CULTURE AND HISTORY
– STUDENT RESEARCH PAPERS

CULTURE AND HISTORY Nr. 02

December 2024

INDHOLDSFORTEGNELSE

FORORD

Dette nummer af Culture and History er et temanummer om kolonialismens kultur, og er redigeret i samarbejde med lektor i historie, Daniel Steinbach ved Saxo-Instituttet.

I forbindelse med dette nummer vil redaktionen gerne sige farvel til Niels Jul Nielsen og Lea Cecilie Brinkgaard. De har været bærende dele af den tidligere redaktion, og vi siger tak for tro tjeneste, og god vind i fremtiden.

Den nye redaktion består af studielektor i historie, ph.d., Peter Edelberg, studielektor i græsk og latin, ph.d., Kristoffer Maribo (orlov efterår 2024), ph.d.-stipendiat i etnologi, Louise Kjærgaard Depner, ph.d.-stipendiat i arkæologi, Margaréta Hanna Pintér, ph.d.-stipendiat i græsk og latin, Valentina Orrù, og ph.d.-stipendiat i historie Rune Korgaard.

Culture and History er et tidsskrift, der almindeligvis publiceres online, og udgiver artikler forfattet af studerende ved Saxo-Instituttet, Københavns Universitet. Formålet er at give studerende fra instituttets forskellige fagligheder mulighed for at publicere artikler baseret på projekter, opgaver eller specialer og dermed dels formidle deres indsigter, dels prøve kræfter med forskningsartikelgenren. Tidsskriftets artikler udkommer både i temanumre, blandede numre og som fortløbende enkeltudgivelser og redigeres af en fast redaktion, eventuelt i samarbejde med gæsteredaktører, herunder studerende, som i fællesskab tager stilling til indkomne forslag og sørger for mulig fagfællebedømmelse. Tidsskriftet var oprindeligt støttet af Københavns Universitets U-2016-projekt, Undervisningsbaseret forskning.

God læselyst!

Redaktionen

This issue of Culture and History is a thematic issue on colonial cultures, edited in collaboration with associate professor in history, Daniel Steinbach at the Saxo-Institute.

Before this issue, the editorial board has said farewell to Niels Jul Nielsen and Lea Cecilie Brinkgaard. We thank them for their service, and wish them all the best in the future.

The current editorial board consists of teaching associate professor in history, PhD, Peter Edelberg, teaching associate professor in Greek and Latin, PhD, Kristoffer Maribo (on leave in Fall 2024), PhD fellow in ethnology, Louise Kjærgaard Depner, PhD fellow in archeology, Margaréta Hanna Pintér, PhD fellow in Greek and Latin, Valentina Orrù, and PhD fellow in history, Rune Korgaard.

Culture and History, which is usually published online, presents articles by students at the Saxo Institute at the University of Copenhagen. The aim is to provide students from the institute's different disciplines an opportunity to publish articles based on projects, essays or Master's theses, thereby presenting their findings and acquiring experience with writing research papers. The journal publishes both special thematic issues, mixed volumes and separate single articles and is edited by an editorial committee, sometimes in collaboration with theme editors, including students. The editors jointly decide on article proposals and take care of the peer review process. The journal was originally supported by University of Copenhagen's U-2016 project Teaching-based Research.

Forside: Fotografi fra Nationalmuseets samlinger er et loftsmaleri fra Grevinde Danners lejlighed i Ny Vestergade 13, tilflyttet i 1863. Lejligheden var blevet udsmykket af en rig tømrerhandler C.L. Maag i 1811 efter tidens antik-inspirerede mode af blandt andet malerne G. Hilker, P.C. Skovgaard og Constantin Hansen. Anvendes med Nationalmuseets tilladelse.

Front page: Photograph from the collections of the National Museum. Ceiling painting from the apartment of Countess Danner, Ny Vestergade 13. Used with permission.

CULTURE AND HISTORY Nr. 02

December 2024

Introduction

Colonialism, Race, and Power in the 19th and 20th Centuries

Daniel Steinbach
History

The 19th and 20th centuries were transformative periods of expansion, consolidation, and eventual unravelling of colonial empires across the globe. These centuries saw the proliferation of imperial ideologies, practices, and cultural codes that permeated everyday life, while also shaping and reshaping social systems and structures. Colonial cultures emerged as dynamic spaces where differences were encountered, power asserted, identities constructed, and resistance negotiated. This special issue explores the multifaceted nature of colonial cultures from the mid-19th century to the mid-20th century, drawing attention to their manifestation in diverse regions and contexts, from the settler colonies of Australia and Kenya to the imperial 'peripheries' of Greenland and Indochina. The breadth of geographical scope across the ten articles contained in the special issue reflects the extensive reach of high imperialism. Across contexts, the articles examine complex intersections among material culture, ideology, and social hierarchy. By analysing distinct practices – from dining to photography, hunting, conservation, and governance – the articles illuminate how colonial cultures functioned as instruments of control as well as sites of conflict, and in so doing reveal the enduring legacies of imperialism.

These contributions all emerged from students of the MA History course 'Colonialism, Race, and Power in the 19th and 20th Centuries', taught at the University of Copenhagen during the academic years 2022/23 and 2023/24. These classes brought together individuals from diverse academic backgrounds, both in terms of nationality and discipline, united by a shared interest in critically engaging with themes of colonialism, power, and globalisation across various temporal, spatial, and cultural contexts. Each article is grounded in the students' original research, drawing often on primary source material that has not previously been the focus of scholarly attention. These sources themselves speak to the technological advancements of this period, spanning mass-printed books and newspapers to photographs, radio broadcasts, and early television programmes. Such materials illustrate the ways in which the colonial era facilitated a 'shrinking' of the world, brought about through the dense networks of social connections and cultural exchanges that accompanied European imperial expansion.

The articles also engage with the evolution of mindsets, knowledge systems, and ideological constructs that shaped how Europeans perceive the 'others' they encountered through imperial expansion, but also how they came to understand themselves in response. Central to these discussions are notions of racial difference, constructions of sex and gender, and attitudes towards nature and the environment. All these categories and concepts were profoundly influenced by Europe's encounters with the colonised world – but such ideas were also inextricably linked to 'praxis' and in combination with colonial power shaped social norms and behaviours in ways distinct from metropolitan contexts. For example, in the colonies, forms of violence that were long outlawed in Europe persisted or were reintroduced, sexual relationships were rigidly regulated by intersections of race and gender, and family structures were adapted to serve the logics of empire. Efforts to control colonised spaces and the bodies of colonised peoples were deeply intertwined, reflecting the totalising ambitions of colonial governance. The articles within this collection collectively illustrate how colonial societies operated as complex, all-encompassing systems, where ideologies and material conditions reinforced one another to sustain imperial rule.

In the first article, *Wild Food: Culinary Colonialism and the Construction of Australian Cuisine*, Micheala Petruso opens the discussion by exploring how the culinary landscape of colonial Australia

was shaped through the encounter between Indigenous foodways and settler ideologies. The article highlights how food served as a site of cultural negotiation, reinforcing settler dominance while also exposing underlying anxieties about belonging and identity in an unfamiliar land. Dining practices and their symbolic importance to colonial identity are further analysed by Emilie Bolding Ørum in *A Performance for Dinner: Dining Culture and Colonial Identity in the Dutch East Indies, 1880–1910*. Through the lens of colonial photography, the article reveals how dining rituals were employed to reinforce European cultural superiority and maintain strict social and racial boundaries. The medium of photography, a recurring theme in this issue, emerges as a powerful tool for both perpetuating and challenging colonial authority.

This duality of photography is particularly evident in *Behind the Mask: Counternarratives in John Møller's Photographs from Greenland, 1889–1922*, where Nanna V. H. Emtoft examines the work of Greenland's first Indigenous photographer. Through a close analysis of Møller's images, the article uncovers subtle critiques of Danish colonial rule embedded within the photographer's compositions, which challenged conventional representations of colonial hierarchies. Similarly, Elizabeth Megan Kiemel Clewett in *Frames of Domination: Connecting the Chaining of Aboriginal 'Prisoners' and Settler Emotions, 1900–1950* analyses how colonial photography in Australia was used to assert settler control over Aboriginal bodies. At the same time, this piece interrogates the ways in which these images were framed to appeal to humanitarian sensibilities, revealing the conditional nature of settler empathy and its inability to confront the broader violence of the colonial system.

Moving from visual culture to bodily violence, *Atrocities in the 'Heart of Darkness': Sexual Violence as a Weapon of Colonial Control in the Congo Free State, 1885–1908* by Daniel Fabricius provides a harrowing account of sexual violence as a systematic tool of colonial oppression. The article examines how practices such as rape, abduction, and forced incest were employed to subjugate the Congolese population, simultaneously enforcing racial hierarchies and consolidating economic and military control. This deeply gendered and racialised violence exposes the brutal underpinnings of colonial authority and its devastating impact on Indigenous communities.

The relationship between colonial power and the environment is explored in two articles focusing on East Africa. In *'Managing' Wildlife: Hunting and Conservation in the 'White Highlands' of Early*

Colonial Kenya Susann Heidecke examines the contradictions of settler conservation practices, highlighting how European settlers in Kenya sought to preserve 'pristine' nature while engaging in hunting and agricultural activities that decimated local wildlife populations. The article argues that these practices reinforced settler dominance by delegitimising Indigenous ecological knowledge and dispossessing precolonial landholders. Similarly, in *Colonial Nature: Hunting in Karen Blixen's 'Out of Africa*' Laura Soland Wang Larsen investigates the symbolic significance of hunting in colonial British East Africa, using Blixen's experiences as a lens to explore gendered and racial dimensions of colonial life. The article reveals how hunting rituals and narratives upheld imperial ideologies, shaping perceptions of masculinity, femininity, and power in the colonial context.

The economic and social transformations wrought by colonial rule are addressed by Zoe Robakiewicz in *Shifting the Centre: The Transformation of Greenlandic Society from Subsistence to Market Economy in the Nineteenth Century*. This article traces the mechanisms through which Danish colonial administrators integrated Greenland into a capitalist market system, dismantling subsistence economies, and reshaping Indigenous governance through reforms such as the establishment of local representative councils. These societal transformations are echoed by Ida Kaae Antonisen in *Métis Child Removal in French Indochina: Change and Continuity from the Second World War to Decolonisation*, which examines the persistent colonial practice of removing 'mixed-race' children from their Indigenous mothers. Despite shifts in rhetoric and priorities during and after the Second World War, the article reveals how these practices were rooted in enduring colonial anxieties about race, memory, and the preservation of French influence.

The final article, *Portuguese Africa through Danish Eyes and Ears: Danmarks Radio's Portrayal of the Portuguese Colonial State, 1961–1974*, Alex Alexandre provides a unique perspective on colonial cultures through the lens of media representation. By analysing Danish radio broadcasts and television news, the article traces the evolution of public discourse on Portuguese colonial wars in Angola and Mozambique, from early uncritical reporting to a later, more pronounced anti-colonial stance. This shift reflects broader global trends in anti-colonial activism and the changing dynamics of public opinion during the second half of the 20th century.

Together, these articles present a wide-ranging exploration of colonial cultures and practices, uncovering their role in shaping identities, governing societies, and reinforcing hierarchies. By focusing on diverse geographies and themes, this special issue contributes to a nuanced understanding of the cultural dimensions of colonial power and resistance. It invites readers to reflect on the legacies of colonialism that continue to shape our world and to consider the ways in which historical narratives can be re-examined to illuminate hidden stories of resilience and transformation.

WILD FOOD: CULINARY COLONIALISM AND THE CONSTRUCTION OF AUSTRALIAN CUISINE.

Cookbooks, Cultivation, and the Taste of Home

By:
Micheala Petruso
Advanced Migration Studies

ABSTRACT: In the intersection of food history and colonisation, historical cookbooks are often more prescriptive than representative of actual culinary habitants of individuals. In the colonial setting, cookbooks act as a marker for the subordination of indigenous cuisine in place of cuisines rooted in the heart of the empire—food becomes representative of culture, identity, and civilisation. In the Australian context, the earliest published cookbooks date back to the 1860's, a period in which Australia saw extensive cultivation, pasteurisation, and settlement. Thus, as we trace Australian cookbooks through the late 19th and early 20th century, the inclusion and exclusion of exogenous foodstuffs becomes indicative of both colonial identity markers and performative campaigns to associate the colony with specific and particular notions of what cuisine should consist of. By analysing the recipes and discourse of historical cookbooks and emigrants' guides in Australia, the performative nature of food asserts the tenets of

culinary colonialism by maintaining spaces of control and occupation through the association of cuisine, identity, and civilisation.

KEYWORDS: Australia, cookbooks, culinary colonialism, identity construction, indigenous cuisine

Introduction

> "It might seem at first view as if nature had formed the Australians on a low scale, to meet the poverty of the land in which they were destined to live, in the same manner in which it constituted the Esquimaux to live amidst perpetual ice and snow, where no other race of man could live. Yet, in this land, seemingly the predestined abode of irretrievable savages, there now live and flourish colonies of another race of man differently endowed, and which, in three short generations, have laid the foundation of a powerful and civilised empire" (Crawfurd 1868: 122).

In 1876, Wilhelmina Rawson published *Mrs Lance Rawson's Cookery Book and Household Hints*, lauded as the first cookbook published by an Australian woman. Subsequent reprints and publications have positioned her as a central figure in the creation of Australian cuisine (Woodcock 2016). That said, however, recipes with pigweed, rosella, or the array of native game in these books are often far outnumbered by traditional Anglo-Saxon and European cuisine: hot-cross buns, croquettes, German sausages, and mutton. In the colonial arena, the quotidian routines of eating embody cultural and historical hierarchies around consumption in such ways that choice and rejection become signifiers of identity construction. Long histories of exploration and cultivation crafted a dynamic in which the endemic foods of Australia, often called "bush food" or "wild food" became battle grounds for tensions around culture and civilisation. In John Crawfurd's 1868 report on the native vegetables and animals of Australia, a work that is more a lamentation on the indigenous food of Australia, the very title of his article leads us to the point of departure for this paper: "...a Comparison between the Australians and Some Other Races of Man." Similarly, in Emma Etta Neville's 1867 guide for the emigrant home, she states, "...there is certainly nothing here that will compare with the luxuriance and beauty of England" (Neville 1867: 143). In the case of the endemic foods of Australia, the writings of colonial settlers show a consistent hierarchy of comparison in which settlers position indigenous plants and animals as inferior to imported ingredients and cuisine more traditional and palatable to Anglo-Saxon culinary tradition.

Throughout this paper, I will examine the ways in which real and symbolic foodways—that is, the actual practices of cuisine and cooking as well as the representation and narratives on food and cuisine, real or not— become frameworks for creating and asserting national identity. By examining early emigrants' guides in tandem with historical Australian cookbooks, I will analyse the symbolic nature of choice and the subsequent rejection of certain foodstuffs, even as cultivation, pastoralisation, and the prescriptive nature of cookbooks demonstrate tensions in perceptions of the intersection between civilization and cuisine. The idea that these writings are often prescriptive rather than reflective of the widespread preferences and practices of the settler population assert the productions of cookbooks as instruments of national narratives around culture in such a manner that positions food as a central point in the expansion of empire.

Historiography

In the intersection of food history and colonisation, gastronomy is used to assert subordination and notions of civilisation. Culinary colonialism, in this vein, is the idea that gastronomy acts as a field beyond law or property in which settlers can exert jurisdiction (Grey and Newman 2018). Grey and Patel posit that indigenous cuisines often see a progression of conquest, assimilation, and appropriation—in which there is a destruction of endemic foods as a tool of war and conquest, a forced assimilation to settler diets, and finally a revalorisation of indigenous cuisine (Grey and Patel 2014). That said, in this paper, I will focus on culinary colonialism as a denigration of endemic foods to create a national identity rooted in Anglo-Saxon culinary tradition. Rather than examining the effect settler colonialism had in Australia on endemic food systems and thus on indigenous communities, I will consider how perceptions of these food systems (both endemic and exogenous) by settler communities were embedded in frameworks rooted in culture and identity.

To conduct the analysis of this paper, I will use emigrants' guides written by Australian settlers as well as historical cookbooks. In emigrants' guides, a researcher can often see a reproduction of initial perceptions—given that these are written for future settlers, we see reconstructed judgements and comparisons about the suitability of endemic food, Aboriginal peoples, and the success of cultivation. In regard to historical cookbooks, Albana notes, "...cookbooks are rarely if ever accurate descriptions

of what people actually ate at any given time and place. They are usually prescriptive literature, and thus reflect peoples' aspirations, or even merely the authors' expectations of what readers might like to know rather than actual culinary practice" (Albala 2012: 230). These sources allow a researcher to consider the perceptions and ideologies that shaped cuisine—both through the act of cooking and the culture around cuisine—at the time of writing, whether or not they were actually intended to provide guidance to the average cook. The inclusion or exclusion of food, and the origins of the recipes included, are prescriptive to the direction of culinary culture in the colony.

In order to consider this intersection of culinary colonialism and the creation of identity, this paper will focus on the mid-nineteenth century to just after the First World War The Australian colony's first cookbook was published in 1864—Edward Abbott's *English and Australian Cookery Book: Cookery for the Many, as well as for the Upper Ten Thousand.* As stated previously, Rawson published the acclaimed *Mrs Lance Rawson's Cookery Book and Household Hints* in 1876. Though these early cookbooks do include foods endemic to Australia, they are also filled with recipes much more familiar to the readers, both settlers and English audiences, whose culinary palates were rooted in Europe. By the mid- to late-nineteenth century, as many of these cookbooks hit both national and international shelves, much of Australia had already been cultivated by settlers— farmers grew crops imported from Europe, pastoralists supplied steady sources of lamb, beef, and other familiar meats, and even exogenous wild game had been introduced (Mayes 2020). In short— the ingredients recommended by Australian cookbooks, despite being European in nature, were easily available to settlers throughout the country.

Section I: Food, Identity, and Colonialism: An Overview Historiography

Before delving into an analysis specifically rooted in the interrelated nature of cuisine, identity, and perception in colonial Australia, it is important to have a broader look at the intersection of food history, identity construction, and colonialism. Both Singley and Parasecoli reference the "omnivore's dilemma," coined by Claude Fischler, in which, as omnivorous animals, we are torn between "neophilia" (the desire for new opportunities to feed ourselves) and "neophobia" (the fear that these new additions to our diet could make us sick or kill us) (Singley 2012). When we are exposed to foreign

dishes or foods that we might deem exotic from our own cultural standpoint, culinary uncertainty is introduced as the points of reference we may be used to are left behind. As we delve into new and exotic meats and produce, we often attempt to draw these tastes back into a broader culinary reference point—that is, to take something unfamiliar and categorise it through the familiar.

In Abbott's 1864 cookbook, for example, a note preceding instructions for cooking emu states, "This is a very unctuous sort of food, and much resembles coarse beef in flavor. At the early establishment of the colony, it was generally partaken of, but we cannot recommend it to the epicure, unless he has the sailor's digestion…" (Abbott 1864: 84). In a description of a using kangaroo on the following page, Abbott quotes an emigrant's guide *Mrs Meredith's Home in Tasmania* which states that kangaroo is, in fact, very much like hare, after describing a cooking method of dredging the lean meat of the kangaroo in bacon fat "as if they were illustrious Christmas beef grilling at some London chop-house under the gratified nose of the expectant consumer" (Abbott 1864: 85). Abbott himself notes in a commentary of Mrs. Meredith's cooking recommendation that beef or mutton can be cooked in the same way. This is almost a given, however—the endemic meats listed throughout this section are rarely, if ever, cooked or seasoned in a manner that the average settler would be unfamiliar with. Kangaroo tail is compared to oxtail, just as the Bass-Strait bird is colloquially called the "mutton bird." Meat, in this sense, becomes universally interchangeable, with familiar tastes for unfamiliar meats easily reproducible. To confront the unknown in the cuisine of the settler colony, in which there is a landscape of unknowns, the omnivore's dilemma is addressed through reorienting experience to the familiar.

Yet it is important to note that Abbott's book was never actually printed or published in Australia, and moreover, modern scholars question how representative Abbott's work was of settler cuisine—as stated previously, cookbooks often act as an aspirational source. O'Brian posits that though Abbott was born in the colony, he considered Britain to be the "parent" culture—by adding in the kangaroo, the emu, the "mutton bird," and so on to his cookbook, there was a hope he could expand traditional English cooking (O'Brien 2016). This is relevant in that Abbot's book acts as a touchstone for the idea of a colonial power actively shaping the perception of food in a settler colony already inhabited

by indigenous peoples. The publishing of this cookbook in England was an act of actively shaping the idea of food and cuisine in the settler colony for those in England (who may be potential future settlers), whether or not it was the actual reality of food in Australia. Until the 1890's, the vast majority of cookbooks used in Australia were English cookbooks, and the inclusion of "bush food" in Australia cookbooks (published in Australia or not) is not a widespread marker of the cultural direction of cuisine—as O'Brian notes, "A singular work could effect such change but when a collective of books proffering similar ideas of food and eating emerges the influence is more certain" (O'Brien 2016: 137). In light of this point, it is important to note that the vast majority of cookbooks I considered for this paper, both those ultimately chosen for further analysis as well as the ones not used as source material, very few contain endemic ingredients compared to a much larger collective of books revolving solely around Anglo-Saxon foodstuffs. The inclusion of "bush food," in light of the trajectory of Australian food history and production is often highly aspirational and not extraordinarily reflective of culinary evolutions, given that the vast majority of cookbooks used until the 1890's was English by publication and authorship, and afterwards was heavily influenced by a food production heavily based on Anglo-Saxon culinary roots.

Tensions around unknown and known food can develop political undertones—food is often exceptionally symbolic and can thus become a marker for community membership or otherness (Parasecoli 2022: 86-88). In other words, food is a marker for tradition: "Traditions open themselves to be integrated in political projects precisely because they are, in many ways, political themselves, in the sense that they participate in determining what a community is and how it sees itself down the line" (Parasecoli 2022: 88). In the case of the colonial project, it is important to note that endemic foods often supplement imported stores in the early years of settlement—however, as food supplies became more stable and as cultivation took hold, this desire for native foods decreased (Singley 2012). Becuț draws on sociological and anthropological approaches to food studies to note that food choices and habits are constructed through collective identities (Becuț and Puerto 2017). As the colony develops, more people become involved in the production and preparation of food. Farmers supply crops, pastoralists supply meat in the form of lamb, beef, and chicken, food transportation systems are put in place, markets to buy foodstuffs spring up, colonial administrations form communities of safety

and nutrition. People throughout the colony become involved in the widespread consumption of food, and thus consumption and cuisine become facets of community and kinship. Food acts as a vector for social membership (Becuț 2017).

Throughout the nineteenth century, land policies in Australia allowed for the relatively cheap purchase of land to encourage cultivation—wheat became the dominant cereal crop, the rise and fall of the wool market saw shifting strategies by pastoralists in their strategies in mutton and lamb markets, technological improvements allowed for the growth of dairy enterprises, among other changes (O'Brien 2016). There is a distinct development of industry and production modelled on Anglo-Saxon ingredients and methods of production. Though emigrants' guides and early Australian cookbooks may include descriptions of endemic foods (generous or not), how to cook them in familiar manners, or even how Aboriginals may have used them, there is a clear trajectory in Australian food history of a standardisation opposing Abbott's aforementioned ideal of expanding English culinary tradition in the spirit of Australian food. Food hierarchies become increasingly polarised and stigmatised as the accepted framework of food becomes less diversified and more ingrained in specific cultural notions—"wild" food is juxtaposed with politics surrounding the superiority of cultivation and pastoralisation. In the case of indigenous plants, the main question for colonial food authorities often revolves around cultivation potential. In the words of economic theorist Jean-François Melon, "...all agreed that to be productive the existing population needed to be well fed. For this reason, a nation's strength was closely correlated with its possessing the greatest possible quantity of foodstuffs. An adequate supply of affordable and nourishing food was thus essential for the 'security, wealth and glory of a state" (Earle 2017: 174). Cultivation is the key to the productive potential of the colony, and thus the frequent scorn for the cultivation potential of Australian crops sidelines these foods as familiar, imported crops take precedence.

We can see this development by looking at the latest cookbook considered in the scope of this research question, Wattle Blossom's 1924 *Off the Beaten Track.* Throughout the eighty-eight page book not a single recipe relies on, or even includes any ingredient particular to Australia. In the introduction, the publishing company notes, "The recipes and hints contained herein are intended for use with standard

ingredients only. To ensure this standard, which includes quality, purity, and correct blending, insist upon Mitchell's Pure Food Products" (Blossom 1924: 1-2). Consider the title of the book (*Off the Beaten Track)* and a note by Blossom herself: "Some of the methods given are quite different from the old fashioned and generally accepted way of preparing various foods, the new way has been found the better way, and in spite of the prejudice that exist against any new thing where the kitchen is concerned, we are confident that once tried, the methods will be permanently adopted" (Blossom 1924: 2). Blossom's note is immediately followed by the publisher's—yet the only manner by which the book veers "off the beaten track" are some modified cooking techniques—slow roasting rather than cooking meat at a very high temperature, for example. The book is standardised and universalised for the colonial experience, not just the Australian settler. Recipes within could be replicated throughout the empire so long as cultivation and food management allowed access to Anglo-Saxon ingredients. The publisher goes so far as to recommend a specific food retailer Mitchell's Pure Food Products (who, given the advertisements throughout the book, likely sponsored the publication). The standardisation of ingredients as well as the implication that there was standardised access to food production systems and branding shows a distinct progression from earlier cookbooks drawing from what could be supplemented from the "bush" to cultivated foodstuffs, or how endemic foods could act as substitutes for the more familiar.

As this develops, Singley notes that the ridicule of foreign foods becomes a way for the in-group to assert its own patterns and habits as superior—and as civilised. In her article on projects devoted to 'civilising' children in Australia, Russell quotes English novelist Anthony Trollope: "The white man, of course, felt that he was introducing civilization; but the black man did not want civilization. He wanted fish, kangaroos, and liberty" (Russell 2009: 335). Endemic foods are thus opposed to civilization—so long as the Aboriginal desires them, he cannot be among the civilised. Similarly, Singley gives another example: "one young Aboriginal boy was considered to have been rehabilitated into civilisation only once his penchant for 'scorched' kangaroo cooked in cinders was eliminated and his palate was able to become civilised in the European way" (Singley 2012: 31). Becuț states the following: "...these historiographies have illustrated how gastronomic heritage expresses the common concern in all human societies for historical continuity and preservation of a shared sense of community membership, even though these fabricated past and origin myth are the construct of imagined

communities….food products and technologies have entailed transformative processes impacting local cultures, consumer tastes, regional economies and political developments" (Becuț 2017: 2). This racialisation of food in the vein of civilised/uncivilised conceptions will be discussed in greater depth in a following section, but nonetheless, this paradigm is an incredibly significant marker in settler food history. The history and utilisation of food in the colonies—in regard to exogenous imports, denial of the endemic, the strategic use of perceptions, and so on—is a history of inclusion and exclusion. As the settler colony explores competing tensions of new frontiers and heritage and tradition, perceptions around food shift and fluctuate around political and economic frameworks set in motion by settlers and their colonial authorities.

Section II: Bush Food: National Identity and Cuisine in Australia

Australia, by the mid nineteenth century, was far from an unknown mass of land—records of Europeans sailors sighting the "Terra Australis Incognita" (unknown southern land) stretch back to Dutch explorer Willem Janzoon in 1605 (Ma Rhea 2018). The first settlers arrived in 1788, bringing their agricultural technology with them (Henzell 2020). By the time the source material for this article was published, the processes of cultivation, pastoralisation, and food production were well under way. By 1864, when English anthropologist John Crawfurd wrote his previously mentioned report on the vegetables and animals of Australia, three generations of settler colonists had worked and toiled to cultivate the land in the image of civilization, something that Aboriginals, in his view, were incapable of conceiving. In his own words: "With equal advantages, we can fancy no such advancement in the Australians, who, although corn and cattle have been presented to them in abundance during three generations, have never grown a plant or bred an animal, but are now the same naked, houseless, wandering savages, living on the wild productions" (Crawfurd 1868: 122). Throughout this section, I will consider how the narratives in reports and emigrants' guides combined with recipes and commentary in Australian cookbooks use cuisine as a performative marker of national identity.

In previous pages I have noted the prescriptive nature of historical cookbooks; frequently, these

cookbooks were less representative of what citizens and settlers were actually eating and more dogmatic. Some of those used for this paper include only recipes European in origin and ingredients, others include endemic flora and fauna but were only distributed in England, suggesting themes of exoticism and individual gastro-cultural intent rather than actual culinary phenomena. That said, in the case of emigrants' guides and reports such as Crawfurd's, the audiences are far clearer. Crawfurd's report, published by the Royal Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland, is directed towards the academic sector—which has further influence on the political and economic sectors of the colonial machine. In Earle's article on food and colonialism, she notes that commercial botany in the colonial empire formed an enterprise of seeking new staples from colonised land to feed the continuously growing labouring populations of both Europe and her colonies (Earle 2017). Anthropological reports such as Crawfurd's outline the potential commercial viability of introducing foodstuff endemic to the empire to the global commercial market.

Emigrants' guides are directed simply at the potential emigrant—filled with anecdotes, advice, descriptions, and comparisons, they seek to prepare future settlers. In the case of food and Australia, for the purposes of this analysis, one major purpose of emigrants' guides is the comparative nature of these guides. Neville's 1867 *Life's Work as it is* makes several points of comparison: "Australian turkeys are much bigger than the English turkey, and more delicious than any kind of game found in Australia" (Neville 1867: 122). In another paragraph, she remarks, "We would have to remark that the fish of South Australia is, without a question, rather inferior to that in England" (Neville 1867: 122). Commenting on the flora of the colony, "Speaking of trees, the Australian foliage is totally different to England in every way…we certainly must say the trees can neither in foliage nor form vie with those of England. The writer has a great partiality to the Australia bush and its peculiarities, but there is certainly nothing here that will compare with the luxuriance and beauty of England" (Neville 1867: 143). The image of the colony is always set against the backdrop of the homeland—a hierarchy of beauty and taste.

John Willox, in his 1858 *Practical Hints for Emigrants' to Our Australian Colonies,* is slightly more subtle in his establishment of hierarchy. "While nature has dealt thus lavishly with Australia in respect to mineral wealth," he writes, "she has not been less bountiful in supplying a soil, which taken in

connection with the fineness of its climate, is capable of yielding in abundance nearly every description of vegetable growth which man can require for his necessities… The indigenous vegetation of Australia is at once remarkable and interesting" (Willox 1858: 38). Rather than spending an abundant time considering this indigenous vegetation, however, he immediately shifts to discussing the successful growth of vine, olives, wheat, oats, barely, and more. He lauds the success of cultivation of all those "culinary vegetables" introduced by British colonialists. Similarly, in Philip Muskett's 1893 *The Art of living in Australia,* the author's plea to increase the vegetable consumption is followed by a list describing "relatively unknown vegetables"—notably, however, all of the vegetables he precedes to list of exogenous vegetables originating from Europe or, in some cases, America (Muskett 1893: xi-xx).

All of the preceding works excluding Muskett's, which becomes a cookbook in the second half of the book, predate the boom of cookbooks published in Australia in the 1890s. Before settlers began publishing works and recipes that prescribe the growing culinary culture, these works show distinct hierarchies of desirability, usefulness, and beauty—even when endemic Australian foods are described positively, they are quickly sidelined by the superiority of crops and animals imported from elsewhere. Willox states, "None of the fiercer beasts of prey were met with; not, on the other hand, were there any congeners to those most useful domestic creatures, the horse, or the ox, or the sheep" (Willox 1858: 39). The true success of the colony, in some sense, is replicating market and landscape throughout empire—and though the colony will never quite measure up to the homeland, and the nostalgia of this can be read in the aforementioned comparisons, attempts to replicate it can be seen in the culture and production of food and landscape. Rhea takes note of this sentiment as seen in another emigrants' guide in her study on Australian national cuisine, "…its natural productions, particularly those of an animal or vegetable kind…its birds, its insects, are all new, and what is very remarkable, none of them of great utility. Its trees produce no excellent fruits…The native shrubs are generally harsh, ugly, and dark coloured – the flowers are many of them very pretty…The Colonist however need not complain of this barren list, for although the native productions are so useless, yet he will find at Sydney all the fruits and vegetables of his own country, and…all these things are already cultivated at Adelaide and other parts in abundance" (Rhea 2018: 181).

To date, the only endemic Australian crop developed as an international trade product is the macadamia nut—originally eaten as a "bush nut," the very name "macadamia" indicates a specific banality and differentiation from other types of "wild food," given that it was named after an amateur British botanist (Wessell 2022)." In his article on the history of macadamia nuts, Wessell notes that native plants were less familiar than local animal products to settlers—some local fruits were used in jams and cordials (familiar preparations), but macadamia were considered in particularly high esteem. However, as aboriginal communities were not consulted in the cultivation process, until the twentieth century, they remained a backyard, bush, and garden staple. It was not until the mid-twentieth century that the crop was definitively named and exported to other current and former colonies throughout Africa and the Americas (Wessell 2022). Notably, the macadamia nut does not appear in any of the cookbooks researched for this paper—very rarely do any endemic plants appear. Even though the macadamia nut does not appear, this is relevant due to the simple notions of availability and standardisation. As noted previously, there is an increasing standardisation in the ingredients required for the recipes of these historical cookbooks. Rawson's occasional usage of "wild" plants such as rosella or pigweed is remarkably uncommon, and she is the only author of the cookbooks used in this paper who uses or even mentions endemic plants at all. Despite its status as the only endemic Australian crop to be cultivated in Australian trade, it had little to no place in the creation of national culinary identity.

Australian agricultural history tells the story of "brave and resilient men triumphing despite repeated failures and threats to life, family and community" (Mayes 2020: 50). These narratives tell of the clearing of eucalypts, planting crops on untilled land, and slow transformation of Australia to civilization. They use agriculture and cultivation to reinforce the history of Australia as a nation under white ownership—it was the settlers who tilled and worked the land, who opened forests for grazing, who created a food production system for continued population growth, and thus white settlers are situated in permanent states of belonging (Mayes 2020). This pride in cultivation and agriculture begins to cement ideas of national cuisine and identity around sovereignty and labour. In Abbott's preface to his 1864 cookbook, he states, "The following pages will show the British and Colonial mode of rendering the vast articles that God has been pleased to give us for our use, nutritious and wholesome, as well as palatable to our tastes" (Abbott 1864: v.) The "rendering" of land and food useful is the colonial project—cultivated

land is civilised land.

The addition of meat and game in historical cookbooks is another significant marker in national identity construction around food. The wild game of Australia, throughout emigrants' guides and cookbooks, is more acknowledged and remarked upon than endemic plants. As discussed in the last section, there are frequent comparisons to more familiar meats so as to render the game of Australia more familiar and palatable, particularly when cooked in methods familiar to the Anglo-Saxon settler. That said, however, the animals are consistently viewed as wild game—there is no cultivation or breeding on a broader scale to put endemic animals at the forefront of the meat supply in the colony. Of the three cookbooks that include Australian game, Abbott's was published only in England and often seems to glamorize the meats by including small excerpts from other sources to portray an exoticized enjoyment of certain animals. Tasting roasted wombat, for example, would allow one to discover new pleasures, just as ortolans are the "most delicious morsels" (Abbott 1864: 85-86). The reliability of Abbott's work in reconstructing settler cuisine at the time of writing has already been discussed, however, and thus Rawson's description of "bush meat" remains the only source written by an Australian for Australians under the scope of this paper. Henrietta McGowan's 1911 *The keeyuga cookery book* includes no native game at all, though it does include specific sections for mutton, lamb, and beef; Muskett's 1893 *The art of living in Australia* and Blossom's 1924 *Off the beaten track* similarly include meat sections with no native game; and Pearson's 1889 *Australian Cookery* does, in fact, have a specific section for wild game without including any wild game that has not been imported.

Mayes argues that to eat mutton and potatoes, rather than kangaroo and yams, allows the settler to take steps beyond physical and legal possession towards "ontological possession" (Mayes 2020: 71-72). In order words, I have noted culinary rhetoric throughout this paper that diminished endemic foods as lesser than and as opposed to civilization. Adapting to foods that settlers have historically held as inferior acknowledges the existence of aboriginal food cultures and dynamics of food sovereignty. By changing the very landscape of available food and standardising food production around the Anglo-Saxon model, there is no longer any need to substitute "the real thing" with endemic meats; to cultivate these would invite them into the culinary culture and would diversify a cuisine looking to reproduce

tastes of home. Mayes quotes cultural anthropologist Claude Fischler, who theorised the omnivore's dilemma:

> "...food and cuisine are a quite central component of the sense of collective belonging…culinary systems…play a part in giving a meaning to man and the universe, by situating them in relation to each other in an overall continuity and contiguity" (Mayes 2020: 71).

In this sense, pastoralists, farmers, colonial authorities, and the settlers themselves, as they take up certain habits and routines including cooking and choosing certain foods above others, created a spatial imaginary of control—rivers, plains, constructions of what "vacant land" consists of, and so on. The settler colony works at different levels to institute methods of control and occupation, and the control of cuisine takes the form of narratives insisting the labour of settlers in establishing routes of food production give them sovereignty over land. Narratives of sovereignty based on agriculture reinforce the cuisines built from the fruits of that agriculture.

In McGowan's 1911 *The keeyuga cookery book,* she notes the definition of "keeyuga" at the start of the preface— "Keeyuga: Western District broad-lip native dialect, meaning 'within.'" She provides no further explanation naming the cookbook as such, and beyond simple reasoning that there is, in fact, recipes within this book, one might assume the use of a name drawing from an aboriginal dialect would reference the aboriginal roots of the colony in some capacity—not so much in terms of aboriginal inhabitants, but in the capacity of foodstuffs. This is not the case. McGowan mentioned no native flora or fauna over the course of the two hundred- and twenty-six-page cookbook. She states, in her preface, "Twelve years' experience in supplying weekly large numbers of recipes to the public through the medium of a well-known journal has proved pretty thoroughly what the manner of recipes the Australian cook wants mostly" (McGowan 1911: 4). Cultivation, pastoralism, and food production systems based on the growth and sale of exogenous foods standardised available food based on exogenous imports. What the Australian cook wants, McGowan implies, is rooted in the colonial systems of food production, a superseding of one cuisine over another. The national cuisine, to cement sovereignty and authenticity, mirrors a 'taste of home' rooted in settler pasts.

Conclusion

In studies of Australian national cuisine today, the influences of migration after World War II and the decreasing costs of travel in recent decades have created an increasingly multicultural culinary identity—a "mongrel cuisine" or one of "migrants and mavericks" (Newling 2022). Yet, prior to these influences, the history of Australian cuisine has been rooted in establishing sovereignty through the exogenous. Cuisine is performative—and deeply rooted in identity construction; frameworks around cuisine assert national identity, and in a settler colony, assert spaces of control and occupation. Though few of the cookbooks used in this paper utilise endemic foods for their recipes, this is not to say that there was no appreciation for these foods in the colony (Albana 2012: 235). That said, however, individual appreciation is not representative of culinary narratives produced on broader scales.

With the rapid growth of land cultivation and colonial structures of food production, the endemic foods that once supplemented the frontier settlers' diet became increasingly racialized and propagated as undesirable. Few endemic ingredients made their way into the Australian household, and the mechanisms of colonial industry seized on opportunities to import the familiar rather than learn to cultivate the unfamiliar (Newling 2022). As a settler colony in which the vast majority of settlers traced their roots to the same culture, food became a marker of sovereignty and civilisation. The focus of lamb as the national meat of Australia, an idea that continues in modern culinary culture, acts as a metaphor for the civilized/uncivilized paradigm of food history in the country—the settler colony "tamed" the wilderness of Australia and effectively repressed or completely destroyed the alternate food pathways and systems developed by aboriginals over sixty thousand years (Newling 2022).

The array of emigrants' guides, research reports, and cookbooks (authored in both Australia and England) are indicative of how early the colonial shaping of cuisine in Australia began—from the first time English explorers made their way into the unfamiliar land, England remained in the foreground as a point of comparison: a juxtaposition between the tamed, capitalist centre of empire and wild, uncivilized and unsettled land ripe for cultivation. Food became a step on the path to the colonial idea

of civilisation. Food is racialized even as it is used to supplement the survival of frontier households: indigenous cuisine is utilised in a manner that imposes sovereignty on aboriginal knowledge in order to sustain the household while attempting to recreate the homeland with a mixture of imported exogenous supplies and available endemic foodstuffs. Endemic food is nearly always supplementary.

In Albana's article on using cookbooks as historical documents, he states, "Cookbooks written for specific immigrant communities are a way to maintain and express identity when surrounded by the forces of assimilation" (Albana 2012: 235). Culinary colonialism in Australia, when looking specifically at discourse and perceptions around food, took the form of directly connecting progress, culture, beauty, and civilization with Anglo-Saxon cuisine. Indigenous food was rarely more than a substitute, and always inferior—novel, strange, and exotic. In the words of John Crawfurd, "This strange region of the earth was even more remarkable for the plants and animals which it wanted than for those it possessed" (Crawfurd 1868: 117).

Bibliography

- Abbott, Edward 1864: *The English and Australian cookery book: Cookery for the many, as well as for the "upper ten thousand."* London, UK: Sampson Low. Available through: Adam Matthew, Marlborough, Food And Drink in History, http://www.foodanddrink.amdigital.co.uk.ep.fjernadgang.kb.dk/Documents/Details/SLNSW_e08291_218 1192 [Accessed November 06, 2023].
- Albala, Ken 2012: "Cookbooks as Historical Documents." *The Oxford Handbook of Food History* 2012, p. 227–40. https://doi.org/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780199729937.013.0013.
- Becuț, Anda Georgiana, and Kàtia Lurbe Puerto 2017: "Food History and Identity: Food and Eating Practices as Elements of Cultural Heritage, Identity and Social Creativity." *International Review of Social Research* 2017: 7, no. 1, p. 1–4. https://doi.org/10.1515/irsr-2017-0001.
- Blossom, Wattle 1924: *Off the beaten track*. Sydney, Australia: D. Mitchell & Co. Available through: Adam Matthew, Marlborough, Food And Drink in History, http://www.foodanddrink.amdigital.co.uk.ep.fjernadgang.kb.dk/Documents/Details/SLNSW_e08327_225 7214 [Accessed November 06, 2023].
- Crawfurd, John 1868: "On the Vegetable and Animal Food of the Natives of Australia in Reference to Social Position, with a Comparison between the Australians and Some Other Races of Man." *Transactions of the Ethnological Society of London* 1868: 6, p. 112–22. https://doi.org/10.2307/3014250.
- Earle, Rebecca 2017: "Food, Colonialism and the Quantum of Happiness." *History Workshop Journal* 2017: 84, p. 170–93. https://doi.org/10.1093/hwj/dbx046.
- Grey, Sam, and Lenore Newman 2018: "Beyond Culinary Colonialism: Indigenous Food Sovereignty, Liberal Multiculturalism, and the Control of Gastronomic Capital." *Agriculture and Human Values* 2018: 35, no. 3, p. 717–30. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10460-018-9868-2.
- Grey, Sam, and Raj Patel 2014: "Food Sovereignty as Decolonization: Some Contributions from Indigenous Movements to Food System and Development Politics." *Agriculture and Human Values* 2014 32, no. 3, p. 431–44. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10460-014-9548-9.
- Mayes, Christopher 2020: "Unsettling Food Politics: Agriculture, Dispossession and Sovereignty in Australia". *Agriculture and Human Values* 2020: 38, no. 1, p. 343-44. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10460-020-10168-9.
- McGowan, Henrietta C. 1911: *The Keeyuga Cookery Book*. Melbourne, Australia: Thomas C. Lothian. Available through: Adam Matthew, Marlborough, Food and Drink in History, http://www.foodanddrink.amdigital.co.uk.ep.fjernadgang.kb.dk/Documents/Details/SLNSW_e08318_2257237 [Accessed November 06, 2023].
- Muskett, Philip E., and H. F. Wicken 1893: *The art of living in Australia: (together with three*

hundred Australian cookery recipes and Accessory Kitchen Information by mrs. H. Wicken, lecturer on cookery to the Technical College, Sydney). Melbourne, Australia. Eyre and Spottiswoode. Available through: Adam Matthew, Marlborough, Food And Drink in History, http://www.foodanddrink.amdigital.co.uk.ep.fjernadgang.kb.dk/Documents/Details/SLNSW_e08385_2179428 [Accessed November 06, 2023].

- Neville, Emma Etta 1867: *Life's work as it is, or, the emigrant's home in Australia*. London, UK: Sampson Low, Son, & Marston. Available through: Adam Matthew, Marlborough, Migration to New Worlds, http://www.migration.amdigital.co.uk.ep.fjernadgang.kb.dk/Documents/Details/MV-HT1042 [Accessed November 23, 2023].
- Newling, Jacqueline 2022: "'Uneasy Lies the Head That Wears the Crown': Lamb or Kangaroo, Which Should Reign Supreme? The Implications of Heroising a Settler Colonial Food Icon as National Identity." Atsuko Ichijo & Ronald Ranta (eds.) *Food and Identity in a Globalising World*, 2022, 173–99. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-96268-5_9.
- O'Brien, Charmaine 2016: *The colonial kitchen: Australia, 1788-1901*. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers.
- Parasecoli, Fabio 2022: "Food and Identity." Fabio Parasecoli (ed.) *Gastronativism: Food, Identity, Politics*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2022. https://doi.org/10.7312/para20206-006.
- Pearson, M J. 1889: *Australian cookery: recipes for the people: as given at the Centennial Exhibition, Melbourne, 1888-89*. Melbourne, Australia. Australasian-American Trading Co. Limited. Available through: Adam Matthew, Marlborough, Food And Drink in History, http://www.foodanddrink.amdigital.co.uk.ep.fjernadgang.kb.dk/Documents/Details/SLNSW_641_50994_80 [Accessed November 06, 2023].
- Rawson, Wilhelmina 1897: *Australian cook and Laundry Book*. Melbourne, Australia: J.W. Knapton. Available through: Adam Matthew, Marlborough, Food And Drink in History, http://www.foodanddrink.amdigital.co.uk.ep.fjernadgang.kb.dk/Documents/Details/SLNSW_e08299_2257233 [Accessed November 06, 2023].
- Rawson, Wilhelmina 1907: *The Antipodean Cookery Book and kitchen companion*. Melbourne, Australia: George Robertson & Co. Available through: Adam Matthew, Marlborough, Food And Drink in History, http://www.foodanddrink.amdigital.co.uk.ep.fjernadgang.kb.dk/Documents/Details/SLNSW_e08322_2257228 [Accessed November 06, 2023].
- Rhea, Zane Ma 2018: *Frontiers of taste: Food sovereignty, sustainability and indigenous-settler relations ... in Australia*. Springer Verlag, Singapore. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-10-1630-1.
- Russell, Penny 2009: "'Unhomely Moments': Civilising Domestic Worlds in Colonial Australia." *The History of the Family* 2009: 14, no. 4, p. 327–39.

https://doi.org/10.1016/j.hisfam.2009.07.001.

- Singley, Blake 2012: "'Hardly Anything Fit for Man to Eat': Food and Colonialism in Australia." *History Australia* 2012: 9, no. 3, p. 27–42. https://doi.org/10.1080/14490854.2012.11668429.
- Wessell, Adele 2022: "Unsettling the History of Macadamia Nuts in Northern New South Wales." Fabio Parasecoli (ed.) *Food and Identity in a Globalising World* 2022, p. 109–26. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-96268-5_6.
- Willox, John 1858: *Practical hints to intending emigrants for our Australian colonies*. Liverpool, UK: Henry Greenwood. Available through: Adam Matthew, Marlborough, Migration to New Worlds, http://www.migration.amdigital.co.uk.ep.fjernadgang.kb.dk/Documents/Details/MMM_DX_507_1[Accessed November 19, 2023].
- Woodcock, Shannon 2016: "Biting the Hand That Feeds: Australian Cuisine and Aboriginal Sovereignty in the Great Sandy Strait." *Feminist Review* 2016: 114, no. 1, p. 33–47. https://doi.org/10.1057/s41305-016-0020-0.

CULTURE AND HISTORY Nr. 02

December 2024

A PERFORMANCE FOR DINNER

Dining Culture and Colonial Identity in the Dutch East Indies, 1880-1910.

By:
Emilie Bolding Ørum
History

ABSTRACT: When photography arrived in the Dutch East Indies in the middle of the 19th century, European colonists embraced the medium to immortalise impressions of colonial life. By studying photographs produced by European colonists in the Dutch East Indies, this article examines dining culture as an arena of colonist regulation, construction and maintenance of colonist identity through visual and material performances and practices from approximately 1880 to 1920.

The article argues that colonists upheld clear cultural and social separation from the colonised through dining practices which highlighted the European material culture around the dining table and gentile sensibilities modeled after the ideals of Victorian gentility in the colonial metropole. The complete social segregation and rejection of cultural assimilation that is evident in the examined photographs, served to maintain colonists' European identity and exclusive positions of power in colonial society.

The medium of photography enabled colonists to perpetuate, reinforce, and preserve the captured messages of colonist idealized life and superiority, as the photographs were continually shared in both private and public European spheres.

Keywords: Dutch East Indies, the Netherlands, photography, dining culture, colonial identity

Introduction

After the initial spread of photography as a medium in 1839, colonial authorities brought the technology from the Western world to European colonies such as the Dutch East Indies in the early 1840s. Soon, photography became accessible to the colonial elites who quickly took to the medium as a way to immortalise everything from large events to their daily lives, industrial production and architecture to landscapes and nature photography, as well as family gatherings, social practices, and material culture. As European colonists snapped away, they produced formidable collections of photographs, many of which were circulated among family and friends, between the colony and metropole, and kept safe in family albums. Today, a considerable number of them have been published for all to see, although others are likely still held in private collections.

A number of researchers have recently engaged with expressions of colonist identity, colonial visual culture, and colonial life as represented through the medium of photography. Notably, there has been studies into photography produced in colonial Southeast Asia covering a variety of fields such as architecture (Achmadi 2014), nature and outdoor spaces (Protschky 2008), archaeology (Bijl 2009), plantation life (Minansny 2023), domestic life (Protschky 2012), soldier's amateur photographs (Protschky 2020), and Aboriginal imprisonment (Lydon, 2010). The role which photography plays in these studies is both that of a source as to what is depicted, but also as a tool which use and effect on both the colonised and the coloniser, then and today, should be examined.

This article will examine the colonial table as an arena of colonist regulation, of what it meant to be Dutch European, and how Dutch colonist identities were constructed and maintained through visual and material performances and practices thought of as essentially "European" in a timeframe focused on approximately 1880 to 1920. By examining photographic depictions of Dutch colonist life in the Dutch East Indies, the article argues that colonists constructed their identity by upholding clear cultural and social separation from the colonized. The colonial dining table was one arena

where colonist identity was clearly expressed and regulated through demonstrations of a performative dining culture highlighting European material culture and gentile sensibilities modeled after the ideals of Victorian gentility in the colonial metropol.

European Colonists in the Dutch East Indies

In the beginning of the 16th century, the first Europeans arrived an area in Southeast Asia located within the borders of what is today the Republic of Indonesia. The first Portuguese traders were searching for spice growers, and the English and Dutch were not far behind. In the year 1602, the Dutch East India Company was established, which quickly cemented the Dutch as the dominant European power for the following 200 years. When the company went bankrupt and was dissolved in 1799, the government of the Netherlands took control and established the Dutch East Indies as a nationalised colony. The colony was extraordinarily valuable to the Dutch government particularly due to the generation of large profits from trade. Through exploitative labour, the colony produced spices and cash crops and later coal and oil, which enriched the Dutch colonial elite.

Dutch control of the colony was regularly challenged throughout the colonial period. Throughout the years, the Dutch colonial forces, the Royal Netherlands East Indies Army was continuously deployed in colonial wars to supress various rebellions around the colony. Only in the beginning of the 20th century were the Dutch able to expand the area of the colony to cover the territory of Indonesia as it is today. Dutch control of the colony ended when the Japanese invasion and occupation during World War II resulted in the Proclamation of Indonesian Independence in August of 1945. The Dutch government contested independence leading to the Indonesian National Revolution which finally ended, as the Dutch succumbed to international pressured and recognised Indonesian independence in December 1949.

The colonial governing elite was usually comprised not only of nationals from the particular European colonial power which claimed sovereignty over the territory, but also a variation of other European nationals. This was the case in colonies across the globe as well as in the Dutch East Indies. Colonist identity was therefore not so much divided into different nationalities. Instead, all Europeans subscribed to the same identity as European colonists first, with nationality coming

second. Thus, in regard to colonists' identities, the European identity is in the majority of greater importance or synonymous with the colonists' national identity.

The identity produced through colonial photographs was based on the projection of perceived cultural and racial essences (Maxwell 2000: 9). To be considered as 'European' was not merely a question of identifying with a certain race or culture. A true European were delineated by their adherence to certain principles. According to Ann Stoler, racial membership was constructed and maintained through adherence to "middle-class morality, nationalist sentiments, bourgeois sensibilities, normalised sexuality, and a carefully circumscribed "milieu"…" (Stoler 1995: 105). Deviating could therefore result in demonization by the metropole, as was seen of impoverished and mixed-race colonials. This also allowed for the acceptance of sexual double standards in the colonies, as European identity itself was gender coded (Maxwell 2000: 7). To stray from these principles would therefore not only be considered an abandonment of polite social customs, but also mean the loss of one's European identity, social standing, and material privilegies. Maintaining their European identity with all that included, was thus essential to European colonists in the Dutch East Indies.

Photography in a Colonial Setting

When Photography initially spread as a medium, it was practically exclusively accessible to an elite community of white, upper middle class men in the Western world. Europeans employed by colonial authorities immediately brought the technology to European colonies such as the Dutch East Indies in the early 1840s. Photography was a craft demanding technical skills, chemical knowledge, understanding of mechanical apparatuses, and special staging techniques. Thus, entry into the field was barred by the required specialist training and financial investment, meaning that access to photography was a privilege for those who could afford to pay the associated fees. In the Dutch East Indies, those with the means to pay were generally European planters and officials, Javanese aristocrats, and Chinese entrepreneurs (Protschky 2015: 12-13). By the end of the 19th century, however, photography had undergone a stage of democratisation whereby it had become more accessible among new social groups such as women, members of the working classes as well as some colonial elites and ethnic minorities (Maxwell 2000: 9). These engaged with the creation of

photographs at both ends of the camera lens. Consequently, photography had become a differentiated and widely distributed medium found in both high and popular cultures (Protschky 2015: 13).

Colonial photography worked to maintain and reproduce the racial stereotypes that assisted European colonialism. Colonial exhibitions were popular sites of cultural production and knowledge dissemination in the metropole. Through visual representation, they catered to both European adventure-seekers and tourists eager to gain insight into the colonial experience (Maxwell 2000: 9). Photography was regarded as accurate evidence of actions and events occurring at the imperial outskirts. Thus, the photographic representations of people and objects in the colonies served as one of the main sources to colonial life (Maxwell 2000: 7).

The photographs, which could be seen at exhibitions, tended to fall within propagandistic ideals to a greater degree than the general photographic production. Images brought back from the colonies depicting more personal scenes leaned more towards accurate reality (Dujardin 2007: 13). These could often be found in private collections. Both types of photographs spanned a wide variety of genres, from anthropological displays of colonised peoples to exhibitions of colonial architecture, images of impressive natural landscapes, and domestic colonist life.

Photography became an important tool in the new science of the day, the 'scientific' study of the human races. A quantity of photographs including anatomical measurements were used to record the physical characteristics and anatomies of colonised peoples so that they could be studied and categorised by European scientists. Furthermore, European anthropologists showed great interest in studying and preserving cultural artefacts and social practices, which also included photography. These studies classified indigenous populations in areas colonised by Europeans as so-called primitive doomed races. They were systematically depicted and interpreted according to reductive generalised tropes, as unable to progress, and in essence untouched by the modern colonial process despite the efforts of white colonists (Maxwell 2000: 10). In the end, the classification and study of human races granted legitimacy to further colonial expansion and contributed to the perception of the colonised as inferior and stagnant, doomed to be left behind at an earlier stage of human evolution by the civilised Europe (Dujardin 2007: 9-11). However, photography in colonial settings

were not only concerned with documenting indigenous peoples, but also the colonists themselves. It was also essential to record the daily lives of the colonists, the colonial forces, and colonists' interactions with local indigenous populations (Dujardin 2007: 9).

It is important to recognise that not all photographs represented and reproduced the same colonial theories, stereotypes, and ideologies. Indeed, a small minority of photographers produced images focused on the colonised and empowerment of indigenous peoples (Maxwell 2000: 9). Even so, most photographs produced in a colonial setting empowered Europeans by upholding the binary opposition of European civility and indigenous savagery. Thus, photography also influenced the development and maintenance of European identity in a colonial context. Through the medium of photography, the image of the faraway 'Other' could be captured, frozen, and disseminated. In this way, photography contributed to the generalised perception in Europe of non-European lands as fundamentally 'other'. This relationship with the colonised and subjugated, and thereby inherently inferior, 'other' played a part in European perception and self-regard (Dujardin 2007: 9).

Using Photography as Source

In order to understand and interpret colonial photography, it is essential to grasp that a large quantity of photographs were produced not just according to the photographer's vision but additionally to the demands of the colonial cause of expansion, economic gain, and perceived racial and cultural supremacy (Dujardin 2007: 62).

Two important aspects must be considered with regards to the context in which colonial images were produced in order to better understand and interpret them. First, all photographs have been produced by a photographer with a vision, which heavily influenced the production of the image. The photographer, or the client who commissioned the photograph, had the intention to create a certain impression in the minds of the audience, whether these were visitors experiencing a colonial exhibition, family members viewing a private album, or government agencies. It is evident that at any given time, photographic portrayals were subordinate to the needs of on one hand the commissioner and on the other hand the nation's colonial propaganda with regards to the way people and events were portrayed and therefore interpreted (Dujardin 2007: 59). As with modern

marketing, colonial photographs were carefully staged and selected to highlight some aspects of colonial life while downplaying or hiding others. Where many photographs produced in the colonial setting highlight beauty, development, and progress, one must not forget the exploitation and oppression hidden behind the romanticised and idealised depictions of colonial life (Minansny 2023).

Secondly, photographs capture and freeze a single moment forever in time, which conditions the viewer's perception of that moment. In a way, the photograph becomes a placeholder for the memory of the moment to the owner. One could argue that colonial photography preserved some part of a state's colonial ideal and contributed by itself to the creation of certain perceptions of the 'Other' held by Europeans. Thus, photographs themselves can be seen as containing fragments of a country's colonial history and its colonial situation at a specific moment (Dujardin 2007: 14).

A great number of photographs have been produced in the setting of colonial Dutch East Indies, now Indonesia, since the middle of the 19th century. Some can be found in the collection "The Dutch East Indies in photographs, 1860-1940", which belongings to the The Royal Netherlands Institute of Southeast Asian and Caribbean Studies under the National Library of the Netherlands. The collection consists of more than 3000 photographs from the period, depicting sceneries of nature and street life, architecture, and domestic scenes as well as portraits and group photos from the period mostly produced by professional photographers. Additionally, several images from the collection of Leiden University "Pioneer photography from the Dutch Indies" is used. This collection contains over 4500 photographs pertaining to the former Dutch Indies in the 19th and early 20th century, most of them taken by professional photographers commissioned by the Dutch government and various historical societies. It should be noted that all photographs used have been loosely dated by the archives as having been produced in the periods of either 1890-1930 or 1860-1940. This is unfortunately common in photographs from these collections, where information on both photographer and exact date have often been lost.

Setting the Table: European Dining Culture

By the 19th century, any act occurring around the dinner table in a European upper middleclass household, was not only about sustenance, but just as much a carefully crafted social display. The dining culture of the period often called 'Victorian', was an aspect of a lifestyle, or habitus that can be termed 'gentility', which implied respectability, refinement, good taste, and good family through their choices related to aspects such as etiquette, manners, food choices and dress. By the act of dining the household would show the achievement of private refinement and public politesse or be judged for the lack thereof. In a way, dining was the ultimate test, which would ruthlessly expose any unsuitable performance (Young 2010: 133).

The Victorian dining culture with roots in the genteel habitus, was mainly expressed through etiquette and consumption. These two aspects shaped the rituals of polite dining and worked as systems of differentiation and identification of practitioners in relation to each other. By inclusion and exclusion, the practitioner's mastery of social capital became visible to all other initiates of the system (Young 2010: 137). Correct dining and table manners was an eternal battle to establish one's position, protect it from criticism, and perhaps even advance it and move up the social ladder. In this struggle, a correct dining performance was interpreted by observers as clear evidence of gentility, or a person's character and worth. The outcome, however, was heavily dependent on the opinions of those one sought to be affiliated with (Young 2010: 136).

Polite dining was not limited to table manners. The correct consumption of goods was just as essential. The wide variety of goods available to the European middle class household in the 19th century, could prove to be just as challenging to navigate for the Victorian household. Knowledge was necessary to acquire perfectly suitable goods, in the right combination and correct order, for just the right purpose (Young 2010: 139). The display of luxury and high culture goods could be the deciding factor when it came to the family's social standing. Such goods as tableware of ceramic, porcelain, glass, or precious metals, metal cutlery, and beautifully printed textiles for tablecloths were preferred and generally belonged to every cultured European's dining table, where they presented the genteel practices as a social statement about the values of their owners. A genteel

family had to demonstrate genteel standards through their consumption of goods (Young 2010: 139).

The exemplary case to represent polite dining was the formal dinner party hosted by genteel Victorian Europeans. A dinner party as an occasion called for highly controlled performances from guests, hosts, and servants alike. Generally, invited guests would all come from similar backgrounds, be of similar social status, and thus share similar values and behaviours. In this way, no one would have to endure any discomfort from interacting with or being connected to any unsuitable acquaintances (Young 2010: 139).

A dining room was necessary to host a dining party. Thus, the existence of the dining room itself signalled the hosts' gentility to all. The designated dining space was refined in its complete separation from the kitchen, which was a place of hectic work of production and preparation of food, and appropriate only for servants and the poor. Furthermore, the designated dining room required specialised furniture to create the correct genteel dining environment. It was recommended to be furnished with pieces of display furniture such as mahogany sideboards with lamps which would contain and display tableware, side tables, a beautiful dining table with matching chairs, cabinets for wine storage, a large mirror, and elaborately framed pictures for decorating the walls (Young 2010: 141). The table setting was full of opportunities for the display of both wealth and the subtle range of practices that characterised genteel identity.

The use of cutlery was among the earliest expressions of self-controlled genteel eating. Thus, matching sets of elaborate cutlery belonged to every plate. Particularly the silver fork carried great significance as the tool of rich, refined dining. Their presence signalled the high standards and effortless ability to partake in refined dining shared by all guests (Young 2010: 141). The tableware was extensive, typically counting more than 60 pieces. It was largely made up of sets of matching plates, a number of serving dishes, bowls, and sauceboats of white ceramics, painted by hand or printed with decorations. Glassware was equally varied and plentiful. With dishes and cups for different foods and beverages, a large dining party would need considerable amounts of tableware (Young 2010: 142).

Dinner Parties in the Dutch East Indies

Photographic collections from the Dutch East Indies are a treasure trove when it comes to depictions of dinner parties and lavishly decorated tables laden with tableware. Several photographs taken at large dinner parties before the dinner guests arrived at the tables, allow us to experience the sight which would greet guests at such parties.

Photograph 1 depicts an unknown dining room in Jakarta. The photographed wooden tables surrounded by matching carved wooden chairs can be seen covered by white tablecloths, multiple China plates and metal cutlery for different courses, drinking glasses, wine glasses, glass decanters, and wine bottles. Artfully folded cloth napkins and elaborately arranged floral centrepieces decorated the tables. Along the walls could further decorations be found such as paintings, floral arrangements, and gilded mirrors. Above it all, lit chandeliers hung from decorated ceilings where they lit up the room and showed off the splendour to all.

Photograph 1 seemingly depicts a dinner party related to a Christmas celebration, as the room was decorated with something akin to fir garlands and a makeshift Christmas tree hanging from the ceiling with paper bells and lights attached over a dance floor. The party depicted in photograph 1 was clearly to be a large celebration with many guests attending and dining together in a colonial version of a European celebration of Christmas.

Collectie Prentenkabinet Universiteit Leiden

Photograph 1: "Versierde eetzaal met dansvloer" (Eng: "Decorated dining room with dance floor"), Dutch East Indies. Exact date unknown, 1860-1940. Source: MM.537/199 (Photo in album), Pioniersfotografie uit Nederlands-Indië, Prenten-kabinet Leiden. Permalink: https://resolver.kb.nl/resolve?urn=urn:gvn:PKL01:MM-537-199

Another dining party is depicted in photograph 2 which show a group of men standing around a festively set table in the Dutch East Indies, under what appears to be a painting of the Dutch monarch Wilhelmina and the flag of the Netherlands, demonstrating their intact close connection to the Dutch fatherland. Compared to photograph 1, the decorations in this room were more subdued for a smaller party. However, the festively dressed European men stood around a long table fully set with white tablecloth, tableware of China and glass, and what appears to be a floral centrepiece, just as in the first photograph.

Collectie Prentenkabinet Universiteit Leiden

Photograph 2: "Mannen bij feestelijk gedekte tafel" (Eng: "Men at festively set table"), Dutch East Indies. Exact date unknown, 1860-1940. Source: MM.537/127 (Photo in album), Pioniersfotografie uit Nederlands-Indië, Prenten-kabinet Leiden. Permalink: https://resolver.kb.nl/resolve?urn=urn:gvn:PKL01:MM-537-127

On a daily basis, few possessed the means or desire to host elaborate dinner parties. Instead, dinner could be taken less formally by individual families in reduced form. This would also be the case in households with limited financial resources, that might not have the room to spare to a dedicated dining room. In those cases, a dining table setup in the parlour became a common compromise, though it was then impossible to host formal dinner parties (Young 2010, 141).

The Dutch archives include many examples of these smaller dining rooms used for more intimate and less formal dining parties. However, as photograph 3 shows, the same standards with regards to table settings, dinner wares, and decorations, were still upheld albeit on a smaller scale. The private dining rooms seen in photograph 3 could also boast to induce the appropriate genteel dining environment, as they were furnished with the important pieces of specialised furniture such as

cabinets and sideboards of precious woods, dining tables with matching chairs for the guests, and elaborate light fixtures accompanied by framed pictures and a woven tapestry decorating the walls and ceiling. The examined dining rooms and dinner parties were clearly all rooted in the same European gentile culture and habitus, which was expressed by the colonists adhering to it through the displayed decorations and table settings.

Collectie Prentenkabinet Universiteit Leiden

Photograph 3: "Mensen heffen het glas aan gedekte tafel" (Eng: "People raise glasses at set table"), Dutch East Indies. Exact date unknown, 1860-1940. Source: F.65/058 (Photo in album), Pioniersfotografie uit Nederlands-Indië, Prentenkabinet Leiden. Permalink: https://resolver.kb.nl/resolve?urn=urn:gvn:PKL01:F-65-058

Thus, a middleclass person should always be able to play their part in the ritualised refined dining performance, whenever attending such an event, as the dining ritual was continually practiced on a variety of scale (Young 2010: 143).

Domestic Servants in Frame

Apart from the colonists themselves, people belonging to another demographic are often present in photographs produced around the colonist dining table. In these photographs, domestic servants can be seen attending to the colonists dining at the table. Photograph 4 depicts a colonist dinner party held in Bogor near Jakarta with around 25 guests seated at chairs around the table. Behind them, almost as many Indonesian servants can be counted, standing straight as they posed for the photographer. The colonists were dressed in dark suits and what seems to be dresses in varying colours and patterns, standing out from each other and the white tablecloths in their formal dress.

Collectie Prentenkabinet Universiteit Leiden

Photograph 4: "Feestelijk gedekte tafel met gasten; achter de stoelen Indonesische bedienden" (Eng: "Festively set table with guests; behind the chairs Indonesian servants"), Dutch East Indies, Java, Bogor. Exact date unknown, 1860-1940. Source: MM.537/101 (Photo in album), Pioniersfotografie uit Nederlands-Indië, Prenten-kabinet Leiden. Permalink: https://resolver.kb.nl/resolve?urn-=urn:gvn:PKL01:MM-537-101

In stark contrast, the servants were all dressed in identical white uniforms, matching the environment and décor of the dining room, as they almost blend into the background all as one, indistinguishable from each other.

The two groups, European colonists and Indonesian servants, were presented in photograph 4 as being entirely different, performing completely separate roles at the dinner table. This rigid dichotomy was emphasised not only through their position, but also through appearance and dress. While the photographs show the colonists seated at the table, ready to engage in the dining experience, the colonised Indonesian servants are standing away from the table. All guests to the dining party are of European descent, whereas all servants are local Indonesian men. This segregation along racial lines was an important part of the colonist dining performance. By upholding this stark distinction and excluding the local population from the European dining practice, colonists prevented racial and cultural intermingling in this important arena. Thus, the European dining practice was reserved as an arena for colonists to maintain their status and identity among their colonist peers, while being attended to by the colonised servants. The vastly imbalanced power relation depicted in theses photographs are quite clear.

A common way to depict domestic servants in colonist photography, showed the servant posed with different arrangements of table wares. Among these, tea sets were especially popular material goods which can be discerned in several photographs from Java. Photograph 5 shows a domestic servant clad in Indonesian clothing and bare-foot posed to the left of a set table with a piece of tableware in his hands, his eyes looking directly at the photographer. The table is covered with a white tablecloth topped by a tea set complete with teapot, teacup with saucer, pitchers, as well as various other vessels of ceramic and glass, a perfect example of the colonial tea set as it could be found across Europe and the colonies.

Photograph 5: "Huisbediende op Java" (Eng: "Domestic servant in Java"), Dutch East Indies. Exact date unknown, 1860-1940. Source: 30784 (photo, albuminedruk), Nederlands-Indië in foto's, 1860-1940, Koninklijk Instituut voor taal-, land- en volkenkunde (KITLV). Permalink: https://resolver.kb.nl/resolve?urn=urn:gvn:KITLV01:30784

This setup depicted the Indonesian domestic servant in his working environment with the tea set symbolising his relation to the European colonists for whom he worked. The photograph presents the man as an attendant and caretaker of the material wares related to the European table, while simultaneously underpinning an inherent opposition between the man and the objects. As he stands barefoot, interacting with the objects, the observer is acutely aware that this is a demonstration of his type of work. These objects were not his to own or enjoy, instead, they belonged to the colonists' material culture, and his role and use of them were limited to that of a servant's. The prepared tea is not for him to drink. This is highlighted by the lack of seating available at the table.

Whereas photograph 5 includes a chair, it was pushed behind and under the table, where it did not offer the man any clear place to sit down. In effect, this meant that the servants could not sit down

at the table to partake in the tea. This can be interpreted as symbolical of the colonised servant's exclusion from the colonist's table.

This type of photograph can be compared to similar photographs of colonists posing with tea sets. Photograph 6 depicts a European colonist woman photographed in an almost identical pose. She stands to the left of a table, on which a tea set is arranged. Looking somewhat to the side of the photographer, she is dressed in a beautiful long light dress with her hair put up in an updo, and a small tea pot in her hands.

Photograph 6: "Vrouw met theeservice in fotostudio" (Eng: "Woman with tea service in photo studio"), Dutch East Indies, Java. Exact date unkown, 1890-1930. Source: 79.24/019 (kabinetfoto), Pioniersfotografie uit Nederlands-Indië, Prentenkabinet Leiden. Permalink: https://resolver.kb.nl/resolve?urn=urn:gvn:PKL01:79-24-019

In contrast to photograph 5, she appears to be preparing tea for herself to partake. One significant difference between the photographs is the positioning of a chair next to the table. Whereas the chair was either unavailable or completely absent to the servants, it stands open and inviting to the

colonist woman, ready for her to sit down at the table to enjoy her tea. This slight variation in the positioning of the chair hints at the underlying power structures and struggles related to the policing of the colonial table.

Colonial Dress

At a formal dinner party, guests would attend wearing their best clothes, which also played an important role in the ritualised dining practice (Young 2010: 139). In photographs 2, 3 and 4, colonist men were dressed similarly in either light or dark suits, depending on the dinner party, and dress shoes, while colonist women are seen in a variety of different colours, patterns, and cuts of dresses and hats. As a result of this, colonists were emphasised and individualised in the photographs as their appearances stood out from each other, while they were simultaneously identified as a collective following the same fashions and dress norms.

On the other side, the Indonesian servants attending to dinner parties in photograph 4 wore variations of the same uniform. All servants at a dinner party wore completely identical uniforms comprised of white shirts and pants, Indonesian traditional blangkon headdress, and bare feet. Because of this, the servants were mostly indistinguishable from each other, one identical collective, which almost became one with the background in the photographs. This effect only emphasised the difference in role and power for the European colonists and the Indonesian colonised at the dinner party as individualised master and unknown servant, as depicted in the photographs. Whereas dress and appearance at a dinner party was a chance for European colonists to dress up in formal clothing, show off to their peers, relax, and establish themselves as part of the European habitus, the dinner party was quite the opposite for the Indonesian participants. The effect of the servant uniform was that it stripped the servants of all individualism as they spent the party on their feet relegated to attend to the colonists.

The European colonists were, quite literally, the ones at the table, while the colonised Indonesian were pushed behind the chairs into the background, where they became an anonymous part of it.

Conclusion

By performing formal dinner parties according to the gentile dinner practice, Dutch colonists demonstrated their continuing belonging to the European metropole to both their colonist peers and the local colonised population. The photographic depictions of dinner parties, including the decorations, tableware, and guests, captured and perpetuated the performance of the gentile dinner practice. They highlighted European material culture and gentile sensibilities, performed by the colonists just as well as any refined European residing in the metropole would. In this way, the photographs acted as tangible evidence of the colonists' common gentile habitus and European affiliation. In these photographs, you find no indications of cultural or social assimilation with the colonised local population, but instead complete cultural and social separation, as the European colonists appeared to perform social practices, as though they had never left Europe.

When local servants were included in colonist photographs, they were posed as anonymous servants in the background of dining parties, as a stark contrast to the colonists. While the individualised colonists were centred and sat at the tables, the colonised were pushed into the background, anonymised and invisible in their uniforms. This dichotomy was part of the colonist construction of their European identity, as it required complete social segregation for colonists to maintain their exclusive positions of power in colonial society.

The messages perpetuated in the discussed photographs could be shared and persistently reinforced as they were shared with family, friends, and the wider European public, showing idealised highlights of colonist life. As the photographs captured these moments in time, they preserved the depictions and messages for long after the photographs were produced.

Bibliography

- Achmadi, Amanda 2014. "A Changing Scene: The Framing of Architectural Otherness of the Dutch East Indies in Nineteenth- and Twentieth-Century Colonial Photography." *Fabrications: the journal of the Society of Architectural Historians, Australia and New Zealand* 24, no. 1: 4–25. https://doi.org/10.1080/10331867.2014.901132
- Bijl, Paulus 2009. "Old, Eternal, and Future Light in the Dutch East Indies: Colonial Photographs and the History of the Globe." In *Mediation, Remediation, and the Dynamics of Cultural Memory*, edited by Astrid Erll and Ann Rigney: 49-65. Berlin: Walter de Gruyter. https://doi.org/10.1515/9783110217384.1.49
- Dujardin, Laetitia 2007. *Ethnics and Trade: Photography and the Colonial Exhibitions in Amsterdam, Antwerp and Brussels*. Amsterdam: Rijksmuseum.
- Lydon, Jane 2010. "'Behold the Tears': Photography as Colonial Witness." *History of photography* 34, no. 3: 234–250. https://doi.org/10.1080/03087291003765836
- Minansny, Budiman 2023, 6 September. "Carl Josef Kleingrothe: capturing the colonial life of Deli, Sumatra." New Mandela. Accessed June 28th 2024 from https://www.newmandala.org/carl-josef-kleingrothe-capturing-the-colonial-life-of-deli-sumatra/
- Maxwell, Anne 2000. *Colonial Photography and Exhibitions: Representations of the "Native" and the Making of European Identities*. London: Leicester University Press.
- Protschky, Susie 2020. "Burdens of Proof: Photography and Evidence of Atrocity during the Dutch Military Actions in Indonesia (1945–1950)." *Bijdragen tot de taal-, land- en volkenkunde* 176, no. 2/3: 240–278. https://doi.org/10.1163/22134379-bja10015
- Protschky, Susie 2015. *Photography, modernity and the governed in late-colonial Indonesia*. Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press. https://doi.org/10.5117/9789089646620

- Protschky, Susie 2008. "Seductive Landscapes: Gender, Race and European Representations of Nature in the Dutch East Indies during the Late Colonial Period." *Gender & history* 20, no. 2: 372–398. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-0424.2008.00530.x
- Protschky, Susie 2010. "Tea Cups, Cameras and Family Life: Picturing Domesticity in Elite European and Javanese Family Photographs from the Netherlands Indies, ca. 1900-42." *History of photography* 36, no. 1: 44–65. https://doi.org/10.1080/03087298.2012.636503
- Stoler, Ann Laura 1995. *Race and the Education of Desire: Foucault's History of Sexuality and the Colonial Order of Things*. Durham, North Carolina: Duke University Press. https://doi.org/10.1515/9780822377719
- Young, Linda 2010. "Gentility: A Historical Context for the Material Culture of the Table in the 'Long 19th Century', 1780–1915." *Table settings: the material culture and social context of dining, AD 1700-1900*, edited by James Symonds, 133-143. Oxford: Oxbow Books.

CULTURE AND HISTORY Nr. 02

December 2024

BEHIND THE MASK

Counternarratives in John Møller's Photographs from Greenland, 1889-1922.

By:
Nanna V. H. Emtoft
History

ABSTRACT: The first Greenlandic photographer, John Møller, produced over 3000 images in the period 1889-1922. This article seeks to analyse and contextualise selected images from Møller's practice. In doing so, the article explores the photographer's agency on composition choices, power dynamics and colonial hierarchies. Furthermore, the article suggests that Møller, through counternarratives in his visual representations, unveils nuanced reflections of power dynamics and a subtle critique and resistance that served to undermine the Danish colonial authority in Greenland.

KEYWORDS: colonial photography, photographic event, colonial hierarchies, resistance, Nuuk, carnival, Denmark

Introduction

Photography held a key role in the 19th and 20th centuries in producing colonial knowledge about Greenland to the metropole in Denmark and the rest of the world (Sandbye 2016: 66). Stereotypical images of the Greenlandic landscape and people captivated by European explorers thus forged and expanded the colonial project in the Arctic colony. John Møller, who was born in 1867 in Nuuk, became the first Greenlandic photographer and created over 3000 images in the period 1889-1922 (Høvik 2021: 81). But what did the first Greenlandic photographer, John Møller, see when he pointed the lens back at the Danish colonisers in this transformative period? As part of a Greenlandic elite in Nuuk, questions of how Møller's role in the colonial hierarchy was reflected in these images arise. Was he merely a loyal colonial agent as the historian Jørgen Viemose defined the Greenlandic elite (Viemose 1977: 47)? Or did he use his photographic practice to act out resistance?

In the following article I seek to answer these questions by analysing photographs taken by John Møller — recently published by the contemporary Greenlandic photographer Inuuteq Storch. By contextualising the images and considering the specific *photographic events* in which these visual representations of life in Nuuk were captivated, I argue that Møller's photographs, situated in and around a Danish carnival tradition, provided both strong and subtle counternarratives to the Danish colonial project. The last two images dealt with in this article are captured by Møller in other parts of Greenland. By analysing these images, I argue that Møller exposes a more violent reality of the Danish colonial project in his broader practice. I furthermore argue that Møller reveals ambiguous feelings towards his own role in the Greenlandic elite, as he was forced to navigate between European ideals of western modernity and Greenlandic traditions.

Historiography

Photography in colonial settings served varied purposes, documenting everything from extreme violence to daily life, portraying both colonisers, colonised people and landscapes. This has led to many different and diverse scholarly approaches, across multiple fields. While anthropologists, art historians and historians alike slowly found new interests in colonial photography in the 1980s, a visual turn in the

1990s generated new work and approaches (Edwards 2022: 1). Edward Said's theories in his groundbreaking book *Orientalism* from 1978 involving the (mis)representation of the "other" and the shaping of European identity, sparked new interest in looking at photos of colonised people, not just as remains of a colonial past but as discursive objects of colonial knowledge and identity (Poole 1997: 218). With the growing field of postcolonial studies and digitalisation of images at the turn of the millennium, new scholarly interests grew in colonial photography. Elizabeth Edwards, among others, ascribes this interest as the visual turn (Edwards 1997: 1). Now, scholars of colonial photography started to question the Saidan approach of understanding colonial images exclusively as a reflection of the coloniser's agency and identity. With the visual turn scholars allowed themselves to view colonial images as a result of what anthropologist Christopher Pinney calls a *photographic event* where negotiation between the subject and the photographer takes place (Pinney 2003: 10). The focus on the colonised's agency through the negotiations in the specific *photographic event* has created important alternative methods of analysing counternarratives in colonial photographs – shifting focus from the colonisers' narratives to the colonised counternarratives of agency and resistance.

The unique position of John Møller as a colonial subject producing images in a colonial time and space, is especially interesting as most colonial photographs were produced by Europeans. Despite this unique perspective in colonial photography, in-depth academic interests in John Møller's photographs and life are scarce. Until recently the sole scholar who dealt with Møller's life and photography was the Danish anthropologist Inge Kleivan, who primarily focused on a biographical account of his life and practice (Kelivan 1996). In more recent years art historian Ingeborg Høvik has extended the scholarly interest in Møller by including an analytical approach to his images. Høvik argues that a subtle reclaiming and formation of Greenlandic identity was created in Møller's work (Høvik 2016: 166). She furthermore argues that his work contributed to a modern understanding of Greenlandic culture in Scandinavia (Høvik 2021: 97).

The work of John Møller has recently sparked new interest outside of the academic world. In 2021, Greenlandic artist Inuuteq Storch released *Mirrored*, a book featuring photographs by Møller that were previously unseen by the public. Despite Storch's intentions of stressing Møller's agency in the art history

of Greenland, the book *Mirrored* has been criticised for its lack of context in its depiction of Danish colonisers. Anna M. Geilas argues that "Møller's Photographs run the risk of resembling colonial constructions of personal national identities" (Geilas 2021: 313). These images thus calls for both a contextualisation and an analysis of the visual representation and counternarratives presented in *Mirrored*. This will be attempted in this article by including a broader understanding of the colonial project in Greenland that historians like Søren Rud so thoroughly describes. Lastly, a more concrete contextualisation of John Møller's life will be based on G.N. Bugge's accounts of life in Nuuk in "Koloniliv i Godthåb 1902-1914" from 1970. As a child of the colonial manager in Nuuk, Bugge grew up in the Danish administrative elite and both lived close to and knew John Møller personally, which is described in his account.

Sources and the *Photographic Event*

A special category of Møller's photographs caught my eye when first looking through his black and white images. These photographs were primarily taken of Danish families and couples, who were dressed in costumes. Besides being different from the 19th century and early 20th century's more formal portraits, which were also a part of Møller's practice, these images are interesting because they reveal hints of special events and traditions for the Danish society in Nuuk. These images are rarely dated and details of the event in which the photographs were captured are scarce. The costumes thus become indications of events more easily pinpointed in time and space.

When studying this category of Møller's photographs, questions of the potential dialogue between photographer and subject – and thus questions of the specific *photographic event* – occur (Pinney, 2003, 10). Why were these costume parties so important for the Danish colonisers, that they had Møller take several photographs of them through time? What narratives did the Danes in Nuuk wish to portray? And lastly, were these the same narratives that Møller wished to portray, or did he push for counternarratives challenging the peaceful portrayal of Danish colonialism in Greenland that was inherent during and following this period (Høvik 2016: 168)?

These questions revolve around the notion that the photograph should be seen as an event. I see the photographs as the results of a *photographic event*, where the photographer and the models negotiate power and agency over the constructed image and what they wish to portray. In some instances, the agency of model and photographer align, whereas in other instances they differentiate. I argue that these points of dissonance between the different agencies can create a potential for Møller to subtly criticise and mock the Danish colonisers – which could create a counternarrative of indigenous reality that has the possibility to undermine the inherent colonial power relations.[1]

Lastly, two photographs have been chosen that depict both Greenlanders and Danes but without any costumes. This makes it hard to tell exactly why or where the photographs were taken, but by investigating these specific *photographic events* I seek to show that Møller's resistance, through counternarratives of Greenlandic identity, is not just applicable at these costume parties but was a broader theme in Møller's photographic practice.

John Møller's Life and the Colonial Landscape

By the second half of the 19th century new colonial reforms were implemented in Greenland to ensure fundamental changes in colonial society (Rud 2017: 33). These reforms were created due to a critique created in the metropole of the colonial administration (Thisted 2021: 12). By giving certain Greenlanders local administrative influence, a new social landscape was created, which constituted a shift from the previous colonial administration's focus on profit-making to a new political rationale, that sought to change the "character of individual Greenlanders" (Rud 2017: 34). To use Foucauldian phrasing; a growing interest in creating self-governing colonial individuals raised the question of the education of Greenlanders in the 19th century (Ibid., 61). By educating certain Greenlandic men, a new Greenlandic elite in Nuuk was formed. These men who were chosen to be educated in both Greenland and Denmark were based on the category "Blandinger" or mixtures – this referencing their mixed

[1] The notion of agency is understood based on Henry John Dewal's definition of the term, neatly described in his article "Mami Wata and Santa Marta: Imag(in)ing Selves and Others in Africa and Americas" from 2002: "By 'agency' I mean the instrumentality of creating one's reality – the process of turning aspirations into practices and product." (Drewal 2002: 193) The discussion of Møller's agency will therefore be seen as a reflection of his reality created in the presented images.

ethnicity of both Greenlandic and Danish heritage (Ibid., 57). The education of this particular group was focused on western epistemology and what the colonial administration deemed to be important ideals of traditional Greenlandic culture, such as seal hunting and kayaking (Marquardt et. al. 2019: 176). The new education was thus heavily influenced by an ethnographic discourse that sought to impose limitations within a project of assimilation between the Greenlandic men in the newly formed social group and the Danish elite (Rud 2017: 55).

John Møller was born into this newly transformed social landscape in Nuuk in 1867 (Kleivan 1996:1). His father Lars Møller was the editor of the first Greenlandic newspaper *Atuagagdlitutit* and known amongst the Danes and the Greenlanders as a man who eagerly debated cultural and political aspects of Greenland (Ibid., 3). John Møller was thus born into a well-regarded and respected Greenlandic family. In Bugge's written memories of Nuuk, a description of the homes of Nuuk shows that the Danish elite lived among themselves separated from where the Greenlanders lived. Interestingly, the home of the Møller family was located close to the colonial manager's house, which informs us that John Møller grew up in the Danish part of Nuuk, close to the Danish elite (Bugge 1970: 2). Growing up in the cultural Greenlandic elite allowed John Møller to travel to Denmark to acquire an education in typography to become editor of *Atuagagdlitutit* (Kelivan 1996: 4). While living in Copenhagen for almost one and a half years, Møller found a growing interest in photography which led him to become the first Greenlandic photographer (Ibid.).

Upon his return to Greenland in 1889, Møller started working for his father while also opening Nuuk's first photography studio *Godthaabs photografiske Anstalt* (Ibid., 5). In 1901, Møller was chosen as a member of local and national councils thus being placed both in the cultural and political elite of Nuuk (Høvik 2016: 167). From Bugge's account, John Møller often visited the colonial manager's home with his father and brother. In the description of Møller, he is both mentioned as a good photographer with good skills of the Danish language and a good hunter (Bugge 1970: 22). This account shows what aspects of Møller's personality were deemed important by the Danes, such as Bugge – "civilised" with knowledge of the Danish language made him agreeable to the Danes, while also being good at more traditional

Greenlandic skills like hunting. As a member of the Greenlandic elite, he was measured on his assimilated skills and his more traditional skills.

The photographs that Møller took were primarily in Nuuk. The costume parties that Møller photographed, and which are given great attention in this article, are described by Bugge in his account of the colonial life in Nuuk. The costume parties were part of the Carnival celebrations that became a tradition in Nuuk around the turn of the 20th century (Ibid., 16). The Carnival celebration was attended by the five Danish families that lived in Nuuk at the time, and a few chosen men from this newly formed Greenlandic elite (Ibid.). The first photograph in Figure 1, is an image of one of these events depicting both Greenlanders and Danes who took part in the carnival.

Figure 1: Carnival [2]

[2] John, Møller 2021: *Mirrored – John Møller.* Inuuteq Storch (ed.), Roulette Russe, Copenhagen, p. 44-45.

Carnival: An event of performativity and ambiguity

The Greenlandic and Danish models in the image appear to be equal and participate in the same kind of fun play or dress-up game. The image depicts a majority of Danes and a minority of Greenlandic men. When looking closer, details of a less harmonious setting tend to reveal themselves. First, it is important to highlight how most of the people in the frame glance in different directions. There are only three men who look directly into the lens. The fact that the majority of the people are looking at more or less the same points either to the left or right of the frame suggests that John Møller had a clear artistic vision and control over the composition. The three men who are looking at the camera are firstly, a man dressed up as the clown *Pierrot* who is situated directly in the middle of the photograph. Secondly, there is a Danish man on the left whose head and body are slightly tilted. Lastly, a Greenlandic man on the right is looking directly into the lens, and like *Pierrot,* his body is also facing the camera. Observing the posture of the Danish man, mentioned above, who aside from his gaze is slightly turned to the right, the onlooker senses that he too was meant to look away like most of the other models —thereby setting him apart from the Greenlandic man and *Pierrot*, both of whom face forward. When focusing on this Greenlandic man and *Pierrot* the onlooker gets a sense that the man from Greenland is standing behind the clown to mimic his pose. The Greenlandic man could thus be interpreted as some sort of reflection or shadow of the clown who is placed centrally in the photograph.

By centralising *Pierrot* in the frame surrounded by people, it is tempting to draw parallels to the 18th century French rococo artist Jean-Antoine Watteau who painted several paintings depicting *Pierrot.* Watteau's paintings usually put *Pierrot* in the centre of the painting, looking directly at the viewer. The clown in the paintings is often surrounded by people who, like Møller's photographs, are glancing in all other directions. In the article "Why so sad? Watteau's Pierrots" from 2016 the art historian Judy Sund argues that Watteau's placement of *Pierrot* in the centre looking directly at the viewer makes *Pierrot* "[...]both physically and psychologically distanced from his fellow actors, who continue to act and emote as Pierrot turns away from the performance to look out of the fiction and into the viewer's world." (Sund 2016: 331). Placing *Pierrot* at the centre and having him gaze directly into the camera punctures the illusion of the constructed image. This seemingly deliberate act by the clown breaks the fourth wall,

drawing the onlooker's attention to the artificial and staged nature of what appears to be a harmonious group scene. By psychologically separating the clown from the rest of the image, Møller potentially conveys a suggestion: the deliberate distance may serve to signify that the depiction of equality between Greenlanders and Danes in a harmonious setting is, in fact, a performative and fictitious portrayal.
I would argue that there is a likelihood of Møller knowing and referencing Watteau's paintings. First of all, the posing in Møller's photograph, as discussed above, is very similar to the poses in the many paintings of *Pierrot* by Watteau. Secondly, Møller's educated background in Denmark in photography makes it more than plausible that he had an understanding and interest in European art history. His brother was furthermore a painter which could indicate that Møller came from a background and upbringing where art was a big component of his life.

When looking at Møller's photograph it is evident that *Pierrot* is not only psychologically distant from the group, but also physically distant from the other adults. *Pierrot* is surrounded by a cluster of children who depict various degrees of emotion. To his right, a girl closes her eyes and covers her ears seeking to block out the scene. Similarly, on the left side of the clown, a boy shuts his eyes. These innocent children seem to be attempting to shut off their sight and block out sound from what then appears as an unsettling scene. One could argue that Møller aims to dismantle the notion of harmony and equality within the event. This is hinted at by the discomfort evident in the children's emotions and Pierrot's disruption of the fourth wall, suggesting the performative nature, and perhaps even absurdity, of the carnival depicted.

As a child growing up in Nuuk, Bugge enthusiastically describes the carnival that became a tradition in colonial town. In contrast to the rigid class society in Nuuk, the carnival was one of the few days a year, when the Greenlanders and Danes came together to celebrate the passing of the long winter (Bugge 1970: 16). But what we also know from Bugge's account is that the Greenlanders who were allowed to partake in these carnival celebrations were carefully chosen from the higher-educated population of Greenlanders (Ibid.). It was therefore the Danish settlers who had the power to create the rules of who was allowed to be in these seemingly innocent festivities. This social gathering could be interpreted as a means for the Danes to establish and navigate social hierarchies. In doing so, they define the indigenous elite while simultaneously excluding and creating distance between the majority of the Greenlandic population and

the Danish elite. As Ann Laura Stoler and Fredrick Cooper calls *Grammar of difference* in the anthology *Tensions of Empire* from 1997 in which; "[...] The otherness of colonised persons was neither inherent nor stable; his or her difference had to be defined and maintained." (Cooper & Stoler 1997: 7). At its core, the carnival embodies a space of cultural expression and performance. However, within the colonial framework, it takes on new layers of meaning. It becomes an event where colonisers can assert a sense of dominance over the indigenous population as the mark of a difference between the Danish elite and the Greenlandic people. The photograph is evidence of Møller documenting and co-producing images of harmony and equality between the indigenous elite and the Danish settlers. However, by depicting the event as both tense and performative, Møller's image suggests a deeper, critical perspective on the complexities and tensions inherent in the relationship between these two groups.

Figure 2: Mortensen and Bang-Jensen in carnival costumes[3]

[3] Møller, *Mirrored – John Møller,* p. 29.

Figure 3: Hedvig Bugge with her two daughters[4]

[4] Møller, *Mirrored – John Møller,* p. 222.

Figure 4: Konrad Olsen Bugge and Hedvig Bugge in carnival costumes[5]

[5] Møller, *Mirrored – John Møller,* p. 207.

Outside the Frame

Like figure 1, the models in the following images (figure 2-4) are also dressed in costumes. In contrast to figure 1, these images feature exclusively Danish models in their homes. The photographs thus function as family portraits rather than as communal group images.

What is striking in all three photographs is the likeness of composition. Not only are the three images of Danes dressed up in their homes, but a mirror is also present in all three photographs. The composition in figure 2 is rather strange compared to a classic family portrait. One would usually expect the models to be in the centre of the image showing what is most important – the people being photographed. In the image, the couple is slightly posing to the right of the frame giving way to a mirror hanging on the left in the frame. This composition indicates that Møller carefully made sure that the mirror was included in the photograph, while also diminishing the importance of the models as they are not directly centred in the image. In figure 3 and 4, the mirror is also present, acting as part of the background.

The placement of the mirror has the ability to show what is outside of the frame such as the photographer. I would argue that the mirror functions in the same way as *Pierrot* does in figure 1; both serve as means to draw the viewer's attention from the performance of the image to the onlooker's and the photographer's world. The mirror's lack of reflection implies that Møller deliberately chose to leave himself out of the photograph. The mirror thus functions as a way of both distancing himself from the image and, at the same time, spreading awareness of his presence in the room.

A deliberate withdrawal from the image could be read as Møller's way of exercising what Homi Bhabha calls *Sly Civility.* The Indian cultural theorist Bhabha introduces *Sly Civility* as a term in his book *The Location of Culture* from 1994 to explain a subtle defiance by colonial subjects that challenges and undermines the colonial authority's hegemony of power (Bhabha 2004: 141). By placing himself outside of the frame, but including the possibility of his presence, Møller implies that he could be in the image but that he chooses not to. This suggests an act of *Sly Civility* of him withdrawing from the Danish models

and their picturesque home, and hereby undermining the agency of the models and what they wished to portray.[6]

If Møller were reflected in the mirror, a strong contrast between the photographer and the performativity of the dressed-up Danes would reveal itself. But instead of showing a clear dichotomy between himself and the Danes, Møller alludes to a more ambiguous relationship with the Danish colonisers. Bugge's account informs us that Møller lived close to the Danish elite and that he was friendly with them. But the Danes were also extremely critical of the Greenlandic elite, seeing them not as truly civilised people, but merely colonial subjects attempting to mimic European culture (Rud 2017: 177). Being part of the Greenlandic elite, Møller has the opportunity of being led into the homes of the Danes, but the lack of his own reflection in the mirror refers to the fact that he does not see himself there. Møller, seemingly within the frame of their world, also dwells just outside it. He is both an insider and an outsider, constantly navigating societal perceptions, personal identity, and the colonial dynamics in the Nuuk society.

Costumes of Dominance

As already argued, the carnival celebrations had the possibility of strengthening the colonial dominance over the colonised and also drawing up lines between who was worthy and who was not in partaking in the celebrations. The event could therefore be seen as a way for the Danish elite to define themselves by defining *the others.* Some of the costumes worn in the photographs and to the carnival events are very interesting. I will argue that costumes were worn as displays and emblems of colonial power and racial authority.

Figure 4 shows Konrad Olsen Bugge and Hedvig Bugge – the parents of G.N Bugge. Konrad Olsen Bugge worked as the colonial manager of Nuuk from 1903-1922 (Bugge 1970: 1). Wearing costumes and masks, the couple is photographed in what seems to be their home in Nuuk. From G.N Bugge's

[6] Using the phrase picturesque homes, I am referencing Gary D. Sampson and his article "Unmasking the colonial Picturesque: Samuel Bourne's Photographs of Barrackpore Park." from 2002. He argues that colonisers created picturesque images to (re)produce colonial authority. The agency of the danish coloniser's could thus be read as an attempt to portray a danish picturesque home as a way to enforce danish dominance and control in the colony.

written memory of life in Nuuk, a communal photograph, with Konrad Olsen Bugge in the same costume, tells us that this photograph was possibly taken in February 1909 (Bugge 1970:16). The peculiar costume worn by Bugge is described by his son as "Den Store Bastian*"* (The Great Bastian), a character from the 19th century popular tale by the same name. "Den store Bastian" is a man who dipped naughty boys in ink to make their skin black (Weinrich 2020). As seen in the photograph Bugge is holding a large inkwell with a quill to show the character's way of sentencing children to what could be described as a racialised punishment. This costume is especially interesting within this article's framework of regarding the carnival event as a subtle but significant act, by the Danish colonisers, of excluding and defining Greenlandic identity. As argued, the deliberate inclusion of the Greenlandic elite in such an event can be interpreted as a strategic move by the colonisers to reinforce the newly established class hierarchy. However, this inclusion of the Greenlandic elite also creates potential challenges as the complete assimilation of the Greenlandic elite into the Danish elite could pose a threat to the Danish colonial dominance in Greenland. The interconnectedness of these elites might dilute the inherent power dynamics, blurring the *Grammar of difference* between the Danes and Greenlanders – thus risking a loss of control over the colonised. The choice of the costume worn by Bugge, depicting The Great Bastian and his ability to alter the skin colour of young boys, could thus serve as a potent reminder to the Greenlandic elite of the colonisers' authority and their ability to use racialisation as a tool of domination. This costume could thus function as a way of reinforcing the underlying power dynamics, reminding the Greenlandic elite of their boundaries within the colonial structure and the colonisers' ultimate control.

Figure 5: Peter Rosing with his fiancé in carnival costumes[7]

Bugge's costume was not the only one worn by the Danes to a carnival that could be interpreted as a display of power and authority. Figure 5 is a photograph of Peter Rosing and his fiancé dressed as native Americans. This costume can be read as a different strategy in portraying colonial power than Bugge's

[7] Møller, *Mirrored –John Møller,* p. 96.

costume. Through the deliberate choice of dressing as native Americans, these costumes redirect the viewer's focus towards a broader picture of colonial dominance and representation. This act of assuming the attire of another indigenous culture could therefore be read as an attempt to exoticise and homogenise non-Western cultures. In doing so the costumes, shown in both figure 4 and 5, can be seen as attempts by the Danes to create a dichotomy of coloniser and colonised. In the context of the carnival, this could function as a way of reinforcing colonial domination by creating a contrast between Danes and 'the other', a larger non-Western category, in a space where this dichotomy was not at its most obvious state.

By adopting the clothes associated with another indigenous culture, the Danes emphasise the divide between those who hold power and those subjected to that power. By considering such a reading, Møller's photographs could thus function as a testimony to the unsteady relations of colonial power. These visual representations can therefore be read as Møller's own attempt to expose ways in which the Danes wished to reinforce their colonial authority, thus making it clear that the colonial authority is neither stable nor static. Through his lens, these photographs serve as a portrayal of the instability and the vulnerability of the colonisers' authority, thus creating a subtle counternarrative to the Danish self-portrayal of stable and harmonious colonial dominance.

Figure 6: Rasmussen, carpenter, and Marie Kreutzmann (neé Lyberth) in Maniitsoq.[8]

Intimacy and Respectability

Figure 6 is an image of the Greenlandic woman Marie Kreutzmann and the Danish carpenter whose last name was Rasmussen. The models are placed on a bed sitting close together. Kreutzmann is in a traditional Greenlandic suit facing her front to the camera with her hands in her lap. Rasmussen is tilted towards her, while also looking into the camera. He is wearing a European suit and traditional Greenlandic boots.

What especially catches the onlooker's eye is the body language of the two models combined with the intimacy of the bed underneath them. As mentioned before, the man is tilted towards the woman. His head is blurry indicating that he was in motion when the photograph was taken. This gives the impression that he is closing in on her – indicating that he has control over the proximity to her body and even control over her body itself. Marie Kreutzmann's body language and composure are very different from

[8] Møller, *Mirrored – John Møller,* p. 263.

his. Her hands are joined together in her lap suggesting a more passive composure as Rasmussen moves closer to her. They are both smiling but in very different ways. Her smile combined with her passive body language makes her look awkward while Rasmussen's confident smile amplifies his control over her and the specific scene.

The intimate event between the Greenlandic woman and the Danish man could be interpreted as a portrayal of the man's sexual domination and a metaphor for colonial power and authority. But where it gets interesting is when considering the relation between the two. Marie Kreutzmann's maiden name was Marie Lyberth which tells us that she was married but not to Rasmussen. The intimate space that is created and controlled by Rasmussen can be seen as an inappropriate situation, as intimacy between two people not married to each other was far from respectable at the time. As Stoler writes; "The regulation of sexual relations was central to the development of particular kinds of colonial settlements [...] Who bedded and wedded with whom in the colonies [...] were never left to chance:" (Stoler 1989: 636-637). This was also the case in Greenland, where interracial marriages were both debated and regulated. Stoler furthermore writes how white prestige amongst the European colonisers was defined by the concept of respectability (Ibid., 652). Portraying this intimate event between two who were not allowed to have this kind of relationship could suggest that Møller was seeking to undermine Ramussen's apparent sexual dominance by making him appear unrespectable thus undermining his white privilege and authority.

Figure 7: Two brothers from Ivigtut and the great hunter and motorman, Abia Frederiksen[9]

[9] Møller, *Mirrored – John Møller,* p. 264.

Intimacy and violence[10]

In figure 7, the Greenlandic landscape serves as the backdrop of an image featuring three men. Positioned at the centre is Abia Frederiksen, a Greenlandic hunter, flanked by two brothers, each locking arms with him on either side. The composition of this image, with its powerful stance and interwoven arms, makes this photograph especially interesting.

At a glance, this closeness and their intertwined arms could be interpreted as a representation of equality and comradery among the three men. It suggests a shared bond and mutual respect between Abia Frederiksen and the brothers. However, when looking deeper, an alternative perspective arises – one that suggests a level of restriction imposed upon Abia Frederiksen. The interlocked arms, while signifying unity, could also symbolise a limitation on his agency or freedom of movement. It implies a constraint, almost as if this Greenlandic man is unable to change his position, even if he wants to do so. The presence of the two Danish men flanking Abia Frederiksen adds another level to this visual narrative. Their positioning and demeanour could be perceived as an imitation of guards, ready to assert control or exert power over him. A sense emerges that these Danish men symbolise a potential threat, capable of exerting dominance and potentially pulling Abia Frederiksen away at any given moment.

This photograph therefore encapsulates a duality – simultaneously suggesting notions of equality and the threat of Danish dominance. It echoes the ambivalence and ambiguity that Møller portrayed in figure 1. However, unlike the Carnival celebration in figure 1, figure 7 presents a strong potential of violence and danger associated with the Danish presence.

In the broader scope of colonial photography, a great importance for colonisers to portray dominance through violence can be identified in many images in the colonial archive. However, the specific Danish colonial project in this period of time stood out as it was important for the Danes and their own identity to create a narrative of harmony between the Greenlanders and themselves – hence the political rationale

[10] This title is inspired by my lecturer and scholar Daniel Steinbach and his article "Between intimacy and violence: Imperial encounters in East Africa during the First World War" from 2021. The article explores encounters between British and colonial soldiers during the First World War, which he argues were heavily influenced by colonial power and authority.

to create self-governing subjects rather than enforcing disciplinary dominance in this period. I will therefore argue that the potential violence depicted both in figure 6 and 7 reflects Møller's own agency and his wishes to show a more violent reality of colonial Greenland. Following Ingeborg Høvik's argument that Møller's studio photographs held the potential of creating a Greenlandic identity, these images captured away from his studio in Nuuk could do the same. I would argue that Møller's counternarrative of violence, depicted in these images, held immense potential of creating an indigenous identity of resistance, challenging the Danish narrative of peaceful colonial dominance.

The more naturalistic setting of the Greenlandic nature contrasts the portraiture style shown in figures 1-5. When comparing these photographs with the ones in figure 6 and 7, it could be argued that the conventions of family portraiture and therefore the agency of the models could have had a restrictive effect on Møller's agency and what he wished to portray. In contrast, the nature of figures 6 and 7 depicts both more intimate relations but also a more powerful and violent colonial dominance and authority. Furthermore, figure 6 of Kreutzmann and Rasmussen is taken on John Møller's journey to Maniitsoq north of Nuuk. The two brothers in figure 7 are from Ivittuut south of Nuuk, indicating that the image could have been taken there.

While the strict conventions of the portraiture style reflect the wishes of the Danish elite in Nuuk, the freer style of the last photographs could thus indicate that Møller had more power over the shaping of the images. Away from the restrictions of the Danish elite in Nuuk, where he was affected by an ethnographic discourse in his everyday life, it is compelling to view the last two photographs as a reflection of a more free and courageous style which allowed Møller to portray a more critical view of the colonial encounter between the Greenlander and the Danes.

The photographs in figure 1-5 present the colonial authority in Nuuk allowing Møller to only present a subtle and ambiguous critique of the colonial project, whereas the geographical distance to the small Danish elite in Nuuk enables him to provide a stronger critical portrayal of the colonial project in which he suggests an impending sexual and physical violence.

Conclusion

This article has sought to explore and contextualise a selection of John Møller's photographs from the period 1889-1922. By doing so, I have suggested that the tradition of Carnival served as a space for the Danish colonial elite in Nuuk to assert and define their colonial dominance. However, John Møller provides a subtle yet critical view of the colonisers, in this event, by producing counternarratives through images filled with tension and complexity. Exposing the unstable colonial authority which the Danes wished to assert through costumes, Møller simultaneously found himself in the Danish homes as both an insider and outsider. In different *photographic events* Møller shows great agency implemented through compositional choices. By distancing himself away from mirrors and the Danish homes, an action of *Sly Civility* came to undermine the colonial project through his visual representation. This in-between place, that he so often found himself in, is also reflected in Møller's work showing an ambivalence towards the colonial expectations of him as both "civilised" and "traditionalised". When traveling away from the small society of Nuuk, Møller shows a free and courageous style in his photography, allowing him to expose a more violent and poignant reality of colonial Greenland in which a counternarrative to the colonial story of harmony is created.

Bibliography

- Bhabha, Homi 2004: *Location of culture*. London: Routledge. https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203820551.
- Bugge, G.N 1970: "Koloniliv i Godthåb 1903-1914." *Tidsskriftet Grønland,* special edition, 1970: August-September, p. 1-32.
- Cooper, Frederick and Stoler, Ann Laura 1997: "Between Metropole and Colony: Rethinking a Research Agenda," Anna Laura Stoler and Frederick Cooper (red.): *Tensions of Empire.* Berkely: University of California Press, p. 1-58. https://doi.org/10.1525/9780520918085.
- Drewal, Henry John 2002: "Mami Wata and Santa Marta: Imag(in)ing Selves and Others in Africa and Americas." Paul S. Landau and Deborah K. Kaspin (red.): *Images and Empires: Visuality in Colonial and Postcolonial Africa*. Berkeley: University of California Press, p. 193-211. https://doi.org/10.1525/california/9780520229488.001.0001.
- Edwards, Elizabeth 2022: *Photographs and the Practice of History: A Short Primer.* London: Bloomsbury Publishing. https://doi.org/10.17159/2309-9585/2021/v47a12.
- Høvik Ingeborg 2016: "Reproducing the indigenous: John Møller's studio portraits of Greenlanders in context". *Acta Borealia* 33:2, p. 166-188. https://doi.org/10.1080/08003831.2016.1238175.
- Høvik, Ingeborg 2021: "Negotiating Meaning: John Møller's photograph in Early Twentieth-Century Scandinavian Literature." Sigrid Lien and Hilde Wallem Nielssen (red.): *Adjusting the Lens: Indigenous Activism, Colonial Legacies, and Photographic Heritage.* Vancouver: UBC Press, p. 81- 100. https://doi.org/10.59962/9780774866620.
- Kleivan, Inge 1996: *John Møller: kalaaleq assiliisoq : ukiuni 1889-1935 assilisat : fotografier fra perioden 1889-1935,* Copenhagen: Nationalmuseet, Grønlandssekretariatet.
- Marquardt, Ole, Inge Seiding, Inge, Niels H. Fransdsen and Søren Thuesen 2017: "Koloniale Strategier i en ny samfundsorden 1845-1904," Hans Christian Gulløv (red.): *Grønland Den Arktiske Koloni*. Copenhagen: Gads Forlag, p. 172-234.
- Møller, John 2021: *Mirrored - John Møller.* Inuuteq Storch (red.), Roulette Russe, Copenhagen.
- Pinney, Christopher 2003: "Indtroduction: How the Other Half…", Christopher Pinney, Nicolas Peterson and Nicholas Thomas (red.): *Photography's Other Histories*. Durham: Duke University Press. https://doi.org/10.1515/9780822384717.
- Poole, Deborah 1997: *Vision, Race, and Modernity.* New Jersey: Princeton University Press. https://doi.org/10.1515/9780691234649.
- Rud, Søren 2017: *Colonialism in Greenland: Tradition, Governance and Legacy*. London: Palgrave Macmillan. https://doi.org./10.1007/978-3-319-46158-8.
- Rud, Søren 2017: *Den Rette blanding: Oprindelighed og ledelse i 1800-tallets Grønland*. Odense: Syddansk Universitetsforlag.
- Sampson, Gary D 2002: "Unmasking the colonial Picturesque: Samuel Bourne's Photographs of Barrackpore Park." Eleanore M. Hight and Gary D. Sampson (red.): *Colonialist Photography: Imag(in)ing Race and Place*. London: Routledge, p. 84-106. https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315015262.

- Sandbye, Mette 2016: "Blasting the Language of Colonialism: Three Contemporary Photo-Books on Greenland". *KULT. Postkolonial Temaserie* 2016:14, p. 66-89.
- Steinbach, Daniel 2021: "Between initimacy and violence: Imperial encounters in East Africa during the First World War." Santanu Das, Anna Maguire, Daniel Steinbach (red.): *Colonial Encounters in a Time of Global Conflict 1914-1918*. London: Routledge, p. 98-122. https://doi.org/10.1093/ahr/rhac175.
- Stoler, Ann Laura 1989: "Making Empire Respectable: The Politics of Race and Sexual Morality in 20th Century Colonial Cultures". *American Ethnologist,* 16:4, p. 634-660. https://doi.org/10.1525/ae.1989.16.4.02a00030.
- Thisted, Kirsten 2021: *Stemmer fra Grønland: Den Danske Koloni i 1920'erne*. Copenhagen: Kristeligt Dagblads Forlag.
- Viemose, Jørgen 1977: *Dansk Kolonipolitik i Grønland.* Viborg: Demos.

Online Resources

- Geilas, Anna M. 2021: "Review of 'John Møller: mirrored, portraits of Good Hope' by Inuuteq Storch". *Polar Research,* 2021:41, p. 312-313. https://doi.org/10.33265/polar.v41.8845.
- Weinreich,Torben 2020: "Den Store Bastian." *Lex.* Last Modified June 3, 2020 https://bornelitteratur.lex.dk/Den_store_Bastian?gad_source=1&gclid=CjwKCAiA4smsBhAEEiwAO6DEjcsxsQi5fe-VJxhjDTCXfqc7boUjAFVDzR2gekChRtW53l3w6qE1ohoCxc0QAvD_BwE.

CULTURE AND HISTORY Nr. 02

December 2024

FRAMES OF DOMINATION

Connecting the Chaining of Aboriginal 'Prisoners' and Settler Emotions, 1900-1950.

By:
Elizabeth Megan Kiemel Clewett
Advanced Migration Studies

ABSTRACT: From the establishment of the first Australian colony until the mid-1900's, Aboriginal people were routinely forcibly restrained using chains by white settlers. Using two lenses, this article analyses a selection of photographs published in colonial newspapers, depicting this practice. It firstly examines how colonial photography constructed the Aboriginal body as an object of fear to be controlled by the frightened settler. This article also interrogates how these photographs appealed to humanitarian sympathies, which themselves were highly conditional, with comparisons to slavery embodying a 'safe' method of critique, one which did not challenge the settler colonial state.

KEYWORDS: colonial photography, Australia, fear, sympathy, First Nations peoples

Disclaimer: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people should be aware that this article contains images, and names of deceased persons in photographs and printed material.

Introduction

> "*So far as I can understand, the custom of chaining blacks has been practised from time immemorial, and within the present gaol it is the only safe way… If the natives had any more liberty than they have at present they would run away*" (Roth Report 1905: 54)

The expansion of the Australian colonial frontier occurred in concert with increasing carceral control and institutional violence against Aboriginal people (ALRC Report 133, 9 January 2018). Indeed, the establishment of the very first Australian colony accompanied practices of forcibly restraining Aboriginal people. This practice became systemic in early prisons (or 'gaols'), and was purported to prevent prisoners absconding, as it was supposedly "impossible to keep a native in custody without chaining" (Roth Report 1905: 44). Various methods of chaining were employed, including chains which were "attached to his neck and hands and wound round his body" (*ibid:* 13) and used "morning, noon and night – usually through the entire period of sentence" (*ibid:* 18). These neck chains often secured prisoners in groups, forming 'chain gangs', and could weigh as much as 3.1kg (Harman and Grant 2014: 166). With the onset of the 1900s, an increasing degree of concern attended chaining practices which culminated in Walter Roth's 1905 *Report of the Royal Commission on the Conditions of Natives 1905* ('Roth Report'), which condemned the use of neck chains. The recommendations were, however, widely disregarded and chaining continued until the early 1960s (Grant 2015), even after its formal abolition in 1958.

Contemporary Australian national identity, which rests on a bedrock of (white) Australian exceptionalism and 'progress', necessitates the "perpetuation of a singular collective amnesia" (Burke *et al.* 2020: 48) and the obfuscation of myriad brutal atrocities committed well into the 20th century. Despite this enduring tendency towards denial in Australia, the maltreatment of Aboriginal people was far from concealed from settlers during the early 20th century, with colonial

newspapers regularly printing photographs of chained Aboriginal prisoners from the early 1900s until the abolition of the practice. This article will analyse a selection of these photographs through two lenses: the emotions of fear, and sympathy.

Analysis of similar source material has explored the role of colonial photography in recognising and bearing witness to the suffering of Aboriginal people (Lydon 2010; 2012) and has investigated the ways in which such photographs perpetuated racist stereotypes (*ibid*). Through the utilisation of Ahmed's (2014) theory of emotion, this article aims develop the scholarship by exploring the roles of fear and sympathy in the construction of racist stereotypes through colonial photography. Firstly, I will firstly examine how colonial photography constructed the Aboriginal body as an object of fear and disgust to be controlled by the frightened, anxious settler. I argue that the visible restraint of Aboriginal people reified perceptions of them as inherently violent and primitive, and it communicated settler progress. Secondly, I will investigate how these photographs appealed to humanitarian sympathies, drawing parallels between the image of the chained Aboriginal and slavery embodying a 'safe' method of highlighting barbarity, without challenging the foundations of the settler colonial state. These images reveal how settler colonial desires bled into highly conditional humanitarian sympathies. In analysing only those photographs printed in colonial newspapers, connections can be made between the function of these images in orientating bodies towards and away one another, and the Australian nation-building project - a process to which the colonial newspaper was central (Putnis 2010).

Approaching Newspaper Photography

Photography historian and theorist John Tagg problematises a generalised history of photography and highlighted the importance of situating it within a "multiplicity of social sites and social practices" (Tagg 2009). For Tagg, photographs serve to animate meaning, not to discover it (*ibid:* 128). Consequently, meaning is not fixed, but rather determined by historians themselves (Bate 2016: 246). Sontag argues that a photograph can only become effective in informing a viewer if it is received within the context of relevant political consciousness (Sontag 2003). The viewer's

interpretation of the photographer's 'reality' is therefore impacted by the captions which contextualise it.

During the colonial era photography became "a gesture of domination […], a tool which participated in, and supported, the application of violence" (Foliard 2020: 28) and was thus a key instrument of the Australian colony. Its development enabled settlers to 'view' remote areas of the colonies which they were otherwise isolated from, thereby gaining knowledge about the people and areas photographed. The viewer and subject were brought closer through the construction of Indigenous People to colonisers (Twomey 2015). Such knowledge was deepened through the repeated publication of images of Aboriginal people in colonial newspapers, many of which depicted chained Aboriginal prisoners. Newspapers were an essential institutional element in the creation of the Australian nation (Putnis 2010) as they allowed those on the frontier to participate on a contemporaneous, regular and recurring basis in the wider imagined community (Anderson 2016; Putnis 2010). The increasingly widespread distribution was assisted by the 19th century technological developments (i.e. the rotary press and railways) which ensured that even rural communities were able to participate in this imagined community of the fledgling Australian nation. Whilst the earliest Australian newspapers could be regarded as "mouthpieces of their colonial governors" (McDonald 2023: 16), the next generation was highly politicised and by 1892 there were over 600 newspapers and magazines in circulation.

Importantly, it was often through newspaper coverage that settlers primarily came to 'know' Aboriginal people. What was 'known' was limited in scope as, despite the diversity of culture and language, Aboriginal people were presented as a homogenised, amorphous group – labelled as 'the problem'. Sections entitled 'The Blacks' were common (McDonald 2023: 27), featuring accounts of Indigenous violence under headlines like 'Affray with the Natives' (*ibid*). Images of incarcerated and chained Aboriginal people began to appear regularly in newspapers from the 1890s and, from the 1920s, were "an immediately recognisable symbol of ill-treatment" (Lydon 2012: 232). This illustrates how the relationships between the photographer, the subject and the viewer were steeped in asymmetrical colonial power dynamics and how the photograph itself often emerged from settler

fetishisation of a colonial encounter. Thus, when considering these images today, it is essential to avoid perpetuating the colonial gaze by divorcing them from the agency and history of colonised populations (Bate 2016: 246).

Theorising Colonial Emotions

Notwithstanding the centrality of 'western rationality' in the expansion of empire and its 'civilising mission', emotions formed a key part of the settler colonial experience (Pyenson 1993). In her seminal work, Ahmed (2014) argues that emotions do "not reside positively in a particular object" (Ahmed 2014: 64). Instead, she conceptualises emotions as "affective economies" (*ibid*: 44) which create surfaces and boundaries, allowing objects to be defined. Therefore, it is the contact between a subject and object which shapes emotions. In the colonial context, this notion of 'contact' is useful for understanding the emotions of settlers as they relate to Indigenous populations. Photographs published in colonial newspapers should be considered a form of 'contact' and, as such, influential in the shaping of settler emotions. Ahmed argues that narratives can stick to objects and result in a subject making a conditioned affective judgement upon coming into contact with an object (*ibid*: 211). These judgements and the stickiness of objects are impacted by past histories of contact. Emotions can be conceived of as performative: "They both generate their objects and repeat past associations" (*ibid*: 194) creating a so-called 'loop of the performative' (*ibid*: 194). The emotions of fear, disgust and sympathy were, I argue, pertinent to the interpretation of photographs of chained Aboriginal prisoners by settlers.

Fearing and Controlling the Aboriginal Body

Photographs of Aboriginal prisoners were frequently published in dedicated illustrated newspaper supplements, often alongside photographs of new infrastructures (Lydon 2010). From this photographic genre, themes of order and control emerge - which serve to communicate the idea of settler sovereignty and the superiority to the viewer. Order —specifically law and order— was a

core tenet of the 'civilising' goals of the Western imperial powers. The settler population in Western Australia at the time largely consisted of new European immigrants (Byers 1993), to whom the realities of frontier life were new and unfamiliar. Lester (2015) has convincingly argued that 'colonial anxieties' were structural and systemic aspects of the colonial life, and the degree of fear was such that the settler population was rendered utterly insecure (Laffan and Weiss 2012: vii). The colonial anxieties which characterised their daily lives stemmed from the frustration of trying to understand the environment (Fischer-Tiné and Whyte 2016). The 'unknown-ness' and unpredictability of this environment contrasted not only to the ultimate goal of law and order, but also to their rational self-image.

Bourke (2005) asserts that fear is fundamentally about encounters between bodies. This aligns with Ahmed's argument that contact shapes emotions. The degree of fear, however, cannot be attributed to encounters alone. Whilst the frontier was in some respects a genuinely dangerous place (Burke *et al*. 2020: 24), the magnitude was amplified by false reports spread through rumour and by the press (*ibid*: 24). The "strain and terror involved in contending with the unknown wilds" (Evans 1993: 29-30) and combined with fear of retaliation from those they had forcibly dispossessed, produced an atmosphere of fear and a sense of communal vulnerability (Burke *et al*. 2020: 22). The fact that fear does not reside in any particular object generates a senso of slipperiness, permitting it to stick to the specific *collective* bodies of Aboriginal people (Ahmed 2014: 64). The communication of sovereignty and superiority was reliant upon the reproduction and vindication of fear in a loop of performativity (*ibid*: 203). According to Weiss and Laffan, development, progress, certainty, order, stability and security can be conceived of as the antidote to fear (Weiss and Laffan 2012: 5). Therefore, through the publication of this genre of images, settlers could 'see' the order imposed on Aboriginal people in securitised settings, thereby assuaging their fears.

I. Reinforcing Primitivism

Notions that white settlers brought with them civilisation were founded upon the enduring stereotype of Aboriginal people as a "stone age race" (Lydon 2012: 224). Figure 1 depicts several labouring Aboriginal men, chained at the waist.

Figure 1. Photographer unknown. Natives at Work. "The Far North-West", The Australasian, 28 November 1908, p. 1378. Newspapers Collection. National Library of Australia.

This was standard practice, with prisoners being required to work whilst chained, often in quarries or construction, for up to 8 hours per day (Roth Report 1905: 19). It was argued that manual labour necessitated neck chains, as it could hardly be completed in handcuffs, and ankle chains were likely to cause the prisoner to injure themselves (Harman and Grant 2014: 165). The prisoners in Figure 1 are dressed in calf-length trousers and wide brim hats, with belts to which chains are attached. Though there were likely practical reasons for the lack of shirts, it is pertinent that this renders the scarification on their chests and backs visible. These scars are also highly visible in Figure 2, which was included in the same section of *The Australasian*.

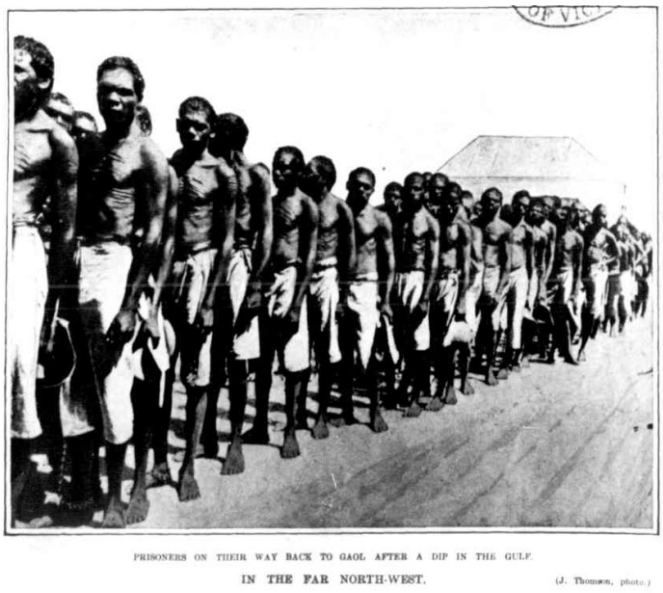


Figure 2. J. Thomson. Prisoners on their way back to gaol after a dip in the gulf. "The Far North-West", The Australasian, 28 November 1908, p. 1378, J Thomson. Newspapers Collection. National Library of Australia.

Scarification is a meaningful practice that was widely performed across Australia. Each scar was deliberately placed, told personal stories and identified social roles. In other words, they embodied the societal structures "by marking it in the very flesh of the individual and make him [*sic*] feel and experience it" (Thevoz 1984: 28-29). What a photograph may 'factually' portray, however, does not compel the audience to draw the same conclusion. Interpretation, and what viewers deem important, depends on the context in which an image is viewed and presented. In the colonial setting, "many newcomers misread the social and cultural significance of indigenous body marking and associated them with western punitive stigmatising practices" (Cole and Haebich 2007: 295). As neither the captions nor the article text remark on the scars, no context is provided. The publication of these images without context invited the viewer to deepen their fears, which were founded on the pathologising of Aboriginal people as under-developed and harbouring an intrinsic capacity for violence. Given that the "response of fear is itself dependent on particular narratives of who or what is fearsome" (Ahmed 2014: 69), erroneous settler interpretations of these scars as indicators of inherent violence fed into existing fears that settlers too would be the subject of this

violence. These marking were, therefore, likely considered manifestations of primitiveness, flagging the 'savage' tendencies of Aboriginal people to the viewer. This interpretation of scarification sharply distinguished the Aboriginals from the white settlers, indicating an 'otherness' and contributing to the production of fear which thereby justified the use of heavy chains. Therefore, chains were not perceived as an enactment of violence, but – paradoxically – as a tool for preventing it. The violence of this photograph further lies in divorcing scarification from its context. Embodying the logic of elimination, Aboriginal cultures were erased through the distortion and re-formation of the scars as imprints of barbarity (Cole and Haebich 2007: 295). Thus, each misinterpretation constituted a new instance of violence against these men. This highlights how it is those *least* in danger of violence who are most afraid (Ahmed 2014).

The accompanying article declared that "after natives have been in gaol a few months they present a comparatively well-groomed [*sic*] appearance".[1] This informed the interpretations of Figures 1 and 2, prompting the reader to imagine the men prior to their detention. The scars, reconstituted in the eye of the settler as indicators of primitivism, served as a visual reminder of 'before'. The gaolers have clothed the prisoners in markers of white, western 'civilisation', reassuring settlers that western sensibilities were in the ascendancy, and that Aboriginal ways of life—constructed as primitive and immoral—were being eradicated. In choosing these images, *The Australasian* communicated that though settler sovereignty was advancing, Aboriginal people were incapable of being entirely 'civilised', as they carried difference on the very surface of their bodies. The transgression "evoked deeper fears of a chaotic savagery that lay outside the control and bounds of the civilised world" (Cole and Haebich 2007: 202), and, therefore, efforts to remould the body of the Aboriginal people could not be entirely successful.

II. Order, Segregation and Containment

Figure 3 featured in a February 1905 edition of *The Western Mail*, a conservative rural weekly which often advocated the use of chains. It depicts tens of Aboriginal prisoners at Wyndham

[1] "The Far North-West", *The Australasian*, 28 November 1908, 1378. Newspapers Collection. National Library of Australia.

Gaol in North-Western Australia. The prisoners are chained in groups of three, with the chains fastened around their necks and secured using padlocks, accurately reflecting the general conditions at Wyndham.

Figure 3. Photographer unknown. *Aboriginal Bathing Gang at Wyndham*. "The Treatment of Aborigines – Prison Life in the Nor'-West", *The Western Mail*, 18 February 1905, p. 24. Newspapers Collection. National Library of Australia.

Importantly, this photograph–which is presented in a manner entirely uncritical of chaining–was printed in the immediate aftermath of the publication of the 1905 Roth Report. Therefore, considering the *Western Mail*'s long-standing support of chaining, the publication of this photo should be read as an effort to vindicate the practices criticised in the Report.

Notwithstanding the accuracy of the conditions depicted, elements of Figure 3 have evidently been constructed for the photograph. It is essential to be cognisant of such choices made in an image's composition (Butler 2016), which may have contributed to the decision to publish this image mere weeks after the Roth Report. The subjects have been precisely organised and are pictured standing in systematic rows and columns, all facing the camera. As this arrangement seems to have been done *for* the benefit of the camera, it seems intentional that this image evokes a sense of orderliness. This orderliness is mirrored in Figure 2, in which prisoners are standing in an organised queue. The presentation of a group considered 'wild' in the settler imagination, adhering to order while

in chains, implicates the chains in the production of that order. The fact that the prisoners are seen as 'under control' through the two-fold containment of the prison and chains, thus demonstrating their 'effectiveness', suggests that such treatment was an effective method of 'taming' the 'unruly' population. Consequently, the use of chains is reified as necessary to prevent inevitable escape, thereby vindicating the use of neck chains in the eyes of the settler population.

In exclusively capturing Aboriginal people, Figures 1 to 4 exemplify another dimension of orderliness - a strict adherence to racial segregation. There are no white settlers in these images, despite, for example, Figure 3 being taken at Wyndham Gaol, where there were both European and Aboriginal prisoners (Roth Report 1905: 44). The portrayal of strict adherence to racial norms communicated that white criminals were not to be associated with Aboriginal people, even in prison. They reflected wider society, in which interracial interactions were limited and occurred largely in carceral settings. Therefore, such photographs entrenched structures of the racial hierarchy - which was fundamental to the establishment of the setter colonial state. The absence of images of white criminals also indicates that it was not deemed to be in the public interest to visualise settler criminality. This acts to associate *only* Aboriginal people with criminality, and Aboriginal people with *only* criminality, in the public consciousness - in spite of Aboriginal people never constituting a majority of the prison population (ALRC 2018). Photographs entrenching racial hierarchy and the criminality of Aboriginal people informed what was believed about them. The delineation between settler and Aboriginal bodies allowed for the coding of the latter as criminal, whilst the former was coded as threatened.

III. Dehumanisation

NATIVE PRISONERS BATHING NEAR WYNDHAM JETTY
(Although alligators are numerous, they do not touch the natives.

Figure 4. Photographer unknown. Native Prisoners Bathing at Wyndham Jetty. "The Far North-West", The Australasian, 28 November 1908, p. 1378. Newspapers Collection. National Library of Australia.

Unusually for this genre, Figure 4 depicts prisoners in a more disorderly fashion, showing a large group bathing at Wyndham Jetty. This jetty, high up and out of the water, is where the white settlers would walk, avoiding the water below. The prisoners here are not only separated from the white settlers, but are immersed in the body of water the jetty was constructed to avoid. In capturing the physical separation of the two groups, the composition of this photograph therefore operates to subjugate its subjects. *The Australasian* has included the caption "although alligators are numerous, they do not touch the natives" (Figure 4). This flags one of the numerous fears held by the settlers - that of the new, dangerous animals in their new, dangerous environment and operates on two levels.

Firstly, it equates the Aboriginal population and the alligators. They exist in the same space physically, one which is avoided by the 'civilised', 'vulnerable' white settler. In highlighting a

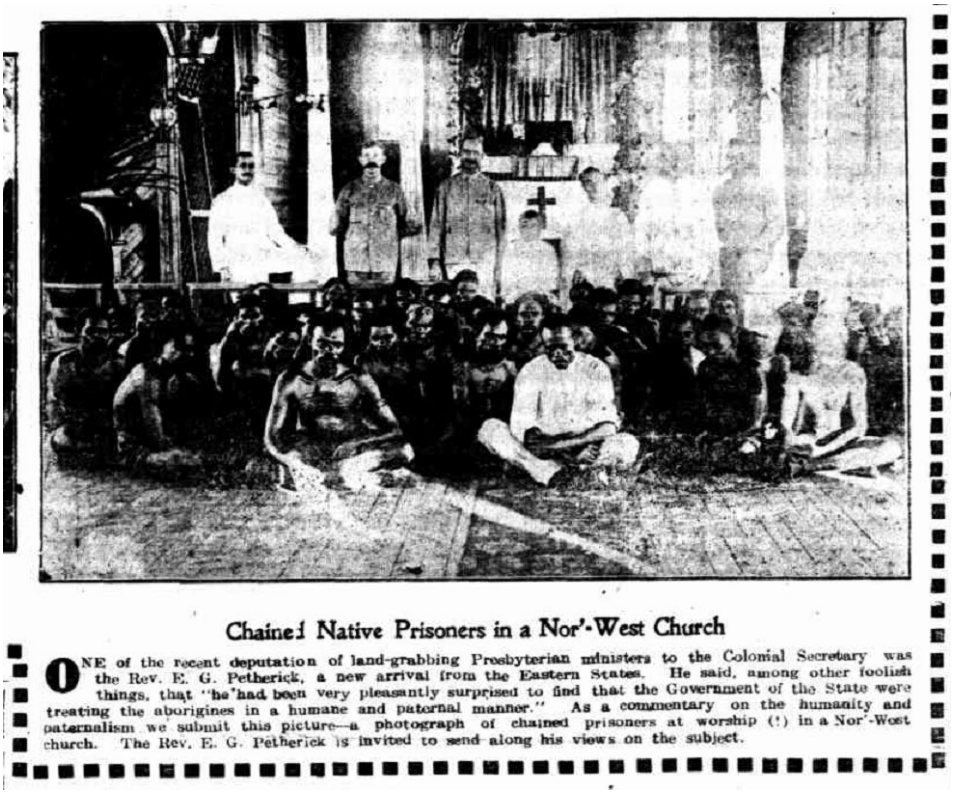
proximity between the prisoners and alligators, their lower position on the racial hierarchy is naturalised justifying their segregation and ill-treatment.

Secondly, the utilisation of this photograph to further the alignment of Aboriginal people with animals is a blatant example of dehumanisation. This perception that Indigenous Peoples were evolutionarily closer to animals than to the 'civilised' white man was a crucial tool of colonisation (Porteus 1931). The photograph implements the disgust, which is suggested to be the primary mechanism of dehumanisation (Rousseau, Gorman and Baranik 2023: 2). Disgust is an object-oriented emotion of superiority, meaning that subjects feel disgusted by bodies deemed inferior and, therefore, are repelled for fear of contamination. By highlighting that even the alligators do not touch the prisoners, the viewer was led to consider the prisoners as repellent in the extreme. This not only operates to suppress the population to the realm of the non-human, but also emphasises the need for strict segregation. Coming into contact with Aboriginal people would be read as contaminating for the settler population. Therefore, disgust worked to confine Aboriginal people to carceral spaces to eliminate the risk of contamination. The dissemination of disgust-inducing photographs acted to attribute the emotion of disgust to Aboriginal people before encounters occurred. The loop of performativity demonstrates the performance of emotions: when one subject reads another as disgusting, the subject is in fact filled with disgust, thereby confirming their initial reading (Ahmed 2014: 203). This works to explain the dehumanisation of Aboriginal bodies by white settlers.

With newspapers, the reproduction of the Indigenous man as animalistic occurs with each viewing on a massive scale across readerships. The norm to which the peoples indigenous to Australia do not conform has been constructed as the white Christian man. The violation of this norm also induced disgust. Figure 1, which highlighted the scarification on the chests of several prisoners, exemplifies this. The transgression represented by scarification was read as something repulsive and indicative of the less-than-human.

Humanitarian Sympathies

During the 1920s, photographs of the chained Aboriginal prisoner became a prominent symbol of ill-treatment (Lydon 2012: 232) and the advent of the League of Nations following the First World War brought with it a "renewed and vigorous interest in Aboriginal people" (Reynolds 2018: 184). Humanitarians often focused on the slavery question (e.g. Gribble 1905: 9) and used photographs to provoke outrage and garner sympathy in urban Australia and beyond. Halttunen (1995) asserts that sympathy is spectatorial in nature, meaning that the act of seeing rendered ill-treatment 'real' for urban audiences.



Chained Native Prisoners in a Nor'-West Church

ONE of the recent deputation of land-grabbing Presbyterian ministers to the Colonial Secretary was the Rev. E. G. Petherick, a new arrival from the Eastern States. He said, among other foolish things, that "he had been very pleasantly surprised to find that the Government of the State were treating the aborigines in a humane and paternal manner." As a commentary on the humanity and paternalism we submit this picture—a photograph of chained prisoners at worship (!) in a Nor'-West church. The Rev. E. G. Petherick is invited to send along his views on the subject.

Figure 5. Photographer unknown. "Chained Native Prisoners in a Nor'West Church", The Sunday Times Perth, 28 March 1909, p. 9 Newspapers Collection. National Library of Australia.

The movement towards perceiving the Aboriginal prisoner as an object of sympathy, however, was not linear. In the first decade of the 1900s Figure 5, which criticises the treatment of prisoners as inhumane, was published less than half a year after Figure 1 - which pushes the opposite narrative.

Crucially, Figure 5 was published in the *Perth Sunday Times*, which differed from its contemporaries, such as *The Western Mail* (Figure 3), in that it was considered a relatively radical newspaper (Byers 1993), purporting to oppose the political elite and support reform. Clearly, photographs have no inherent moral agency to stimulate sympathy. The emotions of viewers are highly dependent on how the photographs are discursively framed and on the emotional community (Rosenwein 2007) to which the viewer belongs. Such communities influence the historical emotional narratives that 'stick' affects to objects, which are taught as established values within particular emotional communities. If these values become dominant, they can turn into social norms.

Depicting Discomfort

Australian slaves

NOT imaginary Russian "slave camp" inmates, such as have Dr. Evatt's sympathy, but Australian Aborigines are here pictured in chains in a real Australian slave camp. They were held at Fitzroy Crossing, Western Australia, for 18 months while police vainly sought evidence on which they could be tried for tribal murder. Then they were freed—but they had served 18 months' hard labor in chains for an offence which had not been proved.

Figure 6. Photographer unknown. "Australian Slaves", Workers Star, 14 April 1949, p. 8. Newspapers Collection. National Library of Australia.

Figure 6 is typical of images published in the late 1940s. Here, a small group of Aboriginal prisoners are pictured working whilst chained together. In the bottom image, two of the men are making direct eye contact with the camera, while the third seems to be holding the chain around his neck and looks distinctly uncomfortable. Both attributes would be uncharacteristic of earlier fear-provoking photographs. Especially the discomfort contrasts with earlier images, in which the prisoners were not portrayed as being affected by the chains. As objections to chaining increased, its proponents argued that chains were a more humane option as, for example, they enabled the prisoners to swat away flies whilst they worked. The visual evidence of discomfort here counters this aspect of the pro-chaining argument, and somewhat challenges the colonial ideas that Aboriginal people were less susceptible to pain due to their 'primitive' nature.

The Slavery Question

Figure 6 is explicitly framed through slavery and takes a degree of responsibility. Aboriginal prisoners were frequently referred to using slurs such as 'natives' or 'aborigines'. In the photograph, they are referred to as 'Australian slaves', subsuming the men in the Australian identity and inviting viewers to somewhat align themselves with the men in the image.[2] The appropriation of the slavery frame was extensive, and worked to make to label of 'slave' stick to Aboriginal people. In Figure 6, connections to the slavery frame can also be identified in the setting – a rural area that contrasts with the construction sites of many earlier photos. This choice of setting aligns the subjects with American slaves toiling in fields. Thus, the slavery connection was an obvious one to make (Paisley 2014: 104) and enabled discussion under an established precedent – that slavery was bad. For Paisley, comparisons with slavery suggested the "collapsing of very distinct histories" (*ibid*: 104), which in turn acted to obscure unique and particular violence of settler colonialism. The homogenisation of the Aboriginal 'slave' is evidenced by the repeated use of Figure 6 across a

[2] This subsummation still relates to the settler logic of elimination.

number of years. Clearly, the utilisation of such an image was not to record a specific instance of injustice directed at an individual, but rather served as a generalised icon of slavery and injustice imposed on a homogenised 'victim' population – a population in need of the white helping hand. This relied upon the proliferation of the notion of western 'advancement'. In 1927, *The Anti-Slavery Reporter* argued that:

> [I]f we recognise their rights […] at least we have the satisfaction of knowing that even in the eleventh hour we shall have endeavoured to redeem any neglect, indifference or maladministration in the past and to do substantial justice (*Anti-Slavery Reporter* 1927: 7, in Reynolds 2018: 194).

This signals that humanitarian organisations were still permeated with the notion that Aboriginal people were an 'inferior' race, and it was this belief which prompted sympathetic efforts of the 'superior' whites. The support for "more humane and enlightened treatment" (*Anti-Slavery Reporter* 1932: 95-97, in Reynolds 2018: 191) reveals that ill-treatment was considered unacceptable because the settlers perceived themselves as more advanced than such treatment would suggest. That the treatment was meted out "to a primitive race by a *civilised* nation" (*Morpeth Review* 1933: 29, in Reynolds 2018: 186) was unacceptable and evidently stemmed from the same stereotypes upon which feelings of fear and disgust were based. Such views underscored much of the 'care' and protectionism that was enacted as the new form of control. This illustrates how colonialism bled into humanitarianism and why the construction of Aboriginal prisoners as anonymous slaves in the national imagination should be considered a form of violence.

The publication of Figure 6, which aligns the men with slavery, was intended to provoke shock and outrage without igniting new and difficult discussions about the specific plight of Aboriginal people. Instead, the same practised sympathies and arguments could be recycled. Figure 6, whilst meant to shock, also remains within the realms of acceptability of the period. Lydon notes that this forms a stark contrast to the violence captured in the photographic record of the United States, for example, where photographs of lynchings constituted trophies and were commonplace (Lydon

2010: 245). The harsher treatment and the dispossession of land, from which it may have been harder for the average settler to extricate themselves from blame, remained concealed from view. This highlights how humanitarian sympathies are endowed with inequalities of power and work to perpetuate them. Consequently, whilst the diversifying of the frame to express humanitarian sympathies widened the information available in the emotional community, it was arguably still defined by the white man's implicit 'superiority' (Hillbrands 2021). Suski argues that sympathy, while capable of building an ethical connection, can simultaneously maintain relationships of power which obscure any genuine social connection between the humanitarian and the 'sufferer' (Suski 2012).

Conditionality

Figure 5 shows a group of chained prisoners sat on the floor of a church, heads bowed. A group of white men stand behind them, either side of a crucifix, separated from the prisoners by a physical barrier. *The Perth Sunday Times* states that this picture of "chained prisoners at worship (!) in a Nor'-West church" [*sic*] should be considered "a commentary on the humanity and paternalism" (*Sunday Times Perth* 1909: p. 9), responding to claims that the state government was treating the Aboriginal people in a 'humane and paternal manner'. Whilst this tone guides the viewer to interpret the photograph as evidence of *in*humane treatment, the selection of this photo to highlight ill-treatment indicates the conditionality of recognition of their suffering (Lydon 2012: 210). Whereas many photographs enabled the viewing of remote areas of the frontier, this one exemplifies the ability of photography to draw the subject and the viewer closer by locating the chained Aboriginal in a familiar setting – a church. This reduces both the physical and emotional distance, by placing them in a recognisable, 'moral' setting. This flagging of religion becomes more overt with the caption which identifies the prisoners as being "at worship". The affective judgements of humanitarians who came into contact with Aboriginal people were shaped by the sticky narratives of Christian humanitarianism, based on values of conversion, equality and the salvation of 'heathens'. Therefore, the assertion that the prisoners were partaking in Christian worship, speaks to how the 'benefits' of sympathy are bestowed only if efforts have been made to shed 'primitive pagan' behaviours and adopt the 'civilised' characteristics of the settler.

Religion was considered crucial in advocating for the liberation of Aboriginal people, with *The Anti-Slavery Reporter* asserting that with the church's support "the cause of all weak and depressed peoples throughout the world will receive fresh encouragement and reinforcement" (*Anti-Slavery Reporter* 1932: 95-97, in Reynolds 2018: 192). This reinforces the notion that sympathy was highly dependent upon notions of passivity which aligned with the framing of the Aboriginal people as "helpless, docile members of a 'child race' in need of protection by beneficent whites" (Lydon 2012: 216). The racial hierarchy remains unchallenged by this image – the composition of which draws on many of the same themes as other cotemporaneous photographs. Whilst there are white settlers in the image, they are visually distinguished from the prisoners in a multitude of ways: they are standing, whereas the prisoners are sitting; the settlers are clothed, and the prisoners are mostly not; the settlers are looking straight into the camera, whereas the prisoners are mostly looking at the floor – a distinctly non-confrontational pose. They are even separated by a physical barrier. Therefore, every part of the composition of this image speaks to the hierarchical nature of early 1900s Australia and demonstrates the conformity of colonial humanitarian photography to the hierarchical standards of the colonial visual economy. The utilisation of photographs as meek, anonymised symbols of slavery indicates the conditionality of humanitarian sympathy. A sympathy which, crucially, did not necessitate them to re-evaluate their identity as rightful occupants of a (stolen) land.

Conclusion

The analysis of colonial newspapers' photographs reveals two over-arching themes which aligned with colonial goals to "isolate, know and manage Aboriginal people" (Lydon 2005: xiv): order and control, and humanitarianism. Through the impression of orderliness, chains were perceived to be an effective method of containing a 'fearsome' primitive population. As order and progress counter fear, such impressions validated the imposition of regimes of control by the fearful and anxious settler. This illustrates how fear works to restrict the movement of 'othered' bodies. The contributions of colonial newspapers thereby reified white victimhood and perpetuated the "loop of the performative": by constructing certain bodies as disgusting and fearsome, those bodies were

subsequently perceived as such. By subjecting the 'problem population' to regimes of correction and control, settler sovereignty was consolidated.

That this same photographic genre was also used by humanitarians highlights their lack of inherent moral agency. The parallels drawn between the image of the chained Aboriginal and the slave trade made these images a safe method of evidencing barbarity without challenging the fundamentals of the settler colonial state. Thus, these photographs reveal the conditional nature of humanitarian sympathy, which relied on constructions of Aboriginal people as docile, primitive and desperately in need of the white, civilised helping hand. Instead of restoring dignity, they were used and re-used precisely because they allowed the chained Aboriginal prisoners to become a symbol, abstracted from their individual humanity.

Bibliography

- "Australian Slaves," *Workers Star* (Perth, Western Australia), 14 April 1949, Newspapers Collection. National Library of Australia.
- "Chained Native Prisoners in a Nor'West Church," *The Sunday Times* (Perth, Western Australia), 28 March 1909, Newspapers Collection. National Library of Australia.
- "The Far North-West," *The Australasian*, 28 November 1908, Newspapers Collection. National Library of Australia.
- "The Treatment of Aborigines – Prison Life in the Nor'-West," *The Western Mail* (Perth, Western Australia), 18 February 1905, Newspapers Collection. National Library of Australia.
- Ahmed, Sara 2014: *The Cultural Politics of Emotion*. New Edinburgh Press, Edinburgh. https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.3366/j.ctt1g09x4q
- Anderson, Benedict 2016: *Imagined Communities*. Verso Books, London.
- *Anti-Slavery Reporter* 18:1 (London: England, 1927), in Reynolds, Henry 2018: *The Whispering in Our Hearts Revisited.* NewSouth Publishing, Sydney. ProQuest.
- *Anti-Slavery Reporter* 22:3 (London: England, October 1932), in Reynolds, Henry 2018: *The Whispering in Our Hearts Revisited.* NewSouth Publishing, Sydney. ProQuest.
- *Australian Law Reform Commission Report* 133. 9 January 2018. https://www.alrc.gov.au/publication/pathways-to-justice-inquiry-into-the-incarceration-rate-of-aboriginal-and-torres-strait-islander-peoples-alrc-report-133/2-context/history-of-contact-with-the-criminal-justice-system/
- Bate, David 2016: *Photography: The Key Concepts*. Routledge, London. Taylor Francis. https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003103677
- Bourke, Joanna 2005: *Fear: A Cultural History*. Virago, London.
- Burke Heather, Kerkhove R., Wallis L., Keys C. and Barker B. 2020: "Nervous Nation", *Aboriginal History*, 44, p. 21-58. https://doi.org/10.22459/AH.44.2020
- Butler, Judith 2016: *Frames of War: When Is Life Grievable?*. Verso, London. ProQuest.

- Byers, Karen 1993: "A paper for the people?: The Sunday Times 1897-1905". Thesis, Edith Cowan University.
- Cole, Anna and Anna Haebich 2007: "Corporeal Colonialism and Corporal Punishment: A Cross-cultural Perspective on Body Modification", *Social Semiotics,* 17:3, p. 293-311. https://doi.org/10.1080/10350330701448587.
- Evans, Raymond 1993: "The 'Darkling Plain': Impressions of Early Racial Confrontation in Frontier Violence and Aboriginal Resistance", in Evans R., Saunders K. and Cronin K. *(eds), Race Relations in Colonial Queensland*, p. 27–32. University of Queensland Press, St Lucia.
- Fischer-Tiné, Harald (ed.) 2016: *Anxieties, Fear and Panic in Colonial Settings: Empires of the Verge of a Nervous Breakdown*. Cambridge Imperial and Postcolonial Studies, Palgrave MacMillan, London. Springer Link. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-45136-7
- Foliard, Daniel 2020: *The Violence of Colonial Photography*. Manchester University Press, Manchester. JSTOR.
- Grant, Elizabeth and Harman, Kristyn 2014: "'Impossible to Detain... without Chains'? The use of Restraints on Aboriginal People in Policing and Prisons," *History Australia,* 11:3, p. 157-176. https://doi.org/10.1080/14490854.2014.11668538
- Gribble, John 1905: *Dark Deeds in a Sunny Land*. Perth: Daily News (Republished Perth: University of Western Australia, 1987).
- Halttunen, Karen 1995: "Humanitarianism and the Pornography of Pain in Anglo-American culture", *The American Historical Review,* 100:2, p. 303-334.
- Laffan, Michael and Weiss, Max (eds.) 2012: *Facing Fear: The History of an Emotion in Global Perspective*. Princeton University Press, Princeton.
- Lester, Alan 2015: "Empire and the Place of Panic", in *Empires of Panic: Epidemics and Colonial Anxieties,* edited by Robert Peckham, p. 23-34. Hong Kong University Press, Hong Kong. JSTOR. https://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctt14jxs0m
- Lydon, Jane 2005: *Eye Contact: Photographing Indigenous Australians*. Duke University Press, Durham and London. JSTOR. https://doi.org/10.1215/9780822387251

- Lydon, Jane 2010: "'Behold the Tears': Photography as Colonial Witness", *History of Photography,* 34:3, p. 234-250, https://doi.org/10.1080/03087291003765836
- Lydon, Jane 2012: "Photography and the Recognition of Indigenous Australians: Framing Aboriginal Prisoners", *Australian Historical Studies,* 43:2, p. 210-232. https://doi.org/10.1080/1031461X.2012.662938.
- McDonald, Willa 2023: *Literary Journalism in Colonial Australia*. Palgrave MacMillan, Zurich. Springer Link. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-31789-7
- Owen, Chris 2021: "How Western Australia's 'unofficial' use of neck chains on Indigenous people lasted 80 years", *The Guardian*, 7 March 2021. https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2021/mar/07/how-western-australias-unofficial-use-of-neck-chains-on-indigenous-people-lasted-80-years.
- Paisley, Fiona 2014: "An Echo of Black Slavery: Emancipation, Forced Labour and Australia in 1933", *Australian Historical Studies,* 45:1, p. 103-125. https://doi.org/10.1080/1031461X.2013.877506.
- Porteus, Stanley 1931: *The psychology of a primitive people: A study of the Australian Aboriginal*. Freeport: Books for Libraries Press.
- Putnis, Peter 2010: "News, Time and Imagined Community in Colonial Australia", *Media History*, 16:2, p. 153-170. https://doi.org/10.1080/13688801003656082.
- Pyenson, Lewis 1993: "The ideology of Western rationality: History of science and the European civilising mission", *Science and Education*, 2, p. 329-343.
- Reynolds, Henry 2018: *The Whispering in Our Hearts Revisited.* NewSouth Publishing, Sydney. ProQuest.
- Rosenwein, Barbara 2007: *Emotional Communities in the Middle Ages*. Cornell University Press, Ithaca.
- Roth, Walter 1905: *Report of the Royal Commission on the Conditions of Natives 1905*. Trove, National Library of Australia.
- Rousseau, David, Brandon Gorman and Lisa E Baranik 2023: "Crossing the Line: Disgust, Dehumanisation and Human Rights Violations", *Socius: Sociological Research for a Dynamic World,* 9, p. 1-16. https://doi.org/10.1177/23780231231157686

- Sontag, Susan 2003: *Regarding the Pain of Others*. London, Penguin Books.
- Suski, Laura 2012: "Humanitarianism as Politics of Emotion", in *Emotions Matter*, eds. Dale Spencer, Kevin Walby and Alan Hunt, University of Toronto Press, Toronto, p. 124-136.
- Tagg, John 2009: *The Disciplinary Frame: Photographic Truths and the Capture of Meaning*. University of Minnesota Press, Minnesota. ProQuest. https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.5749/j.ctttv1qh
- *The Morpeth Review* 3:25 (London: England, October 1933), in Reynolds, Henry 2018: *The Whispering in Our Hearts Revisited.* NewSouth Publishing, Sydney. ProQuest.
- Thevoz, Michael 1984: *The Illusions of Reality: The Painted Body*. Rizzoli, New York.
- Twomey, Christina 2015: "Framing Atrocity: Photography and Humanitarianism", in *Humanitarian Photography: A History*, ed. Heide Fehrenbaco and David Rodongo, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, p. 47-63 https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9781107587694

Online resources

- Grant, Elizabeth 2015, January 9: "In Chains: Aboriginal Prisoners' Bleak History". *University of Adelaide* (blog), from https://www.adelaide.edu.au/news/news75642.html
- Hillbrands, Michelle 2021, June 15: "Emotional Masculinity: Fear, Disgust and Sympathy in Colonial Australia", *Histories of Emotion* (blog). From https://historiesofemotion.com/2021/06/15/emotional-masculinity-fear-disgust-and-sympathy-in-colonial-australia/.

CULTURE AND HISTORY Nr. 02

December 2024

ATROCITIES IN THE 'HEART OF DARKNESS'

Sexual Violence as a Weapon of Colonial Control in the Congo Free State, 1885-1908.

By:
Daniel Fabricius
History

ABSTRACT: This article will provide an in-depth analysis on the colonial usage of sexual violence as a weapon of superiority during the Congo Free State during 1885-1908. The evaluation aims to uncover how white settlers systematically and intentionally utilised sexual violence as tool of colonial warfare. Literature shows that rape was a common occurrence which caused psychological, economic and physical hardship towards the Congolese. Crimes relating to sexual violence transpired through atrocities like rape, abduction, blackmail, forced incest and kidnapping. It will be illustrated that sexual violence was fuelled by motives like economics, sexual lust, psychological dominance and military tactics. Sexualised atrocities proved effective as they inflicted unprecedented injuries while also manifesting social hierarchies. Sexual violence served as reliable weapon of colonial warfare which remained unbound by controversy and objections. Rape and sexual violence were effective tools in causing psychological and physical injuries while simultaneously displaying its perpetrator as the superior force.

KEYWORDS: colonialism, racial encounters, war crimes, imperialism, racism

Introduction

The article aims to broaden our current knowledge on Leopold's Congo by analysing how colonialists implemented sexual violence as a weapon of superiority between 1885-1908. The Berlin Conference, November 15 1884 – February 26 1885, provided King Leopold II of Belgium with absolute authority over the African region of Congo. Unlike other African colonies, the Congo Free State remained under legal dictatorship of Leopold until its disestablishment in 1908 (Vanthemsche 2012: 14-32). The private ownership of Congo became a controversial topic shortly after its establishment as numerous missionaries, journalists and rights activists proclaimed that it exercised slavery, mutilation, genocide and sexual violence (Rutz 2018: 25-107). The highlight of such atrocities gave birth to political and humanitarian organisations such as the *Congo Reform Association (CRA)*, which sought to discontinue Leopold's private ownership of Congo as a colony (Hasian 2015: 178-192). The work of CRA and Alice Harris, Roger Casement, Joseph Conrad and Edmund D. Morel proved vital as their photographs, journals and testimonies acted as key evidence for the political liquidation of the Congo Free State (Hawkins 1982: 65-82).

This article will provide an in-depth analysis on the Belgian weaponisation of sexual violence against the Congolese. The extent of sexual violence and its weaponisation as tool of racial suppression will be in the centre of this analysis. Sexual atrocities will thus be evaluated with the purpose of determining whether and to what extent sexual violence impacted the physical and psychological wellbeing of the Congolese population. These impacts will be investigated through a variety of primary and secondary sources. The information gathered from journals, diaries, books and photographs will thus be the backbone of this particular research. primary sources include documents from first-hand witnesses like Roger Casement, Joseph Conrad and Edmund D. Morel.The impact of sexual violence will be determined through factors like psychological influence, racial intimidation and militaristic superiority. This article will uncover how colonialists used sexual violence as a weapon of superiority in the Congo Free State during 1885-1908.

White Peril: Colonial Sexualisation and Pornification of African Bodies

Literature shows that African bodies, especially female, proved significant in relation to how a majority of Europeans perceived people of darker skin. Late 19th century writings such as Joseph Conrad's fictional novel, *Heart of Darkness*, provides an interesting narrative on European sexualisation of Congolese women. Conrad portrays them through a highly sexualised language, by which he refers to an African female warrior by stating that "She was savage and superb, wild-eyed and magnificent" and "naked breasts, arms, legs, glaring eyes."[1] Although fictional, Conrad's novel demonstrates that the sexualisation of African bodies was a common occurrence within the Congo free State as white Europeans such as himself viewed Congolese women as savage, wild, and erotic. His statements are especially relevant as they manifest the link between African sexualisation and fetishes like exoticism through racial intercourse and dominance.

Another notable example of African pornification occurs at the case of *Hottentot Venus,* also known as Saartjie (Sara) Baartman in 1810. Baartman rose to fame due to being publicly displayed in French and English exhibitions, which paired her womanly features to the sexualisation of African women. These were displayed in 19th century posters like *La Belle Hottentote*[2] and William Heath's *the Hotttentot Venus.*[3] The historian, Corrie Decker, provides an interesting examination of Baartman's case by demonstrating a link between African sexualisation and Darwinist theories by stating that, "Europeans employed representations of African female bodies like Baartman's in pseudoscientific studies of racial difference as fodder for Social Darwinist theories" (Decker 2021: 21). She also argues that this particular correlation remains an issue within colonial studies due to "the enduring legacy of colonial racial sexual stereotypes that portray African men and women as hypersexualized" (Decker 2021: 42).

[1] Conrad, Joseph, "Heart of Darkness," Blackwood's Magazine, First published: 1899 (serial), 1902 (book), *Penguin Classics*, 1989, pp. 101.

[2] La Belle Hottentote, a 19th-century French print of Saartjie (Sara) Baartman, *Les Curieux en extase ou les Cordons de souliers*, published by: A Paris chez Martinet, Libraire, rue du Coq, N° 15, et Chez Charon rue Saint Jean de Beauvais No. 26. 1 January (1815).

[3] Heath, William, "Love at first sight, or a pair of Hottentots, with an addition to the broad bottom family," Sarah Bartman (Saartjie Baartman, Saat-Jee, "the Hotttentot Venus"), *London, (50 Piccadilly): S.W. Fores*, Date: 15 of Nov. (1810).

Available sources illustrate the colonial pornification of African bodies to be more nuanced than previously suggested. The complexities of sexualised violence become clear as European fetishism of African women is closely tied to broader ideas like scientific racism and white dominance. The link between African sexuality and scientific racism can be found in 19th century writings such as Joseph A. Gobineau's *Moral and Intellectual Characteristics of the Three Great Varieties*.[4] Gobineau relies on scientific explanations when discussing the sexual characteristics of African peoples by stating that "They have a decided taste for sensual pleasures."[5] The arguments presented by Gobineau provide for an interesting frame of reference as he highlights the correlation between African inferiority and sexuality. His perspective and arguments on the scientific research towards African inferiority occurs through statements like "The dark races are the lowest on the scale" and "The shape of the pelvis has a character of animalism".[6] Additionally, the link between scientific inferiority and African sexualism during the early 19th century has been investigated by scholars such as Saul Dubow (Dubrow 1995).

His study reaches a fascinating conclusion by arguing that the European belief in racial inferiority strongly increased the sexualisation of African bodies. Scholars such as Philippa Levine (Levince 2008: 189-219) and Felix Lösing (Lösing 2020: 47-196) provide a more in-depth analysis on this topic by debating the link between African fetishes and sexual violence. Their studies prove informative as they place this linkage within a colonial context which concludes that numerous 19th century colonialists perceived African bodies as physical vessels to be conquered and tamed. Their works provide for an engaging narrative by demonstrating that African pornification was closely tied to the social and political power struggles within European colonialism and superiority.

Belgian Superiority: Rape and Sexual Violence in the Congo Free State

It is shown that instances of colonial rape and sexual violence was a common occurrence within Belgian Congo during 1885-1908 (Hawkins 1982: 65-80; Hasian 2015: 178-192; Louis 1964:

[4] Gobineau, Joseph Arthur, "Moral and Intellectual Characteristics of the Three Great Varieties," In: Harlow & Carter (Eds), *"Archives of Empire: The Scramble for Africa," Duke University Press*, Vol. 2, 2004, pp. 143-153.
[5] Ibid. P. 148.
[6] Ibid. P. 145.

99-120). Underlining sexual violence as a frequent occurrence has been illustrated by 19th century publications of Edmund D. Morel, Roger Casement and Alice Harris. Sexual violence towards Congolese became increasingly investigated since 20 May 1903 as the House of Commons confirmed its overseas examination of Congo by deploying political diplomats such as Roger Casement. Casement began his investigation in early June where he served as a diplomatic eyewitness during July, August and September 1903 (Reid 1974: 460-480) His investigation proved lucrative as his diaries contained numerous instances of sexual violence. The highlight of physical and sexual violence within Belgian Congo became a controversial topic in early 1904, as Casement published his eyewitness accounts through the book, *the Casement Report*.[7]Academics should therefore consider that such sources were often fuelled by European economic and political interests rather than eliminating moral injustice within colonial Africa.

The social elements of sexual violence within Casement's report have been examined further by historians like Peter Singleton-Gates and Maurice Girodias (Singleton & Girodias 1959: 144-176). Their work, as well as the report by Casement, shows that sexual violence mostly occurred between white perpetrators and African women as victims. As documented by Casement, sexualised violence was also utilised by African men who were employed by the Belgian militia. White colonisers and African sentries were therefore the main perpetrators of rape. In parallel to the perpetrators, Conrad demonstrates that sexualised violence often targeted young African girls. Prior to the rape and murder of two village girls, one Congolese armed sentry stated according to Casement that "We might keep them both, the little one is not bad-looking."[8] His report is valuable within this study as it establishes a link between sexualised violence and ideals such as colonial superiority. A same conclusion is reached by scholars like Ann Laura Stoler, who highlights sexual violence as being tools of colonial superiority by stating that "sexual domination has figured as a social metaphor of European supremacy*"* (Stoler 1989: 638).

[7] Casement, Roger, "The Casement Report: Correspondence and Report from His Majesty's Consul at Boma Respecting the Administration of the Independent State of the Congo," *Harrison and Sons*, The Project Gutenberg, Vol 1-64, No. 1, 1904, pp. 1-84.
[8] Casement, Roger, "The Eyes of Another Race," In O'Sicohain, Seamas and O'Sullivan, Michael (eds) *"The Eyes of Another Race: Roger Casement's Congo Report and 1903 Diary*", University College Dublin, 2003, p. 153.

Sexualisation and perceived racial inferiority produces various consequences within the social and psychological elements of sexualised violence. One such consequence transpires as colonialists regarded African women as being socially, racially and sexually inferior. This view proved consequential towards Congolese women as their bodies were perceived as erotic vessels to be conquered. Most white colonialists regarded therefore the rape of Africans as being morally acceptable. A similar acceptance is also illustrated within Casement's report which proclaims that colonialists did not regard sexual violence as a criminal or moral offence.[9] Singleton and Girodias reach a similar conclusion by arguing that "these men themselves never made any concealment in committing these acts" (Singleton & Girodias 1959: 166). The acceptance of sexualised violence was attached to elements like white superiority, as it allowed for the colonial rape which weaponised physical and psychological terror.

The acceptance of sexual violence becomes further proven when analysing statements within 19th century documents such as Mr. De. Bernhardt's, *Cases of Ill-treatment by officials in the Congo Free State, 1891-1900.*[10] Bernhardt's source is striking as it rarely refers to sexual violence while simultaneously containing numerous statements on mutilations, beatings and floggings. His few statements on sexualised violence are often downplayed as he marks them as incidents rather than crimes. The lack of coverage becomes apparent as the report does not contain words such as "rape", "ravish" or "forced intercourse." Its chosen vocabulary and lack of mention strongly suggests that sexual violence was lowly prioritised.

Its downplay is also noticeable within Edmund D. Morel's *King Leopold's Rule in Africa*[11] and *Red Rubber: The story of the Rubber Slave Trade which flourished on the Congo for twenty years, 1890-1910.*[12] Morel downplays sexual violence by arguing that rape and forced incest, as they might

[9] Ibid. Pp. 147-152.
[10] Mr. De. Bernhardt, "Cases of Ill-treatment by officials in the Congo Free State, 1891-1900," Confidential Print: Africa, Print No. 7315, Accessed Through: *The National Archives*, FO 403/304, Printed for the use of the Foreign Office, August, 1900.
[11] Morel, Edmund D. "King Leopold's Rule in Africa," Accessed Through: Internet Archive, Open Library, *London: William Heinemann Publishing*, First Edition, 1904, pp. 31-102.
[12] Morel, Edmund D. "Red Rubber: The story of the Rubber Slave Trade which flourished on the Congo for twenty years, 1890- 1910," Accessed Through: Internet Archive, Open Library. Accessed on: 07.12.2022, *The National Labour Press LTD*, 1906, pp. 18-225.

damage the social power structures of colonial Africa (Burroughs 2016: 40-51). Morel's refusal to highlight sexualised violence has been studied by historians like Charlotte Mertens, who states that "In his diary, Morel also makes clear that some atrocities did not have to be published, such as forced incest" (Mertens 2016: 6). Toni Smith provides a similar argument as he concludes rape to be downplayed due to more controversial atrocities like beatings and mutilations (Smith 2020: 144-161).

However, it is important to state that such primary sources should be examined with care and scepticism when being referenced as historical evidence. Firstly, a majority of documents which rely on eyewitness accounts contain biased sources as their purpose of creation was to liquefy the Free State of Congo. Secondly, these sources were not created with the intent on highlighting sexual violence, but rather, to conclude that Belgium violated its economic agreements with Europe. The correlation between European self-interest and anti-colonial organisations such as CRA has been debated by Derrick M. Nault. When concluding the origin and purpose of primary sources such as *The Congo Report*, he states that "British economic and political self-interest helped make the Congo Report possible" (Nault 2020: 18).

Correspondingly, social, racial and religious factors proved highly influential. Firstly, societal views like racial inferiority played a vital role in justifying sexual atrocities. Sexual violence towards Congolese was therefore rarely regarded as punishable. The historian, Robert Burroughs, provides a similar argument by stating, "Even if Africans did speak of their experiences, justice was not guaranteed, even in cases of extreme violence" (Burroughs 2019: 16). Corrie Decker reaches a similar conclusion by stating that "white men in colonial Africa rarely, if ever, faced charges for raping African women or girls" (Decker 2021: 21). Secondly, the rape of Congolese remained socially acceptable due to European marriage laws and customs. Its acceptance transpired as a majority of Congolese women were regarded by colonisers as being mistresses and wives. Sexual violence towards Congolese women was thus accepted, as European marital laws during the early 20th century did not perceive sexual violence towards spouses as a punishable crime (Roberts & Miers 1988: 32-44).

Sexualised violence towards Congolese spouses was additionally impacted due to Christian influences. A moral and juridical acceptance occurred as European missionaries did not regard sexual intercourse between spouses as a moral sin. The Christian downplay of rape is proven further as most 19th century missionaries within Congo did not document such atrocities. Most missionary sources contain instead information on other atrocities like beatings and mutilations (Peffer 2008: 55-77). The correlation between rape and Christian acceptance has also been discussed by Toni Smith who claims that "missionaries connected African forms of marriage and slavery through discussions on bridewealth" (Smith 2022: 374). The lack of moral judgement concludes that the acceptance of sexualised violence was fuelled by European racism, Christian sexual morality and marital laws. These factors remained consequential towards the Congolese as their influences fostered a systematic justification of colonial rape and sexual violence. Colonisers were therefore rarely held accountable or punished (Smith 2022: 366-393). The lack of legal punishment, as well as social stigmatisation, demonstrates that colonisers within Leopold Congo utilised such atrocities as tools of dominance and superiority.

In parallel to this debate, sexualised violence occurred through social masses and groups rather than by individual incidents. The argument that sexual violence was initiated as a systematic weapon has been made by scholars such as Singleton and Girodias who states that "It was the deliberate act of the soldiers of a European administration" and that sexual perpetrators "were but obeying the positive orders of their superiors" (Singleton & Girodias 1959: 166-167). The close correlation between sexualised violence and authoritative orders concludes that such atrocities were deliberately and systematically instigated rather than being random occurrences. Adam Hochschild supports this theory by proclaiming that sexualised violence regularly transpired through colonial social groups (Hochschild 1999: 150-195). More particularly, that the rape of Congolese women was frequently used as a reward which would increase and manifest the social authority of European colonisers. According to Hochschild, sexualised violence was linked to colonial social struggles such as intimidation and mockery as colonisers would "unchain the prettiest ones and rape them" (Hochschild 1999: 162). There exists therefore a strong case that colonialists weaponised its usage due to social ascendancies such as colonial intimidation and superiority.

Scholars such as Richard N. Price have also demonstrated that psychology proved highly consequential as it impacted racial encounters, social hierarchies and colonial superiority (Price 2018: 25-52). He takes this debate further by illustrating that physical and sexual violence within colonial states occurred due to settler fear, ignorance and self-victimisation. Price indicates that psychology remained solidly attached to sexual violence by stating that "narratives were invented about the threats posed by the native people to the security and safety of settlers, which served to justify violence as a defensive, pre-emptive strategy" (Price 2018: 32). The use of force was thus justified as a means of self-defence, which strongly increased hostilities as colonialists simultaneously implemented sexualised violence as a tool of psychological dominance as "Settlers paid no attention to the indigenous ties of attachment and felt free to use violence to secure their sexual partners" (Price 2018: 29). The weaponisation of sexual atrocities and its justification exemplifies that psychology acted as a useful tool in displaying colonialists as the superior force. Sexualised violence should therefore be regarded as a weapon of superiority as its purpose was to install fear and obedience within indigenous populations.

Psychological consequences of rape have proven highly visible in numerous 19th century documents and statements. The historian, Kevin Grant, provides an interesting narrative by demonstrating that psychological terror played a major role in the colonial weaponisation of rape (Grant 2001: 27-58; Grant 2015: 64-88). Grant examines instances of sexual atrocities like the case with "Mingo of Ilua". In early January 1905, the Congolese girl, Mingo, became a victim of sexual violence as a group of colonisers forced her to undress where they subsequently cushioned her reproductive organs with clay. There remains a firm sense of psychological terror within Mingo's case as the purpose of her sexual assault was to deliver bodily injury rather than providing sensual pleasure for her perpetrators. Firstly, the usage of psychological terror is demonstrated through mockery and contempt and as her assault was orchestrated by several individuals. Secondly, the usage of clay acted as a double-edged sword as it caused physical and psychological harm. The clay, as described by Grant, would greatly harm a woman's reproductive ability while simultaneously causing psychological and social humiliation by marking her body as vulgar due to its coverage of clay.

Psychological terror was also implemented through forced incest and public intercourse (Hunt 2016: 27-60). The work by Charlotte Mertens provides an informative study on forced incest within Belgian Congo by examining its purpose as a tool of psychological warfare. She provides an example of forced incest by stating that "men installed transparent mosquito nets in the open and made a brother and a sister or a mother and her son enter and force them to have sex" (Mertens 2016: 8). Similar to the usage of clay, forced incest served multiple purposes in terms spreading psychological terror among the Congolese population. Its psychological weaponisation is demonstrated as it took place within public and local locations. The psychological damage caused by this atrocity was often far viler as colonisers occasionally forced other Congolese to listen and observe. The forced participation proved highly harmful in relation to its psychological impact as it defiled its victim with emotions such as shame, guilt and humiliation. Public incest and intercourse were thus implemented as a tool of colonial superiority due to its ability to spread psychological fear and terror. Its impact proved devastating as it brought suffering towards the Congolese while simultaneously manifesting colonial superiority.

A Devastating Tactic: The Militaristic and Strategic Weaponisation of Sexual Violence

The link between sexual violence and militaristic tactics has been debated by numerous studies and human rights organisations. The tactical utilisation of rape is underlined by organisations such as *Human Rights Watch* (HRW), (Chamberlain 2002: 2-44). Their report delivers a useful narrative to this debate by demonstrating that European colonialists implemented sexual violence as a deliberate tactic in that "Soldiers and combatants raped and otherwise abused women and girls as part of their effort to win and maintain control over civilians and the territory they inhabited" (Chamberlain 2002: 23).

Belgian colonisers militarised sexual violence due to strategic advantages like indigenous obedience, economic exploitation, as well as increasing colonial morale. There is also firm reason to believe that economic exploitation strongly fuelled sexual violence. Economic motives are presented by David M. Gordon, who underlines sexualised violence as the main weapon of colonial warfare in relation to optimising economic profits and interests (Gordon 2017: 133-168). More particularly,

the economic exploitation of Congolese transpired due valuable products such as rubber and ivory. The link between the militaristic weaponisation of sexual violence and economic exploitation occurs as colonialists implemented rape as a punishment towards Congolese men. Colonisers would in most cases abduct, imprison and sexually abuse Congolese women and children. Forceful removal gave therefore white settler a strategic leverage over Congolese men. Additionally, the price of freeing Congolese women was often in the currency of rubber and ivory. Charlotte Mertens supports this claim by stating that "The practice of taking women hostage was a common tactic amongst the colonial officials as a way to force the native men into the forests to collect rubber" (Mertens 2016: 7). The abduction of Congolese women was weaponised as it provided the colonisers with numerous tactical and economic advantages.

One such advantage transpired as the gathering of rubber and ivory kept the Congolese men occupied, which decreased the colonial need for physical violence. The lessened usage of violence was advantageous as it allowed colonisers to increase their economic opportunity rather than engaging in militaristic combat. Similarly, the lack of violence provided the colonisers with a steady number of soldiers and guards. The imprisonment of Congolese women bestowed the colonisers with a safer work environment as their task was to guard the hostages rather than venturing into dangerous territories. decreased risks of danger supplied Belgian authorities with multiple strategic assets as it decreased the vulnerability of colonial soldiers which increased their tactical advantages. The abduction of Congolese women proved less controversial when compared to instances of mutilations, which allowed colonisers to operate on a broader scale. The method of obtaining raw materials did not receive the same level of controversy, as it was perceived as an honourable agreement between European and Congolese. However, in actual fact, this exchange of goods should not be regarded as an agreement as the Congolese were, according to Hochschild, forced to accept the terms presented by colonialists due to "if necessary at gunpoint – to accept extremely low prices" (Hochschild 1999: 118). The strategic usage of sexual violence through abduction has also been presented by Toni Smith, who states that "Belgian Congo was fixated on controlling women's lives and sexualities as a strategy", and that its strategic purpose was "to serve its own economic ends and exert its will over local communities" (Smith 2022: 369). The colonial

utilisation of sexual violence and abduction was thus weaponised as it marked colonisers as the most dominant force within Belgian Congo.

The abduction and rape of Congolese women also increased colonial morale. The study by Martin A. Klein contains an interesting narrative as it demonstrates that African women in French Sudan were distributed as gifts and prices amongst French soldiers (Klein 2014: 61-83). The usage of women as sexual rewards contains multiple elements of tactical warfare as it decreased the number of conflicts within the colonial hierarchy. Firstly, the allowed rape proved useful as it kept colonisers busy and occupied. Rape within Congo contains numerous similarities as sexual violence remained firmly attached to colonial morale, lust, hierarchy and sentiments of superiority.

Additionally, the abduction of women and children was strategic in terms of colonial blackmail as it required firm obedience from Congolese communities. Abduction was therefore utilised as a weapon of war as it installed distress among the male population which increased rubber and ivory productions. Forceful removal occurred as colonialists promised safety and freedom to hostages whose male relatives managed to deliver sufficient amounts of raw materials (Mertens 2016: 9) The abduction and safeguarding of Congolese women remains firmly attached to strategic warfare as it was a tactical manoeuvre which installed psychological terror and obedience.

The purpose of sexual violence was also to place Congolese at the bottom of the social and economic hierarchies. The idea of racial suppression through sexual violence has been presented by historians such as Osumaka Likaka, who concludes that rape impacted social hierarchies and colonial intimidation (Likaka 2009: 108-123). Sexual violence was therefore in the centre of the colonial warfare as it manifested colonial dominance. Rape and sexual violence remained a deadly weapon within colonial warfare as it granted its user with militaristic advantages which placed him at the top of the social hierarchy.

The link between sexual violence and colonial warfare has been taken further by scholars such as Maria Baaz Eriksson and Maria Stern (Baaz & Stern 2013: 12-64). Their study demonstrates that sexual violence proved beneficial due sexual satisfaction and proof of militaristic superiority. Firstly, “the military makes use of the notion of rape as a result of biological heterosexual urges” (Baaz &

Stern 2013: 48), which provided colonialists with tactical benefits such as decreased internal conflicts. Their study argues that the usage of African women as spoils of war remained efficient. Secondly, sexual violence was used as a measure of colonial rank, as the obtainability of African women signalled power and superiority. The implementation of sexual violence was far from uncommon as it commonly occurred in the Caribbean. The scholar, Nicole Bourbonnais, provides an informative comparison by concluding that sexual violence experienced a similar weaponisation within the Caribbean colonies. She demonstrates that European colonialists implemented rape as a display of superiority by stating that "plantation records illustrate how European men used their position of power to sexually dominate enslaved women" (Bourbonnais, 2021: 31). Comparing the work by Baaz and Stern to that of other scholars such as Bourbonnais illustrates that the sexual violence also transpired within other European colonies.

The idea of an interconnection between the obtainability of women and colonial power has been presented by Amandine Lauro, who similarly concludes Congolese women to be utilised as tools within hierarchical authority (Lauro 2021: 361-373). Using women as spoils of war provided colonial soldiers with moderate motivation for battle while simultaneously decreasing internal conflicts due to sexual urges being extinguished. Baaz and Stern provide a similar idea by stating that "Armed forces use sexual violence as the spoils of war for soldiers who see the rape of women as their entitlement" (Baaz & Stern 2013: 54). Women as spoils of war proves that sexual urges played a major role within colonial warfare. Sexual violence was therefore not only used as a weapon against the Congolese, but also as a strategic benefit within colonial groups and hierarchies. Furthermore, utilising sexual intercourse as a colonial reward proved devastating towards Congolese women as it displayed their physical bodies as trophies of militaristic dominance and superiority.

Conclusion

The presented arguments have shown to which extent colonialists systematically weaponised rape and sexual violence as displays of European superiority within the Congo Free State during 1885-1908. The humanitarian work by Alice Harris, Edward Morel and Roger Casement are vital sources as their statements have increases our comprehension of colonial violence (Hawkins 1982:

65-82). Their evidence requires cautious analysis as most European witnesses often excluded or downplayed sexual atrocities. Deliberate downplay proves sexual violence to be lowly prioritised when compared to the documentation of other atrocities like flogging and mutilation. Analysing such works remains vital in relation to racial encounters as their research provides for a clear substructure on the social, psychological and sexual relations within colonial studies.

The article concludes that European colonialists systematically weaponised sexual violence. Crimes such as rape were linked to strategic warfare as their purpose was to provide tactical advantages by increasing colonial dominance and superiority. The systematic utilisation of sexual violence was impacted by factors like racism, sexuality, economics, white superiority and strategic warfare. sexualisation and pornification of Africans during the early 19th century played a significant role in relation to sexual violence as a weapon of colonial superiority. Prior to the establishment of the Congo Free State, Africans bodies, especially female, were regarded as erotic vessels which colonialists perceived as exotic and fascinating. The sexualisation increased the social and moral acceptance of sexualised violence which further fuelled the implementation of rape as a weapon of colonial superiority (Singleton & Girodias 1959: 144-176).

The utilisation of sexual violence as a tool of war transpired as a systematic strategy by colonial officials rather than occurring through individual incidents. It also manifested colonialists as the superior force while simultaneously striking its victims with psychological terror. Psychological intimidation transpired due to rape, abduction, forced intercourse and enslavement. Apart from erotic satisfaction, sexual violence also served the purpose of implementing bodily injury and pain. White settlers often used Clay in order to cause physical pain towards its victims by damaging their reproductive organs while simultaneously displaying them as filthy and tainted (Grant 2001: 27-58; Grant 2015: 64-88).

Sexualised atrocities remained successful tools of colonial warfare as they exhibited European superiority. The tactical implementation of sexual violence remained a common and systemic tactic as it provided Belgian authorities with numerous strategic advantages. Firstly, the implementation of rape increased colonial morale by allowing colonialists to extinguish their sexual urges through sexual violence (Baaz & Stern 2013: 12-64). Secondly, the rape of Congolese women remained a

sought-after atrocity among soldiers as the possession of women symbolised colonial power. Thirdly, the abduction and rape of women allowed colonialists to blackmail Congolese men to gather rubber and ivory which highly increased economic productions. The enslavement of women became systematically weaponised as it demanded the absolute obedience from Congolese men which allowed colonialists to assert colonial superiority.

Colonialists were able to operate on a larger scale due to sexual violence being less controversial than flogging and mutilations. This lack of controversy transpired due to legal and Christian influences, which did not regard 'marital' intercourse with as a moral sin or crime (Smith 2022: 366-393). The acceptance of sexual violence proved devastatingly consequential towards the Congolese as it paved the way for colonial superiority through acts of rape and sexual violence. Sexual violence was thus a highly reliable tool of colonial warfare as its utilisation remained unbound by controversy and objections. Finally, the weaponisation of rape and sexual violence proved highly effective as it delivered psychological and physical injury towards its victims while simultaneously displaying its perpetrator as the superior force.

Bibliography

- Baaz Eriksson, Maria and Stern, Maria 2013: "Sexual violence as a weapon of war? Perceptions, prescriptions, problems in the Congo and beyond", Nordic Africa Institute, *Zed Books Ltd*, pp. 12-64. https://doi.org/10.5040/9781350222557

- Bourbonnais, Nicole 2021: "Sexual hierarchies and erotic autonomy: Colonizing and decolonizing sex in the Caribbean" In: (eds) C. Schields and D. Herzog, *The Routledge Companion to Sexuality and Colonialism*, Routledge, 1 Edition, pp. 30-41. https://doi.org/10.4324/9780429505447-2
- Burroughs, Robert 2019: "African Testimony in the Movement for Congo Reform: The Burden of Proof", *Routledge Studies in the Modern History of Africa*, p. 16-123. https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315208664
- Burroughs, Robert M 2016: "Savage times come again': Morel, Wells, and the African Soldier, c.1885–1920", English Studies in Africa, Vol 59, pp. 40-51. https://doi.org/10.1080/00138398.2016.1173276
- Casement, Roger, "The Casement Report: Correspondence and Report from His Majesty's Consul at Boma Respecting the Administration of the Independent State of the Congo," *Harrison and Sons*, The Project Gutenberg, Vol 1-64, No. 1, 1904, pp. 1-84.
- Casement, Roger, "The Eyes of Another Race," In O'Sicohain, Seamas and O'Sullivan, Michael (eds) *"The Eyes of Another Race: Roger Casement's Congo Report and 1903 Diary*", University College Dublin, 2003, pp. 147-152.
- Chamberlain, Randy 2002: "Human Rights Watch", (eds) Michele Alexander and Rona Peligal, Human Rights Watch Reports 2001/2002, *Annual Report*, pp. 2-44.
- Conrad, Joseph, "Heart of Darkness," Blackwood's Magazine, First published: 1899 (serial), 1902 (book), *Penguin Classics*, 1989, pp. 1-144.
- Decker, Corrie 2021: "Sexuality in Colonial Africa: Current trends and new directions", The Routledge Companion to Sexuality and Colonialism, *Routledge*, 1st edition, pp. 42-54. https://doi.org/10.4324/9780429505447-3
- Dubrow, Saul 1995: "Scientific Racism in Modern South Africa", *Cambridge University Press*, First Edition, pp. 20-66.
- Gobineau, Joseph Arthur, "Moral and Intellectual Characteristics of the Three Great Varieties," In: Harlow & Carter (Eds), *"Archives of Empire: The Scramble for Africa," Duke University Press*, Vol. 2, 2004, pp. 143-153. https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctv1220psq.21
- Gordon, David M 2017: "Precursors to Red Rubber: Violence in the Congo Free State, 1885–1895", *Past and Present*, Volume 236, Issue 1, pp. 133-168. https://doi.org/10.1093/pastj/gtx018
- Grant, Kevin 2001: "Christian critics of empire: Missionaries, lantern lectures, and the Congo reform campaign in Britain", *The Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, 29:2, pp. 27-58. https://doi.org/10.1080/03086530108583118
- Grant, Kevin 2015: "The Limits of Exposure: Atrocity Photographs in the Congo Reform Campaign.", In: H. Fehrenbach and D. Rodogno (eds), *In Humanitarian Photography: Human Rights in History*. Cambridge University Press, pp. 64-88. https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9781107587694.004
- Hasian, Marouf Jr 2015: "Alice Seeley Harris, the Atrocity Rhetoric of the Congo Reform Movements, and the Demise of King Léopold's Congo Free State", *Atlantic Journal of Communication*, 23, pp. 178–192. https://doi.org/10.1080/15456870.2015.1047495
- Hawkins, Hunt 1982: "Joseph Conrad, Roger Casement, and the Congo Reform Movement", *Indiana University Press*, Journal of Modern Literature, Vol. 9, No. 1, pp. 65-80.

- Heath, William, "Love at first sight, or a pair of Hottentots, with an addition to the broad bottom family," Sarah Bartman (Saartjie Baartman, Saat-Jee, "the Hotttentot Venus"), *London, (50 Piccadilly): S.W. Fores*, Date: 15 of Nov. (1810).
- Hochschild, Adam 1999: "King Leopold's Ghost: A Story of Greed, Terror, and Heroism in Colonial Africa", Mariner Books, *Houghton Mifflin Harcourt*, 1st Edition, pp. 150-195.
- Hunt, Nancy Rose 2016: "A Nervous State: Violence, Remedies, and Reverie in Colonial Congo". *Duke University Press*, pp. 27-60. https://doi.org/10.1515/9780822375241
- Klein, Martin A 2014: "Sexuality and Slavery in the Western Sudan", In: (eds) Campbell, Gwyn and Elbourne, Elizabeth, "Sex, Power and Slavery", *Ohio University Press, Athens*, pp. 61-83.
- ''La Belle Hottentote'', a 19th-century French print of Saartjie (Sara) Baartman, *Les Curieux en extase ou les Cordons de souliers*, published by: A Paris chez Martinet, Libraire, rue du Coq, N° 15, et Chez Charon rue Saint Jean de Beauvais No. 26. 1 January (1815).
- Lauro, Amandine 2021: "Violence, Anxieties, and the Making of Interracial Dangers: Colonial Surveillance and Interracial Sexuality in the Belgian Congo", In: (eds) Shields, Chelsea and Herzog Dagmar, *The Routledge Companion to Sexuality and Colonialism*, pp. 361–373. https://doi.org/10.4324/9780429505447-29
- Levine, Philippa 2008: "States of undress: nakedness and the colonial imagination.' *Victorian Studies,* 50, pp. 189-219. https://doi.org/10.2979/VIC.2008.50.2.189
- Likaka, Osumaka 2009: "Naming Colonialism: History and Collective Memory in the Congo, 1870–1960", The University of Wisconsin Press, 1st edition, pp. 108–123.
- Lösing, Felix 2020: "A Crisis of Whiteness in the Heart of Darkness: Racism and the Congo Reform Movement", Bielefeld: Transcript Publishing, pp. 47-196. https://doi.org/10.1515/9783839454985
- Louis, William Roger 1964: "Roger Casement and the Congo.", *The Journal of African History* 5, no. 1, Cambridge University, pp. 99–120. https://doi.org/10.1017/S0021853700004539
- Mertens, Charlotte 2016: "Sexual Violence in the Congo Free State: Archival Traces and Present Reconfigurations", The Australian Review of African Studies (ARAS), Vol.37 No.1 June, pp. 6-21. https://doi.org/10.22160/22035184/ARAS-2016-37-1/6-20
- Mesquita, Bruce Bueno de 2007: "Leopold II and the Selectorate: An Account in Contrast to a Racial Explanation", *Historical Social Research*, Vol. 32, No. 4, pp. 203-221.
- Morel, Edmund D. "King Leopold's Rule in Africa," Accessed Through: Internet Archive, Open Library, *London: William Heinemann Publishing*, First Edition, 1904, pp. 31-102.
- Morel, Edmund D. "Red Rubber: The story of the Rubber Slave Trade which flourished on the Congo for twenty years, 1890- 1910," Accessed Through: Internet Archive, Open Library. Accessed on: 07.12.2022, *The National Labour Press LTD*, 1906, pp. 18-225.
- Mr. De. Bernhardt, "Cases of Ill-treatment by officials in the Congo Free State, 1891-1900," Confidential Print: Africa, Print No. 7315, Accessed Through: *The National Archives*, FO 403/304, *Printed for the use of the Foreign Office*, August, 1900.
- Nault, Derrick M 2020, "The Congo Free State, Atrocity Tales, and Human Rights History", Africa and the Shaping of International Human Rights, *Oxford University Press*, pp. 9-37. https://doi.org/10.1093/oso/9780198859628.003.0002

- Peffer, John 2008: "Snap of the Whip/Crossroads of Shame Flogging, Photography, and the Representation of Atrocity in the Congo Reform Campaign", *Visual Anthropology Review*, Vol. 24, Issue 1, pp. 55–77. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1548-7458.2008.00005.x
- Price, Richard N 2018: "The Psychology of Colonial Violence", In: P. Dwyer and A. Nettelbeck (eds.), Violence, Colonialism and Empire in the Modern World, palgrave Macmillan: Cham, *Cambridge Imperial and Post-Colonial Studies Series*, pp. 25-52. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-62923-0_2
- Reid, B. L 1974: "A Good Man: Has Had Fever Casement in the Congo", The Sewanee Review, *The Johns Hopkins University Press*, Vol. 82, No. 3, pp. 460-480.
- Roberts, Richard & Miers, Suzanne 1988: "Introduction: The End of Slavery in Africa", (eds) Roberts and Miers, In: The End of Slavery in Africa, *University of Wisconsin Press*; 1st edition, pp. 32-44.
- Rutz, Michael A 2018: "King Leopold's Congo and the "Scramble for Africa": A Short History with Documents", *Hackett Publishing Company*, (Passages: Key Moments in History, pp. 25-107.
- Singleton-Gates, Peter and Girodias, Maurice 1959: "The Black Diaries of Roger Casement: With an Account of His Life and Times", *New York: Grove Press*, 1st Edition, pp. 144-176.
- Smith, Toni 2020: "Colonial Attitudes Towards Women, Slavery and Gender-Violence in the Congo, 1900–1930s," PhD diss., *The University of Birmingham*, pp. 144–161.
- Smith, Toni 2022: "Liberators or Perpetrators? Co-Opting, Committing, and Condoning Sexual Violence against Women and Girls in the Early Belgian Congo", Slavery and Abolition, A Journal of Slave and Post-Slave Studies, Routledge, pp. 366-393. https://doi.org/10.1080/0144039X.2022.2063235
- Stoler, Ann Laura 1989: "Making empire respectable: the politics of race and sexual morality in 20th-century colonial cultures," *American Ethnologist* 16, pp. 634-660. https://doi.org/10.1525/ae.1989.16.4.02a00030
- Vanthemsche, Guy 2012: "Origin of the Colonial Phenomenon in Belgium", Chapter. In Belgium and the Congo, 1885–1980, Cambridge: *Cambridge University Press*, pp. 14-32. https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9781139043038.002

‘MANAGING’ WILDLIFE

Hunting and Conservation in the ‘White Highlands’ of Early Colonial Kenya.

By:
Susann Heidecke
Global Development

ABSTRACT: European settlers in colonial Kenya in the beginning of the 20th century embodied a significant contradiction: While advocating vividly for the preservation of a ‘pristine nature’, the settlers hunting and agrobusiness activities are the single most important factor for a rapid decline of wildlife population in the area. This article investigates the meaning of hunting and conservation practices for the establishment and consolidation of a White settler elite in Laikipia, Kenya. The argumentation is based on episodic evidence from the biography of Lord Delamere, an influential first settler, hunter and conservationist, written by Elsbeth Huxley in 1935. It investigates the practices around ‘managing’ wildlife from an ideological and economical dimension. I argue that the transplantation of European aristocratic traditions of ‘The Hunt’ and the understanding of nature and society as separate spheres delegitimized pre-colonial modes of nature-use and reinforced a racist hierarchy of societies. The systematic dispossession of precolonial landholders, their forceful but selective inclusion in the settler economy and the eradication of wildlife for profitable agrobusiness irreversibly degraded the various forms of precolonial economies and consolidated the settler’s presence in Laikipia until today.

KEYWORDS: settler colonialism, nature-society dualism, Laikipia, conservation, hunting

Introduction

> "The depredations of wild animals were among the hardest problems at Soysambu. Lions and leopards took a heavy toll of [cattle and sheep] stock. […] Trapping and poisoning were resorted to, but these lions were wily beasts […] In 1912 a **serious effort was made to reduce the lion population of Soysambu**. An American called Paul J. Rainey […] at Delamere's request […] came on to […] Soysambu for fifteen days and killed twelve lions and several leopards in the time." (Huxley 1935: 306; author's emphasis)

> "Delamere was a keen observer of wild animals as well as a hunter. He was intensely interested in their habits and behaviour and did not indulge in senseless slaughter. He […] eventually made his stock-farm [Soysambu] in East Africa into a **game sanctuary**." (Huxley 1935: 22; author's emphasis)

Soysambu in Laikipia, Kenya - once a large-scale cattle farm, today a game sanctuary - was established 1906 by one of Kenya's first White settlers: Hughes Cholmondeley (1870-1931), known as Lord Delamere. Besides being an ambitious big-game hunter, Delamere's efforts to turn his farmland into a profitable sheep and cattle farm resulted in the eradication of wildlife on his property. However, his reputation as life-long conservationist is established as far as that the official draft of history of the Kenyan National Parks 1949 acknowledges: "Due entirely to the foresight of Lord Delamere, two Game Reserves were established in British East Africa"[1]. How can one person embody this contradiction?

The killing of big mammals for agroeconomic and sporting reasons and the protection of the same through conservation policies and closed-off protectorates are two sides of the same coin: they both describe modes of wildlife management and are deeply rooted in a western dualist epistemology of separate nature spheres and human spheres. For the realization of a settler colonial state which evolves primarily around the territoriality and the access to land (Wolfe 2006), wildlife management in colonial Kenya materialized in hunting and conservation policy which delegitimized precolonial nature-society relations. This essay zooms in on the role of White European settlers who arrived in the first years of the 20th century in the area that became 1895 East Africa Protectorate under the British Empire, specifically

[1] Royal National Parks of Kenya, Kenya National Archives (KNA) KW/1/76 #224,6. in Steinhart, 2006, p. 95

in Laikipia, until the First World War. I interrogate the interplay of ideological foundations of hunting and conservation and the economic meaning of wildlife to explore the question: *What role played hunting and conservation for the establishment and consolidation of a White European settler elite in Laikipia, Kenya?*

My argumentation is based on episodes of the life of Lord Delamere from his two-volume biography published 1935: *White Man's Country: Lord Delamere and the Making of Kenya* by Elsbeth Huxley (1907-1997), an English writer who spent her youth as the child of a British settler family in Laikipia. Her books stand together with other popular Kenyan settler literature (e.g. *Out of Africa* by Isak Dinesen, 1935, and *The Green Hills of Africa* by Ernest Hemingway 1937) for the construction of a romantic Africa fantasy in the British public and beyond (Jackson 2011: 239). Her writing is anchored in a particular understanding of settler colonialism, described as 'Pioneer settlers' where "the presence and persistence of indigenous 'Others' is comprehensively disavowed" (Veracini 2013: 313).

Huxley's writing itself is an informative and relevant piece for analysis, because we see two meanings of biography at play: "to denote a life course and a genre of writing" (Lamber 2014: 31). Those two are hard to detangle because Huxley herself is child of a British settler family in Laikipia and the book was commissioned and financed by the widow, Lady Delamere. Huxley writes in defence of the rightfulness of White settlement in Kenya.[2] By considering, that Huxley is aware of voices opposing European settlement in Kenya, it is important to critically reflect which episodes of Delamere's life are purposefully selected and considered as narratable to the public by the author. Although biographies are often associated with celebratory accounts of colonial empire's achievements, if informed by postcolonial thinking, Huxley's book can serve as a base for a critical historic analysis (Lamber 2014: 26). It "can provide insight into all manner of trans-imperial ideas and practices" (Lamber 2014: 28). This approach is in line with other authors on hunting and conservation in colonial Kenya who use Huxley's work for

[2] Huxley (1935) defended the notion of 'empty land' from "recent discussions on the rights and wrongs of settlement" (p.71-74) by arguing with ideas of underdevelopment: a very low number of inhabitants per square mile, the pastoralist lifestyle as occupying more land than necessary for survival, questioning the rightfulness presence of others as just recently inhabited by local tribes (p.111-113). She refers to the Kenya Land commission 1934 which verified the justice of the colonial land claims in 1903-1904 (p.114). However, recent analysis show that this commission has been coopted by settler interests (see Ladekjaer Gravesen 2021).

their writing but carefully triangulate it with other sources (Adams 2002; Hughes 2006; Steinhart 2006; Jackson 2011, 2016).

Conservation and hunting in Kenya are unequivocally linked and historians in the field consistently connect these two practices. MacKenzie's work on the history of hunting and conservation in the British Empire "Empire of Nature" (1988) is anchored in the tradition of studies of imperialism. The book covers the period from nineteenth century hunting world until 1960s. He identifies three phases of European hunting (commercial ivory hunting, hunting as subsidy for the European establishment and 'The Hunt') where the third one is the most influential on the evolution of conservation. His work was inspirational to Steinhart's "White Hunters, Black Poachers" (2006) who analyses in a class-based study on the control over animals which has been overlooked by many historians analysing struggles over land in colonial Kenya. The author posits that African hunters were marginalized and denigrated due to class attitudes, prejudice against peasants, and a sense of entitlement that were brought over from rural British society. Although he further develops Mackenzie's attempt to incorporate African agency by utilizing oral testimony to narrate African hunting traditions, Hughes, who worked intensely on the history of the Maasai treaties in early twentieth century in Kenya, comments critically that "a paucity of written evidence of African hunting inevitably leads to an imbalance" (Hughes 2007: 2).

The remainder of this article is structured as follows. I set the scene by providing historical background on the production of available land for agriculture by incoming European settlers through state-led dispossession. I outline how the ideological foundation of hunting and conservation reinforced the racist idea of a 'benevolent occupation' by delegitimizing indigenous ways of living. In section 5 and 6, I argue that in line with the ideological reasoning, the destructive practices of eradication of wildlife as a form of hunting as well as conservation as spacial enclosure practice aided the economic survival of the settler farms. Finally, I present an outlook on persistence of this dualist nature-human understanding and land use in Laikipia.

Historical background

The 'Lunatic Express' and settler politics

The geographical area which is today demarked as Kenya was declared British Protectorate on June 15, 1895, taken over by the British Foreign Office from the Imperial British East Africa Company. With the desire "to opening up the untapped great estate of East Africa for the benefit of the world" (Jackson, 2016, p. 232), the British administration started to construct the Uganda Railway in 1896. Therefore, the Land Acquisition Act of India was extended to legal realm of British East Africa which enabled the British Foreign Office to appropriate all land surrounding the railway from Mombasa on the ocean coast to Kisumu at Lake Victoria (Koissaba 2016: 192).

The construction expenses of the railway exceeded the initial calculations by far. This sparked dismissal within the British Parliament where it got nicknamed as 'Lunatic Express' (Clemm 2019: 133). Because of the lack of support by the British metropole population, economic development through settlement became a prominent idea to refinance the railway. Settler influx into the area was constructed as necessary because the indigenous population was too small and not accustomed to produce for surplus. Agricultural production by British settlers ought to be 'beneficial occupation'. (Huxley 1935: 77-79)

The British administration declared all land within the protectorate as Crown land under "The Crown Lands Ordinance" in 1902. This system made all present Africans in the protectorate effectively tenants of the crown and enabled the commissioners to sell freehold land to European settlers regardless of customary and indigenous land tenure systems (Koissaba 2016: 192). Whitin a short time, private land tenure dominated over communal land regimes and "white pastoralists had supplanted black ones in the country's most productive, resource rich heartland of the Rift Valley and highlands" (Hughes 2006: 15).

In the struggle about power between the settlers aiming for autonomy and the interests of the colonial administration to 'civilize' colonized people and nations, "the great rhetorical myth espoused […] that African and settler fortunes could be shown to be compatible" (Jackson 2016: 242). This resulted in different practises towards different communities living in Kenya colony. A groups' way of living, culture and economy were judged by their compatibility with settler capitalist ways of land-use, or more concrete: To which extent could they be incorporated into profitable agriculture? While some, e.g. Kikuyu, were

identified and fixated by the British administration as agricultural people and incorporated as subordinate labour force into the settler economy, Maasai-speaking people on the other hand who practices a herding culture were positioned beyond civilisation and not suitable for settler economy. (Jackson, 2016)

Production of 'White Highlands' in Laikipia

Settlers applied for different parts of land. The Central Rift Valley and Highlands were of special interest and in Delamere's eyes the only regions climatically suitable for European settlement (Huxley 1935a: 71-74). This land was to a large part grazing grounds of Maasai cattle herds. But the colonial government reflected on pastoralism as "irrational, uneconomic and based on accumulation for its own sake" (Evans and Adams 2016: 217), in 1904 based on a treaty the Maasai population was forcefully moved out of the rift and divided into areas, north and south of the railway. Despite the agreement that the land of the reserve remains Maasai lands, and driven by a rising demand for land by arriving White settlers, by means of a new treaty in 1911 they were moved again to the southern reserve (Jackson 2016: 235). The displacement of 20,000 people and two and a half million livestock caused the death of many people and their cattle and had severe psychological, social and economic impacts (Evans and Adams 2016: 217; Koissaba 2016: 194). The two treaties exemplify that unoccupied land available for agriculture by British settlers was politically and violently produced through dispossession and eviction.

After Laikipia was emptied, the land was subdivided into large land units available for European settlers. This created a small, powerful, European elite holding almost all land in Laikipia (Evans and Adams 2016: 217). Nevertheless, what became known as 'White Highlands' describes only a 'visible minority' (Jackson 2011: 345). The practice of squatting by landless Africans (particularly Kikuyu), which describes the subsistence farming on small land portion on settler farms in exchange to their labour, led to that de facto three quarters of the land in the 'White Highlands' were cultivated by African squatters (Ladekjær Gravesen 2021: 53).

Delamere was the first unofficial leader of the small European community and later founder and chairman of the 'Planters' and Farmers' Association (later renamed to Colonists' Association). Delamere received a land lease of 100,000 acres in 1903 to establish his 'Equator Ranch'. After heavy losses of livestock and money they moved 1906 to a second farm of 50,000 acres, located in former Maasai land and named it

Soysambu (Soysambu Conservatory, no date). A statue of him erected in Nairobi honouring him with the words "who devoted his life to the service of East Africa" (Reuters Archive, no date) was removed in the aftermath of independence in 1963 but illustrated Delamere's position in the White settler community. Historians discuss his role for the settler community differently. While for some, Delamere is "Kenya's most notable settler" (MacKenzie 1988: 247), others question his reputation as hardly overstated and describe him as not more than a "lordly and lusty hunter" (Steinhart 2006: 96). Steinhart acknowledges that British East Africa was established and developed "very much in the image of this lordly and lusty hunter." (2006: 96). Hughes challenges Huxley's claim that Delamere was the man who 'made Kenya' but argues that he was "instrumental in pushing […]for the White reservation of land" (2006, p. 28).

Hunting and 'The Hunt' as Marker of Class and 'Race'

Hunting became an ideological cornerstone of White settler life and, as in history of European hunting, served as a marker of class and particular in the colonial setting, a marker of 'race'.

In the Middle Age in northern and western Europe hunting shifted from subsistence hunting 'for the pot' to a "ritualized sport of gentlemen and nobles" (Steinhart 2006: 62). The prominent understanding was that wildlife is a form of property which must be regulated by law. The policies to accommodate a park for game hunting became so exclusive that only the wealthiest could afford to entertain such an area. As "central struggle for class hegemony within the English society" (Steinhart 2006: 63), 'The Hunt' was loaded with rituals and traditions. It was associated with military skills, leadership and superiority, with robust athleticism, honour and masculinity. All other hunting activities were more and more rendered as an attack on property rights and poaching. (MacKenzie 1988: 10)

In the 19th and 20th century, aristocratic British hunters went out of Europe to pursue their 'sport' in India, North America and Africa where the killing of big mammals sparked particular interest aligning with the imagination of superiority and the colonial gaze (Adams 2002: 36). With progressing formal colonialization of Africa by European nations, the colonial British apparatus transplanted and reinforced the noble understanding of the Hunt into their African territories, which translated centuries of aristocratic class barriers into a new racialized context (Adams 2002: 38). Traditional African hunting

methods were condemned by European hunters for its barbarity. In contrast to a clean, clinically, and carefully considered kill of the sporting rifles of a White hunter, other methods like traps, spears, bows and arrow or other home-made guns were constructed as cruel by the many reports, novels, and newspaper pieces reporting on hunting trips out of Europe. (Adams 2002, 37–38)

The role of permanent or occasional hunting for subsidence in many African societies was a mean for the European public to construct their imagined inferiority. According to prominent Social Darwinist interpretations, the role of hunting in a society was an indicator for an imagined economic evolution of a society, where hunting is transformed from the pre-modern necessity of the utilisation of the animal into a sporting and symbolic activity. Thereby hunting and gathering societies are considered at the lowest level, pastoral and agricultural on superior level of development and an industrialized society on top. Hunting did therefor not serve as a common ground to meet on eye-level, even if many White hunters arriving in Africa were reliant on the hunting knowledge of their African guides, but reinforced the colonial racist world order. (MacKenzie 1988: 7)

In the first thirty years of settlement in Kenya, there was a "disproportionate number of lords and ladies, dukes and earls" (Jackson 2011: 344) and Kenya was in this time the "most aristocratic of Britain's outposts overseas" (ibid.). The main motive for many high-born aristocrats were the outlook of cheap land and cheap labour but their hunting fascination played a significant role. Steinhart argues that for some early settlers (namely Delamere, Lord Cranworth, Berkeley and Galbraith Cole) game hunting was the prior driver (2006: 97). The persona Lord Delamere exemplifies well the entanglement of aristocratic hunting fascination and emigration decision. According to Huxley (1935: 54), Delamere's vision for Laikipia was economic development through permanent European settlement but Steinhart resumes that Delamere's "decision to settle in Kenya had far more to do with his hunting avocation than with his interest in farming" (Steinhart 2006: 93). Huxley summarizes that as a young man, "Delamere had no interests but shooting and hunting. The English seasons were marked off for him […] by the species of animal it was appropriate to kill" (Huxley 1935: 25). On multiple big-game hunting expeditions, reaching from India, Norway to Somalia (Huxley 1935: 24), Delamere followed in his imagination the footsteps of European discoverers (Huxley 1935: 23) and carried with him like other aristocratic hunters "not just the desire to hunt 'big game', but the banner of imperial conquest" (Steinhart 2006: 67).

There is some uncertainty to which extent hunting was the main motivation for numerous British aristocrats to resettle to Kenya. However, hunting served as a class marker, which was especially attractive to high-born or wealthy settlers in distinction to other poorer immigrants to the colony, particularly Boers migrating from South Africa, seen as White but lower class (Matheka 2008: 619). Moreover, the delegitimization of African hunting reinforced the imagination of an racist hierarchical order of societies and legitimized thereby the settlers presence through the concept of 'benevolent intervention' in which colonialization is projected as an urgent necessity (Shanguhyia 2023: 166).

Dualist Conservation Policies and the Delegitimization of African Hunting

The distinguishing of legal and illegal, licit and illicit modes of hunting and nature-use along racist and classist divides, materializes in the conservation policies, in which Kenya's British settlers played a significant role. The conceptualization of different 'natural resources' and their plundering was a prominent feature of colonialization. During the second half of the 19th century the destructive power of human activities in a capitalist economy became prominent in North America and Europe where around that time a better-off social middle class emerged with concerns towards the rapid shrinking of pristine natural areas in frontier territories due to increasing settlement and uncontrolled hunting practices (Akama 1998: 105).

The urge to protect 'nature' from 'human influence' is grounded in a particular epistemology. Adams (2002) argues that the fundament of colonial understanding of nature was the European Enlightenment and its Cartesian dualism, which differentiated profoundly between humans and nature (ibid.: 22). The acquisition of colonies was motivated, and in part made possible, by a strong conviction that nature could be rearranged and restructured to better suit human wants and preferences. In the eyes of the Western world, the lands outside of Europe seemed underdeveloped and underexploited (ibid.). Along with an intensive exploitation of nature by capitalist and colonialist expansion, Western populations carried the idea that tropical regions were like Garden of Eden (ibid.: 29). Adams accurately describes the irony of this interplay as "what capitalism destroys, Western culture personifies as precious: romantic constructions of nature accompany its systematic plunder" (ibid.: 29).

Wolfe (2006) argues that the settler colonial project evolves primarily around the territoriality and the access to land. The erection of a new colonial society on expropriated land carries elimination of native societies as organizing principle (Wolfe 2006: 388). Conservation is a fundamentally spatial practice, and the establishment of protected areas was the prior mean of realizing conservationist ideas since the end of the 19th century (Evans and Adams 2016: 215). In that logic, indigenous presence in areas subscribed to be 'preserved' undermined the Western ideal of 'non-human nature' and therefor had to be restricted.

The development of game laws and conservation areas was a dialectal process between metropole and periphery as local conservationist were inspired by the international movement and vice versa.[3] British conservationist alongside with the settler community identified the reason of a decline of wildlife population in the activities of African hunters and Boers, emigrating from South Africa, who were rendered as 'meat butchers' who hunt for the pot (Steinhart 2006: 169). Keith Caldwell, a British conservationist, commented in a letter of introduction to the Society for the Preservation of Fauna of the Empire (SPFE)[4] that to be blamed are "the native hunters for the depletion of Kenya's stock of elephant and rhino. […] Another problem […] is the Dutchman." (Steinhart 2006: 176).

Additionally to the geographical demarcation of different spheres though establishment of reserves, e.g. Kenya's first reserve Ukamba Game Reserve in 1899 (Adams 2002: 37), the Colonial Administration established a significant difference in the making of the game laws and its enforcement. Kenyan Game Ordinance was approved in 1900, essentially outlawing hunting without a license (ibid.:37). Stringent gun laws from the late 1890s prevented Africans from legally owning guns and the ban of precolonial African hunting techniques (nets, springs, traps, snares, gins, stick) in 1900 dislocated communities from sources of their livelihoods. While the British administration granted some few tribes whom they identified as reliant on game meat exemptions before the First World War, demands by other tribes who hunted occasionally to prevent famine were rejected (MacKenzie 1988: 209–215). Settlers on the other hand were permitted to hunt under licenses. A racist double standard in law enforcement was prevailing. When European hunters or settlers got caught by game wardens violating laws through shooting without

[3] On the history of conservation policies in international forums and civil society engagement in Great Britain see Akama (1998), MacKenzie (1988), Steinhart (2006).
[4] The SPEE founded in 1903 is an example for international forums in which influential individuals with organized to pressure their governments to enact protective policies in Africa (Steinhart 2006).

licenses they were often seen as 'overzealous sportsmen'. However, the same case with African hunters were treated like "a violation of the natural order" (Steinhart 2006: 170). Besides all efforts to limit the hunting activities, most policies were due to the remoteness of many areas not effectively implemented in the early settlement period until the First World War (MacKenzie 1988: 218).

The notion that 'nature' and 'resource' have to be 'managed' meant to maximise its usefulness to humans, by 'developing the land' and on the other hand create an 'wilderness' with minimized human interference. The ideological foundation of conservation in a Western human-nature dualism justified the settler's destructive presence because their mission was to 'develop the land' in what was meant to be a sphere for humans. The progressive separation of human and animal settlement created internal frontiers under the premisses of the colonial state and its consideration for settler interest (MacKenzie 1988: 222). By restricting their presence and modes of recreation, for indigenous communities, "the game reserve was a variant of the settler farm" (Jackson 2016: 242). What conservationists perceived as wilderness and 'pristine nature' is a historical and cultural construct (Rashkow 2014: 819) and overlooks thereby the fact that Indigenous peoples existed deeply interwoven with the land and actively altered their environments (Murdock 2021: 242).

Hunting for the Economic Success of Settler Farms

Aligning with the construct of human-spheres and nature-spheres, most settlers and the colonial administration shared the opinion that wild animals are not supposed to threaten the economic success of the settler farms. Some animal species were declared as vermin which allowed eradication practises like culling the breeding population, the curbing of habitats, poising and shooting with machine guns (MacKenzie 1988: 201), although it stands in stark contrast to the public perception of the noble methods of 'The Hunt'. Several episodes of Delamere biography underline the same attitude. In a 1903 published pamphlet, he argues that "the rigid game laws which penalise the killing of destructive vermin" (Huxley 1935: 89) are in the way to successful livestock farming and thereby an obstacle to attract more settlers from Great Britain. Contrary to the idea of clinically clean and 'human' hunting methods of the aristocratic 'Hunt', Delamere writes to his manager in order to establish a sheep farm, that "vermin have

to be killed down […] before sheep can be allowed free run night and day. […] As soon as vermin can be cleared off (by poison chiefly I expect) the bulk of the flocks will be given free run."[5]

The active opposition to strict game laws by Delamere becomes clear as he provoked a court case against him in 1905 in Nairobi. Under the law, the settler farmers were only allowed to kill four antelopes or zebras a month. Huxley argues that "however excellent from the conservation point of view, were impossible if the country was to be settled. If zebra in their thousands ravaged his crops, he [the settler] could not destroy them" (Huxley 1935:161-162). Delamere despite the legal restrictions decided to have zebra shot entering his fields. Defending himself by arguing the loss of his economic activities through herds of zebras did not prevent him from losing the case and being charged with a fine for overshooting. But by securing publicity and the support by other white settlers the game laws were amended in favour of the farmers to protect their livestock and crops (Huxley 1935: 162). Those episodes illustrate the destructive impact of the settler's crop and livestock farming activities which transformed the landscape making it uninhabitable for wildlife (Steinhart 2006: 98).

The settler's interests were backed by the colonial administration. Their attempts for preservation of wildlife were clearly subordinated to the securitization of profitable agriculture in the 'White Highlands'. Lieutenant-Governor of the East African Protectorate Frederik Jackson noted from a meeting with the Kenya Colonists Association in 1908, led by Lord Delamere, that "[t]he game reserves were to be recognized as sanctuaries in exchange for the principle 'outside the reserve the presence of game cannot be allowed to interfere with the economic development of the country" (MacKenzie 1988: 215). The administrative support to secure the economic success of the farming activities led to an institutionalization of vermin control, a task taken over by the Game Department, founded in 1906. This went as far as, that the government body employed full-time Game and Vermin Control Officers in 1929, with the task to kill animals that harmed agricultural progress, and appointed 'Honorary Game Wardens' which were almost exclusively members of the settler elite (Steinhart 2006: 162).

The settlers advocation for the extermination of game was assisted by argumentation along the lines of 'progress' and 'civilisation' (Steinhart 2006: 164). But reflecting on the profit-driven logics of settler

[5] Delamere to Jackson 10th August 1903, Huxley 1935: 102.

capitalism and the debt status of many settler farms, this can be not only questioned regarding the imperialistic and Eurocentric idea of progress, but also as pure economic self-interest. In contrast to the shared understanding of international conservationist, settler elite and colonial administration, Steinhart concludes that the habitat destruction by making land available for farming (practices like fencing, clearing, and burning) was "the single most important factor in the decline of game" (2006: 99) in the early-settlement period.

While certain practices of big game hunting served as identity marker and illustrated a version of wildlife encounter which dominated public perception in the metropole through books and novels and movies (Jackson 2011), the destructive impact of farming activities by settlers to secure economic success remain a less known part of colonialist wildlife management.

Economic Meaning of Conservation for Settlers

With the consolidation of the conservationist policies through the British colonial administration, there has been a change from the usage of game as direct economic resource by selling game products, towards indirect economic benefits by gaining revenue from hunting licences and tourism (MacKenzie 1988: 209). 'Nature' itself was turned into a profitable land use practice and the preservation of 'wilderness' became an "economic enterprise" (Shanguhyia 2023: 167). The conservationist policies on issuing hunting licences helped the Protectorate to reduce its budgetary deficits towards London's Foreign Office. Kenya was overall as an exception from other British colonies making profit from fining convictions against the game laws (MacKenzie 1988: 219).

Particularly relevant for this development was the invention and popularization of hunting safaris, where notable and wealthy visitors came to Kenya for several month to enjoy the Hunt. Some authors argue that the big-game safaris became an important part of the settler economy and that European settlers benefitted substantially from hosting hunting safaris and selling their services as guides (see for example Middleton 2015: 1; Bersaglio 2018: 76). The hospitality of influential settlers provided to prominent guest, like the former president of the United States Theodore Roosevelt, were an expensive tradition within the safari experience. During his eight-month long hunting safari Roosevelt travelled with over 100 porters and staff, shot over 500 animals and enjoyed gratis accommodation for his entire entourage

at Delamere's farm for a week. Huxley writes in his biography that Roosevelt was a particular prominent but not the only guest enjoying the costly privilege: "Any prominent man who visited East Africa used to stay a day or two with Delamere" (Huxley 1935: 250).

Therefore, it remains questionable if the settler elite in their first decades where directly economically profiting from a rise in the popularity of Kenyan wildlife. But they benefited through restricted land user rights by Indigenous groups through the conservationist policies of the British colonial administration, because „African communities that were prior users of products from these environments virtually became subjects, and therefore dependents, of British monopolistic tendencies in environmental management" (Shanguhyia 2023: 164).

The creation of nature reserves and the prohibition of natural resource use by Africans, including the punishment of using forest resources such as firewood, disclosing grazing grounds and honey collection, dislocated African communities physically and culturally from there modes of reproduction and recreation. Shanguhyia argues that "land alienation had the most far-reaching impact on African communities" (ibid.: 170). While rich White tourists travelled to Kenya to hunt big mammals for sport, communities like Kamba and Okiek, who were reliant of hunting as part of their livelihood, were excluded from hunting (ibid.: 172). The alienation produced landlessness for e.g. Kikuyu people, which turned them into 'restless squatters'(ibid.: 170) cultivating land for settler farms which was previously owned by them. The relation of settler farmers and their landless African workers was because of various interdependencies very complexed and nuanced (Hughes 2006: 152), but "violence on settler farms, as several historians have shown, was perennial and widespread."(Jackson 2016: 238)

By alienating indigenous societies from their lands and thereby stripping them of the means of sustenance and survival, the colonial state forced them to enter the capitalist mode of economy where the surplus of their labour benefitted the European settler farmers who have been granted lease for land and received cheap labour. This process, along with the British colonial administration's increased regulations on mobility and (cattle) trade, as well as taxes (Hughes 2006: 16), degraded the various forms of precolonial economies and consolidated the settlers presence in Laikipia.

Conclusion

Settlers like Delamere attempted to eradicate wildlife on their farms. At the same time, they were ambitious hunters and passionate conservationist in one person which earned them the title of 'penitent butchers' in the British public at that time (MacKenzie 1988: 211). A critical analysis of the ideological and economical foundations of this apparent contradiction shows its embeddedness in a dualist nature-society understanding which is aptly described by Adams (2002: 42), who writes: "In the colonial mind, nature was 'out there', never 'in here'." The practices of killing and protecting wild animals were forms of resource management which in the name of a 'benevolent intervention' (Shanguhyia 2023: 166) were spatially materialized in the form of either nature reserves or large-scale, export-oriented farms. Both served the economic and recreational benefit of an incoming settler elite and both dispossessed traditional landholders.

In colonial Kenya, enabled though the support of the colonial administration, settler involvement in hunting and conservation practices reinforced a racist hierarchy of societies, solidified the dispossession of traditional landholders and irreversibly deteriorated pre-colonial modes of economic and cultural reproduction. Although this essay is focussed on a settler perspective as lens for analysis, it is important to highlight that the colonial dispossession of traditional landholders faced fierce resistance and became one of the major themes of the anti-colonial struggle in Kenya. This is most famously inscribed the slogan *ithaka na wiathi*,, which can be translated as 'land and freedom' or 'self-mastery through land' (Miyonga 2023) by the Mau Mau Uprising in central Kenya, one of the most significant anti-colonial movements in African history. (see e.g. Maloba 1998)

Overall, the colonial wildlife management and its 'fortress' approach continued after the Kenya's independence (Akama 1998: 109; Adams 2002: 42). While hunting was banned for everyone in 1977 (Hughes 2007: 167), conservation served as legitimization for the descendants of the first White settlers to keep their large land holdings until today. In Laikipia, a few dozen former settler families own over a million acres of land. Besides other large-scale land holders, like elite Africans, Asians and other expatriates, the settler descendants play a disproportionate role in conservation (Jackson 2016: 236). In the image of Delamere's farm Soysambu, many cattle ranches, cleansed from wildlife 'vermin' in the past,

were transformed into wildlife sanctuaries between 1977 and 1997. Bersaglio argues that those fenced-off Safari resorts are "built on the cultural, economic, and legal bedrock of a racialized private property regime" (2018: 77) and enabled by international support for conservation became "a source of staying power […] in post-independence Kenya" (2018: 83).

References

- Adams, William Bill 2002: "Nature and the Colonial Mind". William Bill Adams, Martin Mulligan: *Decolonizing Nature: Strategies for Conservation in a Post-Colonial Era*. Taylor & Francis Group, p.16-50. https://doi.org/10.4324/9781849770927
- Akama, John S. 1998: "The Evolution of Wildlife Conservation Policies in Kenya". *Journal of Third World Studies*, vol. 15(2), pp. 103–117.
- Bersaglio, Brock 2018: "Green violence: Market-driven conservation and the reforeignization of space in Laikipia, Kenya". Thembela Kepe, Sharlene Mollett: *Land Rights, Biodiversity Conservation and Justice: Rethinking Parks and People*. Routledge, p. 71-88. https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315439488.
- Clemm, Robert H. 2019: "The Uganda Railway and the Fabrication of Kenya". Robert S. Ehlers Jr., Sarah K. Douglas, and Daniel P. M. Curzon: *Technology, Violence, and War: Essays in Honor of Dr. John F. Guilmartin, Jr*. Brill.
- Evans, Lauren A. and Adams, William M. 2016: "Fencing elephants: The hidden politics of wildlife fencing in Laikipia, Kenya". *Land Use Policy*, vol. 51, pp. 215–228. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.landusepol.2015.11.008
- Hughes, Lotte 2006: *Moving the Maasai: a colonial misadventure*. Palgrave Macmillan.
- Hughes, Lotte 2007: "Black Poachers, White Hunters: A social history of hunting in colonial Kenya, by Edward I. Steinhart.". *African Affairs*, vol. 106(422), pp. 166–168. https://doi.org/10.1093/afraf/adl052
- Huxley, Elspeth 1935: *White man's country: Lord Delamere and the making of Kenya. Vol. 1.* London: Macmillan.
- Jackson, Will 2011: "White man's country: Kenya Colony and the making of a myth". *Journal of Eastern African Studies*, vol. 5(2), pp. 344–368. https://doi.org/10.1080/17531055.2011.571393

- Jackson, Will 2016: "Settler colonialism in Kenya, 1880–1963". Edward Cavanagh, Lorenzo Veracini: *The Routledge Handbook of the History of Settler Colonialism*. Routledge.
- Koissaba, Ben Ole 2016: "Elusive Justice: The Maasai Contestation of Land Appropriation in Kenya: A Historical and Contemporary Perspective". Michael Mwenda Kithinji, Mickie Mwanzia Koster, Jerono P. Rotich: *Kenya After 50: Reconfiguring Historical, Political, and Policy Milestones*. Palgrave Macmillan, pp. 189–219. https://doi.org/10.1057/9781137558305
- Ladekjær Gravesen, Marie 2021: *The contested lands of Laikipia: histories of claims and conflict in a Kenyan landscape*. Brill.
- Lamber, David 2014: "Reflections on the Concept of Imperial Biographies: The British Case". *Geschichte und Gesellschaft*, vol. 40(1), pp. 22–41. http://www.jstor.org/stable/24368733
- MacKenzie, John M. 1988: *The empire of nature: hunting, conservation, and British imperialism*. Manchester University Press.
- Maloba, Wunyabari O. 1998: *Mau Mau and Kenya: an analysis of a peasant revolt.* Indiana University Press.
- Matheka, Reuben M. 2008: "Decolonisation and Wildlife Conservation in Kenya, 1958–68". *The Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, vol. 36(4). https://doi.org/10.1080/03086530802561016
- Middleton, John 2015: "Aspects of tourism in Kenya". *Anthropology Southern Africa*, vol. 27(3–4), pp. 65–74. https://doi.org/10.1080/23323256.2004.11499901
- Miyonga, Rose 2023: "'We Kept Them to Remember': Tin Trunk Archives and the Emotional History of the Mau Mau War". *History Workshop Journal*, vol. 96 (Autumn), pp. 96–114, https://doi.org/10.1093/hwj/dbad010
- Murdock, Esme G. 2021: "Conserving Dispossession? A Genealogical Account of the Colonial Roots of Western Conservation". *Ethics, Policy & Environment*, vol. 24(3), pp. 235–249. https://doi.org/10.1080/21550085.2021.2002625
- Rashkow, Ezra D. 2014: "Idealizing Inhabited Wilderness: A Revision to the History of Indigenous Peoples and National Parks". *History Compass*, vol. 12(10), pp. 818–832. https://doi.org/10.1111/hic3.12190
- Reuters Archive (no date): "Kenya: Lord Delamere Statue Removed (1963)". *British Pate.* Accessed 25 Jan 2024 from https://www.britishpathe.com/asset/160848/
- Shanguhyia, Martin S. 2023: "The Environment Under Colonialism". Wanjala S. Nasong'o, Maurice N. Amutabi, Toyin Falola: *The Palgrave Handbook of Kenyan History*. Springer International Publishing, pp. 163–175. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-09487-3_14
- Soysambu Conservatory (no date): "History". *Soysambu Conservancy*. Accessed 25 Jan 2024 from https://soysambuconservancy.wordpress.com/history/
- Steinhart, Edward I. 2006: *Black poachers, white hunters: a social history of hunting in colonial Kenya*. Ohio University Press.
- Veracini, Lorenzo 2013: "'Settler Colonialism": Career of a Concept". *The Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, vol- 41(2), pp. 313–333. https://doi.org/10.1080/03086534.2013.768099
- Wolfe, Patrick 2006: "Settler colonialism and the elimination of the native". *Journal of Genocide Research*, vol. 8(4), pp. 387–409. https://doi.org/10.1080/14623520601056240

CULTURE AND HISTORY Nr. 02

December 2024

COLONIAL NATURE: HUNTING IN KAREN BLIXEN'S *OUT OF AFRICA*.

By:
Laura Soland Wang Larsen
History

ABSTRACT: This article examines the hunting practices in the British colonies, the significance of hunting and what the specific hunting style used, revealed about the imperial and colonial mindset of that time. Furthermore, this article examines the gendered and racial aspects of colonial life and hunting, as well as the personal hunting experiences of the Danish author Karen Blixen. This article argues that hunting in the British colonies was a significant part of colonial life and imperial control, as well as a great influence on the gender ideals and roles of this time. The personal experiences of Karen Blixen as settler, white, woman and hunter functions as an embodiment of the colonial and imperial views of this time and place.

KEYWORDS: colonial history, gender, whiteness, hunting

Introduction

From 1913-1931 the Danish author Karen Blixen owned a farm in the British colony of Kenya. In her bestselling memoir "Out of Africa" she reminisces on her time in Africa and everything she experienced during this period of her life. One of the rather prominent themes of this memoir, is big game hunting and her own experiences hunting in Kenya.

> "As the light reached him he turned his head and Denys shot. He fell out of the circle, but got up and into it again, he swung round towards us, and just as the second shot fell, he gave one long irascible groan. Africa, in a second, grew endlessly big, and Denys and I, standing upon it, infinitely small."[1]

Experiences such as Blixen's above, were nothing exceptional in colonial Kenya in the 19th and 20th century, as hunting had almost become synonymous with colonial life in Africa. Both the wilderness and the exotic game were attractive to many Europeans and soon it became a complete hunting-craze. Colonies such as Kenya would very quickly become known as ideal hunting grounds: as "white hunters appeared in Central Africa from the 1850s, and by the 1870s and 1880s they had become very nearly a flood." (MacKenzie 1988: 122).

This article examines why hunting was such a big part of the British empire and what this specific style of hunting reveals about the colonial and imperial mindset of this time. It furthermore examines the gendered and racial aspects of both hunting and colonialism. Karen Blixen and her personal hunting experiences will function as the specific piece of investigation, as it will be examined how her experiences with both big game hunting and being a white colonial woman

[1] Karen Blixen, *Out of Africa,* (Random House, 1938), p. 235-236.

corresponds with the overall points found throughout the previous examinations. This article is thus conducted from the following research question: what do the hunting practices and traditions of the British colonies in the 19th and 20th century reveal about the colonial mindset of that time and how does Karen Blixen's personal experiences in colonial Kenya embody this mindset?

Hunting being an enormous part of life in colonial Africa is well established in academic publications such as John M. MacKenzie's book *The Empire of Nature* (MacKenzie 1988) in which he underlines just how colonialism and hunting correlated and how hunting functioned as an imperial tool of power and masculinity. Women going hunting in the colonies, as Blixen did, however, is examined in Vijaya Ramadas Mandala's article "British Huntswomen in Colonial India: Imperialism and Gender Hierarchies, 1809-1921" (Mandala 2020). Mandala examines the difference in how white women would hunt in the colonies as opposed to women hunting in Europe. The lives of the Blixens in the colony of Kenya as white northern Europeans are investigated by Raita Merivirta in the article "Nordic Settler Identities in Colonial Kenya: Class, Nationality and Race in Bror and Karen Blixen's Transimperial Lives" (Merivirta 2023). The article focuses on the Blixens place in the colony in terms of race and social class and by that brings a further understanding of Karen Blixen's colonial experiences.

Hunting in the Imperial Colonies

MacKenzie among other things, claims that to the imperial colonists, hunting was in many ways a frontier of its own. Furthermore, in was an open one at that, in opposition to a closed frontier that is characterized by being settled with an established authority, an inhibited freedom of action for the frontiersman, a greater population pressure on the land and the status of the non-whites deteriorates (Ibid.: 89). According to Todd Cleveland's book *A History of Tourism in Africa* the colonists seem to have greatly exercised this 'inhibited freedom of action' (Ibid.: 89) , as hunting quickly became popular in the African colonies and "it was said that one was more likely to be hurt by a bullet than a lion." (Cleveland 2021: 53).

This sudden influx of colonial hunters of course had an impact on the African wildlife and environment. When the first white settlers came to the African colonies there was an impressive number of animals roaming the lands as "animals were so plentiful that elephants foraged in herds of hundreds. At times, antelopes covered the savannah like a carpet (...) One might see 150 rhinoceros in a day" (Ibid.: 40). Of course, the numbers of animals could not keep up with the hordes of European hunters and neither could the local environment, as colonies such as Kenya had to go through massive changes to accommodate its new settlers, for example the city of Nairobi, which "had been founded as a railroad depot in 1899 yet within eight short years had become a tourism hub for big-game hunting and was made the capitol of the colony." (Ibid.: 55). Not only did the wildlife and the environment go through large changes, but life was also forever changed for the native Africans who also felt the presence of the new European hunting craze, since hunting, which had played a large part in both their pre- colonial diet and economy and was suddenly challenged (MacKenzie 1988: 55). The overhunting by the white settlers greatly impacted the native Africans in that it caused a quite sudden scarcity in animals, and to ensure that the settlers would continue to have game to hunt, the imperial authorities instilled so-called 'game laws' and 'game reserves' to restrict the big game hunting (Ibid.: 121). However, these laws that highly restricted who was allowed to hunt and where, did not include the native Africans. This had detrimental consequences as they could no longer support themselves as they previously had been able to (Ibid.: 121).

The European settlers did not only deny the natives their hunting game, but also forced them from their homes in order to acquire land for farming and game reserves (Merivirta 2023: 490). The natives' need to support themselves and the settlers' need for cheap labor created the 'squatting system' which is described Raita Merivirta's article "Nordic Settler Identities in Colonial Kenya: Class, Nationality and Race in Bror and Karen Blixen's Transimperial Lives" as such:

> "The small white population of the Protectorate owned a huge chunk of the arable land of the country, but large areas remained unfarmed. Consequently, large numbers of Africans began squatting in the white highlands. Until the end of the 1920's, African squatters',

> resident farmworkers on the Europeans' farms, cultivated much of the land for the landowners in exchange for their own plots on the farms." (Ibid.: 490).

The settlers had thus created a feudal society in the African colonies, casting themselves as the feudal lords and the native Africans as their subjects. Not only did the settlers create a feudal structure in the societies of the African colonies, but their hunting style would also invoke a feudal feel according to MacKenzie, as "the monarch's authority in the land is represented by his or her role as the greatest hunter." (MacKenzie 1988: 15). This notion that the big game hunt was more than a sport to the settlers, but instead a display of colonial power, is also supported in William K. Storey's article "Big Cats and Imperialism: Lion and Tiger Hunting in Kenya and Northern India, 1898-1930" (Storey 1991) as he claims that "for the hunters, the basic underlying structures of the hunt symbolized the triumph of culture over nature and of the colonist over the colonized" (Storey 1991: 149) and that *"*the hunting of big cats by Europeans, as opposed to various indigenous hunting traditions and techniques, expressed colonist power because of its potent symbolism and because it was an activity open only to the most powerful inhabitants of a colony.*"*(Ibid.: 154). These scholars thus suggests that hunting was not only a display of power, but also a display of culture and civilization since only the wealthy and cultured were able to pursue it, just as the feudal hunts of the past. Hunting the wild and exotic animals in the colonies was then highly symbolic of the colonial 'triumph' over the natives as well.

In "A History of Tourism" Cleveland describes how the white Europeans who either visited or settled in the colonies, expected *"*high times, an African extension of the privileged life that entertained them, or bored them, in Biarritze and St. Moritz, in the West End and Newport. Like polo and yachting, safari's combined excitement with luxury.*"* (Cleveland 2021: 54). The colonies had thus become a haven and hideout for the wealthy white Europeans who were looking for excitement, entertainment and exclusivity and wanted a change of air. The colonies had then become a haven for the wealthy white Europeans who frequented the 'champagne safaris' as they were jokingly named (Ibid.: 54).

This claim that many wealthy Europeans looked to the African colonies when going on vacation is supported in E. I. Steinhart's article "Hunters, Poachers and Gamekeepers: Towards a Social History of Hunting in Colonial Kenya" (Steinhart 1989). Many of the early colonist settlers who had spent much of their time in Africa hunting, did their best to benefit from the new and massive hunting tourist-influx in Kenya, including both Karen Blixen's husband Baron Bror von Blixen-Finecke and her later love interest Denys Finch-Hatton (Cleveland 2021: 53). These men acted "as guides, organizers and field leaders of the 'champagne safari's' (or hunting parties) which gave the Kenyan safari its unique reputation for luxury and the Colony its overseas image as a wealthy sportsman's paradise." (Steinhart 1989: 254). Storey too, supports this notion is his article, as he states that "Kenya in particular had a reputation for having the best selection of game, as well as being one of the more expensive places to hunt." (Storey 1991: 154). In Shafqat Hussein's article "Sports-hunting, Fairness and Colonial Identity: Collaboration and Subversion in the Northwestern Frontier Region of the British Indian Empire" (Hussein 2010) it is stated how the colonial hunters cared much for both fairness and equality in the hunt, which is what distinguished sports hunting from hunting for practicalities (Hussein 2010: 114). The sports hunters wanted to believe that the hunted animal entered the hunt on some agreed upon rules and terms, in order to make the hunt more exciting to the hunter and to elevate the hunt into something greater than a disadvantaged animal being killed merely as the victim of a game: "Of course, in the case of hunting as a sport, the animal, which is hunted cannot lay down, or agree to, a set of rules under which it could be hunted. So, what is considered as fair game is then imposition of hunting ideals, in the shape of rules, of one class of hunters over another." (Ibid.: 114). Hussein thus suggests that the hunt was not only an unequal sport, but also highly symbolic of the unequal fight between the colonizer and the colonized. However, the deployment of the European notion of fairness was not only a way to make the hunt into a sport of its own, but also to distinct the imperial huntsmen from the native huntsmen (Ibid.: 114).

Hunting both for sport and for social separation, was also a relic from the European Middle Ages in which the wealth and aristocracy had hunted for entertainment and thrill, and dominance, rather than need. Especially the social separation and exclusivity was important for the colonists; having a

clear hierarchy in place for hunting and making up a system in which only they were allowed to hunt, was essential (Cleveland 2021: 39). In order to have themselves be the only ones hunting in the colonies, the settlers deemed the traditional African ways of hunting, by using poison to kill big game, barbarous and unmanly and in doing so claiming the hunting grounds for themselves (Ibid.: 39). Deeming the native hunting practices 'unmanly' was to the white settlers very grave, as being manly and masculine was highly esteemed in the white European societies and something to strive for: as it is stated in Joseph Sramek's article "Face Him like a Briton": Tiger Hunting, Imperialism, and British Masculinity in Colonial India, 1800-1875" (Sramek 2006) how "hunting was central to the development of that all-important Victorian trait of "character" (Ibid.: 665).

The notion of hunting creating 'character' and being the key to achieving true masculinity is supported by MacKenzie as he states that the masculine aspect of hunting was also, at this time, a very central theme in juvenile literature, and it was thus taught very early on that hunting was a formidable way of becoming a true man (MacKenzie 1988: 47). Moreover, Sramek states in his article how "only by successfully vanquishing tigers would Britons prove their manliness and their fitness to rule over Indians." and with this he too supports the correlation between hunting and masculinity at this time, but also the suggestion that successful big game hunting was symbolic of the success of the empire (Sramek 2006: 659). MacKenzie and Sramek then both suggest, in this, that there was a clear connection between hunting and masculinity to the colonists that and hunting was thus a way to prove just how fit they were to rule over the natives of their colonies.

Furthermore, hunting was viewed as the "perfect expression of global dominance in the late nineteenth century" since it "required all the most virile attributes of the imperial male" such as courage, individualism and sportsmanship (MacKenzie 1988: 51). The 'imperial male' was thus the immediate ideal to the colonial man, and according to MacKenzie hunted to exercise his power and dominance as an agent of the empire (Ibid.: 51). The big game hunt therefore provided the colonial men with both masculinity and dominance, but it also prepared them for their imperial duties since "willingness to take life was an important part of this ethos, and hunting was seen as a necessary

preparation and training for European expansion and conflict with other peoples." (Ibid.: 44). The hunt had seemingly, at this stage, surpassed the status of a leisurely hobby.

Colonial Women and Whiteness

As examined in the section above, the colonizing men were often times eager hunters and by that, willing agents of their empire aiding the European expansion. Karen Blixen, is an example, of a typical white European woman who travelled to Kenya in hopes to make hers and her husband's fortune by farming the 'new' land. In Tom Buk-Swienty's book *Løvinden* (Buk-Swienty 2019) about Blixen's life, it is stated that Blixen came to Africa with her fiancé the baron, Bror von Blixen-Finecke, as they were to run a coffee farm in Kenya as an investment made by Karen's family (Ibid.: 41). It was very typical of this time for women to come to the colonies with their husbands in search of fortune. In Ann L. Stoler's article "Making Empire Respectable: The Politics of Race and Sexual Morality in 20th-Century Colonial Cultures" (Stoler 1989) she states that the typical colonial woman functioned as either missionaries, nurses or teachers, and through these jobs the women would help forward the imperial mission and agenda (Ibid.: 642). Whether Blixen was as a stereotypical colonial woman in this matter is somewhat established in Kirsten Holst Petersen's book *Burden or Benefit? Imperial Benevolence and Its Legacies* (Petersen 2008) in which a letter from Blixen to her family in Denmark is included, and in it she writes how she "would very much like to start a school on the farm" however, she is doubtful about the utility of a school on her land saying: "I actually don't know is it wouldn't be better it the native could be kept in their primitive stage, but I consider that to be out of the question." (Ibid.: 111). Blixen thus seems to be quite adamant that civilizing the natives would be rather necessary and by that, she too is an agent of the empire, through her activities in Kenya, just as the stereotypical colonial woman was.

Whiteness in the Colonies

Being a colonizing woman in the British colonies, also meant being both European and white. Being white and whiteness was an essential part of colonial life as a settler, as the entire social hierarchy

and acceptance in the colonies rested in the settler's whiteness. In Merivirta's article "Nordic Settler Identities in Colonial Kenya" (Merivirta 2023) the hierarchy of whiteness in the colony of Kenya is explained as such:

> "Yet the definition of 'whiteness' was not altogether simple. For most settlers, the British were the most superior 'white race', but the Protectorate's British settlers – including here Anglo South Africans, Americans, Canadians, New Zealanders, and Australians - welcomed Western Europeans. They could help in the civilizing project. But whites from other parts of Europe, well, their whiteness was suspect. Southern Europeans, or even whites of a lower class, were 'not quite white', they were not considered prestigious or civilised enough." (Ibid.: 495).

This hierarchy of whiteness is thus not solely based on skin-color, hair- color or eye-color, in that the settlers distinguished the whiteness from geography, rather than color. One had to be white of skin surely, but determining who were more 'acceptably white' based on geography shows that whiteness was seen as more than just a skin-color. This way to differentiate different types of whiteness within being white is explained in the article "The White Woman's Burden: from colonial "civilization" to Third World "development" by Jawad Syed and Faiza Ali (Syed & Ali 2011), in which they explain race as being socially constructed to justify discrimination against others, such as non-whites (Ibid.: 350). By applying Syed and Ali's theory, whiteness thus extends both ethnicity and race as there then can be different types of whiteness, within the white race. Whiteness is then, with this theory applied, fluid and has "a tendency to prefer and blend towards a norm set by the elite groups within the race." (Ibid.: 350) As whiteness can both change as social standards change and the different types of white can hold their own value due to these standards, whiteness then seems to be more of a mindset than anything physical as such.

Even though the Blixen's were not British, they were from western/northern Europe where their whiteness was deemed to be a sufficiently kind of white (Merivirta 2023: 495). According to Bill Schwarz' book *The White Man's World* (Schwarz 2011) there was a tendency for the settlers to credit

their whiteness for their place in the world and to view their whiteness as a guarantee for their place as global rulers (Ibid.: 169). Schwarz explains how the imperialists "might have believed that their modernity was a product of their whiteness; but it was whiteness which was the sign of their being modern, and of their role as self-appointed makers of history." (Ibid.: 169).

In this worldview, it was whiteness and white people that brought modernity and 'civilization' with them because of merely being white. This view furthermore suggests that whiteness was an asset to the empire as "the power of the empire resided in the activities of the white man, in particular capacities of white femininity, in white brains and in white blood. In this view whiteness was a possession." (Ibid.: 180). Whiteness was thus not only a mindset, but a possession or tool of imperial power in the hands of the colonists, just a hunting was perceived to be.

The White Woman

Although there was much power in being white and European in the colonies, the true heads of these societies at this time, were the white men. As earlier stated, the white women were usually companions on the journeys to the colonies and even though they would have jobs, the women were not on their own in the colonies (Mandala 2020: 72). However, according to Syed and Ali the white colonial women did in fact enjoy a distinct sort of privilege through their whiteness in that "despite their own gendered subordination, white women's membership of the dominant group afforded them a range of rights and concessions." (Syed & Ali 2011: 350). This claim would suggest that colonial women thus had far more privileges and possibilities than the homebound European women, since the colonial women were suddenly citizens of a colony in which the true secondary citizens were the natives, and not the women. In the colonies, the women counted only as being white citizens and their gender was suddenly no longer the barrier it used to be in Europe, and because of this these women enjoyed privileges they never had before. This claim is also supported in Durba Ghosh's article "Gender and Colonialism: Expansion or Marginalization?" (Ghosh 2004) in which she states that:

"Seen to be in diminished capacity because they were members of the 'weaker sex', white women benefited from being members of the 'superior races', and were charged with the responsibilities of upholding the cultural and moral values of the empire." (Ibid.: 738). By being teachers and missionaries, for instance, the colonial women were then upholding the empire's cultural and moral values by spreading it out into the colony via the natives they were teaching.

Colonial Women and Big Game Hunting

Regarding her imperial duties as a white colonial woman, Blixen definitely lived up to the expectations of her time, but not as commonly Blixen also enjoyed going big game hunting in the reserve near her grounds. As earlier established hunting was seen as the true mark of masculinity in Victorian Britain and as a sport that required courage and virility (MacKenzie 1988: 51). The attitude that hunting was an activity reserved for men was a notion very popular in western/northern Europe at the time, where many men thought that women did not have the physique required to ride a horse, or they commonly believed that hunting made a woman less desirable to marry, as it is claimed in Vijaya Ramada Mandala's article "British Huntswomen in Colonial India: Imperialism and Gender Hierarchies, 1890-1921" (Mandala 2020). Women hunted nonetheless, and usually took part in fox-hunting as it was one of the more accepted forms of hunting for women to be part of (MacKenzie 1988: 21). Although some women hunted back in Britain, they did have to face quite a bit of criticism from the society, and often times they were only accepted in the hunting parties as wives, guides or servants, but never equals (Mandala 2020: 72).

Blixen too, came from a home in which hunting was not encouraged as an activity for women as her father believed that "the gun doesn't suit the fairer sex any better than the crochet hook suits the rest of us."[2] (Ellerbæk 2023). Blixen was therefore just as used to gender barriers when it came to hunting, as any other white European women in her time. However, these gender barriers did not seem to play as big a part in the colonies, as it did in Europe as "such physical, cultural and sociopolitical barriers imposed by Victorian society in Britain were comfortably disregarded in the

[2] Original: "geværet klæder ikke det smukke køn bedre end hæklenålen os andre."

colonies" and as such, there was less keeping the colonial women from going big game hunting in the British colonies (Mandala 2020: 84). An example of just how accepted hunting women were in the colonies is an anecdote from Blixen's memoir "Out of Africa", in which Blixen and her love-interest and professional big game hunter Denys Finch-Hatton has gone hunting and comes upon a lion: "Denys asked me in a low voice: 'Shall I shoot her?' – For he very courteously looked on the Ngong Hill as my private hunting-ground"[3] Blixen seems in this instance to be viewed, by Finch-Hatton, as an equal and capable hunter that commands respect; Blixen is thus in this situation not a woman, but a white hunter and is because of that, treated as an equal.

Furthermore, both Blixen and her husband Bror would write letters home to their family in Denmark, describing their hunting trips and safaris. Bror would often times praise Blixen's hunting abilities in these letters: "she has proven to be a very good shot and can now brag of being the only danish lady who has shot both leopard and lion."[4],[5] Bror himself was, as mentioned earlier, a professional big game hunter in Kenya and would spend most of his time hunting, but seems to have had no qualms about his wife going hunting as well (Steinhart 1989: 254). This letter then also supports the claim of gender barriers being disregarded in relation to hunting, in the colonies made by Mandala (Mandala 2020: 84).

Hunting in 'Out of Africa': Imperial Power and Symbolism

As established earlier in the article, an essential quality of hunting in the colonies was displaying imperial power. The hunt itself had become a symbol of the empire and its global power; and especially lion-hunting was viewed as being very prestigious, as a lion was "the most fearsome foe, a dragon substitute, a source of awe and fascination to most African hunters. All were proudest of their tally of lion kills." (MacKenzie 1988: 47). Not only was Blixen, according to her husband, the

[3] Blixen, *Out of Africa,* p. 229.
[4] Karen Blixen & Aage Westenholz, *Karen Blixens afrikanske farm. En brevsamling 1913-1931.* (Gyldendal: København, 2018), p. 465.
[5] Original: "Hun har vist sig at være en meget god skytte og kan nu prale af at være den eneste danske dame, der har skudt baade leopard og løve".

first Danish lady to shoot and kill a lion[6] but she would even shoot so many lions, that she had trophies to spare and would give, according to Simon Lewis' article "Culture, Cultivation and Colonialism in "Out of Africa" and beyond" (Lewis 2000); "lion-skins to "the Indian High Priest" and to King Christian X of Denmark, in the latter case claiming to have shot the lion herself." (Ibid.: 70-71). Blixen herself also confirms on more than one account in her memoir that the lions she shot would almost always be skinned before she even got home, so that she would have trophies to bring back with her: "while the sun rose they skinned the lions (...) We sat on the short grass and ate and drank. The dead lions, close by, looked magnificent in their nakedness."[7] Blixen was thus not only keen on hunting as her fellow settlers, but she also was an eager trophy hunter which very much correlates with the hunting-spirit of the colonies at this time.

Blixen furthermore shares, in her memoir, another anecdote of a lion-hunt in which she and Finch-Hatton shoots and kills a couple of lions on Blixen's land. As soon as the lions are shot and killed, the native children on her grounds emerge from the school she set up, and as they come outside, they find Blixen sitting on top of one of the dead lions.[8] The fact that Blixen, a white settler, is sitting on a hunted and killed lion seems to more or less establish the symbolism of imperial power in big game hunting. The symbolic setting is completed by the native children emerging from a school in which they are taught imperial values and morals by their colonist ruler. This assumed symbolism can of course not be determined, neither can Blixen's thoughts or intentions with this anecdote; but the immediate symbolism is striking.

The native children that Blixen had taught in her school was of course 'squatting' children who lived on Blixen's farm because their own lands were stolen by settlers. Blixen had set up the school to enlighten the native children because she believed herself to be goodwilled just as "whitely people generally consider themselves to be benevolent and goodwilled, fair honest and ethical." (Syed & Ali 2011: 351). In this, Blixen was indeed, in this instance, a very typical white settler who enjoyed

[6] Blixen & Westenholz, *Karen Blixens afrikanske farm*, p. 465
[7] Blixen, *Out of Africa,* p. 231
[8] Blixen, *Out of Africa*, p. 236

the feudal structure of the colonies as she "promoted herself as a feudal lady, selflessly protecting her retinue of dedicated Africans." (Merivirta 2023: 500).

Hunting for Sport

As previously established in earlier sections, the hunt in the colonies was made into a sport for the settlers. Blixen too, treated the big game hunt as a sport as she reminisces on how she would get caught up in the sport: "Here in the hills there were Buffaloes. I had even, in my very young days, - when I could not live till I had killed a specimen of each kind of African game, - shot a bull out here."[9] Blixen seems to have been just as much a sportswoman as the next hunting settler at this time. On this account, Blixen thus proves to be very much in tune with the hunting zeitgeist in the colonies at this time.

In Hussein's article it was previously stated that the settlers would convince themselves that the animals they hunted, somehow had agreed to be hunted and agreed to rules that would make the hunt fair and equal (Hussein 2010: 114). Another way to 'make' the animal a more equal opponent was to personify them and credit the animals with human abilities they had no way of possessing. Hussein brings an example of this in his article: "But the ibex is a gentleman in his manners and customs as compared with his spiral-horned cousin lower down mountain; he gives you all the chances that a fair-minded animal should give an honest foe. (...) he has been a worthy opponent." (Ibid.: 117). In this example the preyed animal is made capable of both having manners and being 'fair-minded'; both very human qualities.

This way of perceiving the prey animal as an equal seems to have been somewhat common in the colonies, since Blixen too confirms to have used this tactic herself, in her memoir. Blixen would credit her hunted prey with abilities and intelligence as she writes the following: "They were both full-grown, young, strong, fat lions. The two close friends, out on the hills or on the plains together

[9] Blixen, *Out of Africa*, p. 241

yesterday had taken the same great adventure into their heads, and in it they had died together."[10] By perceiving the animals to be capable of human qualities such as 'going on adventures' and being friends, Blixen made them human and by that a fair opponent, fair game. Blixen thus utilize the same strategy that many other colonizers did, in that she perceives her prey to have been more humanlike that it was and thus justify her hunting it.

Champagne Safaris and Reserves

As many of their fellow settlers, Blixen and her husband too, enjoyed going on safari when they needed time away to enjoy themselves (Cleveland 2021: 54). As Blixen falls ill with malaria in the beginning of their time in Africa, she writes home that "now the doctor has recommended a change of air and since we don't want to go to a hotel we will instead go on a little safari tomorrow."[11],[12] Blixen thus establishes, with this letter, how going on safari was something fun and soothing to do in the colonies. Her husband writes the following, to her family as they return from the safari: "Dearest Uncle Aage! We are now home from our safari and it has been a success. Tanne is strong and well again, and it has been a pleasure to once again see her tanned and happy."[13],[14] The safari then did Blixen very good and even seems to have had a healing effect on her, as she returned from it happy and healthy, according to her husband. Blixen and her husband thus seem to have frequented the 'champagne safaris' just as much as all the other white settlers and tourists in the colonies (Ibid.: 54). This cavalier exploitation of the African wilderness, natives and animals was, once again, very stereotypical at this time and by this, Blixen solidifies to have embodied many aspects of the white colonial experience in Africa.

[10] Blixen, *Out of Africa*, p. 236.
[11] Blixen & Westenholz, *Karen Blixens afrikanske farm*, p. 81.
[12] Original: "nu har Doktoren raadet meget til en change of air og da vi ikke gerne vil tage op til et Hotel gaar vi ud paa en lille Safari i morgen."
[13] Blixen & Westenholz, *Karen Blixens afrikanske farm*, p. 465.
[14] Original: "Kæreste Onkel Aage! Vi er nu hjemme efter vor safari og den har været en succes. Tanne er stærk og rask igen, og det er en fornøjelse atter at se hende solbrædt og glad."

Conclusion

Big game hunting in the imperial colonies in the 19th and 20th century was heavily influenced by notions of power, masculinity and whiteness. The colonial hunt became a display of imperial power both by controlling the native population through game laws and reserves, and thus destroying both their economy and food supply, and also by helping creating a feudal structure that oppressed the natives and forced them to work for the white settlers.

Whiteness was highly esteemed and because of this white colonial women experienced far more privileges than they had been used to in Europe, due to being white and thus being first-class citizens. Gender was then, in many ways, not as prominent a barrier as it was back in Europe. The women were thus placed or encouraged to take jobs that helped forward the imperial mission and vision, such as teachers and missionaries, but were also able to go hunting on equal terms with the colonial men. This opportunity was seized by Karen Blixen, who turned out to be an adamant and seemingly skilled hunter, who would hunt on the same terms as her male counterparts. Furthermore, Blixen's fondness of hunting, sportsmanship and feudalism all correlate with the overall zeitgeist of the colonies of this time. Blixen was additionally and simultaneously quite a typical white woman in the colonies in both her actions, beliefs and ethnicity.

Moreover, the notions and claims of power display, sport, feudalism, gender and whiteness in imperial hunting made by scholars such as MacKenzie, Storey, Hussein, Merivirta, Mandala etc. all support and confirm one another, and thus emphasize the overall historical outline of imperial hunting showcased in this article. Blixen's memoir and personal experiences further supports these scholarly and historical claims, as they align very well. Blixen's experiences both hunting and as a white European woman in the African colonies is thus, in many ways, an embodiment and incredible primary example of the overall imperial hunting experience and colonial experience at this time.

Bibliography

- Blixen, Karen 1938: *Out of Africa*. Random House, New York.
- Blixen, Karen & Westenholz, Aage 2018:, *Karen Blixens afrikanske farm. En brevsamling 1913-31*. Gyldendal, Benedikte F. Rostbøll, København.
- Buk-Swienty, Tom 2019: *Løvinden*. Gyldendal, København.
- Cleveland, Todd 2021: *A History of Tourism in Africa: Exoticization, Exploitation and Enrichment.* Ohio University Press, Ohio.
- Ghosh, Durba. "Gender and Colonialism: Expansion or Marginalization?" *The Historical Journal* 47, no. 3 (2004): 737–55. https://doi.org/10.1017/S0018246X04003930
- Gissibl, Bernhard 2019: *The Nature of German Imperialism: Conservation and the Politics of Wildlife in Colonial East Africa*. Berghahn Books, New York.
- Hussain, Shafqat. "Sports-Hunting, Fairness and Colonial Identity: Collaboration and Subversion in the Northwestern Frontier Region of the British Indian Empire." *Conservation and Society* 8, no. 2 (2010): 112–26. https://www.jstor.org/stable/26393000
- JanMohamed, Abdul 1983: *Manichean Aesthetics. The Politics of Literature in Colonial Africa.* University of Massachusetts Press, Massachusetts.
- Knipp, Thomas R. "Kenya's Literary Ladies and the Mythologizing of the White Highlands." *South Atlantic Review* 55, no. 1 (1990): 1–16. https://doi.org/10.2307/3199869
- Langbaum, Robert. "AUTOBIOGRAPHY AND MYTH IN 'OUT OF AFRICA.'" *The Virginia Quarterly Review* 40, no. 1 (1964): 64–80. https://www.jstor.org/stable/26444994
- Lewis, Simon. "Culture, Cultivation, and Colonialism in 'Out of Africa' and Beyond." *Research in African Literatures* 31, no. 1 (2000): 63–79. https://www.jstor.org/stable/3820645

- MacKenzie, John M 1988: *The Empire of Nature: Hunting, Conservation and British Imperialism.* Manchester University Press, Manchester.
- Mandala, Vijaya Ramadas 2020: ”British Huntswomen in Colonial India: Imperialism and Gender Hierarchies, 1890-1921”, *International Review of Environmental History*, vol. 6, no. 1, s. 71-99. https://www.proquest.com/docview/2417369814/fulltextPDF/371C805CD95A4485PQ/1?accountid=13607&sourcetype=Scholarly%20Journals.
- Merivirta, Raita 2023: ”Nordic Settler Identities in Colonial Kenya: Class, Nationality and Race in Bror and Karen Blixen’s Transimperial Lives”, *The Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, vol. 51, no. 3, s. 487-509. https://doi.org/10.1080/03086534.2023.2205695
- Petersen, Kirsten Holst 2008: *Burden or Benefit? Imperial Benevolence and Its Legacies*. Indiana University Press, Bloomington.
- Schwarz, Bill 2011: *The White Man’s World*. Oxford University Press, New York.
- Smalley, Andrea L. “‘Our Lady Sportsmen’: Gender Class, and Conservation in Sport Hunting Magazines, 1873-1920.” *The Journal of the Gilded Age and Progressive Era* 4, no. 4 (2005): 355–80. https://www.jstor.org/stable/25144412
- Joseph Sramek. “‘Face Him like a Briton’: Tiger Hunting, Imperialism, and British Masculinity in Colonial India, 1800-1875.” *Victorian Studies* 48, no. 4 (2006): 659–80. https://www.jstor.org/stable/4618910
- Steinhart, E. I. “Hunters, Poachers and Gamekeepers: Towards a Social History of Hunting in Colonial Kenya.” *The Journal of African History* 30, no. 2 (1989): 247–64. https://www.jstor.org/stable/183067
- Stoddart, Brian. “Sport, Cultural Imperialism, and Colonial Response in the British Empire.” *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 30, no. 4 (1988): 649–73. https://www.jstor.org/stable/178928
- Stoler, Ann L. “Making Empire Respectable: The Politics of Race and Sexual Morality in 20th-Century Colonial Cultures.” *American Ethnologist* 16, no. 4 (1989): 634–60. https://www.jstor.org/stable/645114
- Storey, William K. “Big Cats and Imperialism: Lion and Tiger Hunting in Kenya and Northern India, 1898-1930.” *Journal of World History* 2, no. 2 (1991): 135–73. https://www.jstor.org/stable/20078498
- Syed, Jawad, and Faiza Ali. “The White Woman’s Burden: From Colonial ‘Civilisation’ to Third World ‘Development.’” *Third World Quarterly* 32, no. 2 (2011): 349–65. https://www.jstor.org/stable/41300234

- Ellerbæk, Thorkild, “Storvildtsjægeren Karen Blixen”, Positivskydning.dk, tilgået d. 10/12-2023, 2023, https://www.positivskydning.dk/wp/2014/05/28/essay-myten-om-karen-blixen-som-storvildtjaeger/

CULTURE AND HISTORY Nr. 02

December 2024

SHIFTING THE CENTRE

The Transformation of Greenlandic Society from Subsistence to Market Economy in the Nineteenth Century.

By:
Zoe Robakiewicz
Art History

ABSTRACT: In this article, I aim to illustrate the process of transforming Greenlandic society from one centered around a subsistence economy to one integrated into the external Danish market, drawing particularly on Karl Polanyi's characterization of market patterns. My focus will be on the means by which the colonial administration acquired a socio-economic dominant position in Greenland, the colonial reforms implemented during the nineteenth century, and the establishment of *forstanderskaberne*, local councils of representatives, as a pivotal milestone in the transformation of the Indigenous society.

KEYWORDS: Danish colonialism, colonial governance, mercantilism, labour history

Introduction

The nineteenth-century political reforms occurring in Greenland have been the focal point of multiple historical analysis by scholars concerned with the colonial relationship between Denmark and Greenland. For many historians like Søren Forchhammer or Søren Rud, the creation of *forstanderskaberne* (local councils) as local administrative units in Greenland in 1862 in Southern Greenland and 1863 in Northern Greenland, served as a backdrop for significant structural changes occurring in both Denmark and Greenland (Forchhammer 2006; Rud 2017; Rud 2017). In this paper, I aim to demonstrate that the reforms surrounding creation of the local councils in the 1860s marked a transformative juncture, symbolizing the conclusion of a century-long period characterized by proletarization and transformation of Greenlandic society from one organised around subsistence economy and its specific division of labour, to market economy and wage labour. To examine the process and apparent changes in the approaches of the colonial administration, I will use writings of missionary colonist and businessman Hans Egede, the civil servant - inspector of the region Southern Greenland, geologist and amateur anthropologist Heinrich Johanes Rink and the legal document of the *Instruction* from the 1782, which functioned as a as legal framework for the Greenland's administration until 1908.

Much research on the colonial relationships between Denmark and Greenland has been influenced by core ideas in Michel Foucault's inquiry into historical development of biopower and the pairing of knowledge-power as a tool for the creation of modern subjectivities in governing practices (Cooper & Stoler 1997). The seminal work of Ann Stoler has also been instrumental in shaping the field of European colonial history, employing a Foucauldian approach termed the 'dialectics of inclusion and exclusion' (Cooper & Stoler 1997). Stoler's application of Foucauldian concepts to colonial governance highlights the instrumentalization and intertwining of colonial and metropolitan subject identities. The impact of Stoler and Frederick Cooper's work can be traced to the scholarship of the colonial relationship between Denmark and Greenland. This includes Hans-

Erik Rasmussen's work on the social stratification of Greenlanders as a method of exercising power by the Danish administration; Jens Manniche's studies of the historical significance of mastery of languages — Greenlandic and Danish — as indicators of positioning within the power structure of the administration; Kirsten Thisted's research within cultural analysis, literary studies, and discourse analysis in Denmark and Greenland touching on the process of constitution of ethnic, gender, and class identity (Rasmussen 1986; Manniche 2002; Thisted 2012).

In my approach, I aim to bridge the studies of governmentality based on social theory of power with research on socio-economic transformations that occurred from mercantilism to the latter half of the nineteenth century in European trade, with the emergence of capitalist economic structures and with the colonial context.

Firstly, I will employ Karl Polanyi's characterization of market patterns as a specific organizational structure for exchange and apply his description of the mercantilist state politics to understand the Danish crown political strategies in the formative period of establishing the colony in Greenland (Polanyi [1944] 2001: 60-65). The Royal Greenlandic Trade Department embodied characteristics of both a state, employing power-oriented strategies such as war and judicial procedures, and a profit-oriented business enterprise, creating systems of production and distribution through buying and selling (Arrighi 2010).

Secondly, I will explore the methods by which the Royal Greenlandic Trade Department subjugated and transformed the Greenlandic Inuit society. In this section, I will describe the primary steps taken to transform the Indigenous society from a subsistence economy to one based on market relations. The expropriation of Indigenous people in the process of colonization both mirrored and influenced historical precedents such as land enclosure from the sixteenth to eighteenth centuries, which led to the proletarianization of peasants and commoners in Europe. I will emphasize the significance of undermining the pillars of the subsistence economy by the colonial power as a means of eroding the independence of Indigenous social relations.

Thirdly, I will describe the conditions in the nineteenth century colonial Greenland, following the Napoleonic Wars and crisis occurring in the middle of nineteenth century. I will stress the importance of harnessing the social consequences of poverty among Greenlanders by the colonial

administration in creation of the conditions for transformation of the Greenlanders into wage labour. To visualize the process of integrating Greenlandic society into the market economy through administrative reforms, I will draw upon the parallel in Poor Law Reform and theory of political economy of the nineteenth century.

Mercantilism and Market-state Entities

In his analysis of the emergence of the modern market economy, Karl Polanyi observed that "mercantilism destroyed the particularism of local and intermunicipal trading by breaking barriers separating these two types of noncompetitive commerce and thus clearing the way for a national market" (Polanyi [1944] 2001: 68). He noted that the dominant merchant class in the mercantilist system, though subordinate to the crown, became the driving force behind the "marshalling of the resources of the whole national territory to the purposes of power in foreign affairs" (Polanyi [1944] 2001: 69).

This marshalling of resources by the Dano-Norwegian crown to establish trade stations and integration of Greenland to the national market was facilitated by The Bergen Company, a joint-stock company primarily funded by Norwegian merchants from Bergen, including the Norwegian pastor Hans Egede. The dual nature of trade companies like The Bergen Company reflected the power dynamics within the mercantilist state of the Dano-Norwegian crown. The merchant class depended on the state to implement policies that served their interests, while the state relied on trade to strengthen the national currency.

The Bergen Company sought to profit by purchasing Greenlandic produce cheaply and selling it at higher prices in the homeland's entrepot, aiming to extend the national market to Greenland. However, dominating the Greenlandic trade required more capital expenditure than the Bergen merchants could afford, leading to the company's debts and gradual takeover by the crown in the seventies of the eighteenth century. In that period, the Greenlandic trade became heavily supervised by the Finance Collegium and the crown. The importance of state capital became apparent, leading to the establishment of the state-owned Royal Greenland Trade Department (RGTD) in 1776.

Although managed like a trade company, it answered to the Finance Collegium rather than to private investors.

The persistence of the Greenlandic *Dasein* (colonial project) by the Danish crown seemed to be driven as much by hope for future profit as by the fear that failure would result in a loss of prestige in the international and local arena. In order to be able to win with the Dutch merchants competing with Danes over the right to trade in Greenland, the Danish crown had to establish a costly and constant presence in Greenland, even without immediate prospects for gains. Private capital was not enthusiastic about long-term investment in the Greenlandic trade. As described by one of the most prominent historians of Danish colonial presence in Greenland, Fin Gad, "no private trading enterprise would, at that time, have been able to manage the deficits to which the trade was at times exposed" (Gad 1976: 284).

Financed by the state treasury, the new venture of the Royal Greenland Trade Department couldn't go bankrupt as long as there was a viable purpose for keeping it afloat. The department effectively imposed executive decisions on the traditionally decentralised Greenlandic trade market, such as enforcing a monopoly and banning trade between Greenlanders and any merchant except the one designated by the Danish crown. Ultimately, the Royal Greenland Trade Department served as a hybrid entity, as described by Fin Gad, functioning as "a strange mixture of administrative organ, commission agency, and trading enterprise" (Gad 1967: 248). By the end of the eighteenth century, when the formative period of colonization was finished, the statements of the company's accounts for both individual colonial districts and the trade as a whole contained at least as many abstractions as real entries. Additionally, neither the management nor the committee acquired real insight into the yearly balance sheet or any idea of where savings could be made (Gad 1967: 251).

Subsistence Economy

Karl Polanyi's analysis of the origins of the free-market economy challenges the causal relationship between human nature and market relations proposed by classical economists like Adam Smith. In his writings, Smith attributed the emergence of market relations to a natural human proclivity to truck and barter (Polanyi [1944] 2001: 48-49). Polanyi demonstrates that for market relations such

as trucking and bartering, a predefined 'market pattern' must first be established, in order to emerge: "Unless such a pattern is present, at least in patches, the propensity to barter will find but insufficient scope: it cannot produce prices" (Polanyi [1944] 2001: 59).

Before the Dano-Norwegian crown established permanent trading stations in Greenland, seasonal markets existed for exchange between Greenlanders and, primarily, Dutch merchants. However, as Polanyi emphasizes, sporadic market activities were insufficient to sustain commercial trade or establish prices for exchange. One of the most significant obstacles to introducing a dominant market pattern in Greenland for the colonial administration of The Royal Greenland Trade Department was the central role of the subsistence economy in organization of the Greenlandic society. Similarly to the much later transformation of the Indigenous Innuit societies in Canada, it was crucial for the Danish colonial administration to erode the central role of the subsistence economy in Greenland in order to introduce permanence of the market pattern and market relations (Hall 2021: 462-464).

Before the colonization of 1721, Greenlandic society was organized around non-commercial principles of reciprocity and redistribution, with the aim of ensuring the continuous reproduction of society and the common benefit (Sødbye 2019: 43-46). Reciprocity was deeply embedded in the cycles of gathering, fishing, hunting, and trapping, ensuring the subsistence and redistribution of goods among all members of the community. Dwellings were not subject to the law of private property, as living in shared houses was the most convenient way to ensure community's survival. Reciprocity and redistribution were also reflected in kinship relations, which extended to people who weren't blood related. In cases where someone could not provide for themselves due to the loss of an important member of their unit, they would typically join relatives or other families to create a larger unit (Marquard & Caulfield 1996: 108-109).

The subsistence economy necessitated that each able person in the community worked to sustain it. Kayak hunting, a dangerous and technically demanding profession which required constant training and repetition, was taught to men from childhood, emphasizing balance, timing, and the ability to blindly grasp tools placed strategically in the kayak. Transport of goods and people to other parts of the island occurred in boats called *umiaq*, or 'women boats' as they were rowed by

groups of women. Women played an equally crucial role in the subsistence economy. Their work included processing hunted animals, which required extensive knowledge of carving and utilizing parts of the animal's organs. Women were also responsible for sewing watertight clothing from sail skins, worn by the community. The production and maintenance of tools was similarly a time-consuming task, but an indispensable stage in the larger process of societal subsistence. Although hunting tools were occasionally made from iron traded from foreigners, they were most often produced from the bones of hunted sea mammals.

Undermining the Subsistence Economy

The legal foundation for establishing the market system and regulating market relations in Greenland - as well as the framework for Danish commercial and colonial activities in the region - was provided by the *Instruction*. Issued by the Board of Managers of the Royal Greenland Trading Department on April 19th, 1782, the *Instruction* was the first legal document to authorize and regulate the RGTD's commercial operations in Greenland. Among other provisions, it formalized the punishment of Greenlanders, as outlined in the fourth chapter of the document. This section stipulated that officers, soldiers, and all Europeans residing in Greenland were authorized to punish Greenlanders who acted against the interests of the colony. Specifically, this included engaging in traditional Greenlandic ceremonies that were forbidden by the administration, or participating in illegal barter trade with Greenlanders from other regions or with traders not affiliated with the Royal Greenland Trading Department (Viemose 1977: 20). Regarding the control of daily life activities, the *Instruction*'s fourth chapter, third point mentions:

> In the Spring and Summer, until Greenlanders move to their winter houses, [they should] use their time on important fish and seal catching, instead of going to Reindeer hunting, chasing after egg of the arctic tern or lie by the rivers where salmon spawn, to eat what they catch immediately.
>
> Whaling should be encouraged [by the colonialists] among Greenlanders […].
>
> Fox hunting should be strongly encouraged, Greenlanders should be taught to do it properly, so they do not diminish the value of the skins by ripping the muzzle or the hind of the fox off […]. [Luxdorph 1782, translated by me]

These fragments illustrate the will to coerce the Greenlandic population into altering their culture, suppressing activities that did not directly benefit the operation of the Royal Greenlandic Trade Department. According to the *Instruction*, actions related to the subsistence economy of Greenlandic society should cease, and Greenlanders had to be coerced into delivering seasonal commodities to the trade company. The document's explicit narrative demonstrates that the Trade Department and the crown assumed to have the superior knowledge regarding what types of work were deemed worthwhile and which were not. A similar moral conviction justified the enclosure of commons in Europe and resources in European colonial projects from the seventeenth century. This outlook was best represented by John Locke's 'theory of appropriation', according to which the right to legally appropriate land is derived from the land's productive use. The concept of productive use was then translated into the right to own and utilize land, equating productive use with profitability and competitive pricing. The theory of appropriation was employed to expropriate commoners' lands that had traditionally been used for communal grazing. In European colonial missions, it supplanted the imperative of Christianizing missions, as it provided colonial administration with the necessary moral authority to dispossess Indigenous populations through extra-economic measures and then economically exploit them, furthering the interests of the allied merchant class and the crown.

According to Hans Egede, in Greenland there was a prescribed role for the Indigenous population since the beginning of the colonial endeavour:

> [Greenlanders] have to contribute some trifle for their own good. [to achieve this] These savages must be completely subjugated and made into slaves and if not, quite slaves then coerced. [Egede Hans 1727, Copy of the writings on the *Haabets Colonie* June-August 1727 and protocols for the colony June – August 1727. Fol. 84, p. 36-47, translated by me].

A complete separation between Greenlanders and their means of subsistence was not only unfeasible for the colonial administration, but it also would not serve the objectives of the enterprise. The primary goal of the reforms and governance implemented by the Royal Greenland Trading Department was to undermine the subsistence economy just enough that it no longer served as the central driver of economic and cultural practices. However, the administration did not aim to completely eliminate traditional practices like hunting, fishing, and trapping. Rather,

the RGTD sought to manage these activities, providing tools and control over production, with the expectation that Greenlanders would continue their traditional methods—but now as producers supplying the RGTD.

Kayak trappers, for instance, were intended to become the primary producers for the RGTD, shifting from being a vital component of the Indigenous subsistence economy to a central part of the trading enterprise. Although the trade company did not directly employ them, trappers became the main producers of 'monopoly goods' through barter exchange (Gulløv 2017: 111). This gradual decentralization of the subsistence economy was one of the most significant shifts in Greenland's economy, gradually changing the economy based on human, social exchange to an abstract relationship between private property which's expression is value constituted in money.

Control Over Supplies and Tools

Key point of assuming the dominant position by the Danish crown was the exclusion of competition through establishing a monopoly and safeguarding of the functioning of the market in Greenland. The safeguarding of the market's functioning and balance was achieved through multiple means. First, by using military force to fend off competition from Dutch, British, and North American merchants. Second, by controlling and prohibiting any illicit trade between Greenlanders and employees of the Trade Department. Third, by establishing profitable supply and demand relationships through the maintenance of a monopoly on the provision and trade of goods in Greenland.

Finn Gad states that during the initial formative phase of colonization (1750-1808), the Royal Greenland Trade Department had already assumed control over the supply of imported goods. With the prolonged presence of foreign merchants, a demand for products from the Indigenous population began to develop. Imported Iron was required for tools, while wood was in demand as a building material for boats and kayaks. Other products such as textiles for shirts (like linen and cotton fabrics), wool, needles, and thread also saw increased demand among the Indigenous population. Trade in Greenland primarily occurred through barter, which not only shielded the Greenlandic market from price fluctuations in Copenhagen, but also allowed the Trade

Department to establish buying prices for Greenlandic products that best served their political and economic interests (Gad 1969: 283). This was a deliberate political strategy aimed at creating a sense of stability in the Greenlandic-Danish commercial relationship and asserting economic domination through exchange rate regulation.

A similar strategy of undermining the subsistence economy through market regulation and product supply was developed by the British Crown's Colonial administration in present-day Ghana, as described by Frances Lappe and Joseph Collins:

> Perhaps the most insidious tactic to 'lure' the peasant away from food production — and the one with profound historical consequences — was a policy of keeping the price of imported food low through the removal of tariffs and subsidies. The policy was double-edged: first, peasants were told they need not grow food because they could always buy it cheaply with their plantation wages; second, cheap food imports destroyed the market for domestic food and thereby impoverished local food producers. [Lappe & Collins 1980: 83]

The independence in production of the means of subsistence by Greenlanders became substituted with foreign products obtained from Danish merchants. The same mechanism that was used in modern day's Ghana, became a powerful force of coercion Greenlanders into a relationship of dependence with Danish colonial enterprise.

Self-sufficiency in tool creation and the common ownership of tools necessary for hunting and continuous sustenance was yet another crucial aspect of the Greenlandic subsistence economy. Therefore, ownership of hunting tools played a significant role in creating dependency. During the formative colonization period, Greenlandic trappers had to rent sloops, boats, harpoons, lines, and skinning tools from the Trade Department. Flaying was no longer performed in the traditional manner, which would have utilized every part of the animal for the benefit of the community. Instead, the new flaying methods prioritized delivering the products that the RGTD was interested in, namely meat and blubber. The changes in hunting objectives, tool ownership, and consumption also influenced the concentration of residency among Greenlanders. The control exerted by the Danish crown through the Royal Greenlandic Trade Department allowed the company to become the intermediary for fulfilling large parts of the needs in Greenlandic society. This ranged from

growing dependence on the RGTD for obtaining tools needed for hunting, to acquiring products necessary for reproducing society itself. Establishing this relationship of dependence and domination made further reforms of Greenlandic society possible. These reforms included managing the Greenlandic identity and relationships between Greenlanders themselves, through laws on marriage and allowed kinship structures. They also involved slowly influencing the organization of society by stratifying it and infiltrating the most intimate spheres of Greenlandic life (Rud 2017: 30-33).

Poverty as a Drive

The practice of writing amateur ethnological studies by colonial administrators and individuals involved in extra-European trade and colonial enterprises dated back to the seventeenth century. Notable examples included François Bernier's *A New Division of the Earth, according to the Different Species or Races of Men Who Inhabit It* (Bernier 1684) or British India's colonial officer's W.H. Sleeman's writings on the phenomenon of thugee, as well as his *An Account of Wolves Nurturing Children in Their Dens* (1852).

Similarly, Hinrich Johannes Rink, a geologist by training and inspector for the Southern Greenland region, produced several ethnological works, including *About the Greenlanders, Their Future, and the Measures Aimed at Their Best Interest* (1882) and *The Eskimo Tribes, Their Common Origin, Their Dispersion, and Their Diversities in General* (1887).

Between the 1850s and 1880s, Western Greenland, especially Nuuk and Akunnat, experienced a significant crisis characterized by widespread starvation among Greenlanders and a decline in the production of Greenlandic goods. In his 1855 study, *About the Shortcomings of the Support Agency in Greenland*, Rink commented on the starvation among Greenlanders attributing it to population to the excessive consumption of European products like bread, sugar and coffee.[1]

[1] "When we recognize that it is a significant misunderstanding to regard bread as a necessity, it is merely a useful product. But for the natives, on the contrary, it is one of the most useless goods they could use their money on. Especially when one considers that during the winter Greenlanders are not having sufficient funds to buy a fishing line those costs less than 1 Rigs dollar, which is sufficient to provide them and their family with daily sustenance, then surely, I do not need to explain further for the reader to get a picture of Greenlander's economy and their ability to manage their income". Rink H. J., 1856, *Samling af Betænkninger og Forslag vedkommende den Kongelige*

According to historian Ole Marquard, contrary to Rink's diagnosis, the crisis was triggered by other reasons. Firstly, by the liberal reforms implemented in Greenland in the early 19th century. According to the administration, these reforms were intended to "raise Greenlanders to more elevated levels of culture and civilization" (Marquard 1999: 10), but their key aspects where of economic character. The changes included raising prices on European products and the introduction of money as a measure of value and a medium of exchange, slowly replacing the traditional system of barter. This shift represented a profound transformation in the economic practices of Greenlandic society.

Secondly, according to Marquardt's research, the decline in goods sold to the Trade Department was influenced by changes in water temperature and a decline in seal population, particularly affecting stations in Godthåb (Nuuk) and Godhavn (Qeqertarsuaq), leading to hunger and poverty.

Further data found by Marquardt indicate that the excessive consumption of European products, designated as the alleged culprit of starvation, was actually lower in the regions most affected by poverty and death compared to areas like Northern Greenland, which did not suffer the same crisis (Marquard 1999: 10). Additionally, contrary to Rink's analysis, Marquardt's archival data revealed that Greenlanders sold fewer skins and blubber to the Trade Company during the crisis years and saved most of their hunted goods for their own sustenance (Marquardt 1999: 27). This indicates that guiding principle among Greenlanders was responsibility for themselves and their kin, showing clarity of judgment in the face of a crisis. On the other hand, the administrative reforms were not primarily aimed at alleviating the crisis, but rather focused on transforming the Greenlandic economy from one based on non-commercial principles to a commercialized economy governed by market relations (Marquardt 1999: 30-31).

The conclusions of Rink and his contemporaries, based on the living conditions of Greenlanders, reflected the prevailing ideas of political economists like Jeremy Bentham and Thomas Robert Malthus. The most significant Benthamite characteristic of the colonial administration's response to crises (such as the one from 1850 to 1880) was their unwillingness to provide relief. Instead,

Grønlandske Handel, Kjøbenhavn: Louis Kleins Bogtrykkeri, p. 172. Digitized 2011. https://www.kb.dk/e-mat/dod/113908034163.pdf. My own translation.

their primary concern lay with the declining supply of Greenlandic goods to the Trade Department. Bentham famously argued that "if hunger could do the job, no other penalty was needed" (Polanyi [1944] 2001: 122). This sentiment echoed the views of thinkers like Thomas Hobbes, who believed that a 'free society' consisted of property owners and laborers, with the number of laborers naturally limited by the available food (Polanyi 2001: 120). As long as property was safe, hunger would drive laborers to work, making legal constraints unnecessary because "hunger was a better disciplinarian" (Perelman 2000: 102). Rink and his contemporaries recognized that the real consequence of the contact between Europeans and the indigenous population was not merely changes in consumption behavior, but a profound transformation of Greenlandic society's metabolism. The establishment of the colony and the trade monopoly irrevocably altered both the Greenlandic population and their environment. The colonial administration's drive to exploit the labor of Greenlanders and the island's resources led to a loss of culture and independence. Greenlandic communities could no longer simply revert to their traditional modes of living, which involved seasonal migrations and subsistence practices. Their means of subsistence had been turned into commodities controlled by the Trade Department, while many traditional practices were marginalized or rendered obsolete.

Forstanderskaberne

> Sharp law of private property cannot be found in Greenland, but in the given conditions of local organisation of relationships, legal enforcement of it wouldn't work sufficiently. In these circumstances, laziness and indifference become crimes against other members of the society. To eradicate that burden, which rests on the Company and the hard-working part of the society, there is a need for tribunal which will impose a compulsion on such individuals. [Rink 1856, *Samling af Betænkninger og Forslag vedkommende den Kongelige Grønlandske Handel*, pp. 234-235, (translated by me)]

H.J. Rink and his peers, growing impatient with the slow emergence of a free market economy, became inclined to believe that non-market solutions were necessary to hasten the process of the transition. In his writings as in the quote above, Rink emphasized that the path to a 'civilized society'—synonymous with respect for the law of private property—needed to be enforced through hierarchical, patriarchal authority among the Greenlanders. This idea was developed further

through the creation of a class of indigenous hunter-trappers, who would serve as an elite within the indigenous population. This special class was embodied in the establishment of boards of representatives known as *forstanderskaberne*, envisioned as an administrative bridge between the interests of Danish officials and Greenlandic hunters and trappers.

According to Rink, the board of representatives, allied with the colonial administration, would enable the creation of a hierarchical structure and the eradication of patterns of redistribution and reciprocity. This process would bring the trappers closer to the free market ideal of an independent laborer, guided by his own individual interest (Polanyi 2001: 105). 'The representatives' were supposed to bring the Greenlandic population closer to the colonial administration, on one hand, while on the other, to create a distinct stratum of an allied class that represented the benefits of fulfilling the ideals prescribed for Greenlanders by the colonial administration.

Forstanderskaberne were not solely a project of social stratification through employment and meritocracy. They were also designed as a tool to undermine the social support system and its distribution. The board of representatives functioned as a project aimed at cultivating local elites, illustrating that cooperation with the colonial administration could prove advantageous on an individual level. In addition to being part of the local councils, Greenlandic workers who excelled in their domain or personally owned a dog sled or a 'women boat' were given the repartition. The repartition system was a program where financial benefits were distributed to Indigenous workers from what remained in the district's budget after allocating social support funds to those unable to work and widows. What enhanced its effectiveness was that indigenous representatives in local councils awarded the money to the best workers based on merit, thereby creating a hierarchical structure and class differentiation among Greenlanders.

Conversely, by linking financial benefits for outstanding workers with reduced spending on social assistance, the administration aimed to generate societal conflict of interest. The repartition system not only provided substantial sums to workers fulfilling their roles in the trade administration, but also promoted private ownership (rather than collective ownership) of traditional Greenlandic boats and sledges.

These solutions had predecessors in Europe and the colonial states. The Poor Law Reform in Britain occurring between 1834 and 1844 was a crucial step towards a self-regulating market economy (Polanyi 2001: 86-88). It involved the legal removal of the Speenhamland system, which had been in place since 1604 and was aimed at mitigating poverty and pauperization of British common people. The Speenhamland system, introduced alongside the *Act of Settlement* in 1662, tied labour to local parishes, which distributed work and payments to the able-bodied poor. Between 1815 and 1830, the subsidy rate provided by the Speenhamland system was reduced by one-third, yet it still served a substantial group of poor and unemployed individuals. Critics of poor-relief argued that it led to idleness and financial mismanagement, as it was alleged that too much money was spent by the poor on unnecessary items such as bread and tea. Karl Polanyi suggested that the real reason for the widespread unemployment and poverty at the time was invisible unemployment caused by the dysfunctional organization of labour and land enclosure (Polanyi 2001: 95). The abolition of the Poor Law was promoted among the political class as a means to address the perceived moral decline of the poor and to encourage their 'independence and industriousness'. In effect, the repeal of the Poor Law removed the biggest obstacle to the emergence of a market economy and allowed unemployed, landless people to be pressured out of their parishes and into cities in search of wage labour.

Conclusion

In this paper my aim was to provide a comprehensive analysis of the process of Danish colonization in Greenland. I began by examining the mercantilist policies of private and state capital expansion into Greenland, carried out through the organization of the company-state represented by the Royal Greenlandic Trade Department. This trade company served two key functions: preparing Greenlandic society for the accumulation of wealth, and —with the aid of extra-economic power— governing by inserting itself between the Greenlandic people and their means of subsistence. I focused on the role of Lockean theory of appropriation in the construction of laws, which gave grounds to expropriation of commoners in Europe, and Indigenous people in European colonies. The examples of this were the legal document of the *Instruction* from 1782 and writings of Hans Egede. I followed the process of the intrusion of the colonial administration into the Greenlandic

culture and into the socio-economic metabolism of the society. Furthermore, I discussed the significance of the nineteenth-century reforms in promoting social stratification in Greenland. I drew a comparison between the Poor Law Reforms in Britain and the reforms in Greenland, as processes designed for integration of Greenland into a market economy through means of economical coercion of the society into wage labour. Søren Rud, Kristian Manniche, and Kristine Thisted have thoroughly explored the processes by which populations were classified into categories of "useful" and "useless" subjects (Rud 2017; Manniche 2002; Thisted 2012). This classification reflects the state's tendency to gather detailed information about its citizens to enhance governance — a process that, as I aimed to demonstrate, was enabled and reinforced by changes in the living conditions and the organization of the Greenlandic society. The mentioned methods of governance could only be put forward following the restructuring of society from one centered around a subsistence economy to a market economy. This restructuring resulted in the mediation of the Indigenous population's basic needs through the market, and, later, in the its coercion into a hierarchical labor market through a series of reforms.

In conclusion, my goal was to illustrate the process of restructuring Greenlandic society from an independent subsistence economy—of which Hans Egede was initially uncertain, believing that it "can do very well without the majority of our goods" (Egede in Gad 1969: 140)— to one that became dependent on trade institutions and, subsequently, on the market in order to obtain means of subsistence. My aim was to show that, as much as in Europe, the process of transformation of the society was long, and that there was nothing natural about it.

I also wished to emphasize that the policies of the colonial administration, which incurred a significant human cost among Greenlandic society in the mid-nineteenth century, relied on controlling market prices. These policies affected the prices of basic necessities such as food purchased by Greenlanders, which, for example, doubled over three years between 1806 and 1809. In contrast, the buying prices of Greenlandic products sold to the Trade Department stagnated, resulting in a decline in real wages (Toft *et al.* 2016: 89-91). I wanted to underline that it took the introduction of certain laws in Europe, and the reduction of others, to drastically change the conditions of living of the commoners so that they would have no other choice but to engage in

wage labour. The same pattern can be observed in Greenland, where society resisted the compulsion of the market economy for as long as possible. However, as I argue in my paper, the eventual introduction of money, a series of reforms that reduced social security financing, and the stratification of Greenlandic society—combined with periods of starvation—constituted a critical step towards a self-regulated market economy and wage labor.

Bibliography

- Egede, Hans, and Ane Martine Lønneker. 2021. *Dagbog 1721-36.* Silkeborg: Atlanten.
- Louis Bobe. 1936. *Meddelser om Grønland, Diplomatarium Groenlandicum 1492-1814, Aktstykker og breve til oplysning om Grønlands besejling, kolonisation og missionering*, Bd.55, Nr.3.
- Luxdorph, Bolle Willum. 1782. *Instrux, hvorefter Kiøbmændene eller de som enten bestyre Handelen eller forestaae Hvalfanger-Anlæggene i Grønland, i Særdeleshed, saavelsom og alle de der staae i Handelens Tieneste i Almindelighed, sig for Fremtiden have at rette og forholde.* S.l. https://www.kb.dk/e-mat/dod/130018497299.pdf
- Ostermann, H., Niels Christian Geelmeyden, Poul Jochumsen Moltzou, and Marcus Nissen Myhlenphort. 1935. *Dagbøker av nordmenn på Grønland før 1814. Meddelelser*, Nr.33. http://hdl.handle.net/11250/216941

- Rink, Hinrich Johannes. 1856. *Samling af Betænkninger og Forslag vedkommende den Kongelige Grønlandske Handel*. Kjøbenhavn: Louis Kleins Bogtrykkeri, Digitised 2011. https://www.kb.dk/e-mat/dod/113908034163.pdf
- Rink, Hinrich Johannes. 1852. *Om Monopolhandelen paa Grønland: Betænkning i Anledning af Spørgsmaalet om Privates Adgang til Grønland*. Kjøbenhavn: i Commission hos A. F. Høst. Digitised 2015. https://www.kb.dk/e-mat/dod/11390803415A_bw.pdf
- Arnfred, Signe. Bransholm Pedersen, Kirsten. 2015. "From Female Shamans to Danish Housewives: Colonial Constructions of Gender in Greenland, 1721 to ca. 1970", *NORA: Nordic Journal of Women's Studies*, 23(4), pp. 282–302. https://doi.org/10.1080/08038740.2015.1094128
- Arrighi, Giovanni. 2010. *Long Twentieth Century: Money, Power, and the Origins of Our Times*. London: Verso.
- Cooper, Frederick. Stoler, Ann Laura. 1997. *Tensions of Empire: Colonial Cultures in a Bourgeois World*. Berkeley: University of California Press. https://doi.org/10.1525/9780520918085
- Erikson, Emily. 2015. *Chartering Capitalism*. 1st ed. Bingley: Emerald Publishing Limited.
- Fink, Jørgen. Hansen, Klaus Georg. Marquardt, Ole. 2016. *Grønland i tal: Kilder og cases gennem 300 år*. 1st ed. Aarhus: Aarhus University Press.
- Foucault, Michel. 1995. *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*. 2nd Vintage Books edition. New York: Vintage Books.
- Forchhammer, Søren. 2006. *Administrative og politiske instruktioner i Grønland fra 1860'erne til 1950*, in Mortensen, A., Nielssen, A.R. and Thor, J.T. (eds.) *De vestnordiske landes fælleshistorie II. Udvalg af foredrag holdt på VNH. konference i Isafjordur, Torshavn 2004 og Oslo 2005*. Nuuk: Forlaget Atuagkat, pp. 130-155.
- Gad, Finn. 1967. *Grønlands historie: I-III*. Kbh: Nyt Nordisk Forlag.
- Gulløv, Hans Christian. 2017. *Grønland: Den Arktiske Koloni*. 1st ed. 2nd oplag. Kbh: Gad.
- Hall, Rebecca. 2021. "Indigenous/State Relations and the 'Making' of Surplus Populations in the Mixed Economy of Northern Canada", *Geoforum*, 126, pp. 461–470. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.geoforum.2020.01.013

- Høiris, Ole. Marquardt, Ole. 2011. *Fra vild til verdensborger: Grønlandsk identitet fra kolonitiden til nutidens globalitet*. 1st ed. Aarhus: Aarhus University Press. https://doi.org/10.2307/jj.608274
- Høiris, Ole. 2009. *Grønland - en refleksiv udfordring: mission, kolonisation og udforskning*. [1. oplag]. Aarhus: Aarhus Universitetsforlag.
- Kuokkanen, Rauna. 2011. "Indigenous Economies, Theories of Subsistence, and Women: Exploring the Social Economy Model for Indigenous Governance", *American Indian Quarterly*, 35 (2), pp. 215–240. https://doi.org/10.5250/amerindiquar.35.2.0215
- Lappé Moore, Frances. Collins, Joseph. 1980. *Food First: The Myth of Scarcity*. Revised updated ed. London: Souvenir Press.
- Manniche, Jens Christian. 2002. *Sprogbeherskelse og Herskersprog: Om Sprog og Kolonialisme i Grønland i 1800-tallet*. Århus: Aarhus Universitet, Historisk Institut.
- Marquardt, Ole. 1999. "A Critique of the Common Interpretation of the Great Socio-Economic Crisis in Greenland 1850-1880: The Case of Nuuk and Qeqertarsuatsiaat." *Études/Inuit/Studies* 23, no. 1/2, pp. 9–34.
- Marquardt, Ole. Caulfield. Richard. 1996. "Development of West Greenlandic Markets for Country Foods since the 18th Century." *Arctic* 49, no. 2, pp. 107–119. https://doi.org/10.14430/arctic1189
- Meiksins Wood, Ellen. 2003. *Empire of Capital*. London: Verso.
- Meiksins Wood, Ellen. 2002. *The Origin of Capitalism: A Longer View*. New ed. London: Verso.
- Mensch, Elizabeth V. 1982. "The Colonial Origins of Liberal Property-Rights", *Buffalo Law Review*, 31(3), pp. 635–735.
- Perelman, Michael. 2000. *The Invention of Capitalism: Classical Political Economy and the Secret History of Primitive Accumulation*. 1st ed. Durham: Duke University Press. https://doi.org/10.1215/9780822380696-001
- Phillips, Andrew. 2020. *Outsourcing Empire: How Company-States Made the Modern World*. 1st ed. United States: Princeton University Press.

https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctvss3xd1

- Polanyi, Karl. 2001. *The Great Transformation: The Political and Economic Origins of Our Time*. 2nd Beacon Paperback ed. Boston, MA: Beacon Press.
- Rasmussen, Hanrik-Erik. 1986. "Genealogier og Social Stratifikation", *Fortid og Nutid*, 33 (2), pp. 95-108.
- Rud, Søren. 2017. *Colonialism in Greenland Tradition, Governance and Legacy*. 1st ed. Cham: Springer International Publishing. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-46158-8_1
- Rud, Søren. 2017. *Den Rette Blanding: Oprindelighed og Ledelse i 1800-tallets Grønland*. Odense: Syddansk Universitetsforlag.
- Stoler, Ann L. 2002. *Carnal Knowledge and Imperial Power: Race and the Intimate in Colonial Rule*. 1st ed. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Søbye, Gry. 2019. *Suverænitetens umulighed og det glemte folk i Grønland: en livsformsanalyse af selvstyreprocessen med udgangspunkt i fangst- og fiskeriksektoren*. Københavns Universitet, Saxo-Instituttet.
- Tejsen, A.V.S. 1977. "The History of The Royal Greenland Trade Department", *Polar Record*, 18 (116), pp. 451–474. https://doi.org/10.1017/S0032247400000942
- Thisted, Kirsten. 2006. " 'Over deres egen races lig.' Om Knud Rasmussens syn på kulturmødet og slægtskabet mellem grønlændere og danskere." *Tidsskriftet Antropologi,* 50, no. 6, pp. 131-148.
- Viemose, Jørgen. 1977. *Dansk Kolonipolitik i Grønland: Jørgen Viemose*. Kbh: Demos.
- Wiltgen, Richard. 1989. "The Evolution of Marx's Perspective of Mercantilism", *International Journal of Social Economics*, 16 (7), pp. 48–56. https://doi.org/10.1108/03068298910133098

CULTURE AND HISTORY Nr. 02

December 2024

MÉTIS CHILD REMOVAL IN FRENCH INDOCHINA

Change and Continuity from the Second World War to Decolonisation

By:
Ida Kaae Antonisen
History

ABSTRACT: In this article, the practice of removing mixed-race, or *métis*, children from their indigenous mothers in French Indochina is examined. While the changed circumstances of the Second World War and the ensuing process towards decolonisation forced colonial authorities to rethink their priorities, the practice of child removal remained constant. Against the backdrop of this persistent and relatively unchanging practice, changes and continuities in rhetoric about and justifications for child removal reveal underlying colonial interests and anxieties around race, memory, and maintaining French influence, even beyond the official end of French colonial rule.

KEYWORDS: colonial practices, *métissage*, repatriation, FOEFI, *métis* protection system

Introduction

All throughout the colonial period, and in many cases decades beyond formal decolonisation, removal of indigenous or half-indigenous children remained a widespread practice, whose ubiquity and durability are indicative of its central role in European colonial endeavours (Firpo & Jacobs 2019: 530-1). The systematic removal of *métis*, or mixed-race, children in the colony of French Indochina (present-day Vietnam, Cambodia, and Laos) differed from more well-known cases in settler colonial contexts, such as the Residential School system in Canada and the Stolen Generations of Australia. While child removal in settler colonial contexts was informed by a "logic of elimination", as phrased by Patrick Wolfe, in Indochina, where colonisers never made up more than a tiny fraction of the total population,[1] different motivations were at play (Firpo & Jacobs 2019: 533-5).

While the forced removal of children within settler colonial contexts is well-researched, the removal of *métis* children is widely overlooked in general works on the French possessions in Southeast Asia, including Indochina, and very little studied as a separate field of inquiry, despite the scale and persistence of the practice, from the early years of colonisation and well into the postcolonial period. One notable exception is the work of Christina E. Firpo, who identifies one primary, overarching purpose of child removal; *métis* children were to "aid in reproducing the French nation" (Firpo 2016: 6). In the following, I will attempt to cast light on the changing faces of this project by examining changes and continuities in colonial concerns surrounding *métis* children. First, I will examine how looking at developments in Indochina from the Second World War through decolonisation from the perspective of the "*métis* issue" can reveal nuances to colonial perceptions of race as they were challenged by changing circumstances. Next will follow a brief discussion of what the lens of *métis* children and their mothers can reveal about colonial views of gender relations, and how these often-overlooked groups can contribute to a more nuanced understanding of agency in the colonial setting.

[1] Estimates say most likely no more than 0.2 percent at any one time; see Ha 2014: 122-33.

Eric Jennings points out how, when examining colonial questions, metropole-centred approaches often reveal mostly the rhetoric of colonising states, with significant discrepancies between such rhetoric and "much more overlooked and revealing practices" (Jennings 2001: 5). In this article, *métis* child removal will serve as one such practice. The phenomenon of child removal is especially suited for critical examination of colonial rhetoric, since this practice remained relatively stable and unchanged throughout the colonial period and beyond. Thus, when held up against the ever-changing justifications for the practice, gaps appear which reveal the underlying motivations, anxieties, and interests behind colonial rhetoric on the "*métis* issue".

Development of the "*Métis* Issue"

French men fathered children in Southeast Asia for at least a few centuries before the beginning of formal colonisation, due to French trade and missionary activity. In the years between 1858 and 1893, the French established colonies and protectorates in what was to become known as the Indochina Union, and the increased military and imperial interest in the area led to a larger French presence (Brocheux & Hémery 2009: 15-17). The largely military nature of the French presence meant that there was a significant gender imbalance in the European inhabitants of Indochina, since European women were only encouraged to immigrate to the colony at a later stage (Ha 2014: 125-32). In the early years of colonisation, colonial authorities thus held a general acceptance of the practice of concubinage, where French men would form relationships and cohabitate with native women. Such unions were considered beneficial by French men and colonial authorities alike, since concubines provided domestic labour and comforts free of charge, while also regulating sexual activity and staving off the perceived threats to the men's moral and physical health associated with prostitution and homosexual activity. Moreover, intimate relationships with local women helped French men learn local languages and customs (Ha 2014: 29-31).

Increasingly rigid ideas of racial categorisation and the subsequent attempts to maintain clear distinctions between the French colonisers and the native colonial subjects eventually brought an end to official condonement of concubinage, and colonists were instead encouraged to marry the increasing number of European women in Indochina, and establish domestic situations modelled

on metropolitan bourgeois households (Ha 2014: 29-31). The change in official attitudes did not, however, stop white men from establishing relationships with native women, and they continued to do so throughout the colonial period. As these unions were generally temporary and seldom took the form of legally binding marriages, the result was a growing population of children who were never legally recognised by their French fathers and were left with their native mothers in the indigenous milieu once the father went back to the metropole, was stationed elsewhere in the empire, died, or simply ended the relationship with his Asian partner, or in cases where the birth of a child was the result of rape or transactional sex.

Such children came to be referred to as *métis*, or mixed-blood. Their position in the empire was tenuous and ambiguous in a number of ways, which was underlined by the fact that *métis* often found themselves struggling to fit into the social as well as administrative structures of the colony, since there was no official legal category for *métis*. *Métis* should thus primarily be understood as a social category which came into being as a result of, and developed in tandem with, the French colonial presence (Saada 2012: 8-9). While interracial unions, or *métissage*, was a reality in practically all parts of the empire, the "*métis* issue" was first problematised as a significant imperial challenge, and potential threat, in the context of Indochina, which functioned as a sort of colonial "laboratory", where potential solutions were formulated and subsequently exported to different parts of the empire (Saada 2012: 3-4). This perceived colonial issue was primarily taken up by decentralised, civil so-called protection societies, who would seek out "abandoned" children, including those who were in fact living with their mothers, and remove them from the home on grounds of "moral" abandonment, the exact definition of which was determined by metropolitan French laws, or simply at the discretion of protection society officials.

Overlapping Continuities in Vichy Racial Views in Indochina

Developments during the Second World War brought about significant changes to colonial rule and its associated ideas of race in Indochina, while at the same time containing strong elements of continuity regarding both the preceding and following decades. When seen through the lens of ideas and practices associated with *métis* children, the 1940-45 period was characterised by demographic

concerns which had been prevalent since the First World War as well as throughout the interwar period and were simply exacerbated by wartime conditions. At the same time, the uncertainty of war, and not least the presence of Japanese occupying forces, brought about new anxieties about retaining French influence in the colony. This was to remain a defining feature of French attitudes and practices regarding the *métis* of Indochina well beyond formal decolonisation.

As such, developments regarding the "*métis* issue" show the era of the Second World War to be an intersection of enduring and persistent colonial agendas of preceding and subsequent years, where the uncertain conditions of war caused a shift in priorities and mentalities regarding race, citizenship, and nationhood. Continuities and change alike in the colony are strongly tied to the influence of the authoritarian Vichy regime, headed by Philippe Pétain, whose establishment in the metropole in 1940 and close collaboration with the German National Socialist regime was quickly felt in Indochina. In June of 1940, the Governor General of Indochina, Georges Catroux, who later joined de Gaulle and Free France, was dismissed. He was replaced as Governor General by Jean Decoux, a loyal Pétainist naval officer, and the everyday administration of Indochina was brought under the control of Vichy officials (Jennings 2001: 131-8). Developments in Indochina were heavily influenced by Vichy ideology, and Pétain's *Révolution nationale*, centred around the motto of *travail, famille, patrie* ('work, family, fatherland'), was exported to the colonial context (Jennings 2001: 20-22).

Views of race in Indochina as well as the metropole during the Vichy years were, overall, a continuation of pre-war views, with a strong focus on racial categorisations and hierarchies. However, from the late 1930's, views of racial categorisations in Indochina began to diverge from those in the metropole in significant ways.

In the metropole, the establishment of the Vichy regime meant an abrupt departure from the republicanism of the preceding period. Regarding views of race, however, the change was much less drastic. The preoccupation with racial mixing and "degeneration" and the associated increasingly rigid views of racial categorisation which had become widely accepted in Europe by the 1930's were also prevalent in republican France, where an exclusive view of racial categorisation developed. In the metropolitan, exclusive understanding of race, mixed-race individuals were generally not

considered part of the white racial group. This exclusive view of race was a result of anxieties surrounding interracial unions engendered by the pronatalist movement, which developed in response to concerns about population deficits during the First World War, and remained prevalent through the Second World War (Firpo 2007: 209).

In Indochina, republican ideals never gained much traction among colonial administrators in the first place; French colonial rule had maintained an authoritarian character throughout the Third Republic (1870-1940), and the assimilationist policies which had developed in some of the older colonial possessions were not applied in Indochina (Jennings 2001: 133). Despite this, an inclusive view of race developed in Indochina from the end of the 1930's, marked especially by the colony-wide implementation of a new policy regarding *métis* children in 1940. The policy stated that *métis* children with lighter skin were to be considered part of the colony's white population, and that abandoned *métis* (who in many cases were in fact living with their indigenous mothers) were to be placed in the *métis* care system and raised as Frenchmen (Firpo 2007: 203-205). The divergence between views of race in the metropole and the colony is telling; the focus on the children's physical attributes shows that racial categorisation and hierarchisation remained as central to the ordering of colonial society as it had ever been, but that different interests were at play than in the metropole.

Firpo identifies a new set of colonial concerns which developed around the years of the Second World War; a perceived demographic imbalance between native and French populations, and the necessity of ensuring a lasting white, French presence in the colony. Because of their perceived possession of white racial characteristics, *métis* children were seen by colonial authorities and the newly centralised *métis* protection organisation, the Fondation Jules Brévié,[2] as a potential solution to these issues (Firpo 2007: 209). Thus, the Pétainist Governor General, Decoux, ordered an intensified effort to locate fatherless *métis* children, remove them from their mothers, and give them a French education, so that they could become part of a permanent, white elite in the colony, or settle in areas with a shortage of agricultural labour or a perceived demographic imbalance due to

[2] Named after the Governor General of 1936-1939, who was behind the initiative to centralise *métis* protection under the colonial government in 1939 (Firpo 2016: 82-85). Brévié since became secretary of state to the colonies in the Vichy government in the metropole.

"indigenous overpopulation" (Firpo 2016: 92-8). Thus, new circumstances lent new meaning to the practice of removing fatherless *métis*, whose ambiguous position in the racial hierarchy now made authorities see them as a solution to colonial problems, rather than primarily as a threat to the colonial order.

However, strong continuities in such colonial concerns can still be seen in the rhetoric used by Governor General Decoux and the Fondation Jules Brévié, which holds clear echoes of pre-war concerns about maintaining "white prestige" in the colony. Maintaining the standing of the colony's white population, both materially, politically, and socially, had been a central concern of colonial authorities since the early days of colonisation, and the risk of abandoned *métis* falling into poverty and prostitution had been a central element of rhetoric on child removals since the early years of the practice. In a letter from 1921, François Baudoin, the Resident Superior of Cambodia, writes to the Governor General of Indochina on the subject of the area's *métis* protection society, la Société de protection de l'enfance de Phnom-Penh. In this letter, he stresses that protection societies taking in abandoned *métis* are essential to the upholding of "the prestige of the French reputation in the colony".[3] In his letter, Baudoin reflects the main focal point of the "*métis* issue" at the time, namely, that *métis* abandoned by their European fathers would become "rebellious outcasts"[4] who would threaten the colonial regime; a concern which was reiterated by protection society officials two decades later (Firpo 2016: 92).

The interplay between continuities and changes in the justifications of *métis* child removal show that changed perceptions of colonial problems brought about a nuancing of the otherwise rigid racial categorisations of the colony. However, the telling gaps between metropolitan and colonial views of race, as well as the continuity in rhetoric on white prestige, reveal that the practice of child removal during the years of the Second World War was still primarily carried out in order to further the interests of colonial authorities. Eventually, the underlying understandings of racial belonging

[3] "(…) le prestige du nom français dans la colonie"; Lettre du Résident Supérieur au Cambodge au GGI au sujet de la Société de protection de l'enfance de Phnom-Penh – circulaire 26C du 24 juillet 1921, FR ANOM GGI//15298.

[4] "(…) des révoltés rejetés"; Lettre du Résident Supérieur au Cambodge au GGI au sujet de la Société de protection de l'enfance de Phnom-Penh – circulaire 26C du 24 juillet 1921, FR ANOM GGI//15298.

showed their brittle nature when met with the reality of the Japanese presence in the colony, which forced colonial authorities to rethink their relationship with the indigenous population, as well as the *métis*.

The Japanese Presence and Other Ambiguities

The implementation of Vichy policy in Indochina was made complicated early on by the entry of Japanese forces into Tonkin in September 1940. An important aspect of Japan's imperial project of creating a Greater East Asia Co-prosperity Sphere (GEACS) was the liberation of East Asian countries from European colonial powers in favour of bringing them under Japanese influence. Throughout the early years of the 1940's, the European powers lost control of all colonial possessions east of India. In Indochina, however, the French colonial administration was retained until 1945, despite the obvious tension this caused within the framework of the GEACS (Shiraishi & Furuta 1992: 59-60). The Japanese, too, were faced with the complexity of racial relations in the former European colonies, where, just as in Indochina, the European presence had caused Eurasian (mixed-race European and Asian) populations to develop.

Japan's policy towards the Eurasian populations of the Southeast Asian territories where it ousted European colonial powers was not consistent, but was adapted to the circumstances of each, ranging from actively seeking out Eurasians on account of their cultural and linguistic competences, to sparing them from European internment, to active hostility. Japan's policy towards the *métis* of Indochina was less hostile than in other parts of occupied Southeast Asia, likely due to the lack of French resistance. Some mothers nonetheless feared for the safety of their *métis* children and attempted to disguise their European features (Firpo 2016: 88).

This illustrates the further ambiguity that the presence of the Japanese lent to the *métis* population's position in the racial categorisations of the colony. Now, the very features that were used by colonial authorities and the Fondation Jules Brévié to determine a child's rightful place in the white racial group – and their access to the associated privileges – were at the same time seen to exclude them from racial affinity with the Japanese and thus putting them in a position of perceived risk. Thus, the Japanese presence brought about new uncertainties for the colony's *métis* population. The

population of fatherless *métis* were in turn considered a possible solution to some of the problems colonial authorities faced due to the Japanese presence and, especially, due to their own policies in response to it. In an attempt to steer local traditionalist elites away from Communism as well as to counter the pan-Asian propaganda of the Japanese occupying force, the colonial authorities implemented policies that favoured native elites. For example, Governor General Decoux opened colonial administrative posts to local elites in an attempt to court them away from pan-Asian sentiment (Jennings 2001: 165-7). This plan was delayed by the opposition of Vichy higher-ups, but came to fruition in 1942, after Jules Brévié became secretary of state to the colonies (Jennings 2001: 165-6).

Part of the decision to include indigenous elites in the colonial administrative apparatus should most likely be seen in light of the "*métis* issue". The Fondation Jules Brévié thought up a strategy for turning abandoned *métis* children into a permanent white elite which could serve as a buffer between the colonial authorities and local elites (Jennings 2001: 165-6; Firpo 2016: 91). This was one of the ways in which the *métis* population came to be seen, on account of their perceived whiteness, as a resource within the inclusive but strictly hierarchical perceptions of race of the Vichy colonial period.

One of the central elements of colonial demographic concerns of the period was the ability to maintain a sufficient white presence in the city of Dalat, which was to become the colonial capital in 1946, to uphold its status as a little European island in the colony (Jennings 2011: 19). As part of this vision, in 1939, a so-called École des Enfants de Troupe, a military academy, specifically for *métis* youth, was opened near Dalat. At first, *métis* children were placed in academies for indigenous children, but the colonial authorities were nervous that *métis* children admitted to indigenous schools would not develop sufficient French identities, or might come to resent colonial authorities for being placed in schools with colonial subjects, echoing earlier anxieties about *métis* children who were left in the indigenous milieu (Firpo 2016: 81-2). The same anxieties that lay behind the creation of a school specifically for *métis* also created a renewed sense of urgency to remove *métis* children from their mothers (Firpo 2016: 82).

As predicted by critics, the official program of the Vichy regime did not serve its purpose in the colonial setting, and with the liberation of the metropole in 1944, the regime and its collaborationist policies were discredited with the beginning of the so-called *épuration légale* ('legal purge'), the series of trials where thousands of people were found guilty of treason owing to their collaboration with the Vichy regime and, by extension, the German occupying force. As for the colonies, the majority had come to support de Gaulle by 1943 (Namba 2019: 520). In Indochina, however, the Vichy regime remained in place almost until the end of the war, only being dismantled by the March 1945 coup by the Japanese. The approach to *métis* children became one arena within which the construction of collective French memory of the contentious legacy of the Vichy years was carried out.

Blurring the Lines: Child Removal as a (Post)Colonial Practice

In January of 1946, the Fondation Jules Brévie was dissolved by the newly formed Democratic Republic of Vietnam. This decision was largely ignored by protection society members, who disregarded DRV law, but the colonial government likewise decided to dissolve the organisation because of its association with Jules Brévié, due to his affiliation with the Vichy government (Firpo 2016: 116). The *métis* protection system went back to being a civilian undertaking with state support, but remained largely centralised in an organisation which became known as the Fédération des Oeuvres de l'Enfance Française d'Indochine, or FOEFI (Firpo 2016: 106-7). The fall of the Vichy regime as well as the discreditation of many of the doctrines of scientific racism after the war brought with it new perceptions of racial belonging. Within the *métis* protection system, this meant a further departure from rigid racial categorisations and the ubiquitous focus on white racial characteristics.

With the outbreak of the Indochina War in 1946, the vision of *métis* children ensuring the French presence in the colony, a sentiment which had emerged during the Second World War, also took on new meaning, and new potency. Throughout the Indochina War, colonial authorities saw the removal and institutionalisation of *métis* children as a means to prevent them from defecting to the

anticolonial Vietnamese forces, as *métis* joining the ranks of the anticolonial movement would pose a political threat as well as a threat to French prestige (Firpo 2016: 106). At the same time, *métis* children who were imbued with French culture and values through the protection system could provide a way of ensuring continued French influence in Indochina as the colony was fighting for independence.

During the Indochina War, and after its end and thus the end of the official French colonial presence in Indochina, changing anxieties surrounding the "*métis* issue" contributed to one of the most drastic changes in the otherwise stable practice of *métis* child removal – the evacuation, or "repatriation", of *métis* children to the metropole. The new protection system leadership feared for the safety of *métis* children in Indochina. Their perceived potential for retaining French influence in Indochina, which was seen as desirable by the *métis* leadership, was seen in quite the opposite light by the Vietnamese independence movement, who saw them rather as reminders of French colonial oppression (Firpo 2016: 107).

Thus, the *métis* protection system brought large numbers of *métis* children to France, where they attempted to reunite them with their fathers or paternal families or have them adopted by French families (Firpo 2016: 124-5). Those who weren't adopted were placed in FOEFI orphanages or religious institutions where they continued to receive a "French" education and upbringing, similarly to the practice in the colony in the preceding decades.

The *métis* children's transitioning from the colonial to the metropolitan context highlights how race was still very much a factor post-1945 – and how perceptions of race differed between colony and metropole. "Repatriated" *métis* children often grew up to be "socially displaced and déclassé" (Firpo 2016: 133). While their perceived white racial characteristics had set them apart from the indigenous population in the colony, in France their Asian heritage was what stood out, and they were subjected to persisting racial prejudices. In this way, the practice of "repatriation" exposes the meanings that were constructed around *métis* children in the colony to be just that – constructs created so serve a specific purpose in the colonial setting, but which took on new, unforeseen meaning in the metropole. At the same time, the FOEFI continued to use racial characteristics to determine whether

to "repatriate" children, belying the idea of a clean break with the racial categorisations of the Vichy years.

After the end of the Indochina War in 1954 and the subsequent end of the French colonial presence in Indochina, the FOEFI continued to operate, invoking colonial-era laws which were no longer in place to legitimise the continued practice of child removal. Firpo has pointed out this continuity in legal justification as an example of the "increasingly blurry distinction between colonial and postcolonial eras in Franco-Vietnamese history" (Firpo 2016: 132). This blurring of lines caused significant friction between FOEFI and the French authorities, who feared for France's reputation and diplomatic relations in Vietnam (Firpo 2016: 132-3).

After 1954, the *métis* issue had become an issue of memory for both the French authorities and the FOEFI, but with very different meanings ascribed to the continued child removals and "repatriations". While the French state was firmly focused on shaping the collective memory of the colonial era in Indochina as a closed chapter, the FOEFI saw the – in their view – benevolent act of *métis* repatriation as a means of maintaining a positive memory and a degree of legitimacy for the French empire in France as well as in the former colony, even as the French presence in Vietnam, Cambodia, and Laos was at an end (Firpo 2016: 126).

Seen from the perspective of the FOEFI, it was not a given that the departure of a formal colonial presence meant the complete retraction of French influence, or the relegation of the colonial project to a shameful corner of national memory. For the FOEFI, the symbolically significant mission of protecting *métis* children in Vietnam maintained a degree of legitimacy for the colonial project, which otherwise had very little left (Firpo 2016: 133).

One development which is very telling of official French motivations regarding the construction of a clear cut in collective memory between France's colonial and postcolonial relationship with Indochina is the partial takeover of the practice of *métis* child removal and repatriations around the mid-1960's by l'Assistance Publique, the French social services, who began bringing *métis* children to France through the public welfare system (Firpo 2016: 154). Now, the French authorities were not simply condoning but actively appropriating the practices of the *métis* protection system, with

FOEFI even critiquing l'Assistance Publique for coercing mothers into giving up their children – using much the same techniques the *métis* protection system had itself been employing for decades (Firpo 2016: 154).

This begs the question of why *métis* child removal and repatriations were partially taken over by the French authorities even as the independent *métis* care system was allowed to remain in place for more than a decade, although the French authorities were at times working to defund or even close down the FOEFI. Here, the appropriation and continuation of FOEFI practice by authorities seems to suggest that the French authorities' issue was never with the continuation of the actual practice of child removal after formal decolonisation, but rather an issue of optics and, significantly, of memory.

It would seem that it was not so much the actual practices of the FOEFI that were unacceptable to French authorities, but rather the FOEFI as an inherently colonial actor, with its strong ties to the legal structures of the colonial era and overlap in individual actors with colonial leadership, including the Vichy regime. As such, we see in the relationship between the FOEFI and French authorities in the ambiguous transition from the colonial to the postcolonial how the changing contextualisation and justification of a relatively unchanging practice reveals underlying motivations. In France, the post-1954 preoccupation with the upholding of France's international reputation and the firm placement of the colonial era in Indochina within the realm of memory did not immediately bring authorities to put an end to child removal and "repatriation". Rather, it caused them to gradually single out the pre-1954 system as embodied by the FOEFI as a symbol of colonial continuities which did not fit within the official French agenda of constructing the memory of a decisive break with the colonial era in Indochina.

Gendered Anxieties and Colonial Agency

The racialised views of Frenchness that become apparent when examining the motivations for *métis* child removal are closely tied to heavily gendered rhetoric and justifications for the practice. Whereas pronatalist sentiment had led to a larger degree of acceptance of single mothers in the metropole, the same was not the case for single indigenous mothers in the colonial setting (Firpo 2016: 42).

One of the most persistent aspects of colonial authorities' and protections societies' rhetoric on *métis* child removal is the demonisation and vilification of indigenous mothers. From at least the turn of the century and until the end of the Vietnam War, indigenous single mothers of *métis* children were consistently referred to as prostitutes. As justification for removing their children, authorities portrayed indigenous mothers as morally base, and claimed that they would return to prostitution once their French lovers left, leaving the *métis* children to grow up in an immoral environment (Firpo 2016: 27-8).

Rhetoric on the *métis* children themselves reveals heavily gendered anxieties as well (Firpo 2016: 34). The concerns for white prestige, as described above, were expressed regarding *métisse* girls in very particular terms. Their potential to threaten white prestige and the colonial order was understood largely in terms of sexuality and reproduction, just as the solution proposed by protection societies was most often marriage with a respectable (preferably French) partner. In the context of post-war "repatriations", FOEFI wards in the metropole were encouraged to marry metropolitan French men and women (Firpo 2016: 146). For the FOEFI, marriage was a central means of ensuring that *métis* wards became integrated into metropolitan French society (Firpo 2016: 153). Especially for female wards, the FOEFI was preoccupied with monitoring their sexualities and sought to make them into good wives and mothers who would make attractive marriage partners (Firpo 2016: 146-7).

The preoccupation with the sexuality and marriageability of "repatriated" *métisse* girls reflects a strong continuity in the interwoven concerns of class, race, and gender, which remained central to the "*métis* issue" throughout the decades. The Resident Superior of Cambodia's letter from 1921 thus reflects a similar sentiment, as he emphasises that female wards of the *métis* protection system in Indochina "most often find themselves marrying either our compatriots or natives occupying a certain social rank".[5] Here, marriage of *métisse* girls to men from the indigenous population of

[5] "(…) trouvent le plus souvent à se marier soit avec de nos compatriotes soit avec des indigènes occupant un certain rang social"; Lettre du Résident Supérieur au Cambodge au GGI au sujet de la Société de protection de l'enfance de Phnom-Penh – circulaire 26C du 24 juillet 1921, FR ANOM GGI//15298.

Indochina is seen as acceptable, so long as it will not steer them into the lower classes and thus cause harm to white prestige.

Another aspect of child removal which remained constant even after the addition of "repatriations" to the practice, was the coercive measures used to obtain custody of *métis* children, and the disregard for maternal consent, justified by the demonisation and vilification of indigenous mothers. Just as the FOEFI continued to use colonial-era laws to justify separating children from their mothers even after decolonisation, the organisation continued to use the same bureaucratic tactics to pressure mothers to give up their children (Firpo 2016: 138-9).

It is clear, however, that indigenous women and *métis* children themselves used similar bureaucratic measures to avoid removal and "repatriation". For example, there are examples of mothers, and *métis* children themselves, requesting Vietnamese naturalisation for *métis* children to keep the FOEFI from being able to take them to France (Firpo 2016: 142). External circumstances also seem to have influenced indigenous mothers' sense of agency. After the 1973 Paris Peace Accords and the ensuing ceasefire and withdrawal of American troops, some mothers reclaimed children in FOEFI custody, and both mothers and children in some cases refused "repatriation" (Firpo 2016: 158). On the other hand, after the fall of the Republic of Vietnam government in Saigon and the ensuing instability, large numbers of mothers of *métis* children actively requested having their children sent to France (Firpo 2016: 159). Additionally, there are cases, if few, where "repatriated" *métis* children managed to get their mothers to France – or chose not to because of the emotional turmoil of separation and the FOEFI's insistence (truthful or not) that their mothers had willingly abandoned them (Firpo 2016: 159). In this way, while *métis* child removal was a fundamentally coercive colonial practice, indigenous women and their *métis* children also found opportunities to exercise agency and make choices for themselves within the framework of the practice. In this way, the perspective of *métis* child removal also reveals a more nuanced picture of colonial agency than the dichotomy between coercive colonisers and passive colonised populations.

Conclusions

In Indochina, the practice of *métis* child removal remained strikingly unchanged throughout the colonial period and beyond, even as its justifications and motivations changed. In the changed circumstances brought about by the war, and by colonial authorities' own policies, the fatherless *métis* of the colony came to be seen as a resource, rather than simply a threat. The changed motivations behind child removal, when held up against the constancy of the practice, thus reveal an instrumentalising view of *métis* children, which persisted for years after formal decolonisation. After the war, multiple meanings were assigned by different actors to the practice of child removal, now including the practice of "repatriation". Despite authorities' and protection societies' fairly consistent portrayal of *métis* protection work as a charitable and necessary undertaking, the many changes and incongruities in French justifications for child removal and "repatriations" make it clear that the constant guiding principles of the practice were, ultimately, French concerns of empire and memory.

Literature

- Brocheux, Pierre, and Hémery, Daniel 2009: *Indochina. An Ambiguous Colonization, 1858-1954*. Trans. Ly Lan Dill-Klein. University of California Press, Berkeley.
- Firpo, Christina E. 2007: "Lost Boys: "Abandoned" Eurasian Children and the Management of the Racial Topography in Colonial Indochina, 1938-1945". *French Colonial History* no. 8: 203-221. https://doi.org/10.1353/fch.2007.0007
- Firpo, Christina E. 2016: *The Uprooted. Race, Children, and Imperialism in French Indochina, 1890-1980*. University of Hawai'i Press, Honolulu. https://doi.org/10.21313/hawaii/9780824847579.001.0001
- Firpo, Christina E., and Jacobs, Margaret 2019: "Taking Children, Ruling Colonies: Child Removal and Colonial Subjugation in Australia, Canada, French Indochina, and the United States, 1870-1950s". *Journal of World History* 29, no. 4: 529-562. https://doi.org/10.1353/jwh.2018.0054
- Ha, Marie-Paule 2014: *French Women and the Empire. The Case of Indochina*. Oxford University Press, Oxford. https://doi.org/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780199640362.001.0001
- Jennings, Eric T. 2001: *Vichy in the Tropics. Pétain's National Revolution in Madagascar, Guadeloupe, and Indochina, 1940-1944*. Stanford University Press, Stanford.
- Jennings, Eric T. 2011: *Imperial Heights. Dalat and the Making and Undoing of French Indochina*. University of California Press, Berkeley.
- Lettre du Résident Supérieur au Cambodge au GGI au sujet de la Société de protection de l'enfance de Phnom-Penh – circulaire 26C du 24 juillet 1921, Archives Nationales d'Outre-Mer (FR ANOM) GGI//15298 (http://www.archivesnationales.culture.gouv.fr/anom/fr/Action-culturelle/Dossiers-du-mois/1904-FOEFI/Contexte.html).
- Namba, Chizuru 2019: "The French Colonization and Japanese Occupation of Indochina during the Second World War: Encounters of the French, Japanese, and Vietnamese". *Cross-Currents: East Asian History and Culture Review* 8, no. 2: 518-547. https://doi.org/10.1353/ach.2019.0019
- Saada, Emanuelle 2012: *Empire's Children. Race, Filiation, and Citizenship in the French Colonies*. Trans. Arthur Goldhammer. University of Chicago Press, Chicago. https://doi.org/10.7208/chicago/9780226733098.001.0001
- Shiraishi, Masaya, and Furuta, Motoo 1992: "Two Features of Japan's Indochina Policy During the Pacific War". Shiraishi, Takashi and Furuta, Motoo (ed.) *Indochina in the 1940s and 1950s*. Cornell University Press, Ithaca.

CULTURE AND HISTORY Nr. 02

December 2024

PORTUGUESE AFRICA THROUGH DANISH EYES AND EARS

Danmarks Radio's (DR) Portrayal of the Portuguese Colonial State, 1961-1974.

By:
Alex Alexandre
History

ABSTRACT: This article examines Danmarks Radio's portrayal of the Portuguese colonial state, specifically during the Portuguese colonial war. From the collected archive material, it has been possible to identify three main phases of the reporting. The first phase, from 1961, was uncritical of the conflicts that were erupting the in Portuguese African colonies. From the mid-1960's a second phase started to emerge, where analysis and criticism in the reports appeared. By 1970, the coverage of the different wars evolved into a third phase, which was committed anti-colonial.

KEYWORDS: colonial war, Danmarks Radio, Portugal, radio, television

Introduction

Compared to the length and extent of other Cold War conflicts and wars, the Portuguese colonial war has often been overlooked until recent decades. This article's purpose is to add another perspective, a Danish perspective, to this 13-year long conflict. Danmarks Radio (DR) was from the start involved in reporting and portraying the war to its Danish and European viewers and listeners. This article examines how DR portrayed, and how this portrayal changed, throughout the Portuguese colonial state and its war in its African colonies from 1961 to 1974.

Media and colonialism

The portrayal of colonialism in the 20th century by the media was spearheaded by the BBC, which was the biggest and most technologically advanced in this industry. In the interwar period colonial newsreels and films showed the 'natives' as recipients of "colonial peace and European technology and economic initiative." (Austin 2011: 225–26). This was part of a bigger media and popular culture propaganda in the European colonial empires' metropoles (Jansen and Osterhammel 2019: 55; Castelo 2017: 223). In the post-war period up to the 1960's, the development and modernisation projects in Africa were portrayed as joint team effort between the metropole, dominions, and colonies (Austin 2011: 227).

Meanwhile in Denmark, the post-war period up to the 1960's was a time when, radio and television had a growing impact in the mental construction of Denmark as a nation-state, but also in the introduction to the world outside of its borders, informing about and showing images from foreign countries. By 1960 half of all Danish households had a television, which meant that television broadcast in this period increased from 6 hours per week to 40 hours. This meant that not only the national reality, but also the international reality was able to be visualised to an unprecedented level (Bondebjerg 2006: 130–33). Radio and television were used to create a shared and unified Danish perception of the outside world.

DR's news programme *TV-Avisen* did not exist before October 1965. In its stead there were various newsreels programmes during the week, the longest running being *Aktuelt* (1951-1964). These programmes included short stories on both domestic and foreign topics. They were not presented and tied together by a presenter but consisted of filmed segments with voice-over. The stories about foreign topics were mainly about political and social conditions but were characterised by the lack of any analysis or discussion (Hjarvard 2006: 105–8). A constant challenge for news production was the technology of film. The speed with which images could be obtained for a current story was quite slow. DR relied heavily on international news agencies and the Eurovision News Exchange cooperation between the national public service television stations in Europe. After 1965, DR's foreign news editorial team could on a daily basis familiarise themselves with image options for international various events. The more independent and extensive reporting on foreign events, however, took place in the foreign affairs magazine *Horisont*, which still exists to this day. Through this programme, the viewers received Danish edited reports from foreign, mainly Anglo-American, news agencies, as well as reports and analyses by their own journalists and correspondents (Hjarvard 2006: 112–13). In general, this period between 1960 and 1975 was characterised by a very traditional enlightenment philosophy of documentary and facts, with very little room for a critical journalistic analysis (Bondebjerg 2006: 181–82).

Primary Sources

All primary sources used in this essay are radio and television programmes produced and broadcasted by DR between 1961 and 1974. I have seen and listened to ca. 140 radio and television programmes of all types and lengths, most being short agency images and other being full 40-minute programmes of various types, *Horisont* being the most common. Most of the short agency images were used for the television news and unfortunately do not have sound, as they were used as background images while the news anchor spoke, therefore their use is restricted. A big part of the radio archive is currently being digitised as well and parts of the television archive has not been digitised, therefore the materials gathered do not offer a full image of DR's coverage of the Portuguese 20th century colonial history in Africa. What it does, is give an idea of how this coverage changed along the years.

In short, the material used is based on a selection of complete digitised programmes of various types and lengths.

The First and the Last: Portugal in Africa (1945-1961)

Domestic and International Context

Portugal had since 1933 been an authoritarian dictatorship called *Estado Novo* (New State), which was led by prime minister António de Oliveira Salazar. Nationalism, corporatism, and traditional values were the core of this regime. The colonial empire was an integral part of the regime's nationalism – the Portuguese state and empire were for all purposes synonymous, except constitutionally. Any questioning of Portugal's colonial empire was quickly and severely contested both domestically and internationally, causing Portugal to become more internationally isolated along the years after the Second World War (Garcia et al. 2017: 12–14).

Abroad, the end of the Second World War sparked a wave of worldwide decolonisation process in the following three decades. At that time, most colonial experts thought that European rule in Africa would last. This would prove to be very miscalculated. Most of the European colonies in Africa became new independent nation-states between 1957 and 1965, if they weren't already independent (Jansen and Osterhammel 2019: 4, 63, 71).

Influencing this process was the overarching Cold War between the United States and the Soviet Union. Their struggle for influence and power did not exempt the European colonies. Although the Soviet Union did not have policy of world revolution, most communist or anticolonial movements around the world did receive to a greater or lesser extent support from the Soviet Union and other communist countries (Jansen and Osterhammel 2019: 139–44). To counter this, the United States used European colonialism to contain the spread of communism. In this way colonial conflicts became proxy conflicts between American and Soviet backed movements (Jansen and Osterhammel 2019: 148–50).

The Isolation in the United Nations

International opinion became a big factor in the post Second World War world. It had a great impact on the colonial powers during this period. In 1951 the Portuguese government acted on the international anticolonial criticism and anticipated a possible entry into the UN, after being vetoed by the Soviet Union in 1946. The constitutional change of 1951 integrated the Colonial Act of 1930, which was the colonial constitution, into the Portuguese constitution. Thereby there were no longer two different constitutions, one for the metropole and another for the empire, and therefore the Portuguese colonial empire ceased to exist, at least constitutionally. The former colonies became overseas provinces (Monteiro 2023: 53–54).

From 1956 to 1960 the international support for Portugal dwindled. The decolonisation in Africa and Asia led to many former European colonies becoming members of the UN, thereby forming a majority against colonial states. The Brazilian and American support would disappear in late 1960 after presidential elections in each country respectively elected Jânio Quadros and John F. Kennedy, which further isolated Portugal in the UN (Cervelló 2020c: 54–55).

Another criticism the Portuguese government received was about the Portuguese forced labour laws called the *indigenato*, Native Labour Code and Colonial Act of 1930. These laws essentially made a distinction between a normal Portuguese citizen and 'native'. More than 95% of the African colonies' population were labelled as 'natives' and subordinate to these laws. All had to have a 'native' identity card, where contracts, labour obligations and movements were written down. Portuguese officials could then sanction the individual if any of these were violated and send them to a penal work or prison. These laws were first abolished in 1962 (Monteiro 2023: 1–5).

On the 14th December 1960 an important step was made. The General Assembly of the United Nations passed Resolution 1514 "Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples". 89 countries voted in favour of the resolution, including Denmark, while Portugal abstained along with eight other countries (United Nations General Assembly 1960a). The next day, the resolution of "Transmission of information under Article 73e of the Charter" was passed, which was a direct resolution by the UN towards Portugal, for the Portuguese government

give all of its colonial territories in Africa and Asia self-determination. (United Nations General Assembly 1960b). This meant granting independence, which was of course impossible for the Portuguese government as it saw its colonial possessions as core Portuguese provinces, which were overseas provinces. (Cervelló 2020b: 58–60).

Portuguese Colonial War (1961-1974)

Before going on, a clarification is needed as to the Portuguese Colonial War. The name itself is a Eurocentric umbrella term for three different colonial/independence wars in the Portuguese African colonies: Angola, Guinea-Bissau, and Mozambique. Each war had its own historical context, nuances and were fought with different methods. For the sake of simplicity, the term of the Portuguese Colonial War will be used about the three wars, as this was the perspective of DR as well. With the quick and simplified resumés of the wars, many nuances will be omitted. A common thread running through all three wars was the horrific violence and destruction, the high number of civilian casualties, the huge number of refugees, and the deep scars it left in all societies. The fighting and struggle through the years were constant, even though they might not be mentioned.

On the 15th March, the Union of the Peoples of Angola (UPA) launched a large bloody attack throughout the northern provinces of Angola. Plantations, farms, factories, government buildings, houses and infrastructure were destroyed (Afonso and Gomes 2020: 82–85). Only on the 13th April did Salazar act, after a failed coup by the Minister of Defence general Botelho Moniz to overthrow Salazar and change the Portuguese colonial policy. On the 1st May a large Portuguese military contingent arrived in Luanda and from there launched a military campaign in the northern provinces which destroyed many villages and killed many civilians, and reports said that napalm was used in these bombings. By august 1961, the Portuguese military had regained control over the region (Afonso and Gomes 2020: 82–95; James 2018: 266; Alves 2017: 14). The UPA and People's Movement for the Liberation of Angola (MPLA) kept on fighting a guerilla war, but no large attacks were made. Eventually the two groups began fighting each other. By 1964 the UPA, now known as the National Liberation Front of Angola (FNLA), suffered an internal divide which went to form the National Union for the Total Independence of Angola (UNITA) in 1966 in eastern Angola. By

this time the MPLA was the biggest of the three independence movements and was trying to gain territory from central Angola into the FNLA's northern Angola and UNITA's eastern Angola. The Portuguese military was in control of the situation of Angola until 1974 (Afonso and Gomes 2020: 104–5).

The war in Guinea-Bissau, the bloodiest and most intense of the three theatres of war, started in January 1963, when the communist African Party for the Independence of Guinea and Cape Verde (PAIGC) militants attacked a Portuguese military garrison in Tite with Soviet supplied weapons. This attack escalated quickly to military conflict between the Portuguese military and the PAIGC. The PAIGC had the support of the neighbouring Guinea and Senegal, where they had various bases, therefore the war was conducted mostly on the southwestern part of Guinea-Bissau. By 1965, new fronts were drawn up in the eastern Guinean border and the northern from Senegal and the international support for the PAIGC grew to that point that Cuba sent military doctors, instructors, and technicians. In contrast to the war in Angola, the Portuguese fought a defensive war in Guinea-Bissau, focusing on maintaining footholds in the cities and other strategic places. This gave the PAIGC quite a lot of freedom of movement, which they used to its fullest to recruit and establish a governmental administration their territory (Afonso and Gomes 2020: 20, 133–34; Mendy and Lobban 2013: 404; Gleijeses 1997: 49). By 1973 the Soviet Union started supplying surface-to-air missiles, which challenged the until then unchallenged Portuguese air superiority. This factor changed the war completely, forcing the Portuguese military to rethink operations and medical evacuations. On the 24th September 1973, the PAIGC declared independence from Portugal. The Portuguese remained on the defensive until 1974 (Afonso and Gomes 2020: 135–37, 540–41).

In Mozambique, the war started on the 25th September 1964, when the communist Liberation Front of Mozambique (FRELIMO) launched an attack in the northern province of Cabo Delgado. From the experiences in Angola and Guinea-Bissau, the Portuguese military positioned forces in strategic locations throughout Mozambique. By December FRELIMO had, like the PAIGC in Guinea-Bissau, acquired Soviet-made weapons. With this newly gained support, they spread their area of operations throughout the northern provinces and in the western province of Tete (Cervelló 2020a: 146–48; Afonso and Gomes 2020: 153–55). Along the years, FRELIMO's equipment

became stronger and more advanced. In Tete, the construction of the Cahora Bassa dam on the Zambezi River started in 1969. The dam was primarily being built to export of hydroelectric energy to South Africa and was seen by the FRELIMO as a criminal enterprise. By 1970, FRELIMO's highest priority became the impediment of the construction of the dam and advance southwards, while the Portuguese objective was stopping this advance and not letting the FRELIMO cross the Zambezi River. By January 1974, FRELIMO was able to cross the Zambezi and approach on the city of Beira (Afonso and Gomes 2020: 155–60; Darch 2019: 73–74).

The isolated Portuguese government was postponing the inevitable. The wars were unwinnable wars, the geopolitical factors of the Cold War, the UN, public opinion, and the international media, were all factors, which Portugal in the end could not contest. After 13 years of war, a military coup toppled the regime on the 25th of April 1974. The revolution brought a new democratic direction. One of the coup's main objectives was the end of the colonial war and the decolonization of the Portuguese colonies. By November 1975 the Portuguese Empire was no more (Garcia et al. 2017: 15–17).

Portraying Portuguese Africa (1961-1964)

A Conflict in Portuguese Angola

The first report on DR about the UPA attack in northern Angola came on the 14th February 1961. A newsreel from an American news agency showing a funeral of European victims ("Begravelse af de 4 døde fra opstanden" 1961). This was followed by a radio news programme which mentioned the Liberian proposal that the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) should consider the situation in the Portuguese colony of Angola under article 34 of the Charter. Liberia's representative stated that basic human rights were being violated in Angola and the UNSC had to take action to achieve freedom for the people of Angola (Riisager 1961: 17:34-18:56).

From March to November 1961 there were around 20 short relevant materials about the events in Angola, all of them only showing images of Portuguese refugees, evacuations, casualties, interviews with politicians and army drills and patrols in northern Angola. Among all these dramatic images

and reports was an agricultural magazine informing about Danish cattle which would be sent to a newly built Danish farm in Angola called Cela, at no point was the unfolding events in Angola mentioned in the magazine (Jørgensen 1961: 21:18-27:18).

Three radio broadcasts stand out during this period. The first being the forementioned Liberian proposal at the UN. The second is a transmission from 8th May, where the Portuguese Minister of Foreign Affairs Franco Nogueira's warns about the Soviet imperialism's infiltration in Asia, Africa, and South America. According to Nogueira, such Soviet infiltration undermined NATO by undermining the position of NATO members. There was an indirectly hint at the Soviet supported movements in Angola. Before the transmission of the speech, journalist Sven Ludvigsen made a resumé of the speech in Danish but did not analyse or comment it (Ludvigsen 1961). The third transmission was Danish Foreign Minister Jens Otto Krag's speech at the UN transmitted on the 28th September of the same year. After discussing the situation between South Africa and South West Africa, Krag showed great concern about the situation in Angola and appealed, without mentioning any names, towards the upholding of the UN charters. This was the first time, from the materials gathered, that DR transmitted a Danish government official's position on the Angolan conflict (Rastén 1961: 03:56-04:24). At this time the conflict was mostly under control and was only located in Angola, so it is safe to say, that the conflict in Angola was not a high priority after June 1961.

Danmarks Radio in Angola

The first large programme made by DR was *Angola 61*. It was a black and white television reportage divided into four approx. 25 minutes programmes. They visited different places in Angola and the Republic of Congo. There is unfortunately no information about when they were in Angola, but it can be estimated that they were in the autumn of 1961. *Angola 61* covers a broad variety of topics. It is difficult to give them all a fair share of attention, but some are repeated more than others. These are the Portuguese narrative of racial harmony in the colonies, the Portuguese modernisation and development plans and the indigenous labour force.

Throughout the four programmes the DR team, and specifically the journalist Claus Toksvig reported about a racial harmony in Portuguese Angola. According to Toksvig and all the people he interviewed there was no racial divide. Toksvig stated that it:

> "… was an irrefutable fact, that the Portuguese did not have the same perception of the relationship between black and white, it was only a man's skills and knowledge that determined how high he could reach in society." (Carlsen, Toksvig, and Walter 1961: 06:18-08:22).

While ending the whole series, Toksvig emphasized that the Portuguese were not race conscious (Toksvig, Carlsen, and Walter 1961b: 23:55-25:17). The Danes interviewed by Toksvig did have clear racist opinions, some more than others, which when spoken were not questioned or confronted by Toksvig in any way.

Angola 61, a post-war programme, kept true to the interwar period's colonial television. It showed how Danish individuals technologically and economically help Portugal in its modernisation effort in Angola, making the Danes in Angola part of the settler colonialism taking place in Angola. Through the four programmes the expedition spoke with various Danes helping in each their own way the modernisation and development of Angola. In the third programme in the series the DR team travelled to the new settlement of Cela, which had a handful of Danes helping with the development of a dairy industry. In the introduction to the segment, Toksvig described a Portuguese settler colonialist plan to develop and modernise that area:

> "In a valley 400 kilometres from Luanda, an area of about 150,000 hectares of good land has been drained and drained, and the government has built 12-13 small villages of this type. These are small farms and in them they have placed farmers from Portugal, the Azores and elsewhere, all white, to cultivate the land and produce agricultural products." (Toksvig, Carlsen, and Walter 1961a: 07:40-14:40)

The labour laws were never mentioned in the four programmes. The closest it got to, was in the first programme when a Danish director of a cement factory near Luanda was asked if there were opportunities for the skilful local workers, to which Jensen answered: "Yes, there is. A few years ago, there wasn't so much. Today, the door has opened for blacks to enter the labour force." The forced

labour laws were not mentioned and Toksvig did not enquire into this, but the fact that Jensen admits that the labour force 'door' was restricted for the local population until recently, was a break in the Portuguese racial harmony narrative. (Carlsen, Toksvig, and Walter 1961: 15:38-20:28).

In the four programs, the DR team did not at any point interview a non-white person in Angola (excluding the merchant of mixed ethnicity who identified himself as white and was very pro-Portugal). The team did not mention this lack of the indigenous Angolan perspective, or that they might have been restricted by the Portuguese government or a third-party. Only when the DR team crossed the border into Congo in the fourth programme did they have a interview with Angolan refugees which was useless – the interview was conducted by a French-speaking Swiss Red Cross employee, who asked the questions to a politically biased Congolese soldier who then translated them to the refugees. A lot of information was lost in translation, if not just changed. The Red Cross employee did not know how to conduct an interview or was just uninterested.

Toksvig and the rest of the team reported on the war, but mostly at the end of segments or programmes as way to balance out the positive opinions about the racial harmony and modernisation plans (Carlsen, Toksvig, and Walter 1961: 20:28-23:22). Toksvig knew there were problems in Angola, but he stayed uncritical of the situation he was surrounded by. This can be attributed to the lack of analysis the programmes of this period had, or that Toksvig and the rest of the DR team did not see any sort racism, due to being shown what the Portuguese authorities wanted to show them, and thereby there was nothing to report.

By the start of January 1963, a news report, although a very short one, where Angolan FNLA volunteers were shown at a training camp in the Republic of Congo. Over the images, a journalist talked about the European and African perspective on decolonisation – "From a European perspective, it may appear that most former African colonial countries have gained independence. From an African perspective, a large part of the continent, over a quarter, is still ruled by a European minority." ('Partisaner fra Angola træner i lejr i Congo' 1963: 19:12-20:11). This might be the first time, apart from Angola 61, where a DR journalist reflects over the situation from different perspectives.

As stated in the previous section, the reports of this period were informative and factual in nature, but there was no further analysis or critical journalism involved. The viewer was presented with mainly news agency images presented by a Danish journalist, and it was there DR's work ended. From there the viewers could take it for what it was or think further about the conflict by themselves and this was the intention in the journalism of that time. *Angola 61*'s portrayal of the colonial state simply confirmed the Portuguese narrative, with some comments about the uncertain future of colonialism, seemingly to balance the opinions.

The Colonial War (1965-1969)

Criticism on *Horisont*

The *Horisont* programme broadcast on 12th January 1965 marked a shift in the DR coverage of the conflict. The last third of the 27-minute programme was used to critically discuss the Portuguese state and its colonial war in Africa. This was the first time, from the materials gathered, that a DR journalist was this critical of the Portuguese state. The segment about Portugal was divided into two parts. First was a reportage with agency images and a voice-over. Images of Portuguese military ceremonies and anti-guerilla exercises ended with the journalist concluding: "This means that the warplanes, naval vessels, and machine guns that NATO countries have supplied to Portugal, in the name of democracy, are now being used to suppress African freedom movements." When talking about the Portuguese dictatorship another criticism of the colonial state:

> "… Salazar regularly sends tens of thousands of unschooled farmers down to Lisbon. Here, huge crowds gather to honour Salazar and applaud a foreign and colonial policy whose inner logic few understand. Many Portuguese continue to support Salazar. Some do it out of sincere conviction, some do it because they make their living in the administration and some because they don't know any better." (Danstrup et al. 1965b: 18:46-22:24).

The second part was an interview with six politicians from six different parties. This was due to criticism from the Minister of Foreign Affairs Nogueira about the Danish relation to Greenland. This was the first time Danish parliament members discussed the Portuguese colonial war. They

were mostly in agreement that the relation that Denmark had with Greenland was not of a colonial nature, because of the democratic relation Denmark and Greenland had and that the UN and other international organisations had approved of Greenland being part of Denmark. Compared to this relation, they were all also in agreement that the relation that Portugal had with its colonies was of a colonial nature. Most did not want to comment on the Portuguese relation with its colonies, as they did not know enough about the subject (Danstrup et al. 1965a: 22:24-26:45).

A full 27-minute *Horisont* programme was later made in November 1967 about the Portuguese state, but mainly focusing on the metropolitan situation. A quick summary of the Portuguese colonial empire was made. Angola was presented: "From Angola there is a large export of iron ore and diamonds and one thing the Portuguese can proudly emphasise - there is no racial discrimination." (Danstrup et al. 1967: 00:00-03:33). This was a very uncritical and naïve portrayal of the war-ridden colonies. To balance this view, the next segment focused briefly on the colonial war. The images shown only show the Portuguese perspective – wounded and refugees are shipped to the metropole, military patrols, and areal images of the destruction.

All the while not being consistent of how to label the independence movements, interchanging between revolutionary forces and rebellions: "The refugees from the areas affected by the African revolution. In Angola the rebellion started in 1961, in Portuguese Guinea in 63 and Mozambique in 64. So far, the fighting has left thousands dead and wounded." (Danstrup et al. 1967: 03:33-04:59). Only images showing the Portuguese perspective are shown, giving a sense of sympathising with the Portuguese soldiers and refugees.

Mondlane's Interview in Copenhagen

In late September or early October 1967, Eduardo Mondlane was interviewed while he was in Copenhagen. Mondlane was the president of the FRELIMO and would be assassinated in February 1969 by the Portuguese secret service (PIDE) in Dar es Salaam (Darch 2019, 269–71). In the three-minute interview aired by DR, Mondlane was able to express his view on the unfairness of the European settler minority's rule and exploitation of the seven million African inhabitants in Mozambique. When talking about his and his family's experiences of colonial rule, Mondlane's

description of the in the harsh labour conditions for the African population in the Portuguese colonies:

> "… all my brothers were away working for Europeans, either in South Africa in gold mines, or in the cities, in the ports of Mozambique. And they never quite were able to count come back unless they were sick to come and die."

Dramatized or not, and not directly mentioning the Portuguese forced labour policies, this description was the first time, from the gathered material, that the Danish viewer was confronted with the harsh reality of labour under Portuguese colonial rule ('Glimt fra Mozambique hvor afrikanske frihedskæmpere har sat sig fast i en femtedel af landet' 1967: 01:19-04:03).

Portugal's NATO Membership

The *Horisont* programme's first report was about a subject that would be discussed throughout the rest of the 1960's and up through the 1970's – NATO. Portugal's usage of NATO supplied armament being used against the various African independence movements and supressing the democratic opposition in the metropole, were causing debates in the member state countries, including in Denmark. In a *Horisont* programme aired in April 1969 the DR journalist is direct in his criticism of the Portuguese government. The journalist accused Portugal of going against NATO's purpose of defending democracy, and even stated that Portugal never had been a democracy, but "… is fighting democratic development both at home and in its colonies." Furthering this criticism, the journalist highlighted that: "The vast majority of Portugal's military capability is not used within the NATO framework but is used to fight the resistance movements in the African possessions." Ending the report, the journalist mentioned Eduardo Mondlane's assassination two months prior, who had repeatedly emphasised that the other NATO countries, because they were Portugal's allies, were helping to fight the African freedom movements (Danstrup et al. 1969: 16:38-18:04). In this *Horisont* report, the journalist portrayed Portugal as an undemocratic colonial state, which was suppressing democratic movements in its metropole and waging a war with NATO supplied weapons against resistance movements in its colonies, which stained the NATO alliance as a pro-colonial organisation. Quite a portrayal in a report with a duration of under two minutes.

In the radio, this debate continued. DR transmitted the Social Democrats' congress in June 1969. Even though it was not DR directly criticising the Portuguese state, it was still transmitted and given quite a lot of transmission time. The former prime minister Jens Otto Krag, who would be elected again in 1971, mentioned the Greek and Portuguese dictatorships as mismatches in the NATO alliance. Again, the Portuguese colonial war was brought up as a contrast to NATO's democratic values. Krag ended stating that Denmark had to demand a halt to all arms aid to the current governments of Greece and Portugal (Koplev and Mathisen 1969a). Two days later, Mogens Lykketoft representing the Social Democrats' youth wing, proposed that "the fascist regimes in Greece and Portugal are excluded from co-operation as long as the current governments are in power." (Koplev and Mathisen 1969b). This was the first time, from the gathered material, that Portugal had been called a fascist regime in DR's transmissions.

From 1965, a new approach to the Portuguese state started to emerge. DR journalists became more active in the analysis of the Portuguese government in the metropole and in the colonies. Danish political debates related to NATO lead the way to Portuguese colonial affairs being brought up in the Danish parliament and political congresses and consequently ending being broadcast by DR in way or another.

The Turning Point (1970-1974)

On the 18th July 1973, *Horisont* brought yet again a programme about Portugal, but this time focusing solely on the Portuguese colonial war. It started with informing about the Wiriyamu Massacre committed by Portuguese forces near the Cahora Bassa dam's construction site. The rest of the programme was about the independence movements' perspective in the colonial war. In this programme three different films were shown, each about different colonies' independence movements. In the presentation of the first, an American film about FRELIMO, Dalhoff-Nielsen, did not hide the fact of being biased and admitting that it was in fact indictment of Portugal (Danstrup et al. 1973: 05:57-06:09). The film about PAIGC shows an interview with the leader Amilcar Cabral and follow a PAIGC groups' preparation and execution of an attack on a Portuguese outpost. When the PAIGC soldiers were getting in position for the attack, Dalhoff-Nielsen

reminded the viewer that the Nordic countries support the schools and hospitals of the partisan movements, and this support was politically controversial in Denmark, due to both countries being NATO members (Danstrup et al. 1973, 28:58-29:09). In the last part about Angola, the MPLA's leader, Agostinho Neto was interviewed, and UNITA was shown on Danish television for the first time, with an interview with its leader Jonas Savimbi. This programme clearly showed how aligned DR was with the independence movements in the Portuguese African colonies.

In this period DR kept its anti-colonial stance by broadcasting foreign pro-independence movement reportages on its programmes. This was especially the case in the *Horisont* programmes. From the 1973, DR's covering of the colonial war expanded. Not only more programmes were being made about the unfolding events, but television teams were also being sent to Portugal and Guinea-Bissau, which led to the *Horisont* programme of the 9th of January 1974, the most nuanced programme since the mid-1960's. A television team with *Horisont* journalist Peter Dalhoff-Nielsen, photographer Ole Lytken, sound technician Ove G. Sørensen and translator Peter Harpsøe. The team, travelled to Guinea-Bissau to report from first-hand experience. Starting with an introduction of the Portuguese in Guinea-Bissau and the capital city of Bissau, while a military marching band of 46 indigenous soldiers leads the change of the guard of the governor's palace in the background. By this time the PAIGC had already declared independence (Dalhoff-Nielsen, Lytken, and Sørensen 1974). Dalhoff-Nielsen brings up the much-debated topic of the racial divide in the Portuguese colonial society. He affirms that officially both African and Europeans have the same rights, he maintains the DR status quo that the team while in Guinea-Bissau did not see a single sign of racial discrimination, and if there was one it would be a social divide rather than a racial one (Dalhoff-Nielsen, Lytken, and Sørensen 1974: 09:08-10:28). When visiting the village of Empada, the DR team interviewed three indigenous militiamen, who told the DR team, that they had joined the Portuguese militia, because the PAIGC had indiscriminately killed villagers of Empada (Dalhoff-Nielsen, Lytken, and Sørensen 1974: 26:23-30:28). After all the pro-PAIGC programmes, this was the first-time atrocities committed by the PAIGC were told on a DR programme.

Conclusion

DR's portrayal of the Portuguese colonial state had three phases. The first phase, starting from the essay's start date – 1961, DR had an uncritical stance towards the looming conflicts that would erupt in the Portuguese African colonies. *Angola 61* was an ambitious programme but ended with very mixed results and leaving a narrative which leaned quite heavily on the Portuguese regime's narrative and with a lack of nuance. DR was just not interested in the Angolan conflict until 1963, when a new war started in Guinea-Bissau. Meanwhile, the world situation was evolving as well. The decolonisation of Africa was by the mid-1960's almost complete. With the Portuguese use of NATO supplied weapons in its wars, the colonial war began to be debated in Danish politics in relation to NATO, and subsequently became a more covered topic on the radio and television. With that development, a new second phase started to emerge. DR's journalists became more analytic and critical about the colonial war, colonialism, and the Portuguese state. By around 1970, DR's coverage evolved to a third phase where it was fully committed anti-colonial broadcaster. DR supported the various African independence movements by focusing on giving the independence movements' perspectives more airtime, than the Portuguese perspective, interviewing movement leaders, travelling to the different colonies, and using foreign materials to further its point of view. For this purpose, the program *Horisont* was, since 1965, a key instrument in this portrayal of the Portuguese colonial state. One thing that did not change throughout the whole period, was the narrative of racial harmony in the Portuguese colonial state. Various DR journalist's, throughout the period, held the opinion that the divide was not racial, but social.

Sources

- "Begravelse af de 4 døde fra opstanden'. 1961, *Aktuelt,* Danmarks Radio.
- Bramsen, Mikael 1974. "Portugal", *TV-Avisen*, Danmarks Radio.
- Dalhoff-Nielsen, Peter, Ole Lytken, and Ove G. Sørensen 1974a. "Kampen om Guinea". *Horisont*, Danmarks Radio.
- Dalhoff-Nielsen, Peter, Ole Lytken, and Ove G. Sørensen 1974b. "Mozambique". *Horisont*, Danmarks Radio.
- Danstrup, John, Robert Christiansen, Peter Dalhoff-Nielsen, and Lasse Budtz 1965a. "Interview med politikere om forholdene Danmark-Grønland og Portugal og dets besiddelser". *Horisont,* Danmarks Radio.
- Danstrup, John, Robert Christiansen, Peter Dalhoff-Nielsen, and Lasse Budtz 1965b. "Portugal". *Horisont*, Danmarks Radio.
- Danstrup, John, Robert Christiansen, Peter Dalhoff-Nielsen, and Lasse Budtz 1967. "Portugal". *Horisont*, Danmarks Radio.
- Danstrup, John, Robert Christiansen, Peter Dalhoff-Nielsen, and Lasse Budtz 1969. "Portugals Kolonikrige". *Horisont*, Danmarks Radio.
- Danstrup, John, Robert Christiansen, Peter Dalhoff-Nielsen, and Lasse Budtz 1972. "Portugals Politiske Fanger Og Krigen i Afrika". *Horisont*, Danmarks Radio.
- Danstrup, John, Robert Christiansen, Peter Dalhoff-Nielsen, and Lasse Budtz 1973. "Kampen om de Portugisiske kolonier i Afrika". *Horisont*, Danmarks Radio.
- "Glimt fra Mozambique hvor afrikanske frihedskæmpere har sat sig fast i en femtedel af landet". 1967. *TV-Avisen*. Danmarks Radio.
- Jørgensen, Poul 1961. "Større parti kreaturer indskibes i Kolding for at blive sendt til Angola". *Internationalt Landsbrugsmagasin*, Danmarks Radio.
- Koplev, Kjeld, and Kurt Mathisen 1969a. "Socialdemokratiets Kongres i København 1969". *Dagens Debat*, Danmarks Radio.
- Koplev, Kjeld, and Kurt Mathisen 1969b. "Socialdemokratiets Kongres i København 1969". *Dagens Debat*, Danmarks Radio.
- Ludvigsen, Sven 1961. "Glimt fra NATO åbningsmødet". *Aktuelt Kvarter*, Danmarks Radio.
- "Partisaner Fra Angola Træner i Lejr i Congo". 1963. *Horisont*, Danmarks Radio.
- Rastén, Adolf 1961. "Udenrigsminister Jens Otto Krag's tale i FN", Danmarks Radio.
- Riisager, Ole Emil 1961. "Liberia om menneskerettighederne i Angola". *Pressens Radioavis*, Danmarks Radio.
- Toksvig, Claus, John Carlsen, and Bent Walter 1961a. "Sorte og hvide portugisere". *Angola 61*, Danmarks Radio.
- Toksvig, Claus, John Carlsen, and Bent Walter 1961b. "Eksperimenter". *Angola 61*, Danmarks Radio.
- Toksvig, Claus, John Carlsen, and Bent Walter 1961c. "Perspektivet nordfra". *Angola 61*, Danmarks Radio.

- United Nations General Assembly 1960a. “Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples”. United Nations Digital Library.
- United Nations General Assembly 1960b. “Transmission of Information under Article 73e of the Charter”. United Nations Digital Library.

Bibliography

- Afonso, Aniceto, and Carlos de Matos Gomes 2020: Guerra Colonial, Porto Editora.
- Alves, Tânia 2017: "Reporting 4 February 1961 in Angola: The Beginning of the End of the Portuguese Empire". Garcia, José Luís, Chandrika Kaul, Filipa Subtil, and Alexandra Santos (ed.): *Media and the Portuguese Empire*, Springer International Publishing, pp. 235-251. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-61792-3_13
- Austin, Gareth 2011: "Poverty and Development as Themes in British Films on the Gold Cast, 1927-57". Grieveson, Lee and Colin MacCabe (ed.): *Film and the End of Empire*, Palgrave Macmillan, pp. 225-35. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-1-349-92502-5_12
- Bondebjerg, Ib 2006: "Dokumentarisme og fakta". Hjarvard, Stig (ed.): *Dansk tv's historie*, Samfundslitteratur, pp. 179-218.
- Bondebjerg, Ib 2008: *Virkelighedens fortællinger: Den danske tv-dokumentarismens historie*. 1st ed. Frederiksberg: Forlaget Samfundslitteratur.
- Castelo, Cláudia 2017: "The Luso-Tropicalist Message of the Late Portuguese Empire". In *Media and the Portuguese Empire*, edited by José Luís Garcia, Chandrika Kaul, Filipa Subtil, and Alexandra Santos, 217-34. Cham: Springer International Publishing. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-61792-3_12
- Cervelló, Josep Sanchez 2020a: "FRELIMO, a Lenta Coesão Do Nacionalismo", Afonso, Aniceto, and Carlos de Matos Gomes, Guerra Colonial, Porto Editora, pp. 144-148.
- Cervelló, Josep Sanchez 2020b: "Portugal e a ONU", Afonso, Aniceto, and Carlos de Matos Gomes, Guerra Colonial, Porto Editora, pp. 58-60.
- Cervelló, Josep Sanchez 2020c: "Portugal na cena internacional (1960-1961)", Afonso, Aniceto, and Carlos de Matos Gomes, Guerra Colonial, Porto Editora, pp. 54-56.
- Darch, Colin 2019: *Historical Dictionary of Mozambique*, Rowman & Littlefield. https://doi.org/10.5771/9781538111352
- Garcia, José Luís, Chandrika Kaul, Filipa Subtil, and Alexandra Santos. 2017. "The Portuguese Empire: An Introduction'. Garcia, José Luís, Chandrika Kaul, Filipa Subtil, and Alexandra Santos (ed.): *Media and the Portuguese Empire*, Springer International Publishing, pp. 1-27. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-61792-3_1
- Gleijeses, Piero 1997: "The First Ambassadors: Cuba's Contribution to Guinea-Bissau's War of Independence". *Journal of Latin American Studies* 29:1, pp. 45-88. https://doi.org/10.1017/S0022216X96004646
- Hjarvard, Stig 2006: "Tv-nyheder". Hjarvard, Stig: *Dansk tv's historie*, Frederiksberg: Samfundslitteratur, pp. 105-144.

- James, W. Martin 2018: *Historical Dictionary of Angola*, Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield.
- Jansen, Jan C., and Jürgen Osterhammel 2019: *Decolonization: A Short History*, Princeton University Press.
- Mendy, Peter Michael Karibe, and Richard Andrew Lobban 2013: *Historical Dictionary of the Republic of Guinea-Bissau,* Scarecrow Press.
- Monteiro, José Pedro 2023: *The Internationalisation of the "Native Labour" Question in Portuguese Late Colonialism, 1945-1962*, Springer International Publishing. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-05140-1
- Silva, A. E. Duarte 1995: "O litígio entre Portugal e a ONU (1960-1974)". *Análise Social* 30:130, pp. 5-50.