

is a long overdue and important study that demands serious attention. It makes a valuable contribution to historical writing about the 1950s and 1960s in particular, through its evaluation of the life of this important political actor. At times, the treatment of Luthuli is a little episodic and even occasionally one-dimensional, but this does not detract from the overall achievement. Luthuli has long been muffled, and his views interpreted through the words of others; it is good to have his voice presented with passion, clarity, sympathy and insight.

Luthuli emerges as a person of modesty, dignity and integrity, all leadership qualities which are attractive and increasingly rare in public life. His career and legacy deserve much more prominence and more honest appraisal than they have enjoyed thus far. Couper deserves much credit for his empathetic portrait of a fine individual, and his study deserves to be widely read.

*The Afrikaans of the Cape Muslims from 1815 to 1915*

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**Achmat Davids (edited by Hein Willemsse and Suleman E  
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Until the 1980s, Afrikaner national unity was maintained by two historical myths: that the Afrikaners were the descendants of the Dutch, with some German and French admixture, but firmly European; and that their 'pearl of great value' – Afrikaans – was likewise a European transplantation: it developed gradually out of Dutch dialects and its recognition as a 'separate' language was thanks to a group of men from Paarl in the Western Cape who

in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century attempted to broaden the functional uses of Afrikaans – the so-called ‘First Afrikaans Language Movement.’ In the mid-1980s – at the height of the ‘state of emergency’ – Afrikanerdom was assaulted further with the publication of two books: Hans Heese’s *Groep Sonder Grense* (1984), which detailed the extent of miscegenation and inter-marriage at the early Cape, and Theo du Plessis’s *Afrikaans in Beweging* (1986), which argued for the existence of a number of Afrikaans language movements during the 19<sup>th</sup> century, most notably a ‘Malay movement’ which existed *before* the advent of the men of Paarl and used Afrikaans in higher functions several decades earlier. Of course, these were the years of the tricameral parliament, and variationist linguistics (*variasietaalkunde*) was all the rage among Afrikaans linguists: MCJ van Rensburg investigated the Afrikaans of the Griqua, Hans du Plessis that of Namibia, while Ernst Kotzé studied Malay Afrikaans. The same period also saw the beginning of a renewed interest in the genesis of Afrikaans in the early Cape, especially among foreign scholars such as Hans den Besten and Paul Roberge who challenged the hegemony of the ideas of J du P Scholtz *cum suis* and argued for the importance of substratum influences in the development of Afrikaans.

It is against this background that the book under review should be seen, for it is the long-overdue publication of an MA-thesis (of exceptional length and quality, it should be added) which the late Achmat Davids submitted in 1991 under the supervision of Theo du Plessis. While in some senses it is the product of Afrikaans variationist linguistics as described above, it is also more than that since Davids straddled different fields and roles: unlike the linguists, he was also an historian and a community leader with deep roots in the Muslim community of Cape Town. He first established himself in the 1980s as an expert on 19<sup>th</sup>-century Cape Muslim history with two books, *The Mosques of the Bo-Kaap* (1980) and *The History of the Tana Baru* (1985). His work contributed much to inspire a new generation of historians of the colonial Cape to write more inclusive histories which also paid attention to Islam. Thus, when Achmat Davids turned his attention to the contribution of Cape Muslims to the history of Afrikaans, he did so with a foremost knowledge of their socio-cultural history and with extensive access to informants and (private) sources which probably no other individual could have commanded. For this reason, this book is of as much importance to historians of the colonial Cape as it is to historians of the Afrikaans language and South African Islamic culture.

Dauids claims that his book has the humble aim of evoking ‘a greater awareness of the existence of Cape Muslim Afrikaans as a useful source for broadening our understanding of the linguistic nature of Cape Afrikaans’ (p. 257). Although Dauids rightly states that his work is not an exhaustive study of the linguistic nature of Arabic-Afrikaans (the Afrikaans of Cape Muslims written in Arabic script), this book has certainly laid the foundation for such a study. One of Dauids’ main objectives was to create a standard system of transliterating the Arabic script of Arabic-Afrikaans texts into roman script to demonstrate that the Cape Muslim community wrote as they spoke – thus proving that Arabic-Afrikaans texts are in a way similar to audio-recordings which preserved the original sounds of Muslim Afrikaans speakers and thus represent a remarkable treasure trove for the Afrikaans historical linguist. These aspects of his study Dauids achieves in the second part of the book which consists of a lengthy linguistic analysis (centred on Dauids’ concept of ‘innovative orthographic engineering’) of how Muslim Afrikaans speakers adapted the Arabic alphabet and Muslim ‘rules of reading’ (p. 206) to preserve their own unique sounds. Dauids develops a system of transliteration for these Arabic-Afrikaans texts which would bring to the fore much better the actual sounds of past speakers than previously existing systems. In the final chapter, he applies his system to extracts from three texts (both the originals in Arabic script and the transliterations are presented, along with English translations provided by the editors), and discusses some of the linguistic features of the texts.

But to the historian the most innovative part of the study is its first half. Dauids quite rightly criticises earlier writers on Arabic-Afrikaans for not contextualising these texts, thus failing ‘to fit them into the milieu in which they occurred. The result is that an invaluable source or social history ... is lost’ (p. 96). Dauids, on the other hand, magnificently achieves this ideal; and it is in doing so that his experience as a Cape historian and Muslim community leader greatly aided him. Chapter 2, entitled ‘The world the Cape slaves made’, traces the ‘social milieu in which the Arabic-Afrikaans literary tradition emerged’ (p. 87). In much detail – based on an intensive study of literary and archival sources – Dauids treats the origins of Cape slaves from the Indonesian archipelago (paying much attention to the religious, literary and linguistic background of the region), the development of a free black community, the various languages and lingua francas spoken by slaves, the development of a Cape Muslim educational system from the early 19<sup>th</sup> century onwards, and the issue of literacy among the slaves. This

socio-historic chapter is followed by one which looks in greater detail at the nature, production and dissemination of the 74 known Arabic-Afrikaans texts produced between 1845 and 1915 (although Davids argues that the tradition of writing Afrikaans in Arabic script was already in place by 1830, no earlier texts have survived), dividing their development into three distinct phases.

Considering that this research was done more than 20 years ago, Davids' achievement is remarkable. He was the first Afrikaans linguist to argue for, and demonstrate, the importance of detailed historical research for an understanding of linguistic phenomena (practising what is sometimes known as 'socio-historical linguistics'). In many respects he was ahead of his time: e.g. his careful study of literacy and the role of different literary traditions in its development. In this, as well as his investigation of the production of different genres of Arabic-Afrikaans texts, he was an early South African practitioner of what is now called 'book history'. In at least two cases he was most prescient: in his discussion of the famous 1760-slave letter in Bugis script he states unequivocally, 'I do not believe it was the only [slave letter] written. Nor do I believe that a network of correspondence existed only among the Buganese [*sic*] slaves' (p. 79). And indeed, the past decade has seen the discovery of another Bugis letter (including some Arabic in Bugis characters) from 1786, the notebook of a slave teacher covering 1717-32 (which includes some text in Tamil), and a large cache of correspondence between slaves and ex-slaves at the Cape with their relatives in Batavia. Likewise, when Davids suggests that one of the reasons for the demise of Arabic-Afrikaans was the inability of converts to Islam to read Arabic script, he mentions that the extent of conversion through marriage might be higher than has been assumed (pp. 99-100). Recently, V.C. Malherbe has indeed demonstrated that in the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, many women of European descent entered into liaisons with Muslim men.

While I am delighted that Davids' study is finally available more widely, in a carefully edited version, rereading his work made me realise what a missed opportunity its late publication represents: had this book appeared in the early 1990s, its impact would have been so much higher. As it is, Davids' work has loomed large on Cape historiography over the past decade or two, and the seminal studies of Kerry Ward on exiles and convicts in the VOC empire, Ana Deumert on the varieties of Cape Afrikaans in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, John Edwin Mason's exploration of Sufism among Cape slaves, as well as Robert Ross and Sirtjo Koolhof's examination of Bugis slave networks, have all taken their cue

from Davids' work on the language and culture of the Cape Muslims. The editing and production of this book were labours of love; well-deserved by a scholar as renowned for his enthusiasm and generosity as Achmat Davids.