

C. SAUNDERS, H. PHILLIPS, E. VAN HEYNINGEN and V. BICKFORD-SMITH (Eds.) *Studies in the history of Cape Town*. Vol 5 (ISBN 0 7992 0568 0). History Department, in association with the Centre for African Studies, University of Cape Town, 1984.

The papers included in this collection were delivered at the fourth workshop on the history of greater Cape Town, held at the University of Cape Town on 3 and 4 June 1983.

Dealing with diverse topics they are nevertheless in the realm of urban history. The first two concern Islam: Robert Shell investigates the reasons for conversion to Islam during the period 1808-1915. He makes use of the censuses of 1841, 1854, 1865, 1875, 1891 and 1904 and analyses the remarks and contemporary observations of travellers, missionaries, administrators and participants to show the nature of the growth and the geographical distribution of Islam. He makes the point that it was an urban religion and comprehensively discusses how conversion to Islam took place mentioning slavery, adoption, education, marriage and the last rites which makes for an interesting and perceptive insight into why the number of Islamic conversions was so high. He concludes that Islam filled the social and legal gap which slavery at the Cape at first consigned slaves to and where the Christian rites of baptism, marriage and internment were denied them. There is an extensive bibliography and source list and Shell seems to have made comprehensive use of existing records from the period.

Achmat Davids briefly traces the history of the smallpox outbreaks of nineteenth century Cape Town and analyses the Cape Muslims' reactions to them which were based on the fact that they were not prepared to give up the privilege of freedom of religion without a struggle. It was only during the 1882 epidemic, by which time they had a fair degree of political strength and the ability to articulate their grievances, that their protest against the health policy of the Cape Town municipality became militant. Davids traces this militancy through their rejection of vaccination, hospitalisation, and quarantine, and sets out the religious reasons for their opposition. He also discusses spiritual medicinal prescriptions and details the municipality's attempts to control the cemeteries and hence their burial practices. He concludes that though the "Malay Revolt" against the early nineteenth century smallpox epidemics was purely a religious revolt, it nevertheless focussed attention on the Muslims' political and social disadvantages in the society of Cape Town. Davids illustrates his points with quotes from newspapers and magazines of the period especially *The Lantern* and has produced an interesting and fairly detailed article from the point of view of the Malays while at the same time being sympathetic and understanding of their plight.

In the third paper Elizabeth van Heyningen presents a different aspect of Cape Town health matters. She concentrates on venereal diseases and the measures taken from 1868-1902 to control prostitution. The first part deals largely with the Contagious Diseases Act of 1868, the support for, opposition against and effects of this act. She also goes on to discuss the changing composition of the prostitutes as the century progresses and traces the influence of the Huguenot Seminary at Wellington, the Vrouesendingbond and the Women's Christian Temperance Union (WCTU) on the rescue work of prostitutes. This study also sheds light on the life of the labouring classes and opens up the usually hidden aspect of prostitution in society. She also reveals the role played by the reform movement and

those opposed to it hoping for regulation and control with a brief look at the medical officers involved in the application of the Contagious Diseases Act. It is thin on statistics but informative of social aspects and an extensive bibliography has been used.

Still dealing with health matters Peter Buirski tries to map out and account for the various trends in certain mortality rates for Cape Town during the period 1895-1980. Using the available statistics for mortality, which only start with the Births and Deaths Registration Act of 1894, while the suburban statistics were only included in Greater Cape Town after 1913, he has set up graphs, ethnically divided, to illustrate the changes over time in those aspects of the social environment mirrored in the mortality data. This data also focuses on the mortality changes of certain infectious diseases, the prevalence of which he concludes provides an index of a community's social and hygiene conditions. In separate sections he deals with the infectious diseases of enteric or typhoid fever infantile gastro-enteritis or diarrhoea and tuberculosis. He concludes that these infectious diseases were essentially a non-white phenomenon. The course followed by enteric fever was largely determined by the extension of water borne sewerage while the decline of infantile gastro-enteritis from about 1960 was associated with a decrease in poverty. Tuberculosis only diminished with the introduction of chemotherapy in the late 1940s. Buirski relies heavily on the reports of the MOH of Cape Town which by the very nature of the article is adequate. However, when it comes to the interpretation and presentation of the social aspects of the data a wider reference will be needed.

David Lombaard's subject is the only strike in Cape Town's history of its police force which occurred at the height of the New Year's eve festivities in December 1917. He traces the reasons for the build up of resentment at working conditions, especially amongst the younger unmarried policemen; their efforts to seek redress through official channels; the rebuffs they received and their final decision and written ultimatum to go on strike in an effort to focus attention on their plight. He details the results and penalties given to the guilty strikers and the support given by the public to the strikers. However, he ends with an unsatisfactory attempt to inject a marxist class theory into the conclusion. His references were largely government reports and inquiries and the odd newspaper report.

The final two papers in the volume are both concerned with aspects of municipal government. Vivian Bickford-Smith, draws upon the little-used Standard Bank archives as well as other sources to examine the material interests of members of the town council of Cape Town during the last two decades of the nineteenth century and how they acted to influence the development policies and practices of this body. The battle for control of the town council between the eventual winners the Clean or Reform Party who were opposed by the so-called "Dirty Party" is outlined. The latter seemed to represent the landlord class while the reformers seemed to represent the merchants or successful businessmen who could afford to be reformers as they did not own extensive land or buildings. The Reform Party received extensive support from the newspapers who were dependent upon the reformers for much of their advertising revenue. After gaining victory in the 1882 elections the Reform Party secured themselves in office by continued press support and changes in the rules for municipal voting in 1885, 1890 and 1893 and were able to look after their interests viz. by developing the centre of town while neglecting the outskirts of town especially concerning the provision of housing in the poorer areas. This study, however, ends disappointingly with little detail of the methods used or actual interests protected. More information concerning specific projects

benefitting the Reform party would have helped. Wider reference to the Town Council minutes could possibly have helped in this connection.

The final study by Jane Carruthers deals with the supply of electricity in the Greater Cape Town area from 1875 to after the Second World War. She traces this development largely through the career of G.H. Swingler who was appointed city electrical engineer of Cape Town in 1918, a post he kept till his formal retirement in 1944. In looking at his career she details his involvement in the building of the Muizenberg power station; the expansion of the Dock Road power station; his opposition to the Electricity Bill; his struggle to retain the independence of Cape Town's electricity supply; his co-operation with Escom and the Salt River power station. Although basically focussing on Swingler's life it is detailed and analytical enough to give us the background and political power play involved in the development of Cape Town's electricity supply.

Overall, this publication, in a new book format, gives a fascinating insight into little known aspects of social life, local events and living conditions of Cape Town history. The majority of the papers concentrated on providing a look at the social, living and working conditions of that part of Cape Town society occupying the lower economic spectrum. The published papers nevertheless make a substantial contribution to our knowledge of the history of Cape Town.

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CORRIGENDUM

On the cover of *Contree* No. 15 (January 1984) a photograph appeared, entitled "The road to Richards Bay (1922)".

According to Mr Z.J. Lazarus, senior lecturer in history at the University of the Western Cape, this date (1922) is not correct as the two leading motor cars in the photograph had not yet been manufactured by 1922. The first is clearly the well-known Model A Ford. The manufacturing of this model only began after production of the famous Model T Ford (pedal Ford or Tin Lizzie) had been stopped in 1927.¹ It is therefore unlikely that the model in the photograph dates from before 1927.

The second motor car is a Chevrolet. General Motors began assembly of this model only in 1926.² It is, however, difficult to establish the exact year as small changes were made periodically. The model in the photograph probably dates from 1927 or 1928.

1. R.H. JOHNSTON, *Early motoring in South Africa* (Cape Town, 1975), pp. 186-189; see also M. SEDGWICK, *Cars of the thirties and forties* (New York, 1979), pp. 22 and 111.
2. JOHNSTON, *op. cit.*, pp. 186-188.

