1930s, Kohler temporarily changed his mind about the earlier concern regarding the "colour bar", as he had expressed it in his letter to Becker. He planned to publish the first of the four photographs in his book *The Izangoma Diviners* (1941) with the caption "The author of the book in the garb of Chief Nyongwane".⁷⁷³ He placed this caption under the photograph in a scrapbook with a preliminary choice of images for the publication. In his scrapbooks he compiled photographed paintings, photographs, and newspaper clippings as potential inspiration and raw material for future publications. Eventually, the photograph was not included in the published version, perhaps because his editor Van Warmelo re-confirmed Kohler's initial anxiety about the "colour bar" and accordingly censored it.

In his letter to Fr. Christoph Becker, Kohler described his appearance as "Zulu Chief" in the accompanying photographs as an "*ex libris*". Becker would have understood this as a reference relating to a conversation they had earlier. The term "*exlibris*" (Latin: "from the books

⁷⁷² KCAL: Kohler collection, album "*Glückliche Reise*". My own translation from the German original.

⁷⁷³ KCAL: Kohler collection, "Album 116".

of...”) commonly denotes a “bookplate”: a personalised book marker indicating a book’s owner, often with an individually themed illustration. During the 1920s and earlier, *exlibri* often featured explicit female and male nudity, although often couched in figures of classic appearance (eg. Braungart 1922). In between the event of the *ingcubhe* and the letter to Becker, Kohler had commissioned Bhengu to draw him his own personalised bookplate, which he titled “*Exlibris Africanis*” (Figure 147). It is illustrated with a depiction of six African men dancing in *umutsha*, while holding shields, spears, and *knobkerries*. They appear almost like a pre-study to Bhengu’s depictions of Chief Nyongwane during the performance of the *ingcubhe* and not unlike Kohler’s own appearance in the four photographs above. In September 1930, Kohler had sent a prototype of this bookplate to Becker, in order to have it printed (1000 copies) with the university printer Stürtz in Würzburg.⁷⁷⁴ As a repeated and explicit emphasis of Bhengu’s ingenious versatility as painter, Kohler eagerly pointed out that the separation lines beneath the painting are in fact writing, which had been “painted by a black boy with a brush and without a magnifying glass”.

⁷⁷⁴ AMI: letter, Kohler to Becker, 09.09.1930.

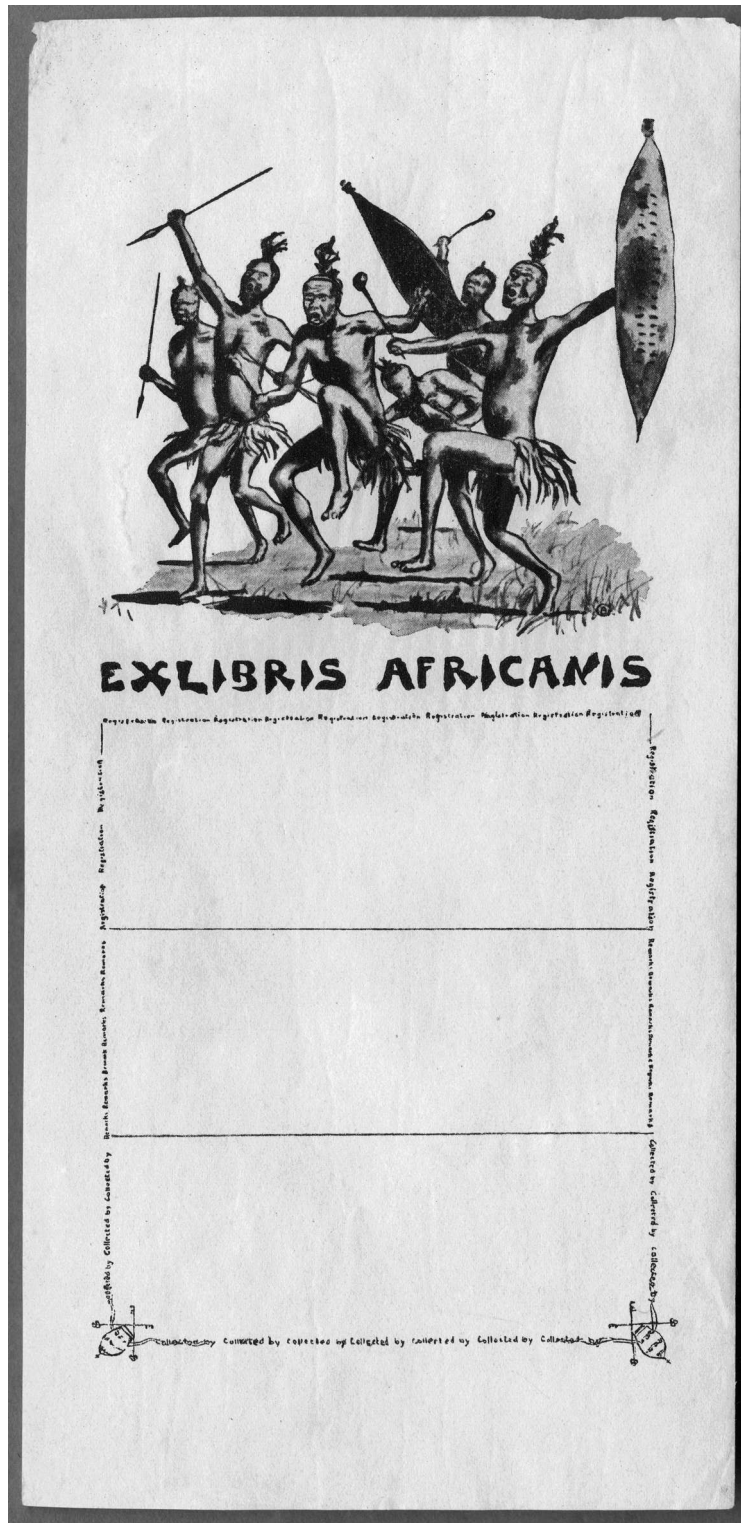


Figure 147: “*Exlibris Africanis*” (KCAL). Each box is constituted by the repeated words (1) “registration”, (2) “remarks”, and (3) “collected by”. The ornaments at the lower corners appear to be shields with crossed spears, but are actually the papal coat of arms (consisting of a mitra and two crossed keys), turned upside down.

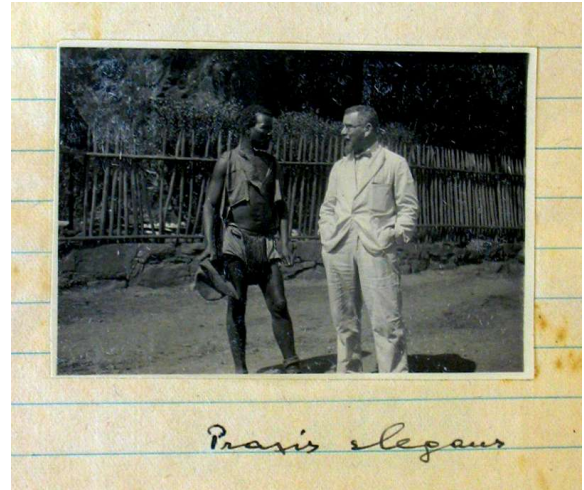
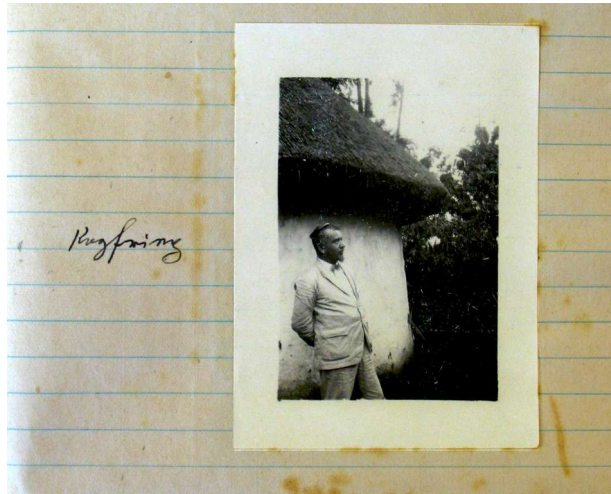
Kohler's attitude towards African stereotypes was therefore highly ambivalent: he considered the male African martial stereotypes of the "chief" or "warrior" as an iconic image that he associated with his literary endeavours. As such he considered it as an illustration for his own publication, as well as an *exlibris* for the books in his library. At the same time, he lamented the generally submissive attitude, which he believed to observe in his male African contemporaries towards Black, as well as White authorities. He expressed this explicitly in his interpretation of Bhengu's painting of the court hearing. Both portrait conventions, the "honorific" and the "repressive" (Sekula 1986) were present in Kohler's and Bhengu's repertoire, intersecting with experiences on the ground, literary fiction such as Rider Haggard, as well as specific concerns in administration and ethnography.

Kohler addressed the "colour bar" in relation to ethnographic concerns in two more instances. In his letter he referred to Fr. Meinulf Küsters OSB (1890-1947), whom he likely considered as a colleague in relation to his own ethnographic attempts. Kohler teased Küsters directly by sending the photograph of himself in 1931, and also mocked him indirectly via his letter to Becker. An unknown confrere of Küsters from Inkamana Abbey near Vrijheid (a "*Herz Jesu Priest*") may have taken the photographs of Kohler. Also Küsters was a member of the Benedictine Missionaries and had worked at Inkamana between 1923 and 1926. Between 1928 and 1932, he was assistant curator at the African section of the ethnographic museum of Munich under Lucian Scherman. The proximity between the museum in Munich and the Archabbey of St. Ottilien allowed for close cooperation (Weigelt 2003:114, Kecskési 1990, 2000). Like Kohler, Küsters published in the yearbook of the Missionsärztliches Institut in Würzburg, gave lectures on ethnology at the institute, and co-published with Scherman in Munich (Scherman and Küsters 1931).⁷⁷⁵ The network connecting Kohler to European ethnologists via Becker, Küsters, and Scherman, eventually allowed for the transfer of an unspecified object collection from Centocow to the ethnographic museum of Munich in 1934, as well as several others to the institute in Würzburg.⁷⁷⁶ Becker also facilitated other collection opportunities for Kohler, such as for the Austrian anthropologist Viktor Lebzelter (cf. Chapter Six). In 1930, Lebzelter requested missionaries to supply him with human skulls for anthropometric analysis. Even though Kohler acknowledged this opportunity, it is uncertain whether he ever sent skulls to Vienna.⁷⁷⁷ Like Müller before him, Kohler thus partook in a transnational network that was scientific, religious, as well as popularising. This network nevertheless seemed to allow for the injection of "inappropriate" images that attempted to undermine its very goal of creating both authoritative knowledge and "civilised" people. This exceptional scenario thus requires further explanation.

⁷⁷⁵ I was not yet able to reconstruct the exact nature of his relationship with Kohler, as there are no remaining correspondences in any of the relevant archives.

⁷⁷⁶ AMI: letter, Becker to Kohler, 28.02.34. Even if sent by Kohler, and delivered by Becker, the objects are not registered with the Museum today (Personal communication with the museum's Africa curator, Stefan Eisenhofer, August 2012).

⁷⁷⁷ The anthropological section of Vienna's Natural History Museum never replied to my repeated inquiries.



Figures 148 and 149: original captions: “*Kopfring*” and “*Praxis Elegans*” (KCAL).

Kohler also collected ethnographic objects for himself, apparently as a hobby. We could already see that he had a performative inclination, as well as a keen sense of dress and style, which brought him to employ some of these objects in his collection as props for his performances. In another photograph from Kohler’s scrapbooks,⁷⁷⁸ he can be seen balancing a head ring, just like he did in the photographs above. The photograph is captioned as “*Kopfring*” (Figure 148). It appears that the object was equally fascinating for him as it had been for Abbot Franz Pfanner some 45 years earlier. For both, the presence and exhibition of the head ring—detached from its original owner—signified a social change. According to Kohler, head rings were no longer a common part of African male dress by 1930:

By now, this sign of dignity has long been taken away from the Kafirs. [...] Instead they dress after “European” fashion. They have gradually lost their tribal consciousness [*Stammesbewußtsein*]. They have been uprooted. And eventually a world traveller passes by and studies how they have been affected by Christianity”.⁷⁷⁹ (Kohler 1931a:19)

Like with Bhengu’s self-portrait and his painting of the court hearing, Kohler once more commented on a society, which was, according to him, in a deep crisis of its own making. By repeatedly including a head ring in his dress-up performances, Kohler thus created his own idealised version of a Zulu stereotype.⁷⁸⁰ Also for Bhengu, the head ring became an important token in his later work, in order to “traditionalise” his paintings, and to make them even more

⁷⁷⁸ KCAL: Kohler Collection, Album “*Glückliche Reise*”.

⁷⁷⁹ My own translation of the German original.

⁷⁸⁰ But Nyongwane, like his contemporary Lokothwayo (cf. Chapters Two and Five), have never been photographed with a head ring. As I explained earlier, head rings symbolised a bond between chiefs and commoners, but were at the same time worn by chiefs themselves. Members of the Zulu Royal House, such as Cetshwayo ka Mpande were commonly photographed with head rings (cf. Mokoena 2013). Still, some chiefs and their commoners, for uncertain reasons, chose not to wear them, or may not have been able to do so, due to balding heads.

interesting for the tourist market (cf. Miles 1997:23, Schlosser 1971:146).

Figure 149 (from the same album) shows Kohler wearing a smart white dress, standing next to a Black man wearing a beige vest in combination with an *umuthsa*. The image is captioned “*Praxis Elegans*”. In yet another photograph, Kohler described the same man as “dressed in two styles: European and primordial”. Kohler played a simple pun according to the logic of colonial humour we are already familiar with since Chapter One: within the contrast of fashion in the encounter between doctor and patient, his medical practice (*Praxis*) was fashionable (*elegans*). Just like his own dress-up, such humour never appeared in the yearbook of the institute in Würzburg, which was very conservative when compared to Mariannhill’s periodicals before the First World War. Therefore this humour has to be considered as Kohler’s private endeavour with a very particular audience, involving individuals such as Küsters and Becker.

Becker eventually replied to Kohler’s letter in June 1931: “I enjoyed your photographs very much. [...] They show that you acclimatised very well, and even perform well in the role of a Zulu Chief”.⁷⁸¹ But Kohler had not acclimatised well at all, and Becker had apparently misinterpreted Kohler’s climactic reference at the very end of the same letter: here Kohler recounted that he had recently been in contact with Bishop Fleischer at Mariannhill. Within the institutional hierarchy, Fleischer was above Centocow’s superior, Fr. Appolinaris Schwamberger. For some years, Kohler had negotiated with the superior about improving the family’s conditions under the general difficulties of living in a remote area, in particular with the growing number of children. As I explained earlier, Kohler already had plans to leave Centocow by 1930. Severe friction with the missionaries and missionary sisters at the station, but also with Bishop Fleischer at Mariannhill, had built up over the years. Kohler generally lamented lacking support of the mission, materially and idealistically. As negotiations with Schwamberger eventually failed, Kohler had turned to Fleischer instead and requested that he should build him a “native kraal, with doors and windows”. However, the request was rhetorical, he added, as he could have built the kraal himself—even against the will of the missionaries. This textual narrative after all corresponds with the four photographs depicting Kohler “in the garb of a Zulu Chief” in front of a “native kraal”. Sending along the photographs with the letter thus appears as a sullen protest on the complicated interpersonal situation: Kohler thought that his family was being underdeveloped by the mission. As he could not find any other job opportunity and was at the same time morally bound by his religious vow, he decided to stay for the remaining five years of his ten-year contract.

Kohler’s pose “in the garb of a Zulu Chief” thus expresses several relationships. Unlike with Müller’s portrait as “orientalist”, or Bhengu as “Black painter”, it is possible to situate this series of four photographic performances within Kohler’s biography. The multiple other documents and traces that can be reassembled around it allow for the conclusion that the performance and its photographs is not simply a caricature of Africans in general, like the ones I

⁷⁸¹ AMI: letter, Becker to Kohler, 05.06.1931.

presented in Chapter One. It is also not a parody of Nyongwane, as Kohler never stated that he attempted to imitate the person Nyongwane, but merely that he dressed *like* Nyongwane. Instead, I suggest that Kohler hoped to draw on the potential power of mimicry, not by imitating the real Nyongwane, but by imitating a variety of circulating imagery: for example the *exlibris* Bhengu had painted for him, or the photograph, which Kohler had pasted into the same scrapbook as his own portrait as chief, preceding it only by a few pages (Figure 145). This photograph shows Chief Lokothwayo ka Manzini of the *Amanganga* at Mariannhill, whom we already know from Chapter Two. I will discuss this photograph in more detail in the next chapter.

As suggested by Bate, the warrior was, next to the despot, a common theme in White colonial mimicry (cf. Chapter One). In Kohler's case we find arms and dress, as well as the "casual 'slothful' pose" as indicative of these Figures (cf. Bate 1993:90). Both Kohler's and Lokothwayo's portraits also resemble classic ruler poses as they were conventional since the 18th century, beginning with Louis XIV. of France: a clear accentuation of supporting and non-supporting leg (*contrapposto*), the left arm akimbo, while the right hand rests on a ceremonial staff or other regalia (cf. Bikker 2018, Burke 2001:29). In his performance, Kohler appears to have fused both stereotypes, the African and the European royal, the despot, as well as the warrior. Especially with the decline of the German monarchy by the 1920s, the latter form of portraiture would have been de-glorified. At least for Kohler, it served as a repertoire for a pose in his photographic performance. Together with general associations of promiscuity and in consequence miscegenation, Kohler's photographs would have offended a general South African society and probably were indeed intended to offend.⁷⁸²

As a singular occasion, Kohler's performance is clearly not an attempt of "going native". Rather it is a statement, infused with colonial humour, as I described it in Chapter One. As such, it was enacted explicitly in order to be photographed. But as I already pointed out, the intended pun is not directed against the referenced colonised subject. Kohler employed certain objects like an *umutsha*, a head ring, a *knobkerrie* and shield as props for his performance, in order to speak to other interlocutors. Also Bhengu repeatedly included objects such as the head ring or the *umutsha* in his contemporary paintings. As I showed, he must even have discussed with Kohler whether to include the chief's *umutsha* in the case of the *ingcubhe* paintings. In so far, these objects accumulated concrete personal meaning for Kohler, which differed from the contemporary colonial common sense. An *umutsha* generally implied nudity, and the head ring hierarchical relationships. These connotations could change, however, according to the interlocutors Kohler addressed at a certain moment: the connotations had potentials, according to how Kohler supposedly could, or could not pose with particular objects; and accordingly how he could speak about, or through them. His pose was not an act of undirected imitation, but intended to mock and criticise colleagues and superiors. To this end Kohler introduced the photograph into

⁷⁸² See Hölzl (2012) for an alternative and isolated analysis of one photograph of the series. While Hölzl denies the relevance of mimicry, I consider the respective interpretation regarding Kohler's photographic practice (and those of Kohler's colleagues) as problematic in several regards: partially due to wrong transcriptions, the limited use of relevant sources, and a resulting over-interpretation of the photographs.

several already existing conversations with particular interlocutors, as well as with other photographs and paintings.

All of these interconnected images give us a better perspective on Kohler's privately and professionally motivated agency behind Bhengu's paintings, and how Kohler articulated his ideas through them. These images were thus not only meant to represent, but to act on Kohler's interlocutors. In this case, Kohler had no intention of creating authentic representations, but used cultural mimicry as a mode of critique, which was not even directed against the colonial subjects themselves. Kohler instead presented himself as a "colonial subject", who had been disadvantaged by the missionaries. He did this not to parody the (in his eyes) even more disadvantaged Black African Chief Nyongwane, but rather to speak to his superior Becker, as well as his colleague Fr. Meinulf Küsters. In both cases, Kohler even invoked the registers of race and colour by describing himself as an "Albino *Amabhaca*". In doing so, he undermined the stability of his own "White" identity and thus the status quo of the "colour bar" including his own scientific work. While Virchow, Bastian, and their colleagues literally had asked for "fixing types" as early as 1872,⁷⁸³ Kohler was busy un-fixing them in 1931. As a result, he expected and indeed received critique. This image occasion thus appears as a telling expression of Kohler's often irritated commentary on the social situation around him, and the stereotypes it produced. He was well aware that his performance was considered ambivalent and therefore inappropriate within the South African discourse of the "colour bar". As a result, the statement was very powerful in its mobile photographic form, and eventually discouraged for exactly this reason.

The South African government claimed the right to rule by maintaining and (re-)creating racial differences. By appropriating and performing some of these differences, Kohler transgressed them in at least two cases. Next to the figure of the chief, Kohler refracted yet another colonial stereotype by wedging himself in between the unstable positions held by government and Africans:

Whenever a [Black] patient persists and inquires without end about the reason for his sickness, I play a joke on him. He does not want a pastoral explanation from the doctor. He loves the priest doctor in the black skin, but not the one in the white skin. I cannot give him a philosophical explanation, because I do not have a full grasp of the language. [Instead], like a sorcerer [*Zauberer*], I rattle with medicine-horns and whistle like the "*imilozi*". The Zulu possesses humour and understands me. But even as a white mission doctor, I was suspected by authoritative institutions to abet heathendom". (Kohler 1935:129)⁷⁸⁴

"*Imilozi*" are ancestral spirits, channelled by a diviner (*isangoma*), so that they may give advice to his or her clients. Kohler thus not only performed in the garb of an African chief, but also with the paraphernalia of an *isangoma*, whom he describes as a "sorcerer". In both cases, he pointed out to a White European audience how he expected and experienced resistance from the White South African society. Despite the fact that he presented both stereotypes with an ironic attitude, there are nevertheless epistemological differences. The role of the chief was a performance

⁷⁸³ See the ethnographic instructions issued since the 1870s, which I discussed in Chapter Six.

⁷⁸⁴ My own translation from the German original.

during a photographic occasion, the one of the *isangoma* was the re-narration of an actual act of mimicry in the course of Kohler's profession. Nevertheless, both were interventions across the "colour bar".

Kohler's attempts at imitating Africans and the intended humorous effects may become even clearer once we acknowledge that he ruled out the possibility of full assimilation and identity between Whites and Blacks. According to Bhabha (1984), this mere approximation always entails doubt about identity, and thus irritation and anxiety. Kohler's opinion on the impossibility to fully assimilate and transform the colonised was probably best expressed in the conclusion to his article on the *ingcubhe*:

We can provide them with many beneficial things, we can free them of their magic frenzy, we can bring to them the light of Christendom. But we should not attempt too much. We can never transform them into civilised Europeans. This is impossible, as much as it is impossible to paint their skin; unless we colour them through bastardisation from the inside out.

They are children, not because they are not yet as old as we Europeans, or because they have not yet climbed as high on the "ladder of evolution". They do appear as children, because they are employed with a raw, primitive, and naive mind [*Gemüt*]. If we ever want to earn their trust, we must not only call them up, but climb down towards them.⁷⁸⁵ (Kohler 1931:127)

Like Müller on the "native question" in 1909, Kohler expressed a public concern about interracial relationships and miscegenation. But instead of Müller's physiognomic interpretations of portraits, I showed that Kohler eventually based his assumptions on psychoanalytical readings of social action and in particular Bhengu's paintings. He not only analysed some of Bhengu's paintings in this regard, but also commissioned other paintings in order to express his views. Even though Kohler opposed segregation, his opinion echoes a speech of the same year by Van Warmelo's predecessor as government ethnologist, Gérard Paul Lestrade. Lestrade provided a deterministic view on "cultural adaptationism", which denied the possibility of total assimilation, and instead suggested only to select from European culture what was appropriate for Africans (cf. Dubow 1989:36, Kuper 1999:151-152). Kohler's above "anti-evolutionary" musings nevertheless remain obscure, as he immediately contradicts himself in the next sentence. His ideas still appear moderate when compared to other racist narratives employed by fellow mission doctors in the institute's yearbook (cf. Hölzl 2011, 2012). In order to position Bhengu and Kohler within such discourses and relationships concerning race, I showed how they positioned themselves in and through photographs and paintings. This allowed Kohler to place images into relationships and to collapse various spaces into each other, as he did with Bhengu's self-portrait. Kohler also experimented with ambivalent inversions and performances of racial identities. For example, he attempted mimicries of the figures of the native chief and the *isangoma*. At the same time, Kohler temporarily tried to pass Bhengu off as a White painter with the help of a Europeanised signature.

By following the circulation of the photographs showing Kohler in the garb of Chief

⁷⁸⁵ My own translation from the German original.

Nyongwane, we could see that the tense situation at Centocow Mission briefly escalated in 1930. This tension only ended in 1935, when the Kohlers indeed left Centocow for good. Betty Kohler departed for a long holiday to Germany with four of the children, while Max Kohler and his son Charley stayed behind to find a new home. After trying his luck at Edendale College in Pietermaritzburg for several months, Kohler eventually became district surgeon in Tabankulu, a small town in the Eastern Cape. Between 1925 and his death in 1948, he never returned to Europe. Either in 1930, when he first considered quitting, or in 1935, he expressed some of his frustrations about the situation at Centocow through an assignment for Bhengu, which he then sent to Würzburg in form of a photographic copy (Figure 150). The painting shows Max Kohler descending down the staircase of Centocow's mission house with flying coat, hat, and stethoscope. To the far right, we see a priest's robe and foot; otherwise, the painting speaks for itself. With the end of Kohler's contract and vow, and also due to the death of Kohler's main interlocutor, Fr. Christoph Becker, the frequent correspondence with the institute in Würzburg stopped in 1937.



Figure 150: monochrome photograph of an untitled painting by Gerard Bhengu, approx. 1931-1935 (AMI).

Conclusion

From Chapters One to Seven we followed the European engagement with African authorship and agency, ranging from satires, theatre plays, the participation in guided tours and photographic occasions, the “salvaging” of African objects before the First World War, and eventually the active encouragement of African *artistic* production since the 1920s. During the 1890s, Mariannhill Missionaries had argued that Black South Africans were not yet fit to produce artistic work, such as fine art painting and photography (cf. Chapter One). Eventually, by the second half of the 1920s, the White South African art world encouraged Black artists to adapt the European mimetic art tradition, or, rather to adapt to it. Beginning at Centocow Mission in 1927, a group of White patrons promoted Gerard Bhengu within South Africa’s religious propaganda, ethnology, and eventually in the South African art world. Bhengu in particular produced genre paintings and portraits, which appear to be mimetic in the sense of copying faithfully from nature through skilful observation. But like Müller, Bhengu also created montages of preexisting images, eclectic compilations of people, objects, and architecture. In the process, he pulled together localities far apart in both time and space. Like its sources, also Bhengu’s oeuvre is very dispersed today. It is therefore impossible to reassemble it in its entirety and to determine the full scope of its inspirations.

Like Müller before him, Bhengu began his career as an illustrator for a religious cause, became an opportunistic ethnographer, as well as an acknowledged artist during his lifetime, but even more so posthumously. At the same time, both men were exuberant, eclectic, yet creative copyists with commercial intentions. In both cases, it was possible to trace the exchange of ideas and image prototypes through a study of intercontinental networks. Müller and Bhengu drew parts of their artistic inspiration from examples acquired in Germany and also applied related aesthetics to ethnographic studies. The conventions of German genre photography thus not only entered the South African ethnographic discourse around 1900 through Müller, but once more manifested themselves in Bhengu’s work around 1930. These movements were only one element in a complex chain of intermediality: paintings had earlier served as inspirations for Müller’s photographic *tableaux vivants*. Similarly romanticised themes once more reappeared in statues, murals, church-windows, as well as Gerard Bhengu’s paintings. Multiple artists became distributed within and even beyond their oeuvres, which can be traced as either “protentions” or “retentions” (Gell 1998). The fact that both Bhengu and Müller relied on other images for their own work was more obvious to contemporary audiences. Intermediality can therefore only be fully understood as a situated historical experience.

Like Müller’s correspondence with German photographers and ethnologists, and his reading of various kinds of instructive literature (photographic, touristic, ethnographic), Bhengu’s early work was partially shaped by correspondences with Kohler’s superior in Würzburg, his artistic relation in Munich, as well as the tutelage by Van Warmelo and his network of the IALC. Like Müller’s photographic project, also Kohler’s and Bhengu’s painterly

project became involved in the same four discourses of production and interpretation: they evolved in relation to missionary propaganda, some images were then directed towards the discourse of ethnographic representation, and most images of both oeuvres have been appreciated and exhibited as art. Both oeuvres are today equally discussed in terms of history and heritage production. This trajectory from construction to historicity (epitomised by Bryant's and Sr. Adelgisa's quotes in this study's main introduction) becomes clearer when we recall both Müller's and Kohler's claims to objectivity for the respective sets of images. Even though their claims to objectivity were contradicted by the practices of artistic poses and montages, their motivations can be understood once considered in relation to the epistemic regimes and audiences they addressed.

In his correspondence with Von Luschan in 1899 and in his article of 1909, Müller framed his work in a way similar to a "mechanical objectivity" (cf. Chapter One). He stressed his "snap shot" photographs as even more authentic, pointed to the future value of his photographs due to the alleged vanishing of "primitive people", and created, if reluctantly, an additional booklet for Von Luschan. Several decades later, Kohler authenticated his own and Bhengu's work for and within ethnographic, medical, psychoanalytical, and artistic discourses. He accompanied ethnographic descriptions with original textual statements by informants in Zulu. Employing the "native's point of view" this approach can be understood as "trained judgement" (cf. Pels 2014). In the case of the *ingcubhe*, he hoped to back up his account with an original text and paintings by Bhengu, which they had negotiated through a "four-eyed sight". Kohler complemented his medical texts with both photographs and Bhengu's paintings. Furthermore, in at least one known case, he interpreted Bhengu's self-portrait as a "working object": by dissecting it within the evidential paradigm of psychoanalysis, he attempted to define it as an authentic emanation of the latter's subconscious, in order to penetrate the "native mind". It was in the art world, however, that Kohler considered it necessary to support the artistic value of Bhengu's paintings with additional improvements to the artist's "signatures": the "germanification" of the artist's surname to "Bhenger", as well as his fingerprint.

Based on interviews with Kohler's widow and Bhengu during the 1950s, Schlosser concluded that Kohler's interest in Bhengu had from the beginning relieved Bhengu of the choice for a different career. Their relationship was also predetermined by Kohler's failure to interest Centocow's superior, Fr. Appolinaris Schwamberger, for Bhengu's artistic training (Schlosser 1971:123). Strictly speaking, we can therefore not count Bhengu among the mission-educated artists, but rather have to take into account Kohler's particular and independent agency as a mission associate. From the outset, Bhengu was set on a path to become an "exceptional" artist: "exceptional" as compared to his Black contemporaries, but nevertheless set apart from his White peers. Bhengu thus became hyper-visible as an individual in a social and artistic sense: his authorship and identity as "Black artist" was the very point of Kohler's efforts in some moments. In the effort of selling Bhengu's work on the art market, however, Kohler temporarily tried to subdue Bhengu's racial identity as "Black", by attempting to pass his work off as that of a White

man through the adjustment of his signature.

Like Müller, Bhengu developed an inclination for self-portraiture. In both cases we must acknowledge the various forms and layers these performances involved. When posing as painter for his self-portrait, Bhengu imitated a very conventional pose that aspired to the status of the artistic painter, not necessarily to the status of being “White” or “Modern”. Nevertheless, Bhengu aspired to the membership of a specific community. Kohler instead, when performing in the garb of Chief Nyongwane, indeed imitated yet another conventional pose, however with the clear intention to subvert. It is crucial to observe that this subversion was no longer intended as a parody of the “native” (cf. Chapter One), but instead a persiflage that allowed Kohler to comment powerfully on a segregated society. Through an intentionally imperfect impersonation or mimicry of the other side of segregation, he indeed refracted both sides. Mimicry is a form of imitation that is by definition never perfect, and in Kohler’s case clearly supposed to be recognised as such. The outcome and consequences of such a social performance can therefore never be fully anticipated or controlled.

In consequence, both Bhengu and Kohler at times appeared as inappropriate within the segregationist society of Natal, if not even as threats to the status quo. Bhengu’s art was not recognisable as “African” per se, why Kohler suggested to adjust Bhengu’s signature, in order to disguise the fact even more. Only in self-portraits showing the act of painting, the identity of the “Black painter” became obvious. As a figure of discourse, “authorship” thus posed a potential problem for the success of Bhengu’s work. This was at least Kohler’s fear around 1930. After all, Kohler felt that Bhengu’s work needed his advice, as well as his presence: either through psychoanalytical commentary, or through his own performance as tutor, together with Bhengu before the easel (Figure 144). Also Natal’s educational authorities—even if appreciative—deemed it necessary to control Bhengu’s artistic creativity. Apparently, his art was becoming too “European” in the eyes of, for example, the professor for art history O.J.P. Oxley. According to Oxley, Bhengu’s work had to be redirected once more towards his own “African” style in order to guarantee a segregated art world. Still in the early 1960s, the production process of Bhengu’s first and only publication together with Phyllis Savory was not easy going. Savory considered it necessary to first consult with the Native Department before publication, in order to avoid a confrontation with racial policy.

Kohler documented his own transgressions of the “colour bar” in a humorous, yet bitter way. These transgressions were perceived as a threat to Natal society in at least two cases. First, through reflections on his photographic performance in the garb of Chief Nyongwane, and second, through his performance with the paraphernalia of an *isangoma*. Even more than with Müller in the last chapters, it becomes apparent with Kohler how he adjusted his voice and rhetorics in a segregated environment, depending on whom he addressed and what topic he brought up accordingly: his superior, a general or professional public in Germany, the local mission superior or Bishop, the buddy in China, members of his family, and eventually his “Black painter”. After all, Kohler was a medical doctor and only entertained his roles as art

patron and ethnologist as hobbies. Just like Müller, he perceived himself—and was perceived by others—as auxiliary to these fields of interest. Like Müller and Bhengu, Kohler nevertheless became an influential “trans-disciplinary subject” on a global scale (cf. Schneider 2011).

By comparing Müller’s general photographic practice and oeuvre to Bhengu’s painterly practice and oeuvre across disciplines, we can see that there were both commonalities and differences. The specific circumstances of Bhengu’s and Kohler’s extended social relationships connected by the medium of painting, made their cooperation possible, necessary, and visible. However, as we saw in Chapter One, also photography could be employed in a painterly manner, given the photographer’s patience and skills to stage models and a well-equipped studio to perform retouching. Both media indeed had a painterly potential, in so far that they *took time* to compose the motive. Contrary to Berger’s suggestion, there is thus not necessarily such a great difference between painting and photography. By taking time to prepare, rehearse, and repeat the sceneries for his genre photographs, Müller—just like a painter—indeed “encompassed time” (cf. Berger 1976, also see Taussig 2011). While Bhengu as painter could condense what he had observed, and thereby could create “identity” instead of mere “resemblance”, the photographer Müller had to evoke poses by social interaction with his models (cf. Albien 1911:5, Chapter One). As we could see throughout the previous chapters, both painting and photography could accumulate moments of past experiences, or as Berger put it: “This is how the act of drawing refuses the process of disappearances and proposes the simultaneity of a multitude of moments” (Berger 1976:82).

The combination of allegedly creative yet authentic—but nevertheless controlled—representations, initially made Bhengu’s paintings successful within a complex visual economy. The complexity of this economy entails that it changed over time. As I indicated in the introduction, Bhengu’s work was eventually devaluated both on the art market and in art history due to his initial reliance on White patrons and the ongoing adherence to romantic genre scenes. Unlike some of his colleagues, he never made the transition to a modernist style that spoke to the struggle narratives of an anti-apartheid lobby in need of Black artists as strong figures of resistance. Nevertheless, after the end of Apartheid, Bhengu and Kohler reemerged within the same fora due to the exceptionality of their cooperation as artist and patron, ethnographer, and amanuensis. Through their work, they contributed in a crucial way to the establishment of other social figures, which gained increasing prominence until today. Three of these figures we shall meet in the final chapter.