

**COLLECTIONS MANAGEMENT PRACTICES  
AT THE TRANSVAAL MUSEUM, 1913 - 1964 :  
ANTHROPOLOGICAL, ARCHAEOLOGICAL  
AND HISTORICAL**

by

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Submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree

**DOCTOR PHILOSOPHIAE (MUSEOLOGY)**

at the

Department of Historical and Heritage Studies  
Faculty of Humanities  
University of Pretoria  
Pretoria  
2005

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**The Old Museum, Boom Street, Pretoria, 1915**

Collection: National Cultural History Museum, HKF 862



**The new building of the Transvaal Museum, 1912**

Collection: National Cultural History Museum, HKF 16757



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## ABBREVIATIONS

dd	dated
NA	National Archives, Pretoria
N a/n a	No author
NCHMA	National Cultural History Museum, Pretoria, Archives
n.d.	No date
n.p.	No page

## SUMMARY

A museum has to care for the objects in its collection to the best of its ability. The concept collections management emerged in the 1960s, when accountability for collections became a strong incentive for museums to develop modern collections management practices. In the process of establishing accountability (the effective implementation of practices to ensure adherence to collections policies on the accessioning, care and disposal of objects in a museum collection) many museums encountered problems such as the lack of access to detailed information about the objects in collections, a proliferation of accession numbers and inadequate location control. These problems were also encountered at the National Cultural History Museum, Pretoria.

This research reveals the way in which the historical, anthropological and archaeological collections at the Transvaal Museum, predecessor of the National Cultural History Museum were managed from 1913 to 1964. This period was chosen for the following reasons:

- J.W.B. Gunning, the director of the Transvaal Museum, was succeeded by H.G. Breijer in 1913. The year 1913 is thus a clear starting point for research and a new beginning, a watershed, at the Museum.
- The year 1964 marked the inception of an autonomous museum, the National Cultural History and Open-Air Museum, and the discontinuance of responsibility, after a period of 60 years, for the anthropology, archaeology and history collections at the Transvaal Museum.

The development of the Transvaal Museum as a natural history and a history museum, is traced. In 1953, for the first time, a trained professional officer was appointed for the history division at the Museum. After 1953 there was an increased awareness (from a professional point of view) that historical, anthropological and archaeological collections require specialized curatorial care. Modern collections management principles, although they were not called by this name, featured effectively in the handling of the historical collection in particular, for the first time in more than 50 years.

Aspects such as departmental organization, the staff, expansion of collections, policies, documentation and conservation are investigated. An evaluation of the factors that played a decisive role in collections management practices for the historical, anthropological and

archaeological collections shows that a combination of aspects has to be considered in order to understand the practices that were followed and the changes that were made.

**Key words:** accessioning; anthropology; archaeology; catalogue; classification; collections; collections accountability; collections management; cultural history; documentation; ethnology; FitzSimons, Vivian, Frederick, Maynard; history; museology; objects; register; Roodt-Coetzee, Jacoba, Aletta, Johanna (Kotie); storage; Transvaal Museum

## OPSOMMING

'n Museum moet na die beste van sy vermoë die voorwerpe in sy versamelings versorg. Die konsep “versamelingsbestuur” het eers in die 1960's ontstaan. Aanspreeklikheid vir versamelings was, veral vir museums in die Verenigde State en die Verenigde Koninkryk, 'n sterk dryfveer om moderne versamelingsbestuurpraktyke te ontwikkel. Soos die proses van aanspreeklikheid (die effektiewe implementering van maatreëls om te verseker dat die beleid vir registrasie, versorging en die afskrywe van voorwerpe in 'n museumversameling nagevolg word) begin vorm aanneem het, het baie museums voor probleme soos die gebrek aan gedetailleerde inligting oor die voorwerpe in die versameling, 'n vermenigvuldiging van aanwinningsnommers en onvoldoende bergingskontrole te staan gekom. Dié probleme is ook by die Nasionale Kultuurhistoriese Museum, Pretoria, ondervind.

Hierdie navorsing toon aan hoe die antropologiese, argeologiese en historiese versamelings in die Transvaal Museum (die voorloper van die Nasionale Kultuurhistoriese Museum) in die tydperk 1913 tot 1964, bestuur is. Die periode is om die volgende redes gekies:

- J.W.B. Gunning, die direkteur van die Transvaal Museum, en voorheen direkteur van die Staatsmuseum van die Zuid-Afrikaanse Republiek, is op 25 Junie 1913 oorlede. Hy is deur H.G. Breijer, wie se aansoek op 11 Desember 1913 deur die Museumkomitee goedgekeur is, opgevolg. Die jaar 1913 was dus 'n nuwe begin, 'n keerpunt, vir die Museum en ook 'n goeie beginpunt vir die navorsing.
- Dieselfde geld vir die jaar 1964. In dié jaar het die Nasionale Kultuurhistoriese Museum onafhanklik geword, en na 'n periode van net meer as sestig jaar was die Transvaal Museum nie langer vir die antropologiese, argeologiese en historiese versamelings verantwoordelik nie.

Die ontwikkeling van die Transvaal Museum as 'n natuurhistoriese en historiese museum is ondersoek. In 1953 is daar vir die eerste keer 'n vakkundige beampte in die geskiedenisafdeling van die Museum aangestel. Dit is gevolg deur 'n toenemende bewustheid (vanuit 'n kuratoriale oogpunt) dat die antropologiese, argeologiese en historiese versamelings gespesialiseerde vakkundige kennis, wat van natuurhistoriese praktyke verskil het, nodig gehad het. Moderne versamelingsbestuurpraktyke, wat egter nie so genoem is nie, is vir die eerste keer na 50 jaar effektief toegepas, veral in die geskiedenisafdeling. Die nuwe

werkswyse weerspiël 'n verandering wat uiteindelik tot die totstandkoming van 'n onafhanklike museum in 1964 sou lei.

Aspekte soos wysigings in organisasie, departementele organisasie, personeel, die groei in versamelings, beleidsake, die dokumentasieraamwerk en bewaring word ondersoek. 'n Ontleding van die dokumentasie in die Transvaal Museum sluit die verskillende stadia waaraan 'n voorwerp onderworpe is, naamlik die oorweging van die voorwerp vir insameling, die aanwinning en die tydelike verwydering of vervreemding van die voorwerp uit die museum, in.

'n Evaluering van faktore wat 'n deurslaggewende rol gespeel het in versamelingsbestuurpraktyke in die Transvaal Museum toon aan dat 'n kombinasie van aspekte oorweeg moet word om te begryp waarom sekere praktyke nagevolg en waarom wysigings aangebring is.

**Sleutelwoorde:** aanwinning; antropologie; argeologie; berging; dokumentasie; etnologie; FitzSimons, Vivian, Frederick, Maynard; geskiedenis; katalogus; klassifikasie; kultuurgeskiedenis; museumkunde; register; Roodt-Coetzee, Jacoba, Aletta, Johanna (Kotie); Transvaalmuseum; versamelings; versamelingsaanspreeklikheid; versamelingsbestuur; voorwerpe

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## PREFACE

This study arose to address the problems experienced in the documentation of collections in the National Cultural History Museum in Pretoria. My interest in museology, particularly collections management, began in 1978 when I was appointed as technical assistant in the History Section of the Museum. At the time the Museum was still located in the old building in Boom Street. There I could fully appreciate the unique characteristics of the many displays set up by Kotie Roodt-Coetzee, and those under her direct supervision. As time passed I also gained first-hand experience of working with the many and varied objects in the cultural history and history collections, and those in other storerooms in town – every corner of available space in Boom Street was filled to capacity and additional storage had to be utilized. The increase in the number of staff members did not always keep up with the growth of the collections, and documentation problems, some of them dating back 70 years or more, slowly but surely emerged in the management of these collections.

Kotie Roodt-Coetzee went on pension at the end of 1978. She was followed by two directors, Dr B. Cronjé and Dr U.S. Küsel. Another milestone came when the Old Museum had to be evacuated because it was flooded in 1990 and again in 1992, resulting in extensive damage to the building and the objects on display. The staff then moved to new offices and the collections and the workshops were housed in several additional buildings in Pretoria. Apart from the satellite museums, the Museum *per se* ceased to exist, but the collections continued to expand, albeit gradually, and collections management problems were aggravated by the divide between the curatorial staff, who were no longer closely associated with the collection, and the collections stored in different locations. These circumstances only improved when the old Mint building in Visagie Street, Pretoria was rebuilt as a functional museum. From October 2002 the staff and the collections of the National Cultural History Museum were then housed in a single building complex for the first time since 1912. This affords the collections management department the opportunity of solving documentation problems and other issues and to eliminate the possibility of similar problems occurring in the future.

During Küsel's tenure trends in the Museum itself and the South African museum scene in general, changed considerably. In April 1999 a major reorganization took place when the National Cultural History Museum, the Transvaal Museum and the South African National

Museum of Military History amalgamated as the Northern Flagship Institution. This move, in my opinion, resurrected the parlous situation that had led to the establishment of the National Cultural History and Open-Air Museum in 1964, because administering natural history and cultural history collections under a single management structure is far from ideal – as this research shows.

My interest in the collections and the chequered, indeed intricate, development of the Museum has focused my attention on factors that may well have contributed to collections management problems. Over the years I have faced many of these problems in my day-to-day work. In undertaking this critical analysis of the collections management practices for the anthropological, archaeological and historical collections at the Transvaal Museum during the period 1913 to 1964, I have thus been able to utilize my 27 years of experience at the Museum. On a museological level, this research also provided me with a challenge: to examine historic museum documentation and other collections management practices in detail and to establish factors that have inevitably led to changes and, in the longer term, to the establishment of the National Cultural History and Open-Air Museum. As far as can be ascertained no similar detailed analysis of historic museum documentation has been carried out for any other South African museum.

This research is in essence a museological study. Although the term “collections management” has only been in use from the 1960s, collections in museums have of course always been “managed”. Although initially it might well be thought that the term could not be applied to practices used as early as 1913, this research has proved that this is indeed possible. The structure of the study, in particular the exposition of the history of the Transvaal Museum in general terms, followed by an analysis of collections management practices during the same period, compelled me to use a similar discussion in different contexts. Although I strove to limit this repetition, or keep it to a minimum, it is to be hoped this is not seen as irksome or unnecessary. Then too, bearing in mind that this is a historic study, some terms, names and concepts that may now be regarded as pejorative or having racist connotations are used purely in their historical context in this thesis.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I wish to thank the Management Committee of the National Cultural History Museum, Pretoria, for their approval of this research project and for the generous time I was allowed to undertake the necessary research. Furthermore, I am grateful that I was permitted to make extensive use of the primary sources located in the archives and the collections management department of the Museum as well as the objects in the collections. In particular I wish to thank Glyn Balkwill, the head of the collections management department, who has had first hand experience of the issues I discuss here; he not only instigated this research but supported and advised me throughout my endeavours. I am also very grateful to all my colleagues at the Museum for their continuous interest, suggestions, unstinting assistance and encouragement – particularly at times when my courage failed me and I despaired of ever completing this project.

I particularly wish to thank my supervisor, Prof. F. Pretorius for his input, guidance and support, and my co-supervisor, Prof. O.J.O. Ferreira for his constructive comments. My thanks also to Dr B. Theron for her critical reading of the thesis, her careful editing and helpful suggestions. Thanks are also due to Nico Harmse of the Africana Section of the Merensky Library, University of Pretoria, for his friendly assistance at all times.

To my family members I express my heartfelt thanks for their support and understanding; they were invariably there to smooth the path for me. Their encouragement, despite having to bear with my problems, was always graciously given.

I acknowledge with heartfelt thanks, tinged with sadness, the inspiration of Kotie Roodt-Coetzee, from whom I learnt the rudiments of museum practice. She taught me so much more besides; she instilled in me a love and respect for the objects in a museum as documents of the past. I therefore dedicate this thesis to her memory. The fact that she passed away on 22 September 2005, shortly before the completion and submission of this study, was a grievous loss to me personally and to museology in South Africa in general; her significant contribution in the field remains undisputed.

## INTRODUCTION

### 1. THE ESTABLISHMENT OF A COLLECTIONS MANAGEMENT DEPARTMENT AT THE NATIONAL CULTURAL HISTORY MUSEUM, PRETORIA

A. Fahy is correct in her assertion that the historical development of collections and the way in which they have been managed affects all other activities of the museum.<sup>1</sup> This is indeed true with regard to collections management as it is practised at present at the National Cultural History Museum, Pretoria.<sup>2</sup> Not a day passes without the staff being confronted with problems which are the legacy of actions that have been taken with regard to the collections over the 113 year history of the Museum.

Although the term “collections management” is relatively new, the techniques involved in managing the collections in a museum are as old as the institution itself. To understand what these techniques were and why they took the particular form they did, makes it of course much easier for present-day staff to cope with problems and to find solutions.

The first department of collections management by that name at the National Cultural History Museum was only created in 1986 as part of the restructuring of the curatorial departments. In a policy document laid before and approved by the Board, U.S. Küsel, the director, proposed that three new departments be formed, namely collections management, period research and a specialized documentation and information retrieval department. The collections management department would be responsible for the professional and technical maintenance of the collections and for object research. In the period research department, research in allocated periods and subjects within individual time frames would be undertaken. The information department would receive full particulars of an object from the

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<sup>1</sup> A. Fahy, Introduction, in A. Fahy (ed.), *Collections management*, p. 1.

<sup>2</sup> The National Cultural History Museum was known as the National Cultural History and Open-Air Museum from its inception in 1964 until 1989 when the name changed. The Museum moved into a new functional building with a collections facility, display areas, educational and public amenities and staff accommodation (situated at 149 Visagie Street, Pretoria) during 1999 - 2000. For the history of the establishment of this Museum and its predecessor, the Transvaal Museum, see chapter II of this research project.

curator, and these would then be processed for eventual retrieval.<sup>3</sup> It was suggested that a new organogram such as this would benefit both the staff and the collections, as the staff would have more opportunities for research in an extended field of work and the collection would be better maintained and documented.

This was a radical innovation in which the collections were for the first time divided in terms of material, such as textiles, metals, ceramics, documents and vegetative objects, and not (as was the case previously) in terms of either academic discipline or specialized subject, such as anthropology, archaeology, cultural history, history, numismatics and philately. The task allocated to the collections management department was regarded as the one with the greatest responsibility as it had to maintain and control the Museum's entire collection.<sup>4</sup>

This was also the first indication that all was not well with the way in which the Museum had been documenting its collections. According to the director, information about the collections in the Museum was difficult to trace because of obsolete and incomplete indexes and retrieval systems.<sup>5</sup> The director was also worried about the tendency of curators to develop their own indexes and catchword lists.<sup>6</sup> The time was therefore ripe to establish a specialized documentation and information retrieval department, in other words a central documentation centre. The first head of the documentation centre was appointed in January 1987.<sup>7</sup> Soon afterwards the name of the department was changed to the "information centre".<sup>8</sup> The aim of the information centre was to centralize documentation, set standards

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<sup>3</sup> National Cultural History Museum Archives (hereafter NCHMA), Versamelings-, bewarings-, dokumentasie- en navorsingsbeleid vir die Nasionale Kultuurhistoriese en Opelugmuseum, Annexure E and decision R1986/15/4, Board of the National Cultural History and Open-Air Museum, agenda and minutes, meeting 21 May 1986.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., Report of director, Annexure C, Board of the National Cultural History and Open-Air Museum, agenda, meeting 27 August 1986 (curatorial report, J. Malan, p. 8).

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., Versamelings-, bewarings-, dokumentasie- en navorsingsbeleid vir die Nasionale Kultuurhistoriese en Opelugmuseum, Annexure E, Board of the National Cultural History and Open-Air Museum, agenda, meeting 21 May 1986.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid., Report of director, Annexure F, Board of the National Cultural History and Open-Air Museum, agenda, meeting 18 February 1987 (curatorial report, J. Malan, p. 2). This report covered the previous three months, including January 1987.

<sup>8</sup> Personal file E. Grobler, Memorandum, Voorstelle vir die reorganisasie van die inligtingsentrum, dd 8 May 1989, p. 6.

and act as co-ordinator between other museum departments.<sup>9</sup> The centre had to deal with in-house documentation training as well as to set up a section for information science. It was envisaged that this section would control, codify and verify records prior to entry into a computerized database, still to be developed. Standard terms were to be used and new acquisitions, accessioning and movement of objects handled.<sup>10</sup> Subsequently a section for computer services and one for movement of objects had to be established. Storage control, the mediathique and the archives also fell within the ambit of the information centre.<sup>11</sup>

There were still several departments dealing with museum documentation after the establishment of the information centre. Various documentation procedures, such as accessioning, inventorizing, cataloguing and marking<sup>12</sup> still remained the duty of either the curators of the various museums<sup>13</sup> or the collections management department. Initially, the information centre was only responsible for “further documentation”.<sup>14</sup> A cataloguing project was also undertaken by the staff of the collections management department under supervision of the information centre.<sup>15</sup>

No wonder that various restrictions handicapped the smooth functioning of the information centre: it had no authority to enforce improvements. Furthermore there was little co-

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<sup>9</sup> M. Hölscher, The information centre, *Museum Memo*, 17(3), September 1989, p. 28.

<sup>10</sup> See glossary. Location control, i.e. the recording of the movement of an object in a museum to and from its permanent location in the museum’s storage rooms is one of the most important collections management principles. For example, an object could be moved for exhibition, research or loan purposes. According to Roberts “the basic principle underlying the design of the location control procedures is the need to locate any group or individual item listed in an inventory, without excessive delay or expenditure of effort, using either direct or indirect methods”. D.A. Roberts, *Planning the documentation of museum collections*, p. 100. The documentation of museum collections should therefore include the location and movement of objects.

<sup>11</sup> Personal file E. Grobler, Memoranda, Voorstelle vir die reorganisasie van die inligtingsentrum, dd 8 May 1989, pp. 10 - 13 and Voorstelle t.o.v. die dokumentasie afdeling, dd 12 August 1989.

<sup>12</sup> See glossary.

<sup>13</sup> In 1987 the following so-called satellite museums resorted under the National Cultural History and Open-Air Museum: the Voortrekker Monument and the Kruger, Pierneef, Pioneer and Sammy Marks Museums and the Willem Prinsloo Agricultural Museum.

<sup>14</sup> Personal file E. Grobler, Memorandum, Departement Spesialiteitsmuseums and job description, dd 26 February 1987.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid., Memorandum, Katalogiseringsprojek 1988/89, dd 23 August 1988.

operation between the various departments and the curators did not have sufficient knowledge of the latest developments in information science and museum documentation.<sup>16</sup>

Clearly the restructuring of the professional section of the National Cultural History Museum was not on par with international practice, as no museum elsewhere had both a collections management and an information/documentation department. One or other of these terms was used for the department that dealt with collections management: acquisitions, accessioning, location control, information processing and retrieval, loans, data entry, inventories and accountability. With regard to conservation there was an anomaly: conservation could be part of collections management or it could be a separate department.<sup>17</sup> The result was that there was again a restructuring of departments at the Museum in August 1989. The new structure included departments for period research, object research, information documentation and conservation.<sup>18</sup> And this time there was no collections management department.

Yet another change was imminent because the professional staff had identified many other problems in the structure, notably the bad condition of the storage areas due to restructuring, the hierarchal line to be followed, the allocation of tasks, the aid available for researchers and students from outside, and the selection of new acquisitions.<sup>19</sup> A report was drawn up to address these concerns. The goals of the information centre were also clearly outlined: the improvement of interdepartmental communication, effective control over and accountability for object information and the standardization of procedures.<sup>20</sup> The functions of the centre were identified as systems control, acceptance of new acquisitions, storeroom control and terminology control.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> Ibid., Memorandum, Voorstelle vir die reorganisasie van die inligtingsentrum, dd May 1989, p. 7.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid., M. Hölscher, Reisverslag van me Marianne Hölscher na Engeland, die VSA en Kanada - Augustus tot September 1988.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid., Memorandum, Personeel- en pligtoreorganisasie, dd 16 August 1989, organogram.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid., Memorandum, Knelpunte, dd 21 November 1989.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid., Report, Verslag oor die herorganisering van die samestelling en funksies van die Nasionale Kultuurhistoriese Museum se Vakkundige Afdelings, p. 7.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid.



One aspect of the work of the information centre was brand new because the Museum was entering the exciting transition to the computer age.<sup>22</sup> The fact that the Museum could benefit from computerization had already been addressed as early as 1983, when two staff members attended a computer symposium and reported back to management. Although it had already become fashionable to use computers, it was only in 1987, with the first seminar at the National Cultural History Museum, held on 23 April 1987 and attended by 70 delegates, that computerization was regarded as a practical reality. The seminar focused on MUSNET, a data network for museums, a computerized information service and a proposed data standard.<sup>23</sup> This seminar paved the way for the use of computers in the Museum; computers would also play a decisive role in the documentation system. The centre was destined to play an important role in training staff in computer use, maintaining hardware and developing databases.

Yet another change in the restructuring of the National Cultural History Museum loomed on the horizon in November 1991 when the National Productivity Institute completed their survey on the functioning and culture of the Museum and the dissemination of information.<sup>24</sup> Although the Board had several queries,<sup>25</sup> the restructuring went ahead with the establishment of the following departments:

- Department of Professional Services comprised two sections, one dealing with research and the other with the museums ( the Voortrekker Monument and the Kruger, Pierneef, Pioneer and Sammy Marks Museums, the Willem Prinsloo Agricultural Museum and the Donkerhoek [Diamond Hill] site),
- Department of Administration,
- Department of Promotion and Source Generation, and the
- Collections Management Department.

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<sup>22</sup> M. Hölcher, The information centre, *Museum Memo*, 17(3), September 1989, p. 28.

<sup>23</sup> NCHMA, Report, Verslag oor die seminaar: Inligtingsdienste in museums, Annexure F, Board of the National Cultural History and Open-Air Museum agenda, meeting 20 May 1987.

<sup>24</sup> P.J.J. Dorfling and A. van Eeden (exec.), "Uitvoerende opsomming: 'n evaluering van organisasie-funksionering, organisasiekultuur en die vloei van inligting van die Nasionale Kultuurhistoriese Museum" (unpublished report).

<sup>25</sup> NCHMA, Decision R1991/34, Board of the National Cultural History Museum minutes, meeting 19 November 1991.

The new collections management department comprised three sections, namely these of conservation, maintenance and information services. The aim of the department was the compilation of the Museum's collections management policy that had to cover all aspects of collections management, as well as the implementation of the policy. Furthermore it had to inform the staff about the new system and train them how to apply it.<sup>26</sup> For the first time the collections management department was on par with the accepted definition of the functions of such a department; nonetheless the way forward was extremely onerous as the curators and the collections management personnel had to develop an entirely new dispensation and re-define the responsibilities for the management of the collections.

One of the most important subsections of the department was the computer services section that had to computerize all collections activities, particularly the data on the collections. The Museum acquired at least fourteen computers and two file servers to realize these aims and appointed a specialist to establish the database. Priorities outlined for the database were the following:

- identification of objects in the Museum's collection (data with regard to objects in the collection that had already been located physically and entered into inventories had to be captured),
- identification of the objects the Museum should have in the collection (data on accessions in the catalogues<sup>27</sup> had to be captured), and
- location of these objects (data on the whereabouts of objects on movement control forms had to be captured).

As the work on the database progressed, it became clear that one of the most important aspects was location control. Without computerization it would have been a herculean task to document and keep track of the movement of objects from one storage location to another, from one satellite museum to another and from the various storage buildings into the new Museum building (African Window) in 1999.<sup>28</sup> The retro-entry of catalogues in

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<sup>26</sup> Ibid., National Cultural History Museum Management Committee minutes, meeting 20 January 1992.

<sup>27</sup> See glossary, historic use of catalogue.

<sup>28</sup> For the history of the various storage spaces and buildings and the movements of the collections since 1990, see G. Balkwill "40 Years in the wilderness - the promised land at last - (almost)", paper delivered at the South African Museums Association (SAMA) Annual Congress, 5 June 2003.

the database started in 1990 and was completed in 2005. Amendments to these entries are ongoing, as documentation problems emerge again and again.

Both location control and the retro-entry of catalogues revealed numerous accession number problems and these became one of the reasons that precipitated this research.<sup>29</sup> Some of these problems went as far back as the 1920s, pre-dating the establishment of the first collections management department in 1986, but little was done to pinpoint the exact nature of the confusion, to identify possible causes or to establish the curatorial history of the collections.

## 2. COLLECTIONS MANAGEMENT PROBLEMS

Although the functions of the information centre, which are closely associated with collections management, featured very strongly in the entire restructuring process, it seems that the basis for these decisions was theoretical rather than practical. There is little to indicate exactly why an information or documentation centre was so important to the Museum. Except for the director's reference to outdated retrieval systems, there is scarcely any indication of the very real problems that had to be solved by the information centre. For example, previously each curatorial department had full autonomy for documentation, with the result that there was no standard way of keeping object records. To organize and retrieve information was an awkward exercise.<sup>30</sup> By 1989, according to the head of the information centre, several attempts had been made to establish a thorough retrieval system, but due to practical problems this was not followed through. The result was that a large amount of object information was irretrievable.<sup>31</sup>

Problems with the management of the collections, especially the method of documentation, were manifold, but few attempts had been made to analyse them. The first two in-house

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<sup>29</sup> Information received from G. Balkwill, head of the collections management department, National Cultural History Museum, 25 February 2004.

<sup>30</sup> M. Hölcher, The information centre, *Museum Memo*, 17(3), September 1989, p. 28.

<sup>31</sup> Personal file E. Grobler, Memorandum, Voorstelle vir die reorganisasie van die inligtingsentrum, dd 8 May 1989, p. 6.

attempts both pertain to the anthropology collection. In 1960 various catalogues that had been used in the anthropology section were scrutinized and problems identified.<sup>32</sup> In 1977 a more detailed description was given of the documentation in the ethnology division, also listing the catalogues and identifying the curators.<sup>33</sup>

Two academic dissertations written in the 1960s also mention collections management problems. In a M.A. dissertation by L. Oosthuizen<sup>34</sup> the problems with the provenance of the petroglyphs, i.e. the lack of proper documentation or insufficient documentation and marking, is clearly set. He identifies the fact that the objects may never have been numbered, or that the accession numbers have faded so badly that they are undecipherable.<sup>35</sup> Oosthuizen does not attempt to explain the reasons for the documentation problems.

The obscurity of the provenance of a collection in the National Cultural History Museum, the so-called Dordrecht Collection, led P.J. de Beer to investigate the origin and existence of the Zuid-Afrikaansch Museum [South African Museum] at Dordrecht in the Netherlands.<sup>36</sup> The collection arrived at the Transvaal Museum from the Netherlands in 1921 and De Beer deplors the fact that because of poor management it did not survive intact. This he says was due to the fact that 23 years elapsed before a trained curator took the matter in hand. Previously the cataloguing had been done by untrained caretakers. In this way the collection had been subjected to the harshest neglect and deterioration.<sup>37</sup> De Beer gives a short résumé of the possible causes, but provides no detailed explanation of the lack of management of the Dordrecht Collection.

The next attempt to analyse some of the problem areas in the documentation of the collections at the National Cultural History Museum was undertaken as part of a

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<sup>32</sup> NCHMA, File ET1/60 Etnologiese Afdeling, Konsepverslag: Toestand in Museum, pp. 3 - 4, n.d.

<sup>33</sup> C.S. van der Waal, "Geskiedenis van die Volkekunde-Afdeling van die Nasko-Museum, Pretoria 1893 - 1977" (unpublished article), pp. 14 - 18.

<sup>34</sup> L. Oosthuizen, " 'n Beskrywing van en kunskritiese beskouing oor die versameling petrogliewe in die ou Transvaal-museum Pretoria" (unpublished M.A. dissertation, University of Pretoria, 1964).

<sup>35</sup> Ibid., pp. 117 - 118.

<sup>36</sup> P.J. de Beer, "Die 'Zuid-Afrikaansch Museum' te Dordrecht 1902 - 1921" (unpublished M.A. dissertation, University of Pretoria, 1967).

<sup>37</sup> Ibid., pp. 143 - 146.

conservation survey in 1989.<sup>38</sup> The anthropology and archaeology collections as well as the numismatics and the philately collections were studied. So too was the cultural history collection, which consists of works of art, militaria, furniture and other household utensils, vehicles, manuscripts, books and photographs, textiles, ceramics and glass and jewellery. Also included in the report were collections at the Voortrekker Monument and the Kruger, Pierneef, Pioneer and Sammy Marks Museums and the Willem Prinsloo Agricultural Museum.

The report covers the documentation situation as it was at the time (1989), but did not address the causes of the problems identified, although solutions were suggested. The survey paid particular attention to the existence or absence of inventories of the respective collections, marking and numbering as well as loans. In some cases it also focuses on the accessioning and the relevant catalogues. The following summarizes the documentation report:

- Complete inventories were available for some of the collections, other available inventories were incomplete and confusing, and for many collections there were no inventories.<sup>39</sup>
- Various types of documentation were kept for loans, such as registers, loose loan agreements on file, lists, a carbon copy book and a receipt book.<sup>40</sup>
- Accessioning was done in each department by the staff concerned with the collections. In some cases the staff member was a professional officer. In others it was an assistant under supervision of the professional officer. In this way the accessioning was kept up to date for almost all the collections.<sup>41</sup>
- The marking of objects differed from one collection to the next. Objects were temporarily marked with a label until the numbers could be affixed permanently with ink and sealed with incralac. In one case (archaeology objects) mowilith was used as basis and permanent white ink for the numbers; documents were marked with ink and paper money (notes) were

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<sup>38</sup> H.A. Jansen van Vuuren (comp.), “Die bewaring van museumvoorwerpe in besit en beheer van die Nasionale Kultuurhistoriese en Opelugmuseum Pretoria, 1989” (unpublished report).

<sup>39</sup> Ibid., pp. 4, 16, 109 and 189.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid., pp. 4, 16, 36, 45, 82, 171, 189, 255 and 314.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid., pp. 4, 62, 255 and 314.

found with the accession number attached to the note with sellotape.<sup>42</sup>

- A significant problem was identified when the accession numbers were deleted when the works of art were restored and not remarked. This made identification and replacing in the storage system very difficult.<sup>43</sup>
- There were many textile acquisitions dating from the 1960s and 1970s that had not been numbered at all; others had no information.<sup>44</sup> The situation was no better with regard to the furniture and other objects made primarily of wood.<sup>45</sup>
- Catalogue cards were only kept for the metal and leather objects, the archaeology collection and anthropology collection.<sup>46</sup>

In short, the documentation system at the Museum could not be regarded as an information retrieval source; it was vague and incomplete, with no standard procedures or manuals.<sup>47</sup>

The conclusion reached was that at the time all aspects of curatorial work, preservation, promotion, enquiries, displays, maintenance, transport, storage, documentation and research for all the collections were still the responsibility of either the curators or the so-called collections managers. The result was that none of these were executed properly. Collections management as a network of all object-oriented functions was proposed as a solution to the problem.<sup>48</sup>

As work in the information centre continued, other problems surfaced. For example, catalogues were still distributed among the different sections, whereas they should all have been in the information centre. Particulars about objects were not readily available and had to be traced in catalogues, receipt books, catalogue cards, cataloguing forms and even in

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<sup>42</sup> Ibid., pp. 4, 82 and 189.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid., p. 16.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid., p. 109.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid., p. 45.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid., pp. 130, 254 and 314.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid., pp. 464 - 465.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid., pp. 470 - 471.

old filing systems. Documentation on objects donated and objects on loan could frequently not be found at all.<sup>49</sup>

A project initiated to inventorize all museum objects, and simultaneously obtain basic curatorial information was launched in April 1992.<sup>50</sup> Its aim was to make a detailed survey of all objects in the collections that were to be stored or displayed in the new building allocated to the Museum.<sup>51</sup> The survey identified one of the most pressing problems of Museum documentation, namely the great number of un-accessioned or apparently un-accessioned objects, i.e. objects without an accession number. To all intents and purposes these objects did not exist in the Museum documentation: it was extremely difficult to correlate them with the extant catalogues, receipt books or other records. Basic collections management information was incomplete or non-existent. It was almost impossible to locate the objects and to answer enquiries that related to these objects if there was no record at all. To alleviate the problem it was decided to introduce a system of accessioning these objects as unnumbered or without a number and to enter them into temporary catalogues.<sup>52</sup> In this way very basic information could at least be captured, but the problem was not by any means solved.<sup>53</sup>

Computer technology highlighted the collections documentation problems that already had been encountered in the manual system. One of these was the repetition of accession numbers for one object.<sup>54</sup> The reason why decisions were taken many years ago, either by the professional officer, director, Museum Committee or Board of Trustees, to duplicate accession numbers has never been fathomed by present-day collections management staff. Perhaps the original number was lost either through wear and tear, or was never marked on the object. Possibly the transferral of objects from one catalogue to another, or even from

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<sup>49</sup> NCHMA, File 2.1.1.3, vol. 1, Quarterly reports, Information Centre, May, June and July 1990 and February, March and April 1991, August, September and October 1991.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid., File 2.1.1.3, vol. 2, Quarterly reports, Information Centre, April - June 1992.

<sup>51</sup> Collections management department, departmental file, Opname van museumvoorwerpe.

<sup>52</sup> These catalogues were identified with the abbreviation "O" (Afrikaans: *ongenommer*) and the relevant code, for example OHG, i.e. unnumbered objects in the cultural history collection.

<sup>53</sup> Oral information, M. Schulze, 9 February 2004.

<sup>54</sup> One painting, for example, was erroneously numbered three times. It was recorded in the Art Catalogue as A.C. accession no. 419 and in the Historiography Catalogue, vol. 21, as H.C. accession no. 18046 and in vol. T14 as H.C. accession no. 32733. For the use of the word historiography, see glossary.

one collection to another, was to blame or the error could be put down to the introduction of new catalogues in the documentation system.<sup>55</sup>

An analysis of the collections management procedures that were followed by the Transvaal Museum has not yet been compiled. The only attempt to unravel this problem for one particular collection was carried out in the numismatics collection, when a project to compare each item in the collection with the catalogues was launched in October 1998. Serious accession number anomalies were identified. This led to a report and a policy document that carried a clear message to all registrars.<sup>56</sup> If reasons for renumbering objects could be determined for the Museum's collection, it would be a boon to the collections management department. This research attempts to do exactly that.

Documentation problems not only involve accession numbers, but are also concerned with establishing the correct names and other particulars of donors. In cases where there is no information whatsoever about donors, there is the possibility of trouble if descendants make enquiries. Then too, the incorrect spelling of surnames or the donation attributed to the wrong donor (perhaps because the initial documentation was lost) also present problems. Other areas of concern are the incorrect identification and misnaming of objects, and incomplete descriptive information so that it is impossible to distinguish between similar objects. Efforts were indeed made to compile manual index systems, but these were not properly maintained and are therefore of limited use as information retrieval systems.

The troubles in the collections management department are, moreover, aggravated by the fact that now for the first time in more than a 100 years, all the collections of the National Cultural History Museum are in storage in one building, and that probably less than 5% of the objects are on exhibition. Control of the objects during the move to the new building, the unpacking process and arrangement in storage have unleashed a new crop of documentation problems. On the other hand the fact that the staff are now in the same building as the collections for the first time in more than 40 years, and that the objects, the previous manual documentation systems and the data bases are readily available, are positive

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<sup>55</sup> Objects were, for example, transferred from the Historiography Catalogue to the Numismatics Catalogue or to the Kruger and Photographic Catalogues, or from the Historiography Catalogue to the Kruger and then to the Numismatics Catalogues.

<sup>56</sup> G. Balkwill, "Subdivision of items between numismatics collection (Nu) and miscellaneous collection (Misc)" (unpublished article).



aspects as far as the Museum is concerned. The Museum uses the new circumstances to sort out problems as they occur, and to make the necessary amendments to the documentation system immediately. In this way the collections management department is making leeway in upgrading the collections documentation.

Although many of these problems are museum documentation concerns, a number of the issues that have been identified by the present collections management department of the National Cultural History Museum relate to collections management in general. Examples are the departmental organization of the Museum and its resources, such as trained staff, the growth of the collection without the necessary support systems, the functions of the curatorial departments and the previously inadequate and impractical storage spaces. If the history of the Museum is taken into consideration, these shortcomings and the way they have been handled, may have a direct bearing on the present situation experienced by the collections management department of the National Cultural History Museum. Further investigation into these aspects, that have not been covered by this research project, should be undertaken in the near future.

Broadly speaking, insight into and knowledge of the history of collections management in museums is vital to furthering our understanding of its operations. E. Crissman, the curator of the Historic Cherry Hill, Albany, New York, USA, puts it simply when she says: “I have found that it is important to really understand the curatorial and collections management history of the collections or institution I am working with”.<sup>57</sup> Although an article by M. Aleppo deals with one particular aspect of documentation, i.e. conservation records and the attendant registers and index cards, it bears witness to the importance of describing and analyzing the history of documentation. Aleppo describes the evolution of documentation over a period of 160 years at the National Archives, UK, and says that this long tradition provided an opportunity to describe the evolution of documentation systems and to comment on current practice.<sup>58</sup>

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<sup>57</sup> E. Crissman, Cataloguer training, <erin@HISTORICCHERRYHILL.ORG>, dd 22 September 2004.

<sup>58</sup> M. Aleppo, 160 Years of conservation documentation at the National Archives, UK, *The Paper Conservator*, vol. 27, 2003, p. 97.

### 3. A RESEARCH PROJECT BECOMES A NECESSITY

At the end of the 1990s it was clear that the concerns facing the collections management department of the National Cultural History Museum were not abating. Moreover, the predicament concerning the collections had its roots in the past and could not merely be attributed to the changes in the organizational structure of the Museum since 1986. Only an in-depth survey into historic collections management practices at the Transvaal Museum – the precursor of the National Cultural History Museum – would provide conclusive answers to many seemingly insoluble issues.

On 19 June 2001 the Management Committee of the National Cultural History Museum therefore decided to approve the instigation of a research project to analyse the consecutive practices followed by the Transvaal Museum for a period of 51 years, from 1913 to 1964, when the National Cultural History and Open-Air Museum was established. This was to be done with specific reference to collections management for the anthropology, archaeology and history divisions. The study was to ascertain whether these historic practices had any direct bearing on collections management problems encountered in the present. The factors within as well as outside the Museum that had dictated these practices during the period 1913 to 1964 also had to be investigated.

#### **Hypotheses**

In view of the above, and before the study commenced, the following hypothesis was constructed. It was then discussed during a seminar for doctoral students held at the Department of Heritage and Museum Studies of the University of Pretoria on 14 March 2002:

- There is a direct relationship between previous collections management practices at the Transvaal Museum and the problems present experienced by the collections management department of the National Cultural History Museum.

To test this hypothesis, several questions presented themselves. How were collections previously managed and was there in fact some vestigial collections management system, albeit in a “primitive” form? In what way was the system applied? Were clear and unambiguous policies followed in the implementation of these early collections management practices? Were trained staff appointed to curate the anthropology, archaeology and history

collections, or was in-house training provided? Were there changes over time? And if so, what were these changes and why had they occurred?

These questions were made all the more challenging by the fact that for many years the anthropology, archaeology and history divisions were administered by a natural history museum, which led to another hypothesis:

- A general museum with a strong bias towards natural history had an adverse effect on the anthropology, archaeology and history collections held at the Museum.

#### 4. SOURCES

Before the present study of the collections management practices at the Transvaal Museum for the anthropological, archaeological and historical collections commenced, a survey of museological sources was done in order to become fully conversant with any similar research done elsewhere and thus to avoid duplication. The survey showed quite clearly that a detailed analysis of past collections management practices in museums in South Africa had not been attempted, although some researchers had devoted a page or three to collections management issues.

##### **General museological literature**

Since the early twentieth century museums in South Africa have generated a plethora of pamphlets, brochures, catalogues, broadsheets and leaflets. Most have concentrated on the public as target group and provide basic information on the museum or specific displays. Newsletters and bulletins were also issued, giving a broad overview of museum activities, and usually targeted in-house readers, or were written for friends of the museum and the general public.

As time passed guide-books were also published. By 1932 five museums in South Africa had issued guides or handbooks. The guide of the Durban Museum was regarded as the best encountered by Sir Henry Miers and S.F. Markham<sup>59</sup> and cost 6d. Seven institutions

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<sup>59</sup> Miers and Markham were sent to South Africa by the British Museums Association to complete a survey financed by the Carnegie Corporation. C.K. Brain and M.C. Erasmus, *The making of the museum professions in Southern Africa*, p. 3; H.A. Miers and S.F. Markham, *A report on the museums and art galleries of British Africa*, preface.

provided catalogues, of which the one produced by the Durban Art Gallery was highly recommended. It included information on the origin of the collection and the history of the methods used by the artists.<sup>60</sup>

The first directory of South African museums and art galleries<sup>61</sup> was published in 1933 by the British Museums Association. Entries were arranged in alphabetical order according to the town or city, and in the case of South Africa, the relevant province was also given. Population figures (for whites and coloureds) were indicated. The first entry was Bloemfontein, with its two museums and a herbarium; the last was Tulbagh, followed by Windhoek in South West Africa (Namibia). In almost all cases the entry includes the visiting hours, entrance fee, and a general description and the scope of the museum collections, including the publications, educational activities, staff and finances. The directory was the companion volume to *A report on the museums and art galleries of British Africa* by Miers and Markham.

The first and second editions of *Guide to the museums of Southern Africa* was compiled by H. Fransen in 1969 and 1978 on behalf of SAMA. They respectively include a short introduction on the history of museums in South Africa, followed by entries with a precis of the particular museum's history and/or development. This publication was intended to give common information on where the museums were located, the visiting hours and what they had to offer to the general public in the way of displays. Aspects such as documentation and conservation received no attention at all. A guide published on the museums of the Cape Province in 1982,<sup>62</sup> follows the same pattern as Fransen's. These publications are well illustrated.

The *Museums Transvaal*,<sup>63</sup> a guide to the museums in the Transvaal published in 1991, has no illustrations and gives no information on the history or development of the museum, but

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<sup>60</sup> H.A. Miers and S.F. Markham, *A report on the museums and art galleries of British Africa*.

<sup>61</sup> The Museums Association (comp.), *Directory of museums and art galleries in British Africa and in Malta, Cyprus and Gibraltar*.

<sup>62</sup> H.M.J. du Preez (comp.), *Museums van Kaapland. 'n Gids vir die provinsie-ondersteunde museums van Kaapland*.

<sup>63</sup> Transvaal Regional Branch of the Southern African Museums Association (comp.), *Museums Transvaal. Guide to the Museums in the Transvaal*.

nevertheless purports to give useful information for tourists who are planning a sightseeing tour or holiday route in the area. It gives a list of the type of museum, the theme, location, admission, facilities and services.

Museums have traditionally been research driven, and the publication of scholarly research results has always been regarded as an important museum function and a compulsory facet of the work of museum professionals. Such published research has concentrated mainly on the specialized academic disciplines of the museums, usually in the journals published by the museums themselves. Examples are the *Southern African Humanities* (Natal Museum); *Southern African Field Archaeology* (Albany Museum); *Annals of the South African Museum*; *Navorsing van die Nasionale Museum Bloemfontein*; the *Adler Museum Bulletin* (Adler Museum of Medicine); *Military History Journal* (South African National Museum of Military History); *Annals of the Transvaal Museum*; *Cimbebasia* (National Museum of Namibia) and *Research by the National Cultural History Museum*. Museological subjects are unfortunately more often than not taken for granted and have not been subject to rigorous research.

In many cases the centenary of the museum or similar celebration precipitated a research project or a publication, for example *A history of the South African Museum 1825 - 1975*, by R.F.H. Summers, published in 1975. Summers based his research on museum records, and provides detailed notes on his sources, including both unpublished and published museum material, but he makes no mention of catalogues and registers. He devotes one page in the text to catalogues, although more attention is paid to E.M. Shaw and her contribution to museum documentation. Shaw was the only museum ethnologist in South Africa for about 25 years.<sup>64</sup> In the main, Summers describes aspects such as the collections, accommodation problems of the museum, displays, staff, the hierarchy of research departments, the library and publications. Collections management practices as separate issues received no attention.

*A history of the Kaffrarian Museum* was written by B.M. Randles in 1984, the centenary year of that museum in King William's Town, and deals with the curators or directors who headed the museum since 1898, providing highlights during their tenure. In *Collections and*

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<sup>64</sup> R.F.H. Summers, *A history of the South African Museum 1825 - 1975*, pp. 74 - 75 and 142 - 143.

*recollections* by C. Quickelberge, issued on the centenary of the Durban Natural History Museum in 1987, the functions of the museum are emphasized with chapters on education, display, collections and research, scientific work and the library. There are also three chapters on the development of the museum.

The silver jubilee of the National Cultural History and Open-Air Museum was celebrated in 1989 with the issue of a catalogue, *Reflection of a collection*, compiled by E. Grobler and J.A. van Schalkwyk. This publication covers the history of the Museum since 1892, and focuses on the collections, the way collecting has been done and collecting policies; the nitty gritty of museological aspects such as conservation and documentation, are not discussed. The publication *Staatsmuseum 100*,<sup>65</sup> commemorating the centenary of the Staatsmuseum [State Museum] of the South African Republic in 1992,<sup>66</sup> recalls the development of the Staatsmuseum as the “mother” museum with its three descendants, the Transvaal Museum, the National Cultural History Museum and the Museum of the Geological Survey. Again, museological aspects are only mentioned in passing.

### **Academic research**

Museum professionals often choose a museum-related topic for a master’s or doctoral degree at a university. In 1979 E.C. van Niekerk submitted a M.A. dissertation on the history of the Port Elizabeth Museum.<sup>67</sup> This dissertation deals mainly with the tenures of the directors and attention is paid to accommodation, displays, finances, staff, the library, administration, research, the board of trustees, publications and natural history facets such as the bird cages, the aquarium/oceanarium, the tropical house and the snake park. Although some attention is given to the human sciences under the directorship of J.R. Grindley, Van Niekerk comes to the conclusion that little historical research had been accomplished. She asserts that this is evidence that in a general museum a cultural history section cannot function successfully alongside a natural history section. She is of the opinion that two

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<sup>65</sup> N.J. Dippenaar (ed.), *Staatsmuseum 100. National Cultural History Museum, Museum of the Geological Survey, Transvaal Museum*.

<sup>66</sup> The Boer Republic in the Transvaal was known as the Zuid-Afrikaansche Republiek [ZAR], or the South African Republic.

<sup>67</sup> E.C. van Niekerk, “Die geskiedenis van die Port Elizabethse Museumkompleks, 1856 - 1975” (unpublished M.A. dissertation, University of Port Elizabeth, 1979).

separate museums should instead be established so that each of these aspects receive the necessary attention.<sup>68</sup>

With regard to collections management, Van Niekerk notes that it was only in 1970 that the historical collection was removed to a separate workroom. The collection was then arranged chronologically and thematically, and a receipt book and a catalogue were opened. The next year an inventory of all the historical objects was made.<sup>69</sup>

In 1981 a M.A. dissertation by H. Oberholzer,<sup>70</sup> dealt with the administration of national museums in South Africa. As this was part of the requirements for a master's degree in public administration, museological matters pertaining to collections, documentation and conservation were not discussed; instead the focus was on the organisation and administration of museums and legal matters.

Although several doctoral theses dealing with museum matters have been completed, few of them deal with to collections management matters. The thesis written by Oberholzer<sup>71</sup> is an administrative rather than a museological exposition of conservation and relates to very broad conservation issues on a national level. The role of museums in conservation constitutes only a part of the dissertation.

Küsel's thesis on the development of the Transvaal Provincial Museum Service<sup>72</sup> emphasizes the museum service as a central organization that planned, co-ordinated, controlled and partly financed provincial and affiliated museums. He discusses in detail museological matters for which the head office of the Transvaal Museum Service provided guidance to provincial and municipal museums, including documentation, typology, collecting, displays, restoration and preservation.

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<sup>68</sup> Ibid., p. 218.

<sup>69</sup> Ibid., p. 224.

<sup>70</sup> H. Oberholzer, Administrasie van nasionale museums in die Republiek van Suid-Afrika, *Memoirs van die Nasionale Museum Bloemfontein*, vol. 17, June 1982 (M.A. dissertation, University of the Orange Free State, 1981).

<sup>71</sup> H. Oberholzer, Beleid vir die bewaring van die materiële kultuurerfenis, *Memoirs van die Nasionale Museum Bloemfontein*, vol. 22, July 1987 (D.Admin. thesis, University of the Orange Free State, 1987).

<sup>72</sup> U. Küsel, "Die ontwikkeling van die Transvaalse Provinsiale Museumdiens" (unpublished D.Phil thesis, University of Pretoria, 1987).

The museological thesis by H.A. Moolman on site museums<sup>73</sup> devotes a page and a half to collections management matters, such as collecting, documentation and restoration, but the principles of preserving a site museum are explained in more detail. Although the tenets of collections management were firmly established by the 1980s, it is clear from the above that they were regarded as fringe issues or even outside the scope of such studies. Moreover, it was apparently taken for granted that museum management would realize their importance and implement them.

The term “museum practice” in the subtitle of a doctoral thesis in archaeology by P. Davison,<sup>74</sup> refers to fieldwork, collecting, classification and exhibition. Davison asserts that:

In the process of bringing systematic order to previously unmanaged collections, artefacts were registered, catalogued and documented according to a set format. These procedures can be regarded as collectively transforming an object into a museum specimen. Through this process the status of an object increases, it is recontextualized and its meaning is circumscribed for museum purposes. Museum processing creates a more precise identity for an object than it ever had when in use and, furthermore, it becomes durable even if ephemeral in other circumstances. In practice an object becomes a specimen through being given a place in a classification system and, once classified, the annotated artefact both gives substance to the category and becomes more resistant to other interpretations.<sup>75</sup>

In describing the process of cataloguing, for example with regard to the Krige Collection at the South African Museum, Cape Town, Davison is concerned particularly with “the principle of making an artefact into a specimen, i.e. the object has a new reality constituted in the set of attributes by which it has been described”.<sup>76</sup> She also shows how meanings, represented in museum practice, have been conveyed to the museum visitor through visual representation in displays, rather than an objective reflection of reality.<sup>77</sup> In this case museum practice as used by Davison differs from collections management practices as set out in this study of the Transvaal Museum.

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<sup>73</sup> H.A. Moolman, “Die bydrae van terreinmuseums tot die bewaring en interpretasie van die Suid-Afrikaanse omgewing” (unpublished D.Phil thesis, University of Pretoria, 1993).

<sup>74</sup> P. Davison, “Material culture, context and meaning: a critical investigation of museum practice, with particular reference to the South African Museum” (unpublished D.Phil thesis, University of Cape Town, 1991).

<sup>75</sup> Ibid., p. 108.

<sup>76</sup> Ibid., pp. 121 and 123.

<sup>77</sup> Ibid., p. 138 and abstract.



There are two studies that do focus on one particular aspect of collections management, namely documentation. The first was submitted in part requirement for a post-graduate diploma in museology by G. Balkwill and is entitled “The design of a documentation system for a systematic geological collection”.<sup>78</sup> The first chapter is of particular interest to my research on the collections management practices of the Transvaal Museum, because it identifies the reasons for embarking on his study. One of Balkwill’s main motivations was the inadequate documentation of the geology collection at the University of the Witwatersrand over a period of 90 years. This is precisely the reason why the present study of collections management at the Transvaal Museum – over a period of 51 years in this case – has been undertaken. In Balkwill’s essay the documentation situation of the geology collection is unfortunately only given in outline, with no in-depth analysis provided on the factors that led to the inadequacy of the documentation. Essentially the study deals with the theoretical aspects of a geology documentation system.

A doctoral thesis by H.F.L. Immelman deals with the principles and practice of museum documentation.<sup>79</sup> She examines the state of collection and information documentation in museums at the time of writing and the problems encountered during automation of the information unit records. Although the history of museum documentation is discussed, there is only a short section that deals with museums in South Africa. This study offers an excellent, but very broad overview of the needs of museum documentation, and looks in particular at principles that would ensure the smooth functioning of computerized data bases. In this case too the study is concerned with theoretical concepts of museum documentation rather than with collections management *per se* and the essential problems encountered in a particular museum.

## **Literature on the National Cultural History Museum**

### Popular articles

The history of the National Cultural History Museum and its predecessors, the Staatsmuseum and the Transvaal Museum, has been written many times in a variety of guises. They have appeared in magazines, newspapers, guide-books and have even been

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<sup>78</sup> G. Balkwill, “The design of a documentation system for a systematic geological collection” (unpublished paper for post-graduate diploma in museology, University of Pretoria, 1987).

<sup>79</sup> H.F.L. Immelman, “Museum documentation: principles and practice” (unpublished D.Phil thesis, University of Natal, 1993).

ronoed as information sheets. The first article to appear was probably an illustrated article printed in the *Strand Magazine* in 1900, entitled “The Boer ‘Tower of London’. A visit to the Staats Museum, Pretoria”, an interesting view of the Staatsmuseum and its displays, written by J.C. Harris. In the *Museum Journal* of 1902 another article appeared with the title “Transvaal State Museum”. In the first volume of the *Annals of the Transvaal Museum*, dated April 1908, the director, J.W.B. Gunning, wrote “A short history of the Transvaal Museum”, an illustrated article giving Gunning’s views on the Museum and its aims after the Anglo-Boer War.

In the first newsletter of the Old Pretoria Society the director of the Transvaal Museum, V. FitzSimons, contributed “Historical collections of the Transvaal Museum”.<sup>80</sup> A roneoed article, “The National Museum, Boomstreet, Pretoria”, appeared in 1952, written by Kotie Roodt-Coetzee on behalf of the Committee for the Van Riebeeck Festival. There is also an Afrikaans version. Roneoed articles, in both Afrikaans and English, appeared in March 1954, with the titles “A short history of Kruger House Museum, Pretoria” and “A short history of the Transvaal Museum”. Both these were written by FitzSimons.

Yet another roneoed article by the same author, again titled “A short history of the Transvaal Museum”, appeared in January 1958, and another piece with the identical title, also by FitzSimons, was published in *Pretoriana* in 1959.<sup>81</sup> It was accompanied by a copy of the circular letter issued by the Staatsmuseum in 1893, in which an appeal was made by the chairman of the Curatorium [board of trustees] for donations. Coetzee wrote on “ ‘n Opelugmuseum vir Pretoria” in the *Pretoriana* of December 1964, and in the same edition an article appeared on “Die Nasionale Kultuurhistoriese en Opelugmuseum, Pretoria”, by P.J. Coertze.<sup>82</sup>

In a supplement to the newspaper *Hoofstad* of 23 September 1970, W. Prinsloo wrote an article entitled “Hierdie museum het ‘n lang pad geloop”. In the *Bulletin of the Transvaal Museum* “A history of the Transvaal Museum” appeared in Afrikaans and English, written

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<sup>80</sup> *Pretoriana*, 1(1), September 1951, pp. 8 - 11.

<sup>81</sup> *Ibid.*, no. 29, April 1959, pp. 9 - 16.

<sup>82</sup> *Ibid.*, no. 46, December 1964, pp. 2 - 21.

by FitzSimons and L. Brain in 1972.<sup>83</sup> An article on the history of the Staatsmuseum by J. Ploeger, appeared in *Pretoriana* in 1992.<sup>84</sup>

The Transvaal Museum has also featured in various guide-books. One example is the two editions of the *Johannesburg and Pretoria Guide*, published by Dennis Edwards & Co. and another is *Pretoria, the administrative capital of the Union of South Africa*, issued by the Pretoria Municipality, the Pretoria Publicity Association and the Pretoria and District Chamber of Industries. In the book *The Transvaal and its mines*, edited by L.V. Praagh, a section is devoted to the Transvaal Museum.

In broad terms all these articles tell the basic story of the development of the Staatsmuseum and its successor, the Transvaal Museum, but scant attention is paid to the museological and curatorial work carried out in the Museum. The reason is probably that such details would not have been of interest to the target group for which the articles were written. Then again, it was taken for granted that the curators were capable and knowledgeable when it came to museum practices, such as collecting, documenting and conserving; they would have implemented these procedures as a matter of routine.

#### Academic research

Various aspects of the history and the collections in the National Cultural History Museum, dating from the time of the Staatsmuseum and the Transvaal Museum have been covered in academic studies over the years. The first of these, a master's dissertation, was entitled “’n Beskrywing van en kunskritiese beskouing oor die versameling petrogliewe in die ou Transvaal-museum Pretoria”, written by Oosthuizen.

Another was written in 1967 by De Beer: “Die ‘Zuid-Afrikaansch Museum’ te Dordrecht 1902 - 1921” for a master's degree. De Beer's doctoral thesis<sup>85</sup> followed and devotes some attention to the collecting and preservation functions of an open-air museum. In particular the role of the National Cultural History and Open-Air Museum in establishing such a museum in South Africa receives close attention.

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<sup>83</sup> *Bulletin of the Transvaal Museum*, no. 13, 30 November 1972.

<sup>84</sup> Ploeger, J., Die Staatsmuseum 1892 - 1904, *Pretoriana*, no. 100, April 1992.

<sup>85</sup> P.J. de Beer, “Die fenomeen opelugmuseum in kultuurhistoriese perspektief” (unpublished D. Phil thesis, University of Pretoria, 1979).

My own master's degree in museology on the development of the Staatsmuseum,<sup>86</sup> besides dealing with issues such as the Curatorium, staff and museum accommodation, also pays specific attention to museological aspects and functions of the Staatsmuseum, including the aims, collecting, conservation and documentation. S. Markgraaf's M.A. in museology<sup>87</sup> focuses on the origin and development of one collection, the paper collection, in the National Cultural History Museum. It also deals with two important collections management aspects, namely preservation and a conservation policy.

From the above it is clear that no previous in-depth research has analysed factors such as the organization of the Transvaal Museum, changes in emphases and environment, staff responsibility for collections, collections policies (or the lack of policies), and the way in which documentation sources have been designed and utilized. Nor has there been any scrutiny of the various stages through which an object passes until it finally becomes part of the museum collection. It is significant to note that failure to manage the collections satisfactorily has been identified clearly in at least two of the earlier studies mentioned above, those by Oosthuizen and De Beer.

### **Notes on sources used**

In order to find answers to the questions posed in the hypotheses it was imperative to make extensive use of the primary sources located in the archives and the collections management department of the National Cultural History Museum. The libraries of the Transvaal Museum and the National Cultural History Museum also provided useful material, including periodicals, journals and scientific literature.

### Primary sources

In the main the sources in the National Cultural History Museum can be divided into three broad categories that correlate with their provenance and also with the chapters and the themes for this thesis. The three categories are:

- archival sources, found in the Museum archives, such as closed correspondence files, annual reports, internal reports, recommendations,

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<sup>86</sup> E. Grobler, "Die Staatsmuseum van die Zuid-Afrikaanse Republiek en sy historiese en etnografiese versamelings" (unpublished M.A. dissertation, University of Pretoria, 1994).

<sup>87</sup> S. Markgraaf, "Papier en die papierversameling van die Nasionale Kultuurhistoriese Museum, Pretoria: ontstaan, aard en bewaring" (unpublished M.A. dissertation, University of Pretoria, 1995).

memoranda and minutes, that have their origin in the management and administration of the Museum; including the reports of the various commissions and committees of enquiry on museum matters,

- documentation sources (in the collections management department), that have their origin in the collections management functions, performed by relevant divisions or departments, such as the series of acquisitions registers dating from the time of the Staatsmuseum, the various catalogues used for and in the anthropology, archaeology and history divisions at the Transvaal Museum, the loans registers and the catalogue cards, and
- the objects in the collections.

The first category was used in the main for the history of the Transvaal Museum from 1913 to 1964 and for aspects that are pertinent to the development of collections management practices. These include organizational and environmental changes, departmental organization, resources (staff, collections), exhibitions, responsibility for documentation, the design of the documentation system and conservation (chapters III and IV).

The second category was used for the detailed exposition of the collections documentation with regard to aspects such as the collection of objects, acquisitioning of those objects, cataloguing, loans-in and loans-out, information retrieval and de-accessioning. The third category was used to correlate the findings on documentation with the objects themselves (chapters V and VI).

- Archival sources

The Transvaal Museum was managed by a director, who in turn was responsible to a governing body (originally called the Museum Committee) and since 29 June 1933 known as the Board of Trustees. The minutes of their meetings are available from March 1905 to 12 June 1964.<sup>88</sup> At this final meeting of the Board two separate boards were constituted for the Transvaal Museum and the National Cultural History and Open-Air Museum respectively.

These minutes are a valuable source of information on the decisions taken about the general business of the Museum, including museum administration, accommodation and problems

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<sup>88</sup> One volume could not be traced, i.e. the volume containing the minutes from 9 April 1954 to 3 February 1956.

of insufficient space. They also cover staff matters, correspondence, development of collections, field trips, the grant-in-aid received from the government, the budget, ongoing shortage of funds and other financial matters. It is notable that the priorities of the Committee and Board are clearly manifested in the minutes, and that they show a decided preference for natural history.

Little detailed information about collections management policies and practices could be gleaned from the minutes. Matters that were discussed pertain to specific issues that needed the attention of the Committee or Board, such as security (in the case of theft or war circumstances), loans, or the availability of money to purchase objects for the collection.

The minutes also portray the changes that took place at the Transvaal Museum from the late 1940s, such as the appointment of board members with a human science background and the increasing attention given to the historical division of the Transvaal Museum. These changes are also reflected in the minutes of the Historical Sub-committee,<sup>89</sup> a new body that was constituted in June 1955 to serve the interests of the history division and to raise these matters in Board meetings.

The minutes of the Sub-committee reflect the new priorities set by the history (later the cultural history) division, such as the development of the collection, the need for funds, the restoration of objects, the appointment of trained staff and, although on a limited scale, documentation matters. The movement towards autonomy for the cultural history division and the establishment of the National Cultural History and Open-Air Museum can also be traced in the minutes.

The minutes of the Board of the National Cultural History and Open-Air Museum and the National Cultural History Museum were used to compile the introduction to this research project, in particular the continuous change in circumstances of the collections management department at the National Cultural History Museum.

The annual reports for the first few years after 1913 could not be traced in the Museum's archive, but some were found in the National Archives. It also appears that no reports were

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<sup>89</sup> Copies of the minutes are also on file.

written for the period 1920 to 1935. From 1935 onwards the annual reports of the Transvaal Museum were retained, first in roneo-format and from 1951 they were printed. In comparison to the minutes, the annual reports provide more insight into the organization of the Transvaal Museum, its achievements and its day to day problems. The general reports of the director contain information about museum visitors, the number of acquisitions, donations and field trips. Research and publications such as the *Annals of the Transvaal Museum* also feature, as do show (exhibition) and study collections. These and other issues such as the maintenance of the buildings, staff matters and the audited financial statements, are all supplemented by reports from the natural history divisions/departments and other divisions. Although the reports were written by individuals such as the chairman of the Museum Committee or the Board, the directors, the keepers, professional officers and curators, they nonetheless reflect not only the administrative process but also the wide-ranging interests of the Transvaal Museum as a vibrant natural history institution.

The annual reports also portray the changes that took place at the Transvaal Museum from the late 1940s and the detailed reporting by the history division was particularly useful. These reports were invaluable in providing information on collections management practices in the anthropology, archaeology and history divisions, giving information about the displays, the study collections, the duties of the staff and the growth of the collections. The Museum's various departments and divisions, and the change of the history division into a cultural history department in its own right, can also be traced in the annual reports.

With the establishment of the National Cultural History and Open-Air Museum in 1964, the correspondence dealing with anthropology, archaeology and history matters was withdrawn from the closed and current record filing systems of the administrative section at the Transvaal Museum. It was then converted into a new closed filing system (later called System No 1) and retained in the archives. This system comprises correspondence dating from 1892 to 1964. Unfortunately not all the correspondence was located at the time and several boxes were added to the archives later. These were not incorporated into System No 1.

Many of the incoming letters, and more particularly the replies (usually written by the director, but not exclusively so) shed light on collections management practices. For example, it seems that the practice of naming the donor on the label in the display was often

used to encourage donors. Although the correspondence was useful in extracting “unwritten” policy statements and methods of display, it also reflected the involvement of the director with the history division over a period of many years, until a professional officer for history was appointed in 1953, and on occasion, with the anthropology and archaeology divisions. Other sources include the letter books of the Transvaal Museum (1917 - 1921) and two diaries (1947 and 1949) that had belonged to the director.

In March 2003 Coetzee donated a variety of photographs and documents, including manuscripts, lectures, newspaper and magazine cuttings, notes, speeches and letters, to the National Cultural History Museum. These records have fallen into disarray. Although the arrangement of the records has still not been finalized, a preliminary sorting was attempted to make the relevant records accessible for this research.

These have indeed proved invaluable, because many of them bear testimony to Coetzee’s attempts to identify, display and conserve cultural history and historical objects. This is particularly true of those already held in the collection of the Transvaal Museum prior to her appointment at the Museum in 1953. Her commitment to the preservation of South Africa’s cultural heritage, her passion for knowledge and the driving force that motivated her to develop the history division of the Transvaal Museum and later to establish and expand the National Cultural History and Open-Air Museum are well documented.

Internal reports, articles and memoranda, usually unpublished, that were drawn up at the Transvaal Museum, the National Cultural History and Open-Air Museum and the National Cultural History Museum, proved very useful. For example, the unpublished article, “Gesiedenis van die Volkekunde-Afdeling van die Nasko-Museum, Pretoria 1893 - 1977” and the report, “Konsepverslag: Toestand in Museum” provided pointers on the progress of the anthropology division in this research project that otherwise could have been missed.

The reports of commissions and committees of enquiry are another valuable source of information on general museum matters, but also provide information on the Transvaal Museum in particular. The report published in 1932 on museums and art galleries of British Africa by Miers and Markham<sup>90</sup> is the first of four reports on museums in South Africa

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<sup>90</sup> Although a copy of this report was obtained from the Transvaal Museum library, it is grouped with the other reports that form part of the Museum archives.



during the period covered by this study. In comparison to the other three compilations by governmental commissions and committees, this particular one was conducted by the British Museums Association.<sup>91</sup> It has an abundance of facts on the distribution of museums, the history, administration and finances. There is also information on staff matters, accommodation, the collections and displays, educational activities, fieldwork, research and publications, but there is no information on the documentation of collections in the 1930s.

Miers and Markham recommended that a commission of enquiry on museum matters should be appointed by the South African government.<sup>92</sup> The first of these was only appointed in October 1948 (the Du Toit Commission), and was some years later followed by the Cilliers Committee in 1960 and the Booyesen Committee in 1962. The reports of all these commissions are useful in the verification of the vested interests of the Transvaal Museum in this research project. They also throw light on events that led to the establishment of the National Cultural History and Open-Air Museum.

- Documentation sources

Registers and catalogues form the backbone of a museum. These sources, usually handwritten, provide the primary and basic information about the collections. They not only serve as a guide to the numbering system used for the acquisition and accessioning of objects; they are also directly associated with the manner in which the collections were managed. They are also important in that they give a contemporary record of the management style used. They were therefore useful in various ways for this study.

At the Transvaal Museum most of these volumes have been preserved,<sup>93</sup> even those pertaining to the collections of the Staatsmuseum. They can be divided into two categories:

- acquisitions entry registers (the entry documentation of, or recording of an acquisition with its initial entry into the museum in a register), and

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<sup>91</sup> H.A. Miers and S.F. Markham, *A report on the museums and art galleries of British Africa*, p. iii.

<sup>92</sup> Ibid., p. 44.

<sup>93</sup> As far as can be ascertained five catalogues are known to be missing, i.e the Ethnographica Catalogue, another ethnology catalogue, and the C. Cat, D. Cat. and N. Cat catalogues.

- catalogues (the formal permanent inclusion of an acquisition in the museum's collection by means of a unique accession number in a catalogue).<sup>94</sup>

Without the close perusal and detailed analysis of these registers and catalogues the two chapters (chapters V and VI) on documentation at the Transvaal Museum could not have been written. In many cases the acquisitions registers and catalogues provide the only extant particulars about the objects in the collection. Additional information in the catalogues, provided by the curator or staff member who compiled these records and the problems they encountered, also throws light on the present collections management problems experienced with particular collections. As far as possible information on how, when and why these catalogues were compiled, were sourced and added to the relevant chapters. The existing loans registers also provided insight into the way the collections were enlarged by loans.

In comparison to the registers and catalogues, previous information retrieval systems did not survive the passage of time intact. Only very few examples of the early anthropology card catalogues from the 1920s were preserved by J. van Schalkwyk, the present head of the Research Department of the National Cultural History Museum. The card catalogue compiled by Coetzee could still be consulted, albeit in a very depleted form.

- **Objects**

The aim of this research project is to establish the ways in which previous collections management practices were to the benefit or detriment of the collections – and more to the point, to the objects in the collections held at the National Cultural History Museum. Thus the objects were essential as evidence of good practice and alleged malpractice. In the case of some of the problems that survive in the records, the passage of time and curatorial effort had obliterated the evidence on the objects themselves. Nonetheless objects were found that could still bear testimony to errors such as more than one accession number for one object, accession numbers without a code, numbers on labels and unnumbered objects.

### Secondary sources

A wide variety of museological literature and handbooks on collections management and collections documentation was used to construct a comprehensive account of the development of modern collections management practices. The *South African Museums*

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<sup>94</sup> Also see glossary.

*Association Bulletin (SAMAB)* was also helpful in tracing the development of collections management in South Africa (chapter I).

One author who needs particular recognition for his contribution to the exposition of collections management and the documentation of museum collections is D. Andrew Roberts. His report on the results of a project undertaken from September 1981 to March 1983 to investigate the state and future development of documentation procedures in museums, *Planning the documentation of museum collections*, was published by the Museum Documentation Association (MDA) in Britain in 1985. Roberts is thoroughly acquainted with collections management and museum documentation, having joined the MDA as a research assistant in 1977; he then became secretary in 1979 and director/secretary in 1987. He was also chairman of the International Committee for documentation of the International Council of Museums (ICOM - CIDOC) and worked at the Museum of London.<sup>95</sup> This book was invaluable in giving structure to the present research and the arrangement of the subdivisions in the chapters on collections management practices and collections documentation (chapters III, IV, V and VI). These could not have been compiled without frequent reference to his work.

More limited use was made of the Internet to provide personal details, current definitions of the museum as institution and thoughts on collections management, but for detailed research on collections management practices at the Transvaal Museum in the period under discussion, web pages were inadequate.

## **5. ARRANGEMENT OF CHAPTERS**

Seen in broad perspective, this study is a museological investigation into museum matters, examining the very basic levels of how objects are handled from the moment they enter the museum until their placement, either in storage or on display; it also studies the way in which information about these objects is collected and disseminated.

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<sup>95</sup> D.A. Roberts (ed.), *Collections management for museums*, p. xvi; The museum information profession and the International Committee for documentation of the International Council of Museums (ICOM - CIDOC), <http://www.willpowerinfor.myby.co.uk/cidoc/prof.html>, 7 June 2004.

In chapter I the ideal collections management situation, as it is recognized in the international museum world today, is set out. This includes a short history of the development of collections management practices both overseas and in South Africa. In order to put collections management within the framework of the particular Museum dealt with in this thesis, the history of the Transvaal Museum from 1913 to 1964 is discussed in chapter II. These dates have been specifically chosen for the following reasons:

- Gunning, the director of the Transvaal Museum, and previously director of the Staatsmuseum, died on 25 June 1913. Gunning's contribution to the development of the Staatsmuseum and the early years of the Transvaal Museum has already been discussed in a dissertation.<sup>96</sup> He was succeeded by H.G. Breijer, whose application was approved by the Museum Committee on 11 December 1913.<sup>97</sup> The year 1913 is thus a clear starting point for research on a new beginning at the Museum.
- The year 1964 may be regarded in a similar light, in other words the inception of an autonomous museum, the National Cultural History and Open-Air Museum, and the discontinuance of responsibilities for the anthropology, archaeology and history collections at the Transvaal Museum, which it had managed for 60 years.
- Between 1913 and 1964 lies the year 1953, which must also be regarded as a crucial date. In that year the Transvaal Museum grasped the opportunity, for the first time since the establishment of the Staatsmuseum, to appoint a trained professional officer for the history section. This set a course towards the new museum and a new cultural history museology in South Africa.

Detailed analyses of collections management practices at the Transvaal Museum during two periods, that is 1913 to 1953 and 1953 to 1964, are discussed in the chapters that follow. First, aspects such as organizational changes, resources and staff are covered. The growth of collections, collection policies, storage and display, the documentation framework and conservation are also dealt with (chapters III and IV). The next chapters (chapters V and VI) deal with the minutiae of the documentation process. This is indeed the crux of the matter in the search to find solutions to the problem at present experienced by the

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<sup>96</sup> E. Grobler, "Die Staatsmuseum van die Zuid-Afrikaanse Republiek en sy historiese en etnografiese versamelings" (unpublished M.A. dissertation, University of Pretoria, 1994).

<sup>97</sup> Transvaal Museum Committee minutes, meeting 11 December 1913.

collections management department of the National Cultural History Museum. To conclude, an assessment of the collections management practices at the Transvaal Museum is made (chapter VII).

For the most part, the illustrations from the documentation systems form an integral part of the research as they support and elucidate issues mentioned in the text.

## CHAPTER I

### COLLECTIONS MANAGEMENT IN MUSEUMS

In the context of this research the term collections management refers to certain practices that are peculiar to a museum. Despite changes in the various definitions of a museum and of collections management, past and present, the basic premise of any museum – that it acquires and conserves material evidence (objects) of people and their environment – remained constant throughout the chequered history of museums.

#### 1. WHAT IS A MUSEUM?

According to the ICOM (International Council of Museums)<sup>1</sup> statutes the definition of a museum had changed seven times since 1946, but all the definitions recognize the importance, and indeed the necessity, of a museum having a collection or collections. For example, the 1956 definition specifies groups of objects and specimens of cultural value: artistic, historical, scientific and technological collections. The 1961 definition identifies collections of objects of cultural and scientific significance, while the 1989, 1995 and 2001 definitions mention material evidence of people and their environment.<sup>2</sup>

One of the most recent museum definitions is the one adopted by Museums Australia in March 2002, that a museum is an institution with the following characteristics:

A museum helps people to understand the world by using objects and ideas to interpret the past and present and explore the future. A museum preserves and researches collections, and makes objects and information accessible in actual and virtual environments. Museums are established in the public interest as permanent, not-for-profit organisations that contribute long-term value to communities.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> ICOM is a non-governmental body of UNESCO, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, that was formed in 1946 as an agency of the United Nations. It is dedicated to the improvement and advancement of the world's museums.

<sup>2</sup> Development of the Museum Definition according to ICOM Statutes (1946 - 2001), [http://www.icom.org/hist\\_def\\_eng.htm](http://www.icom.org/hist_def_eng.htm), 26 November 2001.

<sup>3</sup> M. Birtley, New definition of "museum" from Museums Australia, <[mbirtley@DEAKIN.EDU.AU](mailto:mbirtley@DEAKIN.EDU.AU)> 15 April 2002.

The latest definition of a museum, according to a draft that was still under discussion in June 2003, is as follows:

A museum is a non-profit permanent institution in service of society, that operates an exhibition place regularly open to the general public. By acquiring, preserving, researching, interpreting and exhibiting tangible and intangible evidence of society and the environment, the museum engages with its visitors, promotes understanding and learning, and offers to all the enjoyment of sharing authentic cultural and/or natural heritage. This definition includes institutions that pursue similar objectives and accomplish most or some of the museum's functions.<sup>4</sup>

Although the current debate on the review of the ICOM definition of a museum addresses the issue of the museum's responsibility to society,<sup>5</sup> the collections remain a *sine qua non*. It is clear that on the one hand, these collections and the information accompanying the collections should be made available to the public by means of displays or other methods, such as education programmes and publications. All these services are derived from the objects in the collections, which also provide the means for the curators and other museologists to do their work.<sup>6</sup> To ensure the constant availability *ad infinitum* of these objects, they should, on the other hand, be cared for and conserved. The two core functions of a museum, to make available and to maintain, are apparently contradictory. For this reason perhaps, a little less is said in the definitions about the way in which a museum should deal with or manage the collections it has acquired.

## 2. WHAT IS COLLECTIONS MANAGEMENT?

Although the role of the museum has changed considerably over the last three decades and current museum practices could even be considered obsolete,<sup>7</sup> nonetheless the fact remains that a museum cannot be a museum without a collection, and that a museum **with** a collection has the moral and legal obligation to care for the objects within its walls to the best of its ability. In fact the museum holds these collections in trust. Malero puts this matter

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<sup>4</sup> J. McAvity, Executive director, Canadian Museums Association, International Council of Museums Discussion list, <ICOM- L@HOME.EASE.LSOFT.COM>, <jmcavity@MUSEUMS.CA>, 12 June 2003.

<sup>5</sup> See, for example, B.L. Murphy, The definition of a museum, *ICOM News*, 57(2), p. 3.

<sup>6</sup> A. Fahy, Introduction, in A. Fahy (ed.), *Collections management*, p. 2.

<sup>7</sup> P. van Mensch, About new museology, in *Defining Museums and Galleries*, City University London, <http://www.city.ac.uk/artspol/mus-def.htm>, p. 4, 26 November 2001.

very succinctly: **“A museum has the responsibility to provide reasonable care for the objects entrusted to it”**.<sup>8</sup>

This issue is clearly defined according to the definition of the American Association of Museums (AAM) for the purpose of the accreditation programme, namely that a museum should also care for the objects it owns and utilizes. Care in this case is defined as “the keeping of adequate records pertaining to the provenance, identification, and location of a museum’s holdings and the application of current professionally accepted methods to their security and to the minimizing of damage and deterioration”.<sup>9</sup> Systematic care is defined as “thorough documentation, good and permanent records (registration and cataloguing), eternal preservation and security, organized filing of objects (storage) that is logical and accessible”.<sup>10</sup> This, in short, is what collections management is all about.

There are as many definitions of collections management as there are of museums. Indeed, it may be regarded as a topic so broad that it presents some of the most daunting of all museum challenges.<sup>11</sup> Because of its wide scope, collections management has been referred to as a blanket term that applies to the physical care and documentation of collections.<sup>12</sup>

It has already been established that collections are the heart, the *raison de’ être*, the characteristic attribute of a museum. Collections management has to do with the model or manner in which a museum organizes its collections. Lord and Lord say that:

Their management are at the heart of any museum’s operations. Adding to them judiciously is the most fruitful way in which a museum can grow. Documenting them fully and caring for them as well is, in the long run, the fundamental criterion of a well-managed museum, since the ability of the museum to provide meaningful experiences for the public today and in the future depends on its care for its collections and the information about them.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> M.C. Malaro, *A legal primer on managing museum collections*, p. 269, my bold.

<sup>9</sup> Definitions of Museums from G.E. Burcaw, *Introduction to museum work*, <http://www.gricola.umn.edu/rhet8520/winter99/museums.htm>, p. 2.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid., p. 3.

<sup>11</sup> P.S. Doughty, Surveys of collections management systems and practice, in D.A. Roberts (ed.), *Collections management for museums*, p. 7.

<sup>12</sup> A. Fahy, Introduction, in A. Fahy (ed.), *Collections management*, p. 2.

<sup>13</sup> B. Lord and G.D. Lord, *The manual of museum management*, p. 63.



The objective of collections management, according to Fahy, is the protection of the collections and their associated information against degradation, theft and destruction. It also involves permitting physical and intellectual access to the objects.<sup>14</sup> Roberts says that the phrase “collections management” has become fashionable as museums attempt to clarify their function and pay special attention to the effective care of the collections in their charge. He defines collections management as the overall process of maintaining the collection,<sup>15</sup> encompassing

the policies and procedures concerned with the accessioning, control, cataloguing, use and disposal of enquiries, acquisitions and loans while in the care of the museum or at an outside agency, together with related issues such as exhibition management and object transportation.<sup>16</sup>

Roberts’ definition of collections management may be regarded as synonymous with the term museum documentation, because documentation includes the accessioning and cataloguing of the collections, information on the movement of objects, as well as loans and conservation. It also assists with the control and location/storage of objects and with auditing, insurance, the development of exhibitions, and curatorial research and publications.

The process is referred to either as a museum documentation system, an information handling system or a collections management system.<sup>17</sup> Such a system, that provides access to detailed information about the collection, is not only indispensable to the smooth maintenance of the entire collection, but also corresponds with the ways in which the museum operates. It should, maintains Light, be totally integrated with the working practice of a museum, and must back up the museum activities that affect its collections.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> A. Fahy, Introduction, in A. Fahy (ed.), *Collections management*, p. 2.

<sup>15</sup> D.A. Roberts, Collections management for museums, in D.A. Roberts (ed.), *Collections management for museums*, p. 1; D.A. Roberts, *Planning the documentation of museum collections*, p. 165.

<sup>16</sup> D.A. Roberts, Collections management for museums, in D.A. Roberts (ed.), *Collections management for museums*, p. 1.

<sup>17</sup> D.A. Roberts, *Planning the documentation of museum collections*, pp. 165 and 166; J.E. Sledge, Survey of North American collections management systems and practice, in D.A. Roberts, *Collections management for museums*, p. 13; Light, R., The scope and design of collections management systems, in D.A. Roberts (ed.), *Collections management for museums*, p. 48.

<sup>18</sup> R. Light, The scope and design of collections management systems, in D.A. Roberts (ed.), *Collections management for museums*, p. 53.

Although such a system may be manual, Sledge maintained that since the 1970s, collections management systems have usually been associated with the use of computers. In earlier days collections management was viewed as automated audit control of museum collections by means of an inventory.<sup>19</sup>

It must be remembered that collections management should not only involve inventory control and information access on the objects themselves, but must also include idea management and intellectual access – “the data itself is an ‘object’ ”.<sup>20</sup> In other words, more than the object itself should be preserved. According to Loy collections management is not simply a more modern phrase to replace the venerable term “curation”. He asserts that it is the embodiment of a strategy to provide access to and control of the entirety of the collection and its attendant data.<sup>21</sup> Whether the practice of collections management is regarded as a new management style or a strategy, it either way drew attention anew to collections and the way in which they were maintained since the very beginnings of museums. In many cases the old methods were found to have serious flaws.

Legally the museum has certain obligations as regards the collections under its care. Malaro points out that museums have a legal responsibility to establish guidelines for collecting objects, disposing of and caring for them in the collection and also to oversee generally the welfare of museum assets.<sup>22</sup> Thus collections management is much more than just a commitment towards its collections for the sake of the museum; in a legal sense it is a mandatory practice that museums could and should uphold. The fact that a museum is legally accountable for the collections in its care, can be regarded as the single most important incentive for the development of collections management.

Roberts does not regard the museum functions of security, environmental control,

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<sup>19</sup> J.E. Sledge, Survey of North American collections management systems and practice, in D.A. Roberts (ed.), *Collections management for museums*, p. 9.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid., p. 11.

<sup>21</sup> T. Loy, Collections computerization at the British Columbia Provincial Museum, in R.B. Light, D.A. Roberts and J.D. Stewart (eds) *Museum documentation systems: developments and applications*, p. 22.

<sup>22</sup> M.C. Malaro, *A legal primer on managing museum collections*, p. 58.

conservation and research as part of collections management.<sup>23</sup> Others hold the opinion, however, that adequate housing and conditions are essential for the collections and that no significant undertaking to improve the documentation should be done unless this is available.<sup>24</sup> According to the definition used by the Heritage Collections Council of Australia collections management includes handling, storage and conservation.<sup>25</sup> In the context of this research thesis, research and conservation have been accepted as an integral part of collections management.

Without collections management, collections would be diffuse and unmanageable; they would be of very little use to the museum itself or to the public. There are many benefits of collections management: probably the most important of these is that museums can now account for their collections and information can be found readily and efficiently.

### 3. THE HISTORY OF COLLECTIONS MANAGEMENT

Keeping records of the museum's collections is, according to Mann, second only to the physical collection, which is the museum's primary concern.<sup>26</sup> As collections have always formed an irreplaceable part of a museum, the management of collections is not new, despite the fact that the term has not always been used. All museums have had to find means of controlling and taking care of the objects in their collections.

#### History

Probably the earliest form of control was the memory of the curator. While the collection was small, this was sufficient, but as the number of objects in the collection grew, written records became increasingly necessary.<sup>27</sup> An elementary, and of course manual system of record keeping or documentation then came into use, such as a register, catalogue<sup>28</sup> or

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<sup>23</sup> D.A. Roberts, Collections management for museums, in D.A. Roberts (ed.), *Collections management for museums*, p. 1.

<sup>24</sup> C.J.T. Copp, The development of documentation procedures in the City of Bristol Museum and Art Gallery, in R.B. Light, D.A. Roberts and J.D. Stewart (eds), *Museum documentation systems: developments and applications*, p. 173.

<sup>25</sup> Na, *reCollections Caring for collections across Australia, Glossary*, p. 9.

<sup>26</sup> V. Mann, From clay tablet to hard disc, in M. Case (ed.), *Registrars on record*, p. 6.

<sup>27</sup> H.F.L. Immelman, "Museum documentation: principles and practise" (unpublished D.Phil thesis, University of Natal, 1993), p. 27.

<sup>28</sup> See glossary.

ledger that provided a list of the objects or group of objects in a collection or museum. Often these volumes are still the primary sources of information on the collections. These record books were arranged in numerical order, making access to categories of information other than the acquisition or accession number virtually impossible. As Liversidge puts it:

Having a catalogue of what one possesses has one function only in the present old fashioned sense, and this is it records what comes into the Museum, when and from where ... It is not possible to tell from these catalogues if the object is still in the Museum, where in the Museum, what state it is in. Nor is it possible to select out particular objects from such catalogues without going through thousands of entries.<sup>29</sup>

Sarasan is of the opinion that the basic system of museum documentation such as files and ledgers, functioned adequately because they were supported by a strong framework of oral tradition. In other words the knowledge and memory of the staff who had worked in a museum for many years constituted a considerable wealth of unrecorded history about the museum objects.<sup>30</sup>

The control of the collections went hand in hand with attempts to classify and catalogue them.<sup>31</sup> In 1853 for example, an idea accredited to a German, Hans von Aufsess, was incorporated into the act constituting the German National Museum in Nuremberg. He was of the opinion that descriptions of documents and objects had to be systemized scientifically and should index the information under headings such as name, place, subject and source in a “Generalrepertorium”.<sup>32</sup> Apart from the accessions catalogue or register, museums sometimes also made use of an index (often also called a catalogue or a card catalogue) so that a variety of information access points could be retrieved.

Another form of documentation was also called a catalogue. It was usually printed and was a guide or booklet which listed, described and illustrated objects in a collection or on display. Although some scholarly catalogues were produced, many were inexpertly prepared.<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> R. Liversidge, Museum cataloguing and a national system, *SAMAB* 8(14), September 1967, p. 451.

<sup>30</sup> L. Sarasan, Why museum computer projects fail, in A. Fahy (ed.), *Collections management*, p. 187.

<sup>31</sup> V. Mann, From clay tablet to hard disc, in M. Case (ed.), *Registrars on record*, p. 5.

<sup>32</sup> P.C. Coetzee, “Lesings in die museumkunde” (unpublished lectures), pp. 28 - 30.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 32.

Lists of accessions were sometimes also published in local newspapers, for example, lists of donations made to the Staatsmuseum in Pretoria<sup>34</sup> and also in annual reports, such as the list of the principal accessions to the South African Museum during the year 1881.<sup>35</sup> The minute book of a museum could even serve as a catalogue. In the case of the National Museum in Bloemfontein, established in 1877, several donations were entered into the minute book, for example, “August 20: Received from Mr Orpen a copy of a Bushman painting”.<sup>36</sup>

This basic pattern of record keeping was followed in many museums in the United Kingdom, notably the British Museum. When the British Museum opened in 1759 there were already 80 000 objects from the collections of Sir Hans Sloane and the Cotton and Harley libraries.<sup>37</sup> Records of acquisitions had begun in 1756 in bound ledgers known as The Book of Presents. From 1836 onwards bound acquisitions registers were used, where donations and purchases were recorded.<sup>38</sup> Although these records are still important, their very longevity, says Roberts, presents the museum staff with serious problems in managing the collections.<sup>39</sup>

McCutcheon is of the opinion that although the British Museum had recognized the importance of comprehensive documentation of its collections, the various systems placed the emphasis on the registration of acquisitions and similar fundamental tasks, to the detriment of the development of systems for the organization, classification and retrieval of information.<sup>40</sup> The fact that the documentation was done in the various departments led to

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<sup>34</sup> Staatsmuseum, Acquisitions entry register, vol. 1, December 1893 - 1897. See also, for example, *De Volksstem*, 10 December 1898.

<sup>35</sup> Cape of Good Hope, report of the trustees of the South-African Museum for the year 1881, pp. 8 - 24.

<sup>36</sup> A.C. Hoffman, Interesting aspects about the early history of the National Museum in Bloemfontein, *SAMAB*, 6(13), March 1958, p. 334.

<sup>37</sup> D. McCutcheon, The British Museum, in R.B. Light, D.A. Roberts and J.D. Stewart (eds), *Museum documentation systems: developments and applications*, p. 131.

<sup>38</sup> D.A. Roberts and R.B. Light, The cooperative development of documentation in United Kingdom Museums, in R.B. Light, D.A. Roberts and J.D. Stewart (eds), *Museum documentation systems: developments and applications*, p. 114.

<sup>39</sup> D.A. Roberts, Collections management systems and practice in United Kingdom Museums, in D.A. Roberts (ed.), *Collections management for museums*, p. 32.

<sup>40</sup> D. McCutcheon, The British Museum, in R.B. Light, D.A. Roberts and J.D. Stewart (eds), *Museum documentation systems: developments and applications*, p. 131.

disparate procedures and great variation in the availability of information. For example, in the ethnography department over 60 different registration numbering systems were used over the years.<sup>41</sup>

Record keeping in the Smithsonian Institution, Washington DC, pre-dates the establishment of that Institution in 1846. Until 1976 the Smithsonian continued to use the record system of the National Institute that was established in 1818. One of the earliest incumbents of the registrar's post at the Smithsonian was Stephen C. Brown in 1880, but the post was abolished with his death in 1919. The records then became the responsibility of the Division of Correspondence and Documents, but in 1956 a Central Office of the Registrar was again established. Most of the activities connected with collections management, however, were conducted at curatorial level, including the development of standards and systems. Objects became separated from their records when collections were moved, with the result that centralized access was impossible.<sup>42</sup> There was no attempt to inventorize the objects or to take stock of the collections at the Smithsonian Institution prior to 1977.<sup>43</sup>

The status of the museum profession increased considerably after the Second World War (1939 - 1945). There was also a growing awareness that the professional handling and management of collections would lead to an improvement in the way in which museums could account for their collections. The stocktaking of the museum collections was regarded as important from as early as 1888 when the British Treasury issued a Minute on the need for a regular store audit.<sup>44</sup> This was followed by an investigation in 1912,<sup>45</sup> but nothing was done about this because of the intervention of the First World War (1914 - 1918). By the middle of the twentieth century, museums in the United Kingdom and indeed worldwide had serious difficulties in accounting for each object in the collection. This was true both in the physical sense and in terms of the museum records.

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<sup>41</sup> Ibid., pp. 131 - 132.

<sup>42</sup> K.P. Spiess, Collections Management policy and procedure initiatives at the Smithsonian Institution National Museum for American History, in D.A. Roberts (ed.), *Collections management for museums*, pp. 133 - 135.

<sup>43</sup> D.A. Roberts, *Planning the documentation of museum collections*, pp. 15 and 512.

<sup>44</sup> D.A. Roberts and R.B. Light, The cooperative development of documentation in United Kingdom Museums, in R.B. Light, D.A. Roberts and J.D. Stewart (eds), *Museum documentation systems: developments and applications*, p. 114.

<sup>45</sup> D.A. Roberts, Collections management systems and practice in United Kingdom Museums, in D.A. Roberts (ed.), *Collections management for museums*, p. 32.

Not only did the number of museums increase, but their holdings grew to such an extent that records became inadequate and unreliable, particularly so for museum functions that are dependent on the collections, such as research, education and presentation. In many of the museums their records dated back a hundred or more years and were outdated and inadequate. Roberts maintains that these early records are usually less detailed, less reliable and less well maintained than the museum would wish. He claims that for many collections, there is possibly only one set of fading manuscript records and that any indexes prepared from these records may well be incomplete, badly maintained and little used. Then too, the records may not have been annotated in the event of a loss, disposal or transfer of an item from the permanent collection. Location details may also be cursory or out-of-date.<sup>46</sup>

Old museum practices and manual documentation systems could no longer exert maximum control over the collections, even if the collections in a museum were regarded as one of its major assets. Accountability became the most important incentive for the development of modern collections management practices. As Fahy puts it, accountability has become the watchword of museums.<sup>47</sup>

In the United States of America museums hold collections in trust for the nation, but in the 1960s confidence in the American museums was shaken when they became involved in court cases such as the case of *Lefkowitz v. The Museum for the American Indian: Heye Foundation*. The Attorney-General listed a number of charges of questionable accession and deaccession practices and a failure to keep adequate records.<sup>48</sup>

The importance of the legal aspects of collections management was recognized. Court cases like above and auditors' reports led to surveys and reviews of collections management procedures in many museums in the United States and the United Kingdom. The concept of museum accreditation also contributed to the acceleration of sound collections

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<sup>46</sup> D.A. Roberts, *Planning of documentation of museum collections*, p. 17.

<sup>47</sup> A. Fahy, Introduction, in A. Fahy (ed.), *Collections management*, p. 5.

<sup>48</sup> J.E. Sledge, Survey of North American collections management systems and practice, in D.A. Roberts, *Collections management for museums*, p. 13. For examples of court cases, see M.C. Malaro, *A legal primer on managing museum collections*.

management practices. Many museums failed to receive accreditation since they could not comply with the minimum standards.<sup>49</sup>

A survey conducted in 1966 at the National Museum of American History noted “inconsistent content and format within files, proliferation of numbering systems and card formats, and the lack of a central index to collections of the Museum”.<sup>50</sup> The result was that sound collections management became a priority. According to a series of reports on American museums during the 1980s, most museums needed substantial reorganization.<sup>51</sup>

An example of a feasibility study carried out in the United Kingdom is that on the St Albans Museum Service in 1973. This study emphasized the insufficiency of collection documentation. The documentation at the time comprised an inadequate and out-of-date accessions register for a small proportion of the City Museum collection as well as two incomplete card indexes that were produced in the 1930's and an ineffective registration procedure.<sup>52</sup>

Several events precipitated the importance of collections management: in 1973 the influential Wright Report on British provincial museums recognized that effective collections management was dependent on the availability of accurate information about the collections in a museum.<sup>53</sup> The Report was followed by investigations by the Public Accounts Committee and District Audit Services, that highlighted the shortcomings of the cataloguing and information retrieval systems.<sup>54</sup> These initiatives were the result of an increasing awareness that cataloguing and information retrieval in museums should be more effective;

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<sup>49</sup> D.B. Reibel, The registrar as human resource manager, in M. Case (ed.), *Registrars on record*, p. 36.

<sup>50</sup> K.P. Spiess, Collections management policy and procedure initiatives at the Smithsonian Institution National Museum of American History, in D.A. Roberts (ed.), *Collections management for museums*, p. 135.

<sup>51</sup> D.A. Roberts, Collections management for museums, in D.A. Roberts (ed.), *Collections management for museums*, p. 1.

<sup>52</sup> S.M. Stone, Collection records at St Albans Museums, in R.B. Light, D.A. Robert and J.D. Stewart (eds), *Museum documentation systems, developments and applications*, p. 190.

<sup>53</sup> D.A. Roberts, Collections management systems and practice in United Kingdom museums, in D.A. Roberts (ed.), *Collections management for museums*, p. 33.; D.A. Roberts and R.B. Light, The cooperative development of documentation in United Kingdom museums, in R.B. Light, D.A. Roberts and J.D. Stewart (eds), *Museum documentation systems, developments and applications*, p. 117.

<sup>54</sup> A. Fletcher, Computerizing records from Leicestershire's Museums, in R.B. Light, D.A. Roberts and J.D. Stewart (eds), *Museum documentation systems, developments and applications*, p. 182.



in essence museums had to be more accountable for the collections in their care. Ways and means had to be devised to demonstrate to both the government and the public that collections could be managed effectively. Practical management objectives, such as those set by the Department of Education and Science, include the accession and registration of objects, the routine verification that they are safely stored to prevent or detect their loss, the monitoring of their condition and their efficient and detailed cataloguing.<sup>55</sup> According to Roberts, however, the wide recognition of the significance of collections management only really came into focus in the late 1970s.<sup>56</sup>

Despite this positive step forward, surveys and reports published as late as 1988, 1989 and 1992 express concern about the standard of inventory control and storage in some national and non-national museums in the United Kingdom.<sup>57</sup> This creates the impression that these museums could neither account for their collections nor care properly for them.<sup>58</sup> As a result various initiatives were set up to improve the quality of collections management practices, such as the National Registration Scheme and the UK Museum Documentation Standard. The surveys also led to the awarding of special government grants for collections audits and inventories. A number of books on collections management have also been published.<sup>59</sup>

### **The use of computers**

From the 1960s computer technological developments grew apace and was seen as answer to collections management problems. Virginia Mann makes the point:

... manual record keeping is on the way out. After a long and venerable history extending back to antiquity, the practice of using a sharp instrument on a flat surface - a pointed stick and a clay tablet, a pencil and paper - is receding into oblivion.<sup>60</sup>

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<sup>55</sup> Ibid., and D.A. Roberts, Collections management for museums, in D.A., *Collections management for museums*, pp. 1 - 2.

<sup>56</sup> D.A. Roberts, Collections management systems and practice in United Kingdom museums, in D.A. Roberts (ed.), *Collections management for museums*, p. 33.

<sup>57</sup> See A. Fahy, Introduction, in A. Fahy (Ed.), *Collections management*, pp. 2 - 3 and 8.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid., p. 3.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid., pp. 3 - 5.

<sup>60</sup> V. Mann, The binary ball game, in M. Case (ed.), *Registrars on record*, p. 179.

She also asserts that museums are changing from traditional record keeping systems to electronic ones.<sup>61</sup>

In the United States an Automatic Data Processing Committee was established at the National Museum of Natural History of the Smithsonian Institution in 1963; an early computer project was launched at the University of Oklahoma in 1965,<sup>62</sup> followed by the Museum Computer Network in 1967.<sup>63</sup> Despite the fact that great deal of hard work was put into computerization – hundreds of computer projects were set up in United States museums – by the late 1970s many problems linked to computerized data were still not solved, probably because, writes Sarasan, “museums rush into computerization with a *naiveté* that is startling!”<sup>64</sup>

The National Inventory Programme used by the Canadian museums was widely regarded as one of the most innovative museum documentation schemes in the world.<sup>65</sup> It was devised in 1972 with the directive to create a databank to include all the public museum collections in Canada. As major changes were made, it was renamed the Canadian Heritage Information Network (CHIN) to meet the computer demands of the day-to-day management of collections in museums.<sup>66</sup>

In the United States the National Museum of Natural History at the Smithsonian Institution used automated methods for collections management from the early 1960s.<sup>67</sup> But it is also noteworthy that a four-year pilot programme for the computerization of the records of the registrar at the Metropolitan Museum of Art was abandoned after four years as a result of the lack of funds. However, the fact that the manual system was regarded as effective for

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<sup>61</sup> Ibid., pp. 183 - 184.

<sup>62</sup> L. Sarasan, Why museum computer projects fail, in A. Fahy (ed.), *Collection management*, p. 188.

<sup>63</sup> D. Vance, The museum computer network in context in R.B. Light, D.A. Roberts and J.D. Stewart (eds), *Museum documentation systems: developments and applications*, p. 37.

<sup>64</sup> L. Sarasan, Why museum computer projects fail, in A. Fahy (ed.), *Collections management*, p. 196.

<sup>65</sup> J. Sledge and B. Comstock, The Canadian heritage information network, in R.B. Light, D.A. Roberts and J.D. Stewart (eds), *Museum documentation systems: developments and applications*, p. 7.

<sup>66</sup> Ibid., p. 8.

<sup>67</sup> T.G. Gautier, National Museum of Natural History, Smithsonian Institution, in R.B. Light, D.A. Roberts and J.D. Stewart (eds), *Museum documentation systems, developments and applications*, p. 48.

over three-quarters of a century, also contributed to that decision.<sup>68</sup> The numbering system, established in 1906 at that Museum, was still used in 1986.<sup>69</sup>

In the United Kingdom semi-mechanized and mechanized systems set up in major museums were eventually followed by the establishment of the Information Retrieval Groups of the Museums Association (IRMGA), and then the new Museum Documentation Association (MDA) in 1977.<sup>70</sup> Many museums, both national and non-national, became aware of the necessity of implementing sound collections management procedures, particularly in reaction to the increased pressure for accountability. As automated facilities became available, retrospective programmes for inventoring or re-cataloguing led to higher standards of documentation and improved utilization of collections.<sup>71</sup> On the international front the International Committee for Documentation of ICOM (ICOM-CIDOC) was established.

The perception that the computerization of existing museum records would immediately solve all collections management problems proved to be naïve and was a common mistake made with many of the computer projects that were launched.<sup>72</sup> The reality is that the computer is no more than a tool to be used by museum personnel to carry out collections management procedures; it is a new management style that has become the responsibility of all staff members.<sup>73</sup> Efficient collections management can only be accomplished by the effort and commitment of the people in the museum, with or without computers.

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<sup>68</sup> J. Buchanan, Documentation and control of collections at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, in R.B. Light, D.A. Roberts and J.D. Stewart (eds), *Museum documentation systems, developments and applications*, pp. 63 - 64.

<sup>69</sup> Ibid., pp. 56 - 57. Only one slight change was made in the system because the Museum was founded in 1870 when the first accessions occurred. After 1969, of course, a change in the system had to be made and the first accession in 1970 was numbered 1970.1.

<sup>70</sup> D.A. Roberts and R.B. Light, The cooperative development of documentation in United Kingdom Museums, in R.B. Light, D.A. Roberts and J.D. Stewart (eds), *Museum documentation systems: developments and applications*, pp. 114 - 118.

<sup>71</sup> Ibid., p. 126.

<sup>72</sup> J.E. Sledge, Survey of North American collections management systems and practice, in D.A. Roberts, *Collections management for museums*, p. 14.

<sup>73</sup> Ibid., pp. 10 and 17.

Some curators did indeed find it difficult to adapt to the new computer technology, or even to set documentation standards, but others recognized the advantages of replacing manual systems with computerized ones. The use of a new documentation system did not only have the advantage of updating information about a museum's collections; it also led to the reorganization of stores and even in some cases, to improved conservation measures.<sup>74</sup> There are instances where re-cataloguing a collection resulted in the retrieval of a body of information on the objects dating as far back as the nineteenth century or the establishment of the museum. At the Hunterian Museum for example, it was ascertained that the ethnography collection included a much higher proportion of historically valuable material than was previously realized.<sup>75</sup> Loy says that the prime importance of computerization is the new ability to track, document and control collections management processes such as accessioning, loans, valuations and conservation treatment.<sup>76</sup> Despite the depressing weight of evidence of the sheer scale of undone work that has been inherited from previous generations, it is encouraging that so many museums were involved in positive planning and change during the 1980s.<sup>77</sup>

### **The necessity of a collections management policy**

One of the most important factors in the successful implementation of collections management in a museum is the presence of a collections management policy. Such a policy should be the starting point and an integral part of the formulation of a system of collections management.

A museum needs a collections management policy for making meaningful decisions because indiscriminate or indifferent collecting "may result in the accumulation of a much too diversified and fruitless miscellany of objects ...[and] may cause it [the museum] to become an overcrowded repository for miscellaneous discarded materials, a sort of community

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<sup>74</sup> See for example S.M. Stone, Collecting recording at St Albans, in R.B. Light, D.A. Roberts and J.D. Stewart (eds), *Museum documentation systems, developments and applications*, p. 194.

<sup>75</sup> F. Willett, The Hunterian Museum and Art Gallery, University of Glasgow, in R.B. Light, D.A. Roberts and J.D. Stewart (eds), *Museum documentation systems, developments and applications*, p. 212.

<sup>76</sup> T. Loy, Collections computerization at the British Columbia Provincial Museum, in R.B. Light, D.A. Roberts and J.D. Stewart (eds), *Museum documentation systems: developments and applications*, p. 22.

<sup>77</sup> D.A. Roberts, Collections management systems and practice in United Kingdom museums, in D.A. Roberts (ed.), *Collections management for museums*, p. 38.

attic”.<sup>78</sup> A collections management policy enables museums to manage collections methodically. Reibel is of the opinion that the system used for accessioning embraces the collections management policy of the museum.<sup>79</sup> A collections management policy is defined by the AAM as

a comprehensive written statement articulating the purpose of the museum, and how this purpose is pursued through the museum’s collection goals, activities and methods. A strong collections management policy introduces consistency into day-to-day handling of an institution’s collections.<sup>80</sup>

Although there is a number of guidelines for the formulation of an efficient collections management policy, the following precepts should be covered:

- statement of purpose or vision and mission of museum
- commitment to maintaining and caring for collections held by museum (conservation and preservation)
- scope, range and limits of a collection, such as dates, geographical range and materials, i.e. what the museum intends to collect
- criteria for inclusion with regard to authenticity, quality, significance and provenance
- accession or acquisition methods
- clear title to, and ownership of collections and objects in collections, and conformance with the legal rights of the museum
- ethical commitments
- purpose for which objects may be collected, e.g. study or display
- deaccessioning or disposal of objects
- loans
- evaluations or appraisals
- documentation of the collection, including entry records, registers and inventories
- marking of objects
- insurance cover for objects
- access, both physical and intellectual, to the objects
- reproduction and copyright

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<sup>78</sup> C.E. Guthe, *The management of small history museums*, pp. 22 - 23.

<sup>79</sup> D.B. Reibel, The registrar as human resource manager, in M. Case (ed.), *Registrars on record*, p. 36.

<sup>80</sup> American Association of Museum Technical Information Service (AAMTIS), Writing a collections management policy, <http://www.aam-us.org/tiswcmp.htm>, p. 1.

By 1988 Roberts could maintain that although the pace and degree of change varies from country to country, the impact of the development and implementation of collections management policies, procedures and systems is becoming apparent throughout the world.<sup>81</sup> The 1990s were characterized by the widespread availability of IT systems with the emphasis on effective collections management and the use of standards.<sup>82</sup>

A collections management policy deals with the objects in a museum, but in practice such a policy directs the actions or behaviour of staff members who deal with those objects. And indeed, the successful formulation of such a policy is also dependent on the guidance, input and expertise of those staff members.

### **Staff**

During the 1970's there were few staff members in the United Kingdom who could claim to be specialists in museum documentation. Many of those who were working in museums had moved from libraries or information science backgrounds, and of the staff responsible for documentation most were curators.<sup>83</sup> In North America a museologist who specializes in collections management is called a registrar. A registrar in the museum field is described as

an individual with broad responsibilities in the development and enforcement of policies and procedures pertaining to the acquisition, management and disposition of collections. Records pertaining to the objects for which the institution has assumed responsibility are maintained by the registrar. Usually the registrar also handles arrangements for accessions, loans, packing, shipping, storage, customs and insurance as it relates to museum material.<sup>84</sup>

The primary concerns of registrars, according to the code of ethics, are creating and maintaining accurate records on objects, including the documents that provide legal protection for the museum and ensuring the safety of and control over objects.<sup>85</sup> All these

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<sup>81</sup> D.A. Roberts, Collections management for museums, in D.A. Roberts, (ed.), *Collections management for museums*, p. 2.

<sup>82</sup> D.A. Roberts, The changing role of information professionals in museums, *Mda information*, 5(3), July 2002, pp. 16 - 17.

<sup>83</sup> Ibid., p. 15.

<sup>84</sup> Code of ethics for registrars, in M. Case (ed.), *Registrars on record*, p. 229.

<sup>85</sup> Ibid.

are elements of collections management. Jack Foss agrees, saying that the registrar is a generalist who is more broadly and intimately involved with collections management and museum operations than other staff professionals.<sup>86</sup> The emphasis on accountability is the one aspect that has accelerated the appointment of registrars in American museums. In the 1980s there was a gradual appointment of documentation specialists in the United Kingdom, usually from a curatorial background.<sup>87</sup>

#### **4. THE HISTORY OF COLLECTIONS MANAGEMENT IN SOUTH AFRICA, WITH THE EMPHASIS ON ANTHROPOLOGICAL, ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL COLLECTIONS**

##### **History**

Eight museums were established in South Africa in the second half of the nineteenth century. In the period after the Anglo Boer War (1899 - 1902) and unification (1910) new museums developed slowly. By 1941 there were five national, five provincial and two municipal museums of natural history, seven art galleries and eight history museums.<sup>88</sup> In Pretoria the Transvaal Museum was regarded as a natural history museum, and the Kruger House as a history museum, but the Old Museum in Boom Street (the history section of the Transvaal Museum) was not even worth a mention according to a so-called statistical enquiry on museums in South Africa.<sup>89</sup>

Matters of importance to the museum community in the 1930s included the care and restoration of works of art, display methods and the arrangement of objects for display. Display cases for exhibitions in museums and for school services were also of concern, as were display labels, the preservation of natural history specimens, the eradication of

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<sup>86</sup> J. Foss, "Let's kill all the lawyers": registrars, law, and ethics, in M. Case (ed.), *Registrars on record*, p. 133.

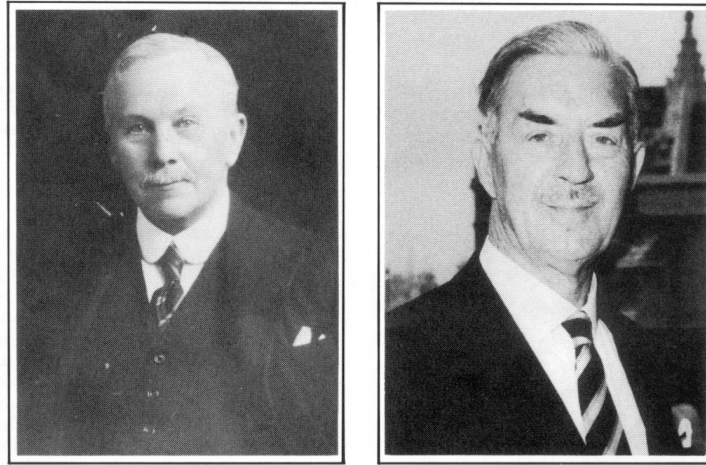
<sup>87</sup> D.A. Roberts, The changing role of information professionals in museums, *Mda information*, 5(3), July 2002, p. 16.

<sup>88</sup> See E.C. Chubb, Report on a statistical enquiry concerning the museums and art galleries of South Africa, South African Museums and Art Galleries (table), *SAMAB*, 2(10), September 1941, p. 234.

<sup>89</sup> Ibid.



museum pests and collecting expeditions. Technical matters, like taxidermy, the sealing of jars and plaster casts, and the production of scientific publications were also emphasized.<sup>90</sup>



**Figure 1**

Sir Henry Miers (left) and S.F. Markham,  
President and Secretary of the British Museums Association respectively,  
who undertook the first museum survey in South Africa in 1932

(C.K. Brain and M.C. Erasmus, *The making of the museums professions in Southern Africa*, p. 3)

The first survey of museums in South Africa was undertaken in 1932 by Sir Henry Miers and S.F. Markham (figure 1) at the invitation of the Carnegie Corporation of New York, which met all the expenses. It was carried out on behalf of the British Museums Association, of which Miers was the President. In November 1931 Markham explained the dual aim of their proposed visit to South Africa to the High Commissioner for the Union of South Africa: the compilation of a survey on museums and the compilation of a directory for the Carnegie Corporation in New York. In South Africa the Secretary for the Interior, under which some museums resorted, and museum directors were also contacted.<sup>91</sup> On 5 February 1932 Miers and Markham left England for Cape Town, where they started their investigation. They also visited Kimberley, Port Elizabeth, Grahamstown, East London, Durban, Johannesburg and Pretoria. Their brief was to make a study of the principal

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<sup>90</sup> The first issue of *SAMAB*, the South African Museums Association Bulletin, was published in September 1936. The bulletin reflects matters of interest to South African museums.

<sup>91</sup> C.K. Brain and M.C. Erasmus, *The making of the museum professions in Southern Africa*, p. 3.



museums in the British Empire in Africa, primarily in the Union of South Africa, Southern Rhodesia, Kenya, Zanzibar and the Sudan.<sup>92</sup>

As points of reference for this investigation the geographical range, political diversity and in particular the population distribution were used. According to the two researchers the overwhelming majority of the population in the British territories was “illiterate negro or other indigenous races”, but the Union of South Africa was seen as the outstanding white area.<sup>93</sup> In their opinion museums were only likely to thrive where there was a large white or other literate population. The report claimed that in South Africa every centre with a white population of over 10 000, except those in the Witwatersrand area, had a public museum or art gallery.<sup>94</sup>

As far as the Union of South Africa was concerned, the study reported broadly on the administration of museums (whether they were subsidized by the government, provincial or local authority or any other source), and the lack of sufficient finances. Other issues that received attention included staff matters, museum buildings and equipment, displays and exhibits. Collections, taxidermy, museum pests, educational activities, expeditions, research and publications, and cooperation between museums were also mentioned. The report summarized the most important requirements for museums in South Africa as greater financial security, some form of co-operation between museums and the development of education work.<sup>95</sup> It did not report on current documentation procedures such as accessioning or cataloguing, nor did it call for improvements on these matters. However, it was suggested that funds be made available for the preparation and publication of a text-book dealing with curatorial problems in the sub-tropics.<sup>96</sup>

At the inaugural meeting of the South African Museums Association (SAMA) held in Kimberley on 23 April 1936, various matters of importance were mentioned. These included art conservation, international loans, exchange of duplicates, study collections and research

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<sup>92</sup> H.A. Miers and S.F. Markham, *A report on museums and galleries of British Africa*, p. ix.

<sup>93</sup> Ibid., p. viii.

<sup>94</sup> Ibid., p. 3.

<sup>95</sup> Ibid., p. 44.

<sup>96</sup> Ibid.

activities. In addition methods of attracting the public to museums, co-operation with education authorities and the appointment of a taxidermist of the highest rank – issues listed in the Miers and Markham report – were mentioned by E.C. Chubb, the curator of the Durban Museum and Art Gallery, in his inaugural speech. He made no reference to the documentation and maintenance of collections.<sup>97</sup>

The Miers report was raised at the first annual meeting of SAMA. Matters which were regarded as important for discussion included the need for the improvement of taxidermy, the dissemination of information on the control of insect pests, the establishment of an agricultural museum and the creation of museums in national parks. It was also suggested that museum staff might well benefit from visits to overseas museums.<sup>98</sup>

In 1938 E.M. Shaw of the South African Museum, Cape Town, visited ethnographical museums, collections and exhibitions in Europe. She was very impressed by two aspects of modern collections management that she saw, namely cataloguing and in particular the storage system at the Royal Museum for Central Africa (the Congo Museum), Tervuren, Belgium.<sup>99</sup> She describes these as follows:

But nothing surpassed the first storage system that I saw, at the Congo Museum, Tervueren. I cannot imagine a greater degree of efficiency; and its documentation is equally efficient, it must surely be the model of what an ethnographic department should be. Small and medium-sized specimens are stored in cupboards. The smallest of all – ornaments, pipes, etc. – are in drawers with glass lids. They are fastened on to a backing, and beside each is a label with the number of each object, the name of the tribe, and district from which it comes. All the cupboards and drawers are numbered; and on the backs of the doors of the cupboards is a series of numbered photographs, one of each drawer, so that the contents of each can be seen at a glance. Medium sized objects are in rows on shelves. Again on the back of the doors are charts which show, by the number of each object written in a circle, its position in the cupboard. The same system is followed in the basement ... If a specimen is removed for any purpose, a slip of paper with

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<sup>97</sup> E.C. Chubb, The advantages of forming a South African Museums Association, *SAMAB*, 1(1), September 1936, pp. 2 - 5.

<sup>98</sup> Sir Henry Miers' and S.F. Markham's report, *SAMAB* 1(4), June 1937, pp. 85 - 87.

<sup>99</sup> The Royal Museum for Central Africa was founded in 1897 - 1898 by King Leopold II, who wished to make the Congo better known in Belgium. He also hoped to promote trade between his country and Africa. The Museum is known for its scientific collections. G. Verswijer, Hidden treasures of the Tervuren Museum, *African Arts*, Summer 1995, pp. 22 - 23. As early as 1912 the director of the Transvaal Museum regarded the Royal Museum as a model museum.

particulars is put in its place.<sup>100</sup>

On cataloguing, Shaw writes that the continental museums had sound card-index systems and general registers for the objects; the cards in triplicate were classified according to group, geographical position and type of object.<sup>101</sup>

Shaw strongly advocated that cataloguing be improved, in particular with regard to ethnographic material. She was of the opinion that the most satisfactory method of cataloguing is to compile a card catalogue, so that each object has its own card in addition to its entry into the register.<sup>102</sup> She proposed that various categories of information be given on the cards, such as the name of the museum, the registered number of the object, the community, group and cultural division from which it comes, name of the object, how and when it was obtained and its storage/display in the museum. Shaw's original system was modified and a list of object terminology added.<sup>103</sup> She popularized it throughout the country, because she was of the opinion that a uniform system would enable museums to build up an accurate picture of indigenous South African material culture.<sup>104</sup>

A few years later Chubb raised the matter of documentation when he was president of SAMA. He saw the registering of accessions and the cataloguing of collections as important and he invited conferees to discuss their methods at the annual general meeting of the Association in Bloemfontein in May 1944. The documentation practises at the Durban Museum, the Transvaal Museum, the Johannesburg Art Gallery, the Africana Museum and other institutions were raised for brief discussion.<sup>105</sup>

In the 1940's the Africana Museum in Johannesburg, established in 1934, took the lead in

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<sup>100</sup> E.M. Shaw, Impressions of recent visit to ethnographical museums in Europe, *SAMAB*, 1(12), June 1939, pp. 303 - 304.

<sup>101</sup> Ibid. p. 304.

<sup>102</sup> E.M. Shaw, A system of cataloguing ethnographic material, *SAMAB*, 2(5), September 1940, p. 118.

<sup>103</sup> See annexure 7, E.M. Shaw (comp.), "A system of cataloguing ethnographic material in museums" (unpublished manual).

<sup>104</sup> Ibid., p. 1.

<sup>105</sup> Proceedings of the eighth annual general meeting of the South African Museums Association, *SAMAB*, 3(6), June 1944, pp. 176 - 177.

early collections management practices for history museums. The Africana Museum's aim was to relate South Africa's history and cultural development, using a variety of pictures, engravings, miniatures, photographs, coins, medals, documents, books, maps and personal or historic relics.<sup>106</sup> The Museum supplied information on important events, individuals, manners and customs.<sup>107</sup> It regarded the documentation of objects as important as their preservation.<sup>108</sup> The term "recording", as used by the Africana Museum, meant more than a catalogue entry; it was also "an exact description, accompanied by a photograph, carefully classified, and with those invaluable added notes, drawn from books, verbal information and other sources, without which a specimen is often meaningless".<sup>109</sup>

The establishment of the Africana Museum was fraught with difficulties. This was particularly so in the documentation and classification of historical collections. Oliver asserts that there were "no neat ready-to-hand scientific classifications and check-lists of objects."<sup>110</sup> In addition, there was also a lack of standardised methods and descriptive terminology.<sup>111</sup> The system eventually adopted by the Africana Museum was based on the Dewey decimal system, that was used by libraries in South Africa.<sup>112</sup> A national catalogue of all Africana on South Africa was also envisaged.<sup>113</sup>

The standardization of archaeological terminology was raised at the third annual general meeting of SAMA on 10 April 1939.<sup>114</sup> This was important to museum workers in the systematic arrangement of their collections of stone implements and other human artifacts.<sup>115</sup>

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<sup>106</sup> W.R. Morrison, The Africana Museum, Johannesburg, *SAMAB*, 1(1), September 1936, pp. 13 - 14.

<sup>107</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 14.

<sup>108</sup> H.G. Oliver, The importance of preserving and recording Africana, *SAMAB*, 2 (10), September 1941, p. 242.

<sup>109</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>110</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 242.

<sup>111</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 245.

<sup>112</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 247 and F.R. Kennedy, The adaptation of biographical classification to museum exhibits, *SAMAB*, 2(6), December 1940, pp. 144 - 146.

<sup>113</sup> H.G. Oliver, The importance of preserving and recording Africana, *SAMAB*, 2(10), September 1941, p. 248.

<sup>114</sup> Archaeological terminology, *SAMAB*, 1(12), June 1939, pp. 294 and 299 - 300.

<sup>115</sup> Summary of the discussion on archaeological terminology, *SAMAB*, 1(2), pp. 4 - 9.

However, no finality was reached on the matter.<sup>116</sup> The details of the cataloguing system used by the Archaeological Survey of the Union of South Africa were published six years later (in 1945).<sup>117</sup> In the same article aspects of acquisitions, the catalogue, the card index and site charts are explained by the director of the survey, C. van Riet Lowe.

From 1938 onwards, attention was primarily paid to the cataloguing (recording and retrieval of information) of archaeological, historical and ethnographical collections in manual systems. However, the reality that a museum had to accept legal accountability for the accessioning, maintenance and disposal of objects in the collection, in other words the basic precepts of modern collections management, was not addressed at this stage.

By 1945 the inclination of many museums was to devote most of their energy and funds to the display of specimens. Educational aspects were also gaining in importance, but research work was relegated to the background.<sup>118</sup> In the opinion of Austin Roberts, then president of SAMA (and also a well-known zoologist at the Transvaal Museum), natural history research was of international as well as national value and should not be abandoned due to a lack of money.<sup>119</sup> Archaeological, historical and ethnographical research was not mentioned.

Natural history museums usually exhibited mammals and birds, but the collection, preservation and display of historical and archaeological objects also formed a component of some museums.<sup>120</sup> At the time (the 1940s) it was problematic to collect historical objects; so much so that all these that were worthy had to be displayed. It was advocated that care should be taken to avoid a historical display becoming “an ill-assorted jumble of

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<sup>116</sup> E.C. Chubb, The first eight years of the South African Museums Association’s existence, *SAMAB*, 3(6), June 1944, p. 157.

<sup>117</sup> C. van Riet Lowe, Catalogue system of the Archaeological Survey, Union of South Africa, *SAMAB*, 3(11), September 1945, pp. 325 - 327.

<sup>118</sup> A.J.T. Janse, Entomological research in South African Museums, *SAMAB*, 3(9), March 1945, p. 261.

<sup>119</sup> A. Roberts, Museums and biological research, *SAMAB*, 3(10), June 1945, p. 292. Because D.A. Roberts is referred to as Roberts in this research paper, reference is made to Austin Roberts.

<sup>120</sup> A.J.T. Janse, Entomological research in South African Museums, *SAMAB*, 3(9), March 1945, p. 261.

personal souvenirs which can teach no history”.<sup>121</sup> Instead, a strict chronology and the “elimination of unworthy objects” were recommended for a history collection.<sup>122</sup> As far ethnography was concerned a study collection in addition to the show collection was, however, important.<sup>123</sup>

Collections management issues listed in a plea for training in museology included the preservation of objects, common museum troubles (museum pests, dust, humidity and temperature control) and accessioning, registration, numbering and cataloguing.<sup>124</sup> Nevertheless the Du Toit Commission (appointed in 1949) found to its surprise that few museums, if any, had a complete inventory on hand for all the objects in their collection. The Commission was of the opinion, therefore, that every piece should be documented as completely as possible with accession number and provenance; they recommended that every state-aided museum and gallery should compile catalogues of its study and display collections for distribution. The Commission was also of the opinion that every possible step should be taken to preserve collections against the risk of theft, fire and deterioration.<sup>125</sup>

The Commission did not make any recommendations on the appointment of ethnologists to the staff of museums, claiming that more information was necessary before this could be done. However, it was recommended that the significance of historical collections as subjects for display and research should be enhanced by appointing qualified historians in museums.<sup>126</sup>

Until the 1950's there was a slow but steady growth in the number of museums, but nonetheless there were many gaps in the South African museum scene. The intrepid Shaw suggested a number of museums or museum departments that were still lacking in South

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<sup>121</sup> N. Jones, The study of man in the museum, *SAMAB*, 3(9), March 1945, p. 253.

<sup>122</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 253.

<sup>123</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 251.

<sup>124</sup> H.G. Oliver, Professional training and status, *SAMAB*, 3(4), December 1943, pp. 98 - 102.

<sup>125</sup> NCHMA, *Verslag van die Kommissie van Ondersoek na sekere staatsondersteunde inrigtings*, pp. 157 - 158.

<sup>126</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 171.

Africa, including a maritime museum, a museum of science and industry and a museum of history “where objects may be seen ... in their historical perspective; ... where one can meet Pharaoh Necho in the first room, and, ... Mr Havenga putting a tickey on petrol in the last.”<sup>127</sup>

No reference was made to the management of these proposed museums or their intended collections. Shaw did, however, stress the need for following correct procedures, particularly as far as ethnology was concerned, arguing that the value of an object diminishes if there is not

proper organisation in the museum. The first requirement is that specimens, of whatever value, should be numbered indelibly and entered into a register immediately, not the next week, or perhaps the next month ... and it is tragic to think what has been lost to knowledge in this subject by the simple fact of the responsible person failing to record the information at the time.<sup>128</sup>

The need for correct documentation was also stressed by Anna Smith of the Africana Museum in Johannesburg. She warned history museums to be careful about family traditions, because anecdotes often proliferate around objects as time passes, with the result that objects with suspect attributions may be accepted in good faith.<sup>129</sup> Daphne Strutt of the Old House Museum, Durban, emphasized the necessity of an index and a proper classification system so that there is no difficulty in separating the various items and putting them in their proper place in a museum.<sup>130</sup>

The transition to the Republic of South Africa in 1961 led to an unprecedented blossoming of new museums and larger, established museums continued to grow and acquire new satellite museums. Whether there was corresponding progress made in the maintenance and management of collections in museums is debatable. Nonetheless, more interest was shown

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<sup>127</sup> E.M. Shaw, Museums lacking in South Africa, *SAMAB*, 4(14), June 1950, p. 412.

<sup>128</sup> E.M. Shaw, Museums and ethnological research, *SAMAB*, 6(12), December 1957, pp. 303 - 304.

<sup>129</sup> A.H. Smith, Museums of history, *SAMAB*, 8(14), September 1962, p. 333.

<sup>130</sup> D. Strutt, The functions of an historical museum and its role in the community it serves, *SAMAB*, 6(4), December 1955, p. 97.

in history collections by experts such as Smith and Strutt than was previously the case.<sup>131</sup>

### **The use of computers**

Although the use of computers to alleviate the problem of maintaining collection information was considered in the early sixties in the United States and the United Kingdom, it was only in 1967 that a plea was made for the modernization of South African museum systems by using punch cards, computers and other mechanical means.<sup>132</sup> According to R. Liversidge of the McGregor Memorial Museum, Kimberley, who presented a paper at the annual meeting of SAMA in 1967, the progression from filing card, to punched card to stored information for computer use, is comparatively simple.<sup>133</sup>

At the Kimberley meeting a committee, comprising A.D. Bensusan, J.R. Grindley, J.M. Winterbottom and Liversidge, was appointed to investigate the requirements, potential and scope for computers in South African museums. It was also resolved that the Council of SAMA should consider methods of co-operation between the museums in the matter of classification of records with a view to future computerization.<sup>134</sup> In the main, however, there was little enthusiasm for the new technology. It took six years of lecturing, publishing and investigations by the SAMA committee for the climate to change and for museums to accept the benefits of computerization.<sup>135</sup> Cultural history museums in particular seem to have been reluctant to show interest in the use of computers, probably because natural history museums had more exposure to computers for research purposes, while cultural history museums had little or no experience in using computers.<sup>136</sup>

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<sup>131</sup> See various articles, for example, A.H. Smith, African decorative maps, in A.H. Smith (ed.), *Africana curiosities*, pp. 10 - 27 and D. Strutt, Collection, preparation and restoration of cultural history material, *SAMAB*, 8(8), December 1965, pp. 253 - 267. Strutt is also the author of *Fashion in South Africa 1652 - 1900*, published in 1975.

<sup>132</sup> R. Liversidge, The cataloguing of museum material: a national system, *SAMAB*, 8(12), March 1967, p. 384.

<sup>133</sup> R. Liversidge, Museum cataloguing and a national system, *SAMAB*, 8(14), September 1967, p. 452.

<sup>134</sup> *Ibid.*, Comment by editor, p. 454.

<sup>135</sup> The Computer Group of the Museums Association of South Africa, minutes, meeting, 2 October 1973, *Computer Group of the Museums Association of Southern Africa Circular*, no. 4, p. 1.

<sup>136</sup> *Computer Group of the Museums Association of Southern Africa Circular*, no. 1, p. 4.



In 1973 a Computer Group was established at SAMA in reaction to the recommendation put to the Council at the annual meeting. It was resolved “that Council should support a committee to form an open group involving every discipline to consider the problems and requirements of data processing in Southern African Museums”.<sup>137</sup> The Computer Group distributed a circular/newsletter and held meetings and workshops in an effort to heighten the awareness of computerization in museums.<sup>138</sup> The name of the group was changed to Documentation Group in 1983 and it became a standing committee of the SAMA Council. The publication of various articles in the bulletin of SAMA is an indication of the growing interest in museum documentation.<sup>139</sup>

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The way in which the anthropological, archaeological and history collections was initially managed at the Transvaal Museum follows the same pattern as that adopted in the majority of overseas museums. A manual system of documentation was used, namely handwritten acquisitions entry registers and catalogues. These provided inventories, arranged numerically, of the objects or group of objects in the collections. In many cases these original registers and catalogues are still the primary source of information about objects in the collections. Until the late 1940s abortive efforts were made to maintain a card catalogue (or index). Manual information retrieval was only successful in the 1950s and 1960s.

The general trend of museum development in South Africa is also clearly reflected in the development of the natural history and the anthropological, archaeological and history collections at the Transvaal Museum from 1913 to 1964. At first there was an overwhelming devotion to natural history, tempered in the 1940s and 1950s by a gradual interest in the history collection.

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<sup>137</sup> The Computer Group of the Museums Association of South Africa, minutes, meeting, 2 October 1973, *Computer Group of the Museums Association of Southern Africa Circular* no. 4, p. 2.

<sup>138</sup> C.K. Brain and M.C. Erasmus, *The making of the museum professions in Southern Africa*, p. 31.

<sup>139</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 30 - 31.

After 1953 there was an increasing awareness at the Transvaal Museum of the anthropological, archaeological, and history collections and the importance of taking reasonable care of these objects. The way in which the history collection in particular, and to a lesser degree the archaeology and anthropology collections, were managed reflects the first real evidence of this change of attitude. Modern collection management principles, although they were not identified as such, featured in the handling of these collections for the first time in 40 years. This in turn, reflects a change of heart that was to give rise to an independent new museum in 1964.

Despite this changed outlook, accountability of the historical, anthropological and archaeological collections at the Transvaal Museum was not an important issue and computerization was not even considered.

## CHAPTER II

### HISTORY OF THE TRANSVAAL MUSEUM

#### 1913 - 1964

At the outbreak of the Anglo-Boer War there were eight museums in South Africa. Two were in the Boer Republics of the Transvaal and the Orange Free State and six in the British colonies of the Cape and Natal. After the occupation of Pretoria by the British forces on 5 June 1900 the Staatsmuseum of the ZAR was reopened as the Pretoria Museum under the new British Military Government. At the request of the Management Committee the name was changed to the Transvaal Museum in 1903.

#### 1. THE TRANSVAAL MUSEUM : NATURAL HISTORY MUSEUM

##### **The Staatsmuseum**

The mother museum of the Transvaal Museum was the Staatsmuseum of the ZAR. This Museum, founded in 1892, was situated in Pretoria, the capital of the ZAR. It was a general museum with the declared aim to collect and preserve objects of general and historical interest.<sup>1</sup> It was also a national museum that had to reflect the status of the Republic.<sup>2</sup> The national character of the Staatsmuseum was clear from the nature of the exhibitions, in particular the historical displays, but the flora and fauna on exhibit also contributed to its national character.<sup>3</sup>

When the Anglo-Boer War broke out the patriotic aura of the Staatsmuseum became even more pronounced because burghers in the commandos were invited to contribute memorabilia to the Museum, such as lances, rifles, cannons, clothes, banners and papers from the battlefield. These objects were seen as “zegeteekenen” [signs of victory] used to

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<sup>1</sup> E. Grobler, “Die Staatsmuseum van die Zuid-Afrikaansche Republiek en sy historiese en etnografiese versamelings” (unpublished M.A. dissertation, University of Pretoria, 1994), p. 51.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., pp. 196 - 197.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., p. 187.

bolster the national sentiment.<sup>4</sup> The circular letter in which this appeal for donations was made, was signed by J.W.B. Gunning,<sup>5</sup> the director of the Staatsmuseum, and N. Mansvelt, the chairman of the Curatorium. This initiative bears witness to the deep feelings of nationalism fostered in the Boer Republics. According to the circular, the Republics were seen as the liberators of the whole of South Africa.

### **Prominence accorded to natural history**

The Staatsmuseum as national institution of the ZAR ceased to function with the occupation of Pretoria by Britain on 5 June 1900. Eight years later, Gunning, now director of the Transvaal Museum, contended that the first aim of the Staatsmuseum had been the scientific exploration of the State (the ZAR) and the making and the preservation of scientific collections. According to him other objectives had been to further education and to promote national pride. Clearly, in the aftermath of the Anglo-Boer War there was a distinct turnabout in Gunning's interpretation of the aims of the Staatsmuseum in its role as a government institution.

The Transvaal Museum was transformed from a general national museum to one that zealously focused on the natural world, geared to generate and disseminate information on natural history and to produce research of international significance.<sup>6</sup> In this way Gunning's retrospective ideal for the Staatsmuseum materialized and the anthropological, archaeological and historical<sup>7</sup> collections became subordinate to the overriding natural history focus. Moreover, the Transvaal Museum was in line with other museums in the country as they consisted "principally of collections of natural history".<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> NCHMA, Letterbook April 1899 - September 1902, p. 436, circular letter drafted by Gunning, dd 15 November 1899. See copy of letter in E. Grobler, *Die Staatsmuseum van die Zuid-Afrikaansche Republiek, die Anglo-Boereoorlog en regstellende aksie, Navorsing deur die Nasionale Kultuurhistoriese Museum*, vol. 9: 2000, pp. 27 - 28.

<sup>5</sup> Jan Willem Boudewijn Gunning (1860 - 1913) was born in Hilversum, the Netherlands. He was educated at the universities of Amsterdam, Leiden and Jena. He came to South Africa in 1884 and was appointed director of the Staatsmuseum in 1897. As he suffered from ill health, he went to Europe for treatment in 1912. He died in Pretoria in 1913. C.J. Swierstra, *Obituary: Dr J.W.B. Gunning, Annals of the Transvaal Museum*, 4(2), October 1913, pp. 110 - 111; E. Grobler, "Die Staatsmuseum van die Zuid-Afrikaansche Republiek en sy historiese en etnografiese versamelings" (unpublished M.A. dissertation, University of Pretoria, 1994), p. 92.

<sup>6</sup> C.K. Brain, *Natural history at the Transvaal Museum 1901 - 1992*, in N.J. Dippenaar (ed.), *Staatsmuseum 100*, pp. 16 - 18.

<sup>7</sup> The historical collection includes the numismatic and philately collections.

<sup>8</sup> J.W.B. Gunning, *Matters concerning museums in South Africa*, pp. 1 - 2.

In 1908 Gunning set the pace by introducing the *Annals of the Transvaal Museum* to reflect the scientific research done by staff at the Transvaal Museum. The first issue, apart from an article on the history of the Museum by Gunning and a note on rock engravings by C.J. Swierstra, carried articles by R. Broom on the *Chrysochloride*, R. Leendertz on the *Amaryllidaceae* of the Transvaal, L.H. Gough on breeding experiments with *Cystericercus tenuicellus* and two natural history notes, also by Gough. In all the following issues the *Annals* show a heavy preponderance towards natural history, except for a note written by Gunning entitled *Aantekeningen over enige weinig bekende muntstukjes van Zuid-Afrika*,<sup>9</sup> Gunning's obituary<sup>10</sup> and five anthropological articles.<sup>11</sup> Three of these were written by an anthropologist, Dora Earthy, and one was by Percy Wagner. Neither of these authors were on the staff of the Transvaal Museum.

The museum building in Boom Street, Pretoria, which was opened officially on 15 December 1904, soon became too small. A new building was planned to house the Museum, including the library and art gallery, on a site in Market Street (now Paul Kruger Street), Pretoria. Although the new building was designed in the form of an H, only the central portion had been completed when the First World War broke out and the building was never finished to the original design. In 1960 the Transvaal Museum had less than half of the accommodation that had been planned 50 years earlier and in that time the Museum had developed to such an extent that the existing space was totally inadequate.<sup>12</sup>

In 1912 some of the natural history study collections were moved to the "New Museum", as it was then called, but the natural displays were only moved in 1925.<sup>13</sup> The anthropological, archaeological and historical objects on display and in storage remained in the "Old Museum" in Boom Street as it was known locally. These two early buildings played a significant role in the history of the Transvaal Museum.

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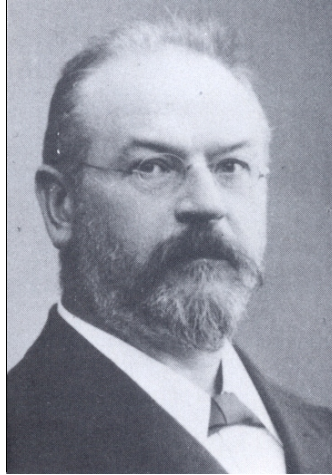
<sup>9</sup> *Annals of the Transvaal Museum*, 2(3), 1910.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, 4(2), 1913.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, 7(4), 1921 and 11(2), 1924.

<sup>12</sup> NCHMA, *Komitee van Ondersoek na openbare museums in Pretoria, 1960 - 1961*, J.T. Robinson, Memorandum on the accommodation problem of the Transvaal Museum, p. 1.

<sup>13</sup> C.K. Brain, Natural history at the Transvaal Museum 1901 - 1992, in N.J. Dippenaar (ed.), *Staatmuseum 100*, p. 18.



**Figure 2**

Dr H.G. Breijer, Director of the Transvaal Museum, 1913 - 1921

(N.J. Dippenaar (ed.), *Staatmuseum 100*, p. 35)

In 1913 Gunning was succeeded by H.G. Breijer (figure 2).<sup>14</sup> The policy of the Museum, as conveyed to the Minister of the Interior, was the collecting, preserving, identification and arranging of natural history, anthropological and historical specimens. That the emphasis was on natural history is abundantly clear from the description of new forms and the re-description of old ones. Attention was to be focused on the geographical distribution and scientific study of flora and fauna in the Transvaal, the northern half of the Union and only then in South Africa in general.<sup>15</sup> To this end the Management Committee decided in 1914 that “as funds permit, the members of the staff will be sent out on collection expeditions, as material collected in this manner will be of higher scientific value in every respect, than the material collected haphazardly by incompetent collectors and amateurs”.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> Hermann Gottfried Breijer (1864 - 1923) was born in Arnhem in the Netherlands and he died in the district of Morgenzon, Soutpansberg, in 1923. He obtained a doctorate in mathematics and physics at the University of Amsterdam in 1893. In the same year he was appointed as lecturer in physical science at the State Gymnasium in Pretoria and also as honorary director of the Staatmuseum. In 1897 he was asked to arrange for the establishment of a mining school, of which he was appointed temporary director, but the outbreak of the Anglo-Boer War put an end to this venture. After the war Breijer was appointed to the staff of the Normal College in Pretoria. In 1905 he became professor in mathematics at the South African School of Mines and Technology in Johannesburg. The Management Committee approved his appointment as director of the Transvaal Museum on 11 December 1913. NCHMA, System 1 No 14 TM1/59, letter M. Buys, Transvaal Archives to T. Jacobs-Venter, dd 1 May 1959; B.C. Cronjé, “Breyer (Breijer), Hermann Gottfried” (unpublished article).

<sup>15</sup> National Archives (hereafter NA), UOD Z15/6 - 15/8, vol. 7, letter chairman, Transvaal Museum Committee to the Minister of the Interior, dd 15 April 1914.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

Although the First World War intervened, this decision was put into effect and natural history objects were collected on numerous field trips, such as expeditions to Maputa, Zululand, Zoutpan, the Carolina-Nelspruit region, the Murchison Range and Komatipoort, Harrismith, Gazaland, Barberton and Umtamvuna.<sup>17</sup>

Natural history specimens were also purchased; a collection of bird skins was bought, for example, for a sum not exceeding £50, fossils at £1/10/6 and mosses at £2/10/0.<sup>18</sup> Exchanges also took place. For example, the collection of stamps belonging to the Museum was exchanged for a collection of about 200 ferns and mosses, a move that was approved by the Museum Committee.<sup>19</sup> In 1919 Breijer was clearly following Gunning's lead with the statement "Our Museum is trying to become more and more a Museum of Nat[ural] History ...".<sup>20</sup>

Breijer resigned in June 1921.<sup>21</sup> He was succeeded by Swierstra (figure 3),<sup>22</sup> who was the first assistant and had acted several times in the capacity of director. His official appointment dates from 1 July 1922.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> See Transvaal Museum Committee minutes, meetings 24 November 1914, 5 May and 1 June 1915, 5 December 1916, 31 July 1919.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid., 1 September and 3 November 1914.

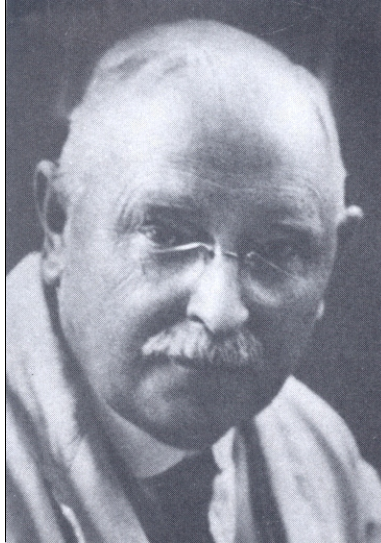
<sup>19</sup> Ibid., 3 September 1918.

<sup>20</sup> NCHMA, Letterbook 4, p. 380, letter Breijer to the Secretary for the Interior, dd 10 June 1919.

<sup>21</sup> Transvaal Museum Committee minutes, meeting 15 June 1921. Breijer's death was reported in the minutes, meeting 16 October 1923.

<sup>22</sup> Cornelis Jacobus Swierstra (1874 - 1952) was born in the Netherlands. He studied entomology under Jonkheer van der Pol at the University of Amsterdam. He arrived in the Transvaal in 1894. He was appointed on the staff of the Staatsmuseum and was naturalized as burgher of the ZAR in 1896. He was married twice. He convened the first meeting of SAMA, and was elected the first President in 1936. He was a fellow of the Royal Entomological Society. C.K. Brain and M.C. Erasmus, *The making of the museum professions in Southern Africa*, p. 6; F.O. Dentz, Van Dordrecht naar Pretoria. De geschiedenis van een Zuid-Afrikaansche Museum en een schildery, *Historia*, 5(2), June 1960, p. 115.

<sup>23</sup> Transvaal Museum Committee minutes, meeting 7 November 1922.



**Figure 3**

C.J. Swierstra, Director of the Transvaal Museum, 1922 - 1946

(N.J. Dippenaar (ed.), *Staatmuseum 100*, p. 35)

Museum expeditions went on as usual. In 1922 for example, the Museum Committee sanctioned trips to Bulawayo, Salisbury, the Western Transvaal, Haenertsburg, Kaap Valley, Louw's Creek, Barberton and Natal.<sup>24</sup> From a scientific and financial point of view, the expedition undertaken to the Soutpansberg in 1923 was the most successful over the previous five or six year period.<sup>25</sup> The most lucrative expedition undertaken by the Transvaal Museum in those years was the Vernay-Lang Kalahari Expedition in 1930. Seven months (March to September 1930) were spent in the veld and scientists such as Austin Roberts and Georges van Son collected an abundance of natural history specimens.<sup>26</sup> The results of this highly successful expedition were later published in the *Annals of the Transvaal Museum*.<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> Ibid., 12 September 1922.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid., 16 October 1923.

<sup>26</sup> C.K. Brain, Natural history at the Transvaal Museum 1901 - 1992, in N.J. Dippenaar (ed.), *Staatmuseum 100*, p. 18.

<sup>27</sup> *Annals of the Transvaal Museum*, vols. 15, 16 and 17.



### First enquiry into museum matters

During the first survey of museums in South Africa undertaken in 1932 by Miers and Markham, the Transvaal Museum (Old and New), the Janse Entomological Collection and the university museums in Pretoria were surveyed. The director reported that they were impressed with the condition and grouping of the specimens in the Museum and that they found the study collections larger and better than those of most museums in the country.<sup>28</sup>

In the report little is said about the Transvaal Museum, except

- that the new building compared favourably with museum buildings in Europe and North America, but that another building was required for the historical or art collections, as the Old Museum was congested,
- that the labelling and displays were very good and that colour had been skilfully harmonised in bird habitat cases,
- that the Old Museum specialized in South African history of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries and the New Museum in natural history,
- that the Transvaal Museum had a full-time qualified taxidermist,
- that public lectures were abandoned through a lack of interest,
- that the research publications were excellent, and
- that Pretoria had admirable scientific collections.<sup>29</sup>

The report stressed the virtually inexhaustible natural history, or what they called the scientific treasures of Africa and the imperative need for detailed surveys, careful expeditions and the immediate publication of the resulting discoveries.<sup>30</sup> The Transvaal Museum did its utmost to meet these requirements.<sup>31</sup> The scientific contributions of its natural history scientists succeeded in attracting international recognition and the admiration of the scientific world.

The endeavours of the Museum staff were motivated and encouraged by the directors, as well as by the members of the Committee and the Board of Trustees, who often accompanied the staff on field trips. Prominent citizens of Pretoria such as H.C. Jorissen,

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<sup>28</sup> Transvaal Museum Committee minutes, meeting 19 April 1932.

<sup>29</sup> H.A. Miers and S.F. Markham, *A report on the museums and art galleries of British Africa*, pp. 3, 16 - 25 and 30.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid., p. 33.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid., p. 45.

A. Johnston, G. Brink and C. Jeppe served as trustees, and although the members changed from time to time, the nucleus consisted of renowned scientists, such as A. Theiler,<sup>32</sup> H.A. Wager,<sup>33</sup> A.W. Rogers,<sup>34</sup> I.B. Pole Evans,<sup>35</sup> L.C. de Villiers,<sup>36</sup> S.H. Haughton<sup>37</sup> and L.J. Krige.<sup>38</sup> Although there were staff and financial shortages during the Second World War, the scientific work of the Museum continued to expand, and a new initiative to publish a series of memoirs was launched.<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> Sir Arnold Theiler (1867 - 1936) was a distinguished veterinarian, who came to the ZAR in 1891. He was the founder of the Onderstepoort Veterinary Institute in 1908. He always supported local scientific activities. His outstanding achievements were widely recognized. M. Gunn and L.E. Codd, *Botanical exploration of Southern Africa*, pp. 342 - 343.

<sup>33</sup> Horace Athelstan Wager (1876 - 1951) came to South Africa in 1903. He was appointed as professor in botany and zoology at the Transvaal University College (University of Pretoria). M. Gunn and L.E. Codd, *Botanical exploration of Southern Africa*, p. 366.

<sup>34</sup> Arthur William Rogers (1872 - 1946) came to South Africa in 1895 and worked as geologist and head of the Cape of Good Hope Geological Commission in 1902. In 1916 he became director of the Geological Survey of the Union of South Africa until his retirement in 1932. He took part in the Vernay-Lang expedition organized by the Transvaal Museum. He received many honorary awards. W.J. de Kock (ed.-in-chief), *Dictionary of South African Biography*, vol. I, pp. 677 - 678.

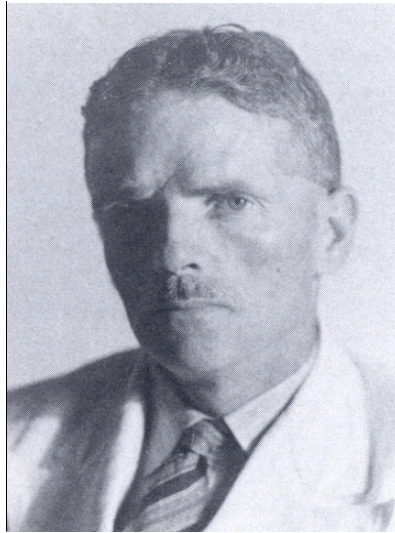
<sup>35</sup> Iltyd Buller Pole Evans (1879 - 1968) was a botanist appointed to the post of mycologist and plant pathologist in the Transvaal Department of Agriculture in 1905. In 1913 he became head of the division. He went on several expeditions. He supported scientific activities and through his energy and dedication, research in plant sciences in the Department of Agriculture flourished. He received several major awards. M. Gunn and L.E. Codd, *Botanical exploration of Southern Africa*, pp. 284 - 285.

<sup>36</sup> Louis Celliers de Villiers (1882 - 1958) was a mining engineer and geologist. He was head of the Department of Geology at the University of Pretoria from 1920 to 1947, and then curator of the Geological Survey Museum. D.W. Krüger and C.J. Beyers (eds), *Dictionary of South African Biography*, vol. III, pp. 221 - 222.

<sup>37</sup> Sidney Henry Haughton (1888 - 1982) emigrated to South Africa to take up the post of geologist and palaeontologist at the South African Museum in Cape Town. He joined the Union Geological Survey in 1920 and became director in 1934. He retired in 1948. He served on several highly important national and international commissions, such as the advisory committee on uranium research from which the Atomic Energy Board developed. He received many awards and honours. C.J. Beyers and J.L. Basson (eds), *Dictionary of South African Biography*, vol. V, pp. 335 - 336.

<sup>38</sup> Leopold Jacobus Krige (1884 - 1965) was born in Stellenbosch. He studied at the universities of Stellenbosch, Cambridge and Zurich. He worked on the Venezuela oil-fields, and returned to South Africa in 1921. He was employed by Geological Survey in Pretoria. Although he was appointed director in 1932, he resigned in 1933 to resume his work as an ordinary geologist. He received awards for his contributions to geological research. C.J. Beyers and J.L. Basson (eds), *Dictionary of South African Biography*, vol. V, p. 426.

<sup>39</sup> V. FitzSimons and L. Brain (comp.), A history of the Transvaal Museum, *Bulletin of the Transvaal Museum*, no. 13, 30 November 1972, p. 9.



**Figure 4**

Dr V.F.M. FitzSimons, Director of the Transvaal Museum, 1947 - 1966

(N.J. Dippenaar (ed.), *Staatmuseum 100*, p. 35)

The next director of the Museum, V.F.M. FitzSimons (figure 4),<sup>40</sup> was appointed in a research post in charge of the department of lower vertebrates and invertebrates in 1924. He had been interested in reptiles from an early age. While at the Transvaal Museum he documented the reptile fauna of South Africa, continuing his research even after his appointment as director in 1947.<sup>41</sup>

Intensive field work continued over the years in all the natural history divisions, as this was regarded as the Museum's most important activity. Many prestigious natural history books and papers were published, and the quality and significance of the natural history collections

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<sup>40</sup> Vivian Frederick Maynard FitzSimons (1901 - 1975) was the son of the director of the Port Elizabeth Museum, in particular known for its Snake Park. He graduated with a M.Sc. degree at Rhodes University and later obtained a doctorate from the University of the Witwatersrand. His museum career spanned 41 years, beginning with his appointment at the Transvaal Museum in 1924, until he retired as director in 1966. He published several monographs and articles (21 of them in the *Annals of the Transvaal Museum*). One of his greatest achievements was the part he played in the establishment of the Namib Desert Research Association, enabling scientists to study desert life. He served on several boards and committees. In recognition of his contribution to science he received many awards, such as an honorary D.Sc. degree from Rhodes University. C.J. Beyers and J.L. Basson (eds), *Dictionary of South African Biography*, vol. V, p. 267; C.K. Brain, Dr V.F.M. FitzSimons: Herpetological pioneer in South Africa, in J.H. van Wyk (ed.), *Proceedings of the FitzSimons Commemorative Symposium*, Herpetological Association of Africa Symposium, 11 - 15 October 1993, pp. 1 - 3.

<sup>41</sup> Transvaal Museum Board of Trustees minutes, meeting 6 March 1947.

grew steadily.<sup>42</sup> The result was, as FitzSimons and Brain put it in 1972, that

... the study collections of the Transvaal Museum have been carefully built up until they probably rank, in many fields, amongst the largest and most representative of their kind in the world today. Their scientific value and importance is steadily gaining widespread recognition as is demonstrated by the increasing numbers of scientific workers, both from South Africa and abroad, who are making use of the unique opportunities which are provided for study ... and a number of officers concerned are recognized as authorities in their particular fields.<sup>43</sup>

During the tenure of FitzSimons significant changes took place in the Transvaal Museum. There was a dramatic increase in professional staff appointments in every division. It was, however, in the history division that possibly the most far-reaching effects were felt.

## 2. THE TRANSVAAL MUSEUM : HISTORY MUSEUM

Despite the changes, the Transvaal Museum still remained, in essence, the old Staatsmuseum: in the eyes of many a national history museum, portraying and preserving the history of the country. In wider museum circles the Museum remained known as the Staatsmuseum: a parcel was sent from the Port Elizabeth Museum to Swierstra, addressed to the Director, State Museum, Pretoria.<sup>44</sup> In 1918 Gustav Preller, Afrikaner nationalist, historian and editor of the Pretoria-based newspaper *De Volkstem*, still addressed Breijer as the director of the Staatsmuseum in a letter to donate a Voortrekker table to the Museum.<sup>45</sup> Even in the late 1920s, F.V. Engelenburg, editor of the *Die Volkstem*, journalist and author, still referred to the Staatsmuseum and still addressed Swierstra as the director of the Staatsmuseum.<sup>46</sup> Clearly, if not *de jure*, the Staatsmuseum indeed survived *de facto* in the guise of the Old Museum for a number of years<sup>47</sup> and would undergo a rejuvenating process in the 1950s.

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<sup>42</sup> NCHMA, Box 515, Memoranda dealing with Transvaal Museum matters - space, finance, collections etc. etc. 1955, Functions of a museum - Transvaal Museum, p. 3.

<sup>43</sup> V. FitzSimons and L. Brain (comp.), A history of the Transvaal Museum, *Bulletin of the Transvaal Museum*, no. 13, 30 November 1972, p. 11.

<sup>44</sup> NCHMA, Box 514, TM5/9/17, letter F.W. FitzSimons to Swierstra, dd 12 August 1912.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid., System 1 No 1 TM1/12 - TM1/26, letter G. Preller to Breijer, dd 25 March 1918.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid., System 1 No 2 TM1/27 - TM1/30, letters F.V. Engelenburg to Swierstra, dd 13 August 1928 and to director Staatsmuseum, dd 22 April 1930.

<sup>47</sup> Cultural History Committee minutes, meeting 26 September 1963.

### **Slow expansion**

Although the Transvaal Museum regarded itself as a natural history museum, it still assumed responsibility for the anthropological, archaeological and historical collections in the Old Museum. In the 1920s the Museum Committee took steps to ensure that historical acquisitions, which would later form a significant part of the historical collection, were secured for the Museum. These objects pertained especially to eminent Afrikaner leaders such as President Paul Kruger, President of the ZAR from 1883 to 1902, and General Louis Botha, Commandant-General of the Boer forces during the Anglo-Boer War and first Prime Minister of the Union of South Africa.

One of the most important collections acquired by the Museum was the so-called Dordrecht Collection.<sup>48</sup> The name is derived from the Zuid-Afrikaansch Museum in Dordrecht in the Netherlands, that was open from 1901 to 1921. Certain objects from the Staatsmuseum were sent to France as part of the International Exhibition in Paris in 1900, in which the ZAR participated. When the exhibition ended in August 1900 the Anglo-Boer War was still in progress and the objects could not be returned to South Africa.

In the meantime several options were considered. In the end a solution was devised and a pseudo-purchase was arranged with J. Hidde Nijland, a self-professed pro-Boer, art lover and businessman. The objects were transferred from Paris to the Zuid-Afrikaansch Museum, specifically established by Nijland to house the objects from Paris and his own large collection. But the matter subsequently developed into an ugly dispute when Nijland refused to return the objects. Many objects from the Zuid-Afrikaansch Museum were sold in the Netherlands, such as prisoner-of-war items and indigenous musical instruments and weapons.<sup>49</sup>

The Transvaal Museum Committee was adamant that the collection sent to Paris from the Staatsmuseum should be returned to the Museum,<sup>50</sup> but the matter was out of their hands. It was only in 1921 that the remainder of the objects from Dordrecht arrived back in South

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<sup>48</sup> See P.J. de Beer, "Die 'Zuid-Afrikaansch Museum' te Dordrecht 1902 - 1921" (unpublished M.A. dissertation, University of Pretoria, 1964).

<sup>49</sup> NCHMA, System 1 No 20 TM1/64, letter P.S. Pretorius to Coetzee, dd 11 February 1964.

<sup>50</sup> Transvaal Museum Committee minutes, meeting 6 April 1915.

Africa due mainly to the unceasing efforts of W.J. Leyds.<sup>51</sup> The first consignment was packed into 14 cases and a further 28 were forwarded later.<sup>52</sup> These were unpacked and the objects put on display at the Old Museum.<sup>53</sup>

The Transvaal Museum took the initiative in procuring the collection of objects and memorabilia that had belonged to Botha. On 14 February 1922 the Museum Committee decided to write an official letter to Annie Botha, his wife, requesting that she donate or loan to the Museum the General's possessions that were of historical value.<sup>54</sup> The Committee at the time comprised Theiler, Jeppe, Rogers, Wager, W. Dod and the acting director, Swierstra. The feeling of the Committee in support of Swierstra's sentiments were strongly in favour of acquiring the Botha memorabilia. The following motivation was sent to Annie Botha:

... die selfde voorwerpen, wanneer 't eigendom van die Natie is en voor een ieder te bezichtigen, zullen zeker er toe bijdragen om 't suiwer Vaderlandse gevoel van ons Afrikaners op te wekken en ook de liefde voor wijlen ons Generaal nog te versterken. Ik geloof zeker dat die voorwerpen, tentoongesteld in ons Museum, veel zullen bijdragen om 't geen wat wijlen Genl. Botha voor zijn land gedaan heeft in dankbare herinnering te houden bij 't nageslacht.<sup>55</sup>

Negotiations were entered into with Engelenburg, a member of the Botha Committee, to secure a grant to purchase showcases for the Botha Collection.<sup>56</sup> This Committee was formed in Pretoria under the chairmanship of General J.C. Smuts to build a monument in

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<sup>51</sup> For particulars, see P.J. de Beer, "Die 'Zuid-Afrikaansch Museum' te Dordrecht 1902 - 1921" (unpublished M.A. dissertation, University of Pretoria, 1964).

<sup>52</sup> For details of the three consignments, see NCHMA, Box 515, TM 5/11A, List of objects received from "Het Zuid-Afrikaansch Museum te Dordrecht, Holland".

<sup>53</sup> NCHMA, System 1 No 2 TM 1/27 - TM1/30, letter Swierstra to the Secretary for the Interior, dd 22 November 1927.

<sup>54</sup> Transvaal Museum Committee minutes, meeting 14 February 1922.

<sup>55</sup> NCHMA, System 1 No 1 TM1/12 - TM1/26, letter Swierstra to Mrs Botha, dd 9 May 1922. [If the objects become the property of the Nation and are accessible for everyone to see, they would contribute to a spirit of patriotism among Afrikaners and would also strengthen the esteem we feel for our General. I believe that the objects, displayed in our Museum, would keep the memories of General Botha's service to his country alive for posterity. (Translated from the Dutch.)]

<sup>56</sup> Transvaal Museum Committee minutes, meeting 28 November 1930.

honour of Botha.<sup>57</sup> The Collection was to be displayed in a Botha Hall, to be created by partitioning off one of the halls in the Old Museum. This move was sanctioned by the Museum Committee.<sup>58</sup> The aim of the Botha display was to familiarize to the public with the life of one of the most interesting South African militarists and statesmen.<sup>59</sup> From time to time the collection was extended, amongst others with additional documents donated by Annie Botha.<sup>60</sup>

Other historical objects of general interest were also considered. A donation of watches and movements, for instance, was offered by the Victoria and Albert Museum in London in 1919.<sup>61</sup> Although the offer was accepted, it was only entered into the acquisitions entry register and accessioned in March 1954.<sup>62</sup> Sometimes valuable historical objects were purchased. In 1925 six bronze busts by the sculptor Anton van Wouw were purchased for £150 and in 1926 a San (Bushman) bust was acquired for an amount not exceeding £100.<sup>63</sup> Four years later, in 1930, the Museum was unable to afford a painting of Pretoria by Thomas Baines for 100 guineas.<sup>64</sup>

The Museum Committee was of the opinion that the government should acquire Kruger's residence in Pretoria for the nation and that it should become known as the Kruger Museum. The necessary supervision would be provided by the Museum.<sup>65</sup> The government bought the house in 1925, but the lease of the Moedersbond, which had used the Kruger House as a maternity home, only expired at the end of 1926.<sup>66</sup> Because it was felt that it was a well-

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<sup>57</sup> See NCHMA, System 1 No 2 TM1/27 - TM1/30, letter Engelenburg to director Staatsmuseum, dd 22 April 1930.

<sup>58</sup> Transvaal Museum Committee minutes, meetings 7 June 1929 and 20 October 1931.

<sup>59</sup> NCHMA, Box 515, list, Botha Collection, dd 8 April 1924 and "Die 'Generaal Louis Botha' versameling" (unpublished pamphlet), p. 3. The pamphlet was probably written by G.S.H. Rossouw.

<sup>60</sup> Transvaal Museum Committee minutes, meeting 7 June 1929.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid., 1 April 1919.

<sup>62</sup> Transvaal Museum Acquisitions entry register, vol. 4, acquisition no. 5069; Historiography Catalogue, vol. 2, H.C. accession nos. 6001 and 6002.

<sup>63</sup> Transvaal Museum Committee minutes, meeting 27 October 1925 and 27 August 1926.

<sup>64</sup> Ibid., 28 November 1930.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid., 20 February 1923, underlined in the minutes.

<sup>66</sup> Ibid., meeting 6 August 1925.



nigh impossible task to restore the house and its contents to their original condition and arrangement, the thinking was that it should instead become a general Kruger Museum.<sup>67</sup> It was envisaged that the objects displayed there would be associated with the people close to Kruger during his life.<sup>68</sup> The Transvaal Museum thus looked upon the Kruger House as a general historical museum for the era that ended when the President died.<sup>69</sup>

Nonetheless details on the original arrangement of the furnishing in the house were obtained from knowledgeable people and these were submitted to the Department of Public Works that was in charge of the renovations.<sup>70</sup> The Department of the Interior suggested that at the very least the main bedroom and the reception room should be restored as it was when the President and his wife lived there. Because the aim was to preserve the original historical atmosphere of the house it was felt that it had to be renovated gradually.<sup>71</sup>

In the meantime the original furniture had been dispersed to family members throughout the country and was proving difficult to locate.<sup>72</sup> The Museum Committee felt that furniture for the Kruger House should be purchased by the government and not out of Museum funds<sup>73</sup> and the Town Council of Pretoria and the Union Treasury gave £250 and £400 respectively for the refurbishment of Kruger House.<sup>74</sup>

Although the house remained the property of the government, it was entrusted to the care of the Transvaal Museum Committee as from 1 April 1933.<sup>75</sup> The Kruger House became part of the Transvaal Museum and fell under its administration. The House was officially opened on 10 October 1934.

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<sup>67</sup> Ibid., 27 June 1932.

<sup>68</sup> Ibid., 20 February 1923.

<sup>69</sup> NCHMA, System 1 No 2 TM1/27 - TM1/30, letter Swierstra to the Secretary for the Interior, dd 22 November 1927.

<sup>70</sup> Transvaal Museum Committee minutes, meeting 22 July 1932.

<sup>71</sup> Ibid., 26 September 1932.

<sup>72</sup> Transvaal Museum Board of Trustees minutes, meeting 10 November 1933.

<sup>73</sup> Ibid., 11 October 1933.

<sup>74</sup> Ibid., 10 November 1933.

<sup>75</sup> Transvaal Museum Committee minutes, meeting 26 September 1932.



### **The interim period (1938 - 1953) : the persuasive power of outsiders**

The anthropological, archaeological and historical collections of the Transvaal Museum remained largely unknown until the late 1930's, except for objects that were placed on display. With the centenary celebrations of the Great Trek in 1938, the first stirring in a long process began; eventually this was to lead to a separate cultural history museum.

#### Kotie Roodt-Coetzee and Afrikaans cultural organizations

One of the first outsiders to work with the Museum's history collection in depth was a student in Afrikaans cultural history at the University of Pretoria, Kotie Roodt-Coetzee (figure 5).<sup>76</sup> This was the beginning of her intimate association with the historical, anthropological and archaeological collections, an association that was destined to last for more than 40 years.

In about 1934 she obtained permission to work with the objects in the history collection in the storage rooms at the Old Museum. Because she regarded them as a particularly fine collection of cultural objects that were linked to the history of the Afrikaner, she felt that the objects should have been on display in 1938.<sup>77</sup>

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<sup>76</sup> Jakoba Aletta Johanna (Kotie) Roodt (1913 - 2005) was born in the district of Lichtenburg, but the family later moved to the historic farm Nooitgedacht near Bronkhorstspuit, where the battle of Bronkhorstspuit between the Boers and the British had taken place in 1881. She matriculated at the Erasmus School in Bronkhorstspuit. In 1933 she became a student at the Pretoria Normal College, but took an additional course in Afrikaans art and culture, that inspired her to redirect her studies to a B.A. degree at the University of Pretoria. In her second year she married P.C. Coetzee, librarian and later professor in library science at the University on 5 February 1934. She graduated with the subjects psychology, philosophy and Afrikaans art and cultural history. During the prolonged illness of Prof. M.L. du Toit, the head of the Department of Afrikaans Art and Cultural History, she lectured for three years. She also taught Afrikaans at an English school for girls. She took an active part in the cultural life of Pretoria, promoting Afrikaans culture and cultural organizations. Her expertise became well-known with the celebration of the centenary of the Great Trek in 1938, the inauguration of the Voortrekker Monument in 1949 and the tercentenary Van Riebeeck celebrations in 1952. She wrote many articles on the cultural history of the Afrikaner, such as the costume of the Voortrekkers, the Voortrekker kappie, the pioneer way of life, the arts and crafts of the Boer prisoners of war and the social life in republican Pretoria. She received numerous awards for her contributions to the preservation of South Africa's cultural heritage and museology, such as the medal of the Suid-Afrikaanse Akademie vir Wetenskap en Kuns [South African Academy for Science and Art] (1976) and the address and medal of the Federasie van Afrikaanse Kultuurverenigings [Federation of Afrikaans Cultural Associations]. In 1990 she received recognition from the government of the day, being granted the highest award in South Africa, the Order of the State President for Meritorious Services. E. Grobler, Pionier Roodt-Coetzee (90), *Bylae tot Die Burger*, 11 October 2003; E. Grobler, Mev Kotie Roodt-Coetzee – doyen van kultuurhistoriese museums, *Lantern* 42(4), 1993, pp. 4 - 7; *Museum Memo*, 6(3), November 1978; E. Klopper and R. Badenhorst, Kotie Roodt-Coetzee, *De Oude Emigrant*, Groot Trek herdenkingsjaar, no. 5, 8 August 1988, pp. 1 and 4; NCHMA, Kotie Roodt-Coetzee Archives, C.V., Kotie Roodt-Coetzee en die kultuurhistoriese museumwese in Suid-Afrika.

<sup>77</sup> NCHMA, Kotie Roodt-Coetzee Archives, file Briewe A.T.K.V. - Museum, letter Coetzee to D. Mostert, dd 24 February 1940.



**Figure 5**

Kotie Roodt-Coetzee as young student, c. 1936

(NCHMA, Kotie Roodt-Coetzee Archives)

Coetzee also brought to the attention of the Afrikaanse Kultuurraad [Afrikaans Cultural Board] of Pretoria the fact that limited space was allocated to objects in the history collection and that the caretakers were untrained and therefore incompetent to provide guidance at the Old Museum.<sup>78</sup> In 1939 the Kultuurraad asked Coetzee and P.J.S. de Klerk to take the matter up with Swierstra, the director of the Transvaal Museum, with the following result:

Mnr Swierstra het gekla oor die gebrek aan ruimte en het aangeraai dat die Kultuurraad 'n versoek van die voltooiing van die museumgebou in Paul Krugerstraat, aan die regering moet rig, en dat die kultuurhistoriese materiaal in een of twee groot kamers uitgestal sal word. Op 'n vraag van my oor die klassifikasie het Mnr. Swierstra geantwoord dat dit onmoontlik was in die verlede om 'n persoon te vind wat tegelyk geoloog, dierkundige en kultuurhistorikus is. Daar is ook nie geld om net 'n persoon vir die kultuurhistoriese afdeling alleen aan te stel nie.<sup>79</sup>

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<sup>78</sup> The Afrikaanse Kultuurraad was established on 6 August 1930, but only got off the ground in 1937. In 1938, the Voortrekker centenary year, it reached the peak of its activities. In the early 1940s the Kultuurraad approved of a policy of conservation of material culture. Although little was accomplished, the Kultuurraad retained its interest in museums. E.C. Labuschagne, *Die geskiedenis en betekenis van die Afrikaanse Kultuurraad, Pretoria, 1930 - 1980* (M.A. dissertation, University of Pretoria, 1980), pp. 9, 13 - 14, 146 - 148.

<sup>79</sup> NCHMA, Kotie Roodt-Coetzee Archives, file Briewe A.T.K.V. - Museum, letter Coetzee to D. Mostert, 24 February 1940. [Mr Swierstra complained about the lack of space and advised the Kultuurraad to request the government to complete the museum building in Paul Kruger Street. He also suggested that one or two big rooms should be used for the display of cultural history material. In reply to my question about classification, Mr Swierstra said in the past it had proved impossible to find someone who was simultaneously a qualified geologist, zoologist and cultural historian. There was no money to appoint a person who would be responsible for the cultural history section only. (Translated from the Afrikaans.)]

At this stage Coetzee felt that the history collection of the Transvaal Museum should be relocated to the Voortrekker Monument. Swierstra also wrote that the Transvaal Museum is responsible for antiques for the volksmuseum [national museum] that was being proposed for the Voortrekker Monument.<sup>80</sup> The benefits of a central museum such as this would be considerable. Visitors and students would know where to find Afrikaans cultural material and collecting could be done easily as there were many objects located in Pretoria. A qualified cultural historian could give the necessary information to visitors, students and scholars.<sup>81</sup> The Afrikaanse Taal- en Kultuurvereniging (ATKV) [Afrikaans Language and Cultural Society]<sup>82</sup> had already decided to house their collection at the Voortrekker Monument.<sup>83</sup> The architect Gerard Moerdyk felt that the available space in the Monument for a museum was three times that of the Voortrekker Museum, Pietermaritzburg.<sup>84</sup> The idea of a museum in the Voortrekker Monument was promoted actively by Coetzee in 1949, because she felt that a museum would be a significant asset to the Monument.<sup>85</sup>

The Central National Monuments Committee was of the opinion that the artists who were working on the historical frieze for the Voortrekker Monument did not have a clear idea of the historical facts they had to depict. Furthermore, it decided that more emphasis should be placed on the cultural lifestyle of the Voortrekkers rather than on armed action. Coetzee, and other members of the historical committee appointed by the Central Committee, were thus asked to evaluate the art work to make sure that it was historically accurate, and that the clothing, people, animals, topography, clarity and composition were satisfactory.<sup>86</sup> The result was an exhibition of Afrikaans antiques organized by Coetzee in the Harmony Hall

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<sup>80</sup> Ibid., System 1 No 4 TM1/34 - TM1/42, letter Swierstra to A.E.G. van Velden, dd 24 February 1939.

<sup>81</sup> Ibid., file Briewe A.T.K.V.- Museum, letter Coetzee to D. Mostert, dd 24 February 1940.

<sup>82</sup> The ATKV was initiated at a meeting of railwaymen in 1930 and founded in Johannesburg on 17 February 1931. The Society played an important role in the attainment of equal rights for Afrikaans alongside English as official language inside and outside the railway service and in the official enquiry into bilingualism in the railway service. The Society played a prominent role in the centenary celebrations of the Great Trek in 1938 and the inauguration of the Voortrekker Monument in 1949. D.J. Potgieter (ed.-in-chief), *Standard Encyclopaedia of Southern Africa*, vol. 1, p. 127.

<sup>83</sup> NCHMA, Kotie Roodt-Coetzee Archives, file Briewe A.T.K.V. - Museum, letter G. Moerdyk to Coetzee, dd 29 February 1940; System 1 No 4, TM1/34 - TM1/42, letter E.G. Jansen to Coetzee, dd 1 March 1940.

<sup>84</sup> Ibid., file Briewe A.T.K.V. - Museum, letter G. Moerdyk to Coetzee, dd 29 February 1940.

<sup>85</sup> O.J.O. Ferreira, "Die geskiedenis van die Sentrale Volksmonumentekomitee" (unpublished M.A. dissertation, University of Pretoria, 1970), p. 240.

<sup>86</sup> Ibid., p. 143; NCHMA, Kotie Roodt-Coetzee Archives, file Voortrekker Kultuur - 1938, letter Secretary, Central National Monuments Committee to Coetzee, dd 7 June 1943.

in Pretoria from 22 to 25 May 1943 in which all the artists had to work to ensure conformity of style.<sup>87</sup> The display was to give the sculptors an indication of the lifestyle of the Voortrekkers and the clothes they wore. The exhibition was under the patronage of the Central Voortrekker Centenary Committee and the Afrikaanse Kultuurraad<sup>88</sup> and was the first of its kind in the country.

Although the primary motivation for the exhibition was to provide visual assistance to the artists, it could stress the necessity of creating a Voortrekker museum, an idea that was not widely recognized.<sup>89</sup> It also focused attention on the Old Museum, where conditions were causing serious concern. The Kultuurraad met to discuss the matter on 4 August 1943. Coetzee was invited to attend so that she could make recommendations on possible improvements.<sup>90</sup> She was also present at a subsequent meeting, where she made an earnest plea for the establishment of an Africana museum by the City Council of Pretoria. The Kultuurraad had already sent a deputation to the Transvaal Museum in 1939, but to no avail.<sup>91</sup> Now they decided to pursue the issue by appointing a committee to investigate and report on local museum conditions, the re-organization of existing museums and the possible establishment of an Africana museum. The following objections were raised by the Kultuurraad about local conditions (at the Old Museum):

- the collections were neglected,
- the collection had been kept in inaccessible storage for a long time,
- the display space was far too small,
- there ought to be continual change of objects on display and in storage to circumvent the lack of space,
- objects on display should be described accurately,
- the museology was entirely English-oriented, and

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<sup>87</sup> O.J.O. Ferreira, "Die geskiedenis van die Sentrale Volksmonumentekomitee" (unpublished M.A. dissertation, University of Pretoria, 1970), p. 141.

<sup>88</sup> NCHMA, Kotie-Roodt Coetzee Archives, invitation card.

<sup>89</sup> Ibid., file Persoonlik 1, newspaper clipping, Tentoonstelling van oudhede. Beroep op Publiek deur Mev. Roodt-Coetzee, *Die Transvaler*, 19 April 1943.

<sup>90</sup> Ibid., letter M.C. Botha, honorary secretary, Die Afrikaanse Kultuurraad to Coetzee, dd 2 July 1943.

<sup>91</sup> Ibid., K. Roodt-Coetzee, Memorandum insake die Kultuurhistoriese Museum te Pretoria, p. 1.

- little could be expected of the incumbent curators.<sup>92</sup>

The members of the Committee were Coetzee, S.P.E. Boshoff, J.F.W. Grosskopf, J.H. Pierneef and H. Rode. Nothing came of this worthwhile initiative, probably due to a lack of sufficient funds during the Second World War.<sup>93</sup>

Another cultural association that was concerned about the prevailing conditions at the Old Museum was the Krugergenootskap [Kruger Society].<sup>94</sup> The Krugergenootskap was of the opinion that such a valuable collection, unique in South Africa, should not be exposed to the ever-present risk of a fire. It was proposed that the geological collection in the New Museum should be housed elsewhere and that the cultural history material should be placed there instead, where it would be safe.<sup>95</sup> Inevitably this did not happen; the Board referred the matter to the Minister of Education, Arts and Science.<sup>96</sup>

Although the Transvaal Museum was world renowned for its natural history research and exhibitions, Coetzee felt that the displays at the Old Museum and the classification system used for historical objects were among the worst in comparison to other history museums in South Africa. She mentioned that various objects – some had even been identified by Swierstra – had simply disappeared from the collection, with the result that the public had grown hesitant to donate objects to the Museum. The displays had not been changed for 15 years, whereas there were treasures hidden in the storerooms.<sup>97</sup> The reason, according to the director, was that it had been impossible to make any radical improvements to the

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<sup>92</sup> Historiography Catalogue, vol. 21, H.C. accession no. 18712, letter M.C. Botha to Coetzee, dd 11 September 1943.

<sup>93</sup> E.C. Labuschagne, *Die geskiedenis en betekenis van die Afrikaanse Kultuurraad, Pretoria, 1930 - 1980* (M.A. dissertation, University of Pretoria, 1980), pp. 147 - 148; Historiography Catalogue, vol. 21, H.C. accession no. 18712, letter M.C. Botha to Coetzee, dd 11 September 1943.

<sup>94</sup> A Kruger Day Committee existed in Pretoria by 1931, but it changed its name in c.1935 - 1936 to the Kruger Committee, and functioned as a sub-committee of the Afrikaanse Kultuurraad. On 9 August 1939 this committee was disbanded and a new association, known as the Krugergenootskap was founded. This was an autonomous body and aimed to organize all matters concerning Kruger, such as the relocation of the Kruger statue and Kruger festivals. E.C.Labuschagne, *Die geskiedenis en betekenis van die Afrikaanse Kultuurraad, Pretoria, 1930 - 1980* (M.A. dissertation, University of Pretoria, 1980), pp. 261 - 263.

<sup>95</sup> NCHMA, Box 515, TM15/40, Gen. File Krugergenootskap, letter B.C. Goosen, secretary Krugergenootskap to the chairman of the Board, dd 23 May 1950.

<sup>96</sup> Ibid., letter FitzSimons to the Minister of Education, Arts and Science, dd 17 June 1950.

<sup>97</sup> NCHMA, Kotie Roodt-Coetzee Archives, file Persoonlik 1, K. Roodt-Coetzee, Memorandum insake die Kultuurhistoriese Museum te Pretoria, p. 1.

collections, because of the lack of space in the existing cases and the perilous state of the Museum's funds, which meant that new cases could not be purchased.<sup>98</sup>

Nevertheless, in 1951 FitzSimons stated categorically in reply to requests that sections of the history collection should be handed over to certain societies:

that it is wrong in principle that historical relics, which have been assiduously collected and preserved by the Museum, should be again dispersed and become difficult of access. In fact a national collection such as that in the Museum has become, should be kept intact as dispersal not only reduces its value but disrupts the complete picture which is necessary to retain.<sup>99</sup>

It was only in 1956 that he was persuaded that the scope of national museums (collecting, preserving and interpreting material of scientific and general interest) was so wide that no one body could be expected to discharge its obligations satisfactorily. One possible solution was the centralization of scientific research and the Transvaal Museum made a start in this direction by handing over the botany collection to the botanical division of the Department of Agriculture.<sup>100</sup> In 1964 the history section of the Museum was also destined to become a separate entity.

#### A second enquiry into museum matters

In 1948 a Commission of Enquiry was appointed by the Governor-General of the Union of South Africa under the chairmanship of P.J. du Toit. It was given nine directives on the functioning of state-aided institutions.<sup>101</sup> In the Commission's report the Transvaal Museum was categorized as a national natural history museum and the Kruger House as a national history museum, but no mention was made of the Old Museum.<sup>102</sup> The Transvaal Museum was, however, also identified as a state-aided institution and with it the Old Museum, where the archaeological and historical collections remained, was mentioned. The Du Toit Commission regarded the old building as totally inadequate to fulfill its function, as the

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<sup>98</sup> Transvaal Museum Annual Report, 1950 - 1951, p. 10.

<sup>99</sup> V. FitzSimons, Historical collections of the Transvaal Museum, *Pretoriana*, 1(1), September 1951, pp. 9 - 10.

<sup>100</sup> V. FitzSimons, National Museums in South Africa, *SAMAB*, 6(6), June 1956, p. 137.

<sup>101</sup> NCHMA, *Verslag van die Kommissie van Ondersoek na sekere staatsondersteunde inrigtings*, p. 1.

<sup>102</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 14.

rooms were dark, the space far too cramped for the objects on hand, some of which were stored in the cellar.<sup>103</sup> The historical collections were regarded as valuable but the unbecoming displays were seen as not doing credit to the collections. Important objects were kept out of the public eye and some of the owners had asked to repossess their donations.<sup>104</sup>

The Commission carried out its brief by conducting interviews and reviewing memoranda. Correspondence was exchanged and interviews were granted to the director of the Transvaal Museum and representatives of the Board of Trustees, the Krugergenootskap, the Old Pretoria Society,<sup>105</sup> the Komitee ter Bevordering van die Historiese Museumwese [Committee for the Advancement of Historical Museums],<sup>106</sup> based in Pretoria. Very few of the recommendations made by the Du Toit Commission were ever implemented,<sup>107</sup> but three aspects of the report were important for the subsequent development of the Transvaal Museum. Firstly there was a recommendation that qualified historians should be appointed in museums.<sup>108</sup> A minority report was made by G.W. Eybers<sup>109</sup> on museums of history and general culture.<sup>110</sup> A third important aspect was that one of the memoranda that was laid

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<sup>103</sup> Ibid., pp. 31 - 34.

<sup>104</sup> Ibid., p. 35.

<sup>105</sup> The Old Pretoria Society (also known as the Association Old Pretoria and the Pretoria Historical Society), was founded on 22 March 1948, aiming to take the lead in research on the history of Pretoria. The origin of street names, the identification of important buildings and the conservation of cultural objects were its primary concern. It also took part in historical festivities. F.J. Du Toit Spies, *Die Genootskap Oud-Pretoria se tienjarige bestaan – 'n oorsig, Pretoriana*, nos. 26 & 27, April - August 1958, pp. 20 - 24.

<sup>106</sup> This Committee was an un-allied group of people in Pretoria interested in the preservation of the cultural heritage of the Afrikaner. They constituted an *ad hoc* body on 19 August 1948. Prof. A.N. Pelzer was the chairman. The secretary was W.J. de Kock, who informed the director of the Transvaal Museum that the Committee had been formed and that a memorandum, stressing the urgent need for better and more extensive accommodation of the historical collections had been prepared by them. Other members of the Committee were P.J.H. Basson, H.P.H. Behrens, C.J. Beyers, G. Bigalke, F.C.L. Bosman, P.J. du Toit, S.P. Engelbrecht, FitzSimons, P. van Biljon, H.D. van Broekhuizen and W. Punt. Transvaal Museum Board of Trustees minutes, meeting 10 September 1948; P.J. de Beer, "Die fenomeen opelugmuseum in kultuurhistoriese perspektief" (unpublished D.Phil thesis, University of Pretoria, 1979), p. 55.

<sup>107</sup> H. Oberholzer, *Skeletons by the roadside*, pp. 11 - 12.

<sup>108</sup> NCHMA, *Verslag van die Kommissie van Ondersoek na sekere staatsondersteunde inrigtings*, p. 171.

<sup>109</sup> George von Welflingh Eybers (1888 - 1976) received his academic training at the universities of Stellenbosch, Amsterdam and London. He was a teacher for 20 years, then inspector of schools and later under-secretary of the Department of Education. He was closely associated with the establishment of an open-air museum, as proposed by the Old Pretoria Society, of which he was founder-member and chairman from 1960 to 1964. He was also a member of the Cilliers Commission in 1960. C.J. Beyers and J.L. Basson (eds), *Dictionary of South African Biography*, vol. V, pp. 252 - 253; caption, photograph of Eybers, *Pretoriana*, no. 30, August 1959, p. 13.

<sup>110</sup> NCHMA, *Verslag van die Kommissie van Ondersoek na sekere staatsondersteunde inrigtings*, pp. 201 - 219.



before the Commission was prepared with specific reference to the historical collections in Pretoria, those in the Old Museum.<sup>111</sup>

In his minority report Eybers made it quite clear that the historian and the natural historian have divergent research interests. In a plea for the founding of history museums Eybers recommended the study of lifestyles, labour practices, state craft and politics, intellectual pursuits and religion.<sup>112</sup> Although history museums had been established in many towns and cities, in his view they remained under-developed and there had even been degeneration in some cases. The neglect of historical displays in national museums could be, according to Eybers, the result of a number of factors such as:

... die ontsaglike wetenskaplike rykdom van die land wat in 'n mate nog onontdek is, en, by vergelyking, die klein getal werkers; die ekonomiese noodsaaklikheid daarvan om die natuurlike hulpbronne van die land te ontdek en te gebruik en om die baie gevare wat dit bedreig, te bestry; die tradisionele funksies van museums wat in hoofsaak gewoonlik as museums vir natuurlike historie fungeer het ... die afgetrokkenheid van kurator-personele, wat dikwels aangestel is op grond van hul kwalifikasies in die natuurwetenskap; die boeiende belangstelling wat die algemene publiek in natuurverskynsels toon ...<sup>113</sup>

Eybers was of the opinion that two separate kinds of institution, namely those for natural history and those for history, were a necessity because both have different aims, collect and exhibit different materials and require different people to care for them.<sup>114</sup>

The Du Toit Commission regarded the memorandum by the Komitee ter Bevordering van die Historiese Museumwese as thorough and detailed, and saw the many comments and suggestions as useful. As far as collections management was concerned, the Committee testified that the catalogues were so incomplete that it was impossible to ascertain the exact

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<sup>111</sup> Ibid., pp. 39 - 40.

<sup>112</sup> Ibid., pp. 203 - 204.

<sup>113</sup> Ibid., p. 208. [The vast scientific wealth of the country remains to some extent uncharted. [This is due to the] comparatively small number of workers, the economic necessity of exploring and utilizing the natural resources of the country and combatting the many dangers that threaten it and the traditional functions of the museums that used to operate, in the main, as natural history museums ... the pre-occupation of curators who have generally been appointed on the ground of their qualifications in the natural sciences; the absorbing interest shown by the general public in the phenomena of nature (Translated from the Afrikaans.)]

<sup>114</sup> Ibid., p. 209.



extent of the history collection; the whole collection was in a state of decay.<sup>115</sup> The most crucial recommendation in the memorandum was that a qualified historian should be appointed to the staff of the Transvaal Museum to investigate the historical collection and to catalogue the objects. Although additional space for the preservation and display of these objects was a dire necessity, the ultimate aim had to be the foundation of a separate history museum in Pretoria.<sup>116</sup>

Ultimately many of the above suggestions were implemented by the Transvaal Museum but only some of them were endorsed by the Commission, such as the immediate appointment of a historian to the staff of the Museum in the post of professional officer.<sup>117</sup> The Commission was also in favour of a separate history museum, the core of which should be the Kruger House and the historical collection in the Transvaal Museum.<sup>118</sup>

### **The Transvaal Museum : a new identity for the history division**

At the inauguration of the Voortrekker Monument in 1949 another temporary exhibition of Voortrekker objects (figure 6), for which Coetzee was responsible, also promoted the idea of a separate history museum. The committee charged with planning this exhibition was called the Komitee ter Bevordering van die Historiese Museumwese (the same Committee that had laid a report before the Du Toit Commission).<sup>119</sup> The final display (figure 6a and b) was co-ordinated by a sub-committee of the Krugergenootskap, on which the Transvaal Museum was represented.<sup>120</sup> The Museum was also associated with the 1949 festivities because it acted as recipient for objects to be donated in response to an appeal made by the steering committee of the dispatch riders (Afrikaans: *Rapportryers*) for information and objects.<sup>121</sup>

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<sup>115</sup> P.J. de Beer, "Die fenomeen opelugmuseum in kultuurhistoriese perspektief" (unpublished D.Phil thesis, University of Pretoria, 1979), p. 56.

<sup>116</sup> NCHMA, *Verslag van die Kommissie van Ondersoek na sekere staatsondersteunde inrigtings*, p. 40.

<sup>117</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 42.

<sup>118</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 44 - 45.

<sup>119</sup> NCHMA, System 1 No 5 TM43/51, letter secretary Komitee ter Bevordering van die Historiese Museumwese, to the Board, dd 29 April 1949.

<sup>120</sup> Transvaal Museum Annual Report, 1949 - 1950, p. 4; *Amptelike program en gedenkboek van die fees ter inwyding van die Voortrekkermonument 13 tot 16 Desember 1949*, pp. 5 - 12.

<sup>121</sup> NCHMA, System 1 No 5 TM43/51, Media release, Insameling van historiese stukke, dd 12 July 1949.



**Figure 6a**

(J.J. Bond, *The saga of the Great Trek*, p. 12)



**Figure 6b**

(M.C. Botha, *Die huldejaar 1949*, p. 264)

**Figure 6 (a and b)**

Exhibition of objects from the Transvaal Museum (1949) in the Voortrekker Monument

In 1950 the Voortrekker display moved to the Africana Museum in Johannesburg for a short while, and then to the Old Museum, Pretoria. Enhanced by new donations it thus became the first exhibition of cultural history objects in the Transvaal Museum and marked a significant and positive change as far as historical displays were concerned.<sup>122</sup>

In the meantime the history division took on a completely new character. This was due for the most part to the willingness of the director to steer the division in an innovative new direction and the creativeness of Coetzee (who worked voluntarily at the Museum). New significance had been accorded to historical and cultural historical objects. In the words of FitzSimons, there was “a vast store of invaluable historical material” in the Old Museum.<sup>123</sup>

The Board of Trustees also reflected these changes. In September 1950, for the first time a historian, Prof. A.N. Pelzer<sup>124</sup> of the University of Pretoria, was appointed as a Board member. This was followed, on 1 October 1951, by the appointment of Prof. P.J. Coertze, also from the University of Pretoria, who was an anthropologist.<sup>125</sup> Prof. H.M. van der Westhuysen,<sup>126</sup> an art historian, and J.J. van Schaik, a prominent Pretoria businessman, were appointed in 1955.

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<sup>122</sup> W. Louw, Die ontstaan en ontwikkeling van die Nasionale Kultuurhistoriese en Opelugmuseum, *Museum Memo*, 6(3), November 1978, p. 16; Transvaal Museum Annual Report, 1949 - 1950, p. 4.

<sup>123</sup> Transvaal Museum Annual Report, 1949 - 1950, report for the division of history, p. 1.

<sup>124</sup> Adriaan Nicolaas Petrus Pelzer (1915 -1981) studied at the University of Pretoria and the Vrije Universiteit, Amsterdam in the Netherlands. He received a doctorate at the University of Pretoria in 1941. He was appointed as lecturer at the History Department of that University in 1942 and became head of the Department and professor in 1947. He was a member of many committees, and co-founder of the Historical Association of South Africa and the Old Pretoria Society. He played a prominent role at the University of Pretoria and became vice rector in 1974. F.J. Du Toit Spies and D.H. Heydenrych (comp.), *Ad destinatum II 1960 - 1982, 'n Geskiedenis van die Universiteit van Pretoria*, pp. 17 - 19.

<sup>125</sup> Pieter Johannes Coertze (1907 - 1998) received his academic training at the University of Stellenbosch, where he later worked as lecturer. He was also on the staff of the University of South Africa and the University of the Orange Free State. In 1950 he was appointed as professor and head of the Department of Ethnology at the University of Pretoria, remaining there until he went on pension in 1972. He is the author of many scientific papers. J.F. Eloff, Die mens en die vakman, in J.F. Eloff and R.D. Coertze (eds), *Etnografiese studies in Suidelike Afrika*, pp. 1 - 13.

<sup>126</sup> Hermanus Marthinus van der Westhuysen (1904 - 1987) studied at the Pretoria Normal College and the University of Pretoria and received his doctorate at the University in 1938. He was head and professor of the Department of Afrikaans Art and Cultural History from 1939 and of the Department of Art History from 1953 to 1969. F.J. Du Toit Spies and D.H. Heydenrych (comp.), *Ad destinatum II 1960 -1982, 'n Geskiedenis van die Universiteit van Pretoria*, p. 52.



The next celebration that had a significant effect on the history division of the Transvaal Museum was the Van Riebeeck festival, organized to commemorate the tercentenary of the arrival of Jan van Riebeeck at the Cape in 1652. Other than the Van Riebeeck exhibition there were still only a few history displays. These included the Botha Hall, displays on the indigenous peoples of South Africa, some Peruvian pots, a selection of English paintings, furniture and a collection of Chinese porcelain donated to the Transvaal Museum in 1918 (figure 7).<sup>127</sup> There were also uniforms, a Voortrekker Bible, various paintings, the Bratina<sup>128</sup> and some smaller objects on display.<sup>129</sup>



**Figure 7**

Displays in the Old Museum, c. 1938, with the caption  
*Oriental Art Oost Aziatische Kunst*, on the cabinet to the right

(Collection: National Cultural History Museum HKF 863)

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<sup>127</sup> In the Transvaal Museum Annual Report, 1918, p. 3, it was reported that the Museum received a valuable donation from Smuts on behalf of an English gentleman, who chose to remain anonymous. This donation consisted of 14 large cases of old furniture, paintings, drawings, vases, ornaments and Persian rugs. The donor was Colonel R. H. Whitwell, Worthing, England, whose death on 1 December 1937, was reported in *SAMAB*, 1(7), March 1938, p. 174.

<sup>128</sup> The Bratina or fraternity cup (Historiography Catalogue, vol. 1, H.C. accession no. 884) was part of the Russian tokens of honour to General Piet Cronjé and the Boer heroes during the Anglo-Boer War. It arrived at the Transvaal Museum in 1921 with other objects from the Zuid-Afrikaansch Museum in Dordrecht in the Netherlands.

<sup>129</sup> W. Louw, Lewenskets van Mev Kotie Roodt-Coetzee, *Museum Memo*, 6(2), November 1978, p. 17; NCHMA, *Komitee van Ondersoek na openbare museums in Pretoria, 1960 - 1961*, K. Roodt-Coetzee, Memorandum oor die kultuurhistoriese afdeling van die Transvaal Museum, p. 1.

In 1950 the Transvaal Museum decided to introduce a system of Certificates of Associate Membership to be awarded to individuals in recognition of outstanding and sustained service to the Museum. Coetzee was included in the 1952/53 list for her contribution to history (figure 8).<sup>130</sup>



**Figure 8**

Certificate issued by the Transvaal Museum to  
Mrs P.C. Coetzee (Kotie Roodt-Coetzee), 25 April 1952

(NCHMA, Kotie Roodt-Coetzee Archives)

<sup>130</sup> Transvaal Museum Annual Report, 1950 - 1951, p. 6 and 1952 - 1953, p. 11; Transvaal Museum Board of Trustees minutes, meeting 25 April 1952, certificate.

### **Kotie Roodt-Coetzee officially on the staff of the Transvaal Museum**

Coetzee was appointed as professional officer on 1 September 1953 (figure 9).<sup>131</sup> This was the first time that such an appointment had been made at the Transvaal Museum in the history division. She immediately made a meticulous enquiry into matters at the Old Museum and at Kruger House and also prepared a memorandum on the proposed Museum at the Voortrekker Monument.<sup>132</sup> One of the most important tasks undertaken was to supplement the existing history collection. Objects that were still lacking were sought by means of the press and radio, and the response from the public was very encouraging.<sup>133</sup> The director supported this new initiative and spared no effort to enhance the reputation of the history museum.<sup>134</sup>



**Figure 9**

Kotie Roodt-Coetzee soon after her appointment  
to the staff of the Transvaal Museum in September 1953

(NCHM, Kotie Roodt-Coetzee Archives)

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<sup>131</sup> Although her name appears on the lists of both the permanent and temporary staff in the annual reports, she had been appointed on contract on a triennial basis. In 1964 the Board recommended to the Department of Education, Arts and Science that her appointment be made permanent, backdated to 1 October 1953. NCHMA, NKP66/1, letter director to the Secretary for Education, Arts and Science, dd 8 May 1964.

<sup>132</sup> Transvaal Museum Annual Report, 1953 - 1954, departmental report division of history, p. 35.

<sup>133</sup> Ibid. and NCHMA, System 1 No 8 TM1/54, letter Coetzee to W.J. de Kock, dd 25 February 1954.

<sup>134</sup> Ibid., letter Coetzee to R. Palk, dd 8 June 1954.

Within a year, as a result of its considerable enlargement, the collection of the history division was regarded as one of the most significant of its kind in the country. The Museum Board thus felt that its scope should be expanded to include the cultural history field, **in order to record and perpetuate for posterity the cultural development of the country.**<sup>135</sup>

One of the biggest promotional events that stimulated interest in the collection of history objects in the Transvaal Museum, was the celebration of the centenary of Pretoria in 1955. According to the director of the Transvaal Museum, the displays were visited by a large number of the public, and aroused much interest and enthusiasm.<sup>136</sup> It earned such glowing tributes that the Board felt that the effort was lucrative.<sup>137</sup>

A catalogue describing the Pretoria Centenary exhibition and in particular the two period rooms, the camping scene and the dioramas, was an important bench-mark in cultural history publications and probably the first to describe period rooms on display in a South African museum. The catalogue was published by the City Council of Pretoria.<sup>138</sup> Other than the articles by Gunning,<sup>139</sup> his obituary<sup>140</sup> and five anthropological articles,<sup>141</sup> nothing else had been published by the Transvaal Museum on the anthropology, archaeology and history collections. Now, for the first time, articles covering these fields appeared, albeit not in the *Annals*, nor in the *Memoirs*. In the *Bulletin of the Transvaal Museum*, however, the number of articles, news items and notes increased. Coetzee, for example, wrote about paper

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<sup>135</sup> My bold. Transvaal Museum Annual Report, 1954 - 1955, report of vice-chairman of Board, p. 1.

<sup>136</sup> Ibid.

<sup>137</sup> N a, Pretoria Centenary Exhibition, *SAMAB*, 6(4), December 1955, p. 95.

<sup>138</sup> N a, *Historical exhibition: Pretoria (1855 - 1955)*.

<sup>139</sup> *Annals of the Transvaal Museum*, 1(1), 1908 and 2(3), 1910.

<sup>140</sup> Ibid., 4(2), 1913.

<sup>141</sup> Ibid., 7(4), 1921 and 11(2), 1924.





**Figure 10**

Period room, 1855, representing Heemraad Daniël Prinsloo, leaving for the Landdros's office. Exhibited during the centenary of Pretoria, 1955  
Kotie Roodt-Coetzee on the right



**Figure 11**

Period room, 1895, representing bride and groom leaving the parental home for the church. Exhibited during the centenary of Pretoria, 1955  
These two rooms show in detail the difference in lifestyle between the early pioneer period (top) and the elegant, luxurious houses in Pretoria 40 years later (below)

(Collection: National Cultural History Museum HKF 4826 and 4824)



cut-outs, a glass chalice, a Cape armoire and a Cape silver snuff box;<sup>142</sup> A.P. du Toit contributed a piece on rock paintings<sup>143</sup> and T. Jacobs-Venter one on indigenous dolls.<sup>144</sup>

### The Voortrekker Monument Museum

The development of the Voortrekker Monument Museum, that had been dormant since 1949, also played a conspicuous role in fostering the ideals of a cultural history museum. A sub-committee consisting of members nominated by the Board of Control of the Voortrekker Monument and the Transvaal Museum was appointed to investigate the possibility of a museum at the Monument.<sup>145</sup> The Department of Education sanctioned this new venture, with the proviso that the Transvaal Museum Board retained control of the objects exhibited at the proposed museum and was satisfied that the material was cared for and insured against theft and fire.<sup>146</sup> All the professional work was done by Coetzee, who was duly congratulated by the Board of Trustees of the Transvaal Museum for the quality of her work, fully realizing that this had been by no means an easy task and had presented many difficulties.<sup>147</sup> The project involved the design of a new museum, including plans for the display cases, correct lighting, humidity and ventilation, and assembling suitable objects. It was decided to construct room interiors, and the technical aspects of creating ceilings, walls and floors all had to be considered, as did the making of life-like models.<sup>148</sup>

The Museum was first housed in the basement of the Voortrekker Monument and the choice objects to be exhibited were from the collection in the Transvaal Museum. Some objects were also transferred to Pretoria from the collection at Hartenbos, the headquarters and

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<sup>142</sup> K. Roodt-Coetzee, Papiersnitte, *Bulletin of the Transvaal Museum*, no. 3, July 1959; Kaapse armoire van die Retief-familie, *Bulletin of the Transvaal Museum*, no. 5, July 1960; Die egtheid van 'n V.O.C.-bokaal, *Bulletin of the Transvaal Museum*, no. 7, July 1961; 'n Unieke snuifdoos in die Ou Museum, *Bulletin of the Transvaal Museum*, no. 8, January 1962.

<sup>143</sup> A.P. du Toit, 'n Samevatting van opvattinge aangaande die rotsskilderye van die Republiek en Suidwes-Afrika, *Bulletin of the Transvaal Museum*, no. 9, July 1962.

<sup>144</sup> T. Jacobs-Venter, Bantoe-speelpoppe in die Ou Museum, *Bulletin of the Transvaal Museum*, no. 5, July 1960.

<sup>145</sup> Transvaal Museum Annual Report, 1953 - 1954, departmental report division of history, p. 39.

<sup>146</sup> Transvaal Museum Board of Trustees minutes, meeting 11 September 1953.

<sup>147</sup> NCHMA, Kotie Roodt-Coetzee Archives, file Persoonlik 1, letter FitzSimons to Coetzee, dd 23 August 1957.

<sup>148</sup> Transvaal Museum Annual Report, 1954 - 1955, departmental report history, p. 35; 1955 - 1956, p. 34.

seaside resort of the ATKV.<sup>149</sup> It was recommended that the Hartenbos objects that were considered unsuitable for display become the property of the Museum,<sup>150</sup> but in 1964, at the request of the ATKV, they were packed in cases for return to Hartenbos.<sup>151</sup>

The Voortrekker Monument Museum was opened on 1 July 1957.<sup>152</sup> The display created for the Pretoria Centenary, and in particular the period rooms, was a precursor for Coetzee's exhibitions at the Voortrekker Monument Museum. It comprised three rooms (a kitchen, bedroom and voorhuis [sitting-room]) as well as an outspan (figure 76) in addition to the traditional glass display cases. The control of the Voortrekker Monument Museum fell under a joint sub-committee of the Transvaal Museum and the Board of the Monument.<sup>153</sup> Within a year new plans for a bigger museum were under way.

### Kruger House

By the early 1950s it was clear that the Kruger House was overcrowded which meant that the aura of the house was lost because it was dominated by a preponderance of additional displays such as cabinets and the photographs illustrating the life of the President (figure 12). A separate exhibition hall became thus a priority, and the search for original furniture continued so that the House could be refurbished to the home it had been in the lifetime of the President and his wife.<sup>154</sup> In reaction to Coetzee's insistent appeals, items that were originally in the house were gradually donated by Kruger's descendants.<sup>155</sup>

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<sup>149</sup> A.N. Pelzer, Mev. Roodt-Coetzee en die Voortrekkermonumentmuseum, *Museum Memo*, 6(2), November 1978, p. 7.

<sup>150</sup> Sub-committee minutes, meeting 6 March 1957.

<sup>151</sup> NCHMA, Jaarverslag van die voorsitter van die Raad van Kuratore van die Kultuurhistoriese en Opelugmuseum vir die jaar geëndig 31 Maart 1965, p. 3.

<sup>152</sup> O.J.O. Ferreira, "Die geskiedenis van die Sentrale Volksmonumentekomitee" (unpublished M.A. dissertation, University of Pretoria, 1970), p. 242; Transvaal Museum Annual Report, 1957 - 1958, p. 13.

<sup>153</sup> Transvaal Museum Annual Report, 1957 - 1958, p. 13.

<sup>154</sup> Ibid., 1950 - 1951, p. 10, departmental report for the division of history, p. 32; 1953 - 1954, p. 9; 1954 - 1955, p. 9.

<sup>155</sup> Ibid., 1954 - 1955, departmental report for history, p. 35 and 1958 - 1959, p. 40.

In 1952 the railway coach used by Kruger was transferred to the back of the Kruger House. It was protected by a shelter consisting of a roof and ramps on both sides of the train.<sup>156</sup> In the financial year 1955 - 1956 funds were provided for the building of an additional hall behind the House.<sup>157</sup> When this hall had been completed in 1957, exhibits were removed from the house to relieve the excess of displays so that the house could be redecorated and the original furniture put in place.<sup>158</sup> The redecoration of the house included the painting of the ceilings, re-papering of the walls and the cleaning or replacement of the curtains.<sup>159</sup> Slowly but surely, the nineteenth century lifestyle of the President and his wife was reflected in the old House. In the hall the displays showed objects linked to Kruger and his times, thus depicting the “Kruger Museum”, as previously envisaged by the Transvaal Museum.<sup>160</sup>

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<sup>156</sup> Ibid., 1952 - 1953, p. 8.

<sup>157</sup> Ibid., 1955 - 1956, p. 7.

<sup>158</sup> Ibid., 1956 - 1957, p. 8; 1957 - 1958, p. 8.

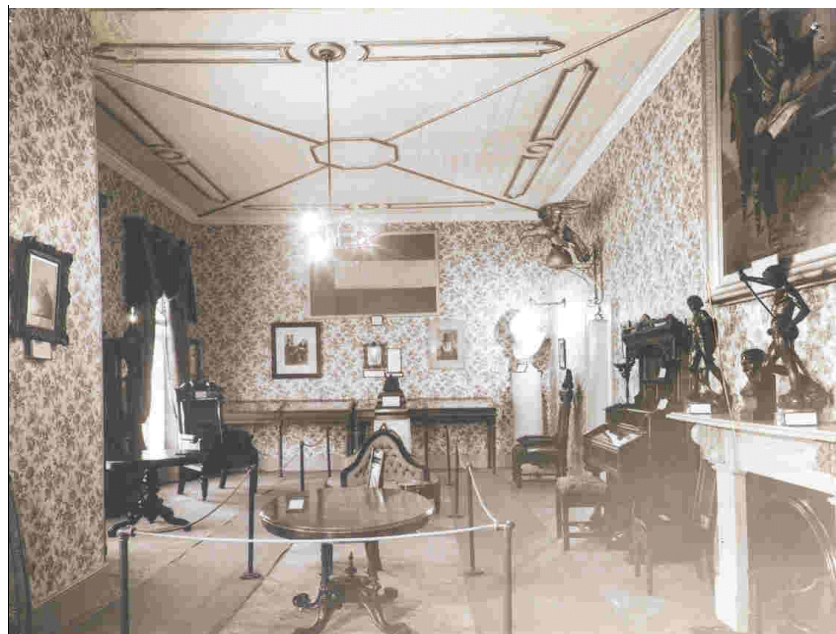
<sup>159</sup> Ibid., 1957 - 1958, p. 38.

<sup>160</sup> Ibid., 1953 - 1954, p. 9.



**Figure 12a**

(P. van Zyl, “Die Krugermuseum” (unpublished paper for post-graduate diploma in museology, University of Pretoria, 1982), p. 55



**Figure 12b**

(Collection: National Cultural History Museum)

**Figure 12 (a and b)**

Display cases in President Kruger’s reception room in the early 1950s (top) in comparison to the display c. 1956. Furniture such as a house organ, conversation seat and a table had been added to the decor, but display cases still remained against the wall (below).

### 3. MUSEUM ADMINISTRATION

In 1906 the responsibility for the Transvaal Museum was transferred from the Department of the Colonial Secretary to the Department of the Commissioner of Lands.<sup>161</sup> A few years later, in terms of government notice no. 8 of 31 May 1910, the Department of the Interior was made responsible for the administration of all matters in relation to the Museum.<sup>162</sup> The Transvaal Museum was regarded as a central national institution (a Union museum), as indicated by the Minister of Finance during the second reading of the Financial Relations Bill in 1913<sup>163</sup> and in terms of the Financial Relations Act No. 10 of 1913, par. 4 of the 2<sup>nd</sup> schedule.<sup>164</sup> This was the first act of importance to be applied to the administration of the Transvaal Museum.

Although it received a so-called grant-in-aid from the government, the Museum was not regulated by its own act, nor had the Staatsmuseum of the ZAR been constituted by an act. The Transvaal Museum was thus part of a group of heterogeneous museums that received government aid, but each one was administered by a museum committee or board that for all practical purposes was autonomous.<sup>165</sup> The Transvaal Museum was managed by the Museum Committee until 1933. The first meeting of the Transvaal Museum Board of Trustees was held on 29 June 1933.

The invidious position of museums led to the promulgation of the State-aided Institutions Act No. 23 of 1931. During the second-reading debate the Minister of the Interior specifically referred to important state institutions, such as the Transvaal Museum, that should be controlled by an act. In terms of government notice no. 99 of 17 January 1933 regulations applicable to the Transvaal Museum were published, but these were amended or added to from time to time.<sup>166</sup> The museum boards, in other words, were gradually deprived

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<sup>161</sup> V. FitzSimons and L. Brain (comp.), A history of the Transvaal Museum, *Bulletin of the Transvaal Museum*, no. 13, 30 November, 1972, p. 6.

<sup>162</sup> NA, UOD 68 File 13/6, letter Secretary for the Interior to the Secretary Agriculture, dd 8 June 1910.

<sup>163</sup> H. Oberholzer, *Skeletons by the roadside*, p. 8.

<sup>164</sup> Transvaal Museum Committee minutes, meeting 2 October 1917.

<sup>165</sup> H. Oberholzer, Administrasie van nasionale museums in die Republiek van Suid-Afrika, *Memoirs van die Nasionale Museum Bloemfontein*, vol. 17, June 1982 (M.A. dissertation, University of the Orange Free State, 1987), p. 31.

<sup>166</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 11 - 16.

of their autonomy.<sup>167</sup> The Transvaal Museum resorted under the Minister of the Interior until 1948, when the Governor-General charged the Minister of Education with the execution of Act No. 23 of 1931.<sup>168</sup>

### **A new management style**

With the appointment of Coetzee in 1953 a new dispensation began for the history division. It soon became clear that provision for the needs of the history division could not be met in the traditional natural history set-up. The first indication that a new trend was developing in the Transvaal Museum as far as the management of the human sciences division was concerned, was the appointment of a special Historical Sub-committee in June 1955.

The appointment of this Committee made museological matters easier to address, but there were still administration problems that remained unresolved. As secretary of the Committee Coetzee had to implement decisions taken by the Committee, while at the same time remaining subordinate to the director. She had to do administrative work as well as acting as link between the director and the staff. In practice she acted as assistant director, an invidious position that often led to difficult and unpleasant situations between Coetzee and the staff. To alleviate her position, the director issued instructions to the staff at the Old Museum that Coetzee had to supervise them. She was directly responsible to the director. Any instructions by her should be regarded as given by the director and reports on any matter had to be given directly to her.<sup>169</sup> Any matter that a member of staff wanted to raise with the director, the Board or the Historical Sub-committee had to go via Coetzee.<sup>170</sup>

### **The establishment of the National Cultural History and Open-Air Museum**

The next great change in management took place in 1964, when the Transvaal Museum had to accept that the cultural history division was breaking away. The secession was a long process that took a great deal of input from a number of interested parties. By constant

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<sup>167</sup> Ibid., p. 33.

<sup>168</sup> H. Oberholzer, *Skeletons by the roadside*, pp. 8 - 10.

<sup>169</sup> NCHMA, *Komitee van Ondersoek na openbare museums in Pretoria, 1960 - 1961*, K. Roodt-Coetzee, Memorandum oor die kultuurhistoriese afdeling van die Transvaal Museum, pp. 3 - 4; Sub-committee minutes, meeting 6 August 1957; NKP66/1, Notice to staff members by FitzSimons, dd 13 August 1957.

<sup>170</sup> Ibid., NKP66/1, letter FitzSimons to Coetzee and A.P. Du Toit, dd 15 September 1961.

lobbying, both in and outside the Museum, Coetzee changed the sentiments and perceptions of many prominent people and set in motion a self-imposed undertaking to gain independence for the history division.

### Outside the Museum

At the annual congress of the Historical Association of South Africa on 30 and 31 August 1957 a resolution was taken about the separation of cultural history museums in South Africa from natural history museums.<sup>171</sup> During the congress a paper was delivered by W.J. de Kock<sup>172</sup> entitled *Die lewende verlede. Voorwerp en Beeltenis in die Geskiedenis*.<sup>173</sup> The Association regarded the neglect of historical museums as an injustice that had existed for many years, and one that should be rectified.<sup>174</sup>

A memorandum compiled by Coetzee on behalf of the Historical Association focuses especially on three aspects, namely the situation of cultural history museums in general, the ideal circumstances that should prevail, and ways and means of making improvements to reach optimal levels. It was stressed that natural history and cultural history are diverse disciplines and that this could, in the opinion of the Association, lead to preferential treatment of the one discipline at the expense of the other, usually cultural history, in any one museum. It was recommended that a complete separation should be made at the museums in Pretoria, Cape Town, Bloemfontein and Pietermaritzburg. Each museum should then have its own board of control, own head, separate funds and eventually also its own building.<sup>175</sup>

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<sup>171</sup> N a, Van die Redaksie; Beskrywingspunte deur kongres aanvaar, *Historia* 2(3), December 1957, pp. 194 and 214.

<sup>172</sup> De Kock had an intimate knowledge of circumstances at the Transvaal Museum. He was responsible for the photographs and documents at the Pretoria Centenary exhibition and was also the secretary of the Komitee ter Bevordering van die Historiese Museumwese. He was in particular interested in the Kruger House and compiled the photographic display illustrating Kruger's life. He also wrote a brochure for the Kruger House. As temporary archivist for the Union of South Africa in Europe, he solicited a number of donations. Transvaal Museum Annual Report, 1953 - 1954, departmental report for division of history, p. 38.

<sup>173</sup> *Historia*, 2(3), December 1957, pp. 202 - 214.

<sup>174</sup> N a, Van die Redaksie, *Historia* 2(3), December 1957, p. 194.

<sup>175</sup> NCHMA, System 2 No 43 NKO(1) 1955 - 1970, Memorandum vir voorlegging deur die Historiese Genootskap van Suid-Afrika aan Sy Edele die Minister van Onderwys, Kuns en Wetenskap.



The struggle for independence for the cultural history division of the Transvaal Museum was reinforced by the idea of an open-air museum.<sup>176</sup> The organization that fostered this notion was the Old Pretoria Society, established in 1948. The Society was disconcerted by the demolition of houses and shops which had been typical of old Pretoria and their aim was to preserve an old dwelling. They were of the opinion that the rich historical heritage of the city could be saved for future generations.<sup>177</sup> The Museum Board was aware of the fact that the Society had identified itself with the establishment of an open-air museum in Pretoria.<sup>178</sup>

One of the old homes in question was on the corner of Skinner and Paul Kruger Streets, built in 1866 by the Portuguese merchant, Bras Perreira. In 1953 this house was the oldest remaining home in Pretoria. The efforts to preserve it were supported by the idea of an open-air museum, which the Society discussed with the City Council of Pretoria. They received the idea favourably and set aside a piece of ground for the purpose.<sup>179</sup> The plan was also fostered by the knowledge of objects of sentimental and cultural value at the Old Museum and the Kruger House. With the establishment of an open-air museum the Society wanted to extend the traditional historical museum, housed in one building, to a museum consisting of many buildings, representing various lifestyles, periods, events and architectural variety.<sup>180</sup>

At the outset the Transvaal Museum could not, even if it wanted to, take part in the venture of the Society to set up an open-air museum, because its funds were very limited. As plans for an independent and separate cultural history museum progressed, it became clear that the need for a site, where a functional cultural history museum could be built was a priority. Objects for an open-air museum were also collected. The Transvaal Museum perforce

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<sup>176</sup> For details on the open-air museum, see P.J. de Beer, "Die fenomeen opelugmuseum in kultuurhistoriese perspektief" (unpublished D.Phil thesis, University of Pretoria, 1979).

<sup>177</sup> W.H.J. Punt, Our city is growing, *Pretoriana*, 2(1), September 1952, pp. 2 - 3.

<sup>178</sup> Transvaal Museum Board of Trustees minutes, meeting 12 March 1954.

<sup>179</sup> W.H.J. Punt, Annual Report: Association Old Pretoria, *Pretoriana*, 4(3), April 1955, pp. 5 - 6; F.J. Du Toit Spies, The open-air museum, *Pretoriana*, no. 22, December 1956, pp. 2 - 5; F.J. Du Toit Spies, Die Genootskap Oud Pretoria se tienjarige bestaan - 'n oorsig, *Pretoriana*, nos. 26 & 27, April - August 1958, pp. 23 - 24.

<sup>180</sup> G.W. Eybers, 'n Suid-Afrikaanse Opelugmuseum, *Pretoriana*, nos. 16 & 17, July - September 1955, p. 69; see also n a, Oud-Pretoria: Opelug-museum word beoog, *Pretoriana*, nos. 16 & 17, July - September 1955, pp. 82 - 83.



discussed a cultural history museum, together with an open-air museum, with the Society.<sup>181</sup> Indeed, the Minister of Education, Arts and Science was also approached more than once,<sup>182</sup> and eventually he decided that a committee of enquiry should be appointed to look into the question of local Pretoria museums.

- The third enquiry into museum matters

After two previous enquiries (1932 and 1948), the third Committee of Enquiry into public museums in Pretoria was appointed on 25 July 1960. The chairman of the Committee was C.A. Cilliers. There were five directives pertaining to the Transvaal Museum, the most important being to investigate and report upon

the organisation, staffing and control of the Transvaal Museum with a view to the effective carrying out of its functions as both a natural-history and a cultural-history museum, with consideration of the desirability of the separation of the two sections as separate institutions, each under its own controlling body, the building requirements of the Museum, and the establishment of an open-air museum ... and the possible co-operation and/or merger with the Transvaal Museum or with a portion thereof.<sup>183</sup>

The Committee came to the conclusion that the natural and cultural history divisions of the Transvaal Museum should be separated immediately and that each should be managed by a separate board of control in a separate building. Evidence was provided that one board of control for both sections resulted in more interest being given to natural history matters than cultural history. Furthermore this had led to a lack of control, development and functioning. It was also shown that the background and training of the staff in both divisions differed so markedly that staff transfers and relief-work between them was impossible.<sup>184</sup>

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<sup>181</sup> Sub-committee minutes, meeting 3 May 1962; Verslag van 'n samespreking tussen verteenwoordigers van die Transvaal-Museum en van die Genootskap Oud-Pretoria, op uitnodiging van die Transvaal-Museum, dd 23 August 1962 (minute book); P.J. Coertze, *Die Nasionale Kultuurhistoriese en Opelugmuseum*, Pretoria, *Pretoriana*, no. 46, December 1964, pp. 3 - 7.

<sup>182</sup> Sub-committee minutes, meeting 26 May 1958; Transvaal Museum Board of Trustees minutes, special meeting 30 May 1958; G.W. Eybers, Verslag van 'n onderhoud, *Pretoriana*, no. 30, August 1959, pp. 9 - 11; Transvaal Museum Annual Report, 1958 - 1959, p. 7; NCHMA, System 2 No 43 NKO(1) 1955 - 1970, Memorandum re proposed new museum of history, Reduced committee (Afrikaans: *kleinkomitee*) with regard to the open-air museum report, meeting 16 August 1962.

<sup>183</sup> NCHMA, *Komitee van Ondersoek na openbare museums in Pretoria, 1960 - 1961*, Memoranda.

<sup>184</sup> *Ibid.*, Report, 14 March 1962, pp. 2 - 3.

In the light of the overwhelming evidence, the Committee recommended the establishment of a cultural history museum, including an open-air museum, as a single institution, under one board of control.<sup>185</sup> The Committee also remarked that the building of a cultural museum should be regarded as a priority, because conditions at the Old Museum were extremely bad. However, acting on this directive should not be to the detriment of the accommodation of the natural history museum.<sup>186</sup>

- The fourth enquiry into museum matters

On 29 December 1960 a Committee was appointed to investigate and report on the needs of state-aided institutions in terms of Act No. 23 of 1931 under the chairmanship of C.M. Booysen.<sup>187</sup> In this report the Transvaal Museum was categorized as a national or state museum. The Committee found that the cultural history division of the Museum was exceptionally important and included an overwhelming amount of material, some of which dated back to early Africa before the arrival of the whites. This material was currently in storage and where possible was exhibited in the Old Museum, the Kruger House, the Voortrekker Monument Museum and the New Museum. Nonetheless there was a lack of space for both display and storage purposes.<sup>188</sup>

According to the Committee the turning point in the progress of the cultural history division had been the appointment of Coetzee in 1953 and this served to prove that it was unpropitious to unite a cultural history and a natural history museum under one management (board and director). The following reasons were given:

Kennisgebiede en uitgangspunte (die natuur en die mens respektiewelik) verskil so radikaal, spesialisering is so nodig, die gevoel van agterstelling of verontregting na die een of die anderkant so maklik, dat onafhanklike inrigtings as die enigste juiste oplossing beskou word.<sup>189</sup>

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<sup>185</sup> Ibid., p. 7.

<sup>186</sup> Ibid., p. 9.

<sup>187</sup> The needs of the Transvaal Museum on accommodation were excluded in the directives.

<sup>188</sup> NCHMA, *Verslag van die Komitee van Ondersoek na die behoeftes van staatsondersteunde inrigtings, deel 1, hoofverslag*, p. 19.

<sup>189</sup> Ibid., p. 20. [Fields of knowledge and methods of approach (those of the natural sciences and humanities respectively) differ so completely that specialization is necessary; and feelings of subordination or injustice can arise so easily, that independent institutions are the only equitable solution. (Translated from the Afrikaans.)]

The Committee unconditionally recommended that the cultural history division be separated as an independent state-aided museum with its own board of trustees. Although the need for a new building fell outside the scope of the Committee, they regarded the condition of the old one as so appalling that they suggested the housing problem should be addressed urgently.<sup>190</sup> The recommendation of the Committee that posts for archaeologists should be created<sup>191</sup> (there were as yet no archaeologists in museums) was met only when the National Cultural History and Open-Air Museum appointed an archaeologist on 1 January 1967.

Both the above Committees carried out their brief by interviews, undertaking visits to museums and reviewing memoranda. Visits were paid to the New Museum, the Old Museum, Kruger House, the Voortrekker Monument Museum and the site for the open-air museum at the Fountains, near Pretoria. Memoranda and/or oral testimonies were given by interested parties, such as the Transvaal Museum, the Old Museum, the Old Pretoria Society and the Kultuurraad. Individuals such as Pelzer, Eybers, Coetzee and FitzSimons all gave their opinions. Although a range of viewpoints were heard, both Committees were convinced that separation was the only solution to the predicament at the Transvaal Museum. By the end of 1962 the chairman of the Old Pretoria Society had hopes “that a decade of persuasion will soon give way to a decade of action”.<sup>192</sup>

#### Within the Transvaal Museum

Within the Museum the Historical Sub-committee, speaking through Van der Westhuysen, felt that additional staff would not be a permanent solution to the critical condition in the cultural history, archaeology and anthropology divisions. Radical change and a positive policy towards historical museums in Pretoria and South Africa were needed. He argued that:

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<sup>190</sup> Ibid., p. 21.

<sup>191</sup> Ibid., p. 80.

<sup>192</sup> G.W. Eybers, Old Pretoria Society Annual Report, 1962, *Pretoriana*, nos. 39 & 40, August - December 1962, p. 40.

Tot die einde van die vorige eeu was historiese museum[s] in die Westerse wêreld ondergeskik aan die natuurwetenskaplike; sedertdien het daar 'n nuwe beskouing oor die geskiedenis as geesteswetenskap gegroei en in Europa het die Kultuur-historiese museums in die jongste tyd feitlik geheel afgeskei en selfstandig ontwikkel. So hoort dit, want die kultuurgeskiedenis en die natuurwetenskap is twee geheel aparte dissiplines. Die Historiese Afdeling kan ten volle ontwikkel, alleen as dit 'n aparte entiteit is ...<sup>193</sup>

The question then arose: which divisions of the Transvaal Museum should fall under the new cultural history museum? In practice this had been answered as early as 1953. Coetzee had accepted responsibility for history, as well as for ethnology and archaeology, and the bulk of the show and study collections of these three disciplines were housed at the Old Museum. The monthly reports show that work had been done on an ongoing basis in these three divisions. Coetzee was also responsible for the annual reports from 1953 to 1959. According to Coetzee a cultural museum (Afrikaans: *kultuurkundige museum*) collected and preserved ethnological, archaeological and cultural historical material as documents or evidence to be used in scientific research on the cultures of the various groups in South Africa in the pre-historical and historical periods.<sup>194</sup>

In answer to a question by the director on the appropriate division between natural and cultural history at a Historical Sub-committee meeting in August 1956, Van der Westhuysen argued that ethnology and archaeology had a very strong bond with cultural history, but at that stage he did not venture a final answer.<sup>195</sup> For the time being, the director himself dealt with the numismatic and philately sections.<sup>196</sup> These had to remain in the New Museum because the numismatics collection has to be kept in a safe.<sup>197</sup> The two sections only became part of the new museum in July 1965.

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<sup>193</sup> Sub-committee minutes, meeting 8 August 1956, underlined in minutes. [Until the end of the previous century the history museum in the Western World was subordinate to the scientific one; since then a new view on history as a human science has developed and nowadays Cultural History museums in Europe have separated and developed independently. This should happen because cultural history and natural history are two very separate disciplines. The Historical Section can develop fully only if it is a separate entity. (Translated from the Afrikaans.)]

<sup>194</sup> NCHMA, *Komitee van Ondersoek na openbare museums in Pretoria, 1960 - 1961*, Aanbevelings met betrekking tot die toekoms van die kultuurkundige museum, p. 6.

<sup>195</sup> Sub-committee minutes, meeting 8 August 1956.

<sup>196</sup> Transvaal Museum Annual Reports, 1953 - 1954, 1954 - 1955, 1955 - 1956, 1956 - 1957 and 1957 - 1958.

<sup>197</sup> Sub-committee minutes, meeting 29 July 1955.

In an internal memorandum dealing with the separation of the cultural history division from natural history, it was argued that the two were different in various ways. For example, in the academic sense, natural science use data derived from the natural environment while cultural history deals with interactions between people and cultural endeavours created by man (Afrikaans: *kultuurlike vorme van die skeppende mens*).<sup>198</sup> Cultural history museums and natural history museums should enjoy equal status. In South Africa, however, natural history museums developed earlier and were better equipped than cultural history museums. Cultural history museums could only come into their own if they developed in terms of their own unique discipline, with particular aims and requirements, independent of natural history. It was important to have their own board of control made up of members who could contribute on the basis of the human sciences.<sup>199</sup>

The most decisive argument was that the ultimate purpose of the natural history and cultural history divisions were so divergent that their best interests are not served in one institution. J.T. Robinson, assistant director of the Transvaal Museum, also put forward the following arguments:

Furthermore the public is generally rather clearly divided into those primarily interested in the subject matter of the one Division and those interested in the other – that is to say a relative minority of people are interested to an equal degree in cultural history and science. This raises the very pertinent point of whether the best interests of both Divisions are served by having them lumped together in a single institution.

Members of the Board of Trustees will be interested more in one Division than another in most cases. This raises difficulties as far as really effective control and direction is concerned. It is unfortunately true that Board meetings are seldom fully attended; which means that interests of the two Divisions may be very differently represented from one meeting to another. Then also, however fair and impartial the Director may strive to be, it is only reasonable to expect that he will have more interest in one Division than in the other. In this case, where the basic approaches of the two Divisions are so different, this whole situation leads to untold difficulties and minor or major frictions which are the fault of nobody – they are inherent in such a situation.<sup>200</sup>

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<sup>198</sup> Memorandum insake afskeiding van die kulturologiese deel uit die natuurwetenskaplike deel van die museum, c. November 1956, added to Sub-committee minutes, meeting 7 November 1956.

<sup>199</sup> Ibid.

<sup>200</sup> NCHMA, *Komitee van Ondersoek na openbare museums in Pretoria, 1960 - 1961*, J.T. Robinson, Memorandum on the accommodation problem of the Transvaal Museum, pp. 2 - 3.

The Board of Trustees of the Transvaal Museum concurred with the complete separation of the cultural history museum as an additional state-aided institution (with its own board of trustees, director, administration and financial provision), but, as worded by the director:

... the Transvaal Museum authorities wish to make it clear that, while regarding it as probably the best long-term solution, it is by no means wedded to same and would be glad to consider any other suggestion ... Other suggestions that come to mind are:

- a) The completion of the New Museum Building by addition of the two wings, and
- b) The abandonment of the present New and Old Museum Buildings (neither of which are really suitable for up to date museum purposes, according to modern concepts) and the erection of new and separate Museums for the Natural Sciences and Cultural History ...

To conclude, it must be emphasized that your Board of Trustees' one and only concern is to see that something is done before irreparable loss, through overcrowding and unsuitable housing, is sustained to the valuable collections on the building up of which thousands of pounds have already been spent.<sup>201</sup>

As a preliminary step, the Minister of Education, Arts and Science was willing to approve the principle of an independent cultural history section under the auspices of the Board of Trustees of the Transvaal Museum because this section was, according to him, still in its formative stage.<sup>202</sup> The Historical Sub-committee then recommended to the Board various ways to achieve this independent status.<sup>203</sup>

The most important suggestions were accepted by the Board on 4 October 1957, with the proviso that the existing status of the natural history division would remain unaltered and that the growth of the cultural history division would in no way impair the natural history division. Two sub-committees, the Historical and the Natural Science Sub-committees, with equal status, were constituted. This meant that there were now two main divisions at the Transvaal Museum, the natural history division and the cultural division. The latter comprised the cultural history, ethnology and archaeology sections. The chairman of the Board of Trustees laid down that:

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<sup>201</sup> Ibid.; System 2 No 43 NKO(1) 1955 - 1970, Memorandum re proposed new museum of Cultural History, 1958, p. 4.

<sup>202</sup> Ibid., System 1 No 12 TM1/57, letter, Secretary of Education, Arts and Science to the director, dd 18 January 1957.

<sup>203</sup> Sub-committee minutes, meeting 29 August 1957.

This arrangement ... has been brought about in order to give as much autonomy as possible, within the present administrative framework, to each of the major divisions of the Museum's activities, until such time as they can be completely divorced to form separate and independent institutions.<sup>204</sup>

In March 1958 it was decided to appoint members to the two Sub-committees. The Historical Sub-committee consisted of the following board members:

Prof. A.N. Pelzer (chairman)  
H.P.H. Behrens  
G.A. Botha  
Prof. P.J. Coertze  
W.J. Snyman  
Prof. H.M. van der Westhuysen  
J.J. van Schaik.

The chairman of the Board and the director each had a seat on both Sub-committees. The following rules were set for the Sub-committees:

- Each Sub-committee should submit their needs annually to the Board, who would allocate the budget with regard to these requests.
- The Sub-committees were authorised to spend up to an amount of £100 for a single item of the available funds.
- All decisions taken by the Sub-committees on policy matters had to go to the next Board meeting as recommendations.
- The Sub-committee could decide on routine matters, but a report had to be tabled at the next Board meeting.
- Sub-committees should meet every month on the same date.
- The annual reports of the Sub-committees should be tabled at the February meeting of the Board.
- All staff matters would rest with the Board.

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<sup>204</sup> Transvaal Museum Annual Report, 1957 - 1958, p. 3.

- Statements of income and expenditure would be made available to the Sub-committees, as requested.
- Financial matters should remain unchanged for the time being.<sup>205</sup>

From April 1963 the cultural history division had been managed by a committee with increased authority, and a separate budget. But it was still under the auspices of the Board of the Transvaal Museum – with the result that the administrative work increased, in particular for Coetzee as she had been appointed as acting director of the division.<sup>206</sup> A decision by the financial sub-committee was endorsed by the Historical Sub-committee and by the Board, namely that:

- the separation should be effected on 1 July 1963,
- the finances, bookkeeping and general administration should continue to be handled by the secretary of the Transvaal Museum,
- provision be made in the budget of the new financial year for the posts of director and secretary, and
- Coetzee should be appointed as acting director for the new cultural museum for the remainder of the year.<sup>207</sup>

The existing Board was divided and the following members were transferred to the Board of the cultural history museum:

H.P.H. Behrens  
F.C.L. Bosman  
G.A. Botha  
Prof. P.J. Coertze  
J.A. Marais  
Prof. J.J. Mulder  
J.C. Otto  
Prof. A.N. Pelzer  
Prof. H.M. van der Westhuysen  
J.J. van Schaik.<sup>208</sup>

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<sup>205</sup> Transvaal Museum Board of Trustees minutes, meetings 4 October 1957 and 7 March 1958.

<sup>206</sup> Transvaal Museum Annual Report, 1963 - 1964, pp. 10 - 11.

<sup>207</sup> Sub-committee minutes, meeting 24 May 1963.

<sup>208</sup> Transvaal Museum Board of Trustees minutes, meeting 28 May 1963.



The Minister of Education, Arts and Science approved the division of the Transvaal Museum into two separate institutions.<sup>209</sup> At its final meeting in 1963 the Sub-committee for the cultural history section decided to request the Minister to validate the separation as from 1 April 1964 and that the separation would entail no additional financial obligations for the Department.<sup>210</sup> The whole process dragged on until June 1964. At the last meeting of the Board of Trustees before the separation, Pelzer said that it had been both an honour and a privilege to have worked with FitzSimons. The cultural history museum was congratulated on the attainment of such a long-cherished ideal. The natural history section shared in its joy and expressed sincere thanks for the spirit of cooperation that had prevailed in the settlement of minor differences.<sup>211</sup> The chairman of the Board was of the opinion that the establishment of two separate and independent museums

marks an important milestone in its history, and the future expansion of these two institutions into independent national monuments will be a task which will require careful planning, dedicated interest and hard work.<sup>212</sup>

### **The National Cultural History and Open-Air Museum, Pretoria : new prospects**

The official separation into two independent museums was formalized by government proclamation in the *Government Gazette* no. 881 of 1 August 1964 by the Minister of Education, Arts and Science. It read as follows:

**(a) the Cultural History Division of the Transvaal Museum (consisting of the Old Museum, the Paul Kruger House and a new open-air museum to be established in Pretoria) shall be known as the National Cultural History and Open-Air Museum, Pretoria, and**

**(b) the Natural History Division of the Transvaal Museum (consisting of the New Museum and the Janse Entomological Museum) shall be known as the Transvaal Museum, Pretoria.**<sup>213</sup>

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<sup>209</sup> Ibid., 12 June 1964.

<sup>210</sup> Committee for the cultural history section minutes, meeting 4 December 1963; NCHMA, System 1 No 20 TM64, letter chairman of the Board to the Secretary for Education, Arts and Science, dd 20 February 1964.

<sup>211</sup> Transvaal Museum Board of Trustees minutes, meeting 12 June 1964.

<sup>212</sup> Transvaal Museum Annual Report, 1962 - 1963, p. 1.

<sup>213</sup> Ibid., 1964 - 1965, p. 8; my bold.

On 1 April 1965 Kotie Roodt-Coetzee was appointed as first director of the National Cultural History and Open-Air Museum.<sup>214</sup> The newly-formed Museum comprised the Kruger House, the sections of numismatics and philately, ethnology and archaeology and a section for general South African culture, which dealt for the most part with photographs, furniture, costumes and militaria. The Museum had displays in the Old Museum, the Transvaal Museum (numismatics and philately, uniforms and the Pretoria centenary exhibition), the Voortrekker Monument and the Kruger House. With zeal and fine prospects for success, the National Cultural History and Open-Air Museum set out to attain aims similar to those of the Staatsmuseum, aspirations which had lain dormant for over 50 years. The new Museum felt that it, too, could contribute a great deal to the consolidation of national consciousness.<sup>215</sup>

#### Objectives set for the National Cultural History and Open-Air Museum

The establishment of the new Museum was founded on clear-cut management principles. It set itself objectives and identified the functions it had to undertake to attain them. The following aim was approved by the Board of Trustees on 25 November 1965:

The goal of the National Cultural History and Open-Air Museum is to collect objects with documentary or visual value and to make them available to researchers, students, school children and the general public, to the benefit of scientific research, formal education and general social instruction.

#### Functions of the National Cultural History and Open-Air Museum

The functions of the Museum were set out as follows:

- *Collecting*  
This to be done by means of donations, purchase, fieldwork and excavations and to include the following material:  
objects of the culture of the white language groups in South Africa, which had been crafted here or elsewhere, but used here; and of groups outside South Africa, inasmuch as they are necessary for comparative studies, ethnological material with regard to the non-white groups in South Africa and Africa, and comparative material from other parts of the world,

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<sup>214</sup> NCHMA, NKP66/1, letter Secretary of Education, Arts and Science to the Board National Cultural History and Open-Air Museum, dd 10 February 1965.

<sup>215</sup> Ibid., Jaarverslag van die voorsitter van die Raad van Kuratore van die Kultuurhistoriese en Opelugmuseum vir die jaar geëindig 31 Maart 1965, pp. 1 - 2.

archaeological material from South Africa and Africa, and comparative material from other parts of the world and

photographs, drawings and other documentary pictorial material to complement the objects.

- *Registration*

The compilation of registers and catalogues of own possessions, of material owned by private persons or material available elsewhere.

- *Restoration and maintenance*

The restoration, conservation and maintenance of material in possession of the Museum.

- *Museological research and instruction*

Research on museological problems such as collecting methods, restoration, conservation, maintenance and exhibitions, as well as instruction about museological matters by means of holiday courses in museology.

- *Exhibition*

The erection of temporary and permanent displays by using objects from the Museum's collections and on loan; the purchase and manufacture of display cabinets, replicas, models and other additional accessories and research that was required for exhibition.

- *Educational activities*

Guided tours to groups of children and adults, lectures, film and slide shows, the staging of plays and musical performances associated with objects in the Museum and  
the organization of discussion and work groups.

- *Service to scientists*

The provision of expert information with regard to objects falling within the scope of the collection field of the Museum, in particular to scientists and students.

- *Publication*

Brochures, books, magazines and photographs in connection with the content of the Museum, and  
registers and catalogues on the content of the Museum and objects of value to the Museum in private hands and the results of museological research undertaken by Museum staff.

- *Library service*  
The establishment of a library necessary for research by the staff and visiting scientists.
- *Open-Air Museum*  
Building structures for the open-air museum to be obtained, demolished and reconstructed.
- *Public relations*  
Fostering of good relations with the public, associations and other institutions in order to gain cooperation from people and institutions to reach the aim of the Museum, and  
to collect funds for the execution of the functions of the Museum and in particular the establishment of the open-air museum.<sup>216</sup>

The year 1964 marked new beginnings for a new and autonomous Museum, independent of the Transvaal Museum. In her own domain the new director's time would be taken up almost exclusively by the extensive organizational, administrative and financial requirements as set out in the aim of the National Cultural History and Open-Air Museum. She was also responsible for the in-house training of the staff, the supervision of curatorial and technical work, planning of publications and public relations. For some time the director also acted as curator, dealing with collecting and accessioning, in the cultural history section.<sup>217</sup> Outside the Museum, guidance to local museums also took up some of her time.

The establishment of an open-air museum now changed from a long cherished ideal to a very real and demanding legal requirement, entrenched in the very name of the Museum. This was destined to bring many a frustration as site after site was considered and then rejected. Nevertheless the initiation of an open-air museum fund, the identification of suitable buildings and objects for the open-air museum, the assembly of these objects, and the appointment of staff to deal with these matters had to be managed by the director. The detailed planning of a functional museum building as part of the open-air museum complex took many hours of research and liaison with the relevant government departments and architects.

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<sup>216</sup> NCHMA, NKP66/1, letter Coetzee to the Secretary for Education, Arts and Science, dd 3 December 1965.

<sup>217</sup> Ibid.

Simultaneously, the development of new “open-air” museums,<sup>218</sup> such as the Pioneer Open-Air Museum in Silverton, Pretoria, to compensate for the long delay in setting up the national open-air museum, also took much time and effort by the director. The collections management tenets that had already been set out clearly in the previous period, were retained and followed by Coetzee and her staff. These did not change radically in the new Museum, and after 1964 would set an example to be followed by other cultural history museums in South Africa.

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During the 51 year period (from 1913 to 1964) in which the Transvaal Museum assumed responsibility for the natural history departments and the anthropology, archaeology and history divisions, the Museum’s commitment to natural history remained constant. Research in these departments, underpinned by solid collections management, continued uninterrupted and earned the Museum world-wide recognition. Work on the anthropology, archaeology and history collections, however, was far less frequent. After 1953 when the greatest changes took place and the cultural history division became independent, the Transvaal Museum faced its greatest challenge. Not only did one woman alter the visible, public face of the Museum (the displays), but the manner in which the collections were assembled and managed, in particular the cultural history collection, changed almost unrecognizably. In the analysis of the collections management practices during these two periods (1913 - 1953 and 1953 - 1964) the similarities, but more particularly the differences, will be shown.

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<sup>218</sup> The term “open-air museum” was used incorrectly for site museums.

## CHAPTER III

### COLLECTIONS MANAGEMENT PRACTICES IN THE TRANSVAAL MUSEUM

1913 - 1953

A detailed analysis of the collections management practices as applied to the anthropological, archaeological and historical collections at the Transvaal Museum will provide insight into the way a natural history museum regarded these “alien” objects within its precincts. The analysis will include features of the manner in which these collections were handled from the first deposit to final placement. It will also examine the changes that took place over time in the museum framework, the documentation framework, collection documentation, conservation and accountability for collections.<sup>1</sup>

#### 1. MUSEUM FRAMEWORK

The museum framework is the formal organization within which collections management practices take place. The collections are an inseparable part of the museum and vice versa, a museum cannot exist without collections.

##### **Management**

##### Organizational change

Organizational changes in a museum have an impact on the way the collections are maintained which would include the various aspects of collections management, such as collecting, documentation and conservation.

- Change in emphases

The Transvaal Museum inherited the anthropological, archaeological and historical collections from the Staatsmuseum, a general national museum that collected historical,

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<sup>1</sup> Adapted from D.A. Roberts, *Planning the documentation of museum collections*.

ethnographical, archaeological and natural history objects.<sup>2</sup>

After the Anglo-Boer War several changes took place under the new government of the Transvaal Colony. The name of the Museum was changed to the Transvaal Museum and its control passed first to the Commissioner of Lands (Department of Agriculture), auguring well for natural history, and then to the Department of the Interior. The language medium of the new administration changed to English and a new management committee was appointed.<sup>3</sup>

The Transvaal Museum was “more or less a Natural History Museum” in the opinion of the Management Committee.<sup>4</sup> This supposition had decisive (and often negative) consequences for the anthropological, archaeological and historical collections in the Museum for almost 50 years.

In 1912 the contention of the Museum was that there should be one historical museum and one ethnographical museum for the sub-continent. In Cape Town the historical Castle was regarded as the most obvious place for a history museum and Pretoria, it was felt, was the best place for the ethnographical museum. A history museum was expected to accept all objects that had any connection to the historical development of the country.<sup>5</sup> The ethnography museum, in turn, should give a comprehensive view of the ethnography of the country, similar to the Congo Museum where, according to Gunning “the ethnography of the Congo State has been collected, studied and exhibited with a thoroughness and completeness I have not met with in any other continental ethnographical museum”.<sup>6</sup> Unless this model was followed in South Africa, the collections were in danger of remaining “a collection of kafir curios, of historical curios, and will never offer to the serious student of

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<sup>2</sup> For the policy of the Staatsmuseum, see E. Grobler, “Die Staatsmuseum van die Zuid-Afrikaanse Republiek en sy historiese en etnografiese versamelings” (unpublished M.A. dissertation, University of Pretoria, 1994), pp. 47 - 58.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., pp. 189 - 260 and E. Grobler, Die Staatsmuseum van die Zuid-Afrikaanse Republiek, die Anglo-Boerer oorlog en regstellende aksie, *Navorsing deur die Nasionale Kultuurhistoriese Museum*, vol. 9: 2000, pp. 1 - 37.

<sup>4</sup> E. Grobler, “Die Staatsmuseum van die Zuid-Afrikaanse Republiek en sy historiese en etnografiese versamelings” (unpublished M.A. dissertation, University of Pretoria, 1994), p. 222.

<sup>5</sup> NA, UOD vol. 72, Z15/6 - 15/8, Transvaal Museum Annual Report, 1912, pp. 6 and 17.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid., p. 17.



history a homogeneous view of the Ethnography or History of South Africa”.<sup>7</sup> Gunning very strongly advocated that the history collections from the former Republics should be maintained by the municipalities of Pretoria and Bloemfontein. He felt that they were out of place in a general state museum; such objects, he said, should be disposed of by the Transvaal Museum. A municipal committee would suffice to take care of these objects, as “they require no **scientific** curator”.<sup>8</sup>

By 1919 the Museum Committee still felt that the Transvaal Museum was a Natural History Museum.<sup>9</sup> Although it was still collecting objects that could later form the basis of a history museum,<sup>10</sup> by 1921 the conviction was that the Museum could even “get rid of the Historical Collection & concentrate on the **Scientific** part of the Museum”.<sup>11</sup> These references to the scientific nature of the work of the Transvaal Museum throw light on the eminence attached to the research in natural history, in contrast to the “trifling” nature of the work done in the anthropological, archaeological and historical collections; the inference was that there was no need for a qualified curator.

The feeling was that the Transvaal Museum was not doing justice to the historical museum (the Old Museum), that funds were too limited to cover both the Old and the New Museum, and that it was desirable that there should be a separate historical museum, to be managed by the municipality of Pretoria – Gunning’s proposal of nine years earlier had not been forgotten. There was, however, a difference of opinion between the members of the Museum Committee on this matter.<sup>12</sup>

Not only did the Transvaal Museum regard itself as a natural history museum, but to the outside world the Museum was also categorized as such. Indeed, its anthropological, archaeological and historical collections in the Old Museum and the Kruger House were

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<sup>7</sup> Ibid., p. 6.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid., p. 18. My bold.

<sup>9</sup> Transvaal Museum Committee minutes, meeting 1 April 1919.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid., 28 July 1921. My bold.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid., 6 September 1921.

almost disregarded.<sup>13</sup>

- Museum environment change

Although the foundation stone of a new building for the Staatsmuseum in Boom Street, Pretoria, was laid on 22 July 1899, the building itself was only completed and opened by the new government of the Transvaal Colony in 1904.<sup>14</sup> The displays and study collections of the Staatsmuseum were still associated with the small market hall on Market Square. The hall was not designed as a museum at all and the staff had to cope with very adverse circumstances. Nevertheless, this was the national museum of the ZAR, known and visited as such. In contrast, the building in Boom Street was a completely new environment for the Transvaal Museum from the outset, because it was connected with a new (British) phase in the history of the Museum.

The building in Boom Street soon became too small and plans for a new building were drawn up. Work began at the premises in Market Street (now Paul Kruger Street), between Visagie and Minnaar Streets, Pretoria, in 1910.<sup>15</sup> By the time Breijer took up the post as director in 1914, the central block of the building was complete. The new quarters did very little to alleviate the space problems experienced by the Museum.

In the years after the Anglo-Boer War the anthropological, archaeological and historical collections expanded somewhat, mainly due to the personal endeavour of Gunning, who reported as early as 1908 that “room to properly store away the valuable acquisitions is very inadequate. Although very necessary, the Ethnographical and Historical collections have not been rearranged owing to insufficient space ... and have been stored out of view from the public”.<sup>16</sup> At this stage there was insufficient space for exhibition purposes, but the situation was worse as far as the study collections were concerned.<sup>17</sup> In 1909 Gunning wrote that only one eighth of the museum building was used for the staff and the study

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<sup>13</sup> See for example, South African museums and art galleries (table), *SAMAB*, 2(3), September 1941, p. 234.

<sup>14</sup> E. Grobler, “Die Staatsmuseum van die Zuid-Afrikaansche Republiek en sy historiese en etnografiese versamelings” (unpublished M.A. dissertation, University of Pretoria, 1994), pp. 202 - 206.

<sup>15</sup> C.K. Brain, Natural history at the Transvaal Museum, 1901 - 1992, in N.J. Dippenaar (ed.), *Staatsmuseum 100*, p. 18.

<sup>16</sup> Transvaal Museum Annual Report, 1907 - 1908, p. 13.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 3.

collections, and that the latter should have had the larger share of room.<sup>18</sup>

The situation at the Old Museum changed very little in the following years. Suggestions had already been made that the ethnographical collection should remain at the Old Museum for the time being as there already was a lack of space in the new building in 1911.<sup>19</sup> By 1914 most of the collections and all the exhibitions were still at the Old Museum where conditions were far from satisfactory. Some, but not all of the natural history study collections were housed in the basement of the new building.<sup>20</sup> The Museum Committee also discussed establishing an art gallery in the Museum; some felt that this should be an independent venture.<sup>21</sup>

The First World War broke out on 4 August 1914, with the result that limited space was allocated to the Museum; it had to share the facilities in the new building in Market Street with the Departments of Defence and Customs and Excise, the Library, the Post Office and the Geological Survey. This led to an endless struggle between the Transvaal Museum Committee and the Minister and Department of the Interior, who were adamant that the whole building should not be placed at the disposal of the Museum – they wanted a portion for certain branches of the public service.<sup>22</sup> In 1916 the Museum's request for more room was again refused, despite the fact that the building was erected primarily as a museum and should justifiably have been used as such.<sup>23</sup> Moreover, Smuts (at that stage the Minister of Finance and acting Minister of the Interior) had already promised that the whole building would eventually be handed over to the Museum.<sup>24</sup>

By 1921 there was still no solution to the space problem. Although Swierstra was of the opinion that the Old Museum should be used exclusively for exhibition purposes, the

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<sup>18</sup> J.W.B. Gunning, *Matters concerning museums in South Africa*, p. 3.

<sup>19</sup> Transvaal Museum Committee minutes, meeting 5 December 1911.

<sup>20</sup> C.K. Brain, Natural history at the Transvaal Museum, 1901 - 1992, in N.J. Dippenaar (ed.), *Staatmuseum 100*, p. 18.

<sup>21</sup> Transvaal Museum Committee minutes, meeting 16 April 1912. A temporary art gallery was eventually opened at the New Museum on 25 September 1912.

<sup>22</sup> Transvaal Museum Committee minutes, special meeting 26 August 1913.

<sup>23</sup> Transvaal Museum Committee minutes, meeting 7 March 1916.

<sup>24</sup> Transvaal Museum Committee minutes, special meeting 26 August 1913.

Museum Committee felt that it should be abandoned when all the collections were accommodated in the new building.<sup>25</sup> There were serious doubts about whether there was enough room for the existing collections in the new building. Swierstra even said that if the historical and anthropological collections were to be moved to the new building, the Museum would resemble a curio shop.<sup>26</sup> There was insufficient space in the Old Museum for these collections too, and although they were at risk because of poor conditions,<sup>27</sup> they were not be given priority in the allocation of space.

In 1925 the natural history displays were moved to the New Museum.<sup>28</sup> The anthropological, archaeological and historical show and study collections remained in the Old Museum, where the lack of sufficient space was an ongoing problem. Besides, the Old Museum still served as storage for the natural history section; several rooms were filled with skins and hides and animal bones, and the taxidermist's laboratory also remained there.<sup>29</sup> By 1938 the circumstances deteriorated to such an extent that it became impossible to add new acquisitions to the displays without changing their arrangement. This situation was partly rectified in 1953, but the displays were still overcrowded.<sup>30</sup>

#### Divisional/departmental organization<sup>31</sup>

In his capacity as president of SAMA, Austin Roberts, who undertook a detailed documentation of birds and mammals during his career of 38 years at the Transvaal Museum,<sup>32</sup> asserted that biological research work was of primary national importance. Only in this way could a museum's status be maintained amongst the nations.<sup>33</sup> The organization

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<sup>25</sup> Transvaal Museum Committee minutes, meetings 18 February and 28 July 1921.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid., 3 October and 1 March 1921.

<sup>28</sup> C.K. Brain, Natural History at the Transvaal Museum 1901 - 1992, in N.J. Dippenaar (ed.), *Staatmuseum 100*, p. 18.

<sup>29</sup> P.C. Coetzee, "Lesings in die museumkunde" (unpublished lectures), p. 108; Transvaal Museum Committee minutes, meeting 20 April 1926.

<sup>30</sup> Transvaal Annual Report, 1952 - 1953, p. 8. The showcases were first used for the displays during the Van Riebeeck Festival in 1952.

<sup>31</sup> See glossary.

<sup>32</sup> C.K. Brain, Natural History at the Transvaal Museum 1901 - 1992, in N.J. Dippenaar (ed.), *Staatmuseum 100*, p. 20.

<sup>33</sup> A. Roberts, Museums and biological research, *SAMAB* 3(10), June 1945, p. 292.

of the Transvaal Museum (see table 1) and the annual reports reveal its marked commitment to natural history. Annual reports were written for the natural history divisions/departments during the period 1913 - 1953. Reports for the anthropological, archaeological and historical collections were only compiled when those divisions were staffed, or in exceptional circumstances, such as the official opening of the Kruger Museum in 1934. Otherwise, the activities in these divisions were recounted in the director's general report.

TABLE 1  
**Organization in divisions/departments 1904 - 1953**  
 (according to annual reports)

<u>YEAR</u>	<u>NATURAL SCIENCE DEPARTMENT/ DIVISION</u>	<u>(HUMAN SCIENCE) COLLECTIONS/ DIVISION/DEPARTMENT</u>
1904/1905	First Assistant: keeper of the Entomological collection AND..... <sup>34</sup>  Keeper of the Botanical collection Taxidermy	First Assistant: keeper of the Ethnographical collection
1905/1906	First Assistant: keeper of the Entomological collection AND.....  Keeper of the Botanical collection Keeper of the collection of Lower vertebrates and invertebrates, exclusive insects Taxidermy	First Assistant: keeper of the Ethnographical collection
1906/1907	First Assistant: keeper of the Entomological collection AND.....  Keeper of the Botanical collection Taxidermy	First Assistant: keeper of the Ethnographical collection <sup>35</sup>

<sup>34</sup> The word AND accentuates the fact that one curator, i.e. the keeper of the entomological collection, working in a natural science division, also assumed responsibility for the ethnographical collection.

<sup>35</sup> The First Assistant reported on the Ethnological Department and Curios. Transvaal Museum Annual Report, 1906 - 1907, report of the First Assistant, p. 10.



YEAR	<u>NATURAL SCIENCE</u> <u>DEPARTMENT/</u> <u>DIVISION</u>	<u>(HUMAN SCIENCE)</u> <u>COLLECTION/</u> <u>DIVISION/DEPARTMENT</u>
1935 /1936	Higher vertebrates Lower vertebrates and invertebrates Entomology Botany Palaeontology and Physical Anthropology	Ethnology
1936/1937	Higher vertebrates Lower vertebrates and invertebrates Entomology Botany	Ethnology
1937/1938	Higher vertebrates Lower vertebrates and invertebrates Entomology Botany Vertebrate Palaeontology and Physical Anthropology	
1938/1939	Higher vertebrates Lower vertebrates and invertebrates Entomology Vertebrate Palaeontology and Physical Anthropology	
1939/1940	Higher vertebrates Lower vertebrates and invertebrates Entomology Vertebrate Palaeontology and Physical Anthropology	Archaeology, Ethnology, Numismatics and Philately (one report)
1940/1941	Higher vertebrates Lower vertebrates and invertebrates Entomology Botany Vertebrate Palaeontology and Physical Anthropology	Archaeology, Ethnology, Numismatics and Philately (one report)
1941/1942	Higher vertebrates Lower vertebrates and invertebrates Entomology Botany Vertebrate Palaeontology and Physical Anthropology	Archaeology, Ethnology, Numismatics and Philately (one report in which Historical is also mentioned)

YEAR	<u>NATURAL SCIENCE</u> <u>DEPARTMENT/</u> <u>DIVISION</u>	<u>(HUMAN SCIENCE)</u> <u>COLLECTION/</u> <u>DIVISION/DEPARTMENT</u>
1942/1943	Higher vertebrates Lower vertebrates and invertebrates Entomology Botany Vertebrate Palaeontology and Physical Anthropology	
1943/1944	Higher vertebrates Lower vertebrates and invertebrates Entomology Vertebrate Palaeontology and Physical Anthropology	Archaeology, Ethnology and Numismatics Stamp collection (part of report of Library)
1944/1945	Higher vertebrates Lower vertebrates and invertebrates Entomology Vertebrate Palaeontology and Physical Anthropology	Ethnology, Numismatics and Archaeology Stamp collection (part of report of Library)
1945/1946	Higher vertebrates Lower vertebrates and invertebrates Entomology Physical Anthropology and Vertebrate Palaeontology	Ethnology, Numismatics and Archaeology
1946/1947	Higher vertebrates Lower vertebrates and invertebrates Entomology Entomology (Heterocera) Physical Anthropology and Vertebrate Palaeontology (2 reports)	Ethnology, Archaeology, History and Numismatics
1947/1948	Higher vertebrates Lower vertebrates and invertebrates Entomology Entomology (Heterocera) Physical Anthropology and Vertebrate Palaeontology (2 reports)	
1948/1949	Higher vertebrates Lower vertebrates and invertebrates Entomology (Genl collection) Entomology (Heterocera) Physical Anthropology and Vertebrate Palaeontology	History



YEAR	<u>NATURAL SCIENCE</u> <u>DEPARTMENT/</u> <u>DIVISION</u>	<u>(HUMAN SCIENCE)</u> <u>COLLECTION/</u> <u>DIVISION/DEPARTMENT</u>
1949/1950	Higher vertebrates (Mammals) Higher vertebrates (Birds) Lower vertebrates and invertebrates Entomology (Genl collection) Entomology (Heterocera) Physical Anthropology and Vertebrate Palaeontology	History Numismatics & Philately
1950/1951	Higher vertebrates (Mammals) Higher vertebrates (Birds) Lower vertebrates and invertebrates Entomology (Genl collection) Entomology (Heterocera) Anthropology and Palaeontology	History Archaeology & Ethnology Numismatics & Philately
1951/1952	Higher vertebrates (Mammals) Higher vertebrates (Birds) Lower vertebrates and invertebrates Entomology (Genl collection) Entomology (Heterocera) Entomology (Coleoptera) Vertebrate Palaeontology and Physical Anthropology	History Archaeology & Ethnology Numismatics & Philately
1952/1953	Higher vertebrates (Mammals) Higher vertebrates (Birds) Lower vertebrates and invertebrates Entomology (Genl collection) Entomology (Heterocera) Entomology (Coleoptera) Vertebrate Palaeontology and Physical Anthropology	History Archaeology & Ethnology Numismatics & Philately

## Resources

### Staff

The staff at the Transvaal Museum were natural history scientists who had been trained in their specific fields of expertise and these did not include history, anthropology and archaeology. The Museum could boast of internationally renowned scientists, such as Austin Roberts, whose field research took as much as five months in a year. Another international figure was Robert Broom, whose excavations made the paleoanthropology centre at the Transvaal Museum world famous.<sup>38</sup>

<sup>38</sup> C.K. Brain, Natural History at the Transvaal Museum 1901 - 1992, in N.J. Dippenaar (ed.), *Staatmuseum 100*, pp. 19 - 20 and 43.

The earliest appointment made in the human sciences was in the ethnology division in 1921. This division was staffed from time to time, but it was only in 1937 that a temporary assistant for archaeology was engaged.<sup>39</sup> Ten years later, in 1947, a temporary part-time assistant for history was appointed.<sup>40</sup> The first professional officer with a history specialization was appointed in 1953.

- Directors

The tenuous link between the Staatsmuseum and the Transvaal Museum was only severed in 1946 as the first three directors were also attached to the Staatsmuseum. Gunning had previously been the director of the Staatsmuseum. He retained his post during the Anglo-Boer War, and became the first director of the Transvaal Museum.<sup>41</sup> After Gunning's demise in 1913, acting directors were appointed on two occasions: first P.A. (later Lord) Methuen and E.C.N. van Hoepen who were to act jointly<sup>42</sup> and then Swierstra,<sup>43</sup> who was originally appointed at the Staatsmuseum in 1897 as entomologist.

Breijer's application had already been approved by the Management Committee on 11 December 1913, but he was only officially appointed as director of the Museum on 6 January 1914.<sup>44</sup> He took up his duties at the beginning of March 1914<sup>45</sup> and retired in 1921.<sup>46</sup> Breijer had been honorary director of the Staatsmuseum in 1893 and had initiated the identification and cataloguing of those collections. He had also been an member of the Curatorium.<sup>47</sup>

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<sup>39</sup> Transvaal Museum Annual Report, 1937 - 1938, p. 4.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid., 1947 -1948, p. 2.

<sup>41</sup> E. Grobler, "Die Staatsmuseum van die Zuid-Afrikaansche Republiek en sy historiese en etnografiese versamelings" (unpublished M.A. dissertation, University of Pretoria, 1994), pp. 254 - 258.

<sup>42</sup> Transvaal Museum Committee minutes, meeting 22 April 1913.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid., 12 June 1913.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid., 11 December 1913 and 6 January 1914.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid., 3 March 1914.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid., 15 June 1921.

<sup>47</sup> E. Grobler, "Die Staatsmuseum van die Zuid-Afrikaansche Republiek en sy historiese en etnografiese versamelings" (unpublished M.A. dissertation, University of Pretoria, 1994), pp 75 - 76 and 91 - 92.

Swierstra was again appointed as acting director on Breijer's retirement. He was director from 1 July 1922,<sup>48</sup> a post that he held until 31 March 1946. The next director, FitzSimons, had no previous association with the Staatsmuseum. He too, was acting director before being appointed as director from 1 January 1947.<sup>49</sup>

- Curatorial staff in the anthropological, archaeological and historical divisions

All the directors became involved with the anthropological, archaeological and historical collections and objects. Although Breijer was not very interested in the history section,<sup>50</sup> Gunning and Swierstra felt some responsibility towards these collections during their tenure as directors. FitzSimons too, reported that he had handled numerous enquiries, in particular on the value of coins, and that routine work in the division of history was carried out under his supervision by a caretaker.<sup>51</sup>

- Anthropological collection

The ethnology collection was the responsibility of the first assistant and the keeper of the entomology collection. Swierstra held this post from 1905. In 1910 the Museum Committee felt that Swierstra should devote his time exclusively to entomology because of the rapid growth of this collection.<sup>52</sup> As late as 1919 Swierstra, still designated as keeper of the ethnology collection, was asked to estimate the value of a collection of curios offered to the Museum for sale.<sup>53</sup>

Although early in 1920 the Department of the Interior refused to meet the additional expenditure necessary for a post in the ethnology division, the Committee was determined to appoint A. Radcliffe-Brown<sup>54</sup> – described as a competent ethnologist.<sup>55</sup> He only took

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<sup>48</sup> Transvaal Museum Committee minutes, meetings 18 February 1921 and 17 October 1922.

<sup>49</sup> Transvaal Museum Annual Report, 1946 - 1947, p. 2.

<sup>50</sup> Swierstra held the opinion that his predecessor had neglected the South African historical objects completely. NCHMA, System 1 No 1 TM1/12 - TM1/26, letter Swierstra to W.C. Beeremans, dd 24 November 1925.

<sup>51</sup> Transvaal Museum Annual Report, 1952 - 1953, pp. 32 and 34.

<sup>52</sup> Transvaal Museum Committee minutes, special meeting 28 November 1910.

<sup>53</sup> Transvaal Museum Committee minutes, meeting 31 July 1919.

<sup>54</sup> Alfred Reginald Radcliffe-Brown (1881 - 1955) gained a scholarship at Trinity College, Cambridge in 1901. He came into contact with anthropology and the well-known anthropologist, A.C. Haddon, whom he accompanied to South Africa as secretary of the British Association for the Advancement of Science in 1905. He gave lectures at the London School of Economics and at Cambridge and Birmingham Universities and

up the post at the beginning of January 1921 and remained at the Museum until July 1921.<sup>56</sup> He did however, propose that he would attend to the collection in his vacation, which offer was accepted by the Museum Committee, who appointed him as honorary curator and also decided to adhere to his proposed policy for the ethnological collection.<sup>57</sup>

The fact that the post for ethnologist remained vacant for some time was, according to the Museum Committee, greatly to the detriment of the Museum, which they felt would suffer scientifically and financially, if not filled soon.<sup>58</sup> At the request of the Department of the Interior the post was not filled, pending the possibility of a museum enquiry.<sup>59</sup> In November 1923 it was offered to G.S.H. Rossouw<sup>60</sup> by the Museum Committee.<sup>61</sup> He resigned in September 1925. From time to time the Museum Committee considered appointing various anthropologists. For example, Schapiro (probably Isaac Schapera) and G.P. Lestrade,<sup>62</sup> but no appointments were made.

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visited and worked in Australia. In 1921 he was appointed to the new Chair of Anthropology at the University of Cape Town. He held appointments at various universities in Sydney, Chicago, Oxford, Alexandria, Manchester and Rhodes. He was one of the creators of modern social anthropology. M. Fortes, Alfred Reginald Radcliffe-Brown, F.B.A., 1881 - 1955: a Memoir, *Man*, no. 172, November 1956, pp. 149 - 153.

<sup>55</sup> Transvaal Museum Committee minutes, meeting 6 April 1920.

<sup>56</sup> For full particulars, see J.A. van Schalkwyk, Radcliffe-Brown at the Transvaal Museum, *Research by the National Cultural History Museum*, vol. 5: 1996, pp. 39 - 43.

<sup>57</sup> A copy of his policy could not be found. Transvaal Museum Committee minutes, meeting 28 July 1921.

<sup>58</sup> Transvaal Museum Sub-committee minutes, meeting 13 April 1922.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid., 4 July 1922 and 8 August 1922.

<sup>60</sup> George Stephanus Hauptfleisch Rossouw (1895 - ? ) studied for a B.A. and a part of the M.A. degree at the University of the Cape of Good Hope, but obtained his M.A. and Ph.D. degrees at the University of Chicago in 1919 and 1922. He was a lecturer at the State University of Minnesota, Minneapolis, U.S.A. He was a teacher at a high school on the Witwatersrand when he applied for the post at the Transvaal Museum. He left the Museum for a position at the Board of Trade and Industry. NCHMA, TM 19/24, copies of letters, Rossouw to director, dd 11 October 1923 and 30 October 1925; Box 137, TM 137/21, letter Rossouw to D. Earthy, dd 25 April 1924.

<sup>61</sup> Transvaal Museum Sub-Committee minutes, meeting 27 November 1923.

<sup>62</sup> Transvaal Museum Committee minutes, meetings 10 February and 4 September 1928. In 1930 Lestrade was appointed as the first professor in "Bantoeïstiek" at the University of Pretoria.

The next anthropologist was W.T.H. Beukes,<sup>63</sup> who applied for the post in November 1932.<sup>64</sup> After months of deliberations with the University of Pretoria so as to get the best deal for both institutions, he was appointed at the Museum from 15 November 1933 to the end of February 1934,<sup>65</sup> moving to the University on 1 March 1934. The circumstances were explained as follows:

In going over to the University, Dr Beukes was not severing his connection with the Museum as he would hold the position of Honorary Curator of our Ethnological division. The specimens in our collection would be at his disposal for lecturing purposes, & in return for this privilege he would be expected to take full charge of our collection with the aid of a junior assistant.<sup>66</sup>

He remained as honorary curator until April 1938, when his work at the University of Pretoria was increasing to such an extent that he could not spend time on the ethnology collection at the Museum. The Board decided to abandon the posts of honorary curators and to release Beukes from his commitment.<sup>67</sup>

An assistant for ethnology, A.J. Swierstra,<sup>68</sup> was also appointed at the time. He was the only applicant who was in any way suitable for the post. He had already assisted Beukes, who recommended him, very effectively in the re-arrangement of the showcases and the cataloguing.<sup>69</sup> He worked at the Museum under Beukes' supervision from 1 March 1934 to 31 April 1935.<sup>70</sup>

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<sup>63</sup> W.T.H. (Wiets) Beukes (1903 - ) studied at the Transvaal University College and obtained a B.A. degree in political science in 1924. He travelled to Europe in 1925 for further studies in anthropology, indigenous languages and agricultural economy at universities in Britain, France and Germany. He obtained his doctorate in 1931. On his return to South Africa, he worked at the Transvaal Museum and from 1934 at the University of Pretoria, as senior lecturer and head of the department of Bantu Administration until his resignation at the end of 1951. N a, Dr Wiets kolf steeds op 100, *Tukkie* 11(3), November 2003, p. 33.

<sup>64</sup> Transvaal Museum Committee minutes, meeting 22 November 1932.

<sup>65</sup> Transvaal Museum Board of Trustees minutes, meetings 20 October 1933 and 22 February 1934.

<sup>66</sup> Ibid., 22 February 1934.

<sup>67</sup> Ibid., 26 April 1938.

<sup>68</sup> As C.J. Swierstra, director of the Transvaal Museum from 1922 to 1946, is referred to as Swierstra in this research paper, the assistant for ethnology, appointed in 1934, is referred to as A.J. Swierstra.

<sup>69</sup> Transvaal Museum Board of Trustees minutes, meetings, 22 February and 23 March 1934; NCHMA, Box 137, TM14/34, letter, Beukes to director, n.d.

<sup>70</sup> Transvaal Museum Board of Trustees minutes, meeting 23 March 1934; C.S. van der Waal, "Geskiiedenis van die Volkekunde-afdeling van die Nasko-Museum, Pretoria 1893 - 1977" (unpublished article), p. 3.

In 1938 there was a vacancy on the staff for one professional officer who would take responsibility for both the historical and ethnological divisions. But this post could not be filled because of lack of funds. In the annual report it was regretted that a full time ethnologist could not be appointed because “... the study of ethnology is to a great extent neglected in this country and with the passage of time it is becoming more and more difficult to study the fast disappearing original culture of the indigenous native tribes”.<sup>71</sup> (No mention was made of an archaeologist or historian.)

The post for an ethnologist appears to have remained on the books, as it was again accepted in principle to appoint an ethnologist (and a zoologist) in April 1948.<sup>72</sup> At a meeting of the Board on 7 May 1948 it was resolved to appoint a mammologist and an ornithologist, but “to drop the appointment of an Ethnologist meanwhile.”<sup>73</sup> This meant, in effect, that two natural history posts were to be filled at the expense of the human sciences division. In September 1948 an application by a Miss Webb for the post of archaeologist/ethnologist was turned down by the Board.<sup>74</sup> This situation was only rectified more than a decade later, in 1959. In the meantime, in the opinion of N.J. van Warmelo, a South African anthropologist and government ethnologist, the fact that there was no curator to attend to the collection was the most critical issue.<sup>75</sup>

- Archaeological collection

For many years no differentiation was made between archaeology and ethnology, and the staff working with the ethnology collection also had to cope with the archaeology objects. Although the Museum Committee agreed to appoint Van Riet Lowe (who was still working as a civil engineer, but had a passion for archaeology) as honorary curator to the archaeology collection in 1929,<sup>76</sup> there is no indication that he actually worked on the collection. It was only in 1937 that a temporary assistant for archaeology was engaged, E.J.

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<sup>71</sup> Transvaal Museum Annual Report, 1938 - 1939, pp. 2 and 7.

<sup>72</sup> Transvaal Museum Board of Trustees minutes, meeting 9 April 1948.

<sup>73</sup> Ibid., 7 May and 6 September 1948.

<sup>74</sup> Ibid., 6 August 1948.

<sup>75</sup> NCHMA, Diary, FitzSimons, 1947, letter N.J. van Warmelo to FitzSimons, dd 1 January 1946; see also Transvaal Museum Annual Report, 1946 - 1947, departmental report for ethnology, history and numismatics, p. 1.

<sup>76</sup> Transvaal Museum Committee minutes, meeting 7 June 1929.

Haughton (later E.J. Maynard), at the request of Van Riet Lowe, who was by then the director of the Bureau of Archaeology at the University of the Witwatersrand.<sup>77</sup> The next year her post was upgraded to temporary assistant-professional officer.<sup>78</sup> She also did work in the ethnology, history, numismatics and philately divisions.<sup>79</sup> Her work was interrupted from 18 October 1942 to 20 December 1943 when she joined the imperial forces and she eventually resigned on 31 March 1946.

As a result of the financial position of the Museum Haughton's post was also not filled, and according to the annual report, the lack of an officer in charge of this important division was "most regrettable".<sup>80</sup> Two applicants for the post of archaeologist were turned down, that of a Miss Harding of the County Museum, Warwick, in the United Kingdom<sup>81</sup> and a Dr Hautman.<sup>82</sup>

- Historical collection

Rossouw was the first professional officer who assumed control of the historical collection.<sup>83</sup> Although he contributed to the accessioning of the objects (cataloguing), he was primarily appointed in the ethnology section and left the Museum after little more than a year.

A long time before the history collection was regarded as significant, numismatics and philately were the two collections that were actively documented and preserved because there was generally a staff member in charge of them. T.M. Campbell<sup>84</sup> was responsible for

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<sup>77</sup> Transvaal Museum Board of Trustees minutes, meeting 3 March 1938.

<sup>78</sup> Transvaal Museum Annual Report, 1937 - 1938, p. 2; 1938 -1939, p. 2.

<sup>79</sup> Ibid., 1939 - 1940, 1940 - 1941 and 1941 - 1942, departmental reports for archaeology, ethnology, numismatics and philately, and history. (History is mentioned once.)

<sup>80</sup> Ibid., 1946 -1947, p. 2.

<sup>81</sup> Transvaal Museum Board of Trustees minutes, meeting 5 March 1948.

<sup>82</sup> Ibid., 7 May 1948.

<sup>83</sup> NCHMA, System 1 No 1 TM1/12 - TM1/26, letter Swierstra to F.V. Engelenburg, dd 22 September 1924.

<sup>84</sup> Campbell, appointed as lay assistant in 1925, was placed on the permanent staff on 1 July 1935. Transvaal Museum Annual Report, 1935 - 1936, p. 5.

the philately collection in the 1930s and the late 1940s. B.J. Versfeld, appointed in 1951,<sup>85</sup> was at first responsible for the philately section, but later also took over responsibility for the numismatics collection.

It was only in 1947 that a temporary part-time assistant was appointed for the history section.<sup>86</sup> This was A. Schiel, who worked in the division from 1 October 1947 tot 30 November 1951. Although Schiel did not have any formal training, he was of the opinion that his general knowledge and former experience would ensure that he made a success of his main task, which was the compilation of an index for the Old Museum.<sup>87</sup>

The Board of the Transvaal Museum also placed a work room<sup>88</sup> to the disposal of R. Gerard.<sup>89</sup> In 1949 he was appointed as honorary historian for military history and heraldry, but his designation was that of historian, Transvaal Museum.<sup>90</sup> His fields of expertise were uniforms, flags and heraldry, but he appears to have worked primarily on the flag collection of the Museum, rather than on the history collection as a whole.<sup>91</sup> He was knowledgeable on museum matters such as the risks involved in the loan of art treasures, flags, standards,

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<sup>85</sup> Versfeld was appointed as part-time typist and museum assistant grade III. Although she left in November 1953, she returned on 1 September 1954. See *ibid.*, 1951 - 1952 , p. 5; 1953 - 1954, departmental report for numismatics and philately, p. 41 and 1954 - 1955, departmental report for numismatics and philately, p. 36.

<sup>86</sup> Transvaal Museum Board of Trustees minutes, meetings 5 September and 7 November 1947.

<sup>87</sup> NCHMA, Diary, FitzSimons, 1947, letter A. Schiel to FitzSimons, dd. 29 August 1947; see annexure 5.

<sup>88</sup> Transvaal Museum Board of Trustees minutes, meeting 5 December 1947.

<sup>89</sup> Raoul Gerard (1883 - 1960) was born in Paris as Raoul Gerard Oesterreich, part of a German- speaking Jewish family. During World War I he lived in England and married Dorothy Moorwood. Between the two world wars the couple lived in Davos and Lausanne in Switzerland, but travelled a great deal. Raoul Oesterreich changed his surname to Gerard, and became a Swiss citizen. His wife died in 1939. He lived and worked in different countries, studying heraldry and flags. For example, according to Gerard's visiting-card, he was attached to the L'académie d'histoire e Mexique. He died on 20 May 1960. His manuscripts and library are preserved in the Bibliotheque cantonale et universitaire in Lausanne, Switzerland. NCHMA, Diary, FitzSimons, 1947, visiting card; Swiss National Library, [www:http://www.snl.ch/](http://www.snl.ch/) and [IZ-Helvetic@slb.admin.ch](mailto:IZ-Helvetic@slb.admin.ch); Transvaal Museum Annual Report, 1960 - 1961, p. 3; N a, Illusion and truth in history, *SAMAB*, 4(9), March 1949, p. 27 (note); Obituaries, *Bulletin of the Transvaal Museum*, January 1961, p. 8.

<sup>90</sup> See article, R. Gerard, Museum Treasures, *SAMAB*, 5(3), September 1951, p. 71.

<sup>91</sup> Gerard was the author of the book *Flags over South Africa*, published by the Pretoria Technical College in 1952. He wrote various articles in *SAMAB*, for example, The heraldry, conservation and restoration of flags, *SAMAB*, 4(8), December 1948, pp. 209 - 219. He also wrote a report on the Villa Krüger, Clarens, Switzerland. NCHMA, TM 15/40, dd 21 October 1953.



uniforms and costumes,<sup>92</sup> and the preservation of historical flags.<sup>93</sup> He was able to advise on the correct representation of historical costumes, arms, liveries, uniforms, flags and even colours that would enhance history books and museum dioramas, so as to stimulate interest in the past.<sup>94</sup> He donated several items to the Museum, such as a series of colour plates of military uniforms in albums, photographs of a flag and various coats of arms.<sup>95</sup> Although he was overseas several times, he retained his connection with the Museum until June 1953 when he returned to Europe for personal reasons.<sup>96</sup> The Board thanked Gerard for his services at the Museum and the valuable material he had donated.<sup>97</sup>

Schiel was followed by S.P. Malan, who was temporarily transferred from his post as caretaker to assistant for history. Malan did routine work under the supervision of the director.<sup>98</sup> Like Schiel, Malan had no formal training in history. In 1949 the urgent need for a qualified assistant in the history division was felt, and the Board decided that “such an appointment should be the first priority as soon as the necessary **extra** funds were made available”.<sup>99</sup> In other words, the history post would not be filled to the detriment of the natural history divisions, which had first call on available funds.

At a Board meeting in 1953 the position of a professional officer in the history division was agreed upon and Kotie Roodt-Coetzee was appointed by majority vote to begin on 1 September 1953.<sup>100</sup> This was a watershed decision by the Board of the Transvaal Museum and a crucial step in the development of new collections management practices, particularly for the Museum’s historical collection. Indeed, it proved to be significant for the development of the Museum and museology in general.

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<sup>92</sup> R. Gerard, Museum Treasures, *SAMAB*, 5(3), September 1951, p. 71 - 73.

<sup>93</sup> R. Gerard, The heraldry, conservation and restoration of flags, *SAMAB*, 4(8), December 1948, pp. 209 - 219.

<sup>94</sup> R. Gerard, Illusion and truth in history, *SAMAB*, 4(12), December 1949, p. 350.

<sup>95</sup> Historiography Catalogue, vol. 3, H.C. accession nos. 6320 - 6339, 6803 (HKF 1473), 6548.

<sup>96</sup> Transvaal Museum Annual Report, 1953 - 1954, pp. 5 and 7.

<sup>97</sup> Transvaal Museum Board of Trustees minutes, meeting 12 June 1953.

<sup>98</sup> Transvaal Museum Annual Report, 1952 - 1953, p. 32; Transvaal Museum Board of Trustees minutes, meeting 7 December 1951.

<sup>99</sup> Transvaal Museum Board of Trustees minutes, meeting 5 August 1949. My bold.

<sup>100</sup> *Ibid.*, 6 March 1953 and 7 August 1953.

The anthropological, archaeological and historical collections

From 1913 to 1953 there was no written policy on basic collections management precepts such as acquisition or accession methods, marking of objects, ownership of objects in the collection and the legal rights of the museum. Nor were there formal guidelines on deaccessioning or disposal of objects, commitment to the conservation of the collections, loans, insurance and access. Nevertheless basic collections management procedures were followed and details of these can be gleaned from correspondence files, reports, minutes and catalogues.

- Collection growth

The Transvaal Museum inherited substantial collections from the Staatsmuseum, and in the first two decades of the twentieth century the collections had grown, albeit slowly. The ethnography collection at the Staatsmuseum consisted of at least 1 522 accessions that had been entered in the ethnology catalogue.<sup>101</sup> In July 1921 Radcliffe-Brown felt that the ethnological collection “would easily fill half of the old Museum building & in a few years time the whole of it”.<sup>102</sup> By February 1924 there were 4 945 ethnology accessions in the collection at the Transvaal Museum and it is likely that some of the Staatsmuseum’s objects had not yet been re-accessioned. In October 1925 there were 3 372 accessions in the historical collection.

There was steady growth in the collections since the 1930s (see table 2). By 1945 there were 8 648 accessions in the ethnology collection<sup>103</sup> and by 1947 there were 4 649 accessions in the historical collection.<sup>104</sup> There were even more objects in the collections than indicated by the accession numbers, because often an accession comprised more than one object and frequently new acquisitions were not accessioned. The collections were in the main enlarged sporadically by means of donations, limited fieldwork and in exceptional cases, purchases.

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<sup>101</sup> Catalogus der Ethnographische Collectie van het Staats Museum.

<sup>102</sup> Transvaal Museum Committee minutes, meeting 28 July 1921.

<sup>103</sup> For numbers of accessions, see Main Catalogue of the Department of Ethnology Africa, vols. 1 and 2.

<sup>104</sup> For numbers of accessions, see Historiography Catalogue, vol. 1.

TABLE 2

**Additions made to the anthropological, archaeological and historical collections by donations, purchases and field trips 1934<sup>105</sup> - 1953**  
(according to annual reports)

<u>YEAR</u>	<u>HISTORY</u>	<u>ETHNOLOGY</u>	<u>ARCHAEOLOGY</u>	<u>PHILATELY</u>	<u>NUMIS- MATICS</u>
1934/1935	1 175	1 057	5		
1935/1936	587	408	95		
1936/1937	445	86		1 090	
1937/1938	234	45	18	1 416	
1938/1939	152	17	37	21 742	
1939/1940	130	411	228	1 085	4
1940/1941	102	8	165	1 471	1 700
1941/1942	64	75	465	1 149	228
1942/1943	56	17	75	552	
1943/1944	29	67	100	1 090	54
1944/1945	38	36	1	795	9
1945/1946	69	20	12	1 600	85
1946/1947	40	28		1 652	20
1947/1948	143	52	32	1 308 (+ 35 blocs)	22
1948/1949	153	67	2		93
1949/1950	380	20	30	4 083	67
1950/1951	821	64	22	2 895	10
1951/1952	242	12	20		31
1952/1953	204	9	3	1 729	4 500

<sup>105</sup> No numbers are available for the period 1913 - 1933.

By 1933 the Transvaal Museum had a substantial stamp collection. In that year the Postmaster-General also arranged for an additional set of stamps from all member-states of the Universal Postal Union to be sent to the Union of South Africa. Two sets had already been received by South Africa. One of them was retained by the headquarters of the General Post Office, while the other was placed at the Public Library in Cape Town. The third set was allocated to the Transvaal Museum.<sup>106</sup> This meant that the philately collection received every new stamp that had been issued from time to time throughout the world. The first assignment was received by the Museum from the Postmaster-General, Pretoria, in 1936.<sup>107</sup> In the meanwhile the government recalled the Transvaal Museum's stamp collection, the idea being that it could be used as a basis for a proposed postal museum.<sup>108</sup> There is no indication of how the de-accessioning was done. A special donation of 19 126 ZAR stamps was received from the Postmaster-General in 1939,<sup>109</sup> but there is no indication that any information was provided with the stamps.

The enlargement of the collections was not necessarily a positive issue, because there were too few staff members, and then only from time to time, whose primary interest or permanent responsibility was to care for and document the collections.

- Collections policy

Additions to the collections were not managed by a collections policy that was clearly formulated and consistent. Instead a series of haphazard decisions were taken, either by the director, the various curators, the Committee or Board. Using these decisions it is possible to set down some general, albeit unwritten, principles on the acceptance or rejection of objects for the collection (there were, of course, always exceptions to the rule).

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<sup>106</sup> B.J. Versfeld, The Transvaal Museum postage stamp collection, *Bulletin of the Transvaal Museum*, no. 6, January 1961, p. 3.

<sup>107</sup> Transvaal Museum Annual Report, 1935 - 1936, p. 5.

<sup>108</sup> B.J. Versfeld, The Transvaal Museum postage stamp collection, *Bulletin of the Transvaal Museum*, no. 6, January 1961, p. 3.

<sup>109</sup> Transvaal Museum Annual Report, 1938 - 1939, p. 7.

- Condition

Objects in a bad condition or of poor quality were not readily accepted, either as a donation or purchase.<sup>110</sup> Objects already in the collection were scrutinized and those in a poor condition were rejected,<sup>111</sup> but whether they were formally de-accessioned or actually removed from the collection is not clear from the notes in the catalogues.

- Complete set

If possible, the Museum wanted full sets or a comprehensive range of objects or items.<sup>112</sup> This was also a guideline endorsed by the Prime Minister in which he declared that the collection of old Republican records and curios in the Museum was becoming yearly more complete.<sup>113</sup> Swierstra in particular kept this in mind when accepting objects, and this made the donations all the more valuable, as they were not yet in the museum collection.<sup>114</sup> The completion of a set was even reported in the annual reports.<sup>115</sup> A range of objects, showing differences in one type, such as rock art, was very acceptable.<sup>116</sup>

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<sup>110</sup> For example, a damaged German aeroplane and a jug were not accepted as donations. Transvaal Museum Committee minutes, meeting 11 March 1919; NCHMA, System 1 No 2 TM1/17 - TM1/30, letter Swierstra to Marais, dd 17 August 1928. A box in a very bad condition was described as “hardly suitable as a Museum specimen”. Ibid., System 1 No 1 TM1/12 - TM1/26, letter Swierstra to C. Mason, dd 13 February 1928.

<sup>111</sup> For example two wooden jugs, destroyed by insects, a wooden carving of a gemsbuck and a wooden gun made by an African, both damaged. Main Catalogue of the Department of Ethnology Africa, vol. 1, ET accession nos. 105, 106 and 118; Ethnographic Catalogue Africa, E.C. accession no. 16.

<sup>112</sup> The Board considered it a sound policy to complete the South African coin collection as far as possible. Transvaal Museum Board of Trustees minutes, meeting 16 November 1939.

<sup>113</sup> NCHMA, System 1 No 1 TM1/12 - TM1/26, letter J.C. Smuts to Sir H. Ross Skinner, dd 28 November 1922.

<sup>114</sup> Ibid., System 1 No 3 TM1/31 - TM1/33, letter Swierstra to C. J. Liebenberg, dd 14 March 1933.

<sup>115</sup> See for example, Transvaal Museum Annual Report, 1941 - 1942, departmental report for archaeology, ethnology, numismatics and philately, p. 4, reporting that “with the exception of the 1893 penny, the Museum now possesses a complete set of Kruger coins”.

<sup>116</sup> NCHMA, Letterbook 5, pp. 113 - 114 and 208, letters Breijer to B. Spoelstra, dd 13 December 1919 and 16 February 1920, saying that the Museum already had a large collection of rock art from different districts, but adding “Hoe meer variatie hoe beter, en vooral, daar U zegt, dat zy uit verschillende steensoorten bestaan, lijkt het zeer belangrijk voor het Museum”. [The more variation, the better, and especially, as you say, that they consist of different kinds of stone, and that is very important to the Museum. (Translated from the Dutch.)]

- General historical interest

The Museum confined itself to acquisitions of South African historical interest.<sup>117</sup> To be acceptable, the item had to be noteworthy.<sup>118</sup> Books were accepted if they were of historical interest.<sup>119</sup> Proposed purchases of objects associated with China and Matabeleland, for example, were not accepted.<sup>120</sup> But there were exceptions (items of other than South African interest) such as the donation of a French bishop's coat, c. 1750, as a good example of French silk tapestry.<sup>121</sup>

- Specific historical events

The Museum gave preference to objects associated with events such as the Great Trek,<sup>122</sup> the Anglo-Boer War<sup>123</sup> and the First World War.<sup>124</sup> The argument that historical objects such as these belonged to the nation also was used to persuade a prospective donor to make a donation.<sup>125</sup> The Museum would then take care of the objects for posterity and display them in a glass cabinet, labelled with the name of the donor.<sup>126</sup>

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<sup>117</sup> A willow pattern plate used by missionaries in Matabeleland was not purchased. *Ibid.*, System 1 No 1 TM1/12 - TM 1/26, letter Swierstra to J.G. Robinson, dd 17 September 1925. However, a flag carried by C.F. Duncker of the State Artillery of the ZAR who was with the Johannesburg Commando at Colenso, Elandsplaagte and Dundee, waaccepted as donation. Transvaal Museum Board of Trustees minutes, meeting 20 February 1936.

<sup>118</sup> A button off the shirt of Sir Pomeroy Colley, was, for example, not regarded as of sufficient interest to be accepted. NCHMA, System 1 No 1 TM1/12 - TM1/26, letter Swierstra to J.A. Ernst, dd 12 March 1923.

<sup>119</sup> Transvaal Museum Board of Trustees meeting, minutes 17 December 1936.

<sup>120</sup> NCHMA, System1 No 1 TM1/12 - TM1/26, letters Swierstra to G.F. Engelhard, dd 27 August 1925 and to J.G. Robinson, dd 17 September 1925.

<sup>121</sup> *Ibid.*, System 1 No 3 TM1/31 - TM1/33, letters J. M. Gilchrist to Swierstra and Swierstra to Gilchrist, dd 25 May, 4 June and 12 October 1931.

<sup>122</sup> Swierstra admonishes a donor with regard to the object "... if it contains no history relative to any of the Voortrekker families it is of no historical value". *Ibid.*, System 1 No 1 TM1/12 - TM1/26, letter Swierstra to W.B. van der Vijver, dd 17 September 1925. On the other hand a cloth made by "n ou landsmoeder" [a Voortrekker woman] was accepted with thanks. *Ibid.*, System 1 No 2 TM1/27 - TM1/30, letter Swierstra to A.M.E. Prinsloo, dd 18 January 1929.

<sup>123</sup> A donation by C.J. Liebenberg consisted of Anglo-Boer War post cards, envelopes, prisoner-of-war programmes and magazines. NCHMA, System 1 No 3 TM1/31 - TM1/33, letter Swierstra to C.J. Liebenberg, dd 14 March 1933.

<sup>124</sup> Swierstra thanks a donor for "... a few old relics of the Great War, which are very acceptable to our collection". *Ibid.*, System 1 No 2 TM1/27 - TM1/30, letter Swierstra to S.M. du Plessis, dd 5 December 1933.

<sup>125</sup> *Ibid.*, System 1 No 1 TM1/12 - TM1/26, letter Swierstra to Reitz and Pienaar, dd 18 March 1924.

<sup>126</sup> *Ibid.*, letter Swierstra to F.J. de Lange, dd 14 February 1923.

- Availability of money

The so-called grant-in-aid was barely adequate and very little money was spent on the purchase of historical objects; there was no real provision to purchase such objects.<sup>127</sup> Even though the historical value of an item, like the gold pendant and book of signatures presented to General Piet Cronjé's wife, was unquestioned,<sup>128</sup> the Museum had no funds to make the purchase. An item was only bought in exceptional circumstances, such as a suit of skin for £5.<sup>129</sup> Swierstra was of the opinion that before considering a purchase he would have to inspect the items personally before setting a price.<sup>130</sup> Later the objects were laid before the Board for inspection.<sup>131</sup>

Money was sporadically allocated to the anthropological division. For example, a collection of curios from Ovamboland was bought for £1,<sup>132</sup> and Radcliffe-Brown was given an amount of £60 to spend on museum objects while in Basutoland during the summer vacation.<sup>133</sup> In the 1930s the spending of money on ethnological objects was motivated as follows:

Prof. du Toit pointed out the urgency for obtaining Ethnological specimens while they are still available. Many of the specimens quite easily procured 25 years ago are now hardly obtainable. They are rapidly disappearing. We should therefore use this opportunity to obtain what specimens we can ...<sup>134</sup>

A trip undertaken by Beukes to Basutoland had been worth the expense (he collected a substantial number of specimens and a great deal of information). The additional expenses he incurred over and above the amount voted, were approved. He was instructed, however,

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<sup>127</sup> Ibid., letter Swierstra to H.L. Greyling, dd 2 January 1924.

<sup>128</sup> Ibid., letter Swierstra to A. du Plessis, dd 19 July 1921; Transvaal Museum Board of Trustees minutes, meeting 19 February 1942.

<sup>129</sup> Ibid., System 1 No 3 TM1/31 - TM1/33, letter Swierstra to D. E. Bisschoff, dd 2 May 1933.

<sup>130</sup> Ibid., System 1 No 4 TM1/34 - TM1/42, letters Swierstra to J. D. Steenkamp, dd 6 March 1934 and to S.W. Pienaar, dd 28 March 1934.

<sup>131</sup> A cuspidor and a fish server used by the Kruger household were offered for sale and inspected by the Board, but not accepted. Transvaal Museum Board minutes, meeting 22 June 1936.

<sup>132</sup> Transvaal Museum Committee minutes, meeting 5 February 1918.

<sup>133</sup> Ibid., 15 June 1921.

<sup>134</sup> Transvaal Museum Board of Trustees minutes, meeting 8 June 1934.

to stay within the budget in future and a subsequent request for a trip to Basutoland on horseback was declined because the cost would be exorbitant.<sup>135</sup>

Special attention was paid to the enlargement of the numismatics collection and coins were sometimes purchased. A set of the first coins minted in Pretoria by the Royal Mint was acquired for £20 and a variety of coins was also purchased from a catalogue from the firm Fred Rose, Johannesburg.<sup>136</sup>

- Aesthetic value and age of object

Works of art had to be of high aesthetic value to be incorporated in the Museum collection.<sup>137</sup> Whether an object was regarded as an antique was also of primary concern.<sup>138</sup>

- Space

One of the biggest factors that was taken into consideration was the lack of display and storage space. Objects could not be accepted indiscriminately without establishing whether there would be enough space to accommodate them either in the show or study collection.<sup>139</sup>

- Authenticity

The association between the object and a historical event or person had to be authenticated. If no valid evidence was provided, the Museum would not entertain the offer. Directly linked to authenticity is the need for associated information. Given this, the object would be of interest to posterity.<sup>140</sup> No money would be paid for information, the feeling being that patriotism and altruism would motivate the donors.<sup>141</sup> The Museum was, however, grateful for any information provided with the gift.

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<sup>135</sup> Ibid., 21 March and 21 November 1935.

<sup>136</sup> Ibid., 15 May 1941.

<sup>137</sup> NCHMA, System 1 No 2 TM1/27 - TM1/30, letter Swierstra to D.B. Marais, dd 28 January 1929. A painting could not be accepted since it had no artistic merit and it was not of sufficient interest to overlook this fact. Ibid., System 1 No 1 TM1/12 - TM1/26, letter M.G. Weston to J.D. Celliers, dd 8 March 1922.

<sup>138</sup> A 44 year-old sewing machine was unacceptable, because it was not an antique. Ibid., System 1 No 4 TM1/34 - TM1/42, letter Swierstra to J.D.P. Ras, dd 17 August 1934.

<sup>139</sup> Ibid., System 1 No 3 TM1/31 - TM1/33, letter Swierstra to C.L. Bradfield, dd 6 March 1931. With the display of objects in the Botha and Smuts collections, for example, limited space was a detrimental factor. Transvaal Museum Board of Trustees minutes, meeting 26 February 1935.

<sup>140</sup> Ibid., letter Swierstra to M. du Toit, dd 26 January 1933.

<sup>141</sup> Ibid., letter Swierstra to J. A. Erasmus, dd 8 December 1931.



Authenticity was of the utmost importance to the ethnology collection, where genuine objects were emphasized rather than copies.<sup>142</sup> Items made for trading purposes were also rejected.<sup>143</sup> Where possible, ethnology objects were correctly identified and the information recorded.<sup>144</sup> The person providing the information was also scrutinized, for example particulars given by a trader were often regarded as suspect.<sup>145</sup>

- Suitability for exhibition

As the objects were primarily regarded as part of the so-called show collection, they had to be suitable for display purposes.<sup>146</sup>

- Selection of objects

Swierstra frequently encouraged people to donate objects to the Museum<sup>147</sup> and the selection of objects was often made by him. He either saw the object itself, or photographs of the objects, before making his decision.<sup>148</sup> To facilitate the matter, objects could be sent to the Museum free of charge by post or train.<sup>149</sup> In many instances the Museum Committee

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<sup>142</sup> Main Catalogue of the Department of Ethnology Africa, vol. 1, ET. accession no. 1263, an assegai was designated worthless, and ET. accession no. 50, a wooden pot, had no special value. In vol. 2 Beukes wrote of ET. accession no. 5099 that these objects looked like imitations.

<sup>143</sup> Radcliffe-Brown, Rossouw and Beukes rejected such items. See Main Catalogue of the Department of Ethnology Africa, vol. 1, ET. accession nos. 18, 19, 20, 21, 57, 61, 62, 63 and 75. A note by Beukes with regard to ET. accession no. 1377 reads, in Afrikaans, that the others are probably imitations for trading.

<sup>144</sup> For example, *ibid.*, ET. accession no. 104, a wooden jug from the Barotse was re-identified as a mortar and pestle from Luemba country by Swierstra on receipt of information in a letter.

<sup>145</sup> With regard to an item purchased from Colman Bros, *ibid.*, ET. accession no. 200, Beukes notes that Colman's information is probably incorrect, and that it was possibly Thonga [Tsonga] work.

<sup>146</sup> The Board rejected a couch that had belonged to Kruger as it was not suitable for exhibition. Transvaal Board of Trustees minutes, meeting 18 July 1935.

<sup>147</sup> NCHMA, System 1 No 3 TM1/31 - TM1/33, letter Swierstra to A.M. Geysers, dd 5 December 1933. Swierstra says "Indien u van nog ander mense weet wat van die ou voorwerpe in hulle besit het sal ek bly wees indien u die mense daarop wil wys dat sulke voorwerpe beter in 'n Museum bewaar word vir die nageslag dan wat die goedjies kan opgepas word deur private families waar hulle somtyds spoorloos verdwyn en sodoende vir die nasie verlore raak". [If you know of other people who own old objects, I would appreciate it if you would tell them that such objects should rather be preserved in a museum for posterity, than by private families, as the objects sometimes disappear. In that way they are lost to the nation. (Translated from the Afrikaans.)]

<sup>148</sup> *Ibid.*, System 1 No 4 TM1/34 - TM1/42, letter Swierstra to J.G. van Rooyen, dd 12 February 1934. Swierstra says it would be best if you could send the kist to me so that I can evaluate it. If that is difficult, a few snapshots of the kist, from different angles, will suffice.

<sup>149</sup> *Ibid.*, System 1 No 3 TM1/31 - TM1/33, letter Swierstra to C.J. Trichard, dd 2 May 1933.

or Board were directly involved in the acceptance or rejection of the objects.<sup>150</sup> Sometimes the reasons behind the decisions were given, but in other instances it remained obscure.

- Show and study collections

An approach of so-called show and study collections was followed by the Transvaal Museum. The natural history study collections owe their quality and significance to the unstinting services of the many trained scientists who, on a continuous basis, collected specimens on numerous expeditions and preserved them in the Museum. In 1921 the acting director held the view that the Old Museum has to be retained for exhibition purposes only.<sup>151</sup> Since 1925, when the natural history exhibitions were moved from the Old Museum to the new building in Paul Kruger Street, many natural history specimens were displayed by means of spectacular habitat groups in dioramas, forming the show collections.<sup>152</sup>

The anthropological, archaeological and historical show collections remained on display in Boom Street. According to a vivid and detailed published description (see annexure 2) the largest part of the collection was on display in 1933, including objects associated with the Voortrekkers (figure 13) and the Anglo-Boer War. Well-known leaders such as Kruger and Botha were also featured, as were San engravings and anthropological artefacts from South Africa, Greece, Italy, Peru and other countries.<sup>153</sup>

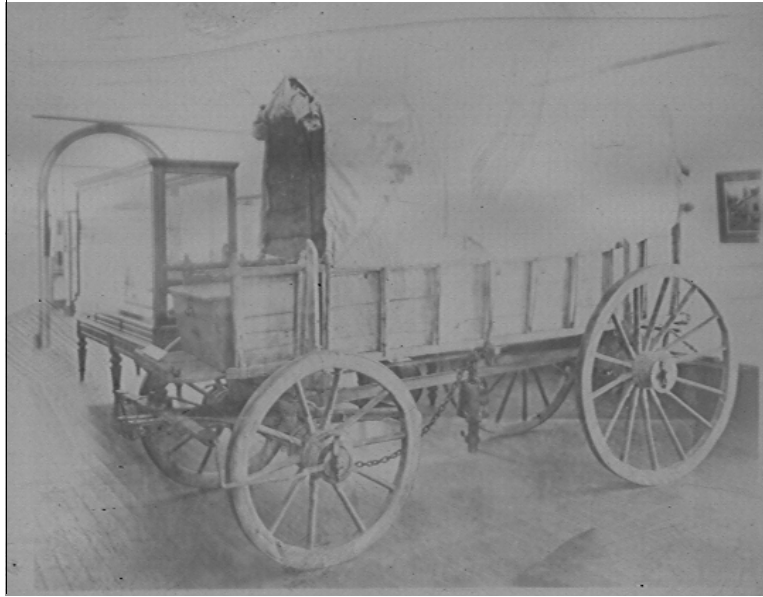
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<sup>150</sup> For example, the Kruger railway coach was rejected “after due consideration”, in August 1934, but the decision was revoked in October of the same year and the coach was accepted. On 19 March 1936 the matter was again discussed and it was decided that the exhibition of photographs and drawings would suffice. The coach was finally accepted in 1951. Transvaal Museum Board of Trustees minutes, meetings 8 August and 18 October 1934, 19 March 1936 and 9 March 1951.

<sup>151</sup> Transvaal Museum Committee minutes, meeting 18 February 1921.

<sup>152</sup> See C.K. Brain, Natural history at the Transvaal Museum 1901 - 1992, in N.J. Dippenaar (ed.), *Staatmuseum 100*, pp. 48 - 51.

<sup>153</sup> S. Metelerkamp, In die Ou Museum in Pretoria, *Die Huisgenoot*, deel XVIII, no. 600, 22 September 1933, pp. 33 and 41 (annexure 2).



**Figure 13**

Voortrekker “kakebeenwa” and the case with the model of the Dunvegan Castle  
in the background on display at the Old Museum, c. 1933

(Collection: National Cultural History Museum HKF 1419)

There were also temporary anthropological, archaeological and historical displays at the New Museum. One of the first exhibits shown at the New Museum was at the temporary art gallery. The display was opened by Smuts on 25 September 1912.<sup>154</sup> Sixty two works of art were exhibited, including copies of Dutch paintings, such as the *Night Watch* by Rembrandt, that had been given to the Museum to enhance the culture of the “Transvalers” and serve as an aid to education.<sup>155</sup>

In 1917 the Museum Committee was looking for another building in Pretoria suitable for the display of the works of art in the art gallery.<sup>156</sup> Part of the gallery was allocated to the

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<sup>154</sup> E. Grobler, “Die Staatsmuseum van die Zuid-Afrikaansche Republiek en sy historiese en etnografiese versamelings” (unpublished M.A. dissertation, University of Pretoria, 1994), pp. 254 - 255.

<sup>155</sup> P. van Zyl, Skenking deur Eenige Hollandsche Vrienden (1912 - 1914), *Navorsing deur die Nasionale Kultuurhistoriese Museum*, 2(5), 1993, pp. 149 - 183.

<sup>156</sup> Transvaal Museum Committee minutes, meeting 24 April 1917.

Defence Force and was thus closed during the First World War,<sup>157</sup> and the works of art were eventually moved to the Old Museum.<sup>158</sup> In 1948 the picture collection was rearranged under the guidance of Walter Battiss.<sup>159</sup> By 1950 the lack of space in the Old Museum prompted plans to remove the art collection to make more space for historical displays.<sup>160</sup>

In 1934 the Nel-Blom Collection, on loan from the University of Pretoria, was exhibited.<sup>161</sup> Objects from Mapungubwe, also loaned from the University, were placed on display in the entrance hall of the New Museum from 1934. These elicited great interest from the public, particularly so as the objects were accompanied by maps of the site showing the position of the layers where the objects were found. The exhibition was officially opened by the Minister of the Interior, J.H. Hofmeyr,<sup>162</sup> and later, in 1947, was considerably enlarged.<sup>163</sup>

Additional space became available at the Old Museum with the transfer of the Kruger Collection to the Kruger House. The result was that the historical show and study collection had to be changed and objects for which no space was previously available, could now be displayed.<sup>164</sup> The next change could only take place in the exhibits at the Old Museum, when six showcases presented by the Botha Committee, were suitably filled with Botha objects.<sup>165</sup> Apart from these, no showcases were received for the Old Museum, but in 1947 a number of illuminated Botha addresses and some historical photographs from the Elliott Collection were installed in two so-called multi-leaf pedestal cases. A model of a Bapedi kraal was also placed on display. At the New Museum the Mapungubwe display

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<sup>157</sup> Transvaal Museum Annual Reports, 1914 - 1919.

<sup>158</sup> Transvaal Museum Committee minutes, meetings 2 December 1919 and 3 October 1921.

<sup>159</sup> Transvaal Museum Annual Report, 1947 - 1948, p. 4.

<sup>160</sup> Ibid., 1949 - 1950, p. 4.

<sup>161</sup> C.S. van der Waal, "Gesiedenis van die Volkekunde-Afdeling van die Nasko-Museum, Pretoria 1893 - 1977" (unpublished article), p. 18.

<sup>162</sup> Transvaal Museum Annual Report, 1933 - 1934, pp. 3 - 4.

<sup>163</sup> Ibid., 1935 - 1936, p. 5 and 1946 - 1947, p. 3.

<sup>164</sup> Ibid., 1933 - 1934, p. 3.

<sup>165</sup> Ibid., 1934 - 1935, p. 4.

was upgraded.<sup>166</sup> To a great extent, however, the show collections remained the same year after year.

Objects were also displayed elsewhere, such as the casts of the petroglyphs (rock art) that were exhibited in the Native Art Section of the Empire Exhibition in Johannesburg from November 1936 to February 1937.<sup>167</sup> In 1945 displays of indigenous arts and crafts were held at the Technical College and the Bantu Training School in Kilnerton, Pretoria.<sup>168</sup>

The displays at the Old Museum were supplemented by new acquisitions that were regarded as potential exhibits and the donors were promised that objects would be exhibited,<sup>169</sup> but because of insufficient display space, such as lack of showcases and hall accommodation, it was impossible to put everything on show immediately.<sup>170</sup> There is evidence in the catalogues that objects were chosen for the show collection or else packed away.<sup>171</sup> Swierstra was of the opinion that it was impossible to put new donations on display, without upsetting the arrangement in the showcases and turning them into mere store-cases, which according to him, was “a very undesirable proceeding from an exhibition point of view”.<sup>172</sup>

The result was that even though potential exhibits were acquired, that were very interesting and should have been exhibited, these could not be displayed.<sup>173</sup> The archaeology collection, for example, contained some of the finest early implements found in South Africa, but the

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<sup>166</sup> Ibid., 1946 - 1947, pp. 3 - 4.

<sup>167</sup> Ibid., 1936 - 1937, p. 5 and departmental report for ethnology, p. 1.

<sup>168</sup> C.S. van der Waal, “Geschiedenis van die Volkekunde-Afdeling van die Nasko-Museum, Pretoria 1893 - 1977” (unpublished article), pp. 18 - 19.

<sup>169</sup> On receipt of a new donation, Swierstra replied that “... Daar zijn ‘n heele paar goede dingens bij die voor onze aanstaande uitstal kollektie heel goed te gebruiken zijn”. [There are many things that could be used effectively in our next exhibition. (Translated from the Dutch.)] NCHMA, System 1 No 2 TM1/27 - TM1/30, letter Swierstra to C.M. Frylinck, dd 11 March 1929. Swierstra promised donors that their donations will be put on display, using words like “our exhibition” and “show collection”. Ibid., letter Swierstra to T. Gilliland, dd 11 March 1929 and System 1 No 3 TM1/31 - TM1/33, letter Swierstra to C.J. Liebenberg, dd 14 March 1933.

<sup>170</sup> For example “... owing to insufficient exhibition space, your uniform is no longer in the showcase, but has been stored away until such time as more space is available, when it will again be exhibited”. Ibid., System 1 No 1 TM1/12 - TM1/26, letter Swierstra to H. Grothaus, dd 8 March 1928.

<sup>171</sup> See Main Catalogue of the Department of Ethnology Africa, vol. 1, ET. accession nos. 2, 5, 6, 7, and 3.

<sup>172</sup> Transvaal Museum Annual Reports, 1938 - 1939, p. 7 and 1939 - 1940, p. 5.

<sup>173</sup> Ibid., 1937 - 1938, p. 5 and 1938 - 1939, p. 6.

display was not as comprehensive as it might otherwise have been.<sup>174</sup> During his short stay at the Museum, Beukes re-arranged the complete anthropological collection and objects were taken from the storerooms and added to the displays.<sup>175</sup>

In practice this meant that the anthropological, archaeological and historical show collections were at least as big as the storage collections, but at the Old Museum the space available for the storage of objects was also wholly inadequate and the conditions far from satisfactory.<sup>176</sup> There is very little information available on the arrangement of the collections in storage, whether the different collections were stored separately, and how each collection was classified (if classified at all). It is known that in 1912 the coins and medals were, for example, overhauled and put in order,<sup>177</sup> but this may have the exception rather than the rule.

Storage was probably completely at random (figure 14). Objects were jumbled haphazardly and could easily be mislaid, hence the exceptionally long period of time between donation and accessioning of some objects. Objects were stored under the displays in cases. According to a list, probably dating from 1940 or later, Persian rugs, an embroidery painting on satin, a Japanese Kakemone mounted on rollers (a wall hanging in the form of a scroll), a piece of ribbon, a coat of arms, flags, flag-staffs and even a cutting from a newspaper, were stored in the ethnological display area.<sup>178</sup>

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<sup>174</sup> Ibid., 1938 - 1939, p. 6.

<sup>175</sup> Ibid., 1933 - 1934, p. 3.

<sup>176</sup> Ibid., 1937 - 1938, p. 5.

<sup>177</sup> NCHMA, Box 515, (TM)M1/2, Director, "Chronicles of the Museum" (unpublished article), dd 21 March 1912.

<sup>178</sup> Ibid., System 1 No 4 TM1/34 - TM1/42, list with heading, Stored in corner cupboard, native section, Old Museum, case 42.



**Figure 14**

Storage at the Old Museum in the 1940s

(N.J. Dippenaar (ed.), *Staatmuseum 100*, p. 101)

Objects were found in odd places when Schiel started with the indexing and accessioning of the historical collection in 1947. For example, rifles were found in the cellar, a prisoner-of-war chess set, documents and a revolver with cartridges were found in the drawer of a writing desk, a yoke was found in the ethnographic collection and a glass walking stick was found in the small storeroom at the back.<sup>179</sup>

Objects were incorrectly identified because they were stored in the wrong place. Objects had been identified as Voortrekkerspore [Voortrekker spurs] because they were discovered in the historical collection, but they had an ethnology accession number; they had to be replaced in the ethnology collection.<sup>180</sup> The laconic question was asked in the catalogue: “Waar Mnr. Schiel die idee vandaan gekry het dat dit Voortrekkerspore is, weet ek nie!” [Where Mr Schiel got the idea that these are Voortrekker spurs, I do not know!]. A variety of objects found in a cupboard together with photographs from the Botha Collection, were wrongly identified as later Botha discoveries, and at least one of them had already been accessioned.<sup>181</sup>

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<sup>179</sup> Historiography Catalogue, vol. 2, H.C. accession nos. 5313, 5314, 5785, 5786, 5788, 5779 and 5858.

<sup>180</sup> Ibid., accession no. 5245.

<sup>181</sup> Ibid., accession no. 5251 and vol. 1, accession no. 3318.



A system of parcels, primarily used for the storage of books, photographs and documents was probably developed in the late 1940s. Objects were grouped together and given a parcel number. Some parcels, in particular those from the Botha Collection also contained three dimensional objects. There were silver teaspoons, a silver teapot, ashtrays and a piece of wood in parcel 187a (a wooden box). The parcel system was not a classification system for objects, because a variety of objects were grouped together. Parcel 64, for example, contained letters, photographs, framed souvenirs and a little-used spring wagon.<sup>182</sup> (How a wagon, or even a model of a wagon could be forced into a parcel, remains a mystery.)

At the time an attempt was made to “recollect” (Schiel’s word) collections, such as placing together all the objects associated with one person, donor or family, but they were not necessarily put together in one parcel. For example, Schiel stated that the “van Alphen collection has now been recollected but had to be placed in different parcels as the respective pieces were found”.<sup>183</sup> The objects were in fact made into parcels and covered or tied together, as can be seen from the following description:

About two years ago the new director of the Transvaal Museum, Dr. V. FitzSimons, had the cellars cleared. On the shelves of the box rooms these articles are now stacked away in parcels neatly sorted out.<sup>184</sup>

A list of more than 187 parcels (some of them designated as a, b, c, etc) is to be found in the handwritten Information Book compiled by Schiel. At least one parcel (no. 7) contained as many as 951 photographs and another had a box of 2 024 photographs (no. 9). Parcel 65 contained only one item, a building plan, while parcel 136 contained only one book. As for parcel no. 40, Schiel mentions a metal drum that was already filled with documents, a coat of arms, photographs, books and newspapers, but from the description of the parcel it is evident that the “drum” was a trunk in which the documents may well have been donated.<sup>185</sup> By 1951, the director felt that the historical collection was in good order and

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<sup>182</sup> The spring-wagon in question is a four-wheeled horse-drawn buggy. *Historiography Catalogue*, vol. 2, H.C. accession no. 4839d and vol. 19, H.C. accession no. 16078.

<sup>183</sup> Information Book, opposite p. 138.

<sup>184</sup> NCHMA, file on the history of the Museum, information sheet issued by the Van Riebeeck Festival Committee, K. Roodt-Coetzee, The National Museum, Boomstreet, Pretoria. p. 3.

<sup>185</sup> See description of parcels 29 and 40 in the Information Book.



that the objects were readily accessible for study and other purposes (figure 15).<sup>186</sup>



**Figure 15**

Objects packed in parcels and labelled

(Collection: National Cultural History Museum HKF 4875)

The aim was still to display all the items in the collection, the only restraint being the lack of space at the new museum building.<sup>187</sup> In 1949 the displays at the Old Museum were rearranged to improve the situation and to provide additional exhibition space. This was very necessary as a large number of most interesting objects had been brought to light by Schiel that should have been on display. Despite the changes there still was not sufficient exhibition space.<sup>188</sup> An interesting and unique collection of historical objects could, however, be added to the show collection in 1953 by using the new display cases obtained for the Van Riebeeck Festival.<sup>189</sup>

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<sup>186</sup> Transvaal Museum Annual Report, 1950 - 1951, p. 32.

<sup>187</sup> NCHMA, System 1 No 4 TM1/34 - TM1/42, letter Swierstra to J. Putter, dd 10 April 1940. Swierstra writes that we are only waiting for the extension of our new Museum before displaying all the objects.

<sup>188</sup> Transvaal Museum Annual Report, 1948 - 1949, p. 4.

<sup>189</sup> Ibid., 1952 - 1953, p. 8.

## 2. DOCUMENTATION FRAMEWORK

The documentation framework is the official means, operating within the museum framework, by which information about the museum's collections is secured.

### **Management and resources**

#### Responsibility and coordination of documentation

The director and the staff member, if there was one at the time, were responsible for the documentation of the anthropological, archaeological and historical artefacts in the Museum. Although this documentation comprised only a minor part of the workload of the directors, Swierstra for example, dealt with the correspondence and FitzSimons for his part was not averse to entering new acquisitions into the acquisitions entry registers. Although documentation matters were reported to the Museum Committee and later to the Board in exceptional cases, the practical ways in which the documentation of the anthropological, archaeological and historical collections were carried out, were not recorded properly.

#### Documentation policy and priorities

No documents, such as acquisition and loan policies, manuals or structured vocabulary lists could be found on the anthropological, archaeological and historical collections. Some reference to these matters are available in letters, reports and minutes.

For many years (until the mid 1940s) there was no attempt to upgrade the standard of museum documentation of these collections. The basic documentation was done, only when staff were available and time permitted. It was however, an accepted fact that as much information as possible should be obtained on each object. This precept had been accepted by Radcliffe-Brown as regards ethnological objects in 1921 and he set it down clearly:

For a specimen to be of value there must be full information about it. (1) Native name. (2) from what material made – with native name. (3) how made – with what tools, if any (4) uses (5) locality where made (6) any other information of interest.<sup>190</sup>

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<sup>190</sup> NCHMA, Box 137, TM 137/21, letter Radcliffe-Brown to D. Earty, dd 20 June 1921.

When a donor sent him information, Swierstra made a point of acknowledging these details, because historical data was growing increasingly difficult to obtain.<sup>191</sup> Such information also enhances the objects from a scientific point of view<sup>192</sup> and increases the possibility of continued research.<sup>193</sup> When information was received from a donor, the particulars were not invariably written down in the catalogue;<sup>194</sup> in some cases not all the information was recorded.<sup>195</sup> Modern or “new” documentation practices such as inventory control, cataloguing<sup>196</sup> and indexing were not undertaken. Loan management was, however, carried out by means of a loans register.

## **Documentation system<sup>197</sup>**

### Design of documentation system

Objects entering the Museum to form part of the anthropological, archaeological and historical collections did in the main undergo some scrutiny in terms of the various collecting principles, either by means of personal contact, correspondence or field work. Often a reply was written to inform the donor whether the object had been accepted or rejected. The documentation process consisted of acquisitioning and cataloguing.<sup>198</sup> The process was then completed by putting the object on display with a label, which formed an integral part of the documentation system. In the late 1940s the Shaw system of indexing was accepted for the anthropological collection.

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<sup>191</sup> Ibid., System 1 No 3 TM1/31 - TM1/33, letter Swierstra to G.O. Lunnon, dd 3 May 1933 and *ibid.*, letter Swierstra to M. du Toit, dd 26 January 1933. Swierstra thanks Du Toit for the information he had sent with the objects, as it will be of historical importance to posterity.

<sup>192</sup> Ibid., letter Swierstra to T. Moore, dd 29 June 1933.

<sup>193</sup> Ibid., System 1 No 2 TM1/27-TM1/30, letter Swierstra to J.H. Segers, dd 22 May 1930.

<sup>194</sup> Compare information received from donor with entries in catalogue: “Twee gedenk stukke van ‘n Voortrekker vrou, Mevr S.J. Neethling gebore Aucamp (1828 - 1914)”, [Two memorials of a Voortrekker woman, Mrs S.J. Neethling born Aucamp (1828 - 1914). (Translated from the Afrikaans.)] *Ibid.*, System 1 No 3 TM1/31 - TM1/33, note, June 1932; *Historiography Catalogue*, vol. 1, H.C. accession nos. 4018 and 4030.

<sup>195</sup> Compare information received from donor with entries in catalogue. NCHMA, System 1 No 4 TM1/34 - TM1/42, letter Swierstra to P.M. du Toit, dd 3 March 1934 and note; *Historiography Catalogue*, vol. 1, H.C. accession no. 4178.

<sup>196</sup> See glossary, second definition of cataloguing.

<sup>197</sup> See glossary for definitions of various terms.

<sup>198</sup> Swierstra stated that all objects were written into the catalogue. NCHMA, System 1 No 3 TM1/31 - TM1/33, letter Swierstra to J. Putter, dd 26 February 1940.

### Documentation sources (annexure 3) and their uses

The documentation sources at the Transvaal Museum for the anthropological, archaeological and historical collections were the acquisitions entry registers, the catalogues, the loans registers, the labels and the correspondence files. When entry forms were used, copies were not kept in the Museum.

These documentation sources contained very basic information and were therefore seldom used for anthropological, archaeological and historical research or enquiries by outsiders, as the Transvaal Museum was primarily known for its outstanding natural history prowess. If such queries on the human sciences were received, they were probably answered by staff who drew on their personal experience or knowledge, or from secondary publications rather than by using the documentation sources. It is clear from the many and varied annotations and notes, in particular in the catalogues, that the staff who had direct access to them used them.

### **Collections audit**

One of the most important functions of a museum is to take responsibility for its collections and the objects in the collections and to be able to account for these to the museum itself and to an outside authority, such as the government or other funding agency. In the past little or no control measures were taken by museums to ensure that the objects on the books were still in the museum, and no pressure, official or otherwise, was exercised from outside.

At the Transvaal Museum the annual statements of revenue and expenditure, audited by the Controller and Auditor-General, were subject to remarks contained in the auditing report that only referred to financial matters such as purchases and staff salaries.<sup>199</sup> Scant attention was paid to the documentation and management of the collections, except where acquisitions by purchase formed part of the expenditure.<sup>200</sup> The director declared that stock

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<sup>199</sup> See for example, Transvaal Museum Committee minutes, meetings 13 March 1906, 7 March 1916 and 2 April 1918.

<sup>200</sup> See for example, Transvaal Museum Annual Report, 1939 - 1940, audit inspection of the books and accounts, dd 10 April 1940.

was taken every year of the furniture, tools and instruments, but a regular annual stock-taking programme of the collections was not undertaken during this period.<sup>201</sup>

One recommendation was made by the auditor, to which the Museum Committee acceded, namely that registers of specimens and a catalogue of books should be kept, but these presumably referred to natural history specimens and the library.<sup>202</sup> The Committee discussed the insurance of the contents of the Museum at the instigation of the auditor's report.<sup>203</sup>

### 3. CONSERVATION

There was no conservation department and no conservators dealing with preservation problems that concerned the anthropological, archaeological and historical collections. No internal conservation records appear to have been kept. Nonetheless there was comprehension for basic conservation requirements, such as the detrimental effects of light on paper. For example, the request by a donor that important historic documents be framed and displayed, was rejected because the paper might fade. Instead the Museum Committee decided that the documents should be kept in the safe and exhibited only once a year.<sup>204</sup>

Preventive conservation was preferred to active conservation and restoration. Good housekeeping was always regarded as part of the preservation process; for example, the carpets in the Kruger House were disintegrating from constant wear and tear, and they were covered with strips of carpet to protect them.<sup>205</sup>

Pest control was also preventive, and items made of skin, flags and similar objects were treated either with a special solution called Areginal, that was made in Austria, or with Xylamon. The ethnologist at that time felt that it was too soon to prove the quality of the disinfectants, but they had already been used extensively in Europe and the tropical

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<sup>201</sup> Transvaal Museum Committee minutes, meeting 3 December 1918.

<sup>202</sup> Ibid., 4 August 1914.

<sup>203</sup> Ibid., 24 April 1917.

<sup>204</sup> Ibid., 5 October 1915; NCHMA, Box 515 TM5/8, letter Breijer to D.E. van Velden, dd 6 October 1915.

<sup>205</sup> Transvaal Museum Board of Trustees minutes, meeting 20 February 1936.

countries, and it was hoped that they would prove as effective in South Africa.<sup>206</sup> An arsenic solution was used as alternative to prevent pests from attacking the objects.<sup>207</sup> In an endeavour to get rid of borers and other pests attacking the ethnology collection in storage, the objects were dipped with a special solution supplied by the Museum's department of entomology and D.D.T. was also used.<sup>208</sup> By 1946 there were almost no traces of moths or borers in the ethnology collection.<sup>209</sup>

The importance of proper display or showcases was also realized, and the Department of Public Works was asked on occasion to make special cases for important objects,<sup>210</sup> such as the Bratina and the Sèvres vases.<sup>211</sup> The showcases with coins of South African interest were strengthened with extra locks, and the coins themselves cleaned and coated with colourless nail varnish to prevent tarnishing.<sup>212</sup> The furniture collection was also repaired and restored.<sup>213</sup>

The storage conditions at the Old Museum were detrimental to the objects because of the damp. The contents of the back storeroom, in particular the garments, skins and leather work, had to be cleaned and thoroughly dried, and moved to the front office, while the stone implements were moved to the back.<sup>214</sup>

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<sup>206</sup> Transvaal Museum Annual Report, 1934 - 1935, departmental report for ethnology, p. 1.

<sup>207</sup> For recipes, see NCHMA, System 1 No 2 TM1/27 - TM1/30, letters, Swierstra to R. Pearson, dd 8 March 1929 and Swierstra to E.A. Hooper, dd 20 May 1930; System 1 No 4 TM1/34 - TM1/42, letter Swierstra to V.W. Hiller, dd 17 October 1940.

<sup>208</sup> Transvaal Museum Annual Report, 1945 - 1946, departmental report for ethnology, numismatics and archaeology, p. 1.

<sup>209</sup> NCHMA, Diary, FitzSimons, 1947, letter N.J. van Warmelo to FitzSimons, dd 1 January 1946.

<sup>210</sup> Transvaal Museum Committee minutes, meeting 7 November 1922.

<sup>211</sup> The so-called Sèvres vases (Historiography Catalogue, vol. 26, H.C. accession nos. 38687 - 8) came from the mansion of W.E. Hollard, Friedesheim, in Pretoria. They stand 1 200 mm high and therefore needed a special case. See A. Malan, End of a myth, *Ceramics and craft South Africa*, July-August-September 1991, p. 24.

<sup>212</sup> Transvaal Museum Annual Report, 1941 - 1942, departmental report for archaeology, ethnology, numismatics and philately, p. 3.

<sup>213</sup> Ibid., 1946 - 1947, p. 3.

<sup>214</sup> Ibid., 1940 - 1941, p. 5.

The conditions at the Old Museum continued to deteriorate, and a warning was sounded that irreparable losses would be suffered, if the objects were not removed to a suitable location.<sup>215</sup> The situation went from bad to worse and was reported regularly. For example, in 1949 it was put on record that

the safety of the valuable historical and ethnographical material, of necessity housed in the Old Museum, proves a constant source of anxiety, owing to the total unsuitability of this building for the purpose, exposed as it is to the ever present hazards of damp, fire, burglary etc.<sup>216</sup>

The stamps were placed in standard loose leaf albums according to separate countries and in strict chronological order.<sup>217</sup> During the Second World War work was suspended on the stamp collection for two years, but the number of stamps that the Museum received increased tremendously and it was decided to sort and file the stamps in small pay envelopes according to issues and countries, and store them in a small filing cabinet.<sup>218</sup> In 1951 - 1952 no less than 200 000 stamps were mounted and annotated in albums.<sup>219</sup>

An innovative method of storing coins was adopted that may well be regarded as a method of preservation (figure 16). Each coin was mounted on a small square of cardboard, on which the accession number was written. A hole was punched through the cardboard to fit the size of the coin and it had a backing.<sup>220</sup> Duplicate coins, medals, tokens, counters, jettons and banknotes were packed in numbered envelopes.<sup>221</sup>

Although the Museum Committee was concerned about the condition of the art collection, which needed cleaning and renovating, the lack of money prohibited any action.<sup>222</sup> Gerard,

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<sup>215</sup> Ibid., 1945 - 1946, p. 2, special report written by the assistant professional officer for ethnology and archaeology.

<sup>216</sup> Ibid., 1948 - 1949, p. 7.

<sup>217</sup> B.J. Versfeld, The Transvaal Museum postage stamp collection, *Bulletin of the Transvaal Museum*, no. 6, January 1961, p. 3.

<sup>218</sup> Transvaal Museum Annual Report, 1943 - 1944, report of the library, p. 2.

<sup>219</sup> Ibid., 1951 - 1952, departmental report division of numismatics and philately, p. 35.

<sup>220</sup> Ibid., 1938 - 1939, p. 7.

<sup>221</sup> Ibid., 1939 - 1940, p. 2, and departmental report for ethnology, numismatics and archaeology, 1945 - 1946, p. 2.

<sup>222</sup> Transvaal Museum Committee minutes, meeting 29 January 1934.



which needed cleaning and renovating, the lack of money prohibited any action.<sup>222</sup> Gerard, who was the honorary historian for military history and heraldry, and an expert on the history and restoration of flags, supervised the restoration and remounting of old historic flags at the Kruger House.<sup>223</sup>



**Figure 16**

Coins mounted on a square of cardboard

During the Second World War precautions to be taken, in case of an emergency, such as the danger of air raids, were discussed. It was proposed that provision be made outside the Museum building to store valuable historical objects. It was even suggested that the lion enclosures, which were not in use at the National Zoological Gardens of South Africa, Pretoria, be used. The matter was left in abeyance until the danger became more acute<sup>224</sup> and the proposal was never implemented.

Although the security of the numismatics collection on display was discussed as early as 1936, a night watchman was only appointed ten years later, after the burglary of gold and silver Botha objects.<sup>225</sup> Valuable silver objects on loan were, however, insured against

<sup>222</sup> Transvaal Museum Committee minutes, meeting 29 January 1934.

<sup>223</sup> Transvaal Museum Annual Report, 1953 - 1954, p. 9.

<sup>224</sup> Transvaal Museum Committee minutes, meetings 19 February, 23 April and 21 May 1942.

<sup>225</sup> Transvaal Museum Board of Trustees minutes, meeting 3 October 1946; NCHMA, System No 5 TM43/51, letter FitzSimons to H. de Waal, dd 17 September 1946.



The chairman of the Board of Trustees could in truth point out that

In spite of all efforts to effect safe-keeping, a considerable portion of our priceless material, more especially our almost unique collection of cultural and historical objects, is in grave danger of serious deterioration owing to lack of adequate storage space.<sup>227</sup>

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New displays began to appear in the Old Museum after the appointment of Coetzee in 1953 and collections were being assembled in a planned manner. The Old Museum gradually took on an entirely new look and began to emanate a new spirit; but the building itself was undeniably old fashioned and unfunctional. It was only in the new century that the Museum would move into a new and functional museum building.

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<sup>227</sup> Transvaal Museum Annual Report, 1952 - 1953, p. 3.

## CHAPTER IV

### COLLECTIONS MANAGEMENT PRACTICES IN THE TRANSVAAL MUSEUM

1953 - 1964

#### 1. MUSEUM FRAMEWORK

##### Management

##### Organizational change

The organizational changes that took place in the Transvaal Museum after 1953 had a momentous effect on the way in which the historical collection and, to a lesser degree, the anthropological and archaeological collections were maintained. Various aspects of collections management, particularly the collecting, documentation and conservation of the history division underwent radical change. These changes were the result of a series of events in the 1930s and 1940s that influenced the development not only of the Museum, but also of the whole country. In the course of time alterations in the organization of the collections eventually led to the establishment of an independent cultural history museum.

- Change in emphases

During the 1930s the conditions in South Africa were hardly propitious for the establishment of history or cultural history collections in a museum. The Great Depression of 1929 - 1932 hit South Africans, both white and black hard, and the drought of 1932 - 1933 was one of the severest experienced in the country.<sup>1</sup> Many people became impoverished, some whites living as share-croppers (Afrikaans: *bywoners*) on farms, others finding jobs on the railways and the mines.

Nevertheless, the Great Trek and the exploits of the Voortrekkers had not been forgotten by Afrikaners and as the centenary year (1938) approached, unsuccessful local attempts were made to commemorate either a Trek personality or an event. At a conference held in 1931 a Central National Monuments Committee was established. The Committee was

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<sup>1</sup> See D. Oakes, *Illustrated history of South Africa. The real story*, pp. 332 - 340.

responsible for the choice of the site and design of the monument now known as the Voortrekker Monument in Pretoria. It was clear that the building would not be completed in time for the commemoration. The 1938 centenary celebration was therefore confined to the laying of the foundation stone of the Monument, preceded by a countrywide symbolic ox wagon trek (Afrikaans: *Simboliese Ossewatrek*).

The ox wagon trek comprised eleven wagons and covered fifteen trek routes in South Africa and parts of Southwest Africa (Namibia). Wherever they went, the wagons were met with unprecedented enthusiasm by Afrikaners and inundated with heritage antiques associated with the Great Trek.<sup>2</sup> The aim was to preserve these objects in one central place for the descendants of the Afrikaners. Although some objects were temporarily housed at Hartenbos, it was the wish of many donors that the objects should be placed in the Voortrekker Monument in Pretoria.<sup>3</sup>

Although the 1938 trek could in reality be described as the journey of a few wagons, it did mobilize the Afrikaners,<sup>4</sup> who were imbued with enthusiasm for and a true appreciation of their own cultural heritage and its preservation. According to Coetzee there is a direct link between the struggle of the Afrikaners for their language and culture and the motivation for a national cultural history museum.<sup>5</sup>

Although in the Transvaal Museum the immediate effect of these festivities was minimal (the only spin off was the phenomenal increase in the number of visitors)<sup>6</sup> the longer term effects were magnified by the inauguration of the Voortrekker Monument in 1949. This led, in turn, to a gradual but profound change in emphasis on the management of the historical collection at the Transvaal Museum. Now, for the first time, the Museum became

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<sup>2</sup> O.J.O. Ferreira, "Die geskiedenis van die Sentrale Volksmonumentekomitee" (unpublished M.A. dissertation, University of Pretoria, 1970), pp. 82 - 91 and 118.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., pp. 118 and 240.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., p. 111.

<sup>5</sup> NCHMA, Kotie Roodt-Coetzee Archives, file, Persoonlik 2, K. Roodt-Coetzee, Aantekeninge vir 'n rede deur die Staatspresident, Dr N. Diederichs, ter geleentheid van die opening van die Pioniershuis van die Nasionale Kultuurhistoriese en Opelugmuseum, 5 November 1975, p. 2.

<sup>6</sup> Transvaal Museum Annual Reports, 1938 - 1939 and 1939 - 1940, p. 2.

a national museum that promoted its natural **and historical** content.<sup>7</sup> This change did not come easily to a natural history museum and can be attributed to the expertise, zeal and perseverance of one person, Kotie Roodt-Coetzee, the first professional officer appointed in the history division in 1953. This was during the directorship of FitzSimons, who would accede to the critical issue of creating a cultural museum, one that would embrace the human sciences – anthropology, archaeology and history.

- Museum environment change

The most significant shift towards the human sciences was noticeable at the Old Museum, where the bulk of the anthropological, archaeological and historical show and study collections were housed. The change in emphasis of the museum environment was evident in the new use that was made of the old space. The so-called show collection was renovated, indeed replaced by new displays in a new style, and the study collection was not only rearranged and re-packed, but enlarged and enriched to such an extent that additional accommodation outside the Museum soon became an urgent necessity.

#### Divisional/departmental organization

The organization (table 3) of the Transvaal Museum changed when a professional officer was appointed for the history division. The monthly and annual reports were for the first time compiled by a staff member for that specific division. They were no longer part of the general account or compiled by the director, but showed that history could stake its claim on equal terms with natural history. For many years the history or cultural history division, including ethnology, archaeology, numismatics and philately, was regarded as part of the natural history in terms of reporting. No difference was made between the natural and the human sciences. It was only in 1960, 1962, 1963 and 1964 that two major divisions, i.e. the natural sciences or natural history section and the cultural history section, were recognized.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> My bold.

<sup>8</sup> See Transvaal Museum Annual Reports for those years.

TABLE 3

**Organization in divisions/departments 1953 - 1964**

(according to annual reports)

<u>YEAR</u>	<u>NATURAL SCIENCE DEPARTMENT/ DIVISION</u>	<u>HUMAN SCIENCE DIVISION/DEPARTMENT</u>
1953/1954	Division of Higher Vertebrates (mammals) Division of Higher Vertebrates (birds) Division of Lower Vertebrates and Invertebrates Division of Entomology (general collection) Division of Entomology (Heterocera) Division of Entomology (Coleoptera) Department of Vertebrate Palaeontology and Physical Anthropology	Division of History Divisions of Archaeology and Ethnology Division of Numismatics and Philately
1954/1955	Higher Vertebrates (mammals) Higher Vertebrates (birds) Lower Vertebrates and Invertebrates Entomology (general) Entomology (Heterocera) Entomology (Coleoptera) Vertebrate Palaeontology and Physical Anthropology	Archaeology and Ethnology History Numismatics and Philately
1955/1956	Higher Vertebrates (mammals) Higher Vertebrates (birds) Lower Vertebrates and Invertebrates Entomology (general collection) Entomology (Heterocera) Entomology (Coleoptera) Vertebrate Palaeontology and Physical Anthropology	Archaeology and Ethnology History Numismatics and Philately

<u>YEAR</u>	<u>NATURAL SCIENCE DEPARTMENT/ DIVISION</u>	<u>HUMAN SCIENCE DIVISION/DEPARTMENT</u>
1956/1957	Higher Vertebrates (mammals) Higher Vertebrates (birds) Lower Vertebrates and Invertebrates Entomology (general collection) Entomology (Lepidoptera) Entomology (Coleoptera) Vertebrate Palaeontology and Physical Anthropology	Cultural History (including archaeology and anthropology) Numismatics and philately
1957/1958	Higher Vertebrates (mammals) Higher Vertebrates (birds) Lower Vertebrates and Invertebrates Entomology (general collection) Entomology (Lepidoptera) Entomology (Coleoptera) Vertebrate Palaeontology and Physical Anthropology	Cultural History Division (including archaeology and ethnology) Numismatics and Philately
1958/1959	Ornithology Mammalogy Bat-Banding Project Lower Vertebrates & Invertebrates Vertebrate Palaeontology and Physical Anthropology Entomology (general collection) Entomology (Lepidoptera) Entomology (Coleoptera)	Cultural History Division (including archaeology and ethnology) Numismatics and Philately
1959/1960	<b>For the first time two separate sections with departmental reports</b>  <u>Natural Sciences Section</u>  Ornithology Mammalogy Bat-Banding Project Lower Vertebrates and Invertebrates Vertebrate Palaeontology and Physical Anthropology Entomology (general collection) Entomology (Lepidoptera) Entomology (Coleoptera)	<u>Cultural History Section</u>  Cultural History Ethnology and Archaeology Numismatics and Philately

<u>YEAR</u>	<u>NATURAL SCIENCE DEPARTMENT/ DIVISION</u>	<u>HUMAN SCIENCE DIVISION/DEPARTMENT</u>
1960/1961	<p><b>No division between the natural and the human sciences</b>  Ornithology  Mammalogy  Bat-Banding Project  Lower Vertebrates and Invertebrates  Vertebrate Palaeontology and Physical Anthropology  Entomology (general collection)  Entomology (Lepidoptera)  Entomology (Coleoptera)</p>	<p>Cultural History  Division of Ethnology and Archaeology  Numismatics and Philately</p>
1961/1962	<p><b>Again two separate sections with departmental reports</b>  <u>Natural Sciences Section</u>  Ornithology  Mammalogy  Bat-Banding Project  Lower Vertebrates &amp; Invertebrates  Vertebrate Palaeontology and Physical Anthropology  Entomology (general collection)  Entomology (Lepidoptera)  Entomology (Coleoptera)</p>	<p><u>Cultural History Division</u>  Old Museum  Division Ethnology and Archaeology  Numismatics and Philately</p>
1962/1963	<p><u>Natural Sciences Section</u>  Ornithology  Mammalogy  Bat-Banding Project  Lower Vertebrates and Invertebrates  Vertebrate Palaeontology and Physical Anthropology  Entomology (general)  Entomology (Heterocera)  Entomology (Coleoptera)</p>	<p><u>Cultural History Section</u>  Old Museum  Ethnology and Archaeology  Numismatics and Philately</p>
1963/1964	<p><u>Natural History Section</u>  Ornithology  Mammalogy  Lower Vertebrates and Invertebrates  Vertebrate Palaeontology and Physical Anthropology  Entomology (general)  Entomology (Lepidoptera)  Entomology (Coleoptera)</p>	<p><b>For the first time an annual report from the acting director, Old Museum, in addition to the departmental reports</b>  <u>Cultural History Section</u>  Old Museum  Kruger House  Ethnology and Archaeology  Philately and Numismatics</p>

The name of the new division still had to change, because the emphasis on the content of the collection and its information had moved from history to cultural history. Various terms such as “Africana collection” or “antiques” were used; even names such as “cultural science” and “culturological science” division (Afrikaans: *kultuurkundige* or *kulturologiese afdeling*) came up for consideration.<sup>9</sup> In the end preference was given to the term **cultural history**. It was used as a blanket term, as this division comprised cultural history, anthropology and archaeology (later also including philately and numismatics and many years later again a history department), and the collections at the Old Museum, the Kruger House and the Voortrekker Monument.<sup>10</sup>

The evolution of the cultural history division into a separate museum took place over a period of ten years. The anthropology and archaeology divisions were incorporated into this division from the very beginning: they did not remain at the natural history museum, but later became independent departments in their own right in the new cultural history museum.

#### Administrative organization

The first recognition that the human sciences division in a natural history museum could hold its own, was the formation of a special Historical Sub-committee in June 1955 “... to cope more adequately with the rapid expanding activities of the Culturological Division”.<sup>11</sup> The Sub-committee comprised

- Prof. A.N. Pelzer (chairman)
- H.P.H. Behrens
- Prof. P.J. Coertze
- V. FitzSimons (director)
- K. Roodt-Coetzee (historical officer)
- Prof. H.M. van der Westhuysen.<sup>12</sup>

The task of the Sub-committee was to deal with all matters concerning the historical division and to make the necessary recommendations to the Museum Board.<sup>13</sup> The Sub-committee

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<sup>9</sup> Sub-committee minutes, meetings 8 and 31 August 1956, 6 August and 20 September 1962.

<sup>10</sup> Transvaal Museum Annual Report, 1957 - 1958, departmental report cultural history division, p. 34.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid., 1955 - 1956, p. 1.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid., p. 4.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid., pp. 3 - 4.



was very active and met each month, proving to be of great value to the Board as far as the cultural history division was concerned.<sup>14</sup> The director and the professional officer for history represented the Museum on the Board – Coetzee as head of the cultural history division and acting as secretary for the Sub-committee.

## **Resources**

### Staff

From 1953 to 1964 the staff for the anthropological, archaeological and historical (later called cultural history) collections had to be increased drastically to cope with the enlarged work load. Even when the separation of the two divisions was imminent, there were only eight staff members in the cultural history division (administration, cultural history, ethnology and archaeology, the Kruger collection, numismatics and philately, and exhibitions and restoration), in comparison to 29 in the natural history division (administration, mammalogy, ornithology, vertebrate palaeontology and physical anthropology, lower vertebrates and invertebrates, entomology, exhibition and taxidermy and preparators). These numbers exclude staff in the library, the caretakers, the messengers, night-watchmen and cleaners.<sup>15</sup>

- **Directors**

FitzSimons was actively engaged in promoting good management of the history collection, and was of the opinion that this material could provide for years of historical research. He agreed that the Museum should do its utmost to see that a qualified historical research officer was appointed as soon as possible.<sup>16</sup> He also took an active part in the discussions and decisions about the history exhibitions, such as the Van Riebeeck tercentenary (1952) and the Pretoria centenary (1955) displays. He represented the Transvaal Museum on the Historical Sub-committee. Coetzee testified that FitzSimons was very sympathetic and that he willingly gave his support wherever possible.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> Ibid., p. 9.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid., 1963 - 1964, pp. 3 - 5.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid., 1948 - 1949, departmental report division of history, p. 1.

<sup>17</sup> NCHMA, System 1 No 8 TM1/54, letter Coetzee to W.J. de Kock, dd 25 February 1954.

- Curatorial and other staff in the cultural history, anthropological and archaeological divisions

After the appointment of Coetzee in the history division in 1953, the need for additional staff for conservation and administrative duties, and extra curatorial staff in the anthropological, archaeological and historical collections was identified. Coetzee also insisted on the creation and the filling of these posts. Additional posts on the pay roll first had to be approved by the Department of Education, Arts and Science and sometimes a post approved for one section would be utilized in another division. In this way personnel on curatorial, conservation and administrative levels were appointed. There was, however, a fair turnover of staff, compromising efficiency, because the work required constant training and supervision.

- Anthropological collection

From 1937 when the post of honorary curator for ethnology was declared defunct there had been no successor to Beukes. The work in the ethnology division came to a virtual standstill and no collecting was done. Coetzee reported that it was impossible to accomplish anything in the ethnology and archaeology divisions; with the available staff (a professional officer, a typist and a restorer) only the most pressing work was being done in the cultural history division and no task could be successfully completed.<sup>18</sup> The most urgent work in these two divisions (anthropology and archaeology), as seen in the monthly reports, was done by the cultural history staff.<sup>19</sup> When it was impossible to do any work, this was also reported.<sup>20</sup> The director, stressing the necessity for an ethnologist in the Museum, advised the Historical Sub-committee that the critical conditions in ethnology in South African museums should be brought to the attention of the government.

At the Transvaal Museum there were large gaps in the anthropological collections and the situation could only be remedied by the appointment of professional officers with specialized training. There was also an urgent need for research.<sup>21</sup> In view of this, the Board unanimously agreed that every effort should be made to have an ethnologist appointed as

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<sup>18</sup> Ibid., 29 August 1957.

<sup>19</sup> See monthly reports, NCHMA, System 2 No 57 NKV, Maandverslae personeel 1955 - 1963.

<sup>20</sup> Sub-committee minutes, meeting 14 May 1957.

<sup>21</sup> Transvaal Museum Annual Report, 1956 - 1957, departmental report for cultural history, p. 33 and 1957 - 1958, p. 34.

soon as possible.<sup>22</sup> It was recommended that the post filled by the restorer could be utilized for the appointment of an ethnologist. This could be done because a post had been created for a restorer by the Department of Education, Arts and Science, and this made it possible to advertise the post.<sup>23</sup> The professional officer appointed for ethnology, M.M. Venter (Jacobs-Venter) held a temporary post, owing to a decision by the government that no married women could be appointed to civil service positions in a permanent capacity.<sup>24</sup> She took up her appointment on 1 January 1959 but resigned on 31 October 1960, to be replaced by A.P. du Toit, whose designation was professional-officer-in-charge of ethnology with effect from 1 January 1961.

- Archaeological collection

No curator or assistant for archaeology was appointed during the period 1953 - 1964.

- Cultural history collection

Coetzee worked at the Old Museum alongside a caretaker and a cleaner. It immediately became clear that the work load made additional staff an absolute necessity, and for the first time a museum-assistant for history was appointed in August 1955.

The necessity of having a trained restorer of antique furniture, who could also make models and dioramas for cultural history and anthropology displays, was identified early.<sup>25</sup> His restoration task was so specialized that he could not repair objects in the same way as an ordinary joiner. He had to be a person with excellent training, in-depth knowledge of antique furniture styles and the techniques used in the manufacture of such furniture.<sup>26</sup> It was also necessary that he should have knowledge of antique lacquer, varnish, polish and tools, and South African and European timber.<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> Transvaal Museum Board minutes, meeting 17 May 1957.

<sup>23</sup> Sub-committee minutes, meeting 20 May 1958.

<sup>24</sup> Transvaal Museum Annual Report, 1958 - 1959, p. 8.

<sup>25</sup> Sub-committee minutes, meeting 8 October 1956.

<sup>26</sup> NCHMA, System 1 No 11 TM1/56, letter director to the Secretary for Education, Arts and Science, dd 22 October 1956.

<sup>27</sup> Sub-committee minutes, meeting 20 June 1960.

The first staff member on the conservation staff was a restorer, T. Westphal, who was appointed on 1 January 1957.<sup>28</sup> He resigned on 31 May 1960 and was replaced from 1 October 1960 by T. Spoelstra, who had considerable experience.<sup>29</sup> A temporary assistant, J.M. Gagiano, was appointed on 29 December 1959.<sup>30</sup>

Time and again the lack of trained staff was detrimental to collections management practices. Even with two full-time assistants and a part-time typist, the work had increased considerably by 1958 and matters such as collecting, classification, registration, marking, indexing and storage could not be kept up to date.<sup>31</sup> The necessity of appointing qualified staff to deal with the photograph collection and Kruger Collection, became increasingly urgent,<sup>32</sup> but the post for a museum-assistant for the Kruger House was only created two years later. The first appointee was C. Brand.<sup>33</sup>

As the cultural history division became better established and more independent, the administrative duties made increasing demands on the professional officer's time and attention.<sup>34</sup> Although the staff (excluding the caretakers) had increased to eight by 1964, the provision was still inadequate. In that year the staff of the human science and the natural history divisions was listed separately in the annual report. The cultural history section was staffed as follows:

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<sup>28</sup> Westphal worked as restorer in the museum in Hamburg, Germany and also had training in furniture techniques, architecture and art. Transvaal Museum Annual Report, 1956 - 1957, p. 4; Sub-committee minutes, meeting 8 October 1956.

<sup>29</sup> Transvaal Museum Annual Report, 1960 - 1961, p. 4, departmental report for cultural history, p. 30.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid., 1959 - 1960, pp. 5 - 6.

<sup>31</sup> NCHMA, System 2 No 57 NKV, Maandverslae personeel 1955 - 1963, monthly report, 24 August - 24 September 1958.

<sup>32</sup> Transvaal Museum Annual Report, 1958 - 1959, departmental report for cultural history division, pp. 39 - 40.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid., 1960 - 1961, departmental report cultural history, pp. 30 and 34.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid., 1957 - 1958, departmental report cultural history division, p. 34.

<i>Administration:</i>	Mrs Kotie Roodt-Coetzee, acting director Mrs M. Esterhuysen, typist
<i>Cultural History:</i>	Mrs Kotie Roodt-Coetzee, professional officer-in-charge Mrs J. Gagiano, museum assistant
<i>Ethnology and archaeology:</i>	Mr A.P. du Toit, professional officer-in-charge Mrs A. Wiehahn, part-time typist ( to 26 June 1963) Mrs M.M. Esterhuysen, (as from 1 July 1963)
<i>Kruger collection:</i>	Mrs L.E. Behrens, museum assistant
<i>Numismatics and philately:</i>	Miss B.J. Versfeld, part-time assistant
<i>Exhibition and restoration:</i>	Mr T. Spoelstra, restorer. <sup>35</sup>

### The cultural history, anthropology and archaeology collections

- Collection growth

By 1953, according to Coetzee, the history collection at the Old Museum was already one of the most representative and diverse in South Africa. By 1955 Coetzee still held the view that the nucleus of objects held in the Museum could be developed into the most complete cultural history collection in the country. In her view there was no other museum that could equal the chronological display of the various periods in the colonial history of South Africa since the arrival of the Portuguese to 1910.<sup>36</sup> She also identified many lacunae in the collection, such as a lack of Cape Dutch furniture,<sup>37</sup> hardly any porcelain, glass and costumes and no objects from the Dutch East India Company (DEIC) period (Dutch: *Vereenigde Oost-Indische Compagnie* [V.O.C.]). Coetzee was of the opinion that visitors to the Museum in Pretoria could not, for example, form an accurate picture of the white lifestyle at the Cape during the eighteenth century.<sup>38</sup>

In the past most pieces had been collected for their association with a historical figure or event, aesthetic worth or value as rarity or curiosity. Coetzee felt that an object should

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<sup>35</sup> Ibid., 1963 - 1964, pp. 4 - 5.

<sup>36</sup> NCHMA, Kotie Roodt-Coetzee Archives, envelope Geskiedenis van NASKO-Museum, Memorandum oor die aankoop van kultuurhistoriese voorwerpe, veral meubels, vir die Ou Museum, Pretoria, 25 February 1955, p. 1.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid. and System 1 No 11 TM1/56, letter Coetzee to K. Rood, dd 16 January 1956; TM1/55(h), K. Roodt-Coetzee, vergelyking tussen die Ou Museum en die Krugerhuis.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid., System 1 No 8 TM1/54, letter Coetzee to I.D. du Plessis, dd 2 November 1954. At this stage there was no accepted collections policy for history and cultural history objects for the Transvaal Museum or any other museum that collected cultural history objects in the country. For example, there was none that would limit the geographical range of collecting. According to her own vision for a national cultural history museum, Coetzee was making steady progress in collections policy precepts for the Transvaal Museum.

rather be a “document” of the past. Now, since clear aims for collecting had been determined, she started a “soek- en speurtog om die vereiste kultuurdokumente te vind” [an investigation to discover the required cultural documents].<sup>39</sup> To do this she either cajoled would-be donors, used contacts to link up with potential donors and lenders, or made purchases. In this way she managed to make good many of the deficiencies in the cultural history collections. She also assembled judicious collections of Cape silver, furniture, copper, ceramics and costumes. The result was that the content of the Old Museum was increased, according to Coetzee, to 30 times the original collection, and that of Kruger House was doubled<sup>40</sup> (table 4).

The best objects formed the nucleus of the exhibition of Cape silver and furniture that opened in the Old Museum in 1962 (figures 17 and 18). At the Kruger House there were furniture and other household items that had been used by the President and Mrs Kruger. These were located and collected with the assistance of and from Kruger descendants, so that the house reflected the original lifestyle of the presidential couple.<sup>41</sup> At the Voortrekker Monument the process of refining the objects was ongoing, because a new location for the museum was envisaged.

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<sup>39</sup> NCHMA, Kotie Roodt-Coetzee Archives, file Persoonlik 2, Kotie Roodt-Coetzee en die Kultuurhistoriese museumwese in Suid-Afrika, p. 8.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid., p. 11.

<sup>41</sup> See, for example, a visit to the Kruger family in the Rustenburg district in 1956. NCHMA, System 2 No 57 NKV, Maandverslae personeel 1955 - 1963, monthly report January - February 1956.

TABLE 4

**Additions made to the cultural history\*, anthropology and archaeology collections  
by donations, planned purchases and field trips 1953 - 1964**

(according to departmental reports where available, some approximate)

<u>YEAR</u>	<u>OLD MUSEUM</u>	<u>KRUGER HOUSE</u>	<u>ANTHRO- POLOGY</u>	<u>ARCHAE -OLOGY</u>	<u>PHILATE- LY</u>	<u>NUMIS- MATICS</u>
1953/ 1954	1 337	22	42	82	1 354	106
1954/ 1955	1 123	136	55+88	26	2 542+20	88
1955/ 1956	667	143	16	45	1 431	120
1956/ 1957	870	45	33 (Anth & Arc)		1 315	55
1957/ 1958	500+	106	62 (Anth & Arc)			
1958/ 1959	1 231	111		73	5 940	
1959/ 1960	682		213	146		
1960/ 1961					3 000	
1961/ 1962	900	23	179		3250+	
1962/ 1963	1 377	98+			5 300	
1963/ 1964	4 018	53	267		4 000+	

\*Old Museum and Kruger House

At the beginning of 1961 Coetzee could report that

The most rewarding part of the activities of the past year was the acquisition of many antique pieces to fill lacunae in our collections and the search for, and discovery of, a number of valuable articles which, it is hoped, can be acquired in the near future. The improvement in the quality of the acquisitions is due mainly to two factors: Firstly, as the Museum has reached a saturation point in respect of certain aspects of social historical material, only choice pieces need now be accepted; and, secondly, that it has been made possible to undertake an extensive collecting tour during each of the last two consecutive years.<sup>42</sup>

Although the anthropological collection was rated highly by Van Warmelo, few objects of scientific value, accompanied by the necessary documentation and research, were added to the collection after the departure of Beukes, but donations were accepted indiscriminately; as Van der Waal puts it: “Na Beukes sak die stilte weer neer in dié afdeling” [After Beukes left, nothing happened in this section].<sup>43</sup>

A draft report, probably written in 1960 by Venter, sets out in detail the conditions of the anthropology division and its collection. Venter maintains that the collection was an incomplete representation of the ethnic groups in South Africa: San material was meagrely represented; there was only a small collection from the South-Western Bantu-speaking groups and a few objects from the Barotse and the Masai, but none from West and Central Africa. Furthermore there was nothing in the collection representing the Coloureds, the Griqua or the Khoi Khoi.<sup>44</sup> Lacunae in the collection were also identified as far as clothing, decorations, music instruments, witch doctor outfits and hand carvings were concerned, nor were there any modern substitutes.<sup>45</sup> At the time Venter regarded these substitutes as very important, because it was necessary in displays in a museum to show how the culture of the white people had been absorbed by blacks and how traditional African cultures had been partly transformed, but not completely assimilated.<sup>46</sup> The arrival of the next anthropologist,

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<sup>42</sup> Transvaal Museum Annual Report, 1960 - 1961, departmental report for cultural history, p. 32.

<sup>43</sup> C.S. van der Waal, “Gesiedenis van die Volkekunde-Afdeling van die Nasko-Museum, Pretoria 1893 - 1977” (unpublished article), p. 3.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid., pp. 4 - 5.

<sup>45</sup> NCHMA, File ET1/60 Etnologiese Afdeling, Konsepverslag: Toestand in Museum, p. 4, n.d.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid., p. 5.



Du Toit, in 1961 heralded a new period: he collected material in a scientific manner and added to the collection through documented field work.<sup>47</sup>

In the archaeology division, the stone implement collection was reasonably big, although there were few examples of the Wilton culture. There were, however, excellent opportunities to collect additional material in the field. Although there was a fine collection of rock art, the display method (the rocks lying on the stoep of the Old Museum) was detrimental to its full appreciation.<sup>48</sup>

- Collections policy

The ideal was that the professional officers, anthropologists, archaeologists and cultural historians, should formulate a clear policy on collecting so as to avoid the use of the Museum as a mere warehouse for curiosities.<sup>49</sup> There was, however, no official written policy for the cultural history division of the Transvaal Museum.

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<sup>47</sup> C.S. van der Waal, "Geschiedenis van die Volkekunde-Afdeling van die Nasko-Museum, Pretoria 1893 - 1977" (unpublished article), pp. 4 and 7 - 8.

<sup>48</sup> NCHMA, File ET1/60 Etnologiese Afdeling, Konsepverslag: Toestand in Museum, p. 5, n.d.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid., Kotie-Roodt Coetzee Archives, envelope Geschiedenis van NASKO-Museum, Aanbevelings met betrekking tot die toekoms van die Kultuurkundige Museum, 1960, p. 9.



**Figure 17**

Furniture and utensils dating from the period of the Dutch East India Company



**Figure 18**

Furniture from the years 1780 - 1795, when Cape Town was known as “Small Paris”

These photographs were taken in 1972 and the display probably differed slightly from the original exhibition of Cape Silver and Furniture

(Collection: National Cultural History Museum  
Christmas card (brochure), Volkskas, 1972)

Coetzee had an insatiable love for cultural history objects that lead to well-nigh compulsive collecting:

... as 'n mens eenkeer met die ou dinge te doen gehad het, kan jy dit nooit weer los nie; dit is soos 'n kiem wat in jou bloed kruip. Ek het so 'n liefde vir die dinge dat as ek daarmee kan werk, ek nie iets anders sal doen nie.<sup>50</sup>

Coetzee did not only possess a genuine love for material culture, but also the discerning power to make reasoned choices. She was able to set out lucidly, in writing, her assessment of requirements for worthwhile museum objects. Her paper, *Die probleme van museale waarde* was delivered in 1962 at the Werkring Kuns en Geesteswetenskappe of the Suid-Afrikaanse Akademie vir Wetenskap en Kuns [Study group arts and human sciences of the South African Academy for Arts and Science].<sup>51</sup> This paper can be regarded as a guideline in providing details of a collecting policy suitable for a cultural history museum. Indeed, it was to serve as a blueprint for use in the Transvaal Museum. In addition, statements made from time to time by Coetzee in letters, memoranda and articles, contributed a great deal to the formulation of a standard for collecting, in particular for the collection of cultural history objects.

- Documents of the past

Coetzee formulated the first policy that went beyond the ordinary relatedness between object and person or event (which is a very restrictive link) to cultural historical value. In other words each object to be collected had to have value as a document on, or evidence of, the spirit of the times; this cultural interpretation had to be independent of any association with a historical figure or event. It is of primary importance to ask what can be deduced (learnt) from an object about the lifestyle of the people or person who made and used it – their attitude towards life, their descent and their creative abilities.<sup>52</sup> As an example the reed hut (Afrikaans: *matjieshuis*) in Namaqualand is quoted: it cannot be linked to any historical event or notable figure, but it reflects an important and unique part of a cultural

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<sup>50</sup> Ibid., System 1 No 6 TM1/52 - TM1/53, letter Voorsitster Historiese Uitstillingskomitee to J.H. Muller, n.d. [... if one has even just once worked with old things, one cannot let go. It is like a seed that sprouts in your blood. I love those things so much that; once having worked with them, I cannot imagine myself doing anything else. (Translated from the Afrikaans.)]

<sup>51</sup> K. Roodt-Coetzee, *Die probleme van museale waarde*, *Hertzog-Annale*, Yearbook IX, December 1962, pp. 43 - 53. See annexure 1.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid., p. 48.

lifestyle.<sup>53</sup> For Coetzee each object was

... ‘n dokument van die verlede, dis ‘n getuienis oor hoe hulle in die verlede geleef, gewerk en gedink het, en waarna hulle gestreef het. Hulle meubels en naaldwerk, hulle klere en glas en aardewerk, hulle silwer en velwerk, al hierdie dinge wat deur ons mense op ons eie bodem gemaak is, dit is die dokumente wat ons beskou, bekyk, bestudeer en ons lei daaruit af wat die aard en karakter en strewing van ons mense was. Ons leer hulle daaruit ken en deur hulle ook onself.<sup>54</sup>

In her introduction to the catalogue on the Cape silver and furniture exhibition, opened in 1962, she states quite clearly that the aim was not to show furniture because they have curiosity or aesthetic value, but because they give expression to a cultural and mental state of mind, to a way of life.<sup>55</sup>

- Research and demonstrative value

Coetzee regarded the demonstrative value of an object as the second most important requirement, meaning that such an object should be a representative example of a skill or art that originated in a cultural setting. Not all objects that are important for research purposes have show quality. It does not matter whether an object is pretty or not, or whether it has monetary value or not. Objects should have display value to give the visitor, whether child or adult, the opportunity to relive the reality of his own or another culture in the museum.<sup>56</sup>

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<sup>53</sup> NCHMA, Kotie Roodt-Coetzee Archives, envelope Geskiedenis van NASKO- Museum, Memorandum oor die “aankoop van kultuurhistoriese voorwerpe, veral meubels, vir die Ou Museum, Pretoria”, 25 February 1955, p. 1.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid., System 1 No 18 TM1/62, radio talk, K. Roodt-Coetzee, Uitstalling van Kaapse silwer en meubels, November 1962. [A document of the past, testimony to their aims and the way in which people lived, worked, and thought in the past. Their furniture and needlework, their clothes and glassware and earthenware, their silver and leatherwork, all these things which have been made by our people on our own soil, these are the documents that we need to scrutinize and study, so that we can infer from them the temperament, character and the purpose of our people. We know them and ourselves through those things. (Translated from the Afrikaans.)]

<sup>55</sup> K. Roodt-Coetzee, *Kaapse silwer en meubels uitstalling*, p. 1.

<sup>56</sup> K. Roodt-Coetzee, Die probleme van museale waarde, *Hertzog- Annale*, Yearbook IX, December 1962, p. 50.

Coetzee was also of the opinion that there should be sufficient objects in the study collection so that the museum could be used as a research centre.<sup>57</sup> Such objects could then be used to further scientific research by academics who wish to study the culture of different groups in South Africa in various periods. She felt that cultural history ranked as a scientific discipline (Afrikaans: *wetenskap*), but that it was not “ordinary” history.<sup>58</sup> One of the most important aspects of Coetzee’s work at the Transvaal Museum and later in her career was in fact to prove that cultural history could and should be practised in a scientific manner, because the human sciences had not been given the status “scientific” in the past.<sup>59</sup> Objects collected should have value as documents and as evidence for scientific research.<sup>60</sup> Coetzee was adamant that the information that was communicated to the public had to be scientifically correct,<sup>61</sup> and even more so, that all museological actions, such as cataloguing and conservation, should be scientifically well-founded.<sup>62</sup>

- Authenticity

Every museum prefers authentic and original objects, says Coetzee. In some cases it is difficult to distinguish between the original and a fake or copy. Therefore each object has to be zealously inspected by the cultural historian to make sure whether it is authentic. Did it really come into existence at the time stated by the donor, or as suggested by the object itself, or is it a cunning copy?<sup>63</sup> The necessity for proof or provenance of antiques and old pieces was emphasized by Coetzee.<sup>64</sup> She was uncompromising in her belief that all information about an object had to be solicited and scrutinized (for both research and

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<sup>57</sup> Ibid.; NCHMA, TM1/9, Draft memorandum, Board of Trustees to the Secretary for Education, Arts and Science, n.d.

<sup>58</sup> NCHMA, System 1 No 11, TM1/56, letter Coetzee to J. van Zyl, dd 14 August 1956.

<sup>59</sup> See p. 116 of this research.

<sup>60</sup> NCHMA, *Komitee van Onderzoek na openbare museums in Pretoria, 1960 - 1961*. Aanbevelings met betrekking tot die toekoms van die kultuurkundige museum, p. 6.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid., System 1 No 15 TM1/60, letter Coetzee to Theron, dd 28 October 1960.

<sup>62</sup> Ibid., letter Coetzee to the town clerk, Hendrina, dd 29 March 1960.

<sup>63</sup> See K. Roodt-Coetzee, Die egtheid van ‘n V.O.C.-bokaal, *Bulletin van die Transvaal-Museum*, no. 7, July 1961, pp. 3 - 5.

<sup>64</sup> NCHMA, System 1 No 11 TM1/56, letter Coetzee to D.P. du Buson, dd 13 January 1956. Irrefutable proof had to be delivered that a porcelain plate came to South Africa with the Huguenots.



authentication purposes).

- Leaders

According to Coetzee, objects with historical and sentimental value associated with an important historical event or eminent person, are on a slightly higher level of significance than objects that are curious, weird or strange. Objects in the first category are probably the most popular with museum visitors and often form the nucleus of a museum's collection.<sup>65</sup> Their collection can be justified because they promote piety and patriotism and create a sense of reality of the past.<sup>66</sup> These objects should not be disregarded totally and, says Coetzee, the Museum ought to be representative of the leaders (Afrikaans: *Groot Manne*) of South Africa. As there were already extensive collections on Kruger, Botha and Commandant-General P.J. Joubert, she felt that objects associated with General J.B.M. Hertzog should also be collected.<sup>67</sup>

- Roots

A representative collection of show and study material on the development of the Afrikaner colonial cultural heritage should include the roots of that culture in Western Europe. Coetzee regarded the countries of origin of the Afrikaner as the source of their cultural lifestyle. Two West European countries were of particular interest, namely the Netherlands and Germany.<sup>68</sup> As there were no objects depicting the home life of their forebears in the Museum, objects were needed to assemble a small representative collection to portray the cultural lifestyle of their German and Dutch ancestry.<sup>69</sup>

- Availability of money

The Transvaal Museum had always been dependent on donations, as there was no purchase fund and very little, often no money, to buy objects. The result was that the growth of the

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<sup>65</sup> K.Roodt-Coetzee, Die probleme van museale waarde, *Hertzog -Annale*, Yearbook IX, December 1962, pp. 44 - 46.

<sup>66</sup> Ibid., p. 46.

<sup>67</sup> NCHMA, System 1 No 8 TM1/54, letters Coetzee to C. Hertzog, dd 2 November 1954 and to H. Joubert, dd 2 November 1954; System 1 No 9 TM1/55, letter to L.I. Coertze, dd 3 June 1955.

<sup>68</sup> Ibid., System 1 No 8 TM1/54, letters Coetzee to R. Breed, dd 22 June 1954 and to H. Schroeder, dd 5 August 1954.

<sup>69</sup> Ibid., System 1 No 8 TM1/54, letter Coetzee to H. Schroeder, dd 5 August 1954; System 1 No 12 TM1/57, letter Coetzee to the director, Ottema-Kingma Stichting, dd 12 March 1957.

collection was at its best haphazard. Objects that were urgently needed to fill gaps in the collection could not be purchased and were simply lost to the Museum.<sup>70</sup>

One of the first tasks Coetzee turned to was to obtain money for purchases and improvements. She was adamant that an impressive museum could be developed with the necessary funding:

As ek ons mense net kan oortuig van die baie goeie werk wat 'n historiese museum kan doen as ons so bietjie geldjies het. In die museum-wereld is dit nog net die gogga-, en mot- en paddamense wat geld kry vir navorsing, as geskenke van die publiek.<sup>71</sup>

As the need to buy objects grew, money had to be found somewhere. In November 1953 an entrance fee was introduced at the Kruger House, partly to provide additional funds for the maintenance of the house and the purchase of Kruger objects, and also to cover two salaries.<sup>72</sup> A charge of 1/- was made for adults to visit the Kruger House, the Old Museum and the Transvaal Museum, from 1 July 1958.<sup>73</sup>

In 1956 the City Council of Pretoria decided that a third of the annual amount donated to the Transvaal Museum, a sum of £500, could be used for the purchase of antiques.<sup>74</sup> The Board also gave Coetzee permission to collect money<sup>75</sup> and by 31 March 1959 the balance sheet of the Transvaal Museum reflected a historical purchase fund, a Voortrekker Monument Museum fund, an open-air museum fund and a Kruger House fund.<sup>76</sup>

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<sup>70</sup> Ibid., Memorandum, Aankoopfonds van die Nasionale Kultuurhistoriese en Opelugmuseum, Februarie 1971, p. 3.

<sup>71</sup> Ibid., System 1 No 11 TM1/56, letter Coetzee to P.J. van der Westhuizen, dd 4 June 1956. [If only I could persuade our people that a history museum could do excellent work with a little bit of money. In the present museum world, it is the bug, moth and frog people who get money from the public for research. (Translated from the Afrikaans.)]

<sup>72</sup> Transvaal Museum Annual Report, 1953 - 1954, p. 7; *Komitee van Ondersoek na openbare museums in Pretoria, 1960 - 1961*. Aanbevelings met betrekking tot die toekoms van die kultuurkundige museum, p. 9.

<sup>73</sup> Transvaal Museum Annual Report, 1958 - 1959, p. 8.

<sup>74</sup> Sub-committee minutes, meeting 9 May 1956.

<sup>75</sup> Transvaal Museum Board of Trustees minutes, meeting 11 May 1956.

<sup>76</sup> Transvaal Museum Annual Report, 1958 - 1959, p. 48.

When objects were purchased, the recommended policy was that preference should be given to objects in the following order:

- objects made and used in South Africa,
  - objects made elsewhere, but with a South African association, and
  - objects of foreign origin and no connection at all with South Africa.<sup>77</sup>
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- Selection of objects

The Sub-committee decided that the professional officer for cultural history could select or discard objects for the collections on grounds of condition or general suitability.<sup>78</sup> Sometimes Coetzee would add objects that she did not regard as suitable for the Museum. An iron, for example, was not acceptable as museum object, because its condition was “primitive”, but it was probably accepted because it was identified as being of Boer manufacture (Afrikaans: *Boeremaak*).<sup>79</sup> But a chair that was described as being in a bad and battered condition, was identified as unacceptable for a museum. Objects in a poor condition were accepted for study purposes, such as a foot-warmer<sup>80</sup> and a red flannel baby shirt. This last item is accompanied by the following note:

Slegs vir studiedoeleindes goed. Hierdie tipe rooi flennie kledingstukkie was baie gedra van ca. 1860 - 1920; die geloof onder die Boerevroue was dat geen ander materiaal so geskik was om borskwale te genees as juis rooi flennie nie. **Om hierdie rede word die verflenterde babahempie in die versameling opgeneem, ook omdat daar geen ander rooi flennie stuk in die versameling is nie.**<sup>81</sup>

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<sup>77</sup> NCHMA, National Cultural History and Open-Air Museum, Committee for general matters and committee for financial matters minutes, joint meeting 9 October 1964.

<sup>78</sup> Sub-committee minutes, meeting 20 October 1960.

<sup>79</sup> Historiography Catalogue, vol. 5, H.C. accession no. 7265.

<sup>80</sup> Ibid., H.C. accession no. 7318.

<sup>81</sup> Ibid., H.C. accession no. 7337. My bold. [Only suitable to be used for study purposes. During the period ca. 1860 - 1920 clothing made of this type of red flannel was worn frequently. Boer women believed that no other type of material was as therapeutic in the curing of chest complaints than red flannel. For this reason the tattered baby shirt is accepted into the collection. In addition, there is no other piece of red flannel in the collection. (Translated from the Afrikaans.)]



- Show and study collections

The conventional division into show and study collections used at the Transvaal Museum, was also practised at the Old Museum, but the aims for these two collections later changed radically and new meaning was given to them.

- New exhibitions and display methods

In a museum, very often an object had to be unique, rare or curious. Traditional historical displays emphasized this type of object as museum piece and it was even called a relic. It was displayed with a general caption. No effort was made to establish its relationship with other objects, the associative connection and aesthetic value were important. These requirements were also part of the Museum's collection policy. Most of the objects selected for display in the Old Museum met these conditions.

The first major change took place in 1952 with the Van Riebeeck exhibition. Coetzee was the chairperson of the special display sub-committee of the Museum and the Transvaal Provincial Van Riebeeck Festival Committee.<sup>82</sup> Conditions at the Old Museum improved because Coetzee worked at the Museum for almost two years prior to the exhibition without any remuneration, often from 08:00 in the morning till 22:00.<sup>83</sup>

This display consisted of historical objects, including some of the rarest and most valuable objects dating from the time of the Voortrekkers, that have been in the Museum since 1892. These had not been exhibited previously as a result of a lack of display space and cabinets.<sup>84</sup> During the time she worked unofficially at the Museum, additional objects were collected by Coetzee by means of letters, mainly to people who had already loaned objects for previous exhibitions organized by her, such as the 1949 display at the Voortrekker

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<sup>82</sup> Transvaal Museum Annual Report, 1951 - 1952, departmental report for division of history, p. 33.

<sup>83</sup> W. Louw, Lewenskets van Mev Kotie Roodt-Coetzee, *Museum Memo*, 6(2), November 1978, p. 17; NCHMA, System 1 No 6 TM1/52 - TM1/53, letter Coetzee to F.O. Dentz, dd 4 December 1953.

<sup>84</sup> NCHMA, file on the history of the Museum, information sheet issued by the Van Riebeeck Festival Committee, K. Roodt-Coetzee, The National Museum, Boomstreet, Pretoria, p. 2; Die provinsiale Van Riebeeck-fees in Pretoria vanuit 'n kunsoogpunt gesien, *Inspan*, April 1952, p. 23; Transvaal Museum Annual Report, 1951 - 1952, departmental report division of history, p. 33.

Monument. Money was raised for the purchase of a number of glass cases to display these items. Coetzee exhorted potential donors by arguing that

A gift which goes towards the acquisition of a cabinet is a gift which will continue to be useful for centuries, a gift which will enable the public to participate effectively in a cultural heritage to which it is entitled.<sup>85</sup>

The Festival Committee also decided that any profit would go to the development of the history museum, in other words, the Old Museum.<sup>86</sup>

The exhibition, opened on 13 March 1952,<sup>87</sup> depicted cultural development in South Africa over a period of 300 years. The Festival Committee took decided and energetic measures<sup>88</sup> to ensure an outstanding exhibition. It was to cover

The Bantu, the period of settlement under Van Riebeeck and his successors, the period 1700 to 1800, the British Settlers and their contribution, the Great Trek, the succeeding period in the four provinces to 1910, the rise of industries in South Africa, the contribution of the Jewish group, the Anglo-Boer War, Unification.<sup>89</sup>

The exhibition itself made a perceptible change,<sup>90</sup> as the new cases allowed for a wide selection of objects. The space was, however, according to the director, still very overcrowded, and little could be done until more space became available.<sup>91</sup>

After the advent of Coetzee in September 1953, the director was able to report that progress was made with the arrangement of display material under her capable and energetic

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<sup>85</sup> NCHMA, file on the history of the Museum, information sheet issued by the Van Riebeeck Festival Committee, K. Roodt-Coetzee, The National Museum, Boomstreet, Pretoria, p. 4.

<sup>86</sup> Ibid., System 1 No 5 TM/43 - TM1/51, Van Riebeeck Festival Committee minutes, meetings 5 November and 4 December 1951; Transvaal Museum Annual Report, 1951- 1952, departmental report division of history, p. 33.

<sup>87</sup> Transvaal Museum Annual Report, 1951- 1952, p. 13 and departmental report division of history, p. 33.

<sup>88</sup> NCHMA, file on the history of the Museum, information sheet issued by the Van Riebeeck Festival Committee, K. Roodt-Coetzee, The National Museum, Boomstreet, Pretoria, p. 3.

<sup>89</sup> Ibid.

<sup>90</sup> Ibid., System 1 No 6 TM1/52 - TM1/53, letter Secretary for Education, Arts and Science to Coetzee, dd 30 January 1952.

<sup>91</sup> Transvaal Museum Annual Report, 1952 - 1953, p. 8.

supervision and that many of the new acquisitions were incorporated “**in their particular section of the exhibition collection**”.<sup>92</sup> In other words, the old collection policy was still followed that objects were regarded as part of the show collection.

The very first thing that Coetzee did was to re-organize the displays. The wooden tops of the cases were replaced by glass to allow more light into the cases. An additional five desk-type cases were also donated by the Department of Commerce and Industry and this did a great deal to alleviate the space problem.<sup>93</sup> For the first time, visitors to the Museum could enjoy a variety of new displays because Coetzee was of the opinion that objects should be changed or rotated in order to display as large a selection as possible.<sup>94</sup> Temporary exhibitions reflected the new spirit that prevailed in the history division. One such exhibition was on the life of President T.F. Burgers to mark the occasion of the unveiling of his statue in Pretoria in October 1953. Then too, an exhibition entitled South Africa and the British Crown was staged to coincide with the coronation of Queen Elizabeth II.<sup>95</sup> Another was on the history of the House of Orange to celebrate the visit of Prince Bernhard of the Netherlands to South Africa, October 1954.<sup>96</sup> These displays were set up in the entrance hall of the New Museum where the Mapungubwe exhibition could still be seen.

Some archaeology and ethnology material on display in the entrance hall remained in the New Museum, but there were also new displays in the Old Museum. A special display of Kruger objects commemorated the transfer of the Kruger statue to Church Square, Pretoria, on 12 October 1954. A small display on the Dorsland trek was also arranged.<sup>97</sup> A new

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<sup>92</sup> Ibid., 1954 - 1955, p. 9; my bold.

<sup>93</sup> Ibid., 1953 - 1954, departmental report for division of history, p. 35.

<sup>94</sup> NCHMA, System 1 No 18 TM1/62, letter Coetzee to A.E. Ferreira, dd 17 January 1962.

<sup>95</sup> Transvaal Museum Annual Report, 1953 - 1954, p. 12 and departmental report for division of history, pp. 35 - 36.

<sup>96</sup> Ibid., 1954 - 1955, p. 13 and departmental report for history, p. 32.

<sup>97</sup> Ibid., departmental report for history, p. 32.

display on the Mapungubwe collection<sup>98</sup> and some stone implements, was set up in the Old Museum.<sup>99</sup> The contents of no less than 27 cases were also replaced and rearranged and dresses were placed on dummies. The director was able to point out that the standard of arrangement and display of material compared favourably with the best in the country.<sup>100</sup>

In February 1954, a few months after Coetzee's appointment, FitzSimons wrote that the Museum reached the limit of its display space.<sup>101</sup> No material relating to the post-1914 period could be exhibited because there was simply no space,<sup>102</sup> nor could clothes worn during the 1938 Great Trek festivities, because they were not yet antiques – in the meantime they would be carefully preserved.<sup>103</sup>

The same was also true of the ethnology and archaeology exhibitions: the space available was so crowded that objects could not be displayed to their full advantage and those relating to indigenous communities were not even exhibited, to the disappointment of many visitors.<sup>104</sup> Only one room was permanently devoted to ethnology. The display cabinets were so high that it made the room dark. A row of cabinets in the middle of the room worsened the situation. Children shrank from walking through these exhibits. Exhibition space was so limited that the cabinets were crammed with objects described as uninteresting, mixed-up, unnatural and drab.<sup>105</sup>

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<sup>98</sup> Ibid., 1962 - 1963, departmental report for ethnology and archaeology, p. 28. The final removal of the Mapungubwe material to the University of Pretoria was only completed in 1962.

<sup>99</sup> Ibid., 1954 - 1955, departmental report for archaeology and ethnology, p 31.

<sup>100</sup> Ibid., p. 9 and departmental report for history, p. 32.

<sup>101</sup> NCHMA, System 1 No 8 TM1/54, letter FitzSimons to W.J. de Kock, dd 18 February 1954.

<sup>102</sup> Ibid., letter Coetzee to C. Brink, dd 15 July 1954.

<sup>103</sup> Ibid., letter Coetzee to A. Meyer, dd 18 October 1954.

<sup>104</sup> Transvaal Museum Annual Report, 1957 - 1958, departmental report for the cultural history division, p. 35.

<sup>105</sup> NCHMA, File ET1/60 Etnologiese Afdeling, Konsepverslag: Toestand in Museum, p. 2, n. d.

The lack of space for the show and study collections held the danger that donors would refuse to make donations to the Museum; this in turn, could lead to public dissatisfaction about conditions at the Old Museum.<sup>106</sup> By 1959 the problem of storage became so acute that “daar nie meer vir ‘n potlood plek is nie ... hier is nie meer die kleinste plekkie in die pakkamers nie ...” [There was not space even for a pencil ... there is not the smallest space in the storerooms].<sup>107</sup>

Changes were inevitable, because Coetzee felt that in a modern cultural museum the display principle is that cultural objects must be exhibited in the context of man’s existence and usability (Afrikaans: *lewens- en gebruikverband*). In other words, heritage objects must be used to rebuild the natural setting in which people lived in the past.<sup>108</sup> This sentiment was behind one of the display methods used by Coetzee in the Pretoria Centenary exhibition in 1955.

The history of Pretoria was depicted by means of a series of themes, such as religion, sport, and education, and a series of five dioramas representing Pretoria in 1855 as compared to a century later. Period rooms were created depicting the way of life in 1855 and 1895 (figures 10 and 11); there was also an outspan scene: Voortrekkers camping at the Fountains. The “natural” displays, which also had educational value, attracted the most attention. This was particularly so with school groups.

The moving force behind these exhibitions was Coetzee, who had been appointed as member of the sub-committee to handle the historical displays.<sup>109</sup> She spent almost seven months in setting up this exhibition, managing everything from the planning stage to its reconstruction in the New Museum. The exhibition was opened on 25 November 1955 by the

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<sup>106</sup> Ibid., System 1 No 13 TM1/58, letter Coetzee to M.C.E. Horn, dd 20 October 1958.

<sup>107</sup> Ibid., System1 No 14 TM1/59, letter Coetzee to C.W. Venter, dd 6 November 1959.

<sup>108</sup> Ibid., Kotie Roodt-Coetzee Archives, file, Persoonlik 2, K. Roodt-Coetzee, Aantekeninge vir ‘n rede deur die Staatspresident, Dr N. Diederichs, ter geleentheid van die opening van die Pioniershuis van die Nasionale Kultuurhistoriese en Opelugmuseum, 5 November 1975, p. 2.

<sup>109</sup> Ibid., System 1 No 8 TM1/54, letter town clerk, Pretoria, to Coetzee, dd 26 April 1954.

Mayor of Pretoria, Councillor Hilgard Muller.<sup>110</sup>

The same period-room technique was used in the Voortrekker Monument Museum, showing how a kitchen, bedroom and sitting room (Afrikaans: *voorkamer*) of the time really looked. The so-called outspan was particularly successful. These true representations of the lifestyle of the past presented cultural history to the visitor in a lively, vivid and comprehensible manner.<sup>111</sup> Coetzee herself describes the use of rooms instead of display cupboards as unique.<sup>112</sup> The display method using period rooms also stimulated the need for the reconstruction of complete houses, as this kind of natural representation brought past lifestyles back to life. This may also have influenced the idea of an open-air museum in South Africa, where rooms in houses were to be recreated, positively.<sup>113</sup>

Although the Pretoria Centenary exhibition was planned and arranged by Coetzee in collaboration with the director of the Transvaal Museum, space was so limited at the Old Museum that the exhibition had to be held in the Hollandia Hall, Proes Street, Pretoria. It was only after the Centenary that the exhibition was re-erected in the Mammal Hall at the New Museum, but the camp scene, kitchen and living room could not be displayed. At the close of the exhibition, the cases and many of the contents were given to the Museum.<sup>114</sup> The display remained on show until 1964.

In fact, space originally intended for natural history at the New Museum had to be utilized for history displays, as the need for additional exhibition space by the cultural history division became pressing, despite the rearrangement and improvement of displays and new

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<sup>110</sup> Transvaal Museum Annual Report, 1955 - 1956, p. 13 and departmental report for history, p. 30.

<sup>111</sup> Ibid., envelope Geskiedenis van NASKO- Museum, Die Nasionale Kultuurhistoriese en Opelugmuseum: 'n historiese oorsig, p. 4.

<sup>112</sup> Ibid., System 1 No 8 TM1/54, letter Coetzee to Mrs Manie Maritz, dd 7 December 1954.

<sup>113</sup> Ibid., Kotie Roodt-Coetzee Archives, envelope Geskiedenis van NASKO-Museum, Die Nasionale Kultuurhistoriese en Opelugmuseum: 'n historiese oorsig, pp. 4 - 5.

<sup>114</sup> Transvaal Museum Annual Report, 1955 - 1956, p. 8 and departmental report history, p. 31.

exhibitions at the Old Museum.<sup>115</sup> Another way of dealing with the lack of display space, was to change temporary exhibitions on a regular basis. They thus covered a variety of subjects and often related to day to day events. In this way the public's interest was retained. The director felt, however, that the amount of time and labour spent on displays hardly warranted the effort, because the congestion and lack of space in the Old Museum were so severe.<sup>116</sup>

The fact that diverse and dissimilar themes were addressed in the displays shows a striking contrast to the drab and stagnant displays during the previous period. At the New Museum, for example, four cases displaying the Smuts Collection,<sup>117</sup> paper money and "good-fors" from Republican days,<sup>118</sup> stone implements from a deposit at Wonderboom, early Chinese porcelain, medals and coins, a police ceramic badge and police uniform insignia and badges were all on display.<sup>119</sup> In 1960 a display on medals from the United Kingdom was mounted in the New Museum.

At the Old Museum an exhibition, called "From Cave to Compound", was opened on 24 May 1958 and ran for three months. Added interest was provided by African dances performed by a number of groups and a series of lectures. This was followed by a display on the British Settlers, to synchronise with Settlers' Day, celebrated on 1 September 1958.<sup>120</sup> A temporary display on the African as an artist (Afrikaans: *Die Bantoe as kunstenaar*) was also set up in 1959.<sup>121</sup> Later two exhibitions, one on African cultures in the past and present, and another on the ancient culture of Peru were put up.<sup>122</sup>

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<sup>115</sup> Ibid., 1960 - 1961, pp. 7 - 8.

<sup>116</sup> Ibid., 1959 - 1960, p. 8.

<sup>117</sup> Ibid., p. 10.

<sup>118</sup> Ibid., 1957 - 1958, p. 12.

<sup>119</sup> Ibid., 1958 - 1959, pp. 13 - 14.

<sup>120</sup> Ibid., departmental report cultural history division, pp. 37 and 39.

<sup>121</sup> C.S. van der Waal, " Geskiedenis van die Volkekunde-Afdeling van die Nasko-Museum, Pretoria 1893 - 1977" (unpublished article), p. 19.

<sup>122</sup> Transvaal Museum Annual Report, 1959 - 1960, p. 10.

True to her conviction that the Museum ought to be representative of South African leaders Coetzee set out to display their life and times. The Smuts Collection had been enlarged by the donation of Smuts objects by the family and it was envisaged to reconstruct the bedrooms of the General and Mrs Smuts from the house in Doornkloof (where the Smuts family lived) in the Museum.<sup>123</sup> Smuts's bedroom was rebuilt in the Old Museum.<sup>124</sup> This was the first reconstruction of a room at the Old Museum and was followed by Hertzog's study. An exhibition honouring the six prime ministers of the Union of South Africa was held at the Old Museum to coincide with the Union Festival in 1960.<sup>125</sup> Objects associated with Prime Minister J.G. Strijdom were also displayed.<sup>126</sup> An exhibition on addresses of honour to Hertzog was opened in November 1963.<sup>127</sup>

When the Union of South Africa became a Republic in 1961, a special display, called "The World Opinion and the South African Republic" (ZAR) was arranged. For the first time objects, presented by many countries to the Boers in homage during the Anglo-Boer War, were exhibited.<sup>128</sup> A small display was also arranged as token of sympathy with the death of Queen Wilhelmina of the Netherlands.<sup>129</sup> With Coetzee's aim to raise the standard of cultural history material on display, special objects were collected, such as Cape silver and copper objects.<sup>130</sup> In a new exhibition of Cape silver and furniture, opened 6 November 1962, the pieces were arranged chronologically, representing Western cultural styles for the first time in South Africa.<sup>131</sup>

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<sup>123</sup> N a, Items of interest, *SAMAB*, 6(15), September 1958, p. 403.

<sup>124</sup> See also Transvaal Museum Board of Trustees minutes, meeting 6 December 1959.

<sup>125</sup> Transvaal Museum Annual Report, 1960 -1961, p. 11.

<sup>126</sup> Ibid., departmental report for cultural history, p. 33.

<sup>127</sup> Ibid., 1963 - 1964, departmental report cultural history section, p. 29.

<sup>128</sup> Ibid., 1961 - 1962, p. 32.

<sup>129</sup> Ibid., 1962 - 1963, departmental report for cultural history section, p. 24.

<sup>130</sup> Ibid., 1961 - 1962, departmental report cultural history, p. 31.

<sup>131</sup> Ibid., 1962 - 1963, departmental report for cultural history section, p. 23.



Exhibitions were also held at venues outside Pretoria, for example, the temporary exhibition, “From Cave to Compound”, was first shown in Johannesburg.<sup>132</sup> In co-operation with the Africana Museum in Johannesburg Kruger medals and medallions were put on an exhibition called “Commemorative Medals of the ZAR”.<sup>133</sup>

- New study collections, new storage methods

General storage conditions were so poor that Coetzee did not mince matters when she described the situation as follows:

By my aanstelling in 1953 was ek ontsteld oor die toestand van die pakkamers en die verwaarlosing waaraan die stukke blootgestel was. Waardevolle stukke is onherstelbaar beskadig deur rotte en deur motte, kewers en ander insekte; emmersvol oorblyfsels van vernietigde Bantoevoorwerpe het ek self met grawe opgeskep van die vloer van ‘n pakkamer en laat weggooi ... By kontrole met die katalogusse het dit geblyk dat belangrike stukke (o.a. ‘n Zeederberg-koets) eenvoudig uit die Museum verdwyn het. Blykbaar het sekere versamelaars vrye toegang tot die versameling gehad en daar is ook stukke uitgeleen wat nooit weer terug ontvang is nie. Enkele leenbewyse is nog in die Museum maar meestal is die leners oorlede en is dit onmoontlik om vandag te bepaal wat van die geleende voorwerpe geword het. So byvoorbeeld is die enigste outentieke Voortrekkerklere in 1933 aan Anton van Wouw uitgeleen en ek het vasgestel dat alles verbrand is.<sup>134</sup>

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<sup>132</sup> Ibid., 1958 - 1959, departmental report for cultural history division, p. 37.

<sup>133</sup> Ibid., departmental report for numismatics and philately, p. 44.

<sup>134</sup> NCHMA, *Komitee van Onderzoek na openbare museums in Pretoria, 1960 - 1961*. Memoranda, K. Roodt-Coetzee, Memorandum oor die kultuurkundige afdeling van die Transvaal-Museum, pp. 2 - 3. [When I was appointed in 1953 I was dismayed at the condition of the storerooms and the neglect to which the objects were subjected. Valuable objects were irreparably damaged by rats, moths, beetles and other insects; I shovelled the remains of broken African objects from the floor of a storeroom into buckets and they were thrown away. While correlating the catalogues, it was apparent that important objects (amongst others a Zeederberg coach) had simply disappeared from the Museum. Apparently some collectors had free entry to the collections and certain objects that had been loaned out, had never been returned. There are still a few loan certificates in the Museum, but the lenders have since died and it is now impossible to ascertain the whereabouts of the objects. For example, the only original set of Voortrekker clothing was lent to Anton van Wouw, and I have learnt that everything has been burned. (Translated from the Afrikaans.)] According to a note made by Coetzee on accessioning a donation of medals, handed in at the Old Museum on 5 February 1945, Transvaal Museum, Acquisitions entry register, vol. 3, acquisition no. 3834, the original donation consisted of 23 objects (as stated on a label), but only 18 were later found in a package in an old cupboard: *Historiography Catalogue*, vol. 2, H.C. accession no. 5970. A similar note was made with regard to two signets. The donor called at the Museum and told Coetzee that she donated two signets, but only one was traced in the Old Museum, unmarked and uncatalogued: *ibid.*, vol. 3, H.C. accession no. 6692.

Immediately after her appointment, Coetzee worked through the storerooms at the Old Museum and the Kruger House. During her first month at the Old Museum, she sorted out ethnological objects in the display cabinets, a storeroom and a shed, and then disinfected and re-packed them. In a small storeroom, she went through all the disposable material and found some old swords between cupboard shelves and old frames. They were sorted, dusted and packed away.<sup>135</sup> Some objects were even found in the strong room at the New Museum.<sup>136</sup> Others were mixed up in storage and Chinese, Egyptian, Greek and Afrikaner objects were found among the ethnology objects under the display cabinets. These were all sorted and catalogued.<sup>137</sup>

Although credit goes to the director, FitzSimons, who initiated the efforts made by Schiel, his packaging system was unacceptable. In one instance a variety of objects (including a christening robe, a ploughshare, a photograph and a document) were all put away together in one parcel, with no wrapping material. The result was that documents were creased and photographs scratched.<sup>138</sup> Heavy metal and stone objects were also found placed on top of fragile bead, bone and ivory objects, which meant that most of the smaller items had been broken.<sup>139</sup> Many pots had also been shattered.<sup>140</sup>

A lot of time was spent in the storerooms; this was a continuous process that involved the sorting out of the bulk of the collection, putting into practice a more scientific method of packing than the one used previously.<sup>141</sup> Objects had to be repacked into new cartons and

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<sup>135</sup> Ibid., Monthly reports, Division of History (K. Roodt-Coetzee) April 1953 - March 1954, monthly report, 28 September 1953.

<sup>136</sup> For example, Historiography Catalogue, vol. 2, H.C. accession nos. 5858, 5866, 5870 - 5877, 5884 - 5885, 5895.

<sup>137</sup> NCHMA, Monthly reports, Division of History (K. Roodt-Coetzee) April 1953 - March 1954, monthly report, 26 October 1953.

<sup>138</sup> Ibid., System 2 No 57 NKV, Maandverslae personeel 1955 - 1963, monthly report April 1955.

<sup>139</sup> NCHMA, File ET1/60 Etnlogiese Afdeling, Konsepverslag: Toestand in Museum, p. 2, n.d.

<sup>140</sup> Ibid., p. 6.

<sup>141</sup> The collection was sorted out into parcels by Schiel. Transvaal Museum Annual Report, 1954 - 1955, departmental report for history, p. 32.

numbered according to a system designed for easy access.<sup>142</sup> Objects were also moved from storage in unsuitable rooms to more adequate storage areas with proper shelving.<sup>143</sup> In 1955 for example, the archaeology and ethnology material, which had at first been stored in two rooms upstairs, was transferred to the cellar, where suitable shelving had been erected so that the objects could be arranged in a systematic manner.<sup>144</sup> By 1963 the archaeological material was still jumbled and it was difficult to locate objects in the Leith Collection. Between 1962 and 1966 the objects were classified according to ethnic affiliation (Afrikaans: *stamverband*).<sup>145</sup> All staff members, whether typist or museum assistant, had to help with the work in the storerooms and in almost every monthly report some facet of this work was recorded. For example, in March 1962 rifles were removed from the cellar, the shelves taken out and rebuilt in the strongroom; the rifles were then numbered and replaced on the shelves.<sup>146</sup>

Although some cardboard boxes were received from the director, finding suitable and sufficient boxes was a problem. Boxes were solicited from businesses, such as the outfitters Grant Mackenzie in Pretoria. Items that were packed in boxes included documents, Bibles, religious literature, utensils, and prisoner-of-war objects.<sup>147</sup> Paper and cotton waste was used as packaging material,<sup>148</sup> and tissue paper was placed between the pages of photo albums.<sup>149</sup> The packaging was improved as an ongoing process and the repackaging of various collections was recorded in the monthly reports. The toys, for example, were packed

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<sup>142</sup> Ibid., 1955 - 1956, departmental report cultural history, p. 32; NCHMA, System 2 No 57 NKV, Maandverslae personeel 1955 - 1963, monthly reports March 1955 and October 1958.

<sup>143</sup> Transvaal Museum Annual Report 1955 - 1956, departmental report for archaeology and ethnology, p. 30; NCHMA, System 2 No 57 NKV, Maandverslae personeel 1955 - 1963, monthly report, June 1955.

<sup>144</sup> C.S. van der Waal, "Gesiedenis van die Volkekunde-Afdeling van die Nasko- Museum, Pretoria 1893 - 1977" (unpublished article), p. 10.

<sup>145</sup> Ibid.

<sup>146</sup> NCHMA, System 2 No 57 NKV, Maandverslae personeel 1955 - 1963, monthly report March 1962.

<sup>147</sup> Ibid., April 1955 and January 1961.

<sup>148</sup> Ibid., January 1956.

<sup>149</sup> Ibid., February 1956.

in new boxes and the new storage place added to the card index.<sup>150</sup> The philately albums were shown to the Board of Trustees, who congratulated the curator on the neat appearance and good condition of the collection.<sup>151</sup> Valuable objects such as paintings and jewellery, remained in storage in the safe at the Transvaal Museum until 1963.<sup>152</sup>

Inadequate storage space continued to be a problem although two small exhibition halls were added to the Old Museum (at the NE and NW corners, where there were small yards.)<sup>153</sup> The lack of storage space was such an obstacle that the Museum could soon find itself unable to receive large items, such as old vehicles and antique furniture.<sup>154</sup> One solution was to find suitable storage outside the Museum. Various options were considered, such as the use of the amphitheatre at the Voortrekker Monument, or even placing an advertisement in a local newspaper for the hire of a suitable building.<sup>155</sup> For the first time in the history of the Museum two storerooms were hired in 1961 outside the precincts of the Museum.<sup>156</sup> Although this provided some storage relief, it could only be regarded as a temporary solution. It was also very inconvenient, because supervision and accessibility were difficult.<sup>157</sup> This resulted in the rearrangement of the storerooms at the Old Museum, such as the re-packing of the textiles, and created more storage space, but it entailed a great deal of moving of objects from one place to another. Recording the movement of objects is one of the basic principles of modern collections management, but it is unclear whether all moves were adequately documented in the 1960s.

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<sup>150</sup> Ibid., March 1962.

<sup>151</sup> Transvaal Museum Board of Trustees minutes, meeting 14 August 1959.

<sup>152</sup> Ibid., 25 November 1963.

<sup>153</sup> Transvaal Museum Annual Report, 1957 - 1958, p. 8.

<sup>154</sup> Ibid., departmental report cultural history division, p. 35.

<sup>155</sup> Sub-committee minutes, meetings 2 April, 20 May, 14 October and 24 November 1958.

<sup>156</sup> Transvaal Museum Annual Report, 1961 - 1962, departmental report for Old Museum, p. 32.

<sup>157</sup> Ibid., 1961 - 1962, p. 7.

Other makeshift measures were attempted, and often these caused even more problems. Shelves erected in the ladies cloakroom caused some dissatisfaction and a rack that had been installed in the cellar, subsequently collapsed.<sup>158</sup> Although new offices, store and workrooms built on the eastern side of the Old Museum provided much needed additional accommodation in 1960, the need for functional and sufficient housing persisted.<sup>159</sup> The storage problem remained acute until 2002. It is appropriate to record that the National Cultural History Museum eventually moved to its new premises (the old Mint building in Visagie Street, Pretoria) in 2000 and the unpacking and re-arrangement of the collection in the new functional storerooms – to date probably the best in Africa – started in June 2002.<sup>160</sup>

## 2. DOCUMENTATION FRAMEWORK

During the 1950s there were few fully-fledged cultural history museums in South Africa with qualified staff who could discuss museological matters such as documentation and conservation. The cultural history division of the Transvaal Museum can be regarded as one of the pioneers in the South African cultural history museum scene and many innovative steps in collections management had to be taken by Coetzee. One of the aims of Coetzee's overseas visit in 1958 was to glean information on the documentation systems used, but she reported that very little had been published in this regard, that it was a relatively new science and that it appeared to her that every museum insisted on its own little scheme.<sup>161</sup>

### **Management and resources**

#### Responsibility and coordination of documentation

Before starting with the documentation Coetzee made it a priority to work through the

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<sup>158</sup> NCHMA, System 2 No 57 NKV, Maandverslae personeel 1955 - 1963, monthly reports July and November 1958.

<sup>159</sup> Transvaal Museum Annual Report, 1960 - 1961, departmental report cultural history, p. 31.

<sup>160</sup> G. Balkwill, "40 Years in the wilderness - the promised land at last (almost)", pp. 7 and 15, paper delivered at the SAMA conference, Pretoria, 5 June 2003.

<sup>161</sup> NCHMA, System 1 No 13 TM1/58, letter Coetzee to E. Holm, dd 2 October 1958.

existing catalogues, correspondence files and acquisitions registers.<sup>162</sup> In the first years Coetzee was solely responsible for documentation. There was no other member of staff who could help her because the first museum-assistant for history was only appointed in 1955.

The staff also had to be trained in all aspects of the management of cultural history collections, as there was no formal training taught at any South African institution. At this stage training envisaged by SAMA was the diploma and technical certificate of the British Museums Association.<sup>163</sup> The curriculum of the British diploma comprised three sections. The administrative section included registration and cataloguing and the second section conservation methods. The third section dealt with advanced work on the first two sections, but with special reference to one or more of the following branches of museum work: archaeology, history, general natural history, botany, geology, zoology, industrial technology or another approved academic subject.<sup>164</sup> Although this diploma was highly regarded, it did not cover special local requirements; in particular it did not cater specifically for the cultural history collections that Coetzee had in mind. The continuous training of her own staff in documentation matters, which she later gave to staff members of other museums, had to be presented, for the most part, by Coetzee herself.

#### Documentation policy and priorities

There was no written documentation policy, but clear principles were adhered to. Information about the objects was considered of prime importance as it gave meaning to these objects.<sup>165</sup> Whenever a new donation was given to the Museum, the donor was asked to supply detailed information. The associated information was one of the most important aspects of the collecting undertaken by Coetzee, specifically with regard to objects for the cultural history division. Although she was not officially attached to the Museum in the

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<sup>162</sup> Ibid., Monthly reports, division of history (K Roodt-Coetzee) April 1953 - March 1954, 28 September 1953, 26 October 1953 and 25 March 1954.

<sup>163</sup> C.K. Brain and M.C. Erasmus, *The making of the museum professions in Southern Africa*, p. 27.

<sup>164</sup> N a, The diploma of the South African Museums Association, *SAMAB*, 7(6), September 1960, p. 139.

<sup>165</sup> NCHMA, System 1 No 8 TM1/54, letter Coetzee to K.J.H. Behrens, dd 9 February 1954.

early fifties, the basic principles of collections management were already clear in her letters. For example, she requested detailed information about the objects, such as the particulars of the owner and the place and date of manufacture.<sup>166</sup> Within three weeks of her appointment, she told a donor that it was of the utmost importance to the Museum that the history of the object be accurate. She asked how old the object was, who the first owner was, where this person lived, and other details.<sup>167</sup> The following information was solicited about a wedding dress worn at a marriage that took place in the concentration camp in Volksrust after the Peace Treaty of Vereeniging:

Graag sal ons soveel moontlik inligting saam met die rok wil ontvang soos name van u ouers, datum van die troue, was u vader ook in die kamp of het hy van buite af ingekom, was daar 'n sluier by die rok, hoe het die hele seremonie plaasgevind en alles wat sy u daarvan vertel het. Weet u waar sy die materiaal vandaan gekry het en weet u wie die rok vir haar gemaak het? Moontlik het u nog 'n foto van u moeder of van die kamp.<sup>168</sup>

The necessity for clear and unambiguous documentation was brought home when Coetzee encountered many objects at Hartenbos with no particulars at all. There were also many pieces of paper with information, but those had become detached from the objects.<sup>169</sup> And of course, at the Old Museum she also discovered many objects about which the information had been lost. Although she went through old correspondence files to look for this information,<sup>170</sup> she often wrote that she could find no particulars.<sup>171</sup> For this reason information applicable to an object was meticulously written down and incorporated in the catalogue. For example:

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<sup>166</sup> Ibid., System 1 No 6 TM1/52 - TM1/53, letter chairperson of the historical display committee to J.H. Muller, n.d.

<sup>167</sup> Ibid., letter Coetzee to L. Bosch, dd 18 September 1953.

<sup>168</sup> Ibid., letter Coetzee to A. van Stryp, dd 6 October 1953. [We would like to receive as much information about the dress as possible, such as the names of your parents, the wedding date, whether your father was in the camp, or whether he was allowed to come into the camp, whether the dress had a veil, where the ceremony took place, and everything she told you about it. Do you know where she obtained the material and who made the dress for her? Perhaps you still have a photograph of your mother or of the camp. (Translated from the Afrikaans.)]

<sup>169</sup> Ibid., System 1 No 12 TM1/57, letter Coetzee to L. Duvenhage, dd 1 October 1957.

<sup>170</sup> Ibid., System 2 No 57 NKV, Maandverslae personeel 1955 - 1963, monthly reports for January - February - March 1956.

<sup>171</sup> Ibid., System 1 No 13 TM1/58, note with regard to Historiography Catalogue, vol. 2, H.C. accession no. 5401.

Gestruk [ekstrak?] van die kliphoutboombas is met die hand aan die nerfkant gesmeer en daarom is die wol nie verkleur nie. Taaibosbas gee 'n ligter kleur.<sup>172</sup>

Coetzee followed a policy of collecting information even if she did not secure any objects. She set out deliberately to visit old people to obtain information about the past and the traditional Boer way of life. For example, house building methods, the dressing of leather, pastimes and clothing.<sup>173</sup> She was interested in furniture making, wine pressing, teaching methods and old folktales that were told and retold from one generation to another.<sup>174</sup> The memories of elderly people were written down so as to preserve this evidence for posterity. All the things elderly people had heard from their parents or others had thus far not been written down in history books, but very often this evidence gave one a better perspective on the past (figure 19).<sup>175</sup>

In many cases this kind of information was difficult to obtain and should have been written down years ago.<sup>176</sup> On the other hand, Coetzee was aware that verbal information was not necessarily so accurate and reliable.<sup>177</sup> True particulars of the object had to be noted; not stories or fantasies; in other words, the history as told by the donor had to be verified carefully.<sup>178</sup> This was particularly so in the case of family traditions. A shawl, for example, allegedly 300 years old, was brought from Germany by an old lady, but a photograph showed the lady wearing clothes that dated to about 1845. Coetzee came to the conclusion that the shawl could not possibly have been brought from Germany 300 years ago.<sup>179</sup> In the

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<sup>172</sup> Historiography Catalogue, vol. 5, H.C. accession no. 7256. [Extract of the bark of the rockwood tree was spread on the hair side, and for this reason the wool did not become discoloured. The bark of the "taaibos" gave a lighter colour. (Translated from the Afrikaans.)]

<sup>173</sup> Transvaal Museum Annual Report, 1954 - 1955, departmental report cultural history, p. 33.

<sup>174</sup> NCHMA, System 1 No 12 TM1/57, letter Coetzee to A. van der Spuy, dd 1 October 1957.

<sup>175</sup> Ibid., System 1 No 8 TM1/54, letter Coetzee to M. Postma, dd 19 Oktober 1954.

<sup>176</sup> Ibid., System 1 No 11 TM1/56, letter Coetzee to W.C. Lambrechts-de Villiers, dd 16 February 1956.

<sup>177</sup> Ibid., System 1 No 2 TM1/57, letter Coetzee to H.A. van Velden, dd 1 Oktober 1957.

<sup>178</sup> Ibid., System 1 No 14 TM1/59, letter Coetzee to C.J. Joubert, dd 25 November 1959.

<sup>179</sup> Historiography Catalogue, vol. 5, H.C. accession no. 7230.



vertelling deur Mr. J.J. Scheepers, Paul Krugerstr. 905,  
Mayville : —

Mr. Scheepers het in Mr. J. A. Strauss van  
Lute, S.-Rhodesie ontmoet wat vertel<sup>ek</sup> dat  
hy in die o. westelike deel van Portuges-Oos-  
Afrika op 'n opfartog was en dat hy daar  
met 'n Kafferstam in aanraking gekom  
het wat hom vertel het dat hulle  
daarlangs op waens afgekom het wat  
vlate onder bome gestaan het en op die  
tang van die wa het 'n hulle in boch  
geseu. Die ou voorvaders het hulle  
vertel van die mense wat daar kom  
staan het met hulle waens en toe  
van daar daar omgehou het. Hulle  
het die water wat in die uitge-  
holde boomstamme gestaan het ge-  
bruik omdat dit in daardie steek  
van min reën. Die waens het op 'n sandhol onder  
Mr. Strauss staan in 'n in die waens  
van bogenoemde me.

Mr. Strauss was vroer offisiële  
jagter van die Portugese regering.  
saam met 'n meneer Ingers.

Mr. Strauss was vandag self hier, 29/10/53.  
Hulle was in 'n boom naby Maienga toe die kaffer  
dit aan hom vertel het, en in 'n suid-oostelike  
rigting gewys het. Hy skat dit moes in die  
omgewing van Makurija gewees het.

Figure 19

Narrative recorded by Kotie Roodt-Coetzee

(NCHMA, Kotie Roodt-Coetzee Archives)

case of a tobacco carver, she noted in the catalogue that, according to the donor, the carver had been made in c. 1760, but that it was not as old as this.<sup>180</sup>

The value of family histories, genealogical information, private documents, letters and books should, according to Coetzee, never be underestimated as they often contained particulars that could not be obtained elsewhere.<sup>181</sup>

Coetzee followed every possible lead to collect objects and information. Where there was no information about objects, she wrote to the family of the donor (even if the donation had been made many years previously), asking pertinent questions about the objects.<sup>182</sup> She would also write to a person after reading an article that appeared in a newspaper,<sup>183</sup> or contact the South African Broadcasting Corporation (SABC) about talks relevant to the Museum, and ask experts for their advice.<sup>184</sup> Departments at the University of Pretoria were also approached for information. For example, the Engineering Faculty was asked to identify metals that looked similar, and the Biology Department was given samples of bamboo, cane and various kinds of reed.<sup>185</sup> The co-operation of the forestry research section of the Forestry Department was asked for the microscopic analysis of samples of wood.<sup>186</sup> The South African Police (SAP) was on occasion requested to trace a person who Coetzee had heard owned an antique, in the hope that he might be prepared to donate it to the Museum.<sup>187</sup>

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<sup>180</sup> Ibid., No. 7356.

<sup>181</sup> NCHMA, System 1 No 9 TM1/55 Jan - Sept, letter Coetzee to A.S. Kleijnhans, dd 3 August 1955.

<sup>182</sup> Ibid., System 1 No 8 TM 1/54, letter Coetzee to the family A. van der Westhuizen, dd 6 January 1954.

<sup>183</sup> Ibid., System 1 No 11 TM1/56, letter Coetzee to P. Prinsloo, dd 17 May 1956.

<sup>184</sup> Ibid., System 1 No 9 TM1/55 Jan - Sept, letter Coetzee to L. Evans, dd 9 March 1955.

<sup>185</sup> Ibid., System 2 No 57 NKV, Maandverslae personeel 1955 - 1963, monthly reports, August 1958 and December 1960.

<sup>186</sup> Ibid., March 1963.

<sup>187</sup> Ibid., System 1 No 18 TM1/62, letter Coetzee to the Sergeant-in-charge, Nylstroom, dd 21 June 1962.

## Documentation system

### Design of documentation system

The new documentation system Coetzee implemented in the cultural history division at the Old Museum comprised classification and cataloguing. At the time the Shaw system was already in use in the anthropology collection.

The purpose of classification was to establish and document information on the object with regard to its country of origin, date of manufacture or make, and material used. The construction and manufacturing techniques used to produce the object and its condition, peculiarities, characteristics or deviations were also recorded. Also significant was the age of the object, its history and details of the donor and family. Where, when and how the object had been collected were also recorded.<sup>188</sup> In the process the objects had to be clearly identified and unambiguously named. This eventually led to the use of a system of catchwords in the catalogue and the card catalogue (see below).

Cataloguing implies two basic processes:

- each object is accessioned in a catalogue according to the classification with its own number, and
- an object record (Afrikaans: *stamkaart*) on a card is made for an object to record its basic details. Additional entries are also made on separate cards (Afrikaans: *newe inskrywings/ verwysingskaarte / indekskaarte*).<sup>189</sup>

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<sup>188</sup> NCHMA, System 1 No 16 TM1/61 Jan - Jun., "Elementêre reëls in verband met museumorganisasie" (unpublished procedure), p. 1, n. d.; System 1 No 15 TM1/60, letter Coetzee to the Town Council of Ermelo, dd 12 December 1960.

<sup>189</sup> Ibid.

The design and development of the card catalogue as a cultural history museum information retrieval system, as implemented by Coetzee, can be largely ascribed to the assistance from her husband, Prof. P.C. Coetzee,<sup>190</sup> who as trained librarian was familiar with the theory and practical application of various classification and information retrieval systems used in libraries.

Two articles<sup>191</sup> bear witness to Prof. Coetzee's<sup>192</sup> involvement with museum practice. The article *Registreermetodes in die museum* gives a clear analysis of the objections to the acquisitions register as a retrieval tool. He advocates the use of an object record as the first step in the accessioning of museum objects. He was of the opinion that the catalogue was no longer the most important record in the museum – the card catalogue in a cabinet with object entries was of more significance.<sup>193</sup> He suggested that a record be made in the form of a loose card and that this should be compiled as soon as possible after arrival of the object in the museum. All the routine activities relating to the objects in the museum such as cleaning, restoration, loans and other movements should be added to the card; it forms the basis for all additional entries and the information on the card could even be used for display labels (figure 20).

This method was used in the Old Museum in a slightly revised form. The acquisitions register was used progressively less and was gradually phased out. The object records did not replace the catalogue, which was probably used merely as a numerical index. They

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<sup>190</sup> Petrus Carolus Coetzee (1905 - 1987) worked at the University of Pretoria from 1922, except for a short period at the State Archives. He became librarian at the University in 1937 and in 1959 was the first head of the Department of Library Science. From 1963 to 1971, when he went on pension, he was full-time professor. He did pioneering work on South African libraries. An honorary doctorate was awarded to him by the University of South Africa in 1982. Coetzee married Kotie Roodt in 1934. F.J. Du Toit Spies and D.H. Heydenrych (comps.), *Ad Destinatum II 1960 - 1982 'n Geskiedenis van die Universiteit van Pretoria*, pp. 41 - 42; J.S. Bergh, O.J.O. Feirreira, F. Pretorius, J.E.H. Grobler & W.A. Stals (eds), *Ad Destinatum III 1983 - 1992 'n Geskiedenis van die Universiteit van Pretoria*, p. 423.

<sup>191</sup> NCHMA, Kotie Roodt-Coetzee Archives, file Kursus in museumwese, opsomming van lesings, P.C. Coetzee, "Die museumkatalogus faseanalities beskou" and "Registreermetodes in die museum" (unpublished articles).

<sup>192</sup> As Kotie Roodt-Coetzee is referred to as Coetzee in this study, Prof. P.C. Coetzee is referred to as Prof. Coetzee.

<sup>193</sup> NCHMA, Kotie Roodt-Coetzee Archives, file Kursus in museumwese, opsomming van lesings, P.C. Coetzee, "Registreermetodes in die museum" (unpublished article), p. 5.

formed the basis of an alphabetical object card catalogue, using catchwords, headings or approved standard terms (Afrikaans: *trefwoorde/ rangwoorde*). The object records were also supplemented by added entries.

RANGNOMMER OF -WOORD			
HERKOMS	DATUM VAN ONTVANGS	INVENTARIS- NOMMER	PLEK VAN BERGING
BESKRYWING			
LITERATUUR			
GESKIEDENIS			
BEHANDELING			
LEIDRAAD			

**Figure 20**

Object record as proposed by Prof. P.C. Coetzee

(P.C. Coetzee, "Registreermetodes in die museum" (unpublished article))

At the time there was no list of recognized standard terms or catchwords to expedite the recording of information in a controlled manner. The use of an established hierarchy of catchwords had already been addressed by Prof. Coetzee,<sup>194</sup> and this matter also occupied Coetzee's attention. The struggle to devise a workable solution is clearly indicated by the handwritten alterations and deletions on many of the catalogue cards and in the catalogues.<sup>195</sup>

<sup>194</sup> Ibid.

<sup>195</sup> In 1973 the first list of standard terms or catch words for a cultural history museum was published in Afrikaans by the National Cultural History and Open Air Museum: L. Slabbert, *Trefwoorde vir kultuurhistoriese voorwerpe*.

As far as can be ascertained, Coetzee did not use a standard cataloguing or classification form, nor did she use a loose card, but notes were found which she must have used to record the initial information. Thereafter the formal classification apparently took place and particulars were written down in the catalogue. In many instances these were long and detailed and even today constitute the basic information about the object in the Museum's documentation system, because the card catalogue was not maintained as computerization took place. Labels for display purposes were produced according to the information in the catalogue.<sup>196</sup>

- Classification

Coetzee regarded the classification of the collection as the starting point of the documentation process. As early as 1940 she wrote that the most important task would be the scientific classification of all the material.<sup>197</sup> At first her primary concern was to classify the objects in storage, because, as she pointed out, there was no system in the packaging. Before her actual appointment at the Transvaal Museum, she had already begun with the classification of the historical objects in the cellar of the Old Museum while searching for objects to use in the Van Riebeeck display. This was, however, "liefdeswerk wat ons in ons spaartydjies doen en daarmee kom 'n mens nie ver nie".<sup>198</sup> [A labour of love, done in little scraps of spare time; in this way very little progress can be made.] In this sense the term "classification" can be associated with its usual meaning, namely the arrangement together of similar types of objects, separating them from dissimilar ones.

In 1953 she set out to arrange similar objects together, such as photographs, costumes, military uniforms according to rank and also helmets, shoes, badges, caps and sabretaches. Other categories were documents, Bibles, religious literature, basket work and skins,

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<sup>196</sup> NCHMA, System 1 No 14 TM1/59, letter Coetzee to C.J. Joubert, dd 25 November 1959.

<sup>197</sup> Ibid., Kotie Roodt-Coetzee Archives, file Briewe A.T.K.V. - Museum, letter Coetzee to D. Mostert, dd 24 February 1940.

<sup>198</sup> Ibid., System 1 No 6 TM1/52 - 1/53, letter Coetzee to D. Heller, dd 15 April 1952.



stamps, medals and matrices.<sup>199</sup> Ethnological objects were separated from archaeological objects<sup>200</sup> and all the objects in the Kruger section were sorted and packed separately, for example books, tokens of honour and personal effects.<sup>201</sup> The coin collection was kept at the New Museum in a safe.<sup>202</sup> The coins were also re-arranged in systematic order<sup>203</sup> and mounted in special albums. Because the objects in the storeroom were organized, they were now far more readily accessible to users (the museum staff, the public and other interested parties such as auditors) than had previously been the case.

Coetzee also used the term classification in a different sense, namely that each object had to be specified according to set requirements. The entries in the catalogue had to conform with her basic rules for classification.<sup>204</sup> A typical example is as follows (classification requirements given in italics after the relevant particulars):

Historiography Catalogue, vol. 5, H.C. accession no.7167

BANKIE (*catchword*) 1750 (*the date of manufacture or make*)

Kaaps; (*country of origin*) stinkhout; (*material*) tweesitplek; armleunings; rugleuning het paneel vertikaal met gekartelde rand en blommotief op elk uitgesny; bokant die paneel op die horisontale, gekartelde hout is ook 'n blommetjiepatroon uitgesny; beide het 'n agtergrond wat gestippel is soos in die midde van die 18de eeu gebruiklik was; 3 pote, gewelfen bal en klou voor; agter is die pote regaf; fyn rottangmat; mat is voor en aan die kante gewelf; tipe meubel en styl is tipies van ca. 1750, maar die reguit lyne in die leuning is nie heeltemal getrou aan daardie styl nie. As verskoning kan aangevoer word dat dit nie 'n hofmeubelstuk is nie maar provinsiaal en boonop koloniaal (*peculiarities characteristics or deviations*).

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<sup>199</sup> Ibid., System 2 No 57 NKV, Maandverslae personeel 1955 - 1963, monthly reports January to April 1955 and December 1958.

<sup>200</sup> Ibid., June 1955.

<sup>201</sup> Ibid., April to May 1955.

<sup>202</sup> Sub-committee minutes, meeting 29 July 1955.

<sup>203</sup> Transvaal Museum Annual Report, 1955 - 1956, departmental report for numismatics and philately, p. 34.

<sup>204</sup> For classification requirements see p. 198 of this research.

Tegniek: Handgemaak; nie besonder fyn afgewerk nie  
(*construction or manufacturing techniques*).

Mate: hoogte van grond tot bo by leuning: 37"

Lengte van mat: 46"

Hoogte van mat: 17  $\frac{3}{4}$ "

Wydte van mat: 19  $\frac{1}{2}$ "

Gesk.: Uit die versameling van Mev. Ds. Elsie van Broekhuysen, (kleindogter van Pres. Kruger,) geb. Eloff, dogter F.C. Eloff. Sy het dit êrens in die Boland gekoop (*history of the object and/or the donor and family*).

Gekoop vir £33 van Ds. van Broekhuysen se dogter, Mev. Elsie van Huyssteen, Smithstraat 176, Muckleneuk, Pta.

Julie 1960 (*donor or manner of collecting and date of collecting*).<sup>205</sup>

One of the most important aspects of documentation is the allocation of a catchword and the formation of a hierarchy of retrieval terms. This has a bearing on both the storage of objects and the compilation of the card catalogue. In the catalogues problems experienced can be seen clearly. For example, should both general and specific terms be used, and in which way should they be used? In many cases an additional term, either general or specific, was added at a later stage, for example:

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<sup>205</sup> The surname of the family is spelled incorrectly in the catalogue; the correct spelling is Van Broekhuizen. [SETTEE 1750  
Cape; stinkwood, two seater, arm rests, back with vertical panels with curved edges and a flower motif carved on each; above the panel on the horizontal curved wood there is also a carved flower pattern; both with a pitted background, as was usual in die middle of the 18th century; 3 legs, in front cabriole legs with ball and claw feet, at the back straight legs; fine cane seating, front and sides shaped; this type of furniture and style is typical of ca. 1750, but the straight lines at the back are not precisely true to that style. The fact that this is not a court piece, but a provincial, and more to the point, a colonial piece of furniture, may serve as an excuse.  
Technique: Handmade; not finished very expertly  
Dimensions: height from ground to arms: 37"  
Length of seating: 46"  
Height of seating: 17  $\frac{3}{4}$ "  
Width of seating: 19  $\frac{1}{2}$ "  
History: From the collection of Mrs the Rev. Elsie van Broekhuysen (granddaughter of President Kruger), born Eloff, daughter of F.C. Eloff. She purchased it somewhere in the Boland.  
Bought for £33 from the daughter of the Rev. van Broekhuysen, Mrs Elsie van Huyssteen, 176 Smith Street, Muckleneuk, Pta.  
July 1960. (Translated from the Afrikaans.)]



- LYFIE (H.C. accession no. 6648/1)  
Rokslyfie  
Vrouelyfie  
Deel van 'n rok  
[Dress, dress bodice, woman's bodice, part of a dress]
- UNIFORM (H.C. accession no. 6874/3)  
Oorlogsdrag of  
Velddrag  
[Uniform, war dress or field dress]
- ROKKIE (H.C. accession no. 6940)  
Doprokkie  
Onderrokkie  
Babarokkie  
[Small dress, christening robe, underdress, baby dress]
- RING (H.C. accession no. 6908/3)  
Vingerring  
[Ring, finger ring]

One of the key premises of collecting as envisaged by Coetzee, was that objects in a cultural history museum should be regarded as culture documents that conveyed a state of mind (Afrikaans: *draers van 'n geestesgesteldheid*). To portray this, she also made use of catchwords, indicating clearly the origin of the object. For example, the catchword Boer made (Afrikaans: *Boeremaak*) was provided and specific events were added, such as objects made by Boer prisoners of war. In other cases the country of origin was indicated (table 5).

TABLE 5

**Examples of catchwords used in the Historiography Catalogue**

<u>H.C. ACCESSION NO.</u>	<u>CATCHWORDS</u>
6429/1	BATAAFSE SILWER [Batavian silver]
6509	PEN Engels - Suid-Afrika [Pen English - South Africa]
6802/4	VURK SILWER, KAAPS [Fork Silver, Cape] Vurk, eetvurk Suid-Afrikaans Kaaps, silwer [Fork, dinner fork, South African, Cape, silver]
6978/20	BORSSPELD Boerekrygsgevangenenewerk [Brooch, Boer prisoner-of-war work]
6914/52	SAKOORLOSIE Switsers [Pocket watch, Swiss]
7737	ROK trourok [Dress, wedding dress] Suid-Afrikaans, Boeremaak [South African, Boer made]
7782	SLOPIE Suid-Afrikaans, Boeremaak (Kaaps) [Pillow case, small, South African, Boer made, Cape]

When she lacked the necessary expertise, Coetzee did not hesitate to ask a knowledgeable person for help. She did so with the classification of a donation of Egyptian objects by requesting the help of Prof. A. van Selms.<sup>206</sup> She also asked J.F. Eloff to help with the classification of ethnology objects.<sup>207</sup> Prof. K.D. Whyte of the Classics Department of Natal University spent two days examining and re-cataloguing the Roman coins.<sup>208</sup>

During Coetzee's visit to Europe in 1959 she made an intensive study of the arts and crafts of ordinary people and those produced by the higher cultural levels. Her investigations were in those countries from which South Africans were derived, in the hope of tracing some relationships between the articles in use in Europe from about 1550 and those made in South Africa in various periods. She also made a study of the methods and tools used in wood, pewter and metal work, glass, pottery, leather and building structures. She did this in order to improve her classification of South African articles.<sup>209</sup>

- Cataloguing

The backlog in documentation was detrimental to the efficient retrieval of information about an object and the object itself. The fact that the staff had to take many hours or even days to trace an object, and the necessity of compiling a detailed index to facilitate this process,<sup>210</sup> was seen as reason enough to increase the number of staff members. This was repeatedly mentioned in the minutes and reports,<sup>211</sup> such as the following:

During the past year it became very apparent that activities at the Old Museum, Kruger House and the Voortrekker Museum could not be satisfactorily carried out by one person, especially in view of the fact that the cataloguing of material, received during the past fifty years, had to be put on a sound basis. As a result an assistant was appointed towards

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<sup>206</sup> Transvaal Museum Annual Report, 1957 - 1958, departmental report for cultural history division, p. 34.

<sup>207</sup> Ibid., p. 35.

<sup>208</sup> Ibid., 1959 - 1960, departmental report for numismatics and philately, p. 42.

<sup>209</sup> Ibid., 1959 - 1960, departmental report cultural history, p. 34.

<sup>210</sup> The card index contained the numbers of the "packs," so that an object could be located easily.

<sup>211</sup> NCHMA, System 2 No 57 NKV, Maandverslae personeel 1955 - 1963, monthly report, September 1958; Sub-committee minutes, meeting 6 February 1959.

the end of the year to type cards for a detailed index catalogue, which is now being prepared. Some 3 500 preliminary entries have already been prepared for typing and inclusion in the permanent card-index. The daily routine of work seeking out antiques, cataloguing, numbering and setting out these items on display has occupied so much time that there has been no opportunity for research, publication or for work on the backlog of cataloguing. With the appointment of an assistant, however, cataloguing can now be taken in hand more actively.<sup>212</sup>

Although an assistant was appointed in 1955,<sup>213</sup> cataloguing accumulated, because it became virtually impossible to complete the documentation that was in arrears while at the same time keeping up with the documentation of new acquisitions. There was not only a backlog in the history collection, but also in the archaeology and ethnology collections, the Kruger House and the Voortrekker Monument Museum. More staff became necessary, and the Department of Education, Arts and Science was repeatedly requested to appoint additional staff members.<sup>214</sup> The lack of staff and the difficulties this created was regarded as a strong motivation for the separation of the cultural history division. The Sub-committee agreed that Van der Westhuysen's proposal, seconded by Behrens, that the cultural history division be split off from the Transvaal Museum to form a separate institution, should be seriously considered.<sup>215</sup>

Although the philately collection was not catalogued (each individual stamp had not been given an accession number and entered into a catalogue), the collection was brought up-to-date by adding historical notes and annotations that involved research.<sup>216</sup> In addition to accessioning cultural history objects, work on the card index was ongoing and significant progress was reported on the compilation of the index.

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<sup>212</sup> Transvaal Museum Annual Report, 1954 - 1955, departmental report history, p. 32.

<sup>213</sup> Ibid., p. 5.

<sup>214</sup> Sub-committee minutes, meeting 6 June 1956.

<sup>215</sup> Ibid., 10 August 1956.

<sup>216</sup> Transvaal Museum Annual Report, 1954 - 1955, departmental report for numismatics and philately, p. 36.

Subject, donor, period, personal and regional cards were now typed. Depending on the work load, some progress was made on the backlog of objects that had been received previously.<sup>217</sup> In the period from 1957 to 1958, for example, an additional 1 545 cards were typed, catching up some of the backlog.<sup>218</sup> At other times very little progress was made.<sup>219</sup> The work was all the more time-consuming because the objects were illustrated on the cards with hand-drawn pencil sketches (figures 63 and 64).<sup>220</sup> The typing had to be done by a trained person, but the staff was simply insufficient, trained or otherwise. When the arrangement, cataloguing and indexing of the Kruger Collection was envisaged the aid of a student who knew something about cataloguing was sought.<sup>221</sup> Despite the fact that the cards were typed by the student,<sup>222</sup> the system could not be fully implemented due to the lack of staff.<sup>223</sup>

Nevertheless every effort was made to keep up with new accessions and in the annual report for 1959 -1960 it was reported that no fewer than 2 131 cards were typed to achieve this goal.<sup>224</sup> With all the new donations the same procedure was followed, namely the objects were catalogued, marked with the accession number and either placed safely in the store or on exhibition.<sup>225</sup> The cataloguing was completed by making index cards for the card catalogue (see table 6).

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<sup>217</sup> Transvaal Museum Annual Report, 1956 - 1957, p. 36.

<sup>218</sup> Ibid., 1957 - 1958, departmental report history, p. 38.

<sup>219</sup> Ibid., 1958 - 1959, p. 38.

<sup>220</sup> Ibid., 1955 - 1956, p. 31; 1958 - 1959, p. 39.

<sup>221</sup> NCHMA, System 1 No 12 TM1/57, letter Coetzee to Prof. A.N. Pelzer, dd 3 October 1957.

<sup>222</sup> Transvaal Museum Annual Report, 1957 - 1958, departmental report for the cultural history division, p. 39.

<sup>223</sup> Ibid., 1961- 1962, departmental report cultural history, p. 33.

<sup>224</sup> Ibid., 1959 - 1960, p. 36.

<sup>225</sup> See for example, Transvaal Museum Annual Report, 1954 - 1955, departmental report history, p. 34; NCHMA, System1 No 11 TM1/56, letter Coetzee to R. Breed, dd 7 September 1956.

It was only in the early 1960s that photographs of new acquisitions were taken to replace the hand-drawn sketches on the index cards; this saved a great deal of time and gave a neater appearance. The first step was taken by the ethnology department.<sup>226</sup> This department sorted the index cards alphabetically according ethnic groups rather than objects.<sup>227</sup> Photographs for the index cards were even taken while on field trips. This proved to be particularly important for certain structures and big objects that could not be removed.<sup>228</sup> A new card system was designed for photographs and the new registration began in July 1958.<sup>229</sup>

TABLE 6  
**Rate of indexing 1953 - 1964**  
(According to annual reports)

<u>YEAR</u>	<u>NEW ACCESSIONS</u>	<u>CARD INDEX</u> <u>New Acquisitions</u>	<u>CARD INDEX</u> <u>Arrears</u>
1953 - 1954	1 430		
1954 - 1955	1 259	3 500	
1955 - 1956	871	2 240	
1956 - 1957	915	730	4 378
1957 - 1958	668	2 255	1 545
1958 - 1959	1 415	1 800	
1959 - 1960	1 041	2 131	
1960 - 1961	No information		
1961 - 1962	900	1 867	

<sup>226</sup> Transvaal Museum Annual Report, 1960 - 1961, departmental report for ethnology and archaeology, p. 35.

<sup>227</sup> NCHMA, System 2 No 57 NKV, Maandverslae personeel 1955 - 1963, monthly report, March 1958.

<sup>228</sup> Transvaal Museum Annual Report, 1962 - 1963, departmental report for ethnology and archaeology, p. 28.

<sup>229</sup> NCHMA, System 2 No 57 NKV, Maandverslae personeel 1955 - 1963, monthly reports, January 1957 and July 1958.

1962 - 1963	1 475	1 489	
1963 - 1964		700	

By 1961 it was reported that there were still hundreds of objects that had been donated before 1953 that had no index cards. Furthermore, nothing had been done in the archaeology collection, where there were more than 9 000 objects without index cards.<sup>230</sup> There was also a backlog of work and confusion in the documentation in the ethnology and archaeology departments.

While the ongoing reorganization of the storerooms continued, many objects were discovered in the historical, anthropological and archaeological collections that had been donated more than 30 years previously and had never been catalogued.<sup>231</sup> In practice this meant that these “old” objects had to undergo the same documentation process as the newly acquired ones. In cases such as these, information had to be sought in old files before the object could be catalogued and then numbered.<sup>232</sup> This process also involved the correction of wrong entries in the catalogue. For example, Coetzee sorted some archaeological tools that had been catalogued in the Historiography Catalogue years ago by Schiel. She also deleted the old numbers and re-catalogued them<sup>233</sup> making the correlation between information in the registers and the index cards.<sup>234</sup> The next year (1962) it was reported that reasonable progress was being made with the re-cataloguing of objects acquired by the Museum in the past, and that 1 498 catalogue cards had been typed and a few hundred provided with a drawing.<sup>235</sup>

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<sup>230</sup> Sub-committee minutes, meetings 3 February 1961 and 3 July 1961.

<sup>231</sup> NCHMA, System 2 No 57 NKV, Maandverslae personeel 1955 - 1963, monthly reports, February - March 1956 and May 1962.

<sup>232</sup> Ibid., monthly reports February and March 1956.

<sup>233</sup> Ibid., monthly report July 1955.

<sup>234</sup> Ibid., monthly reports, December 1959, January and February 1960.

<sup>235</sup> Transvaal Museum Annual Report, 1962 - 1963, departmental report cultural history, p. 25.

### Documentation sources (annexure 3) and their uses

The documentation sources used in the cultural history division remained the same as those in the previous period. They comprised the acquisition entry registers, the catalogues, the loans registers and file and the correspondence files. But there was one significant difference. A voluminous index with a variety of retrieval possibilities was compiled. These sources were used by the staff at the Old Museum, but as researchers made increasing use of the facilities, the index proved a boon for quick retrieval of information and objects.

### **Collections audit**

Stock-taking was reported for the first time in 1961, when the textiles were re-packed and stock accounted for at the same time.<sup>236</sup> In 1964 an official audit of the collection was undertaken. For the first time in the existence of the Museum, an auditor verified the safe-keeping of objects. In the ethnology division some objects in the catalogue and on the card index could not be traced, as the storage location had not been noted. In the cultural history division however, all objects that the auditor asked to see, could be shown to him. He also made recommendations about the security of keys and on the filing of acquisition entry forms.<sup>237</sup>

At the back of volume 5 of the Historiography Catalogue a note, initialled and dated 24 July 1964, was added during the audit inspection to the effect that several pages of the catalogue were missing. In volumes 3, 4 and 5 of the Historiography Catalogue are the initials and a stamp of the Administrative Inspector of the Department of National Education, dated 10 April 1972. These probably refer to an audit inspection.

## **3. CONSERVATION**

From the time of her appointment Coetzee regarded the preservation of objects in the collections as a priority. She reassured donors that the collections were well looked after.

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<sup>236</sup> Transvaal Museum Annual Report, 1961 - 1962, departmental report Old Museum, p. 32.

<sup>237</sup> NCHMA, System 1 No 20 TM1/64, Verslag van werksaamhede van die Ou Museum en Krugerhuis vir die tydperk vanaf 1 April 1964 tot 21 Augustus 1964 (amended), p. 1.



She organized several exhibitions; at none of them were any objects had been lost or broken.<sup>238</sup>

One of the most common problems experienced in a museum is insect infestation. Once this happened, it was virtually impossible to get rid of the pests. For that reasons no new donations were allowed into the Museum before they were treated in the disinfecting room.<sup>239</sup> Infected objects were treated in various ways. San objects were, for example, put in the sun, brushed and re-packed with disinfectant.<sup>240</sup> Others were taken to the fumigation chamber in the entomology department; various disinfectants and preservatives were used, such as para-dichlorbenzene, wood preservative and naphthalene.<sup>241</sup> A flag was even ironed to rid it of moths' eggs.

The first textile preservation was done by Coetzee herself; she personally repaired uniforms and the clothes for the exhibition at the Voortrekker Monument in 1956 and 1957.<sup>242</sup> Furniture and other wooden objects were treated with a special preserving mixture, and leather dressing was imported from England.<sup>243</sup> After his appointment in 1957, the restorer immediately commenced with the restoration of furniture, old weapons, kitchen utensils and farming implements,<sup>244</sup> but was also responsible for general carpentry and had to make replicas of objects as required.<sup>245</sup> The technical assistant who worked under the supervision of Coetzee as textile restorer, also did other restoration work and made replicas.

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<sup>238</sup> Ibid., System 1 No 6 TM1/52 - TM1/53, letter chairperson of the historical display committee to F. Von Reiche, dd 19 January 1952; System 1 No 11 TM1/56, letter Coetzee to D.E. Moodie, dd 1 May 1956.

<sup>239</sup> Ibid., System 1 No 9 TM1/55 Jan - Sept., letter Coetzee to Pretorius, dd 4 February 1955.

<sup>240</sup> Ibid., System 2 No 57 NKV, Maandverslae personeel 1955 - 1963, monthly report March 1955.

<sup>241</sup> Ibid., System 1 No 9 TM1/55 Jan - Sept., letters Coetzee to Pretorius, dd 4 February 1955 and to A. Rothman, dd 8 November 1955; System 2 No 57 NKV, Maandverslae personeel 1955 - 1963, monthly reports, April 1955, May 1957 and January 1959.

<sup>242</sup> Ibid., System 2 No 57 NKV, Maandverslae personeel 1955 - 1963, monthly reports, April 1956 and January 1957.

<sup>243</sup> Ibid., System 1 No 13 TM1/58, letter Coetzee to W.W. Viljoen, dd 10 January 1958.

<sup>244</sup> Transvaal Museum Annual Report, 1956 - 1957, departmental report cultural history, p. 36.

<sup>245</sup> Ibid., 1957 - 1958, pp. 40 - 41.

Restoration was sometimes outsourced when museum staff did not have the necessary expertise. For example, certain documents and Bibles were sent to the bindery at the State Archives for repairs; paintings were sent to J. van Tilburg, who worked under the supervision of Anton Hendriks, the curator of the Johannesburg Art Gallery.<sup>246</sup> The restoration of furniture and paintings was preceded by thorough discussion between the professional officer (Coetzee), the restorers and where necessary other experts. The advice of the Council for Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR), the South African Bureau of Standards (SABS) and the Departments of Agriculture and Forestry were sought in connection with the provision of wood for restoration, the preservation of sandstone, cotton and woollen fabrics, as well as paints and adhesives.<sup>247</sup>

Where no expert could be found, experiments were done in the Museum by Coetzee until the required technique was perfected. For example, books were consulted on beadwork and the techniques subjected to close inspection, firstly by un-threading the beadwork and then by re-stringing the beads with a piece of thread and queen beads. These techniques were demonstrated to the temporary assistant, who soon learnt the craft and restored many pieces most expertly.<sup>248</sup> Unfortunately very little detail is available in the form of reports that explain exactly what restoration techniques were applied. One exception to this is a description in the catalogue on the restoration of a baby cot.<sup>249</sup> Although restoration played a role in the conservation of the collections, general maintenance was also regarded as important and the storerooms and displays were cleaned on a regular basis. Dust proofing was installed in the display cabinets,<sup>250</sup> and the ultra-violet rays were blocked either by painting windows, by fitting ultra-violet resistant glazing or fittings to the display cabinets

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<sup>246</sup> Sub-committee minutes, meeting 6 February 1959.

<sup>247</sup> Transvaal Museum Annual Reports, 1960 - 1961, departmental report cultural history, pp. 33 - 34; 1963 - 1964, p. 11; NCHMA, System 2 No 57 NKV, Maandverslae personeel 1955 - 1963, monthly report January 1958.

<sup>248</sup> Transvaal Museum Annual Report, 1959 - 1960, departmental report for ethnology and archaeology, p. 41.

<sup>249</sup> Historiography Catalogue, vol. 5, H.C. accession no. 7309.

<sup>250</sup> Transvaal Museum Annual Report, 1959 - 1960, departmental report cultural and social history, p. 40.

or by hanging curtains.<sup>251</sup>

Coetzee was aware of the fact that conservation of museum objects was a specialized task and she collected literature on the conservation and preservation of antiques. She visited British and European museums twice in order to improve her knowledge of every aspect of the management of a cultural history museum. During her first tour (March - September 1959) she visited museums in Sweden, Norway, Denmark, the Netherlands, Belgium, Switzerland and Britain. She also visited the restoration departments in the Koninklijke Instituut voor Kunstpatrimonium at Brussels and the National Museum in Copenhagen to glean information on aspects of conservation, such as tools and substances used.<sup>252</sup>

Coetzee's knowledge of and expertise in conservation was also considerably augmented by attending a training course on the conservation of antiquities held at the research laboratories of the British Museum in London from 23 June to 6 July 1963.<sup>253</sup> This was the first time that a member of staff from a South African museum had attended an overseas course in connection with the work done in a cultural history museum. Coetzee received instruction on the most recent scientific findings of relevance to the identification of objects, methods of restoration and care of articles in storage and on display. Special attention was paid to architecture, display techniques, restoration methods and registration systems. During her stay in Europe she also visited museums in Vienna, Nuremberg, Amsterdam, Arnhem, Oxford, Rome and Athens. Back in the Old Museum, research was directed towards discovering substitutes for British preparations in cooperation with the CSIR<sup>254</sup> and the conservation knowledge that she gained was immediately applied in local museums.

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<sup>251</sup> Cultural History Committee minutes, meeting 7 February 1964.

<sup>252</sup> Transvaal Museum Annual Report, 1959 - 1960, departmental report for cultural history, p. 34.

<sup>253</sup> Sub-committee minutes, meeting 24 May 1963.

<sup>254</sup> Transvaal Museum Annual Report, 1963 - 1964 departmental report cultural history, p. 28.

#### 4. TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT

A month after her appointment as professional officer at the Transvaal Museum, Coetzee, who was of the opinion that the collection should be made available for research and study purposes, wrote to the University of Pretoria urging students that were doing cultural history assignments and post-graduate studies to use the material available in the Museum. She pointed out that collections such as the Cape silverware, music composed in honour of Kruger and the Russian tokens of honour to the Boers would all be fruitful for research purposes.<sup>255</sup>

Coetzee was constantly updating and improving her own knowledge and expertise in all aspects of museum work, so she could perfect her day-to-day museological tasks. She also aspired to train staff at the Old Museum, and personnel from other museums received instruction at the Transvaal Museum. She regarded guidance of this nature as an important branch of the activities of the Museum, particularly once the classification and cataloguing of cultural material had been placed on a sound and up-to-date basis.<sup>256</sup>

The Transvaal Museum was regarded as a leading museum in the North, and was therefore in a position to give expert advice to other institutions.<sup>257</sup> Local museums and municipalities such as Rustenburg, Hendrina, Potchefstroom and Ermelo were given guidance on the proper organization of a museum, conservation and exhibitions. Even the curator of the museum on the Fiji Islands was given advice.<sup>258</sup> This soon became an onerous and time-

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<sup>255</sup> NCHMA, System 1 No 6 TM1/52 - 1/53, letter Coetzee to Prof. H.M. van der Westhuysen, dd 6 October 1953.

<sup>256</sup> Transvaal Museum Annual Report, 1957 - 1958, departmental report cultural history division, pp. 36 - 37.

<sup>257</sup> Sub-committee minutes, meeting 3 February 1961.

<sup>258</sup> NCHMA, System 2 No 57 NKV, Maandverslae personeel 1955 - 1963, monthly reports September 1956, November and December 1960 and October 1962.

consuming task, as

more and more towns are coming to regard the Old Museum as the mother institution of the North, as far as cultural history museums are concerned and the museum committees of municipalities are approaching the Old Museum for information on the organization of their collections of cultural history, the type of display cases, the cataloguing and scientific methods of preserving antiques. Every institution ... must be given individual attention as the available buildings and the type of material differ.<sup>259</sup>

The first training course in museum techniques, was held at the Old Museum from 29 June to 3 July 1964, with the approval of the Cultural History Committee.<sup>260</sup> One of the reasons behind the course was that Coetzee had been inundated with so many enquiries that it had become impossible to visit or answer each one individually.<sup>261</sup> It was attended by 24 people and comprised 19 lectures, of which Coetzee presented nine. Instruction was given on museological aspects such as the history of museums, management and organization of a cultural history museum, the identification and collection of objects for cultural history and exhibition methods. Other topics such as registration and cataloguing methods, security for museum objects, field work and museum architecture were discussed by 10 knowledgeable people who were regarded as authorities in their field of expertise. These experts were gleaned from universities, institutions and private practices. W.M.H. Rennhackkamp of the CSIR, for example, spoke on the influence of light, humidity and heat on the colour and texture of museum objects.<sup>262</sup> The training was regarded as the most successful undertaking organized by the Museum in the past 10 years and it proved that museology is indeed a

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<sup>259</sup> Transvaal Museum Annual Report, 1959 - 1960, departmental report cultural history, pp. 36 -37.

<sup>260</sup> Cultural History Committee minutes, meeting 4 December 1963.

<sup>261</sup> NCHMA, System 1 No 20 TM1/64, letter Coetzee to J.W. van Wyk, dd 23 March 1964.

<sup>262</sup> Ibid., Jaarverslag van die voorsitter van die raad van kuratore van die Kultuurhistoriese en Opelugmuseum vir die jaar geëindig 31 Maart 1965, p. 2.

fully-fledged discipline.<sup>263</sup> The course was appreciated by all those who attended.<sup>264</sup>

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Although the above discussions of the collections management practices used in the Transvaal Museum indicate the general trends and the typical changes that took place, the current problems of the National Cultural History Museum can only be fully identified and understood in a detailed account of the previous documentation of the collections. In the two chapters that follow, efforts have been made to trace the development of documentation for each stage of the “lifespan” of objects in the Museum.

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<sup>263</sup> Ibid., System 1 No 19, TM1/63, report on work at the Old Museum and Kruger House, dd 1 April to 21 August 1964; Kotie-Roodt Coetzee Archives, file Kursus in museumwese, programme, Vakansiekursus in museumwese vir die kultuurhistoriese museum, Ou Museum, Pretoria 29 Junie - 3 Julie 1964.

<sup>264</sup> Ibid., System 1 No 20 TM1/64, see for example letter L.S. Kruger to Coetzee, dd 20 July 1964.

## CHAPTER V

### DETAILED ANALYSIS : COLLECTIONS DOCUMENTATION AT THE TRANSVAAL MUSEUM

#### 1913 - 1953

For decades, record-keeping took a back seat to collecting and preserving objects and came to be viewed as a task of secondary importance ... Rather than functioning as a coherent, interrelated system of information, collection documentation at many museums devolved into a series of disjointed, poorly integrated files and ledger books.<sup>1</sup>

In addition to the above, Sarasan is of the opinion that particulars about the collections were also maintained through the collective memory of the staff, and that almost no information exist on the documentation procedures followed by the older generation of curators and other staff members.<sup>2</sup> This, then, is the aim of this chapter: to record in detail the collections documentation of the anthropological, archaeological and historical collections at the Transvaal Museum during the period 1913 - 1953. This, it is argued, will lead to a better understanding of the current documentation situation.

The documentation procedures applied to objects in a collection, according to Roberts,<sup>3</sup> may be broken down into seven stages. These are the pre-entry stage, the entry stage, the acquisition stage (in this case called the cataloguing stage), the post-acquisition stage, the item stage, the output stage and the exit stage. The object documentation of the anthropological, archaeological and historical collections at the Museum has been analyzed in terms of these stages, if applicable. Primarily, the sources used are the extant acquisitions entry registers, catalogues, loans registers, labels and indexes.

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<sup>1</sup> L. Sarasan, Why museum computer projects fail, in A. Fahy (ed.), *Collections management*, p. 187.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> See D.A. Roberts, *Planning the documentation of museum collections*, p. 27.

## 1. PRE-ENTRY STAGE

This stage deals with the management of objects prior to their entry into the museum. This involves the particular way in which information on objects, that may become part of the museum collection by donation, purchase or field work, is recorded and linked to cataloguing.<sup>4</sup>

### **Anthropology**

At the Transvaal Museum anthropological objects were collected during field trips undertaken by the professional officers. Radcliffe-Brown collected Swazi objects in August and September 1924 and later Rossouw collected material in Gazaland and Portuguese East Africa. Whether they made use of field-notes is unknown. Rossouw clearly identified each object that he collected on his field trips by entering them into the catalogue under an appropriate heading.<sup>5</sup>

Without doubt, the most valuable parts of the collection, according to Van Warmelo,<sup>6</sup> were some objects donated by the Department of Native Affairs and the extensive and carefully recorded field-collections made by Beukes from the Sotho, Venda, Tsonga and Xhosa speaking groups.<sup>7</sup> The journeys undertaken by Beukes were very fruitful and the collection was extended considerably. He undertook the following trips:

- 29 June - 4 July 1934                      Portuguese East Africa
- 30 October - 31 October 1934            Enkeldoorn, Pretoria
- 5 January - 24 February 1935           Basutoland and Transkei
- 13 April - 17 April 1935                  Renosterhoek, Rustenburg
- 28 June - 25 July 1935                    Venda
- 16 January - 13 February 1936          Basutoland
- 1937    Sekhukhuneland.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Ibid., pp. 27 and 205.

<sup>5</sup> Main Catalogue of the Department of Ethnology Africa, vol. 2, ET. accession nos. 6818 to 6904.

<sup>6</sup> NCHMA, Diary, FitzSimons, 1947, letter N.J. van Warmelo to FitzSimons, dd 1 January 1946.

<sup>7</sup> C.S. van der Waal, "Geschiedenis van die Volkekunde-afdeling van die Nasko-Museum, Pretoria 1893 - 1977" (unpublished article), pp. 6 - 7.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid., p. 11.



The objects collected by Beukes were entered in a separate catalogue.<sup>9</sup> The information is direct and easy to understand, which is an indication that documentation at the pre-entry stage must have been done efficiently by Beukes himself. He was well-qualified and ably recorded the essential information, meticulously entering the acquisitions in the acquisitions entry registers and catalogues. There is no sign that he used any field work records or notes during cataloguing.

Objects that were donated to the Museum and those that were purchased were sometimes accompanied by basic information.<sup>10</sup> Some were accompanied by letters, such as the descriptions provided by Earthy for the collection from the Chopi and Lenge speaking groups in Mozambique.<sup>11</sup> Beukes solicited objects by asking people for items that he felt might be of interest to the Museum and he followed up old correspondence and previous donations.<sup>12</sup> These actions may be regarded as part of the pre-entry stage. Information obtained in this way was filed on the correspondence files and added either in condensed or complete form to the catalogue. Information in the correspondence files was sometimes added to the relevant accession at a later stage when it was discovered by a curator.<sup>13</sup>

It appears that some objects remained in the pre-entry stage for quite some time. For example, on 3 January 1934 a Masai shield purchased on 21 January 1911 was entered in the Main Catalogue of the Department of Ethnology Africa.<sup>14</sup> Similarly bellows found in

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<sup>9</sup> Catalogue used for the Nel-Blom Collections and collecting done by Dr W.T.H. Beukes.

<sup>10</sup> NCHMA, System 1 No 3 TM1/31 - TM1/33, letter Swierstra to T. Moore, dd 29 June 1933, in which Swierstra thanks the donor for a salt-basket "... the particulars supplied herewith greatly enhance its value from a scientific point of view. It will form a very fine addition to our Ethnological collection".

<sup>11</sup> Ibid., TM137/21 (copy in file Korrespondensie 1921: Etnologie), letter Earthy to the director, dd 17 September 1921 and descriptions; J.A. van Schalkwyk, Radcliffe-Brown at the Transvaal Museum, *Research by the National Cultural History Museum*, vol. 5: 1996, p. 42.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid., System 1 No 4 TM1/34 - TM1/42, letter Beukes to Zammit, dd 14 August 1934, asking for information about boats from Chikomo; System 1 No 3 TM1/31 - TM1/33, letter Beukes to J.H. Grobler, dd 18 December 1933, asking whether he has perhaps made other discoveries in the meantime.

<sup>13</sup> See for example, Main Catalogue of the Department of Ethnology Africa, vol. 1, ET. accession no. 4312, particulars added by Beukes.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid., vol. 2, ET. accession no. 7982.

the storage cupboard without a number or information was only entered into the catalogue in 1934.<sup>15</sup>

### **Archaeology**

The archaeology collection of the Transvaal Museum consisted of objects that had either been donated or purchased. There were also some that were inherited from the Staatsmuseum. Archaeological fieldwork was not undertaken until the 1940s when the assistant for archaeology started examining archaeological sites. A cave on the Gatsrand, in the Potchefstroom district and a gravesite at Pienaar's Poort near Pretoria are two examples.<sup>16</sup> Although there is no indication of pre-entry records of these and other site visits, the entries in the catalogue are efficient and include hand-drawn maps.

### **History**

Potential donations for the historical collection were either brought or sent to the Museum. Alternatively a letter was written, asking whether the Museum was interested in accepting or buying a particular object. Swierstra dealt with such enquiries, but no field work was done.

The information on the stamps included of date of issue, description of definitive or commemorative, the name of designer and/or printer, perforations, watermarks and explanatory historical references. These facts were culled from printed stamp catalogues and magazines, such as the *Gibbons Stamp Monthly*, but other sources were also used if the particulars were not readily available from the catalogues.<sup>17</sup> The numismatics collection of the Transvaal Museum was inherited from the Staatsmuseum. Information on numismatics came from donors or other reference works such as the *Spink & Son's Monthly Numismatic Circular* or the *Encyclopaedia of Gold & Silver Coins of the World*, that were procured by the Staatsmuseum in August 1898, as the subscription for the numismatics periodicals was

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<sup>15</sup> Ibid., ET. accession no. 7995.

<sup>16</sup> Transvaal Museum Annual Report, 1939 - 1940 and 1940 - 1941, reports of the departments of archaeology, ethnology, numismatics and philately, pp. 2 and 1. No corresponding accessions were found.

<sup>17</sup> B.J. Versfeld, The Transvaal Museum postage stamp collection, *Bulletin of the Transvaal Museum*, no. 6, January 1961, p. 3.

discontinued in 1914.<sup>18</sup>

## 2. ENTRY STAGE

The entry stage is concerned with the curation or control of objects when they first enter the museum.<sup>19</sup> The objects received in the Transvaal Museum, whether the result of fieldwork, donation or purchase, were duly entered in four acquisitions entry registers, kept in the administrative office, when they were received.<sup>20</sup> The entries were thus, for the most part, probably written by an administrative staff member and not the curator of the collection. This practice is consistent with the method started at the Staatsmuseum, where objects received were entered into two acquisitions entry registers. The acquisitions covered natural history and anthropological, archaeological and historical objects, and no distinction was made between the different collections or kinds of objects or specimens.

The Staatsmuseum acquisitions entry registers are important because they contain objects that were inherited by the Transvaal Museum and have been re-catalogued from time to time. Some objects dating from the Staatsmuseum may still be traced in the collections today. From a collections management point of view these entry registers constitute the earliest stage in the documentation of the collections of the National Cultural History Museum, Pretoria. In some cases they are the only source because all the objects were not necessarily entered into catalogues.

### **Staatsmuseum**

#### Acquisitions entry register

The first entry register kept by the Staatsmuseum began, in Dutch, with a pasted cutting<sup>21</sup> dated 30 December 1893, signed by the assistant custos [curator], M. Rossteucher, and the chairman of the Curatorium, N. Mansvelt. It records objects numbered 1 to 726, so a

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<sup>18</sup> Transvaal Museum Committee minutes, meeting 7 April 1914.

<sup>19</sup> D.A. Roberts, *Planning the documentation of museum collections*, p. 27.

<sup>20</sup> NCHMA, Box 515, file Memoranda dealing with Tvl Museum matters – space, finance, collections etc. etc. 1955, Functions of a museum – Transvaal Museum, p. 3.

<sup>21</sup> Lists of donations were printed in newspapers.

numerical sequence was used. The objects were divided into 18 categories.

This is followed by a monthly handwritten register of new acquisitions, starting in January 1894 and ending in December 1897. The acquisitions are numbered consecutively from 727 to 4732. This means that even more than 4 732 objects were received into the Staatsmuseum's collection during this period because a set or group was sometimes acquisitioned as a single unit. For example:

- Acquisition no. 4351: Drie honderd Planten uit het Dist Lijdenburg  
[Three hundred plants from the Lydenburg district]
- Acquisition no. 4340: Een aantal munten  
[A number of coins]
- Acquisition no. 3869: Kraalwerk Zwasi  
[Swazi beadwork]
- Acquisition no. 3182: 23 stuks Boschjesman-gereedschappen  
[23 pieces of San implements].

There was no further attempt to classify or arrange the acquisitions into categories, except where a group of similar objects was received simultaneously, for example, a group of coins. The acquisitioning indicates that the objects or specimens were acquisitioned as they were received. In a few additional newspaper cuttings pasted in the back of the register, the objects were categorized.

The second register starts with the heading "Lyst van Geschenken voor het Staatsmuseum van af 1 Sept 1897" [List of Donations to the Staatsmuseum from 1 September 1897]. The first acquisitions, covering the period September to December 1897, are not consistent with the last acquisitions of the same period in the first register. The language is still Dutch and the acquisitions are again given per month up to September 1898. From October 1898 the information is given in columns with the headings: "Datum, Be/Omschrijving van voorwerp, Aangekocht van/Geschenk van, Adres" [Date, Description of object, Purchased from or Donated by and Address] (figure 21).

The headings of the columns changed several times in order to add information, such as the number of objects and remarks. In this register there is no consecutive numbering. Some

acquisitions were numbered per month, or per year while others were not numbered. A set or group was sometimes, as previously, acquisitioned as one unit. Not all objects received were entered into the register.<sup>22</sup> The last object, a Canadian note of 25 cents, was received on 28 August 1900, almost three months after the occupation of Pretoria by British forces.

The essential information in the entry register consists of the object or specimen name and the name of the donor, seller, or lender and the date of acquisition. Additional information on the history or provenance of the acquisition is sometimes given, for example:

Acquisition no. 2012: Een zilveren Bandelieggespen door zijn oor oor groot vader Jean Labuschagne naar Afrika gebracht. [One silver bandolier clasp, brought to Africa by his great-grandfather, Jean Labuschagne.]

In the acquisitions entry registers references are made to various catalogues that were compiled after the Anglo-Boer War (figure 21). The annotated acquisitions correspond with those in the various catalogues as indicated, but not all acquisitions have been designated in this way.

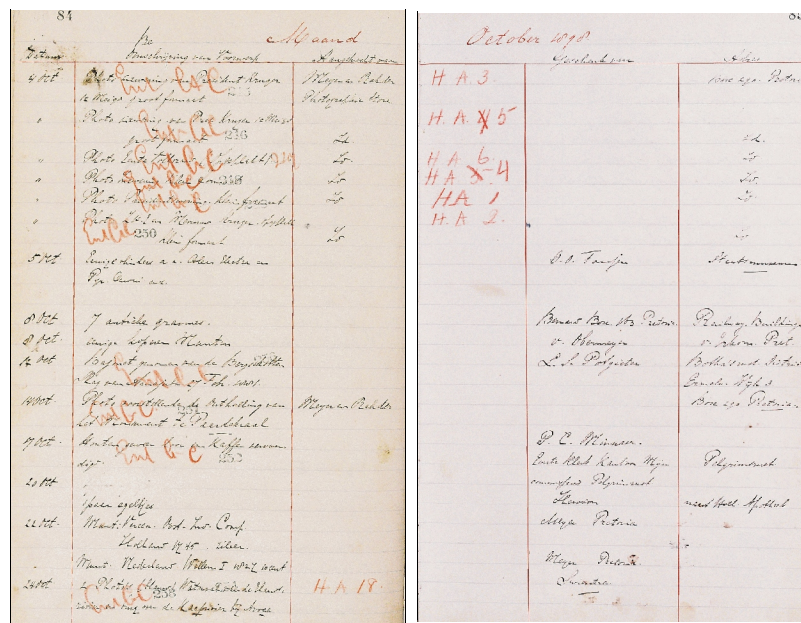
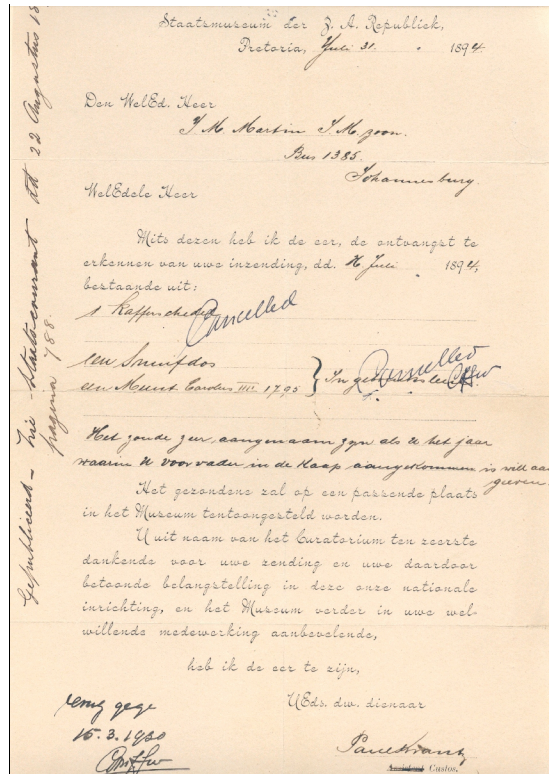


Figure 21

Page from the Acquisitions entry register of the Staatsmuseum, showing the headings and annotations

<sup>22</sup> See for example, Main Catalogue of the Department of Ethnology Africa, vol. 1, ET. accession nos. 3922 to 3954, which were presented by J.T.E. Canneel in January 1898. They could not be traced in the Staatsmuseum Acquisitions entry registers under that date, although there is a similar donation, dated 14 March 1898.



**Figure 22**

The entry form used by the Staatsmuseum for new acquisitions

### Entry form

Acquisitions were acknowledged by means of an entry form (figure 22), with standard wording, thanking the donor for the presentation in the name of the Curatorium and promising to display the objects in the Museum. As far as can be ascertained no copies of the entry forms were kept by the Staatsmuseum.

## **Transvaal Museum**

### Acquisitions entry register

The entries in the registers are in English, but from 1940 some are given in Afrikaans. The first register deals with the period 1906 to 1908, indicating clearly that in the aftermath of the Anglo-Boer War little attention was paid either by the public or by the Museum to the anthropological, archaeological and historical collections. The first recorded acquisitions date from 1 July 1906, namely three Basotho bracelets. In total, 257 acquisitions were received up to 17 September 1906 for that year. The majority are natural history objects and



literature, with only 12 anthropological, archaeological and historical objects. There is among others a stone axe (no. 2), a double-barreled percussion lock fowling piece, made by Joe Manton (no. 19), a sewing machine picked up in the veldt during the war (no. 30), and a pipe from 1853, an old Bible and a marriage waistcoat, dating from 1860 (no. 68).

The acquisitions for 1907 begin in July 1907, and 50 acquisitions were received up to 30 December 1907, of which nine were anthropological, archaeological and historical objects. The entries include two shields, one assegai, two wooden dishes and one wooden pillow, with the remark that these were picked up on the battlefield during the [Bambatha?] rebellion of 1906. Only one acquisition is recorded for 1908, namely three serviette rings, one egg cup, two spoons and one pen holder, purchased and made in Ceylon by a prisoner of war, and given the number 51 (the acquisition numbers for 1908 continued from number 50).

The next acquisitions entry register was opened with acquisitions acquired in November 1927. It covers the period up to March 1938 (acquisition numbers 1 to 3043). This register was begun by the director, who informed the Museum Committee “that a separate Acquisition Book had been started, where all acquisitions were recorded from month to month and from which a list was drawn up & published monthly in several Newspapers”.<sup>23</sup>

All acquisitions received by the Transvaal Museum, including natural history specimens and anthropological, archaeological and historical objects, were recorded and given an acquisition number that was called a general reference number or a general serial number. Therefore one finds that acquisitions such as bird skins, Paul Kruger’s hair in a frame, a striped lizard, a Voortrekker double-barreled gun, powder horn and bullet mould, herbarium specimens, a newspaper article, section of a tree eaten by white ants, government notes, two geckos and a native assegai may follow one another at random (figure 23).

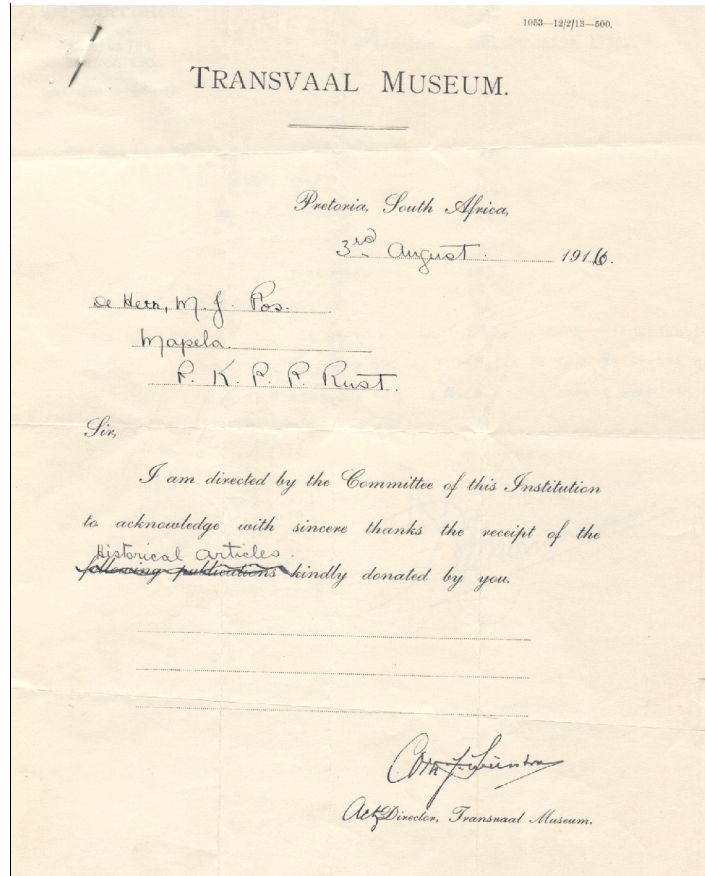
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<sup>23</sup> Transvaal Museum Committee minutes, meeting 15 December 1927.





in this register. Volume 4 covers the period 27 March 1952 to 20 May 1966 (acquisition numbers 4783 - 7023), and follows the same pattern as the previous registers.



**Figure 24**

The entry form used by the Transvaal Museum for new acquisitions

### Entry form

The first entry form used by the Transvaal Museum was a printed letter, to be completed as required (figure 24),<sup>26</sup> but a blank note with the letterhead of the Museum was also used. As far as can be ascertained no copies of the entry forms were kept at the Museum from 1913 to 1953. A letter of thanks was written to the donor, particularly if additional information in respect of the objects had been provided.<sup>27</sup>

<sup>26</sup> NCHMA, Box 515, TM5/8, entry form Swierstra to M.J. Pos, dd 3 August 1916.

<sup>27</sup> See as examples, *ibid.*, Letterbook 4, letters Breijer to Mrs Botha, dd 28 July 1919 and System 1 No 3 TM1/31 - TM1/33, letter Swierstra to M. du Toit, dd 26 January 1933.

### 3. CATALOGUING (ACQUISITION) STAGE

Roberts defines the acquisition stage as the curation and control of items during their formal incorporation into the collection, either as a permanent accession or long-term loan.<sup>28</sup> The process of formal incorporation entails the allocation of an accession number to the object in an accessions register; this was called the catalogue at the Transvaal Museum. Preference is therefore given to the term cataloguing instead of acquisitioning in this context.

#### **Permanent accessions : general**

##### General Catalogue

Probably during the Anglo-Boer War or shortly thereafter a G.C.<sup>29</sup> [General Catalogue?]<sup>30</sup> was compiled in English. The work was done primarily by Gunning. This is the only general catalogue for the anthropological, archaeological and historical collections at the Transvaal Museum that could be found and it contains accession numbers 1 to 1054. Whether this was actually an attempt to begin a new acquisitions entry register or a new catalogue for the new dispensation is not clear. For the purpose of this research, this record is regarded as a catalogue.

A decision must already have been taken to compile other catalogues, with the result that each accession in the General Catalogue is preceded by a rectangular stamp (figure 25) with the following information:

No  
Received  
Entered  
Replied

Not all these categories were completed for each accession, notably the categories “Received” and “Replied”. The General Catalogue accession number in the margin was

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<sup>28</sup> D.A. Roberts, *Planning the documentation of museum collections*, p. 27.

<sup>29</sup> Letter codes were used to distinguish between the different catalogues/collections. For example, H. was used as abbreviation for historical and E., Eth. or ET. for ethnological objects (see annexure 3). There is no indication of the date when the use of codes was made compulsory and added to the accession number on the objects. In this research code letters are used to facilitate comprehension, except where no code letters exist, for example for the Coins and Medals Catalogue.

<sup>30</sup> There is no name or heading in the catalogue.

always repeated in the “No” (number) category and the new catalogue number written in the “Entered” category, thus adding yet another number to the object and indicating that the object had been accessioned in another catalogue.

The Eth. numbers referred to in the General Catalogue in the category “Entered”, probably refer to an ethnology catalogue that had been mislaid, or to the so-called Ethnographica Catalogue. They (the Eth. numbers) do not correspond with the accession numbers given to the same objects in the first extant catalogue used at the Transvaal Museum for the anthropological collection, the Ethnographic Catalogue Africa (E. Catalogue). There had probably been some attempt to correlate the Eth. numbers in the General Catalogue with the E.C. numbers as there are pencilled Eth. numbers in the Ethnographic Catalogue Africa (E. Catalogue).<sup>31</sup> The same happened with objects in the General Catalogue that have been accessioned in the E.E. Catalogue there are corresponding pencilled Eth. numbers that appear in the General Catalogue and the E.E. Catalogue.<sup>32</sup> The highest Eth. number in the General Catalogue is Eth. 781<sup>33</sup> (corresponding to E.C. accession number 288). As these pencilled Eth. numbers go up to 1221 - 1222<sup>34</sup> the lost ethnology catalogue must have contained at least that many accessions.

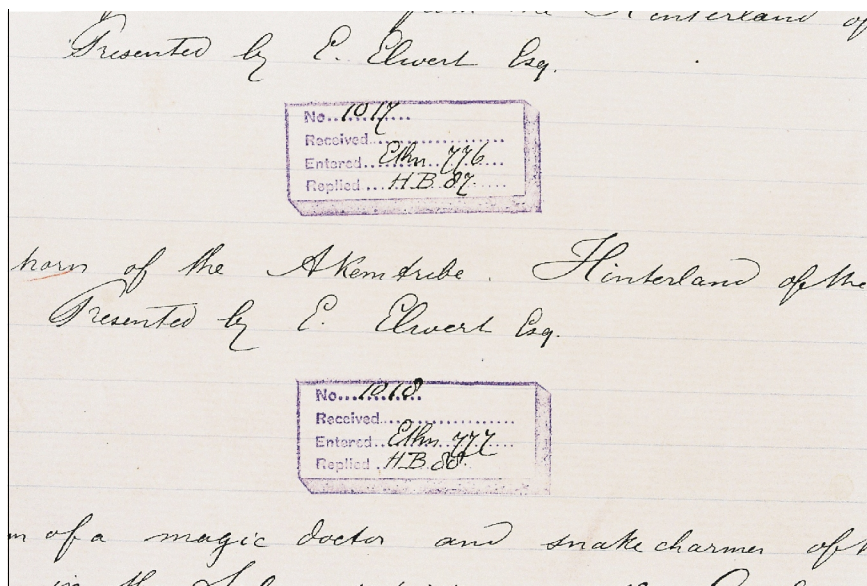
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<sup>31</sup> Baskets made of grass, accessioned as G.C. accession nos. 1002 - 1003, appear as E.C. accession no. 271, with the pencilled Eth. accession nos. 761 - 763, as they have been entered in the G.C. rectangular stamp.

<sup>32</sup> A Chinese fine hair comb and brush accessioned as G.C. accession no. 1008 appear as E.E. accession no. 47, with the pencilled Eth. accession no. 767, as they have been entered in the G.C. rectangular stamp. When Ratcliffe-Brown accessioned the comb in 1921 in the Main Catalogue of the Department of Ethnology Africa, vol. 1, ET. accession no. 3984 the brush had apparently already been lost or mislaid. Since 1921 the comb has thus had four accession numbers.

<sup>33</sup> According to a note written in the Main Catalogue of the Department of Ethnology Africa, vol. 1, p. 280, the final accession number in the Ethnographica Catalogue (E) was 781, which has since been lost.

<sup>34</sup> Indicated at E.C. accession no. 446.



**Figure 25**

Page from the only General Catalogue of the Transvaal Museum  
with rectangular stamps

In the General Catalogue there are references to H.A. and H.B. accession numbers, but the opposite also happened: the General Catalogue numbers were written in the H. catalogues by referring to G.C. Page ... No ... The General Catalogue contains a variety of objects that were received by the Staatsmuseum, such as documents, newspapers, photographs, Bibles, spoons, assegais, spears, arrows and coins, but also eggs, skulls and trunks. The last few accessions may well be new, but no dates are given. There is only one additional note in this catalogue, and this is a reference to the H.C. Catalogue.<sup>35</sup> In this respect the General Catalogue differs from all the other catalogues, which abound with notes and cross-references that have been added at a later stage.

### **Permanent accessions : Anthropological collection**

Apart from new objects obtained for the ethnology collection during the early years at the Transvaal Museum, there also was the existing ethnology collection of the Staatsmuseum.

<sup>35</sup>

The note on page 8 reads: Ent. HC 168.

Staatmuseum

At the beginning of the first acquisitions entry register of the Staatmuseum the categorized sections included “Ethnographische Voorwerpen” [Ethnographic objects] and listed ten objects. The section “Antropologische Voorwerpen” [Anthropological objects] listed two skulls.<sup>36</sup> Under the category “Diverse Voorwerpen” [Diverse objects] is mentioned a small collection “Kaffercuriositeiten, wapenen, gereedschappen, enz.” [African curios, weapons, tools, etc.]. This was also done in the printouts that followed, but in the registers there were no further attempts to categorize or classify, the objects were simply acquisitioned as they were received.

- Catalogus der Etnographische Collectie van het Staats Museum (Catalogue P)  
[Catalogue for the Ethnographic Collection of the Staatmuseum]

The Staatmuseum used an accessions register, called a catalogue, for its ethnology collection, with the heading “Catalogus der Etnographische Collectie van het Staats Museum. Alle voorwerpen zijn gemerkt P”. This probably means that the objects themselves were marked with the code letter P (figure 26). According to the label on the cover this was Catalogue II.<sup>37</sup> A note by Rossouw, probably made in 1924, also indicates that this catalogue was designated Catalogue P. The letter P in the card index and in the Main Catalogue of the Department of Ethnology Africa refers to this Staatmuseum catalogue. It is also the first indication that there was an existing card index.

The catalogue is written in Dutch and the objects are numbered 1 to 1522. An additional note on a loose page identifies (with a red cross) objects that were sent to the Exhibition in Paris in 1899 on loan. The note also indicates that all objects of Bawenda or Bagwamba origin were bought from J. Flygare<sup>38</sup> by the Commission that handled the Paris Exhibition and that these had been donated to the Staatmuseum,<sup>39</sup> but that there was no further indication to this effect in the catalogue (Dutch: *zonder verdere aanduiding*).

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<sup>36</sup> This is consistent with the field of study of anthropology at that time, i.e. the study of physical anthropology.

<sup>37</sup> There is no indication so far (2005) of a Catalogue I.

<sup>38</sup> Johannes Flygare (1868 - 1899) published a booklet on “De Zoutpansbergen en de Bawenda natie” in 1899, a copy of which he presented to Gunning. It is still in the library of the National Cultural History Museum.

<sup>39</sup> The ZAR took part in an international exhibition held in Paris in 1900 and won twelve awards. See S. Brink, Die Zuid-Afrikaansche Republiek se deelname aan die Internasionale tentoonstelling in 1900 in Parys, Frankryk. *Navorsing deur die Nasionale Kulturhistoriese Museum*, 2(4), 1992, pp. 119 - 146.





**Figure 26**

Neck rest in the anthropology collection of the National Cultural History Museum,  
still marked with the letter P on the right  
(Collection: National Cultural History Museum ET. 140)

Objects in the two Staatsmuseum acquisitions entry registers were accessioned in the above catalogue.<sup>40</sup> In this catalogue some objects have been annotated later in various ways, for example, with the word “Entered” (in red pencil), Ent GC (red pencil), Ent. GC with numbers (pencil) and Ent M.C. with numbers (red ink). The annotations are indications that the re-accessioning of the collections was done after the Anglo-Boer War, as they are in English. They also indicate that some, but not all the objects, have been re-entered in various catalogues at the Transvaal Museum. For example, the reference GC refers to objects re-accessioned in the General Catalogue. Some of the objects without any note or cross reference have also been re-accessioned. This means that there is a degree of inconsistency in the annotations.<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>40</sup> See for example, Staatsmuseum Acquisitions entry register, vol. 1, acquisition no. 71 and Catalogus der Etnographische Collectie, P. accession no.123, knopkieries found on location in Zululand where Prince Napoleon fell in battle.

<sup>41</sup> See for example, Catalogus der Etnographische Collectie, P. accession no. 569 and General Catalogue, G.C. accession no. 601, madolla's (witchcraft implements) found in the royal hut of M'Pefu.

### Transvaal Museum

- Ethnographic Catalogue Africa  
(E. Catalogue)

The first extant catalogue for the ethnology collection at the Transvaal Museum was the Ethnographic Catalogue Africa, designated E.C. (ECat), as identified in two comments by Rossouw in February 1924.<sup>42</sup> This catalogue was started after the Anglo-Boer War as the date on the fly-leaf is 1904 and had already been abandoned when Rossouw located it. According to a label on the cover this was Catalogue III.

In the catalogue there is also a variety of notes, for example, numbers that refer to the Eth. accession numbers in the General Catalogue (in pencil), numbers written above each other separated by a line (red ink), the letter C and Ent. M.C. with numbers (blue and red ink). There are also additions here and there and some changes to the object descriptions.

The catalogue was written in English, with accession numbers 1 to 797. It cannot be regarded as a copy of the *Catalogus der Etnographische Collectie van het Staats Museum*, as it contains fewer entries (797 in comparison to 1 522). On the other hand, most of the entries in the Ethnographic Catalogue Africa were, according to Rossouw, transferred to the Main Catalogue of the Department of Ethnology Africa and the historical catalogues.<sup>43</sup> This was not done in the case of all objects, but quite how choices were made is not clear. Nor is there any apparent reason why this catalogue was abandoned in favour of a new Main Catalogue. The catalogue was probably withdrawn in 1908, or shortly afterwards, because, although very few entries are dated, one of the last accessions was donated to the Transvaal Museum in 1908.<sup>44</sup>

There are objects in the Ethnographic Catalogue Africa (E.Catalogue) that can be traced back to the acquisitions entry registers, as well as the *Catalogus der Etnographische Collectie* of the Staatsmuseum and sometimes to the General Catalogue (and even to the lost ethnology catalogue and the *Ethnographica Catalogue*, should they be found) and

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<sup>42</sup> Notes by Rossouw on the front page and p. 1 of the catalogue.

<sup>43</sup> Ethnographic Catalogue Africa, note on front page.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*, E.C. accession no. 715, i.e. an accession number in the last hundred accessions; Transvaal Museum Annual Report, 1907 - 1908, p.14.

forward to the new ethnology catalogue of the Transvaal Museum. This means that some objects have been acquisitioned and catalogued no less than five or six times (figure 27).<sup>45</sup> The description of the object may also differ: in four of the five entries it may almost be exactly the same, but in one less or more information is sometimes given.<sup>46</sup> There is no indication of the source of such additional particulars.



**Figure 27**

Although six acquisition and accession numbers  
have been allocated to this pot, only two numbers were marked on the object,  
and the final number, ET. 5085, is given twice  
(Collection: National Cultural History Museum, ET. 5085)

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<sup>45</sup> For example, a pot, dug up on the farm Buffelshoek and made c. 1836, has had six numbers, viz. Staatsmuseum acquisition entry register no. 4413, and the following accession numbers, Catalogus der Etnographische Collectie, P. no. 1175, General Catalogue, G.C. no. 320, Ethnographica Catalogue, Eth. 79, Ethnographic Catalogue Africa, E.C. no. 24 and Main Catalogue of the Department of Ethnology, vol. 2, no. 5085.

<sup>46</sup> Compare the description "Pot opgegraven op de plaats 'Buffelshoek' Vaalrivier, distr. Potchestroom, in een voor ongeveer 60 à 70 jaar verlaten kafferkraal vroeger bewoond door de 'Bantukaffers', welke door 'Moselikatze' in de jaren 1824 - 30 vermoord zijn" in the Catalogus der Etnographische Collectie with the condensed description "Old Bantu kaffir pot; dug out at the farm Buffelshoek. This pot was made about 1836" in the Ethnographic Catalogue Africa. [Pot dug up at the farm Buffelshoek, Vaal River, district Potchefstroom, in African kraal which had been abandoned for 60 to 70 years. It was inhabited by indigenous blacks, who were murdered by Mzilikazi during the years 1824 to 1830. (Translated from the Dutch.)]



New objects, either donated or purchased, were also entered into the Ethnographic Catalogue Africa, for example, objects either bought from or presented by J.R. Ivy, a dealer in curios in Pretoria. Towards the end the purpose of the catalogued changed somewhat and included items that should have been part of the historical collection.<sup>47</sup>

- E. E. Catalogue

According to an undated note by Rossouw there is also an E. E. Catalogue.<sup>48</sup> This catalogue contains accessions numbers 1 to 117 and seems to have been used for non-Southern African objects, for example, those that came from Batavia, Java, China, India, New Guinea, North America, New Zealand, Holland, Egypt and Crete.

The catalogue was annotated with notes in pencil, blue ink and blue pencil, referring to E or M E C followed by a number. These numbers refer to numbers in the Main Catalogue of the Department of Ethnology Africa, vol 1. Pencilled numbers refer to the Eth. numbers given to objects in the General Catalogue. There are references to various other catalogues too, such as P. Cat, and C. Cat. A few items have been allocated to the H.C. and A.C. Catalogues. The initial re-accessioning in the Main Catalogue was done by unknown persons, but Radcliffe-Brown and Rossouw were responsible for some re-accessioning. A.J. Swierstra wrote A.C. and H.C. cross references, dating one of his notes 8/5/34. There are also notes by Coetzee. This means that the catalogue was still consulted as late as 1953 and was probably still in a bound volume at the time. A few items were reported missing during re-accessioning.

Most of the items seem to have been received at the end of the nineteenth century, but again there are items in the acquisitions entry registers of the Staatsmuseum that also appear in this register. The information in the E.E. Catalogue is very basic, with only the name of the object, occasionally with the donor and date. In a few instances additional information has been added.

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<sup>47</sup> For example, Ethnographic Catalogue Africa, E.C. accession no. 758, an old boerewoman's kappie.

<sup>48</sup> At present (2005) consisting of unnumbered loose pages cut from a register, without any heading except Rossouw's note. The E.E. may be an abbreviation for Ethnology European or Ethnology Elsewhere.

- Main Catalogue of the Department of Ethnology Africa (ET.)

This catalogue is still used by the National Cultural History Museum, Pretoria, for its Anthropology Collection.

- Volume 1

Volume 1 was probably started in 1912 or 1913, with the first few accessions being clay pots, purchased by Swierstra in January 1912. The next date is May 1911 (accession numbers 78, 84, 86, 87, 88, 89, 104 and others). Objects donated in 1898 only appear under accession numbers 3922 to 3954, and the Leith Collection, purchased by the Museum in 1905,<sup>49</sup> follows from accession number 1512, but objects donated by Trevor in 1909 appears in accession numbers 1911 to 1937. It is clear that the objects were not entered in any specific order, either in terms of the previous catalogues, or as new objects were received. Nor were they entered according to a system of classification.

As is the case with the other catalogues, this catalogue contains new purchases, new donations and objects from previous collections and catalogues. There are many references to the previous catalogues. Sometimes these are correct, but there are also those that are incorrect or obscure.<sup>50</sup> For example, accession numbers 198, 224, 225 and 226 are annotated “From the old Collection”. The corresponding numbers in the Ethnographic Catalogue Africa (E Catalogue) are correct, but numbers added to both catalogues probably refer to the mislaid catalogues. Acquisitions registered in the E. E. Catalogue were also re-accessioned in the Main Catalogue.

The catalogue was regarded as a basic workbook by the ethnology curators and it abounds with notes, annotations and references, often making it difficult to read. It is clear that the first keeper in charge of the ethnology collection, Swierstra, and the three professional curators for ethnology (Radcliffe-Brown, Rossouw and Beukes), did not always agree on the information that was written down. Nor did they regard all objects as being worthy of collecting or placing in the collection. They made their divergent opinions quite clear in the catalogue.

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<sup>49</sup> The Leith collection was bought with contributions of members of the public and the Museum Committee. E. Grobler, “Die Staatsmuseum van die Zuid-Afrikaansche Republiek en sy historiese en etnografiese versamelings” (unpublished M.A. dissertation, University of Pretoria, 1994), pp. 229 - 230.

<sup>50</sup> In the Main Catalogue of the Department of Ethnology Africa, vol.1, p. 280, note 1, Rossouw gives an explanation of the problems he encountered with regard to the cross reference techniques previously used.

Accession numbers 1 to 1501 were recorded by unknown registrars,<sup>51</sup> but Radcliffe-Brown accessioned numbers 1502 to 4896. He had to contend with objects that had been in the collection for many years, such as the Leith Collection.<sup>52</sup> Although Radcliffe-Brown wrote that the collection was not catalogued by Leith and many of the specimens had not been marked,<sup>53</sup> he does refer to “Leith’s own catalogue” by numbers.<sup>54</sup> These (Leith’s) numbers should not be confused with the accession numbers of the Transvaal Museum catalogues. Where there was no record, Radcliffe-Brown noted that this was the case.<sup>55</sup> Radcliffe-Brown also refers to the Ethnographic Catalogue Africa (E Catalogue) and accession numbers in the mislaid catalogue.

Volume 1 of the Main Catalogue of the Department of Ethnology Africa was continued by Rossouw with accession numbers from 4897 to 4945. This means that Rossouw accessioned 50 objects from 1 to 8 February 1924. Rossouw was the first curator who tried to make sense of the existing registers and catalogues. He gave a lucid explanation of what he intended to do about previous accessions.<sup>56</sup> He also wrote a clear heading to volume 1 of the Main Catalogue of the Department of Ethnology, and ended the volume with this note: “This book is continued in Main Ethnographic Catalogue Vol 2 GSHR. Feb 8 - 1924”.

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<sup>51</sup> One may have been J.T. Jenkins, a clerk at the Museum. The Museum Committee gave the acting director permission to utilize his services for cataloging. Transvaal Museum Committee minutes, meeting 15 July 1913. The same handwriting appears in several catalogues, such as the Historiography, the E.E., the Coins and Medals and the H.A. Catalogues.

<sup>52</sup> E. Grobler, “Die Staatsmuseum van die Zuid-Afrikaansche Republiek en sy historiese en etnografiese versamelings” (unpublished M.A. dissertation, University of Pretoria, 1994), pp. 229 - 230.

<sup>53</sup> NCHMA, Letterbook 5, letter Radcliffe-Brown to J Hewitt, dd 5 March 1921.

<sup>54</sup> For example, Main Catalogue of the Department of Ethnology Africa, vol. 1, ET. accession nos. 2361 to 2496.

<sup>55</sup> For example, *ibid.*, ET. accession nos. 1851 and 1854.

<sup>56</sup> Rossouw writes that no cross references will be given in the Main Catalogue, but that objects already accessioned in previous ethnology catalogues will be viewed and then entered into the Main Catalogue by continuation number. The cross references will be made in the previous catalogues. *Ibid.*, pp. 280 - 281, note II.

- Volume 2

Volume 2 is again clearly identified as

The Transvaal Museum

Main Catalogue of the Department of Ethnology

Africa Vol II Continued from Vol I

note This catalogue started 8 Feb - 1924 GSHR.

In March 1924 Rossouw wrote the following note:

Henceforth entries made in this catalogue will have the year when specimen was received at the Museum attached. When the year number is not given then specimen was received prior to June 1921. Specimens having numbers like 21/1 to 21/156 and 22/1 to 22/31 have been numbered by Professor A. R. Radcliffe-Brown and will be given their continuation numbers of this catalogue. The 21 and 22 of Radcliffe-Brown's numbers refer to 1921 & 1922. Fairly full descriptions and correspondence references will be given where possible.

G.S.H. Rossouw 15/3/24.<sup>57</sup>

No objects using the above numbering system by Radcliffe-Brown are recorded in a catalogue, but it is possible that he visited the Museum as honorary curator for ethnology and numbered objects during these visits without actually entering them in a catalogue. There are objects in the collection marked with these numbers, such as the Earthy Collection, which he was instrumental in obtaining for the Museum.<sup>58</sup> These objects have also been allocated numbers in the Main Catalogue of the Department of Ethnology Africa, vol. 2 – again a case where objects received at least two accession numbers and were marked in this way (figure 28).

Rossouw was responsible for the accessions up to ET. accession number 7364, May 1925. In many cases Rossouw wrote the year in which the object was received at the end of the entry, namely 1922, 1923, 1924, etc. In some, but not all cases, a note was made, such as “(prior to 1921)”. As is the case with volume 1, objects received by the Transvaal Museum and even the Staatsmuseum over a long period were entered into the catalogue by Rossouw

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<sup>57</sup> Ibid., vol. 2, pp. 21 - 22.

<sup>58</sup> J.A. van Schalkwyk, Radcliffe-Brown at the Transvaal Museum, *Research by the National Cultural History Museum*, vol. 5: 1996, p. 42.

in the years 1924 to 1925.<sup>59</sup> Again, although the so-called Historiography Catalogue already existed, historical items were entered into this catalogue.<sup>60</sup> Some of these were re-accessioned in the Historiography Catalogue and the numbers annotated.<sup>61</sup>



**Figure 28**

Fertility doll purchased by Dora Earthy, accessioned by Radcliffe-Brown (left) and Rossouw (right), with no code letters, with the original label attached by Earthy still intact (2005)

(Collection: National Cultural History Museum ET. 6446)

There is no indication who accessioned object numbers 7365 to 7909, but Beukes, who regarded cataloguing as part of his curatorial duties and reported on this annually was responsible for the cataloguing of numbers 7910 to 8001 (except 7996). Again these objects include items obtained before Beukes' time, as well as objects that were purchased and donated. The catalogue was kept up until October 1934 with three additional accessions by A.J. Swierstra, and thereafter no other objects were registered in this catalogue for five years. In 1939 accessioning was re-started by Haughton with a large collection donated by

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<sup>59</sup> For example, a collection of ostrich eggs, shell beads and perforated pieces, donated in 1905 was accessioned as Main Catalogue of the Department of Ethnology Africa, vol. 2, ET. accession no. 6159.

<sup>60</sup> For example, a revolver (*ibid.*, ET. accession no. 7398), Voortrekker toys (ET. accession no. 7409), and an old Dutch Bible (ET. accession no. 7574).

<sup>61</sup> For example, *ibid.*, ET. accession no. 7572 is described as a small wooden butter or milk tub, with no particulars, but probably of Voortrekker manufacture, with note: "Entered H.C. 3373 A.J. Swierstra".

the Native Affairs Department, Pretoria. Objects were accessioned until 1945. Haughton usually wrote the date of the acquisition or acquisition number and the Museum file reference. She was responsible for accessioning up to number 8648.

The catalogue was clearly scrutinized by later staff members and there are many additional numbers, names, re-accessioning and notes on identification, authenticity, files and loans. Some pages were also cut out (between pages 121 and 122 and 209 and 210, for example). The Main Catalogue is boldly cancelled with red ink to show which numbers have been re-allocated to the archaeological collection.

- Catalogue used for the Nel-Blom Collection and collecting done by Dr W.T.H. Beukes

For the years 1934 (overlapping slightly with the Main Catalogue of the Department of Ethnology Africa) to 1937, Beukes used a new catalogue for the objects collected on fieldwork, purchases, exchanges and donations. He introduced a new system, combining the year (19)34, (19)35, (19)36 and (19)37, with the object number, starting with number one each year.

The first 252 and a few other accession numbers in this catalogue refer to the Nel-Blom loan received from the University of Pretoria.<sup>62</sup> The numbers 1 to 252 were written by A.J. Swierstra, the assistant for ethnology who worked under Beukes' supervision and have not, moreover, been prefixed with 1934 or 34. The first number entered in this way is 34:253 by Beukes, but no letter code was used.

The documentation done by Beukes was of a high standard. He differentiated between his fieldwork expeditions, giving place and dates.<sup>63</sup> Each object is clearly named, in Afrikaans and the indigenous language. Objects are described and often he also gives an explanation

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<sup>62</sup> At present (2005) there are also two catalogues from the University of Pretoria, presented to the National Cultural History Museum in 1997, one with the heading "Universiteit van Pretoria. Dept van Bantoeïstiek Etnografiese Versameling". It contains information on the loan. The other catalogue, without any caption, contains information on the gifts to M.C. de Wet Nel.

<sup>63</sup> For example, "Die volgende voorwerpe is aangekoop deur W.T. Beukes, gedurende 'n ondersoektog na Basoetoeland en die Transkei. 5 Januarie - 24 Feb 1935" [The following objects were purchased by W.T. Beukes during a field trip to Basutoland and the Transkei. 5 January - 24 Feb 1935. (Translated from the Afrikaans)].

of the usage, and when applicable the purchase price. Accession number 35:43 - 44 serves as an example:

Twee kalbasse om mee te drink. No. 44 het gebreek, maar die stuk is weer aangewerk met garing. Op 'n vraag van my waarom so groot moeite geneem word om 'n ding te herstel wat tog relatief maklik deur 'n ander vervang kan word, was my geantwoord dat die kuns om so te werk opgehou moet word. Daarom as sulke voorwerpe soos kalbasse breek, dan word die werk gewoonlik aan jongere meisies gegee om oefening te kry in hierdie soort werk. By Pitseng in noord Basotholand as geskenk ontvang. Heet: "Mohope"<sup>64</sup>

Most of the objects were catalogued as soon as possible. Beukes remarked that after his return from a trip to Portuguese East Africa during 1934, 168 new specimens acquired for the Museum were disinfected, catalogued and packed away. The next year, Beukes also mentioned that a few hundred objects were catalogued, fully described and disinfected. In this way he worked off the cataloguing arrears, including those collected during the trip he had undertaken to Basutoland and the Transkei in January and February 1935 and had not catalogued earlier, because he had been pressed for time.<sup>65</sup> Beukes also took many photographs during his field trips. He catalogued the old photographs that were already in the Museum and then started on his own, but could not complete the whole collection.<sup>66</sup> After 1937 (last accession number 37/278 - 9) no accessions were made until 1954. There are only a few annotations in the catalogue, although almost all the entries have been crossed out in pencil (probably when the catalogue was retyped in ledger format).

### **Permanent accessions : Anthropological photograph collection**

#### Transvaal Museum

There were two catalogues for photographs in use at the Transvaal Museum without any letter codes.

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<sup>64</sup> [Two calabashes for drinking. No 44 was broken, but the pieces had been sewn together with thread. In answer to my question "why repair a thing that can easily be substituted for another", the reply was that the art of doing this must continue. That is the reason why objects such as broken calabashes are given to younger girls so that they can gain experience in this kind of work. Received as donation at Pitseng in northern Basutoland. It is called "Mohope." (Translated from the Afrikaans.)]

<sup>65</sup> Transvaal Museum Annual Reports, 1934 - 1935 and 1935 - 1936, departmental reports for ethnology, p. 1.

<sup>66</sup> Ibid., 1936 - 1937, p. 1.



- Catalogue of Ethnological and Archaeological photographs and drawings

This catalogue was started in 1921 by Radcliffe-Brown. It had the following headings in columns: no., by, subject, size, location, negative and remarks.

The first fourteen photographs were taken by Reinhardt Maack and entered by Radcliffe-Brown. There are 138 photographs, including copies of San paintings, ethnology practices and Peruvian scenes. As usual, un-accessioned objects, even dating from the Staatsmuseum, were now entered, in this case drawings dated 21 June 1899. (accession numbers 106 - 109). This catalogue was probably used by Rossouw until 1924.

- “Katalogus van volkskundige Portrette. 1934” [Catalogue of ethnology Portraits. 1934]

This catalogue for ethnology photographs was begun in 1934 by Beukes. Although he took most of the photographs himself, being a prolific photographer, he also accessioned old photographs found in the collection, such as those donated by George Leith (accession numbers 34:1 - 6 Tasmanian objects). The descriptions of his photographs are meticulous and are dated. He was responsible for accessions 34:1 to 37:68 (April 1937).

### **Permanent accessions : Archaeological collection**

#### Transvaal Museum

For cataloguing purposes no distinction was made either in the Staatsmuseum or the Transvaal Museum between ethnology and archaeology during the period 1892 to 1938. In all the above registers and catalogues objects are found that eventually would be classified as archaeology. The most interesting example is probably the Egyptian mummy, donated to the Staatsmuseum in 1899, and entered in the acquisitions entry register.<sup>67</sup>

The mummy was originally accessioned in the Ethnographic Catalogue Africa (E Catalogue) as E.C. accession no. 450. In the E.E. Catalogue it was duly entered, but then deleted without an accession number. At no stage was it ever entered into the Main Catalogue of the Department of Ethnology Africa, but it is recorded in the Historiography Catalogue. One can only speculate why the choice was made to accession the mummy as part of the history collection (H.C. accession no. 74) because archaeology, including

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<sup>67</sup> Staatsmuseum Acquisitions entry register, vol. 2, acquisition no. 91, dd 28 April 1899.



Egyptology, was already an established science at the time of accessioning, c. 1915. It was only in 1968 that the mummy was classified as an archaeological object and re-accessioned in the catalogue of archaeological specimens as ARG. accession no. 68/68.

- Catalogue of Archaeological specimens (ARG.)

Despite the fact that archaeological objects were accessioned in the the Main Catalogue of the Department of Ethnology Africa, the honorary curator for archaeology, Van Riet Lowe, was of the opinion that the greater part of the collection was not catalogued. This “was regarded as a great handicap in making any use of the collections for study purposes and moreover it was a great obstacle in building up a proper show collection”.<sup>68</sup>

The first archaeology catalogue was opened by Haughton in February 1938. This task was done in preparation for displays that would make archaeological material more available to students. In addition it was regarded as fundamental to the duties of the curator, that: “every one of the thousands of specimens has to be numbered and entered into the catalogue”.<sup>69</sup> According to the director Haughton had done nothing but catalogue stone implements since the day she started working, and she showed herself to be a very painstaking and conscientious worker.<sup>70</sup> The catalogue was started in English, but changed to Afrikaans from ARG. accession no. 9297.

The numbering in this catalogue does not start with accession number 1, but with ARG. accession no. 1496 (previous ET accession no. 1496) because the ethnology numbers have been retained (i.e. the numbers that have been allocated to the archaeological objects in the Main Catalogue of the Department of Ethnology Africa, vols.1 and 2). Only the code changed. The result is that the numbers of archaeology objects in the new catalogue do not follow consecutively, because the remaining ethnology objects are still registered in the Main Catalogue, where they are interspersed with cancelled archaeology objects. They kept their ET. numbers, and have of course been left out of the archaeology catalogue.

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<sup>68</sup> Transvaal Museum Board of Trustees meeting, minutes, 3 March 1938.

<sup>69</sup> Transvaal Museum Annual Report, 1937 - 1938, pp. 4 - 5.

<sup>70</sup> Transvaal Museum Board of Trustees meeting, minutes, 3 March 1938.

No descriptions are given in the new Catalogue of Archaeological specimens, for example, accession numbers 7193 - 7323 refer to the Peruvian objects now in the archaeology collection, but the information in the Main Catalogue of the Department of Ethnology Africa was not repeated. At the back of the archaeology catalogue some preceding and other numbers that were omitted when the catalogue was first compiled,<sup>71</sup> have also been recorded. This could indicate that these objects were only found, either as show or study items, after some headway had been made with the catalogue. Numbers written in red in the margin refer to these objects.

From number 8005 the accession numbers follow in sequence. They cover a variety of objects donated or found in the collection as far back as 1905 and 1909, but were not registered at the time.<sup>72</sup> Objects with no information at all have now been registered.<sup>73</sup> There are a few references to previous numbers in the later records, indicating that although the objects may have been part of previous acquisitions, they were not registered *in toto* at the time,<sup>74</sup> either in the Main Catalogue of the Department of Ethnology Africa or in the new Catalogue of Archaeological specimens. For example, only eleven scrapers from the donation by C.D. Braine were registered initially; the other items were registered at a later stage.<sup>75</sup> This donation was dated 1909. The catalogue was “completed” in 1939, and was kept up to date until 1945.<sup>76</sup>

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<sup>71</sup> For example, Catalogue of Archaeological specimens, ARG. accession nos. 1036 - 1038, 1417 - 1419, 1440 - 1469 and 4000 - 4008.

<sup>72</sup> Ibid., ARG. accessions nos. 8019 - 8032, a collection of fourteen perforated stones was donated in 1905 and accession nos. 8604 - 8617, a collection of fourteen small scrapers, in November 1909.

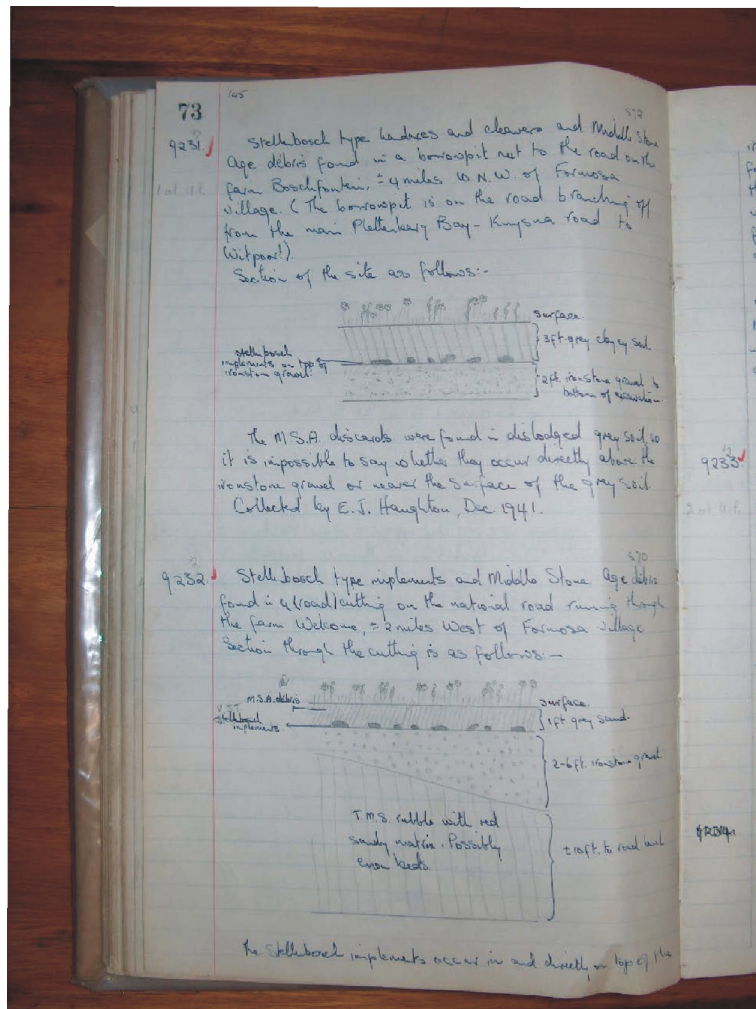
<sup>73</sup> For example, *ibid.*, ARG. accession no. 8123, Trimmed point MSA (no record).

<sup>74</sup> For example, *ibid.*, ARG accession nos. 8513 - 8516 with the note “They belong with the collection 5456 - 5469”.

<sup>75</sup> Catalogue of Archaeological specimens, ARG. accession nos. 5819 - 5829 and nos. 8785 - 8811.

<sup>76</sup> Transvaal Museum Annual Reports, 1941 - 1942 and 1945 - 1946, departmental report for archaeology, pp. 2 and 3.

New donations were also recorded, as were the objects recovered by the archaeologist, for example, from an archaeological site at Vereeniging (Klip River gravels).<sup>77</sup> Drawings of sites and notes accompany some of the acquisitions found by Haughton (figure 29). For a period of eight years (1946 - 1953) no accessioning was done as there was no staff member dealing with either the anthropological or archaeological collections.



**Figure 29**

Example of drawings in the Catalogue of Archaeological specimens,  
done by E.J. Haughton

<sup>77</sup>

Ibid., ARG. accession no. 9131a - f, a collection of eleven Stellenbosch I implements, collected by B.D. Malan and Haughton, 8 March 1939.

## **Permanent accessions : Historical collection**

### Staatmuseum

There seem to have been many efforts to accession, re-accession and even categorize the objects in the history collection. The first attempt took place at the Staatmuseum when the history objects in the acquisitions entry registers were categorized as

- Nationale Relikwieën en andere Herinneringstukken van vroegeren tijd  
[National relics and other memorabilia of early times]
- Munten en Medailles [Coins and medals]
- Documenten, enz. [Documents, etc.]
- Kunstvoorwerpen, Photographieën, enz. [Art objects, photographs, etc.]
- Diverse Voorwerpen [Diverse objects]
- Boeken [Books]

The division “Munten en Medailles” was later extended to include bank notes. Some of these categories formed the basis of a range of extant catalogues, but no catalogues for numismatics, books and diverse items could be found.

- “Bescheiden, voorwerpen, enz, betrekking hebbend op de Transvaalsche Deputasie in Europa 1883/1884.
- Documenten, van min of meer belang voor de Geschiedenis van Transvaal”<sup>78</sup>

The above two headings are used in the catalogue of the Staatmuseum for historical documents and photographs, containing accession nos. 0001 to 0139 for the first section and accession nos. 0140 to 0273 for the second section, in Dutch. Objects in the acquisitions entry registers of the Staatmuseum were accessioned in the Documenten Catalogue.<sup>79</sup> The last 20 accession numbers, in English, were probably entered after the Anglo-Boer War.

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<sup>78</sup> [Records, objects, etc. on the Transvaal Deputation to Europe 1883/1884. Documents more or less of interest for the history of the Transvaal. (Translated from the Dutch.)] This catalogue is referred to as the Documenten Catalogue.

<sup>79</sup> For example, a Government Gazette of the New Republic, Staatmuseum Acquisitions entry register, vol. 2, acquisition no. 24, dd 14 March 1898, was accessioned in Documenten Catalogue, Docum. accession no. 0205.

As usual, objects in the catalogue have been annotated in various ways, for example, with the word “Entered” (in red pencil) and with blue, grey and red pencil marks. A note at the beginning of the catalogue indicates that “Transvaal Dep” and “Historica” have all been entered, and at the end a final assurance: “All entered”. Abbreviations, such as T.D. and D. and D. Hist. (probably for Transvaal Deputation, Deputation and Documents History), are also used. This indicates that the objects have been re-entered in various catalogues at the Transvaal Museum. The accession numbers in the C.G., H.A. and H.B. catalogue have been noted in some instances, again corroborating the fact that the objects had been accessioned more than once.<sup>80</sup>

### Transvaal Museum

- H. Catalogues

After the Anglo-Boer War two catalogues were compiled at the Transvaal Museum for historical documents (“Historische zaken”), viz. H.A. (Africa) and H.B. (Europe), both written in English. They were probably preceded by the General Catalogue.

- H.A. (Africa)

The heading of this catalogue is “Historical. documents. (South African).” in the catalogue itself, but it includes a variety of items such as photographs, chairs, a cannon, buckles, and even a hairball out of the stomach of an ox (H.A. accession no.158). There are 245 accessions.

In the catalogue some objects have been annotated in various ways, for example, with the word “Entered” (in red pencil) and with other blue, grey and red pencil marks. There is a note at the beginning of the catalogue that curios, photographs, historica, newspapers, maps and documents have all been entered, and at the end again the final statement “All entered”. This indicates that all the objects have been re-entered in various catalogues at the Transvaal Museum. A column on the right side of each page gives references to G.C. Page ... no ... for all the accessions.

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<sup>80</sup> An inventory of the State Printing Office July 1869 was accessioned three times, in Documenten Catalogue, Docum accession no. 0169, General Catalogue, G.C. accession no. 92 and Historical documents (South African) Catalogue, H.A. accession no.127.

Although the catalogue contains a few new items, such as a copy of the new Transvaal Constitution printed on silk, dated 25 April 1905,<sup>81</sup> the accessioned objects consist primarily of objects received by the Staatsmuseum.<sup>82</sup>

- H.B. (Europe)

This catalogue consists of 13 loose pages, covering accession nos. H.B.1 to 96. The heading of this catalogue, “Historical documents Historische Zaken”, refers to the general historical catalogues, with a sub-heading H.B. (Europe). The objects cover a range of items such as bank notes, revolvers, antique busts, a water tank, clothes and bottles.

In the catalogue some objects have been annotated in various ways, for example, with the word “Entered” (in red pencil) and with other blue and red pencil marks. There is a note at the end: “All entered except notes”. This indicates that some, but not all the objects have been re-entered in various catalogues at the Transvaal Museum. A column on the right-hand side of each page gives references to G.C. Page... no... for all the accessions. In a few instances objects have clearly been noted E.E., and these objects can be traced in the E.E. Catalogue. This indicated that they have been re-accessioned again and at that stage had been assigned at least four numbers.<sup>83</sup>

- Historiography Catalogue (H.C.)

This catalogue, usually called H.C., is still in use by the National Cultural History Museum for its historical and cultural history collections.

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<sup>81</sup> Historical documents (South African) Catalogue, H.A. accession no. 244.

<sup>82</sup> For example, one silver bandolier clasp brought to Africa by the donor’s great-great grandfather, Jean Labuscagne, Staatsmuseum Acquisitions entry register, vol. 1, acquisition no. 2012, Historical documents (South African) Catalogue, H.A. accession no.110 and General Catalogue, G.C. accession no. 74.

<sup>83</sup> Two antique busts found when digging in the bed of River Tiber near Rome (Italy), with the following numbers: Staatsmuseum Acquisitions entry register, vol. 1, acquisition no. 3175 - 3176, HB (Europe) Catalogue, H.B. accession no. 15, General Catalogue, G.C. accession no. 104 and E. E. Catalogue, E.E. accession no. 55.

- Volume 1

The catalogue was written in English up to accession no. 3372 (with accessioning in Afrikaans here and there), and was thus probably started after the Anglo-Boer War. It contains accession numbers 1 to 4664. The first accession is devoted to “Books, papers, documents etc. relative to the Transvaal Deputation in Europe. 1883/1884”. In other words, this catalogue follows the same pattern as the Documenten Catalogue, but the two entries differ. Only 65 entries, numbered from 1.a. to 1.mmm., in comparison to the 139 entries in the catalogue of the Staatsmuseum (“Bescheiden, voorwerpen, enz, betrekking hebbend op de Transvaalsche Deputasie in Europa 1883/1884”) were recorded. The next section, called “Historica”, commences from accession number 2.

This catalogue was regarded as a workbook by the staff dealing with the historical collection. It abounds with notes, cross-references, attempts at classification and indexing, alterations and additions. It contains new acquisitions and the collection inherited from the Staatsmuseum. Many objects have been accessioned at least three or even four times. The description of the object may also differ: two of the three entries, for example, may be identical, while another has had extra information added that does not appear in the first entry.<sup>84</sup> No indication is given of the source of such additional particulars.

In the first few pages of the H.C. Catalogue there are references to various other catalogues, for example, P. Cat, C. Cat (figure 30), D. Cat and N. Cat. Only one of these catalogues has been discovered, namely the Photograph catalogue (P. Cat), containing 35 entries. One may surmise that the letter references could represent categories in the collection such as curios, documents and newspapers.

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<sup>84</sup> Compare the description “Twee oude silveren voet gespen, door een der Hugenotten, n.l. Jan Labuschagne, naar Africa meegebracht” [Two old silver shoe buckles brought to Africa by a Huguenot, Jean Labuschagne] in the Staatsmuseum Acquisitions entry register, acquisition no. 776, with the description “Two silver buckles brought from France to S. Africa by Jean Labuschagne. During the great trek saved from a fire of a laager in Natal (1834) later taken by Christian Labuschagne on the [trek] to Humpata, he died in the desert and the buckles were returned by an old native servant to his daughter Susanna Catherina (Labuschagne)” in H.A. accession no. 98 and H.C. accession no. 21.





**Figure 30**

Anglo-Boer War prisoner-of-war object, presumably regarded as a curio, still (2005)  
marked only with the C. accession number

(Collection: National Cultural History Museum C. Cat. 72)

Various unknown staff members did the cataloguing until 1924 when the following note was made by Rossouw : “Cat. continued by G S H Rossouw - May 6 - 1924”. As the previous accessioning was probably done in July 1920, a period of little less than four years had elapsed during which no accessioning was done. Rossouw was appointed as ethnologist, but according to Swierstra he was also in charge of historical matters and used the designation historiographer.<sup>85</sup> He did a great deal of accessioning, (called “cataloguing” by Swierstra), being responsible for H.C. accession nos.135 to 3372 from May 1924 to October 1925. He also packed the objects away.<sup>86</sup>

Whenever possible Rossouw grouped items belonging together (items associated with one person, items from one donor, or items of the same kind). For example, H.C. accession nos. 407 to 418 were all objects belonging to Joubert, while numbers 453 to 499 was a group of weaponry and numbers 699 to 792 comprised uniforms and accoutrements. Accession nos. 793 to 809 were cannons and accession nos. 878 to 1063 were objects associated with

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<sup>85</sup> NCHMA, System 1 No 1 TM1/12 - TM1/26, letter Swierstra to F.V. Engelenburg, dd 22 September 1924; in letter Rossouw to Mrs Botha, dd 23 June 1924 he signed as Historiographer.

<sup>86</sup> Ibid., letter Swierstra to F.V. Engelenburg, dd 22 September 1924.



General P. Cronjé. This may have been an attempt at a rudimentary classification. In this way too collections within the historical collection were formed and named, but all still belonged to the main collection of the Transvaal Museum, and there was no intention whatsoever to separate them from the main collection or to earmark them for a particular museum. Rossouw for example, identified the following collections:

- Note: Specimens 878 - 2041 have been received from 'Het Zuid-Afrikaansch Museum at Dordrecht, Holland, the so-called "**Dordrecht Collection**",<sup>87</sup>
- Specimens 1064 - 2015 are with reference to Pres Kruger ("**Kruger Collection**")<sup>88</sup> & other Historical Figures, Die Kruger Kolleksie van Dordrecht ontvang,
- Note: The following nos. 2103 -2526 belong to the **Genl. Louis Botha Collection** presented by Mrs Genl L. Botha March 1924 ...

For eight and a half years no accessioning was done for the historical collection. The next accessions were written in Afrikaans by A.J. Swierstra in 1934, identifying himself as A.J. Swierstra 23/3/34 (H.C. accession no. 3379). He followed Rossouw's example of identifying the collection and noting it, for example:

- Nommers 4250 tot 4450 was gegee deur Mevr. Gen L Botha en behoort aan die Botha Versameling 6 Maart 1935,
- No. 4506 tot 4649 behoort by die Botha versameling en is deur Mevr. Botha Gestuur 22 Maart 1935.<sup>89</sup>

It is interesting to note that Rossouw and A.J. Swierstra were appointed in the Ethnology department, but that both also worked with the historical collection.

The next accessioning was probably done more than twelve years later. H.C. accession nos. 4650 - 4669, in English, were done by Schiel. While preparing an index for the historical collection he found numerous unnumbered objects, which had either never been accessioned

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<sup>87</sup> My bold.

<sup>88</sup> The name Kruger Collection was probably coined by Leyds. See NCHMA, Box 515, TM 5/11A, copy of letter by Leyds, dd 13 November 1920, to which Rossouw had access.

<sup>89</sup> [Mrs General Botha donated object numbers 4250 to 4450 on 6 March 1935, and they are part of the Botha Collection, and numbers 4506 to 4649 also belong to the Botha Collection and have been sent by Mrs Botha 22 March 1935. (Translated from the Afrikaans.)]

or the accession number had disappeared. This meant that accessioning became one of his main tasks.

- Volume 2

This volume was started by Schiel, who used both Afrikaans and English. New acquisitions were accessioned. As usual objects donated in the past that had not yet been accessioned, were duly handled. In some cases no information could be located on the objects and the phrases “So far no information”, or “Particulars so far unknown” and “Geen verdere besonderhede” [No further details] were used frequently.<sup>90</sup> Very often one accession number was allocated to a group or unit of objects, for example, documents, photographs, spoons, a hat badge and a buckle, were all accessioned under one number – probably because they were received from one donor.<sup>91</sup> Schiel often used descriptions such as “a nice little collection”, “a double parcel”, “an interesting collection”, “bundle of old newspapers” and even “a cardboard box with ...” to indicate an acquisition. In other cases sub-numbers were allocated to the different objects in one accession.<sup>92</sup>

Objects already accessioned in the Historiography Catalogue were re-accessioned, without any explanation provided for the re-accessioning.<sup>93</sup> Coetzee could not fathom why Schiel had decided to renumber and recatalogue some objects. Schiel himself remarked that the markings and the numbers of the first three pages of the Historiography Catalogue caused some confusion. Objects were incorrectly numbered, and he also re-entered numbers that could not be distinguished. At a later stage he remarked that the confusion created by wrong entries had been corrected.<sup>94</sup>

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<sup>90</sup> For example, Historiography Catalogue, vol. 2, H.C. accession no. 5611, “Wafelpan van koper uit die vroeë tyd van die 18de eeu (omstreeks 1725). Verdere besonderhede het verlore gegaan”. [Copper waffle-iron dating from the early years of the 18<sup>th</sup> century (c. 1725). Further information is missing. (Translated from the Afrikaans.)]

<sup>91</sup> Ibid., H.C. accession no. 4759, souvenirs from Boer camp at Magersfontein.

<sup>92</sup> For example, ibid., H.C. accession no. 5499 (numbered 1 - 9), the uniform and accoutrements belonging to T.C. Robertson of the Voluntary Corps.

<sup>93</sup> For example, ibid., H.C. accession no. 5149: original H.C. accession nos. 4369 - 4371: Windsor Castle. Two volumes plus accessory volume with maps & plans of castle.

<sup>94</sup> See ibid., pp. 6, 58 and 170.

Additional information about the objects was added from time to time, such as the condition of an item,<sup>95</sup> and the storage or display location.<sup>96</sup> When objects were donated under certain conditions, these were noted as part of the entry information.<sup>97</sup>

The descriptions given by Schiel were evaluated at a later stage. For example, Schiel remarks that a porcelain washbasin probably belonged to the Voortrekkers, but a note was added in pencil saying that it was questionable to make this claim. Similarly, the description of a doll as wearing Voortrekker clothing was altered to a doll in the clothing of ca. 1875.<sup>98</sup>

Parts of some pages were also left open, presumably so that information could be added at a later stage, as the word “reserved” is sometimes written in pencil.<sup>99</sup> No accessioning done, however, and those numbers were never allocated to an object.<sup>100</sup>

This catalogue was regarded as a workbook even more so than volume 1, as there are numerous notes, cancellations, catchwords, and references to other entries (either in red and grey pencil, red ink or ball-point pen). Many of the accessions had been cancelled with a note that they had been sent to the Archives. There are instances where the original entry had been covered and replaced by a new entry.<sup>101</sup>

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<sup>95</sup> According to a pencilled note the photographs (ibid., H.C. accession no. 4764) were unfortunately in a bad condition.

<sup>96</sup> For example, the Botha objects on display in the leaf exhibition stand and the Botha showroom were listed. Ibid., pp. 55 - 63.

<sup>97</sup> For example, ibid., H.C. accession no. 5777: “Die Bybel en al die ander goed sal in die Museum bly as onverganklike erfpag vir die nageslagte. Die kleingeslag wat dit wil sien, kan dit in die museum gaan sien”; H.C. accession no. 5808: “Hierdie oudhede word geskenk deur Catherina Schutte, aan die Transvaalse Museum met dien verstande dat geen enkele stuk ooit uit die Museum uitgeleen sal word nie”. [The Bible and all the other objects will remain in the Museum as a legacy for future generations. The children who would like to see it, can go to the Museum. These antiques are being donated to the Transvaal Museum by Catherina Schutte, on condition that no piece will ever be loaned out by the Museum. (Translated from the Afrikaans.)]

<sup>98</sup> Ibid., H.C. accession nos. 5247 and 5101.

<sup>99</sup> For example, ibid., H.C. accession nos. 5199 and 5238.

<sup>100</sup> Ibid., H.C. accession nos. 5495 and 5496.

<sup>101</sup> For example, ibid., H.C. accession no. 5595.

In volume 2 Schiel did the accessioning from numbers 4670 to 5663, but from 5190 to 5663 Malan and Coetzee did some of the work in between. The last object accessioned by Schiel is dated 30 November 1951, his very last day in Museum service. During his time at the Museum, Schiel had been engaged almost exclusively on cataloguing and recording material so that the director reported that the collection was in good order.<sup>102</sup> This statement is belied by the numerous additions and corrections Coetzee found it necessary to make to Schiel's work. By 1952 it is reported that the work of re-cataloguing and annotating of material was more or less brought up to date and that Malan continued with the work after Schiel's resignation.<sup>103</sup> Malan accessioned numbers 5664 to 5857 in volume 2. This section of the catalogue contains less additions and alterations than the first.

### **Permanent accessions : Art collection**

There was an art collection on display for many years, first at the Transvaal Museum and later at the Old Museum, Boom Street. The only stipulation for collecting was that works of art had to be of high aesthetic value. This rule was clarified further in the Art Catalogue.

#### Transvaal Museum

- Art Catalogue (A.C.)

According to a note by Rossouw the catalogue was "designated 'Art Catalogue' (A.C.) to contain a record of objects of art such as Oriental Porcelain, etc, European paintings etc. & S African Art – Paintings, Drawings, Furniture etc – in short the history of art". Also according to Rossouw, the catalogue was started by Radcliffe-Brown, who wrote the heading of the catalogue:

Numbers 1 to 319. Collection of Oriental Porcelain etc. presented  
(anonymously) through Lt. General the Right Honourable J.C. Smuts.  
8/vi/1918.

Rossouw added the name of the anonymous donor, Whitwell, and a chronological list of Chinese dynasties.

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<sup>102</sup> Transvaal Museum Annual Report, 1950 - 1951, departmental report for division of history, pp. 31 - 32.

<sup>103</sup> Ibid., 1951 - 1952, p. 32.

Several pages have been torn out of the register so that the information about A.C. accession numbers 314 to 417 is missing,<sup>104</sup> as are the last few numbers in the Whitwell Collection and the objects accessioned by Rossouw, who made the next entries up to number 438. The next cataloguing was done ten years later in 1934 by A.J. Swierstra. Another ten years passed before Schiel and Malan continued the work.

Although Rossouw claimed that the Art Catalogue would contain a record of paintings, he also accessioned paintings and portraits in the Historiography Catalogue. Whether this was done before or after he worked in the Art Catalogue, is not clear.<sup>105</sup> Schiel re-accessioned the art collection, making the following note in the Historiography Catalogue: “All pictures are now numbered and entered in the Art Cat. See Index”.<sup>106</sup> Many years later (probably in the 1980s) some art works were again re-accessioned in the Historiography Catalogue, with the result that they may have at least two but even as many as three accession numbers.<sup>107</sup> The A.C. Catalogue also abounds with various notes and additions.

### **Permanent accessions : Numismatics collection**

#### Staatsmuseum

The numismatics collection dates from the time of the Staatsmuseum, and in the first acquisitions entry register numbers 99 to 403 were allocated to coins and medals, including a complete set of coins minted at the Pretoria Mint. Nonetheless, there was no separate numismatics catalogue in the Staatsmuseum although the collection was one of the biggest in that Museum.

#### Transvaal Museum

- Coins and Medals Catalogue

The Coins and Medals Catalogue was probably started in 1913 after a decision by the

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<sup>104</sup> It is possible to list missing A.C. accession numbers from sources such as the database of the National Cultural History Museum and Schiel's index and information book, but when or why these pages have been removed, is a mystery.

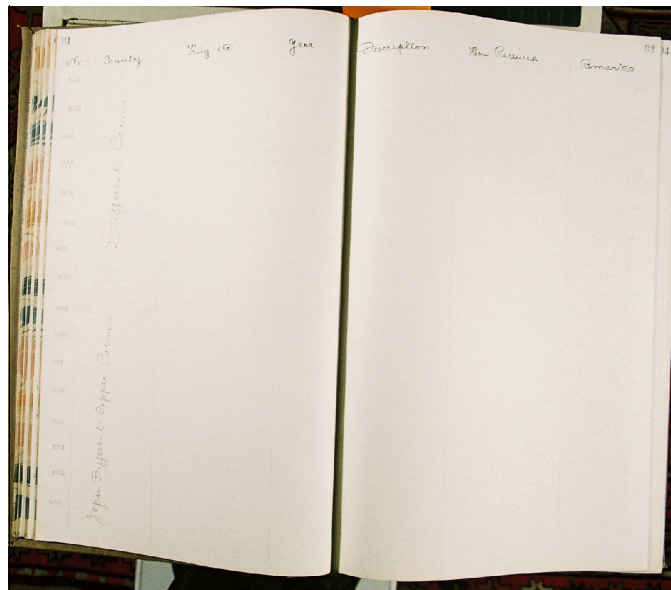
<sup>105</sup> For example, Historiography Catalogue, vol. 1, H.C. accession nos. 859 to 874.

<sup>106</sup> Ibid., p. 75.

<sup>107</sup> For example, the painting by F.J. Oerder, *Bloedronken*, A.C. accession no. 419, Historiography Catalogue, vol. 21, H.C. accession no. 18046 and vol. T14, H.C. accession no. 32733.

Museum Committee to take the cataloguing of this collection in hand.<sup>108</sup> The headings for the columns (No., Country, King, etc., Year, Description, How received and Remarks) and the information are in English. There are 2 321 accessions, with almost no indication of the method of procurement. There is also no indication of code letters used for this catalogue.

The catalogue made provision for coins, medals and medallions.<sup>109</sup> There must have been some attempt to sort the collection into coins and medals of a particular country, such as the English coins.<sup>110</sup> Other countries represented were Portugal, Spain, France, Holland, Japan, Brazil and Austria. This catalogue often contains only the most basic information on some coins, for example, for accession numbers 641 - 656 the words “Japan Different Copper Coins” and “Different Coins” are written vertically in the “Country” column, with no other information (figure 31). From accession number 1967 the style of accessioning appears to have changed and contains more detailed descriptions, some given in Dutch.<sup>111</sup>



**Figure 31**

Page from the Coins and Medals Catalogue with hardly any information at all

<sup>108</sup> Transvaal Museum Committee minutes, meeting 15 July 1913.

<sup>109</sup> A medallion is called a “gedenkpenning” or a “legpenning” in Dutch in the acquisition entry registers and catalogues.

<sup>110</sup> For example, accessions nos. 1 to 167 refer to coins from England and accession nos. 1589 to 1612 to British medals.

<sup>111</sup> For example, accession no. 2146, “Belooningspenning voor Doctoren en Chirurgen die meer dan 100 personen in een jaar ingeënt hebben” [Medal given as reward to doctors and surgeons who vaccinated more than 100 persons in one year. (Translated from the Afrikaans.)]

At least until 1919, and probably much later, there was nobody at the Museum who understood anything about numismatics<sup>112</sup> or who dealt with the collections management of the numismatics collection. For 20 years or more no cataloguing for numismatics was done at the Transvaal Museum and the above catalogue was apparently forgotten. As the director in 1939 said, there was no catalogue in existence nor anything on record that showed how the original collection was acquired.<sup>113</sup> It is probably for this reason that a new catalogue was opened.

- Numismatics Catalogue (Nu.)

According to a note, on the first page of volume 1, the catalogue was begun in February 1939 by Haughton. She was appointed in the archaeology division, but she also worked with objects in the ethnology, history and philately collections. Probably prior to or simultaneously with the accessioning, the numismatics collection had to be identified. Very few difficulties were experienced with the modern coins, but the ancient coins took a great deal of research. Even with the use of reference books not all coins could be identified beyond doubt. The project took two full years.<sup>114</sup> The catalogue appears to have been intended mainly for items included in the usual definition of numismatics, including medals,<sup>115</sup> but objects falling outside this category have also been accessioned, such as a badge, a seal and a ticket.<sup>116</sup>

- Volume 1

The first part of the catalogue contains the re-accessioning of an already classified and ordered numismatics collection, starting with Abyssinia (Nu. accession no. 1). As is the case with all other registers, coins and medals that have already been accessioned in the Coins and Medals Catalogue were not only re-accessioned in the Numismatics Catalogue,

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<sup>112</sup> NCHMA, Letterbook 5, letter Breijer to T. Parks, dd 22 October 1919.

<sup>113</sup> Transvaal Museum Board of Trustees minutes, meeting 20 April 1939.

<sup>114</sup> E.J. Haughton, A plea for a wider numismatic interest in our museums, *SAMAB*, 2(16), December 1942, p. 404.

<sup>115</sup> Numismatics is the study, science and collecting of coins, paper money, tokens, and related items with a relevance to currency, but also includes medals, orders and decorations that are produced by a minting process.

<sup>116</sup> G. Balkwill, "Subdivision of items between Numismatics (Nu) and Miscellaneous Collection (Misc.)" (unpublished report), p. 1.



but the descriptions were also changed to standardized numismatics terminology. For example, compare the description “Spain, Isabella II 1833 - 1869, 1862, 25c de Real” in the Coins and Medals Catalogue, accession no. 249, with the new description for the same Spanish real:

Numismatics Catalogue, Nu. accession no. 859

#### UN-CILO

25-cent piece (copper) (1<sup>1/16</sup> diam.)

Obverse: Bust to the right crowned with a laurel wreath and also surrounded by “ISABEL 2A POR LA G. DE DOIS Y LA CONST.” (“1862”)

Exerque: “L.M.”

Reverse: Coat-of-arms flanked by two sprays of laurel leaves and surmounted by crown. Figure below coat-of-arms. Whole surrounded by: REINA DE LAS ESPANAS.”

“UN C<sup>ILLO</sup>” “25 CENT DE REAL.”

Edge plain

Spain Isabella II, 1833 - 1868

- Volumes 2 and 3

Accessions up to no. 3115 were done by Haughton, presumably until her resignation on 31 May 1946. No further work was done in these volumes until Versfeld was appointed in 1951. Because she resigned in November 1953, and was re-appointed in September 1954, it is difficult to ascertain when she began accessioning.<sup>117</sup> Both old and more recent acquisitions were accessioned. In 1940 an outstanding donation, that formed a magnificent addition to the numismatics collection, was bequeathed to the Transvaal Museum by J. de Villiers Roos. The collection was identified, catalogued and many coins incorporated in the collection.<sup>118</sup>

The Numismatics Catalogue was also regarded as a workbook and numerous notes and changes appear. One of the most significant alterations in the catalogues pertains to the number of coins or notes in the numismatics collection. For example, the original Nu. accession no. 2065 consisted of two £1 bank notes. In the catalogue the number two had

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<sup>117</sup> G. Balkwill, “Subdivision of items between Numismatics (Nu) and Miscellaneous Collection (Misc.)” (unpublished report), p. 2.

<sup>118</sup> Transvaal Museum Annual Report, 1940 - 1941, p. 3. By incorporate was meant that the coins were given the same accession number as similar coins already accessioned.

been deleted. The numbers five and six had been entered and were also deleted, and the present number is ten. This means that there are ten similar £1 notes from different donations or sources in the collection. Additional sub-numbers had also been added, as were the previous accession numbers (figure 32). These changes comply with the general practice not to accession new, but similar acquisitions and the existing accession number is used. Duplicate coins or notes in the collections were exchanged for others to fill shortages. When or where the practice of “ non-cataloguing” started, is difficult to establish.

- Numismatics Presentation Catalogue (P.C.)

According to the heading on the flyleaf, this catalogue contained coins and medals presented to the Transvaal Museum. As usual, donations stock-piled over many years were at last catalogued, the very first accession dating back to 1928 and the second one dating from 1914. An alphabetical numbering system was used, from Aa, Ab, etc. to Ck., with the letter code P.C. The last accession is dated 1945.

The presentation collection was catalogued by Haughton in 1940 and comprised 733 pieces.<sup>119</sup> In 1941 a policy decision was taken to incorporate all presentation collections into the general numismatics collection. In the past the policy has been to keep the two separate, but as this system has been found unsatisfactory, the presentation coins had to be given numbers and incorporated into the general collection.<sup>120</sup> In a few instances this fact was noted in the catalogue.

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<sup>119</sup> Ibid., 1939 - 1940, departmental report for archaeology, ethnology, numismatics and philately, p. 2.

<sup>120</sup> Ibid., 1941 - 1942, departmental report for archaeology, p. 3.

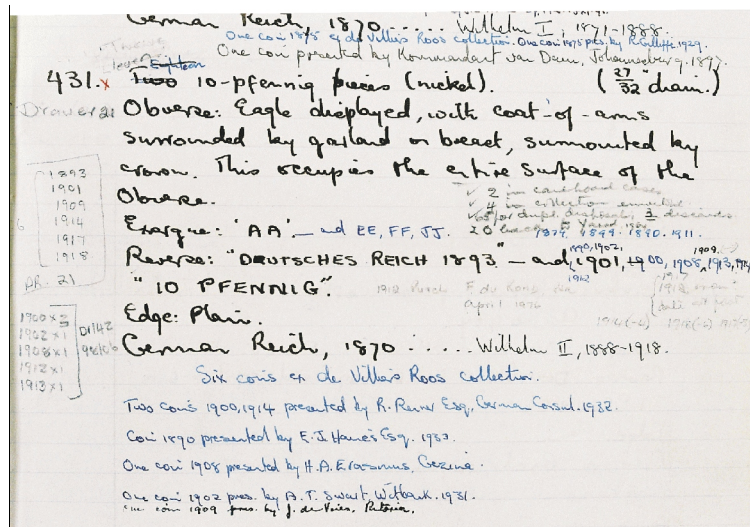


Figure 32

Page from the Numismatics Catalogue, showing the process of “non-cataloguing”

## Permanent accessions : Kruger Collection

### Transvaal Museum

The Kruger Collection was first recognized as a cataloguing unit by Rossouw who wrote the following remark in the Historiography Catalogue:

Specimens 1064 - 2015 are with reference to Pres. Kruger (“Kruger Collection”) & other Historical Figures.

Die Kruger Kolleksie van Dordrecht ontvang”.<sup>121</sup> [The Kruger Collection received from Dordrecht.]

Clearly the objects received from the Zuid-Afrikaansch Museum were the starting point for cataloguing the Kruger Collection, which Rossouw sorted into five categories and accessioned in the Historiography Catalogue. At this stage this Kruger/Dordrecht Collection did not include objects associated with Kruger already in the Museum’s collection prior to the arrival of the Dordrecht Collection or received afterwards.<sup>122</sup>

- Kruger Catalogue (Kr.)

<sup>121</sup> Historiography Catalogue, vol. 1, p. 77.

<sup>122</sup> For example, *ibid.*, H.C. accession no. 5 (a medallion in relief of President S.J.P. Kruger) and H.C. accession no. 2564 (framed photograph of a painting of President Kruger).

- Volume 1

Perhaps with a view to consolidating all the Kruger objects, Schiel opened a new Kruger Catalogue, probably in the late 1940s. This abounds with notes and explanations of Schiel's activities and is almost impossible to understand or to analyse. He first wrote a note on the various presidential elections in which Kruger was involved and then provided an explanation (Afrikaans: *Kataloog 'n Skets en verduideliking*) in which he set down his interpretation of the President's intentions: "Ek probeer my in die gedagtegang van hom as president te verdiep en rangskik die boeke wat die versameling bevat, daarin [daarom?]"<sup>123</sup> He also wrote notes on the demise and funeral of the President and the genealogy of the Kruger family.

He started the new catalogue with an exposition (he called it an index), of the groups in which the objects were placed. There are 109 groups in total. These groups relate to a variety of subjects and objects such as President Kruger in France, religion and poetry, music, framed portraits and flags. The package/parcel numbers and corresponding catalogue numbers with which each group commences are provided. He used the code letters K.A.C., an abbreviation for Kruger Section No. C. (Afrikaans: *Kruger Afdeling No. C*). The catalogue proper starts with Group 1, K.A.C. no. 1a. Up to accession no. 278 the code K.A.C. was definitely used, as indicated by Schiel at the top of the margin, but where and when the code Kr. was introduced, is not known. The corresponding H.C. (and later HKF) numbers are given in a column from accession number 241 to 776. This section ends with a group of objects called "Los" [loose, unsorted].<sup>124</sup> Then follow 15 pages (of which 10 appear to have been cut out), which were reserved for additional objects. Schiel noted "Hierdie 15 bl. bly as 'n reserwe vir nog Kr. eksemplare wat mag inkom. In die geval met B805, – B meen Bygekom. Uitstallings begin met 805 sonder die B".<sup>125</sup> This means that accession numbers 805 - 838 were preceded by the letter B, and presumably these objects were marked as such. Most of them were donated in the years 1951 - 1953, and were therefore catalogued by Schiel and Malan. As usual objects donated previously and not

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<sup>123</sup> [I try to become engrossed in the thoughts of the President and to arrange the books in the collection appropriately. (Translated from the Afrikaans.)]

<sup>124</sup> Kr. accession nos. 797 - 804.

<sup>125</sup> [These 15 pages remain as a reserve for objects associated with Kruger that may still be acquired. In the case of B805, B means "added": displays begin with 805 without the B.] (Translated from the Afrikaans.)]

entered at the time, were simply “found”.<sup>126</sup> In the catalogue some B’s have been deleted.

The next section of the catalogue is devoted to the displays in the Kruger House, starting with Schiel’s “Voorbeskrywing”. [An introduction about the master bedroom]. The objects in the rest of the house are accessioned room by room, cupboard by cupboard, corridor by corridor, on stands and in the outbuildings, up to Kr. accession no. 1119.

The numbering of the first part of this section poses a problem because Schiel started numbering with accession no. 805, the consecutive number following the previous accession (and omitting the B numbers). In practice this means that there were two Kruger objects with the same number, one with and one without a B. At a later stage a decision must have been taken, probably by Malan, that the B numbers should hold good. The result was that the numbers 805 to 838 were deleted and replaced by the numbers 1121 to 1154. This juggling with the numbers is almost impossible to comprehend, but a copious note to explain it was compiled, and it is indicated in the catalogue.<sup>127</sup> In practice this means that there are objects that were accessioned in the Historiography Catalogue and two Kr accession numbers were allocated to one object.<sup>128</sup>

### **Permanent accessions : Historical photograph collection**

#### Transvaal Museum

- P. Cat.<sup>129</sup>

According to a decision made by the Museum Committee in 1913,<sup>130</sup> the photograph collection was to be taken in hand, catalogued and arranged in albums. The photographs were in fact mounted in albums (figure 33),<sup>131</sup> and catalogued in a so-called P. Cat. This catalogue has only 35 entries, including some photographs that were donated to the

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<sup>126</sup> For example, accession no. B836, 42 documents in a file, were found in a photograph cupboard in office no. 2 on 30 October 1952.

<sup>127</sup> Kruger Catalogue, vol. 1, p. 148.

<sup>128</sup> For example, a framed portrait of General de Wet was accessioned as Historiography Catalogue, vol.1, H.C. accession no.1390 and Kruger Catalogue, vol. 1, Kr. accession nos. 815 and 1131.

<sup>129</sup> The P. Cat is in the same volume as the HKF Catalogue.

<sup>130</sup> Transvaal Museum Committee meeting, minutes 15 July 1913.

<sup>131</sup> At present (2005) these albums are still extant.

Staatsmuseum. Of particular interest to the history of the Staatsmuseum are photographs of the laying of the foundation stone of the new museum building in Boom Street, a corner in the Staatsmuseum on Market Square, and models of ships in the Museum. Reference to the H.C., E.E. and Eth. catalogues are given where relevant.

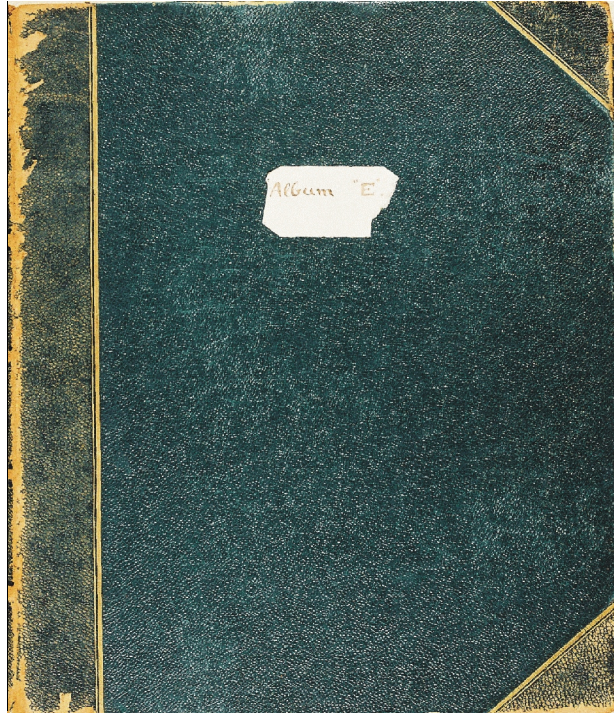
After accession no. 33 a note explains that the catalogue was continued under the directorship of Breijer in 1914, but only two accessions were made in 1918. These are photographs and plates of ticks and a portrait of Sir Lowry Cole. There is an annotation indicating that the catalogue was discontinued and that the Historiography Catalogue should be consulted instead.



**Figure 33a**

Page in album showing photograph of a street scene in Pretoria, with typed caption





**Figure 33b**

The photograph collection was mounted in albums in 1913

### **Permanent accessions : Philately collection**

#### Staatsmuseum

There are two stamp albums in the National Cultural History Museum that were made for the Staatsmuseum with the designation “Postzegelverzameling van het Staatsmuseum der Z.A.R.”. The first volume contains a collection of eight pages of stamps. Whether these stamps formed part of the small philately collection at the Staatsmuseum, or whether they were specially collected and prepared for the ZAR pavilion at the international exhibition in Paris in 1900, is impossible to say at this stage. They were on display in Paris. The collection consists of fiscal stamps of the ZAR, and the accompanying text is written in French. After the exhibition the album formed part of the so-called Dordrecht Collection that was returned to South Africa in 1921.<sup>132</sup>

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<sup>132</sup> M. Esterhuysen, “From the collection of the National Cultural History and Open-Air Museum, Pretoria, South Africa” (unpublished article), p. 1; S. Brink, Die Zuid-Afrikaansche Republiek se deelname aan die Internasionale Tentoonstelling in 1900 in Parys, Frankryk, *Navorsing deur die Nasionale Kultuurhistoriese*



Although the one album (volume 2) is empty, the Postmaster-General of the ZAR presented the Staatsmuseum with a collection of unused stamps and other philatelic material from the various countries that were part of the Universal Postal Union.<sup>133</sup>

### Transvaal Museum

The philately collection had never been accessioned, in other words an accession number was not allocated to each stamp, either at the Staatsmuseum or at the Transvaal Museum, and therefore there is no catalogue for this collection. In exceptional cases only was a Historiography (H.C.) accession number allocated to a philatelic item.

## **Loans**

### Transvaal Museum

Even in Gunning's time loans had already been accepted for the Transvaal Museum.<sup>134</sup> Both loans-in and loans-out were regarded as standard museum practice.

- Loans-in

There is evidence that there were objects at the Museum on loan for considerable periods. Two bronze statuettes that were in the Museum from 1911 to 1955 are a case in point.<sup>135</sup> Loans were not accepted during the First World War, Breijer maintaining that the public tended to regard the Museum as a cheap storage place.<sup>136</sup> Swierstra also agreed that it was not museum policy to safeguard objects for members of the public.<sup>137</sup> He was adamant that a loan could only be accepted by the Museum for a period of at least five years, because he argued that the Museum could not keep objects for people who had the right to take them away at their convenience.<sup>138</sup>

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*Museum*, vol 2: 4, 1992, p. 132.

<sup>133</sup> Staatsmuseum Acquisitions entry register, vol. 2, acquisition no. 22 dd 16 February 1898.

<sup>134</sup> NCHMA, Box 515, TM5/8, loan acceptance, Gunning to J. Oudhoff, dd 15 April 1910.

<sup>135</sup> Transvaal Board of Trustees minutes, meeting 17 August 1939. The Board decided not to buy the statuettes as they were not regarded as museum specimens. According to Dutch loan certificate no. 5 they were bought by the firm Braak in 1955.

<sup>136</sup> NCHMA, Letterbook 2, letter Breijer to M. Burgers, dd 22 October 1917.

<sup>137</sup> Ibid., System 1 No 3 TM1/31 - TM1/33 letter Swierstra to D.J. Geysers, dd 14 September 1931.

<sup>138</sup> Ibid., Box 137, TM18/35, letter Swierstra to W. H. Neethling, dd 2 September 1935.

A policy was followed that all objects that were left in the Museum on loan for a period of more than 30 years automatically become the property of the Museum,<sup>139</sup> but this was not always applied consistently, as in the above case of the bronze statuettes. There are also cases where the objects that were in the Museum for an extended period were eventually given back to the lender, as happened with the Musschenbroek paintings that were returned in 1952.<sup>140</sup>

The so-called permanent loan, in itself a contradiction in terms, was also used at the Transvaal Museum. One of the earliest loans accepted by the Museum as “permanent loan” was a collection of 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> century arms and armour, comprising back and breast plates, skullcaps, plaquets and secretes, arm pieces and gauntlets, helmets and lances from the Royal Armouries at the Tower of London in 1920, that remains in the National Cultural History Museum to this day. The loan, although not solicited by the Transvaal Museum, was accepted by Breijer on 7 December 1920.<sup>141</sup> The objects were regarded as being a permanent part of the collection and were given accession numbers.<sup>142</sup>

Formal documents for the loan of objects from private individuals or institutions (the lender)<sup>143</sup> to the Museum were prepared in the form of numbered loan certificates (figure 34). The certificate had two parts, i.e.

- a stub that remained in the loans register that gave details on the name and address of the lender, the date, description of the article on loan, and other particulars about the loan,

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<sup>139</sup> Ibid., System 1 No 3 TM1/31 - TM1/34, letter Swierstra to J.M. Martins, dd 12 March 1931.

<sup>140</sup> Ibid., System 1 No 6 TM1 /52 - 1/53, note with regard to the return of four paintings by the Transvaal Museum to the lender, dated 2 August 1952.

<sup>141</sup> Ibid., Department of collections management, loans-in file 7/1/3/2, Tower of London, letter director to curator, Office of the Armouries, dd 7 December 1920 and reply, dd 17 February 1921 and Issue of arms and armour on permanent loan to the Transvaal Museum, Pretoria.

<sup>142</sup> See Historiography Catalogue, vol.1, H.C. accession nos. 2973 - 3088.

<sup>143</sup> See glossary.

- the certificate, on which the director of the Transvaal Museum acknowledged the receipt of the objects on loan to the Museum from the lender, with the proviso that the objects remained the property of the lender and could be taken back by him/her or a legal representative on presentation of the certificate.

Loans that had been returned to the owner were sometimes treated in a more informal manner with a handwritten receipt by the lender.<sup>144</sup> There are also instances where a note was made in the catalogue that the object had been returned to the owner, and often this was done many years after the loan object had been accessioned.<sup>145</sup>

There were two loan registers, one in Dutch and one in English, both with 100 certificates. The registers were used from 1911 to 1961 and 64 certificates were issued, of which 15 loans were returned with the loan certificate, and 10 loans without the certificate. Many of the loans were for an indefinite period, for example, a judge's cloak, loaned by J.A. Denysen on 2 May 1913, on the issue of English loan certificate no.12. The loans were sometimes given an acquisition number, for example, Dutch loan certificate no. 28: acquisition no. 4607. On other occasions they were given an accession number, for example, English loan certificate no. 17: H.C. 4246 - 4248.

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<sup>144</sup> Four paintings that were exhibited in the Museum for many years were received by the artist E. Musschenbrook by means of a handwritten note. The accession numbers were also given. NCHMA, System 1 No 6 TM1/52 - 1/53, receipt, signed E. van Musschenbrook, dd 2 August 1952.

<sup>145</sup> For example, Historiography Catalogue, vol. 2, H.C. accession no. 5622.

LOAN CERTIFICATE. 22 TRANSVAAL MUSEUM. 22

CERTIFICATE.

*The undersigned, in his capacity as Director of the Transvaal Museum, acknowledges to have received on loan from* \_\_\_\_\_


\_\_\_\_\_

Director, Transvaal Museum.

Pretoria, \_\_\_\_\_

The above-mentioned article remains the property of \_\_\_\_\_ and can be taken back at any time by <sup>her</sup>him or <sup>her</sup>his legal representative on the return of this Certificate.

P.O. Box 413. Posbus 413. Telephone 2-8801. Telefoon 422



TRANSVAAL MUSEUM,  
PRETORIA, 23<sup>rd</sup> August, 1940.

Received from the  
Transvaal Museum: 1 Pestle &  
Mortar, Acq. No. 2464, which  
was lent to the Museum  
5 years ago by Mr. A. J. Kruger,  
Provincial Administrator's Office, Pretoria.

(Sgd.) A. J. Kruger

Figure 34

Example of loan certificate with stub on the left (top)  
and handwritten return of loan (below)

The objects borrowed by the Transvaal Museum from the University of Pretoria, such as the Nel-Blom and Mapungubwe Collections, were handled differently.

- The Nel-Blom Collection

This Collection was loaned to the Transvaal Museum by the University of Pretoria in 1934.<sup>146</sup> The catalogue used by the University<sup>147</sup>(nos. 1 to 252) was rewritten by A.J. Swierstra in a new catalogue at the Transvaal Museum.<sup>148</sup> It had a note to the effect that those numbers also had the code “Nel U.P.” on the objects themselves and correspond with the University catalogue. This means that there was a clear distinction between the ET. accessions nos.1 to 252 in the Main Catalogue of the Department of Ethnology Africa and the Nel U.P. loan numbers 1 to 252. Numbers. 34:425 to 432 was added to both catalogues by Beukes at a later stage. Part of the collection was stored and part was put on display.<sup>149</sup> This is an example of objects on loan which were given accession numbers in a catalogue used for permanent accessions.

The inventory compiled by Beukes was tabled at the meeting of the Board of Trustees and approved.<sup>150</sup> The collection (except the items listed) was returned to the University in 1952. The return of the loan was signed by the University and the Transvaal Museum in both catalogues.<sup>151</sup>

- Mapungubwe Collection

Probably the most important loan effected by the Transvaal Museum was the Mapungubwe material from the University of Pretoria.<sup>152</sup> The Museum and the University agreed to

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<sup>146</sup> This is a collection of ethnological objects from the Pietpotgietersrust district, received by the University of Pretoria from M.C. de Wet Nel and Maria Blom. Transvaal Museum Committee minutes, meeting 8 June 1934.

<sup>147</sup> The catalogue used by the University of Pretoria, had the following heading “Universiteit van Pretoria. Dept. van Bantoeïstiek Etnografiese Versameling” to indicate the Nel-Blom collection and other objects in the ethnology collection of the University. The collection was donated and returned to the National Cultural History Museum in 1997.

<sup>148</sup> Catalogue used for the Nel-Blom Collection and collecting done by Dr W.T.H. Beukes.

<sup>149</sup> Transvaal Museum Annual Report, 1934 - 1935, departmental report for ethnology, p. 1.

<sup>150</sup> Transvaal Museum Board of Trustees minutes, meeting 8 August 1952.

<sup>151</sup> The University catalogue includes a note to the effect that the Nel-Blom objects were given back to the University, signed by A.J. Janse as acting director of the Transvaal Museum, dd 15 October 1952. In the Beukes Catalogue a pasted typewritten note acknowledges receipt of the objects, with a few exceptions, signed by the Head of the Department of Ethnology, Prof. P.J. Coertze, dd 16 October 1952.

<sup>152</sup> Transvaal Museum Board of Trustees minutes, meetings 22 August 1935, 9 April 1948 and 7 May 1948.

collaborate on this project,<sup>153</sup> the Museum promising to provide accommodation (both exhibition and storage space) for the material.<sup>154</sup> Although the Museum did not hold itself responsible for theft or fire, it promised take reasonable precautions to ensure the safety of the collection.<sup>155</sup>

### Exchanges

Although exchanges were not often undertaken at the Transvaal Museum, the practice was not unknown. In 1937 Beukes acquired an ornament from a private person in exchange for a marala.<sup>156</sup> In 1941 a collection of Australian native implements was received from the Australian Museum, Sydney in exchange for a collection of South African stone implements.<sup>157</sup> A third example is the exchange, in 1949, of duplicate music items, in response to a request by [F.Z.?] van der Merwe.<sup>158</sup> Duplicate coins were also exchanged for coins that would fill gaps in the numismatics collection. This appears to have been an accepted practice in museums, as they “advertised” their wares for exchange in *SAMAB*. The Africana Museum, for example, wanted to exchange duplicate coins and medals for Africana material of an approximately equivalent value.<sup>159</sup>

### Marking

The value of the acquisition number is that it links the acquisition, i.e. either one object or a group or collection of objects, to the information in the acquisitions entry register. At the Staatsmuseum and the Transvaal Museum this was not a permanent number and has in many cases been lost. The way in which acquisition numbers were marked on the objects is not clear, but it was probably done by means of an acquisition stamp, if that was possible, or otherwise a label, on which the accession number was sometimes noted (figure 35).

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<sup>153</sup> Ibid., 20 October 1933.

<sup>154</sup> Transvaal Museum Annual Report, 1935 - 1936, p. 5.

<sup>155</sup> Transvaal Museum Board of Trustees minutes, meeting 28 Augustus 1933.

<sup>156</sup> Accession no. 37/196.

<sup>157</sup> Transvaal Museum Annual Report, 1941 - 1942, departmental report for archaeology, ethnology, numismatics and philately, p. 1.

<sup>158</sup> Transvaal Museum Board of Trustees minutes, meeting dd 11 November 1949.

<sup>159</sup> See for example, notice, Material for disposal, *SAMAB*, 2(5), September 1940, p. 130.





Figure 35a

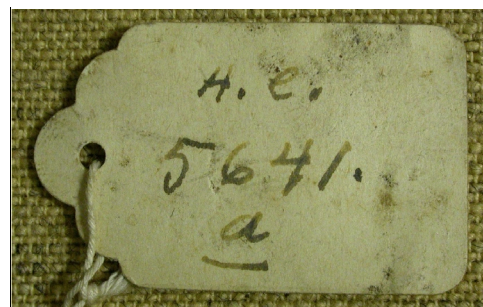
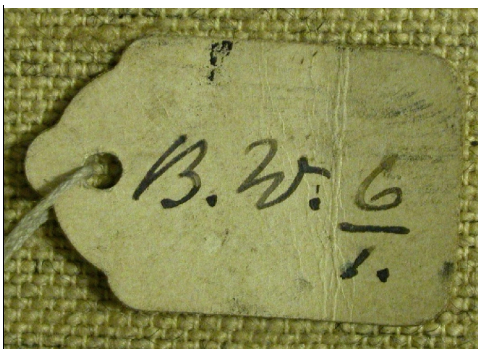


Figure 35b

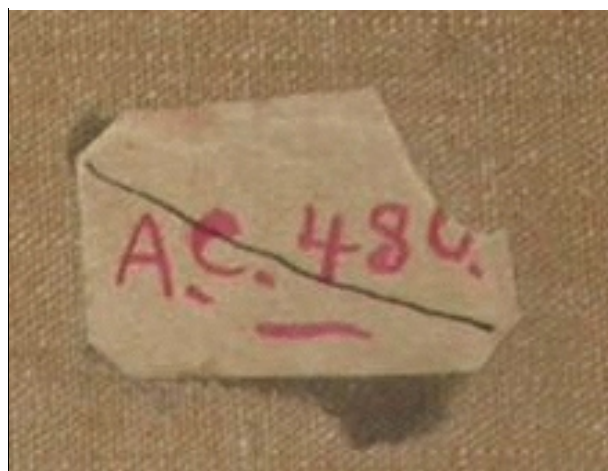
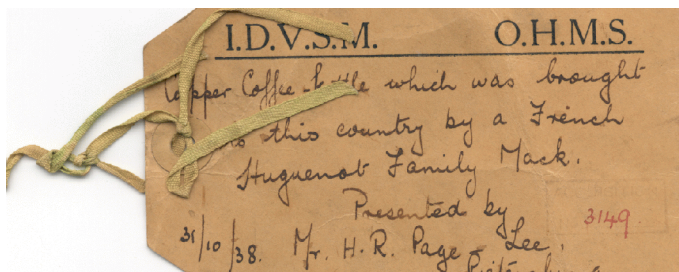


Figure 35c



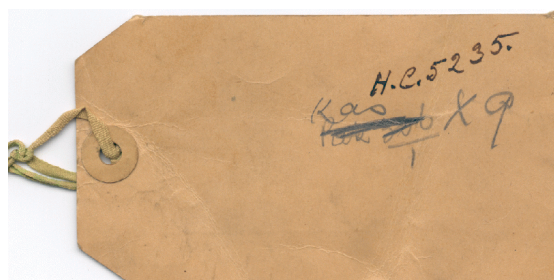


Figure 35d



(Front of label)

Figure 35e



(Back of label)

Figure 35 (a to e)

Examples of accession and acquisition numbers on labels, either gummed to the object or attached by means of string

The permanent marking of an object with the accession number is of the utmost importance in the management of collections as this is the link between the object and the museum documentation system. No written standard procedure for the marking of objects for the Staatsmuseum and the Transvaal Museum could be located. Only one recommendation by Rossouw was found, in which he advised the Museum to catalogue and label, as permanently as possible, the historical and ethnological objects as soon as they were received.<sup>160</sup> This seems to indicate that it was not the accepted practice at the Museum to accession and mark the objects immediately on receipt. This would go some way towards explaining the presence of objects without accession numbers, either by a label or in any permanent manner at all. If objects have not been marked with accession numbers, one would assume that they were never accessioned. As a result one finds that in one catalogue the same object is accessioned more than once.<sup>161</sup> Often the same object was also accessioned in more than one catalogue. On the other hand, there is also evidence that the opposite may have happened. The objects were numbered, but the numbers were not entered into a catalogue, such as references to accessioning by Radcliffe-Brown.

Without a reference (acquisition or accession) number the object and any existing information about that object would become divorced. It is then almost impossible to find the correct information. The following remarks in the Historiography Catalogue make this clear:

- H.C. accession no. 4603(a)  
“Gevind in nov. 1953 in klein pakkamertjie. Dit mag êrens anders in die H.C-boek gekatalogiseer wees”.  
[Found in Nov, 1953 in small storage room. It may have been catalogued elsewhere in the H.C. book.]
- H.C. accession no. 5309  
“Op ‘n meegaande kaartjie staan dat dit geskenk was deur die Z.A.R. regering maar geen ou nommer kan gevind word nie”.  
[On the accompanying label it was recorded that it was donated by the Z.A.R. government, but no original number can be found.]

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<sup>160</sup> NCHMA, TM19/24 copies of letters and recommendation, Rossouw to the director of the Transvaal Museum, dd 30 October 1925.

<sup>161</sup> Historiography Catalogue, vol. 1, H.C. accession nos. 259 and 67 both refer to the newspaper *Camp News*, published during the siege of Pretoria 1880 - 1881, and H.C. accession nos. 22 and 168 to the same Bible.

- H.C. accession no. 4816

“This parcel, when found, was not entered into any catalogue”.

These are issues that seem prevalent throughout the period under review when making an analysis of the documentation.

The manner in which objects were marked also differ considerably. Paper objects from the collection of the Staatsmuseum show that they have been imprinted with the date stamp of the Staatsmuseum, and this practice was also adopted at the Transvaal Museum. The stamps did not provide for an accession number (figure 36), but this was sometimes added in writing on the object or on a label (figure 36 and 37). The ethnology objects at the Staatsmuseum were marked with the letter P as indicated in the catalogue (figure 26). As late as 1960 many unnumbered ethnology objects were still found with no identification, either on the object itself or on a label.<sup>162</sup>

According to Schiel cannon balls were marked with red paint (figure 38), as were various other objects (figure 27).<sup>163</sup> Objects were found in the ceramic collection, also numbered in red and white that refer to numbers in the Art Catalogue, but without any code. This made it difficult for an uninformed staff member to associate the number with the correct catalogue as the same numbers appear in more than one catalogue. Later numbers are marked in black on the object with the prefix A.C.<sup>164</sup> Accession numbers on paintings were added to the caption (figure 41).

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<sup>162</sup> NCHMA, File ET1/60 Etnologiese Afdeling. Konsepverslag: Toestand in Museum, p. 4, n d.

<sup>163</sup> Historiography Catalogue, vol. 2, p. 170; H.C. accession no. 5626.

<sup>164</sup> For example, Art Catalogue, A.C. accession nos. 82, 92 and 126 (red on a light background) and A.C. accession nos. 111 to 114 (white on a dark background), but without a code. Later numbers are marked in black on the object with the prefix A.C., for example, A.C. 551.

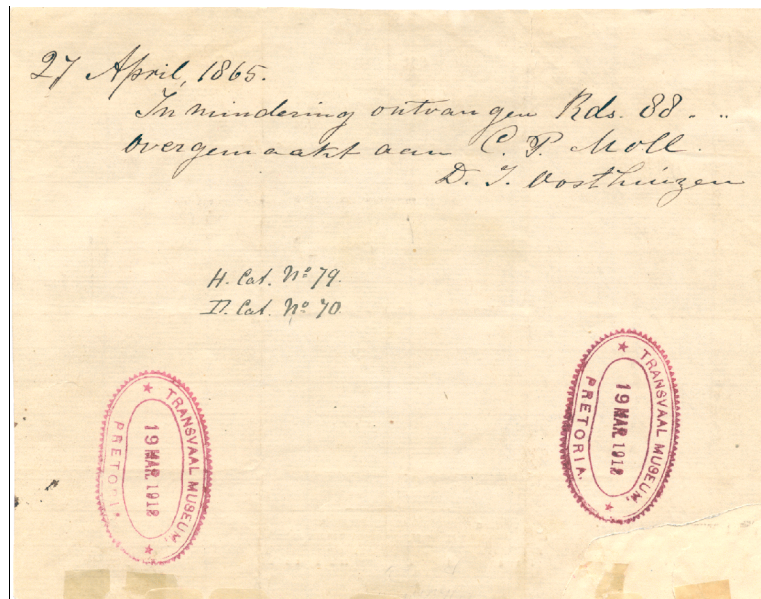


**Figure 36**

Examples of date stamps of the Staatsmuseum and the Transvaal Museum, which did not provide space for an accession or acquisition number.

The accession number was added later by means of a label

(Collection: National Cultural History Museum Nu. 2057)



**Figure 37**

Accession numbers were also written on the objects, for example, H. Cat. No. 79 and D.Cat. No. 70

( Collection: National Cultural History Museum Nu. 2935)





**Figure 38**

Canon balls were marked with red paint

(Collection: National Cultural History Museum H.C. 4181)



**Figure 39**

Objects in the ceramics collection, numbered in red without a code referring to an accession number in the Art Catalogue

(Collection: National Cultural History Museum A.C. 279, 254 and 273)



**Figure 40**

Object in the ceramics collection with several accession numbers: 119 (incorrect) and OHG 1345 on the object; whereas the original number was A.C. 70 and the final number, H.C. 21100

(Collection: National Cultural History Museum H.C. 21100)



**Figure 41**

Accession number added to the caption on a painting

(Collection: National Cultural History Museum H.C. 32739 )

Even if the objects were marked, many accession numbers did not only become indistinct over time, but some disappeared completely. In some cases it seems that the original accession number was deleted and replaced. One of the reasons for this assumption is that, according to Schiel, the old catalogue to which the previous accession number referred, did not exist any longer.<sup>165</sup> The old numbers were thus deleted from, for example, bullets, and the H.C. catalogue numbers marked on them.<sup>166</sup> It is not clear precisely what the process of deletion entailed.

The use of codes prefixed to the accession number seems to be a relatively late development and was almost certainly done in an attempt to distinguish the various collections from one another. It would also have made finding information in the catalogues easier. The old numbers, marked on the objects and still extant, show only the number without a code (figures 39 and 78).

#### 4. POST-ACQUISITION AND ITEM STAGE

Roberts<sup>167</sup> describes the post-acquisition stage as the curation and control of groups after their formal acquisition and prior to the cataloguing<sup>168</sup> of the components, and the curatorial operations involved in item documentation such as cataloguing. At the Transvaal Museum there was no post-acquisition stage, nor any further cataloguing of the objects. Nevertheless the information about objects, particularly the associated details, were regarded as important and were actively solicited.<sup>169</sup>

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<sup>165</sup> Ibid., vol. 2, H.C. accession no. 5626.

<sup>166</sup> Ibid., p. 170.

<sup>167</sup> D.A. Roberts, *Planning the documentation of museum collections*, pp. 69 - 74, see also pp. 213 - 216.

<sup>168</sup> See glossary Cataloguing: current use.

<sup>169</sup> NCHMA, System 1 No 4 TM1/34 - TM1/42, letter Swierstra to J.P.J. Roux, dd 19 April 1934. Swierstra writes "Ek sal bly wees indien u ons 'n kort geskiedenis kan gee van elke voorwerp wat u stuur; dit verleen groter historiese waarde aan hulle en is ook van belang vir die publiek"; [I would be pleased if you could let us have a short history of each object that you send; in this way the historical value attached to them increases and the information is also of interest to the public. (Translated from the Afrikaans.)]; letter Beukes to J. Botha, dd 26 Januarie 1934, in which Beukes also asks question with regard to a particular donation: "... was dit deur jong meide of groot vroue gedra? En was vroue daarmee gekoop, of was dit net vir mooiheid gedra?" [... was it traditionally worn by young girls or older women? Were women purchased with it, or was it worn merely as an ornament? (Translated from the Afrikaans.)]



Swierstra often noted that historical details were growing increasingly difficult to obtain,<sup>170</sup> and that the Museum was grateful to have any relevant information. Particulars supplied with an ethnological donation greatly enhanced its value from a scientific point of view.<sup>171</sup> The information was noted in the books,<sup>172</sup> (in the acquisition entry register and/or in the catalogue), recorded in files,<sup>173</sup> which implied that a letter or note with information was filed in the administrative filing system, or put onto labels.

## 5. OUTPUT STAGE

The output stage involves the compilation of records such as catalogues and indexes to facilitate retrieval of information.<sup>174</sup> At the Transvaal Museum there were apparently well-nigh no information retrieval systems in place for details, such as the type or classification of objects, donors, associated individuals and places, events or location.

### Inventories/lists

It was almost impossible to trace an object as there were no inventories: Gunning had packed many of the objects away, but Swierstra soon realized there were no inventories as a guide to the contents of the different chests and boxes into which everything had been packed.<sup>175</sup> From time to time, however, information was sent to the media and in that way details about the donor and the donation were made public.<sup>176</sup>

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<sup>170</sup> Ibid., System 1 No 3 TM1/31 - TM1/33, letter Swierstra to G.O. Lunnon, dd 3 May 1933.

<sup>171</sup> Ibid., letter Swierstra to T. Moore, dd 29 June 1933; System 1 No 4 TM1/34 - TM1/42, letter Beukes to J. Loots, dd 4 January 1934 in which Beukes also notes that the scientific value of the objects is enhanced because the place of origin has been identified.

<sup>172</sup> Ibid., System 1 No 4 TM1/34 - TM1/42, letter Swierstra to C.J. Groenewald, dd 18 September 1934. He thanks the donor for the information and says the information will now be registered in the Museum's books.

<sup>173</sup> Ibid., System 1 No 3 TM1/31 - TM1/33, letter Swierstra to G.O. Lunnon, dd 3 May 1933.

<sup>174</sup> D.A. Roberts, *Planning the documentation of museum collections*, pp. 79 and 219 - 220.

<sup>175</sup> NCHMA, Box 514 TM 5/9 Art, letter Swierstra to J. Radcliffe-Brown, dd 6 February 1914.

<sup>176</sup> Ibid., System 1 No 2 TM1/27 - 1/30 letter Swierstra to the editor of *Die Volkstem*, dd 22 November 1927 and System 1 No 3 TM1/31 - 1/33, cutting, report sent to the *Die Volkstem* for publication. It deals with a donation by B. Boshoff, who gave a photograph and a small collection of old coins to the Transvaal Museum. Also a newspaper cutting about a donation of a cannon that belonged to the Voortrekker leader Andries Hendrik Potgieter.

In exceptional cases an in-house catalogue was produced. Two of these were found. On 8 April 1924 Rossouw produced (and signed as historiographer) a list of the Botha Collection. These were arranged in chronological order, divided into four periods corresponding with the public life of Botha in South Africa and abroad. No fewer than 422 items are listed. The list is accompanied by a typed pamphlet dealing with the four periods and the objects pertaining to each period.<sup>177</sup> The corresponding H.C. numbers were added later to the list. Another list was located in the correspondence files.<sup>178</sup>

A list of the objects received from the Zuid-Afrikaansch Museum was also compiled by Rossouw. It consisted of two sections, namely the objects associated with Cronjé and those linked to Kruger.<sup>179</sup> This list was probably based on three separate detailed lists. One of these, describing the 16 chests, is the original inventory compiled by Leyds. The other two are copies of lists that were also compiled by Leyds.<sup>180</sup> These lists and the correspondence were received together with the consignments at the Transvaal Museum and were retained by the Museum. De Beer, who did in depth research on the Zuid-Afrikaansch Museum, however, contends that no written particulars accompanied the collection.<sup>181</sup>

Lists of photographs and other objects were also produced by Schiel.<sup>182</sup> These lists, says Coetzee, did help to locate objects because the Historiography Catalogue was in a chaotic state and there were no catalogue cards.<sup>183</sup>

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<sup>177</sup> Ibid., Box 515, list, Botha Collection, dd 8 April 1924 and “Die ‘Generaal Louis Botha versameling’ (unpublished pamphlet).

<sup>178</sup> Ibid., System 1 No 2 TM1/27 - TM1/30, list with 168 Botha objects.

<sup>179</sup> Ibid., Box 515, list of objects received from “Het Zuid-Afrikaansch Museum” te Dordrecht, Holland.

<sup>180</sup> Ibid., see TM Files 5/11A, for details of the three consignments.

<sup>181</sup> P.J. de Beer, “Die ‘Zuid-Afrikaansch Museum’ te Dordrecht 1902 - 1921” (unpublished M.A. dissertation, University of Pretoria, 1967), p. 144.

<sup>182</sup> NCHMA, file no. 26, list no.1, Documents connected with Z.A.R. Deputation 1883-4 and Miscellaneous photographs.

<sup>183</sup> Ibid., System 1 No 17 TM2/61 Jul - Dec., draft report, Ou Museum Historiese Afdeling.

### Card catalogues

In 1913 the Museum Committee resolved that a card as well as a book catalogue should exist in all divisions.<sup>184</sup> According to a note in the Main Catalogue of the Department of Ethnology Africa a card catalogue existed in 1914 for the ethnology objects, from no. 1 to 1415.<sup>185</sup> Blank cards with the heading TRANSVAAL MUSEUM Division of Ethnography, were printed and had to be filled in by hand.<sup>186</sup> The following information was required:

No.	How received
Specimen	Remarks
Nation or Tribe	Entered by
Description	Date

The ethnography card catalogue was maintained by Swierstra (figure 42), but unfortunately he did not date any of the existing cards. Radcliffe-Brown also worked on the card catalogue, probably during April 1921, as some of the cards are dated. He had access to the various ethnography catalogues and made cross references to them on the cards. In the top right hand corner of some of the cards he filled in a code (the meaning of which is not clear) such as E.S., SS, D.16.d and E.C. 18 (figure 43).

In 1921 an amount of £15 was authorized for the typing of cards for the ethnology collection.<sup>187</sup> The typing of the cards started in Radcliffe-Brown's time because he also coded some of the cards in the same way (figure 43). The hand-written card catalogue was continued by Rossouw (figure 44). On all the extant cards the accession number of the object was recorded without a prefix or code. As the complete card catalogue no longer exists (2005), it is impossible to say whether the typed catalogue was also continued and for how long the cards were compiled in this manner.

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<sup>184</sup> Transvaal Museum Committee minutes, meeting 15 July 1913.

<sup>185</sup> Main catalogue of the Ethnology Department Africa, vol. 1, p. 157, ET. accession no. 1415.

<sup>186</sup> Examples of cards provided by J. A. van Schalkwyk, National Cultural History Museum, 12 November 2004.

<sup>187</sup> Transvaal Museum Committee minutes, meeting, 15 June 1921.

**TRANSVAAL MUSEUM.**  
Division of Ethnography.

No. 922  
 Specimen Axe (Nsembi)  
 Nation or Tribe Luemba country, N. Rhodesia  
 Description Handle (Mupinyi) of Mpasa wood; ordinary iron working axe. Note the ornamentation on the handle (Wekhalaya) made wrapping the handle in strips of wet bark and then charring.  
 How received Purchased from Rev. Robertson, Kwinana, N. Rhodesia  
 Remarks see letter 24<sup>th</sup> May 1911 No 3, 4

Ent. by Corn. J. B.  
Date \_\_\_\_\_

4355-27/6/12-3000.

**TRANSVAAL MUSEUM.**  
Division of Ethnography.

No. 946  
 Specimen Barkcloth  
 Nation or Tribe Chenda umbulu, Bemba country  
 Description small piece, unjointed and unsewn

How received Purchased by Rev. Robertson, at Chenda umbulu just north of the Zambezi in Bemba country.  
 Remarks see letter 31 Oct. 1909 No 5

Ent. by Corn. J. B.  
Date \_\_\_\_\_

4355-27/6/12-3000.

Figure 42

Ethnology index cards, written by C.J. Swierstra



E.C. 18

**TRANSVAAL MUSEUM.**  
Division of Ethnography.

No. 4304

Specimen Model of Native House

Nation or Tribe Borneo

Description

How received Pres. by Dr. G. A. F. Molengraaf

Remarks EE73.

Ent. by  
Date

8403—6/12/12—3000.

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E.C. 18

**TRANSVAAL MUSEUM.**  
Division of Ethnography.

No. 4304

Specimen Model of native house

Nation or Tribe Borneo

Description

How received Pres. by Dr. G. A. F. Molengraaf

Remarks EE73.

Ent. by  
Date

**Figure 43**

Ethnology cards, written by A.R. Radcliffe-Brown, and retyped

**TRANSVAAL MUSEUM.**  
Division of Ethnography.

No. 5050

Specimen Ink pot

Nation or Tribe

Description Made of Soapstone by natives from  
Nanggaland

How received Bt. from Mr. O. Elk an

Remarks Not valuable  
Asian

Ent. by G.H.R.  
Date

3884—8/6/21—5000.

**Figure 44**

Ethnology card, handwritten by G.S.H. Rossouw

A major breakthrough was made in the early 1940s when the Transvaal Museum decided to follow the method of anthropological cataloguing compiled by Shaw of the South African Museum, Cape Town. According to Shaw the procedure of cataloguing by entering ethnographic material in a register, “fails to be of much assistance for the scientific study of the material listed in it ... One can not rearrange it temporarily according to a different scheme”.<sup>188</sup> The Shaw system claimed that the most satisfactory method of cataloguing was a card catalogue in which each object has its own card. The card has several benefits, for example, they can be arranged to particular requirements and additional information can be added from time to time (annexure 7).

After a visit by to the Transvaal Museum by Shaw and H. Oliver of the Africana Museum in Johannesburg to the Museum it was decided to recatalogue the complete ethnology collection, and index cards had to be printed for this purpose.<sup>189</sup> The aim of the system was to involve every museum in the country and to build up a national system of recording ethnological data.<sup>190</sup> The system consisted of index cards on which the information on an object, including a detailed description, a sketch, and a bibliography, was recorded<sup>191</sup> (Figure 45). The printing of the cards was transacted by Shaw, who sent a batch of two thousand cards to the Transvaal Museum, together with an account of £2/9/0. She also sent the cataloguing instructions with a covering letter. She had high hopes that other museums would follow the good example set by the Transvaal Museum and the South African Museum in Cape Town.<sup>192</sup>

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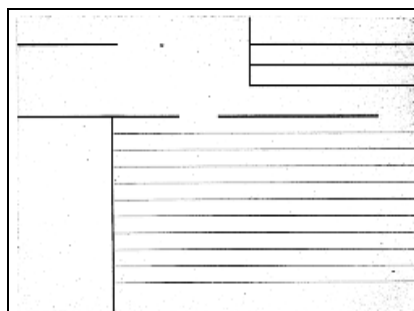
<sup>188</sup> E.M. Shaw, A system of cataloguing ethnographic material, *SAMAB*, 2(5), September 1940, p. 118.

<sup>189</sup> Transvaal Museum, Annual Report, 1940 - 1941, departmental report for archaeology, p. 3. For printed index card, see figure 42.

<sup>190</sup> *Ibid.*, 1944 - 1945. p. 1.

<sup>191</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>192</sup> NCHMA, Box 137, TM18/35(a), letter, Shaw to director, dd 28 July 1942.



Registered Number.	Tribe : Group
	Locality
	District : Province.
Quantity & name of Object.	Native name.
Photograph or Sketch with measurements.	a) Materials, appearance, etc.
	b) Information obtained with it.
	Corresp. How and from whom obtained.
	Where in museum. Date.

Figure 45

Catalogue card, blank (top) and with information (below) proposed by E.M. Shaw

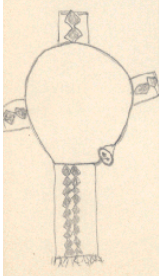
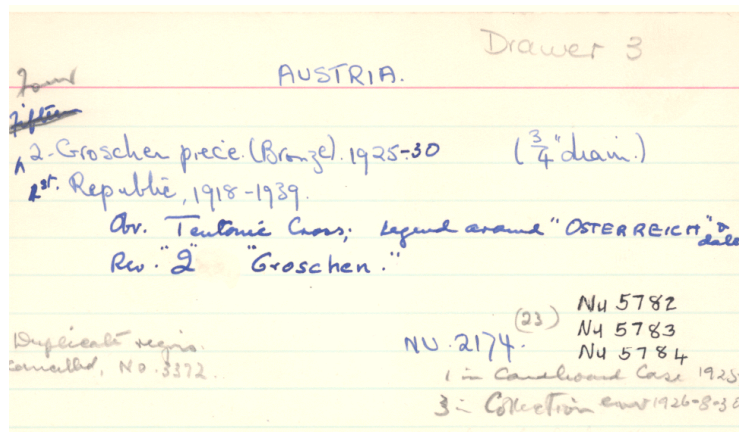
ET. FM. 8392.	TEMBU. (a) I. II. (a)
	BAZIYA MISSION. (a)
	UMTATA. C.P. (a)
NECKLET?	ISIGUNA SIFUBA. (a)
	Oblong beadedwork (4 3/4" x 2") of white, dark blue and red, with a short bead fringe of white, black, dark blue and red attached to a single light blue string. Attached to this string are 3 small squares of white, light blue + dark blue. A button fastens it.
	"The ornament is called UMUTI."
	Collected by Rev. W. Blohm, Baziya.
	Purchased from him on vi. 41.

Figure 46

Ethnology card, handwritten and illustrated by E.J. Haugton, according to the Shaw system



At the Transvaal Museum the job was undertaken by Haughton, who had to complete the cards by hand, including a sketch of the object (figure 46) as photographic films was difficult to come by during the war.<sup>193</sup> She was very enthusiastic about her task and set about re-cataloguing the whole anthropological collection.<sup>194</sup> The project started at the beginning of 1944,<sup>195</sup> but by 1947 the card index was still incomplete.<sup>196</sup> Haughton encountered some practical problems with Shaw's glossary, and was in communication with her.<sup>197</sup> There was no move to compile a card index for the archaeological collection.<sup>198</sup> In 1939 a numismatics card index (figure 47) had, however, been compiled by Haughton, and when the De Villiers Roos donation was received, that collection was also card-indexed.<sup>199</sup>



**Figure 47**

Numismatics index card, written by E.J. Haughton and B.J. Versfeld,  
with additions and alterations

<sup>193</sup> Ibid., letter Haughton to director, Albany Museum, dd 25 October 1944.

<sup>194</sup> Ibid., letter Haughton to J. Hewitt, dd 22 December 1943.

<sup>195</sup> Ibid., letter Haughton to J. Hewitt, dd 19 September 1944.

<sup>196</sup> Transvaal Museum Annual report, 1946 - 1947, p. 1.

<sup>197</sup> NCHMA, Box 137, TM18/35(a), letters Haughton to Shaw, dd 13 February 1945 and 19 January 1946.

<sup>198</sup> Ibid., File ET1/60 Etnologiese Afdeling, Konsepverslag: Toestand in Museum, p. 4, n.d.

<sup>199</sup> Transvaal Museum Annual Reports, 1939 - 1940 and 1940 - 1941, departmental report for archaeology, ethnology, numismatics and philately, pp. 2 and 4.

## **Indexes**

The first attempt at indexing the historical collections was made in 1947 by Schiel at the request of the director.<sup>200</sup> Schiel provided a rough estimate for the index, in which he explained his proposed method.<sup>201</sup> Schiel envisaged his task as working out different index “files” in alphabetical order for the various divisions, to be bound after completion of his task. The files had to have enough space for alterations and additions. The rooms, show and other cases where objects, which he called specimens, were placed, had to be numbered. The most difficult part of his task, in view of the former mistakes in labelling, was the classification (called “assorting” by Schiel). The packing and labelling of the objects according to the index, and the comparison of all objects with the catalogues could then be completed. As far as can be ascertained Schiel produced four indexes, using bound numbered books.

### Information book

The index, called an information book by Schiel, was compiled for exhibited works of art, and stored documents, photographs, scrolls, books, Bibles and a few three dimensional objects, as well as the Botha Collection in storage and on display. A separate alphabetical index of the art exhibits was written on nine loose pages. Schiel made an effort to obtain additional information, even writing to the Archives and consulting the old catalogue of the Staatsmuseum.<sup>202</sup> The information book also has numerous notes and remarks made by Schiel and gives his personal opinion on certain objects and their history.

### Indexes

Schiel compiled three indexes in addition to the information book, covering the medieval, Huguenot, Voortrekker and later periods<sup>203</sup> and also a historical index for documents, books and Bibles.

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<sup>200</sup> NCHMA, Diary, FitzSimons, 1947, letter Schiel to FitzSimons, dd. 29 August 1947.

<sup>201</sup> See annexure 5, Rough estimate for Index.

<sup>202</sup> Copy of a letter Schiel wrote to the Chief Archivist and his reply. Information Book, p.79, “Inligting uit ou Kataloog van 1897” [Information from old catalogue of 1897].

<sup>203</sup> Pages were cut out from this index in the late 1970s and the book was used for addresses.

### Index Kruger objects

The Kruger index is apparently an old discarded catalogue, as the first 17 pages have been cut out. It is an alphabetical index of the Kruger Collection. The information is divided into two columns, listing the items in alphabetical order and giving the Kr. accession numbers. The parcel numbers are only given for one page. This index was apparently put together after the compilation of the Kruger Catalogue.

### Index (unknown)

Another index provides a list numbered from 1 to 3161 with names, but no indication at all about the collection these numbers and names refer to. Not all the numbers were used, and some entries are annotated with a B or D, a number and a tick.

### **Labels**

At the Transvaal Museum labels were regarded as one of the most important ways of documenting, irrespective of whether the objects were in storage or on display. It was the one way to ensure that information survived, because many objects were not catalogued and marked immediately. In the catalogues there are a few references to the labels attached to the objects, giving information about the donor, entry number or other details.<sup>204</sup> In the current collection (2005) of the National Cultural History Museum there are still examples of objects that have old labels (Figure 35).

Little information exists on the actual process of labelling, but it is known that a collection of uniforms from the Staatsartillerie of the ZAR were sorted and labelled during research. Whether these labels gave the accession numbers and additional information, is unknown.<sup>205</sup>

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<sup>204</sup> For example, *Historiography Catalogue*, vol. 2, H.C. accession no.5375 (3), chair, with following information: “Byskrif op ‘n etiket lui: Derector Museum, Ik zal zelf kom om u verder en formasie te geef zoover ik weet A van der Westhuizen”; H.C. accession no. 5378, chair, with following information: “‘n Etiket daarby meld dat die stoel oorspronklik van die Kaapse Tuine afkom, dd. vanaf die Groot Trek. Het aan skenker se oorgrootmoeder Johanna Oosthuizen behoort, toe weer aan grootmoeder van Zyl. Dit was gedurende die Driejarige Oorlog gesteel deur die kaffers maar is weer gevind”. [Caption on label: Director Museum, I will come myself and give your further information that I have, A van der Westhuizen]; [On the label it says that the chair originally came from the Cape Gardens at the time of the Great Trek. It belonged to the great grandmother of the donor, Johanna Oosthuizen, and then to her grandmother Van Zyl. During the Anglo-Boer War it was stolen by Africans, but subsequently found again.” (Translated from the Afrikaans.)]

<sup>205</sup> Transvaal Museum Annual Report, 1945 - 1946, departmental report for ethnology, numismatics and archaeology, p. 4.

A label was one way to ensure that the donor of the object could be identified, because it would link the object to the donor for posterity, either in storage or on display.<sup>206</sup> Furthermore the public were able to see the details when the object was on display. Donors were promised that objects would be displayed with a proper label giving their name. It was regarded a strong motivation for encouraging donations (figure 48).<sup>207</sup> This premise was endorsed by the Museum Committee when it decided that a display case with a donation of Ovambo and Bushman implements had to give the name of the donor on a brass plate.<sup>208</sup> The label was also used for additional information about the object on display<sup>209</sup> and details were updated and corrected from time to time.<sup>210</sup> In theory this meant that a label was attached to the object with collections management information, such as the name of the donor, date of donation and acquisition or accession number, possibly in lieu of marking the object itself with the accession number – a practice that was destined to lead to loss of information.

## 6. EXIT STAGE

Roberts describes the exit stage as the stage where material leaves the museum on a temporary or permanent basis.<sup>211</sup> It also includes exchanges and the loss or disposal of objects.

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<sup>206</sup> NCHMA, System 1 No 1 TM1/12 - TM1/26, letter Swierstra to F.J. de Lange, dd 14 February 1923. He writes that the objects will be displayed in a glass case “... met een kaartje daaraan waarop uw naam daarop als schenkster. Daardoor word dan ook voor de nageslag uw naam ook behou en staan daar voor altijd”. [... with a card bearing your name as donor on it. In this way your name will be preserved for posterity and will remain there always. (Translated from the Dutch.)].

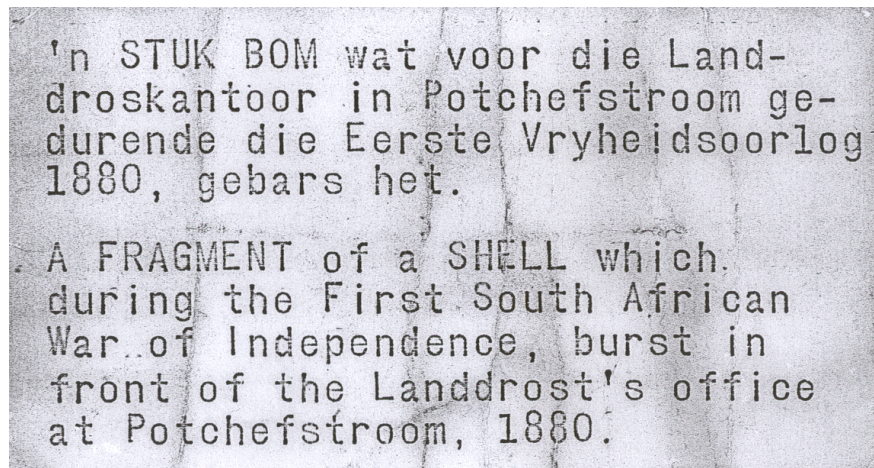
<sup>207</sup> Ibid., letter Swierstra to Sir Harry Ross Skinner, dd 7 December 1922, with the assurance that the keys would be exhibited with a proper label attached.

<sup>208</sup> Transvaal Museum Committee meeting, minutes 14 October 1919.

<sup>209</sup> NCHMA, System 1 No 1 TM1/12 - TM1/26, letter Swierstra to C.E. Dennison, dd 13 October 1922. Swierstra says that “the particulars supplied ... have been of great assistance to me in drafting the exhibition label and also for future records with regard to the History of our country”.

<sup>210</sup> After a visit by Mary Cook, the labels of the old furniture that was on show were corrected. H.H. Curson sorted and labelled the uniforms. Transvaal Museum Annual Report, 1945 - 1946, departmental report archaeology, p. 3:1.

<sup>211</sup> D.A. Roberts, *Planning the documentation of museum collections*, pp. 85, 108 and 167.



**Figure 48**

Display labels, with (top) and without (below) the name of the donor



## Loans-out

Requests for the loan of a variety of objects were received by the Museum. Although each request was handled according to its merits, general guidelines for a loan policy can be gleaned from some decisions.

### Loans-out policy

- Value

Valuable objects could not be loaned out.<sup>212</sup>

- Historical association

Objects linked to significant historical events and important individuals such as the regalia of Kruger, were never sent out on loan.<sup>213</sup>

- Risk of damage

Objects that were in danger of being damaged were not loaned out.<sup>214</sup>

- Unique or irreplaceable objects

A formal decision was adopted that no unique specimen or irreplaceable item would be loaned out by the Transvaal Museum, but duplicates or replaceable items could be loaned at the discretion of the director.<sup>215</sup>

- Money

The Museum asked an adequate deposit to cover damages<sup>216</sup> and later did, in at least one case, receive an amount of money for damages caused to objects.

- Aim or use of objects

The way in which the objects were to be used while on loan was of importance. For example, requests from the government for the loan of objects for official exhibitions were

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<sup>212</sup> Transvaal Museum Committee minutes, meeting 3 October 1916: Valuable guns could not be loaned to the Paardekraal Festival Committee,

<sup>213</sup> NCHMA, System 1 No 2 TM1/27 - TM1/30, letter Swierstra to the magistrate, Lydenburg, dd 11 March 1929; System 1 No 4 TM1/34 - TM1/42, letter Swierstra to M.H. Hough, dd 20 November 1934.

<sup>214</sup> The loan of the Kruger state coach to the Cape Town Van Riebeeck Tercentenary Committee was refused on grounds of damage risk. Transvaal Museum Board of Trustees minutes, meeting 27 September 1951.

<sup>215</sup> Ibid.

<sup>216</sup> Transvaal Museum Committee minutes, meeting 3 October 1916.

usually granted.<sup>217</sup>

### **De-accessioning/exchanges**

No attempts were made by the Transvaal Museum to dispose of objects. For example, an offer by the Johannesburg Art Gallery to buy part of the Chinese porcelain collection was turned down by the Board.<sup>218</sup> Exchanges were not, however, unknown. Beukes, for example, obtained a Le-nyina decoration (accession no. 37/196) in exchange for a marala.

### The Transvaal Museum and the Archives<sup>219</sup>

At the outset all books, documents and manuscripts of historical interest (and even books on crafts) were accepted for the collection,<sup>220</sup> but in 1916 some old newspapers were handed over to the Archives. This was in line with a decision taken in 1913.<sup>221</sup> Documents in the history collection were also handed over to the Archives from the 1940s onwards. One of the first and most important of these were the diary and pocket book of the Voortrekker leader Louis Trichardt (Tregardt)<sup>222</sup> that were handed over to the Archives on “perpetual loan” rather than being presented (donated), but the Chief Archivist did undertake to supply the Museum with two photocopies of the documents within a reasonable period.<sup>223</sup>

A request from the Chief Archivist, asking for the transfer of historical documents at the Old Museum to the Archives, was discussed by the Board. They agreed in principle to the transfer of the documents, in particular the items on the 1884 Boer Deputation to Europe, but a sub-committee was also appointed to draw up a list of the remainder of the items for

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<sup>217</sup> Objects were exhibited at the British Empire Exhibition and the Southern Rhodesia Centenary Exhibition. Transvaal Museum Committee meeting, minutes 20 February 1923 and 9 February 1926; Transvaal Museum Board of Trustees meeting, minutes 6 February 1953.

<sup>218</sup> Ibid., 6 April 1951.

<sup>219</sup> The term “archives” refers to the government (state) archives, today known as the National Archives of South Africa (NASA).

<sup>220</sup> For example, a donation included Anglo-Boer War envelopes, post cards, programmes and magazines. NCHMA, System 1 No 3, TM/1/31 - TM1/33, letter Swierstra to C.J. Liebenberg, dd 14 March 1933. A crochet pattern book was also accepted, because Swierstra was of the opinion that, although the craft would not change, over the years the pattern would change considerably. Ibid., letter Swierstra to Olderman, dd 24 August 1931.

<sup>221</sup> Transvaal Museum Committee minutes, meetings 15 July 1913 and 7 November 1916.

<sup>222</sup> Transvaal Museum Board of Trustees meeting, minutes 17 July 1941.

<sup>223</sup> Ibid., 20 November 1941.



approval by the Board.<sup>224</sup>

As far as historical photographs were concerned, in 1949 the Board was willing to hand over the collection to the Archives on condition that they compiled a detailed catalogue for the Museum and also supplied the Museum with free copies of all photographs for use in exhibitions in the Museum. The Archives agreed to these conditions.<sup>225</sup> In 1952 another 4 219 photographs were handed over to the Archives, on the same condition.<sup>226</sup> In 1951 another request was received from the Archives for the remainder of the documentary material in the Old Museum and again a sub-committee was appointed to discuss the issue. The Museum Board of Trustees accepted the recommendation of the sub-committee

- that the handing over of historical documentary material to the Archives be postponed until after the exhibition to be held from 7 March to 7 April 1952 (the Van Riebeeck Festival exhibition),
- that the sorting out of this material be undertaken by the Museum staff and
- that all documents to be submitted to Prof. Pelzer of the University of Pretoria for scrutiny before being finally handed over.<sup>227</sup>

In 1952 the Board reviewed another recommendation of the sub-committee and decided the following:

- that no “Kruger” documents be handed over to the Archives, but that they will form part of the Kruger Collection
- that the ± 3 000 photographs at the Old Museum be retained and properly cared for
- that the old maps be retained and stored in the strongroom of the New Museum
- that an attempt be made to retrieve the 5 000 photographs already handed over to the Archives and that, wherever possible, the individuals on the

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<sup>224</sup> Ibid., 18 June 1948.

<sup>225</sup> Ibid., 3 December 1948 and 4 February 1949.

<sup>226</sup> Transvaal Museum Annual Report 1951 -1952, departmental report for division of history, p. 32.

<sup>227</sup> Transvaal Museum Board of Trustees minutes, meetings 7 Sept 1951 and 9 November 1951.

photographs be identified while some of the old people were still alive.<sup>228</sup>

The sub-committee also recommended that selected books, with a few exceptions, be sent to the Merensky Library, University of Pretoria.<sup>229</sup>

With regard to the photographs, it was reported to the Board that the Archives were now making copies of all photographs that had been handed over to them by the Museum and that they would return these to the Museum. The Archives are anxious to have the remainder of the Museum's photo's for copying.<sup>230</sup> Those historical documents listed by Pelzer would be handed over as soon as Malan was back on duty to supervise the necessary sorting process.<sup>231</sup> These decisions were taken by the highest authority, namely the Museum Board, and on the recommendation of a sub-committee, whose members were eminently suited to deal with the matter. The reasons why documents and photographs should rather be housed in the Archives than in the Museum were that these "should be classed as research material proper and that the archives is the right place to house this type of material ... material that by its very nature belongs at the archives and also have no exhibition value".<sup>232</sup>

The deaccessioning was done by annotating the relevant catalogues (Historiography Catalogues, vols. 1 and 2). This was usually Schiel's responsibility because he dealt with the document collection at the time. He used the words "Na Argiewe" [To the Archives] and the date with red pencil to indicate the transfer. In Schiel's Information Book items were also annotated with the remark "All specimens marked with a red cross have been sent to the Gov. Archives".<sup>233</sup> Lists of the documents and photographs handed over to the Archives

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<sup>228</sup> Ibid., 13 June 1952.

<sup>229</sup> Ibid., 8 August 1952, but no list of these books has been found up to date (2005).

<sup>230</sup> Ibid. Whether the photographs were in fact returned to the Museum, cannot at this stage (2005) be ascertained.

<sup>231</sup> Transvaal Museum Board of Trustees minutes, meeting 12 December 1952.

<sup>232</sup> NCHMA, System 1 No 5 TM43/51, letter W.J. de Kock to the director, dd 24 November 1948.

<sup>233</sup> Information Book, p. 86.

were typed by the Museum,<sup>234</sup> but the Archives also compiled inventories of the documents.<sup>235</sup>

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The next period of Museum activity (1953 to 1964) was characterized by a great change in collections management practices, in particular with regard to documentation. Whereas in the past there had been haphazard documenting of the anthropological, archaeological and historical collections, depending on available time and staff, in the next period a pattern was be set for cataloguing and the compilation of card catalogues for the cultural history objects. This improved information retrieval for these objects and facilitated enquiries and research by the staff and the public.

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<sup>234</sup> NCHMA, file 20, various typed lists.

<sup>235</sup> NA, W. 21, Inventaris van Transvaalse Museum-stukke; NCHMA, file 20, letter senior archivist to the professional officer, dd 24 September 1958, and annexure Aanwins Nr. 551.

## CHAPTER VI

### DETAILED ANALYSIS : COLLECTIONS DOCUMENTATION AT THE TRANSVAAL MUSEUM

1953 - 1964

There were major changes in collections documentation at the Transvaal Museum after the appointment of Kotie Roodt-Coetzee in 1953, notably in the handling of the history collection. These changes are clearly evident in the way the objects were classified, the subsequent recording of information in the catalogue and its availability for retrieval in the card catalogue. All aspects of collections management did not change; acceptable practices at the Transvaal Museum were retained. The existing catalogues were, for example, still used and only one new catalogue was opened.

#### 1. PRE-ENTRY STAGE

##### **Anthropology**

The practice of collecting anthropology objects during field trips was continued by the staff who were employed in the anthropology section. Venter went to Madimatle and Kgodumodumo, Thabazimbi district, and to Rosekop, Roosenekal.<sup>1</sup> Du Toit worked primarily in the north-eastern Transvaal. He undertook the following trips:

- 23 October - 27 October 1961                      Venda
- 27 October - 2 November 1961                      Lobedu
- 2 November - 6 November 1961                      Gananwa
- 6 November - 9 November 1961                      Northern Ndebele
- 7 May 1 - 14 May 1962 (+ 22 days)                      Phalaborwa
- 11 June - 1 July 1962                                      Phalaborwa
- 15 October - 5 November 1962                      Phalaborwa
- 8 April 1 - 28 April 1963                              Thlabine
- 10 June - 30 June 1963                                  Thlabine and Phalaborwa
- 5 August - 25 August 1963                              Thlabine and Phalaborwa.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Transvaal Museum Annual Report, 1958 - 1959, p. 37.

<sup>2</sup> C.S. van der Waal, "Gesiedenis van die Volkekunde-Afdeling van die Nasko-Museum, Pretoria 1893 - 1977" (unpublished article), pp. 11 - 12.

The field trips were undertaken to collect objects and also information about their manufacture and use. From 1961 the collection began to show a scientific tendency, mainly due to the fact that objects were primarily obtained through field work. According to Du Toit, notes on the assembled material were prepared and filed.<sup>3</sup> No field notes could be located, but it is notable that the quality of the documentation had improved significantly.<sup>4</sup>

Some objects were donated and purchased. The Museum also made a point of soliciting objects from government departments, such as the Departments of Justice<sup>5</sup> and Bantu Administration and Development,<sup>6</sup> Native Commissioners<sup>7</sup> and police in the field in order to fill gaps in the collection:

Weens 'n tekort aan personeellede kan ons nie al die werk, soos die insameling van materiaal, self verrig nie, daarom het ons die hulp van Polisie-beamptes in verskeie Bantoe-gebiede nodig. Die Polisie kom gewoonlik in noue aanraking met die Bantoe en kan miskien op daardie manier Bantoe-voorwerpe vir die Museum bekom.<sup>8</sup>

Although the Commissioner of Police granted permission to the police to collect articles from black people in the different areas and officials promised their co-operation, it seems that there were relatively few objects that were sent to the Museum in this manner. The assistant information officer of the Commissioner-General in Umtata did send 20 objects and the senior information officer in Pietersburg forwarded 50 objects.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Transvaal Museum Annual Report, 1961 - 1962, departmental report for division of ethnology and archaeology, p. 34.

<sup>4</sup> C.S. van der Waal, "Gesiedenis van die Volkekunde-Afdeling van die Nasko-Museum, Pretoria 1893 - 1977" (unpublished article), p. 23.

<sup>5</sup> NCHMA, ET1/58 - 59, Etnologie Afdeling, April 1958 - December 1959, letter Secretary of Justice to the director, dd 16 August 1958.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid., ET1/60, Etnologie Afdeling, letter professional officer to chief information officer, Department of Bantu Administration and Development, dd 23 February 1960.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid., ET1/58 - 59, Etnologie Afdeling, April 1958 - December 1959, various letters professional officer to the native commissioners in South West Africa, dd 1 May 1959.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid., letters professional officer to Commissioner of Police, dd 19 October 1959, and Acting Commissioner to the professional officer (ethnology), dd 27 October 1959; Transvaal Museum Annual Report, 1959 - 1960, department report for ethnology and archaeology, p. 39. [Due to a lack of staff we cannot do all the work, such as collecting objects, ourselves. For this reason we need the assistance of police officers in several African areas. The police is usually in close contact with the Africans, and can perhaps collect objects for the Museum. (Translated from the Afrikaans.)]

<sup>9</sup> NCHMA, ET1/60, Etnologie Afdeling, letter Lubbe to the ethnologist, dd 21 November 1960 and entry receipt to W.J. Wessels, dd 22 November 1960.

## Archaeology

During this period archaeology still functioned under the ethnology section. Owing to pressure of work in the Museum, the professional officer could not do extended field work, in particular to recover rock-engravings.<sup>10</sup> A reconnaissance trip through the Kruger National Park with a view to investigating the archaeology of the Park was made.<sup>11</sup>

## History/Cultural History

Traditionally, fieldwork was regarded as one of the most important means of collecting at the Transvaal Museum. In the cultural history division this tradition was upheld, bringing in a rich harvest of objects that was collected at home as well as further afield. Field work was also in line with the view held by Coetzee: “Geen wetenskaplike kan sit en wag met die hoop dat ontbrekende materiaal geskenk sal word nie. Die wetenskaplike wat sy leemtes ken, moet hierdie materiaal gaan soek”.<sup>12</sup>

During the first six months after her appointment, Coetzee visited no less than 21 people in Pretoria and vicinity, and collected antiques.<sup>13</sup> In the next year over 30 people in Pretoria, Potchefstroom, Benoni, Brits, Standerton and Wakkerstroom were visited.<sup>14</sup> The centenary year of Pretoria, 1955, was first and foremost spent on planning and building the exhibition, but in 1956 no less than 62 visits were paid to individuals in Pretoria and on nearby farms.<sup>15</sup>

As the Transvaal was the principal locality for collecting, considerable time was spent that year in making personal contact with people in the province who were willing to donate

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<sup>10</sup> Transvaal Museum Annual Report, 1959 - 1960, departmental report for ethnology and archaeology, p. 38.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid, 1961 - 1962, p. 33.

<sup>12</sup> NCHMA, TM 1/55 (h), K. Roodt-Coetzee, Vergelyking tussen die Ou Museum en die Krugerhuis, p. 2. Underlined by Coetzee. Ibid., System 1 No 8 TM1/54, letter Coetzee to I.H. Vermooten & Zonen, dd 2 November 1954. [No scientist can sit and wait, hoping that the required material will be donated. The scientist who knows the lacunae [in the collection] have to go out and look for these objects. (Translated from the Afrikaans.)]

<sup>13</sup> Transvaal Museum Annual Report, 1953 - 1954, departmental report for division of history, p. 35.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid., 1954 - 1955, p. 33.

<sup>15</sup> NCHMA, System 2 No 57 NVK, Maandverslae personeel 1955 - 1963, draft annual report, 1955 - 1956.

objects. In this way unique material was obtained for the collection.<sup>16</sup> It was necessary to look further afield than the Transvaal, because the Anglo-Boer War and in particular the British scorched earth policy, had led to a dearth of cultural goods.<sup>17</sup> Coetzee was also motivated by the ideal of a national cultural history museum: a museum with collections common to the whole country. In 1957, for example, journeys were undertaken to Vegkop and Heilbron<sup>18</sup> and in December 1962 to January 1963, a trip was organized to the Boland, Karoo and Gamkaskloof.<sup>19</sup>

This practice continued during Coetzee's career at the Museum and extensive field trips were made throughout the country. Objects still missing in the cultural history collection were certainly traced, but in addition valuable contacts were established. Many donations were received as a result of fieldwork, because, as Coetzee put it, many people, more particularly those from the country, have now become more interested in the Museum.<sup>20</sup> Coetzee also attended auctions where antiques were sold and combed the antique shops to get to know current prices and to purchase objects.<sup>21</sup> Coins were bought at auctions, which were primarily attended by the assistant for numismatics, and again, "attendance at these sales proves a helpful guide as to changes in current prices".<sup>22</sup>

Although this research has not uncovered any structured field notes in standard format, many examples of jottings were found, either in the form of notebooks, or on cards, sheets and scraps of paper (figure 49).

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<sup>16</sup> Transvaal Museum Annual Report, 1956 - 1957, departmental report for cultural history, p. 34. In the *Historiography Catalogue*, vol. 2, accession no. 5312, Coetzee made the following note: "Sy ouers het pragtige goed meegebring uit die Kaapkolonie ... Verder het Jacob van sy ouers baie geelkoper gebruiksvorwerpe, boeke wat die Voortrekkers gelees het, ens, geërf ... dis alles vernietig in die Tweede Vryheidsoorlog". [His parents brought beautiful objects from the Cape Colony ... Jacob also inherited many copper household articles, books read by the Voortrekkers, etc ... everything was destroyed during the Anglo-Boer War. (Translated from the Afrikaans.)] See also, for example, NCHMA, System 1 No 15 TM1/60, letter Coetzee to Mr and Mrs J.B. Steyn, dd 8 February 1960; *ibid.*, System 1 No 18 TM1/62, letter Coetzee to Prof. M. Bokhorst, dd 14 September 1962.

<sup>18</sup> Transvaal Museum Annual Report, 1957 - 1958, departmental report for cultural history division, p. 37.

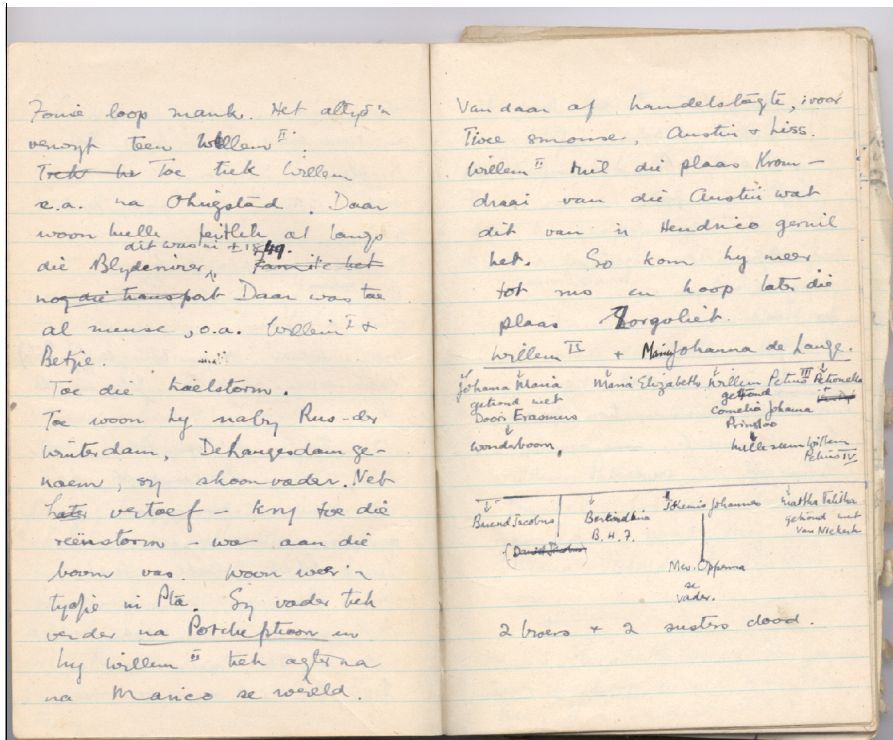
<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, 1962 - 1963, departmental report for cultural history section, p. 22.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, 1960 - 1961, departmental report for cultural history, p. 32.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, 1957 - 1958, departmental report for cultural history division, p. 37.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, departmental report for numismatics and philately, p. 44; see also *ibid.*, 1959 - 1960, p. 42.





Meiniger, Mes.  
 skoon moeder van Prozesky,  
 het stoel gebruik by Vredesonder-  
 handeling, 1902. Die stoel het  
 in Karel Rood se huis gestaan  
 toe die Boere-genl. hier in  
 Pretoria was, net langs  
 "Melrose-huis"

Figure 49  
 Examples of notes taken during field  
 trips by Kotie Roodt-Coetzee  
 (NCHMA, Kotie Roodt-Coetzee  
 Archives)

Van der Kaay (Mes.  
 geb. Maré (vader ~~Paul~~ Maré)  
 waterkloof,  
 Jacob Philippus se broers: Hip  
 Pit  
 Frikkie  
 Hip + Pit was onderskeidelik 77 en 75 jr.  
 toe hulle as bittereinders in 1902 wapens  
 neerle.  
 Jacob het op Emdrag Heidelberg gewoon  
 Sy vader was landmeter in Potchefstroom.  
 Hy kom in e. 1870 in Pta woon.

## 2. ENTRY STAGE

### **Transvaal Museum**

#### Acquisitions entry register

The practice of keeping an acquisitions entry register was maintained at the Transvaal Museum until 1966. Volume 4 covers the period 27 March 1952 to 20 May 1966 (acquisition nos. 4783 - 7023) and follows the same pattern as the previous registers with regard to information categories.

Even before her official appointment at the Transvaal Museum, Coetzee is acknowledged as collector of various donations in the acquisitions register. Detailed information was often given,<sup>23</sup> although there is no indication of the source; in other cases no information at all was recorded.<sup>24</sup> One acquisition number was allotted to a single donation, whether the donation comprised one object, or 67 different objects.<sup>25</sup>

From 1953 the acquisitions entry register became increasingly used for history acquisitions, and when necessary also for anthropology and archaeology objects – but less and less for natural history specimens. It was not only the new donations that were allocated acquisition numbers, but also objects presented to the Transvaal Museum in the past.<sup>26</sup> Objects that had already been accessioned previously were also accessioned.<sup>27</sup>

From June 1955 the accession number of the object in the Historiography or Numismatics

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<sup>23</sup> For example, the Bruchausser collection, solicited by Coetzee with particulars, Transvaal Museum Acquisitions entry register, vol. 4, acquisition nos. 4868 - 4887.

<sup>24</sup> For example, 12 objects donated by C.J. van Nispen, *ibid.*, acquisition no. 4992.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, acquisition no. 5042 consisted of one railway ticket, but acquisition no. 5028 of 67 different objects. Acquisition no. 5947 by Erich Mayer consisted of 224 works of art.

<sup>26</sup> For example, seventeen watches and movements from the Victoria and Albert Museum in London that had neither been accessioned nor catalogued since May 1919 were accessioned in March 1954. *Ibid.*, vol. 4, acquisition no. 5069. In December 1953 a coat of arms of the Nederlandsche Zuid-Afrikaansche Spoorweg-Maatschappij (NZASM) was accessioned with the note that it was found in the Old Museum without any particulars. *Ibid.*, acquisition no. 5031.

<sup>27</sup> Acquisition No.6403 already had two numbers, a Historiography Catalogue, vol. 3, accession number, H.C. accession no. 6715 and Documenten Catalogue, Docum, accession no. 0122.

catalogues was sometimes provided and vice versa. One can only speculate which process was applied first – the cataloguing or the acquisitioning? Was the cataloguing perhaps done at the Old Museum and the acquisitioning at the New Museum? There are also references to Transvaal Museum files. From 1959 the acquisitions entry register was used almost exclusively for numismatics and philately. When the National Cultural History and Open-air Museum became autonomous in 1964, the practice of using the acquisitions entry register ceased, except in the case of the numismatic section.<sup>28</sup>

### Entry form

The donor was thanked for the donation by letter, and/or an entry form was sent to the donor.<sup>29</sup> In the early years receipt forms were handwritten or typed. A printed entry form was also used and in many cases the accession number was added. It was the responsibility of the typist to type the entry forms.<sup>30</sup> A carbon copy was kept in the Museum.<sup>31</sup>

The fact that the donation was acknowledged, either by letter or in the form of an entry or receipt form. This was noted in the acquisitions entry register.<sup>32</sup> Donors often brought the objects personally to the Museum, in which case it was also noted in the register. Whether an entry form was issued in all such cases, is impossible to say.<sup>33</sup> (figure 50).

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<sup>28</sup> The numismatics and philately sections remained at the Transvaal Museum until July 1965.

<sup>29</sup> Donors thanked Coetzee for the entry forms, see for example, NCHMA, System 1 No 12 TM1/57, letter J.H. Viljoen to Coetzee 23 December 1956.

<sup>30</sup> NCHMA, ET1/58 - 59, Etnologie Afdeling, April 1958 - December 1959 “Roetinerwerk vir tikster Ou Museum” (unpublished procedure).

<sup>31</sup> See *ibid.*, file, Bedank: nuwe aanwinste van 1956.

<sup>32</sup> For example, Transvaal Museum Acquisitions entry register, acquisition nos. 4938 and 4040.

<sup>33</sup> For example, *ibid.*, acquisition no. 6072: a note was made “Brought in personally. Acklgd on form 22/9/54”. The date of the acquisition is the previous day.




Ontvang van Prof. S.P. Engelbrecht :  
 Bruikleen ~~to 3 E~~  
 1. Handskryf, A. Brodnieh, gedig :  
 Ons Republie (2 blaaie)  
 2. - 1 Bundel gedigte van A. Brodnieh  
 3. - 1 Bundel "Touelle uit ons Dorp"  
 deur Res. Bingers.  
 4. - 1 Bundel geskifte, varia, deur  
 Res. Bingers.

K. Roodt. Coetzee,  
 12 Sept. 1953.

Transvaal Museum.  
 Tenuig gegee :  
 Ontvang  
 S.P. Engelbrecht  
 29. Okt. '53

Figure 50a and b

  
 TRANSCVAAL MUSEUM  
 P.O. Box 413, HQ. 6782  
 PRETORIA,  
 23rd November 1956.

Mrs. E.K. Whitaker,  
 Irene Hotel,  
 PRETORIA.


SIR/MADAM,  
 I am directed by the Trustees of this Institution to acknowledge with  
 sincere thanks the receipt of the following donation :  
 Badge issued to Alec Donn.

K. Roodt-Coetzee (Mrs.)  
 p.p. Director.

G.P.S. 11166-1028-1000.

P.O. Box 413  
 Posbus

Telephone 2-8801  
 Telefoon

  
 TRANSCVAAL MUSEUM,  
 PRETORIA, 8 April 1957

Ontvang van mev. M.A. Murphy (ingehandig  
 deur mev. A. de Wit, een laslappies-  
 deken.

Met dank!!

Figure 50c



### 3. CATALOGUING (ACQUISITION) STAGE

#### **Permanent accessions : Anthropological collection**

##### Transvaal Museum

- Main Catalogue of the Department of Ethnology Africa  
(Afrikaans: *Etnologie Stamboek nr. II*)
  - Volume 2

No cataloguing was done after 1945, when Haughton resigned. Accessioning was only resumed some nine or ten years later by Coetzee and her staff. They began with accession number 8549 and went up to 8688. The inviolateness of the catalogue, which is one of the most basic tenets of modern collections management, was not honoured as some pages had been cut out between the two bouts of accessions. Some items were accessioned in English, but Afrikaans was more frequently used. Although a few accessions were never completed,<sup>34</sup> in the main catchwords were allocated to each object and a description and information about the donor and acquisition was recorded. As usual, “old” donations dating from as far back as 1935 to 1949, were only now accessioned,<sup>35</sup> as were the donations received from 1953 onwards. There are numerous notes on the storage place, objects that were re-allocated to the archaeological and numismatic collections, as well as new sub-numbers.

The first four objects catalogued by Coetzee were Venda xylophones, but many of the accessions entered afterwards in this register were regarded as “foreign” ethnology objects, such as Arabian slippers, a Japanese tea set and an Australian boomerang.<sup>36</sup> It appears that they were accessioned in this catalogue for that very reason, whereas ethnological objects

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<sup>34</sup> For example, Main Catalogue of the Department of Ethnology Africa, vol. 2, ET. accession no. 8655; no information was entered in the catalogue except the name of the object in pencil.

<sup>35</sup> For example, Main Catalogue of the Department of Ethnology Africa, vol. 2, ET. accession no. 8662, an Egyptian carpet donated in 1942.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid., ET. accession nos. 8661, 8666(a) and 8687/3.

from southern Africa were accessioned in the other catalogues (listed below). There may indeed have been a need to establish a separate “foreign” collection.<sup>37</sup> At the end of 1959 the accessioning ceased with ET. accession no. 8688, a Somalian knife, because a new code, ET.V., (Afrikaans: *Vreemde etnologieë*) was then introduced. This decision was taken during a discussion with the chairman of the Board of the Transvaal Museum.<sup>38</sup> The code may have been used previously for some of the objects accessioned since 1954.<sup>39</sup> Six objects were accessioned in 1960 (ET.V.60/1 - 6) but these were the last and the catalogue was then abandoned.

- Catalogue used for the Nel-Blom Collection and collecting done by Dr W.T.H. Beukes

In this catalogue, started by Beukes in 1934, his last entry was made in December 1937. The next entries, with the annual date as part of the accession number, started in 1954. This catalogue contains accession numbers 1954/1 (there is an overlap with the Main Catalogue of the Department of Ethnology Africa, vol. 2) to 1958/71, with no entries for the year 1956. Most of the accessioning was done in Afrikaans by Coetzee and her staff. Where available, information on the donor, the history and a description was entered and a catchword was allocated to the object. In one instance an entry was pasted over and a new one made.<sup>40</sup>

- Main Catalogue of the Department of Ethnology Africa
  - Volume 3

The next hand-written catalogue commences with ET. accession no. 58/72, following the last number in the Beukes Catalogue, described above. It continues up to no. 61/24 and entries were made by Coetzee and Du Toit. The accessions in this catalogue follow the same pattern: a catchword was allocated to the object, followed by a description and information on the ethnic context, material and donation or purchase particulars. The history of the

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<sup>37</sup> According to the annual report ethnology consisted of the following sections: Foreign ethnology groups, various groups from Africa (outside South Africa's borders), ethnic groups within the Union and South West Africa (these include the different indigenous groups in South Africa, which are as yet not truly represented in the Museum), and the Coloureds, including the Griqua, Rehoboth and Cape Coloureds. Transvaal Museum Annual Report, 1959 - 1960, departmental report ethnology and archaeology, p. 39.

<sup>38</sup> See note, Main Catalogue of the Department of Ethnology Africa, vol. 2, p. 222.

<sup>39</sup> See *ibid.*, top of p. 221, left hand corner.

<sup>40</sup> Beukes Catalogue, accession no. 55/12.



object was also recorded where available. The depth of the classification varied considerably, depending on the staff member.<sup>41</sup> As usual, there was a backlog of unaccessioned objects and in one instance objects were accessioned 14 years later.<sup>42</sup>

In 1961 a decision was taken to substitute the handwritten catalogues for the ethnology and archaeology collections with loose-leaf ledgers, so that the old entries, which are often difficult to decipher, could be typed<sup>43</sup> (figure 51). The typed catalogue starts with the objects collected by Beukes, using the year code, from 34/253 up to 37/278. The catalogue then goes on to ET. 1954/1 from ET. 61/24. This means that the entries in the above two catalogues were retyped. From ET. accession no. 61/25 no duplicate handwritten catalogues exist. In 1964 only four accessions were entered.<sup>44</sup>

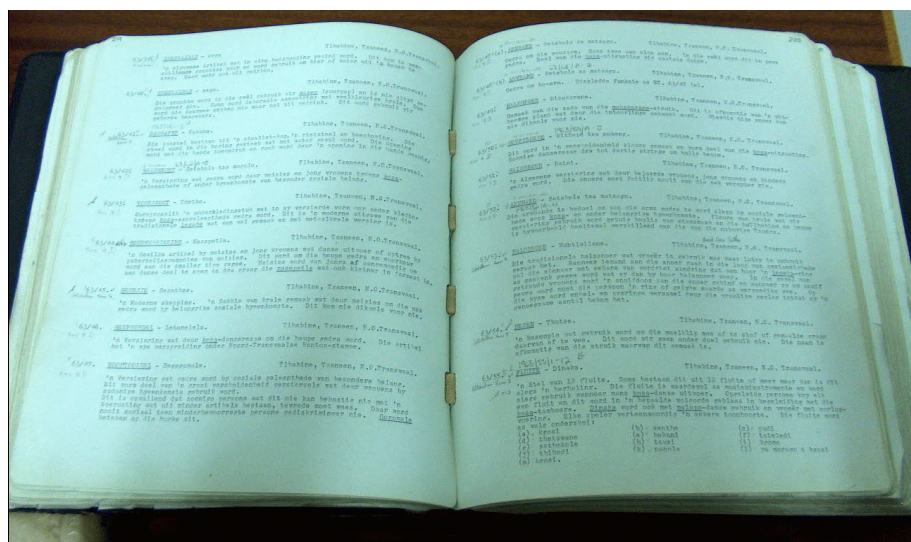


Figure 51

New typed Ethnology Catalogue in ledger format

<sup>41</sup> C.S. van der Waal, “Geschiedenis van die Volkekunde-Afdeling van die Nasko-Museum, Pretoria 1893 - 1977” (unpublished article), p. 16.

<sup>42</sup> For example, Main Catalogue of the Department of Ethnology Africa, vol. 3, ET. accession no. 59/73: “Voorwerpe gevind in kelder sonder gegewens” [Objects found in cellar without particulars] and ET. accession no. 60/1: “Kraalwerk in 1946 gevind in ou pakkamer saam met Barotse- materiaal; kraalwerk self is definief nie Barotse nie” [Beadwork found in old storage room in 1946 with Barotse objects; beadwork definitely not Barotse].

<sup>43</sup> Transvaal Museum Annual Report 1961 - 1962, departmental report for ethnology and archaeology, p. 34.

<sup>44</sup> Accessions in this catalogue dating from 1965 to 1979 fall outside the scope of this research.

## **Permanent accessions : Anthropological photograph collection**

### Transvaal Museum

- Catalogue of Ethnological and Archaeological photographs and drawings

This catalogue was started in 1921 by Radcliffe-Brown and probably used until 1924. It was only in 1959 that it was used again by Coetzee for archaeology photographs, with the code ARGF. For the most part accession nos. ARGF. 139 to 147 cover rock art paintings and engravings, but there are also a few Egyptian scenes and other landscapes.

- “Katalogus van volkskundige Portrette. 1934” [Catalogue of ethnology Portraits. 1934]

The photography catalogue, used by Beukes up to April 1937, was used again by Coetzee and staff with the code ET.F. from 1959, for accession numbers 59/1 to 60/1/75 (number 76 was never completed). The accessions provide information on the photograph, description, donation, size, catchword and ethnic context.

## **Permanent accessions : Archaeological collection**

### Transvaal Museum

- Catalogue of Archaeological specimens  
(Afrikaans: *Argeologie stamboek No. 1*)

The last object accessioned by Haughton in 1946 was ARG. accession no. 9294. The next “batch” of accessions started in 1953 with a donation received some two years earlier in 1951 (ARG. accession no. 9295). One can take it for granted that Coetzee only started in 1953, the second accession being dated 4 September 1953. Although this was a new donation, a backlog of un-accessioned objects were also entered into the catalogue, some dating even as far back as 1929.<sup>45</sup> As usual, objects without any information were also found and accessioned.<sup>46</sup> These registrations show that although it was claimed that the archaeological re-cataloguing was up to date, not all items in the collections had been registered.

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<sup>45</sup> For example, Catalogue of archaeology specimens, ARG. accession no. 9325, two pieces of pipe (blaaspy) and a potsherd, donated by Badenhorst in 1929.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid., ARG. accession no. 9324 is accompanied by the following note: “Dié drie stukkie(s) gevind bymekaar, sonder enige gegewens, in die Nuwe Museum, Julie 1954” [These three pieces were found together in the New Museum in July 1954 without any particulars. (Translated from the Afrikaans.)].

From ARG accession no. 9295 the numbers follow consecutively up to 9381, which is dated 28 September 1960. Various staff members were responsible for the entries. As far as possible, the information (donation and history) about the object was recorded, but the catchwords seemed to have presented a problem in some cases, because words such as artefact, stone implement and stone instrument were used without further explanation. At a later stage catchwords, such as “vuisklip V.S.T. L.A.” [hand axe, Early Stone Age, Late Acheul], were added in pencil.<sup>47</sup>

A new system of registration commenced in 1961, using the code ARG, date (year) and the number. The following note was written by Du Toit, dated 20/1/61:

Die volgende inskrywings word volgens ‘n nuwe numeriese metode genommer, viz

ARG + jaartal/nommer

bv. ARG61/1, ARG61/2 ens. Vir elke nuwe jaar sal die jaartal verander.<sup>48</sup>

The system starts with only one number for 1960, ARG60/1; there are then four for 1961, followed by an open page and then two for 1963 and five objects accessioned for 1964. Thereafter, no accessioning was done until 1967.

The accessioning done by Haughton, Coetzee and Du Toit was retyped when a decision was taken in 1976 to use a typed ledger catalogue. The additional accessions at the back of the handwritten Catalogue of archaeology specimens were incorporated numerically. The handwritten catalogue ends in that year. All the accessions originally in English were translated and then typed in Afrikaans. The maps drawn by Haughton were also redrawn and renamed in Afrikaans.

## **Permanent accessions : Cultural history collection**

### Transvaal Museum

- Historiography Catalogue  
(Afrikaans: *Historiese Grootboek* H.G.)<sup>49</sup>
  - Volume 2

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<sup>47</sup> The original catchword was “HANDPIK [HAND AXE]”, ARG. accession no. 9354.

<sup>48</sup> [A new numerical method will be used for the next accessions, i.e. ARG + year/number, e.g. ARG61/1. ARG61/2, etc. Each new year the year reference number will change. (Translated from the Afrikaans.)]

<sup>49</sup> Although the Historiography Catalogue is now (2005) referred to as the “H.G. Katalogus/register” and the code letters H.G. are used for the marking of the objects, the original H.C. code is used throughout in this research to avoid confusion.

This catalogue commences with Historiography Catalogue, H.C. accession no. 4670. Although the cataloguing was done by Schiel and Malan in the first part of the volume, it is clear that Coetzee added her input by means of notes and corrections from the very beginning of the catalogue as she worked her way through the collections.<sup>50</sup> Objects were recatalogued by Coetzee either using a new accession number, or in another catalogue.<sup>51</sup>

The inviolateness of the catalogue, one of the most important principles of modern collections management, was not adhered to in volume 2 of the Historiography Catalogue. There are examples of pages cut out and there are new pages pasted in, and pieces of paper stuck over the original entries. Three pages were cut out, for example, and another three added. On these additional pages a collection of fire-arms<sup>52</sup> catalogued by Coetzee, was entered in the catalogue in January - February 1954, in between entries made by Schiel.

There are several places where accessions have been pasted over.<sup>53</sup> This can perhaps be regarded as an indication that this kind of “re-cataloguing” was done in an attempt to rectify previous errors or to reconcile the catalogue with un-accessioned or apparently un-accessioned objects. Despite FitzSimons’ admiration for Schiel’s efforts, the cataloguing he undertook was frequently fragmentary and incomplete and often repetitive. Coetzee found many un-accessioned objects in the storerooms, and she noted this in the catalogue, for example: “Op ‘n meegaande kaartjie staan dat dit geskenk is deur die Z.A.R.-regering maar geen nommer kan gevind word nie” [On the accompanying label it is indicated that this was donated by the Z.A.R. government, but no number can be found].<sup>54</sup> Many accessions

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<sup>50</sup> For example, according to Historiography Catalogue, vol. 2, accession no. 5407, “Drie vurke en twee lepels van skoon silver uit Skotland saamgebring deur die skenker se grootvader ...”. This information is corrected by Coetzee by means of a note in the margin, reading “FOUTIEF! DIS KAAPS”. The five pieces have been classified clearly at the end of the page. [Three silver forks and two spoons from Scotland, brought out by the grandfather of the donor. MISTAKE! THIS IS CAPE SILVER. (Translated from the Afrikaans.)]

<sup>51</sup> Ibid., vol. 2, H.C. accession no. 5217, four antique dresses were catalogued as H.C. accession no. 6542 with a note by Coetzee that particulars were rewritten in H.C. 6542. H.C accession no. 4675 had been cancelled with of red pencil strokes and the accession number Kr. 706 added. Coetzee allocated H.C. accession no. 4675 to a “WA-AS, stukkend met 2 ysterpunte (los). Geen besonderhede” [WAGON AXLE, broken with two separate iron tips. No particulars (Translated from the Afrikaans.)].

<sup>52</sup> Ibid., H.C. accession nos. 5304 - 5326. Another example of pages cut out and others pasted in occurs in the case of accessions nos. 5369 - 5379 (2 pages), also catalogued by Coetzee.

<sup>53</sup> For example, *ibid.*, H.C. accession no. 4819, DOKUMENTE [DOCUMENTS], consisting of a piece of typing paper pasted over the original entry, with information typed; *ibid.*, H.C. accession no. 5096, TAFEL-DEKEN [TABLE CLOTH], with a piece of ruled paper pasted in, but no information except the catchword, and *ibid.*, H.C. accession no. 5597 covered with ruled paper, but no information.

<sup>54</sup> Note written at *ibid.*, H.C. accession no. 5309.

in Volume 2 were later identified by Coetzee as already having an accession number, in which cases the previous accession number was added.<sup>55</sup>

This cataloguing was also a training experience for Coetzee in classification. Firearms were, for example, catalogued with catchwords. A distinction was made between a GEWEER (rifle/gun) and a LOOP (barrel). Each gun was identified according to type, such as a flintlock muzzle loader (Afrikaans: *pan-voorlaaier*) and muzzle loader (Afrikaans: *doppie-voorlaaier*). The calibre, condition of the gun, name of gunsmith or trademark and other marks, decorations, reparations and the missing parts, were all described.<sup>56</sup> Where available the name of the donor and the history of the object was added.

Classification was, according to Coetzee, one of the first principles of documentation, and in volume 2 all objects catalogued by Schiel and Malan were provided with a catchword, either by Coetzee herself, or another staff member, usually in pencil and in capital letters, such as BYBEL, BOEK, FOTO, ALBUM, KOERANT, BRIEF, SPORE, ROK, PYP, DAS, LEPEL, BOM [Bible, book, photograph, album, newspaper, letter, spurs, dress, pipe, tie, spoon, bomb].

- Cataloguing by Kotie Roodt-Coetzee

On her appointment as professional officer on 1 September 1953 Coetzee assumed responsibility for documentation. In this capacity she began the cataloguing of the history collection in volume 2 of the Historiography Catalogue (H.C.). Her cataloguing covers accession numbers 5858 - 6257 (July 1954). The documentation was done in Afrikaans, except for two accessions presented by English-speaking donors,<sup>57</sup> that are written partly in English. There are very few alterations or additions, except for storage and display details and changes to the catchwords.

Gradually the entries take on a standardized format: starting with a catchword, first in lower case and later always in capital letters, followed by a description of the object and its history. The name and address of the donor, the history of the donor and his family and acquisition

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<sup>55</sup> For example, *ibid.*, accession no. 5512: "Ou H.C. 740" [previous H.C. 740]; H.C. accession no. 5608: "Die regte H.C. is 857" [correct H.C. is 857] and H.C. accession no. 5832: "Ou No. H.C. 2072 - 2098" [previous H.C. No. 2072 - 2098].

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*, H.C. accessions nos. 5304 - 5326

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*, H.C. accession nos. 5969 and 6003.

number and date are provided.<sup>58</sup>

Coetzee was also aware that catalogues had been used in the Staatsmuseum and the Transvaal Museum in the past, because she noted that a manuscript may well have been catalogued in another book, because it was numbered with an old number and given the code Docum [Documents]. This code refers to the Documenten Catalogue and is one of the very few indications that accession numbers were marked on the object during the Staatsmuseum period (figure 52). Such objects were re-accessioned.<sup>59</sup>

As she worked in the storerooms, objects were frequently found without numbers. Indeed, in volume 2 Coetzee started her cataloguing with an object found in the back storeroom.<sup>60</sup> A doll was found that, according to Coetzee, had no acquisition number, but had been lying around in cupboards in the Museum since 1948; it was now accessioned.<sup>61</sup> Another object was found between a lot of old junk.<sup>62</sup> Some were found in the strong room at the New Museum, either with no information at all, and annotated “Skenker anoniem, geen Acq nommer” [donor anonymous, no acquisition number],<sup>63</sup> or with a few facts attached.<sup>64</sup>

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<sup>58</sup> For example, *ibid.*, H.C. accession no. 5919:

ROK

VROUE-

groen alpaka, versier met groen sy, kettingsteek-masjienwerk, c. 1880, 2-stuk, moue ontbreek. Het behoort aan Cathrina Elizabeth Erasmus, gebore Erasmus, dogter van Theodorus Erasmus wat op Wonderboom gewoon het, sy is oorlede in 1928. Haar man Cornelus Erasmus het die dorpie Bronkhorstspuit (vroeër Erasmus) uitgelê. Geërf deur haar kleindogter Martha le Roux.

Skenker Mnr. J.M. le Roux, Honderivier, P.K. Bronkhorstspuit. Acq. 5038, 15/1/54.

[DRESS

WOMAN'S

Green alpaca, decorated with green silk, machine made chain stitch, c. 1880, two piece, sleeves missing. Belonged to Cathrina Elizabeth Erasmus, born Erasmus, daughter of Theodorus Erasmus who lived at Wonderboom. She died in 1928. Her husband Cornelus Erasmus laid out the little town of Bronkhorstspuit (previously Erasmus). Inherited by her granddaughter Martha le Roux. Donor Mr. J.M. le Roux, Honderivier, P.O. Bronkhorstspuit. Acq. 5038, 15/1/54 (Translated from the Afrikaans.)]

<sup>59</sup> Documenten Catalogue, Docum. accession nos. 0079 and 0122. Historiography Catalogue, vol. 1, accession no. H.C. 1kkk and *ibid.*, vol. 2, H.C. accession nos. 5895 and *ibid.*, vol. 3, H.C. accession no. 6715.

<sup>60</sup> Historiography Catalogue, vol. 2, H.C. accession no. 5858.

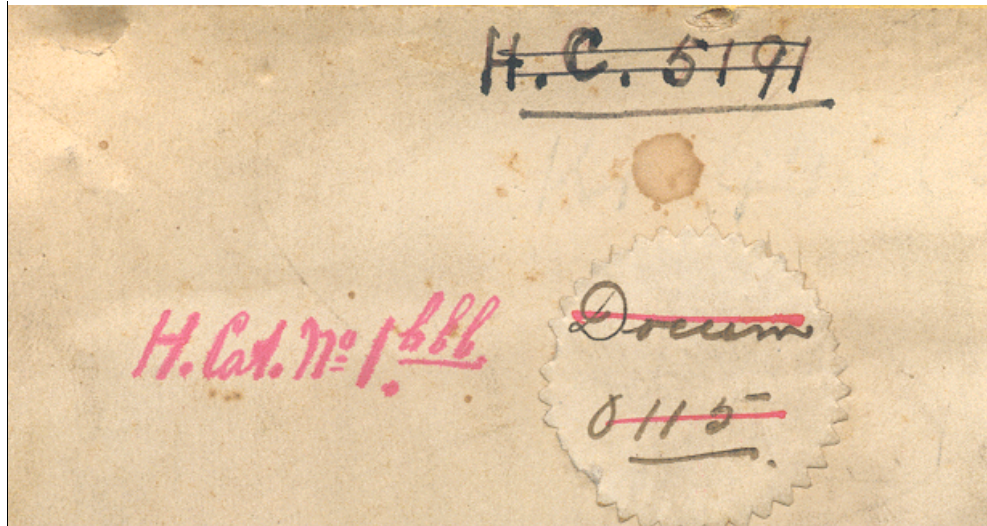
<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*, H.C. accession no. 5866.

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*, H.C. accession no. 5894.

<sup>63</sup> For example, *ibid.*, H.C. accession no. 5870.

<sup>64</sup> For example, *ibid.*, H.C. accession no. 5874, a Pro-Boer pin, made in the Netherlands in 1900 as token of sympathy with the Boers, donated by C. Prinzen, and handed in by W.J. de Kock, with date and acquisition number.





**Figure 52**

Book in the Kruger Collection, on the slip-case marked with the original Docum accession no. 0115 and two Historiography Catalogue H.C. accession numbers

Objects with no or little information found in store cupboards at the Kruger House were also accessioned.<sup>65</sup> As usual objects that have been in the Museum for many years – even as far back as 1919 – were discovered and accessioned, such as the collection of watches and movements donated by the Victoria and Albert Museum in 1919.<sup>66</sup>

Acquisitions that arrived at the Transvaal Museum just prior to Coetzee's appointment or within the first months thereafter were accessioned immediately. For example, a map (acquisition date 28 August 1953), a bullet mould (acquisition date 10 September 1953),

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<sup>65</sup> For example, a bandolier, *ibid.*, H.C. accession no. 5884.

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.*, H.C. accessions nos. 6001 and 6002.



a glass bowl (acquisition date 17 September 1953) and Christmas cards (acquisition date 3 November 1953).

Information gleaned in many innovative ways by Coetzee was recorded. Details about the Marais family were given to her by telephone by the donor. Transvaal Museum files were also consulted.<sup>67</sup> The information entered into the catalogue with each new accession bears testimony to Coetzee's belief that as many details as possible should be collected and written down. She was passionately interested in the history and genealogy of families and well-known families in and around Pretoria became prolific donors. Family particulars that were entered in the catalogue, included those of President T.F. Burgers, and the Erasmus, Marais, Celliers and Prinsloo families.<sup>68</sup> She collected family trees, including that of the Swanepoels and recorded the genealogy of the Badenhorst and Prinsloo families (figure 53).<sup>69</sup>

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<sup>67</sup> Ibid., H.C. accessions nos. 5865 and 5868.

<sup>68</sup> Ibid., H.C. accession nos. 5879 - 5881, 6228 - 6257, 5865, 5889, 5906 - 8, 5919 and 6140 - 6165.

<sup>69</sup> Ibid., H.C. accession nos. 5886, 5909 and 6139.

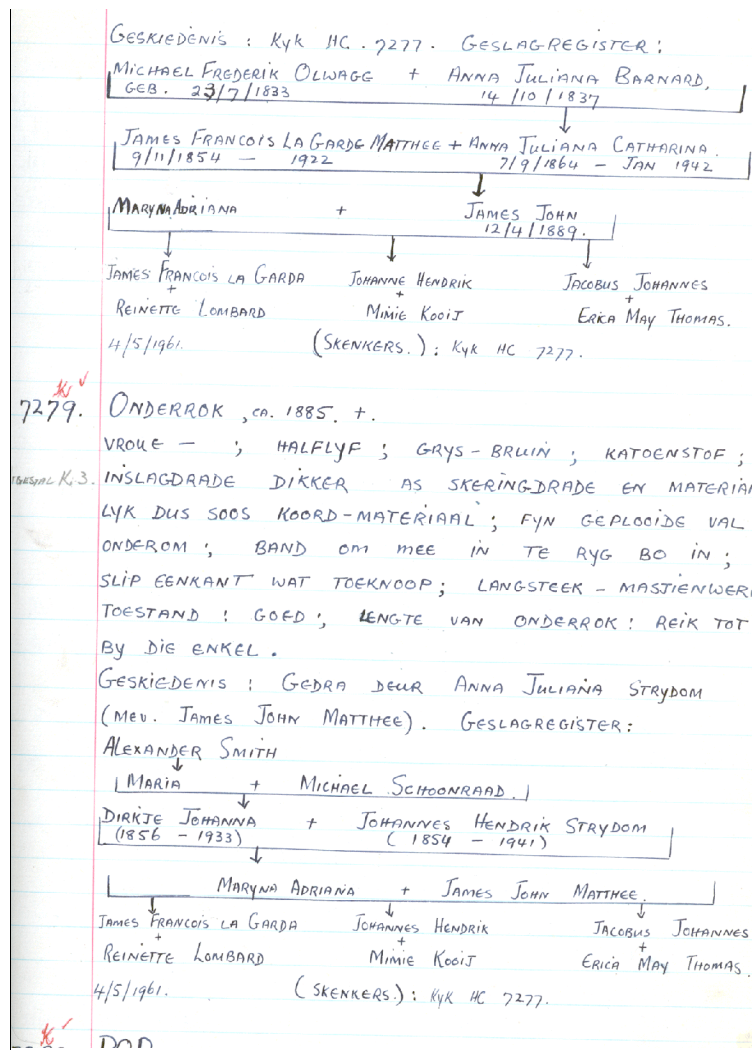


Figure 53

Example of genealogy recorded by Kotie Roodt-Coetzee in the catalogue

She was also interested in traditional skills, such as the dressing of leather, tanning<sup>70</sup> and soap making. This can be seen in the following entry:

SEEP

1. 2 ligte stene seep gemaak van boontjies (Die droë boontjies word fyngemaal of gekook)

2. 1 donker steen gemaak van fyn artappels.

Albei stene is kort na 1910 deur Mev. M.P.J. Uys gekook.

<sup>70</sup> Ibid, vol. 3, H.C. accession nos. 6664 and 6423(3).

(Die boerevroue kon besonder mooi seep kook, wat 'n tradisie was van die 18 de eeu af. Hulle het ook pampoen en papseep gekook om vet uit te spaar. By sulke bestanddele gebruik hulle dan veel minder vet.)<sup>71</sup>

A rhyme used when the Voortrekkers were driving their oxen was researched and recorded:<sup>72</sup>

Jaar	Krüger
Matner	Smelt
Deurslag	Blom
Nanat	Tong
Oorlê	Wandel
Stamper	Stoot

- Volumes 3, 4 and 5

These volumes show the same characteristics as the cataloguing done by Coetzee in Volume 2 (figure 54). There are neat entries in Afrikaans in a fairly standardized format, usually with all or some of the following particulars: catchword, description and history of the object, family history, name and address of the donor and acquisition number and date. There are also references to the Transvaal Museum's record system and decisions taken by the Historical Sub-committee and/or Board. The relevant storage place or display case was often added in the margin.

Volume 3 covers accessions 6258 (June 1954) to 6847 (6 May 1957). Coetzee was responsible for the catalogue, except for one or two small amendments. Volume 4 includes accessions 6848 (July 1957) to 7099 (February 1960). Coetzee was responsible for this catalogue too, except for the Erich Mayer art works<sup>73</sup> and a few negligible additions. Volume 5 covers accessions 7100 (January 1960 ) to 8040 (March 1964). Most of the cataloguing was done by Coetzee , but there are also entries and notes added by other staff

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<sup>71</sup> Ibid., vol. 2, H.C. accession no. 5890.

[SOAP

1. 2 light pieces of soap made from beans (the dry beans are ground or cooked)

2. 1 dark piece of soap made from mashed potatoes

The soap was made by Mrs M.P.J. Uys shortly after 1910.

(The Boer women made very attractive soap, a tradition practiced since the 18<sup>th</sup> century. They also made soap from pumpkin and porridge to save fat. When using these ingredients, less fat was necessary.) (Translated from the Afrikaans.)]

<sup>72</sup> Ibid., H.C. accession no. 6223.

<sup>73</sup> Ibid., vol. 4, H.C. accessions nos. 7014/74 - 724.

7248. **STOELKUSSING**, ca. 1880 (laaste kwart van 19<sup>de</sup> eeu).  
 BOEREMAAK; NAMAKWALAND; BOKVEL; VIERKANTIG MET  
 'N UITGESNYDE VLAK BY ELKE HOEK AAN DIE AGERKANT  
 BY DIE STOEL SE AGERPOTE; SWART BOKVEL MET 'N BRUIN  
 BOKVEL - VERSIERING INGELAS IN DIE MIDDEL; DIE VER-  
 SIERING IS 'N FANTASIE FIGURISTIESE ONTWERP WAT AGT  
 PUNTE HET WAT VAN 'N SIRKEL UITSPREI; RONDOM WAS  
 'N VAL VAN BAIE SAGTE VEL WAT GROTENDEEL AFGE-  
 SKEUR IS; AGERKANT IS 'N WIT-EN-BRUIN BOKVEL.  
 TEGNIEK: HANDGEMAAK; VERSIERING IN DIE MIDDEL IS  
 MET SENING-GARE INGEWERK; BUITE OM IS MET GE-  
 WONE GARE GEWERK, SOOS SWART EN WIT RUGARE.  
 GESKIEDENIS: GEMAAK EN GEBRUIK DEUR SKENKSTER SE  
 MOEDER, MEV. ANNA ELIZABETH GOOSEN, NEE VAN DYK, GEB.  
 1856, VAN PIKETBERG, GETROUD MET GYSBERT JOHAN-  
 NES MICHEL GOOSEN VAN HONDEKLIPBAAI, NAMAKWALAND  
 SKENKSTER: Kyk HC 7245.

7182. **POP**, ca. 1825+  
 BOERE-MAAK; LAPPOP; LYFIE VAN WIT LINNIE  
 GEMAAK EN OPGESTOP; GESIGGIE IS DOORGETREK  
 MET 'N DUN MATERIAAL SOOS "VOILE"; DAARONDER  
 IS ROOI LAPPIES VIR WANGE EN 'N MOND; DIE  
 IS INGEWERK MET SWART GARE; OP DIE KOPPIE  
 IS 'N STUKKIE SWART GEDRAAIDE HARE VASGEWERK;  
 DIE ARMFIE EN BEENTJIES IS LOS AANGEWERK;  
 DIE VOETJIES IN SWART KOFFIE OF INK GERLEUR;  
 SY HET 'N KANT KAPPIETJIE, 'N BLOM SY NERDOE-  
 KIE, 'N ROOMKLEUR SIS TOKKIE MET BRUIN KOLLE-  
 TJIES EN PATROANTJIES IN ROOI, PERS EN GROEN;  
 ROKKIE HET KORT LYFIE SOOS GEDRA KORT NA 1800,  
 DIE SG. "EMPIRE"-STYL; PERS BAND OM DIE LYE,  
 LINNIE ONDERROKKIE; HOOGTE VAN POPPIE: 15 $\frac{1}{2}$  SM.  
 TOESTAND: VERWEER, VERAL DIE MATERIAAL VAN  
 DIE ROKKIE.  
 GESKIEDENIS:  
 HIERDIE POPPIE IS DEUR ENE MEV. BLOM VAN DIE  
 PLAAS BROEDERSTROOM, GRAAFF-REINET, VIR HAAR DOGTER-  
 TJIE MAGDALENA ANNA (LATER MEV. HECHTER) GEMAAK,  
 IN CA. 1834. DEUR LSG. SE KLEINDOUGHTER GEERF.  
 Mev. Blom  
 ↓  
 MAGDALENA ANNA (LATER MEV. HECHTER)  
 ↓  
 SARAH CATHERINA (LATER MEV. WEITZ)  
 ↓  
 MAGDALENA (LATER MEV. BADENHORST.)  
 SKENKSTER: MEV. M.M. BADENHORST,  
 WINTERSGILL 2,  
 SCHOENMANSTR., 602, PRETORIA.

Figure 54

Examples of catalogue entries by Kotie Roodt-Coetzee

members. These volumes were devoted almost entirely to new donations and purchases during those years, but old donations and objects without any information cropped up every now and then and had to be accessioned. Among these was a collection of uniforms of the State Artillery, documents and chairs,<sup>74</sup> and four revolvers<sup>75</sup> that had been found in an old cupboard in the New Museum and had no particulars attached. In the beginning of 1958 a collection of 61 postal stamps<sup>76</sup> were found in an old storage room in the Old Museum, and these were later transferred to the numismatic section. The Erich Mayer art collection, received in 1950, was only catalogued in 1957. Even as late as 1960 unaccessioned objects were still being discovered. A note written in July 1960 states that an unaccessioned sword had been found in a cupboard.<sup>77</sup> In the same vein a donation made in 1941 was found unaccessioned in an old kist in the Old Museum.<sup>78</sup> Nonetheless it seems that sometimes the acquisition entry number remained attached to the object for 20 years or more; in this way the donor could be traced (figure 55). Previously catalogued objects were also recatalogued, for example a book with an accession number in the Staatsmuseum Documenten Catalogue and the Historiography Catalogue.<sup>79</sup>

The same characteristics that appear in the cataloguing previously done by Coetzee, appear in Volumes 3, 4 and 5. Family histories and genealogies<sup>80</sup> were written down or collected. As she was adamant that the history or associated information was of the utmost importance, she also recorded the fact if no information was available. In one instance, for example, an old lady in Rustenburg donated a cupboard full of items, but none had any

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<sup>74</sup> Ibid., vol. 3, H.C. accession nos. 6444 - 6455, 6488 - 6489 and 6536 - 6537.

<sup>75</sup> Ibid., vol. 4, H.C. accession no. 6869.

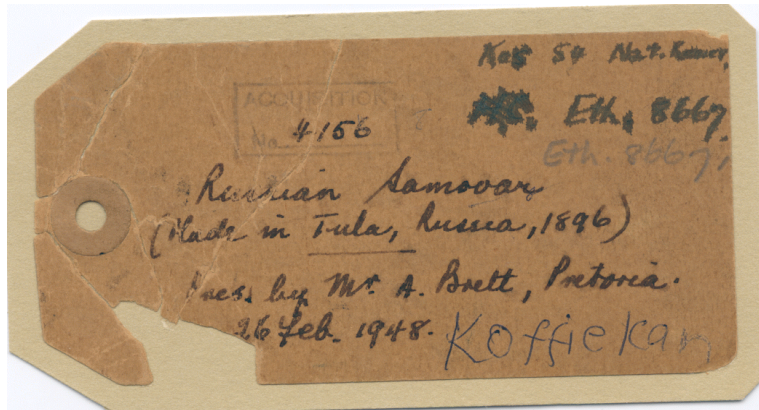
<sup>76</sup> Ibid., H.C. accession no. 6961.

<sup>77</sup> Ibid., vol. 5, H.C. accession no. 7129, catalogued 5 July 1960.

<sup>78</sup> Ibid., H.C. accession no. 7164.

<sup>79</sup> Ibid., vol. 3, H.C. accession no. 6715 and vol. 2, H.C. accession no. 5191.

<sup>80</sup> Ibid., H.C. accessions nos. 6316, vol. 4, H.C. accession nos. 6853, 6982 and 7040/2.



**Figure 55**

Example of label with acquisition number  
catalogue number and storage location added later

history attached.<sup>81</sup> In other cases a space was left open in the catalogue so that details of the history of an object could be added, but in some cases this was never received.<sup>82</sup> When additional details did indeed arrive received they were incorporated into the original entry.<sup>83</sup> In many cases the history associated with the object, person or family was written down in detail (figure 56).<sup>84</sup> There are also examples of entries with no information whatsoever, but Coetzee presumably regarded these objects as important enough to add them to the collection.<sup>85</sup> Conditions under which the donations were given, were also added, for instance the stipulation that no documents could be removed from the Prinsloo-Booyens Collection.<sup>86</sup>

<sup>81</sup> Ibid., vol. 4, H.C. accession no. 6603.

<sup>82</sup> Ibid., vol. 3, H.C. accessions nos. 6479 and vol. 4, H.C. accession nos. 6982/2, 5, 6, 11, 14.

<sup>83</sup> Ibid., vol. 4, H.C. accessions nos. 7046 and 7047/2.

<sup>84</sup> For example, *ibid.*, vol. 3, H.C. accession no. 6722/14, containing the history of the owner of the Voortrekker kappie and its provenance as inherited by several descendants.

<sup>85</sup> Ibid., vol. 3, H.C. accessions no. 6504/6 and vol. 4, H.C. accession no. 7047/3.

<sup>86</sup> Ibid., vol. 3, H.C. accession no. 6530.



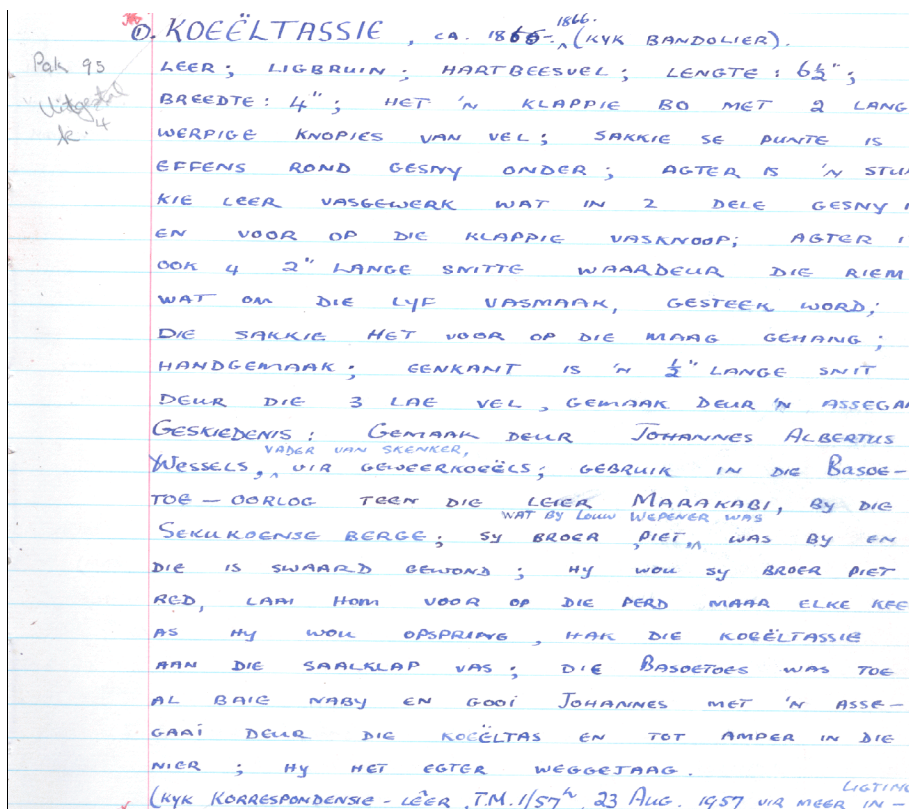
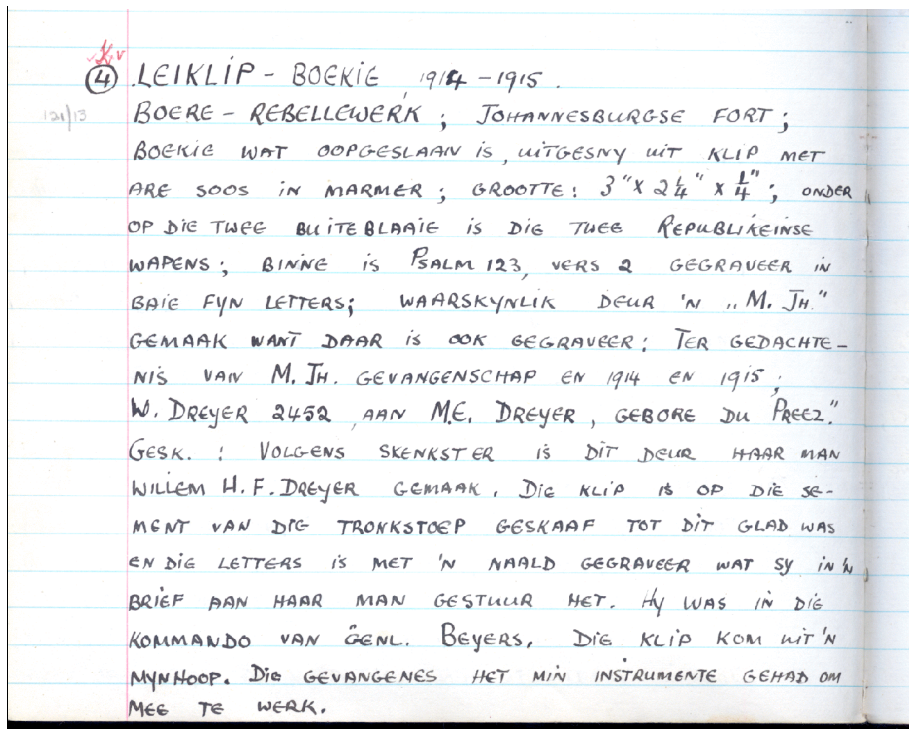


Figure 56

Detailed history associated with an object in the catalogue



There are few signs of alterations made to the entries, but catchwords have been deleted or amended, for example, LYFIE VAN ROK [BODICE OF DRESS] was changed to ROKSLYFIE, VROUE-, DEEL VAN 'N ROK [DRESS BODICE, WOMAN'S, PART OF A DRESS].<sup>87</sup> Eleven pages (pages 13 - 23) have been cut out of Volume 3, and also one page between pages 187 and 189. There were also entries that were pasted over.<sup>88</sup> In Volume 4 two pages (pages 28 - 31) have been cut out, while in Volume 5 one entry was pasted over.<sup>89</sup> According to a note by the inspector, the last pages of the volume (pages 542 - 545) were cut out. In Volume 5 a page, or part of a page, have been left blank.

Although many single donations consisted of a variety of objects – one included 44 objects ranging from a family tree, a rifle, a kierie to a slate, a doll and goat halter<sup>90</sup> – the catalogues bear witness to Coetzee's unswerving attempts to enhance the collection. Established lacunae in cultural records (Afrikaans: *vasgestelde kultuurdokumente*), in other words objects identified as being of extremely important to reflect the true nature of white South African heritage, such as Cape silver and furniture, were collected systematically.<sup>91</sup>

As a result of Coetzee's continuous endeavours, items were also received from overseas museums so that the collection could be supplemented by objects used in European countries where white South African families had originated. The Altona Museum in Hamburg, for example, donated "Blaudruk" prints used for German print dress material.<sup>92</sup> Similarly Het Prinsessehof Museum, Leeuwarden, Friesland, donated a collection of sixteen antique pewter objects.<sup>93</sup>

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<sup>87</sup> Ibid., H.C. accession no. 6648(1).

<sup>88</sup> Ibid., after accession H.C. nos. 6441/11 and between 6610 - 6611.

<sup>89</sup> Ibid., vol. 5, H.C. accession no. 7660.

<sup>90</sup> Ibid., vol. 4, H.C. accession no. 6982.

<sup>91</sup> For example, *ibid.*, H.C. accessions no. 7000 (a collection of 122 Cape silver items) and vol. 5, H.C. accession nos. 7989 - 7997 (furniture).

<sup>92</sup> Ibid., vol. 4, H.C. accession no. 7084.

<sup>93</sup> Ibid., vol. 3, H.C. accession no. 6554.

Objects which would enhance the museum collection were also acquired, even if their condition was such that Coetzee noted “As museumstuk is dit deur die oorverwery feitlik waardeloos” [As a museum piece the object has little value, because it had been repainted many times].<sup>94</sup> The purchase of a modern roll of tobacco was motivated as follows: “Hoewel modern is dit gerol op die tradisionele Boeremanier” [Although modern, it has been rolled in the traditional Boer manner].<sup>95</sup>

- Volume 6

Volume 6 records accessions 8041 to 9133, covering the period 1963 to 1967. Various staff members made the entries. There are very few alterations or additions in the catalogue, and the entries follow the same pattern as Coetzee’s previous cataloguing. The bulk of entries are new donations and purchases, but even at this late stage there is evidence that some objects had been in die Museum for many years before they were catalogued. There were, for example, some manuscripts where the donor was unknown,<sup>96</sup> and a kappie, a kappie-liner, a hymn book and a spoon, that were donated in 1956 and 1957.<sup>97</sup>

### **Permanent accessions : Numismatics collection**

#### Transvaal Museum

- Numismatics Catalogue
  - Volume 3

The numismatics collection remained under the curatorship of Versfeld until she left the employ of the Transvaal Museum in 1965. In this capacity she was responsible for the numismatics catalogue and accessioned from Nu. accession no. 2864 to 3687 in June 1965. The practice of linking a new accession to a similar older accession continued during her tenure,<sup>98</sup> making some entries difficult to decipher. She also had to contend with “old” objects that had never been accessioned, such as a collection of old medals and plaques

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<sup>94</sup> Ibid., vol. 5, H.C. accession no. 7138.

<sup>95</sup> Ibid., H.C. accession no. 7139.

<sup>96</sup> Ibid., vol. 6, H.C. accession nos. 8715 - 8723.

<sup>97</sup> Ibid., H.C. accession nos. 8661 - 8664.

<sup>98</sup> G. Balkwill, “Subdivision of items between Numismatics collection (Nu) and Miscellaneous Collection (Misc)” (unpublished article), p. 2.

found in the Museum.<sup>99</sup> Coins were also accessioned twice.<sup>100</sup> In one case a piece of paper had been pasted over the original record.<sup>101</sup>

The Numismatics Catalogue was used for a wide variety of objects relevant to currency<sup>102</sup> and objects that are produced in the minting process such as medals, plaques and medallions.<sup>103</sup> However, probably in emulation of previous accessions, Versfeld also accessioned badges of civilian origin, dies and militaria as part of large numismatic donations.<sup>104</sup> The catalogue was regarded as a workbook by succeeding curators and there are many notes and additions. The storage or display location was noted in the margin in many cases.

- Miscellaneous Acquisitions Catalogue (Misc)

Balkwill asserts that Versfeld encountered a number of items in the collection that were difficult to reconcile with the definition of numismatics, such as badges, military insignia and other objects related to military uniforms. She classified them as *Miscellanea*.<sup>105</sup>

As a result, Versfeld started a new catalogue for badges, devices, buttons and similar objects in 1957, using the code Misc. She presumably intended to use this catalogue for objects of military and other uniformed services origin and items that could not easily be reconciled with the definition of money, but not all entries are consistent with this decision. In the catalogue she was responsible for the first eighteen entries, including dairy tokens, coupons and permits, a feather plume and a Russian State loan bond. It was only this latter item that

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<sup>99</sup> Numismatic Catalogue, vol. 3, Nu. accession nos. 3489 - 3518.

<sup>100</sup> For example, *ibid.*, Nu. accession nos. 3407 (1119) and 3408 (2769).

<sup>101</sup> Entry following *ibid.*, Nu. accession no. 3575.

<sup>102</sup> For example, also postal orders, *ibid.*, Nu. accession no. 3209.

<sup>103</sup> G. Balkwill, "Subdivision of items between Numismatics collection (Nu) and Miscellaneous Collection (Misc)." (unpublished article), p. 1.

<sup>104</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 2; Numismatic Catalogue, vol. 3, Nu. accession nos. 3189, 3262 and 3489.

<sup>105</sup> G. Balkwill, "Subdivision of items between Numismatics collection (Nu) and Miscellaneous Collection (Misc)." (unpublished article), p. 2.

could be regarded as the first object of direct numismatic significance in this catalogue.<sup>106</sup> Objects which had already been accessioned in the Numismatics Catalogue were now re-accessioned in the Miscellaneous catalogue, without changing all the accession numbers, with the result that some objects have two accession numbers.<sup>107</sup>

### **Permanent accessions : Kruger Collection**

#### Transvaal Museum

- Kruger Catalogue
  - Volume 1

The first part of Volume 1 of the Kruger catalogue is discussed in the previous chapter. Coetzee started cataloguing objects in the Kruger catalogue using Afrikaans soon after her official appointment at the Transvaal Museum. The first few were probably accessions donated shortly after her arrival.<sup>108</sup> There was also a purchase from an officer of the *Gelderland* on which President Kruger sailed to Europe in 1900. She discovered some uncatalogued objects almost immediately and noted that they were found in an old storage cupboard in the Kruger House on 3 November 1953, dating from 1931 and 1938. They were promptly catalogued 22 and 15 years after arriving at the Museum.<sup>109</sup>

Coetzee was responsible for the greater part of the catalogue from October 1953 to January 1960 (Kr. accession nos. 1160 - 1424), but other staff members also added entries from time to time. These accessions consist for the most part of objects and photographs associated with President and Mrs Kruger, their household in Pretoria and the President's overseas sojourn. Many were donations or purchases that have been received since 1953, often from members of the Kruger family or by overseas donors, who either had some association with Kruger in Europe or simply returning the spoils of war.

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<sup>106</sup> Ibid., Misc. accession nos. 5, 11, 14 and 15.

<sup>107</sup> For example, accession nos. Misc 1 and Nu 3219; G. Balkwill, "Subdivision of items between Numismatics collection (Nu) and Miscellaneous Collection (Misc)." (unpublished article), p. 2.

<sup>108</sup> Kruger Catalogue, vol. 1, Kr. accession nos. 1160 and 1161 and 1162. Two accessions (1163 and 1164) were entered in English by an unknown person.

<sup>109</sup> Ibid., Kr. accessions nos. 1166 - 1169.

Other objects,<sup>110</sup> not necessarily associated with Kruger, were also accessioned in this volume, such as a photograph of the battle of Spioenkop in Natal and a receipt for sugar bought by the ZAR in Pretoria in 1900, photographs used at the ZAR pavilion in France in 1900 and a booklet, *The absent-minded beggar*, by Rudyard Kipling.<sup>111</sup> A decision was taken by the Historical Sub-committee that photographs with no association at all with Kruger, but accessioned in the catalogue, should be reallocated to the cultural history section.<sup>112</sup>

The classification categories used by Coetzee for the general cultural history collection, also applied to the Kruger Collection, namely a catchword, followed by a description of the object and its history. The name and address of the donor, the history of the donor and his/her family and acquisition number and date are given.<sup>113</sup> Not all entries, and in particular the photographs, met the classification requirements, probably because most objects were associated with President and Mrs Kruger and required less detailed descriptions.<sup>114</sup> There

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<sup>110</sup> The Transvaal Museum adopted the policy that objects associated with Kruger's contemporaries and the ZAR should also be exhibited at the Kruger House.

<sup>111</sup> Kruger Catalogue, vol. 1, Kr. accession nos. 1192, 1269/2, 1275 and 1322/1 - 2.

<sup>112</sup> Historical Sub-committee minutes, meeting 1 November 1957.

<sup>113</sup> For example, Kruger Catalogue, vol. 1:  
 Kr. accession no.1335  
 TERMOMETER, c. 1895  
 In ivoor geset. Maker: M Pillischer, 88 New Bond St., London. Lengte: 3 1/4". Bo aan 'n skakeltjie waaraan dit opgehang kan word.  
 Geskiedenis: Geneem deur 'n Britse soldaat uit Pres. Kruger se huis in Pretoria en later deur die betrokke soldaat aan skenker se moeder gegee omdat sy hom toe hy honger en vermoeid was, kos gegee het.  
 Skenker aan Oorlogsmuseum: Mnr J.A. Loots, Kwaggafontein, Graaff-Reinet.  
 Oorhandig deur die Oorlogsmuseum, Bloemfontein, 7 Desember 1955; Aw. no 6202.  
 [THERMOMETER, c. 1895  
 Set in ivory. Manufacturer: M Pillischer, 88 New Bond St., London. Length: 3 1/4" At the top a small loop from which to suspend it.  
 History: Taken out of President Kruger's house in Pretoria by a British soldier. Later this soldier gave the thermometer to the mother of the donor, because she gave him food when he was hungry and tired.  
 Donor to the War Museum: Mr J.A. Loots, Kwaggafontein, Graaff-Reinet  
 Presented by the War Museum, Bloemfontein, 7 December 1955, Acq. no.6202. (Translated from the Afrikaans.)]

<sup>114</sup> For example, *ibid.*:  
 Kr. accession no.1215  
 FOTO  
 1. President Kruger en sy staf .  
 [PHOTOGRAPH  
 1. President Kruger and his staff].

is a very clear-cut distinction between the old and new way of cataloguing (figure 57). Objects already catalogued were re-entered (for example, the state coach), thus giving one object two or even three accession numbers.<sup>115</sup>

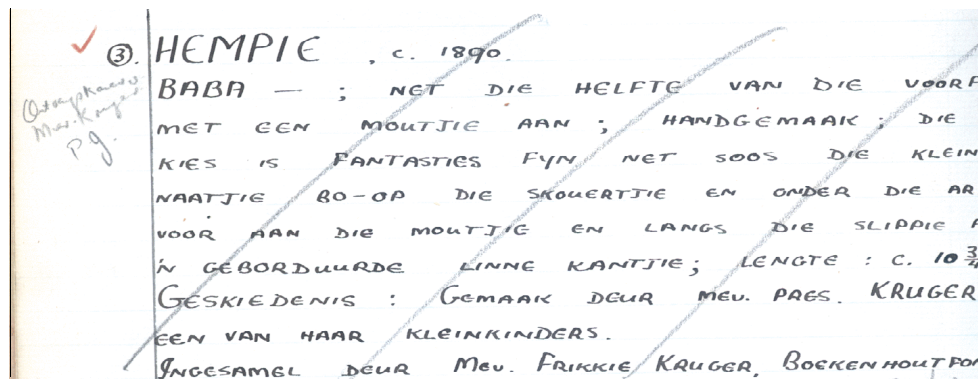
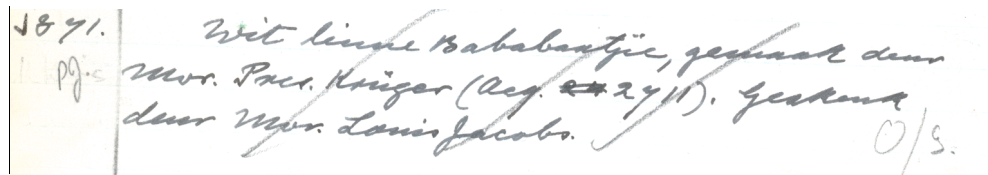


Figure 57

Clear distinction between the old and new method of cataloguing

Schiel's description of the object runs to three words "Wit linne bababaadjie" [White linen baby jacket], whereas Coetzee describes the jacket in detail, giving particulars by which the object can be identified

The overall impression is that the catalogue had been used as a workbook, as there are notes in the margin giving references to the displays and storage; information was also added at later stages and almost all the entries were cancelled with slanting pencil lines and the letters O/G.<sup>116</sup>

- Volume 2

This volume includes accessions from March 1960 to June 1982, but only slightly more than a 100 entries were made until July 1964 by various staff members, including Coetzee. These

<sup>115</sup> Ibid., Kr. accession nos. 1110 and 1261; Historiography Catalogue, vol. 1, H.C. accession no. 3350.

<sup>116</sup> This abbreviation may refer to the Afrikaans *oorgedoen*, i.e. done again, but why and where the accessioning was redone, is unknown.

entries show a number of discrepancies and mistakes, presumably due to the turnover in staff. Numbers that were allocated twice were deleted,<sup>117</sup> and at the back of the catalogue accession 1460 was rewritten and sub-numbers were added to entries in Volume 1. Part of a page was left blank, presumably because no information was available (to be completed at a later stage).<sup>118</sup>

As before, objects without an accession number were discovered and registered.<sup>119</sup> This catalogue was regarded as a workbook by staff members, because there are additional notes, references to storage and displays places, cross references, additional sub-numbers and other reference numbers and letters in the margins as well as in the text. Almost all the entries have been cancelled with slanting pencil lines and the letters O/G.

### **Permanent accessions : Historical photograph collection**

#### Transvaal Museum

- Photograph Catalogue (HKF)  
(Afrikaans: *Historiese Katalogus Foto 's*)
  - Volume 1

The first part of the catalogue for photographs (P. Cat) is discussed in the previous chapter. The “new” catalogue (in the same register) was started in 1958 by Coetzee with the following note:

#### **1958**

Die werk in hierdie katalogus is blykbaar in 1918 stopgesit. Die foto's wat tot by no 35 ingeskrywe was, is later deur iemand anders in 'n groot gemeenskaplike katalogus, genoem “H.C.”-katalogus oorgeskrywe. Alle foto's word egter uitgelig daaruit en nou in hierdie katalog oorgeskrywe. K. Roodt-Coetzee.<sup>120</sup>

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<sup>117</sup> Kruger Catalogue, vol. 2, Kr. accession no.1437 (twice allocated) and following numbers up to Kr 1439 were deleted and new entries made for these numbers.

<sup>118</sup> Ibid., Kr. accession no. 1467.

<sup>119</sup> Ibid., Kr. accession nos. 1490, 1503 and 1523.

<sup>120</sup> [1958 Apparently the work in this catalogue ceased in 1918. The photographs, accessioned up to number 35, were later re-registered by some-one else in a common catalogue, called the H.C. Catalogue. However, all photographs have now been identified and rewritten in this catalogue. K. Roodt-Coetzee. (Translated from the Afrikaans.)]



This catalogue was now coded HKF, Historiese Katalogus Foto's [Historical Catalogue Photographs]. Although the above aim was quite clear, namely that all photographs in the H.C. catalogue should be re-accessioned, this was not done in Volume 1. Towards the end of Volume 1 there are a few photographs that have been transferred from the H.C. catalogue to the HKF catalogue.<sup>121</sup>

Volume 1 consists primarily of new donations. The first entry<sup>122</sup> is a group of 272 photographs donated to the Transvaal Museum by Smuts' children on 23 June 1958. Most of the following entries were photographs also donated to the Museum in the period 1958 to 1963. As usual, one is not surprised to find the explanatory notes: "Gevind in die pakkamer, Ou Museum, Pretoria, Aug. 1958" [Found in the storeroom, Old Museum, Pretoria, Aug. 1958] and "Gevind in Museum se pakkamer" [Found in the Museum storeroom].<sup>123</sup> The catalogue also contains photographs specially made for the Museum, such as 25 photographs of Prime Ministers Verwoerd and Strijdom and other important people.<sup>124</sup>

The entries were done by Coetzee and other staff members and are in Afrikaans. To some extent they follow the established classification pattern of the name or subject, date, description, history, donor, where applicable.<sup>125</sup> There are also photographs that were re-

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<sup>121</sup> For example, Photographic Catalogue, vol. 1, HKF accession no. 353 was first accessioned in the Historiography Catalogue, vol. 3, H.C. accession no.6701/5.

<sup>122</sup> Photographic Catalogue, vol. 1, HKF accession no. 36 followed on the last accession no. P. Cat 35, dated January 1918.

<sup>123</sup> Ibid., HKF accession nos. 40 and 44.

<sup>124</sup> Ibid., HKF accession no. 176.

<sup>125</sup> For example, *ibid.*:  
 HKF accession no. 259  
 WONDERBOOM  
 PRETORIA, CA. 1910?  
 PASSASIEERS-VERVOER; op die voorgrond is 'n "Spider"met 2 perde; op die agtergrond die boom.  
 GROOTTE: 51/2" X 31/2"  
 Skenkster: Mev. M.A. Budler  
 12 Shepstone Ave  
 Pietermaritzburg  
 Natal  
 6/2/1963  
 [WONDERBOOM  
 PRETORIA, CA 1910?

accessioned from the Kruger catalogue and noted.<sup>126</sup> Some Kr. photographs had already been re-accessioned from the H.C. catalogue, and therefore one photograph may have had as many as three accession numbers.<sup>127</sup>

- Volume 2

This volume has entries HKF 359/28 to HKF 830. Various staff members contributed to the catalogue. In both Volumes 1 and 2, the classification pattern had been established to the extent that the catalogues show few signs of alterations and additions. There are some pencilled notes in the margin, mostly referring to storage.

### **Permanent accessions : Voortrekker Collection**

#### Transvaal Museum

- Voortrekker Catalogue (V.)

- Volume 1

The catalogue covers two categories of objects, namely objects donated to or handed in at the Transvaal Museum or the Voortrekker Monument Museum, and objects from the collection at Hartenbos that had been handed over to the organizers on the ox wagons during the 1938 festivities (figure 58). The ATKV and the Voortrekker Monument Board of Control numbers are noted in an additional column.

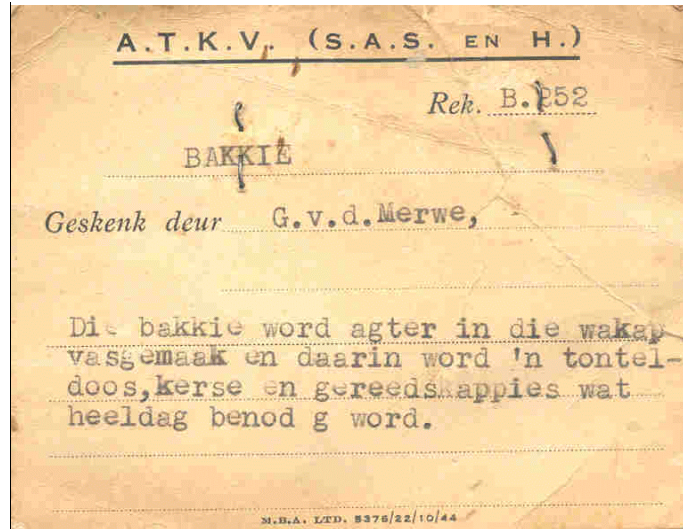
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PASSENGERS-TRANSPORT; in front, a Spider with 2 horses, in the background the tree.  
SIZE: 51/2" X 31/2"  
Donor: Mrs M.A. Budler  
12 Shepstone Ave  
Pietermaritzburg  
Natal  
6/2/1963. (Translated from the Afrikaans.)]

<sup>126</sup> For example, Kruger Catalogue, vol. 1, Kr. accession no. 776 contained 34 photographs and they were not simultaneously re-entered in Photographic Catalogue, vol. 1, HKF accession no. 177/1 - 19, but other HKF accession numbers were noted later.

<sup>127</sup> For example, see Historiography Catalogue, vol.1, H.C. accession Nos. 1528 - 1542, Veertien foto's. Pretoria, Johannesburg en ander dele uit Transvaal 1888 en 1890; Kruger Catalogue, vol. 1, Kr. accession no. 569, Foto's, 14 stuks, ou Pretoria en Johannesburg, and Photographic Catalogue, vol. 1, HKF accession no. 195 with note: "Foto's oorgeskrif uit Kr. 569 in Krugerboek, 17/10/60" [Fourteen photographs. Pretoria, Johannesburg and other parts of the Transvaal 1888 and 1890; Photo's. 14 pieces, old Pretoria and Johannesburg; Photo's rewritten from Kr. 569 in the Kruger Catalogue, 17/10/60. (Translated from the Afrikaans.)].

A decision was taken by the Historical Sub-committee that all objects received from the ATKV and other items that will be donated to the Voortrekker Monument Museum had to be registered with the code VMT, i.e. Voortrekker Museum Transvaal.<sup>128</sup> In practice the preferred code was V.



**Figure 58**

Label with ATKV number still attached to object (V 298) in 2005

The catalogue was started in Afrikaans in 1957 (the first entry is dated March 1957). Coetzee was responsible for most of the entries until 1959, but other staff members also accessioned objects. This catalogue contains objects belonging to the Voortrekkers or dating from the period c. 1700, for example, c. 1700 a candle snuffer, 1720 a pistol, 1738 a pit-saw and even one object as early as 1688, a powder horn.<sup>129</sup> The Voortrekker period ends at c. 1840, but objects dating up to 1887 are catalogued if they could be associated with Voortrekkers or the period of the Great Trek. There is even an object (a driving-whip), dated 1925, with a note “NB Geen oudheid nie, maar wel ou tegniek” [NB No antique, but an old technique].<sup>130</sup>

<sup>128</sup> Sub-committee minutes, meeting 8 August 1956; Transvaal Museum Board of Trustees minutes, meeting 10 August 1956.

<sup>129</sup> Voortrekker Catalogue, vol. 1, V. accession nos. 103, 271, 186 and 330.

<sup>130</sup> Ibid., V. accession no. 322.

At the time the catalogue was opened, the standardized format of classification was already established. Many of the objects were given to the ox wagons during the ox wagon trek in 1938. Most had no historical details attached, but where the history was available, it was given. Other classification categories included condition and restoration, style, function and use.

The accessioning of this collection can be regarded as a model of cataloguing and curatorial expertise for that time, because most of the entries follow the same pattern.<sup>131</sup> As a result there are almost no changes or additions to the entries, although there are pencil notes in the margin on display or storage location. Although there are very few signs of changes to the register itself, two pages had been added between pages 35 and 36, so that there are two pages each with the number 36, 37, 38 and 39; furthermore pages 199 to 204 had inadvertently been skipped.

## Loans

### Transvaal Museum

- Loans-in

Coetzee had already gained some experience in collections management practices before her appointment at the Transvaal Museum. She used a small pen carbon book, in which she wrote receipts for the objects she received on loan in 1949 for the exhibition she staged for

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<sup>131</sup> For example, *ibid.*,

V. Accession no. 256

KRUI THORING, CA 1840

Beeshoring; lengte van punt tot boom buite-om : 18"; punt van horing is swart; deel naby die boom is lig; hout boom wat in sesblarige blom uitgesny is; boom is met swart pennetjies vasgesit; voorste deel op nek van horing is in golwende lyne uitgesny; oorspronklike prop ontbreek.

Restourasie: Maart 1957 in Ou Museum is gedoen: Riempies volgens ou tegniek is gevleg en horingprop in ooreenstemming met lynversiering van die nek van die kruithoring gemaak.

Geskiedenis: Gemaak deur grootvader van skenker, Nicolaas Grobler, toe oorhandig aan sy seun Petrus Jochemus Paulus Grobler (14/5/1833 - 7/7/1882) en toe weer aan skenker.

Skenker: P.J.J. Grobler, Laer Drosdy 6, Uitenhage, K.P.

[POWDER HORN, CA 1840

Ox horn; length from tip to bottom on the outside: 18"; the tip of the horn is black; the part near the bottom is light; the wooden base is decorated with a flower with six leaves; the base is fastened with black pins; curved lines are carved on the front part on the neck of the horn; original stopper is missing.

Restoration: Done at the Old Museum in March 1957. Riempies plaited according to the old technique and a stopper of horn was made in line with the curvature of the neck of the powder horn.

History: Made by the grandfather of the donor, Nicolaas Grobler, given to his son Petrus Jochemus Paulus Grobler (14/5/1833 - 7/7/1882) and then to the donor.

Donor: P.J.J. Grobler, 6 Laer Drosdy, Uitenhage, C.P. (Translated from the Afrikaans.)]

the inauguration festivities of the Voortrekker Monument.<sup>132</sup> For a full three months afterwards she was busy returning hundreds of objects to the owners who loaned them for the exhibition.<sup>133</sup>

Some objects that were borrowed by the Museum, were accepted on the so-called permanent loan (Afrikaans: *permanente bruikleen*) principle. Although this is an apparent contradiction in terms, it basically meant that an object presented to the Museum on a basis of permanent loan was distinguishable from a donation.<sup>134</sup> Objects were also lent to the Museum by private individuals and institutions for special display purposes. There are several good examples of this practice: an inventory was made of Cape Silver objects loaned to the Transvaal Museum for the Van Riebeeck Exhibition<sup>135</sup> and in the catalogues of the Pretoria Centenary exhibition (1955) and the Cape Silver and Furniture exhibition (1962) the lenders of displayed objects were fully acknowledged.<sup>136</sup> Mine compounds in Brakpan, Germiston, Nigel, Merivale and Springs also loaned objects to the Museum for the “From Cave to Compound” exhibition.<sup>137</sup>

Proposed loans were usually tabled at the meetings of the Historical Sub-committee for its approval.<sup>138</sup> In terms of a decision taken by the Board a document had first to be compiled making it clear that while every precaution would be taken to ensure the safety of objects lent to the Museum, the Museum could not accept further responsibility for any loss.<sup>139</sup>

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<sup>132</sup> NCHMA, Kotie Roodt-Coetzee Archives, The Croxley pen carbon book.

<sup>133</sup> Ibid., System 1 No 5 TM1/43 - 51, circular letter from Coetzee, dd 26 February 1951.

<sup>134</sup> Examples are a cupboard and Delftware, c.1730, lent by Dr and Mrs Grotepas and oil paintings on the Dorsland Trek, lent by Mrs F. Mason; Transvaal Museum Annual Report 1954 - 1955, departmental report history, p. 34.

<sup>135</sup> NCHMA, System 1 No 6 TM1/52 - TM1/53, list, Lys Kaapse silverstukke, geleen aan die Pretoriase Kunsuitstalling, Boomstraatse Museum, Maart 1952.

<sup>136</sup> Na, *Historical exhibition: Pretoria (1855 - 1955)*, see also Transvaal Museum Annual Report, 1955 - 1956, departmental report for history, p. 33 and K. Roodt- Coetzee, *Kaapse silwer en meubels uitstalling*.

<sup>137</sup> Transvaal Museum Annual Report, 1958 - 1959, departmental report cultural history division, p. 37.

<sup>138</sup> For example, the loan of a VOC vase from D.A. Cloete, Sub-committee minutes, meeting 29 November 1960.

<sup>139</sup> Transvaal Museum Board of Trustees minutes, meeting 6 November 1959.

Particulars of loans were entered in loan registers. In the English version two certificates were issued in 1959, both for numismatics,<sup>140</sup> but the Dutch version was used to issue sixteen loan certificates.<sup>141</sup> Loans were also acknowledged by means of letters or notes.<sup>142</sup> The Board felt that the Museum should make an effort to build up a duplicate collection for loan purposes.<sup>143</sup>

A separate loan register (a bound volume) was started in 1960 and contains information on 41 loans-in in the period until 1961. The information gives the name and address of the lender, the date and the objects. The code HKB was apparently used for the loans, but later (c. 1985) may have been changed to BL.<sup>144</sup> Notes were made when the objects were given back to the lender, and sometimes the entry was also signed by the lender. In many cases, objects that had been loaned to the Museum were accessioned in the catalogues, and were later purchased or converted into donations. Objects on loan could also become the property of the Museum by prescription.

### **Exchanges**

Exchange was regarded as a valid form of collecting objects and this was endorsed by the Transvaal Museum Board of Trustees. The Board even approved exchanges with private individuals.<sup>145</sup> Coetzee was of the opinion that exchange was valid in European museums and that this could be of benefit to both museums. She therefore did not hesitate to ask other museums for objects that she felt would enhance the collection at the Transvaal

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<sup>140</sup> Loan certificates nos. 20 and 21.

<sup>141</sup> Bruikleencertificaat nos. 30 to 46 [Loan certificate].

<sup>142</sup> See NCHMA, System 2 No 10 NKB Bruikleen 1942 - 1978.

<sup>143</sup> Transvaal Museum Board of Trustees minutes, meeting 9 March 1956.

<sup>144</sup> See list at the end of the entries, compiled by E. Jacobs, c. 1985.

<sup>145</sup> On receipt of antique beads not represented in the collection and Boer prisoner-of-war covers, antique beads were exchanged with W.G.N. van der Sleen. Transvaal Museum Board of Trustees minutes, meeting 10 August 1956.

Museum.<sup>146</sup> Her requests were not always successful<sup>147</sup> and may have even provoked a feeling of resentment. In this way the Museum, however, obtained a fine collection of early Union stamps in exchange for foreign postal stationery.<sup>148</sup>

### Marking

Objects were often found that had not been marked with an accession number, or where all that remained of the number was “... net ‘n rooi verf stippeltjie” [ ... only a speck of red paint].<sup>149</sup> It was therefore necessary for Coetzee to clearly lay down the rules for marking: the accession number was not to be visible on top of an object. Textiles had to be marked by using a piece of tape on which the number was written. The tape was then sewn to the textile. Paper objects had to be marked with a soft pencil and metal, wood, silver, glass and porcelain objects had to be marked in an unobtrusive place and the marking had to be suitably sealed. The accession numbers of rifles were punched in on the rifle butt.<sup>150</sup> Coetzee also advocated the use of additional labels marked with the number to make identification even easier, but never by means of pins or metal staples.<sup>151</sup> The typist was responsible for the marking of the objects with small but legible numbers.<sup>152</sup> The result was that the way in which objects were marked changed considerably, whereas, claims Coetzee, for the previous half a century a piece of paper with the number was simply pinned to the object.<sup>153</sup> In cases where objects were renumbered, the old accession numbers were deleted and the

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<sup>146</sup> For example, she asked the War Museum in Bloemfontein for a few spoons and a doll and the East London Museum for mannikins that she felt should rather be in her museum. NCHMA, System 1 No 19 TM1/63, letters Coetzee to director, Museum, Bloemfontein, dd 16 August 1963; *ibid.*, System 1 No 15 TM1/60, Coetzee to director, East London Museum, dd 13 December 1960.

<sup>147</sup> *Ibid.*, System 1 No 16 TM1/61, letter director, East London Museum to Coetzee, dd. 12 January 1961.

<sup>148</sup> Transvaal Museum Annual Report, 1960 - 1961, p. 38.

<sup>149</sup> NCHMA, Monthly reports, Division of History (K. Roodt-Coetzee) April 1953 - March 1954, 25 February 1954.

<sup>150</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>151</sup> *Ibid.*, System 1 No16 TM1/61 Jan - Jun., Elementêre reëls in verband met museumorganisasie, pp. 1- 2.

<sup>152</sup> *Ibid.*, ET1/58 - 59, Etnologie Afdeling, April 1958 - December 1959, “Roetinewerk vir tikster Ou Museum” (unpublished procedure).

<sup>153</sup> *Ibid.*, System 2 No 57 NKV, Maandsverslae personeel 1955 - 1963, Monthly report, June 1956.



new ones marked on the objects.<sup>154</sup>

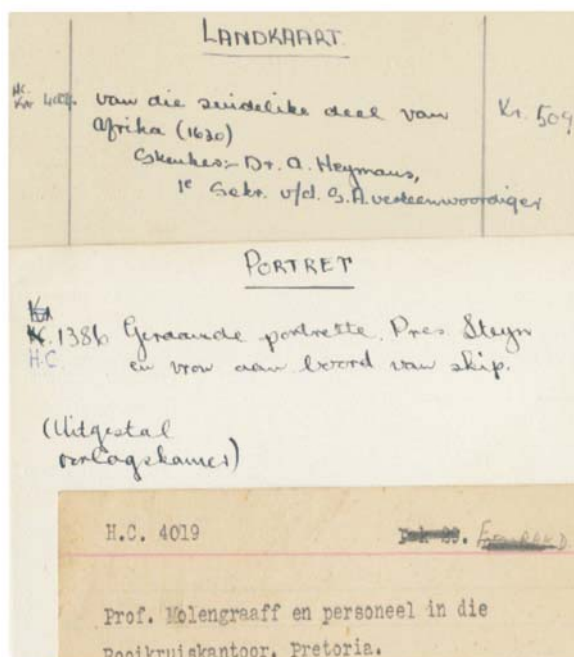
#### 4. POST-ACQUISITION AND ITEM STAGE

Although the curation and control of objects after their formal accessioning was an ongoing process in the history section – Coetzee and the professional staff and museum assistants worked with the collections continuously – there is no formal documentation of these processes and no extant cataloguing forms on which details of the accessions were kept, except for the catalogues and card catalogues.

#### 5. OUTPUT STAGE

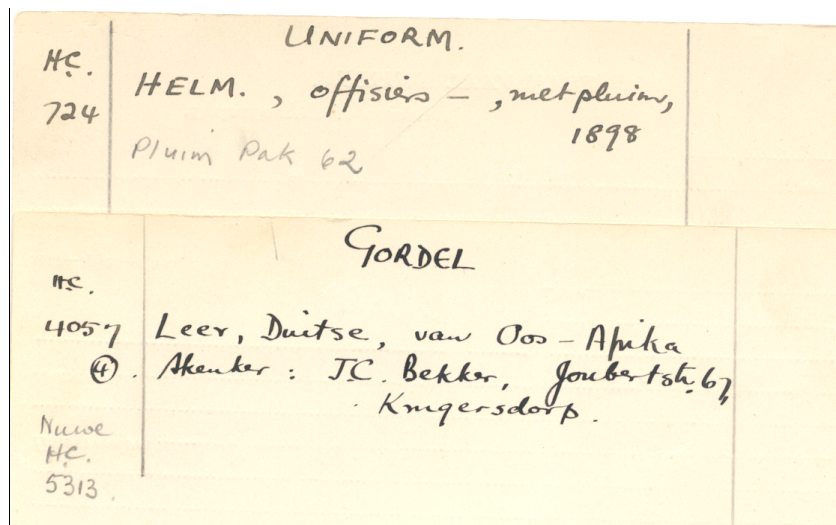
##### Card catalogues

Soon after her arrival at the Old Museum, Coetzee started with a very basic card catalogue for the history section, following the example of the few cards already in existence. These cards contained the most basic information (figure 59). The earliest cards completed by Coetzee were handwritten (figure 60).



**Figure 59**  
Catalogue cards with basic information, probably done prior to Coetzee's appointment

<sup>154</sup> Ibid., July - August 1955.



**Figure 60**

The first catalogue cards, written by Kotie Roodt-Coetzee

The compilation of the cards was the responsibility of the professional officer - for the first years Coetzee - who had to compile the information. Particulars received from the donor or the family, were often copied, as indicated on the information by Coetzee. The work of compiling the various cards, sorting them and filing them alphabetically was done by Coetzee herself.<sup>155</sup> The typing of the cards was done by the typist (figure 61), who had to type subject, donor, time/period, location and person cards for each accession, and who had to make the small sketches on the cards (figure 62).<sup>156</sup>

<sup>155</sup> Ibid.

<sup>156</sup> No extant location cards were found.

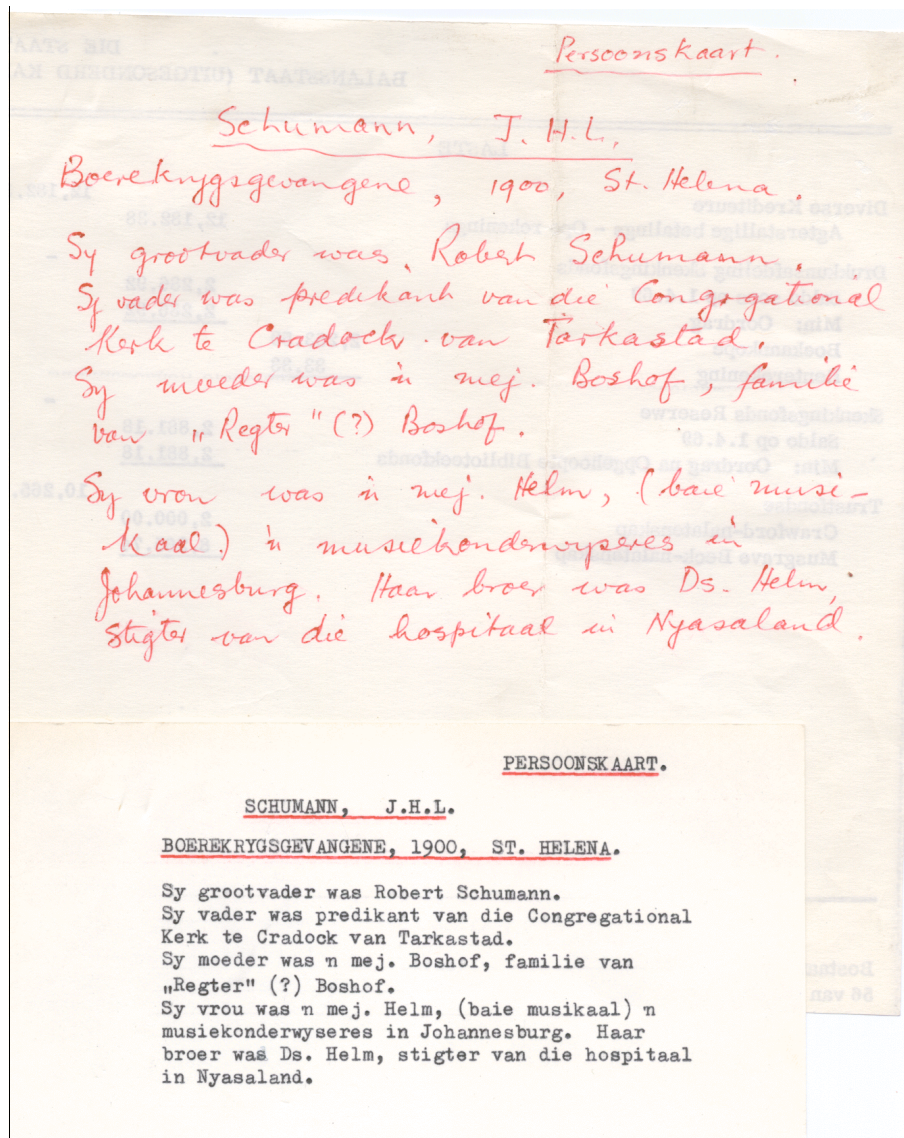
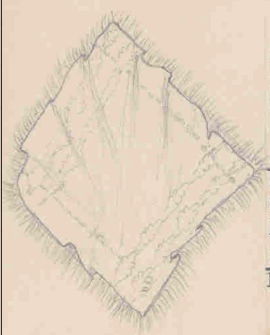


Figure 61

Draft prepared for typing by Kotie Roodt-Coetzee,  
and the typed card

<p>H.C. 5576(14) Aw.No. 4664 Pak: 15</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><u>DOEK</u> <u>NEKDOEK</u> (Voorwerpkaart) <u>SJAAL</u> c.1840.</p>  <p>Dun materiaal soos "gauze lisse" of "nion"; pers; donker pers vierkant in die middel; ligpers rand; 4 donker pers strepies om die rand; sy gare fraings; silwerkleurige ingeweefde blomme; grootte 30"x 29".</p> <p><u>GESKIEDENIS</u>: Gedra deur óf Elizabeth of Catherina Bruchausser, woonagtig op die Groenmarkplein, Kaapstad. (Sien persoonskaart).</p> <p><u>SKENKER</u>: Mev.C.Schutte, Schagen, Nelspruit. April 1951.</p>	<p>H.C. Skénkerskaart.</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><u>SCHUTTE MEV. C.</u> Schagen Oos-Transvaal.</p> <p>5808(17) Gesangboek, Duits, 1778. 5576(13) Kappie -kinder c.1814. (17) Kappie-hoedjie. (3) Teegoedbak c.1880. (2) Teekissie 5577(10) Rokkie en broekie c.1814. 5808(21) Rokkie(doop)c.1814. 5576(8) Sjaal, c.1830. (14) Sjaal c.1840; 5808(7) Sjaal c.1840;</p>
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H.C.	TYDKAART - 1840.	SKENKER.	2.	)Persoonskaart)
6657	Vleismeul ca.	Sk: T.A.P. de Beer.		<p style="text-align: center;"><u>BRUCHAUSER, CATHERINA</u> c.1814</p> <p>Enigste kind van Elizabeth Francina Bruchausser, geb. Muller getroud met Johann Heinrich Bruchausser in 1806. Sy is getroud in c.1841 met die wewenaar Rousseau. Na haar troue het sy en haar man en haar weduwe-moeder, d.i. in c.1848 met 'n donkiewa verhuis na Middelburg, K.P. want na die vrymaking van die slawe het hulle materieel baie agteruit gegaan.</p> <p><i>In hierdie tyd was sy waarskynlik getroud met André Kiewer.</i></p>
6613 (1)	Sjaal ca.	Sk: T.M. Coetzee.		
6679	Foto: A.W.J. Pretorius.	Sk: -		
6686(24)	Brief 13/4/1840.	Sk: Mej. H. Bosman.		
6691 (2)	Katel ca.	Sk: Mev. M. le Roux.		
(3)	Graaf ca.	Sk: " " " "		
(4)	Skottel ca.	Sk: " " " "		
6487 (4)	Broek ca.	Sk: Mnr. & Mev. J.J. Booyser		
6432 (1)	Stoel ca.	Sk: W.A. Lombard.		
Ou 16	Stoel ca.	Sk: -		
17	Stoel ca.	Sk: -		
6860	Slagyster ca.	Sk: C.J. du Toit.		
5862(10)	Sjaal ca.	Sk: Mev. C.J. van Nispen.		
5807 (7)	Sjaal ca.	Sk: Mev. C. Schutte.		
5444 (1)	Sjaal ca.	Sk: S. Malan-Smith.		
5576(25)	Lyfie.	Sk: Mev. C. Schutte.		
6266	Mantilla.	Sk: Mev. Alex Boshoff.		



H.C.6918(1) (Voorwerpkkaart)  
 Aw.No. DAGBOEK  
Pak: VM-Museum ca.1811  
 Plakas 5 MARE, GABRIEL STEPHANUS

op Trek; manuskrip; oorgetrek met skaap-leer; binne in boekie en 2 beursvalkies; klap met lang punt wat omvou; binne 2 lussies vir potlood; gemaak van dik papier wat oorgetrek is met leer(opgeplak) en leervoering; binne in 2 blaadjies van wol materiaal vir naalde; boekie bestaan uit handgeskepte papier; met veerpen en potlood geskryf; leer was oorspronklik rooi gekleur.

GESKIEDENIS: Gabriel Stephanus, geb.1790 was op die Groot Trek ; in sy dagboekie is twee bladsytjies wat 'n verslag oor 'n **Trek bevat maar geen jaartal kom daarin**  
 ..anderkant

voor nie; name van plekke waar verby getrek word: Kogmanskloof, Palmietvly, Tradouberg, Rooiberg; Kaledonskloof, Kamenasie, Langekloof, ens., Op 'n ander bladsy kom die datum 1811 voor; agter in verskyn 'n lys van boerdery-benodighede: 5 stave bant, 1 snijmes, 1 ronde(?), 3 bant, 2 voorbuss en 3 stave spijker, 1 staaf smalle stutijster, 5 hoopsels, 13 stukke staal; verder 'n aantekening: 15 Junij, aan Jan Bresselaar te vraagde of Jan Moor sijn sulver snuifdoos klaar ben.

SKENKER: Mev.H.J.C.Mare, Posbus 18, Belfast. 21/1/1958.

Gabriel Stephanus Mare (geb 1790) + Anna Margaretha  
 ↓  
 Frederik Jacobus + Hester Mariana Coetzee  
 ↓  
 Frederik Jacobus + Helena Johanna v/d Heever  
 ↓  
 Skenker

H.C.	TYDKAART - 1811.	SKENKER.	l.
6918/1	Dagboek.	Sk: Mev. H.J.C. Mare.	
4040	Bottel.	Sk: Mev. H.E. Dodd.	
165	Bybel.	Sk: Genl. Louis Botha.	
166	Bybel.	Sk: Genl. Louis Botha.	
10333	LEPEL (SOP-)	1768 - 1811	
10373	Snuifdoos.	1811.	

(Skenkerskaart)

MARE, MEV. H.J.C.  
 Posbus 18, Belfast. Tvl.

H.C.6918(1) Dagboek ca.1811  
 (2) Mouskakels ca.1820  
 (3) Sakboek 1898  
 (4) Nuwe Testament 1847.

(Persoonskaart)

MARE, GABRIEL STEPHANUS

Gebore 1790; Hy was op die Groot Trek; in sy dagboekie is twee bladsytjies wat 'n verslag oor 'n Trek bevat maar geen jaartal kom daarin voor nie; name van plekke waar verby getrek word: Kaledonskloof, Kogmanskloof, Palmietvly, Tradouberg, Rooiberg, Kamenasie, Langekloof ens., op 'n ander bladsy kom die datum 1811 voor.

Kyk ook H.C.7057.

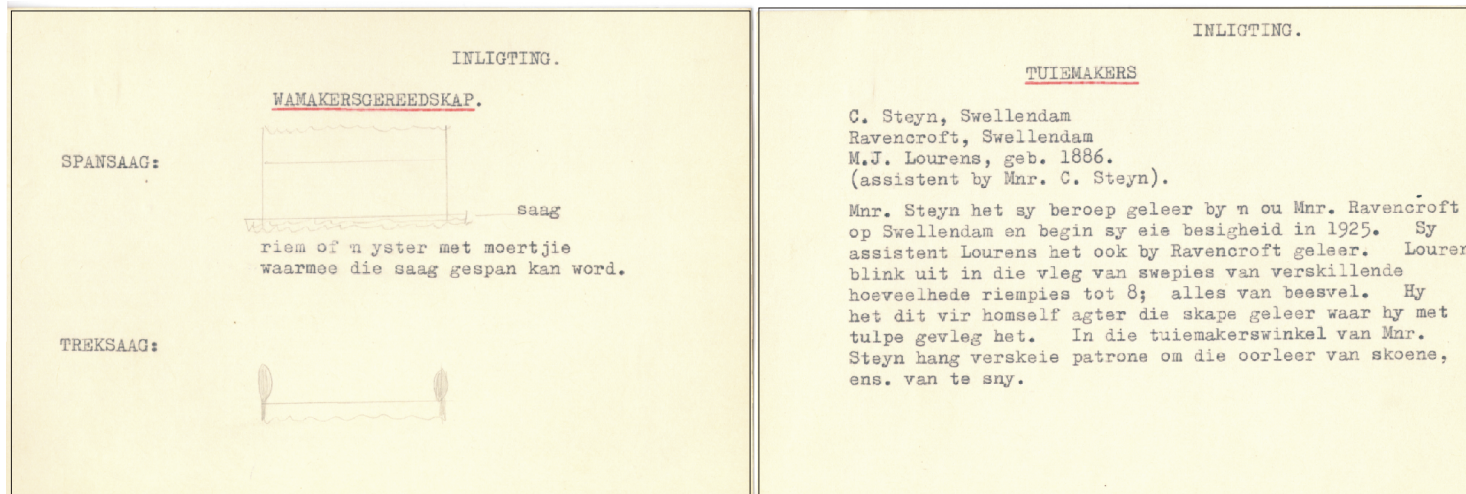


Figure 62

Object records with donor, period and person cards  
for Bruchausser/Schutte and Mare. Information cards were also compiled

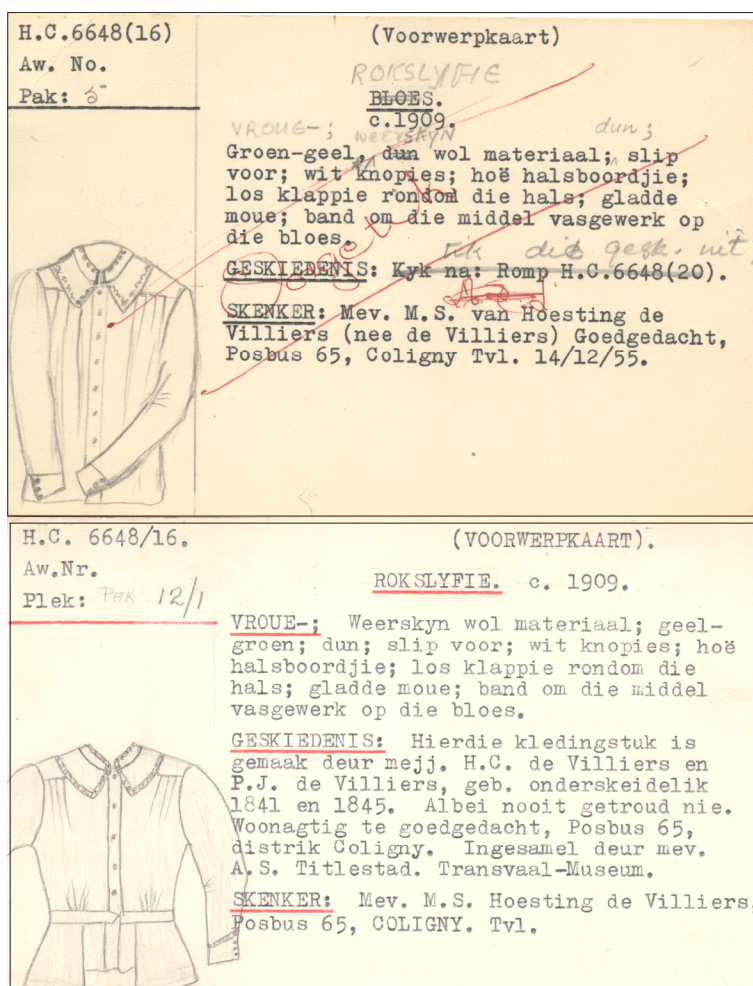


Figure 63

Typed card, corrected and retyped

After marking the accessions (also the responsibility of the typist) the objects had to be packed away and the storage location had to be recorded in the catalogue and on the cards.<sup>157</sup> The cards were corrected by Coetzee and had to be retyped if necessary (figure 63).

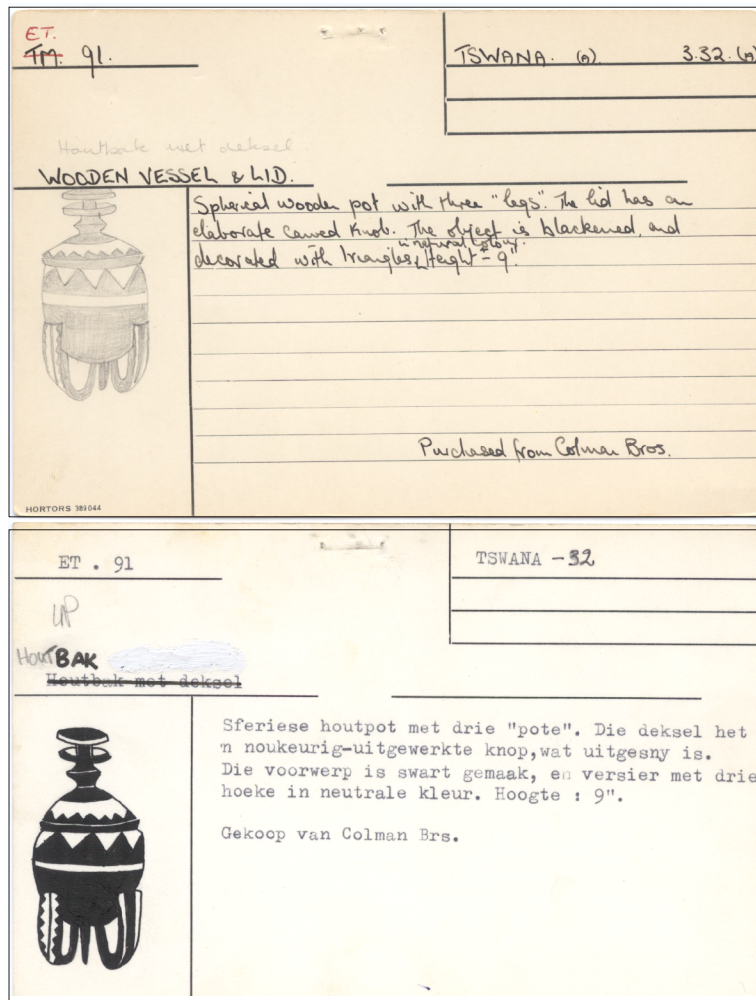
In the 1960s the Shaw system for the ethnology card catalogue was criticized because catchwords were not used in a consistent manner, making the search for objects awkward. Beadwork for example, could be found under beadwork, bracelet, collar and necklace. The fact that the cards were hand-written also made deciphering them more complicated.<sup>158</sup> In

<sup>157</sup> NCHMA, ET1/58 - 59, Etnologie Afdeling, April 1958 - December 1959, "Roetienewerk vir tikster Ou Museum" (unpublished procedure).

<sup>158</sup> Ibid., File ET1/60, Etnologiese Afdeling, Konsepverslag: Toestand in Museum, p. 4, n.d.



1969 a decision was taken to translate the English cards into Afrikaans, still using the catchwords prescribed by Shaw (figure 64).<sup>159</sup> Furthermore the cards were now typed.



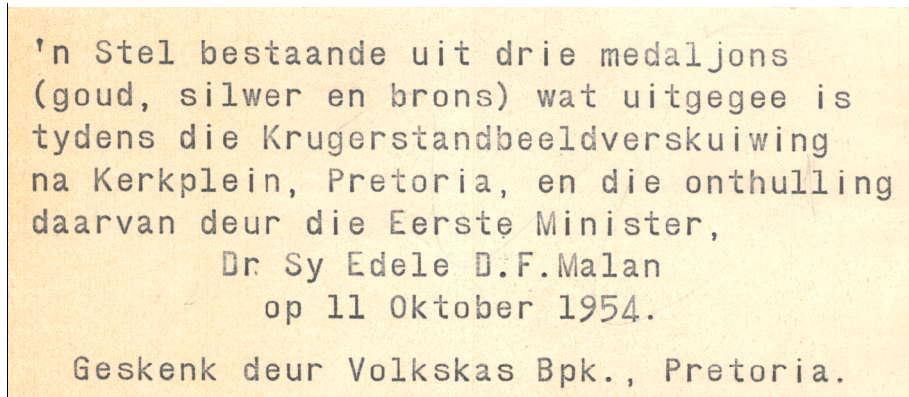
**Figure 64**

Card, handwritten during the 1940s,  
 translated and retyped in Afrikaans

<sup>159</sup> C.S. van der Waal, " Geskiedenis van die Volkekunde-Afdeling van die Nasko-Museum, Pretoria 1893-1977" (unpublished article), pp. 16 - 17.

## Labels

Very few labels could be traced, but those still extant show little change from the previous period (figure 65).



**Figure 65**

Label used during the early 1950s for display purposes

## Inventories

The Transvaal Museum Acquisitions entry register, Volume 4 also contains loose typed inventories with the following information categories: object, donor, accession number and acquisition number. In all cases the accession numbers are given, but only some have the acquisition number. Again there is no indication which process, the acquisitioning or accessioning, came first.

Inventories or lists were used in many cases. A list was made of the Jansen furniture that had been accepted, and another identified items that should be bought later.<sup>160</sup> The objects on loan from the Hertzog family, including certificates, honorary addresses, photographs and other documents, were also listed.<sup>161</sup> Inventories compiled by the donors were filed in the records<sup>162</sup> and lists were compiled for the objects to be moved from one place to another, such as a list of goods selected at the Old Museum for display at the Voortrekker

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<sup>160</sup> NCHMA, System 2 No 57 NKV Maandverslae personeel 1955 - 1963, Monthly report, April 1960.

<sup>161</sup> Ibid., June 1962.

<sup>162</sup> Ibid., System 1 No 13 TM1/58, Opgawe van artikels geskenk deur W.P. Burger, van die Pospersoneel Klerksdorp, dd 22 September 1958.

Monument Museum.<sup>163</sup> A complete list of objects exhibited at the Voortrekker Monument Museum was also made in 1958.<sup>164</sup> These lists were, however, either filed in the administrative filing system, or kept by the professional officer and did not form part of the documentation system.

## 6. EXIT STAGE

### Loans-out

There was no clear-cut policy to deal with loans-out. On the one hand, the loan of 75 muzzle loaders to the 20<sup>th</sup> Century Fox Film Corporation for the production of the film *Untamed* was approved by the Board, who trusted that a donation to the Museum might be considered in return. The assistant production manager held himself responsible for any damage or loss, and also undertook to guarantee the safe return of the arms.<sup>165</sup>

On the other hand, Coetzee was adamant that no object should loaned out by the Museum.<sup>166</sup> Whether a distinction was made between loans to private individuals and institutions at that stage, is not clear, because exceptions to the above rule were indeed made, because objects were loaned to other museums and the municipality of Pretoria.<sup>167</sup>

### De-accessioning

The alienation of objects was a matter which surfaced time and again as requests were received for objects to be returned to their previous owners. Although a decision was taken to attach a copy of the legal provisions for donations to the entry form, this was not in fact

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<sup>163</sup> Ibid., System 2 No 57 NKV, Maandverslae personeel 1955 - 1963, Monthly report November 1956, also April 1957.

<sup>164</sup> Ibid., December 1958.

<sup>165</sup> Ibid., System 1 No 8 TM1/54, letters M. Laxton to the director, dd 3 February 1954 and director to M. Laxton, dd 17 February 1954.

<sup>166</sup> Ibid., letters Coetzee to M. Odendaal, dd 8 June 1954; System 1 No 11 TM1/56 to J.H. Frier, dd 17 April 1956 and System 1 No 12 TM1/57 to National Theatre Organisation (NTO), dd 11 November 1957.

<sup>167</sup>

For example, the loan of African objects to the municipality of Pretoria and items from the numismatic collection loaned to the Africana Museum in Johannesburg for a temporary display called "Commemorative medals of the ZAR"; Transvaal Museum Annual Report, 1953 - 1954, departmental report for division of numismatics and philately, p. 40; *ibid.*, 1957 - 1958, departmental report for cultural history division, p. 35.

done in practice.<sup>168</sup> Instead, the matter was clearly spelt out in correspondence: all donations to the Museum became government property, which could not be alienated.<sup>169</sup> Nevertheless objects were handed over to original owners or institutions whom it was felt had a valid claim.<sup>170</sup>

### Exchange

Although exchange was regarded as a valid form of collecting, objects could, of course, also be disposed of in this way. Duplicates in the postal stationery collection, for example, were made available with the consent of the Board to collectors in exchange for early South African stamps, that were not represented in the collection.<sup>171</sup>

With the approval of the Board, the numismatic collection was sorted into groups. The best quality specimens were put aside for retention and discards (material of poor quality and little value) and duplicate coins were earmarked for possible disposal, either by auction or by exchange for coins which were still needed in the numismatic collection<sup>172</sup> or to other collections.<sup>173</sup> Gold coins, and Roman, Greek or South African coins were not exchanged.<sup>174</sup>

### The Transvaal Museum and the Archives

The practice of handing over items of archival interest to the State Archives continued.<sup>175</sup> In 1955, however, with the approval of the Minister of Education, Arts and Science, the Transvaal Museum/Archives Co-ordinating Committee was set up as a permanent advisory body to decide on the type of historical material that should be housed in the Archives and

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<sup>168</sup> Sub-committee minutes, meeting 31 July 1959.

<sup>169</sup> See for example, NCHMA, System 1 No 18 TM 1/62, letters Coetzee to A.E. Ferreira, dd 17 January 1962 and System 1 No 19 TM1/63, to F.A.J. van Niewenhuizen, dd 11 April 1963.

<sup>170</sup> For example, the Raadsaal clock was given back to the Transvaal Provincial Administration. Kultuurhistoriese Komitee minutes, meeting, 26 September 1963.

<sup>171</sup> Transvaal Museum Annual Report, 1959 - 1960, departmental report for numismatics and philately, p. 43.

<sup>172</sup> Transvaal Museum Board of Trustees minutes, meeting 10 November 1961.

<sup>173</sup> Duplicate obsolete foreign coins were, for example, exchanged for scarce historical Katanga and French Equatorial Africa stamps. Transvaal Museum Annual Report, 1961 - 1962 departmental report for numismatics and philately, p. 35.

<sup>174</sup> Ibid.

<sup>175</sup> Ibid., 1952 - 1953, departmental report for division of history, p. 32.

what should go to the Transvaal Museum. It was decided that documentary/archival material in the Museum was to be transferred to the Archives, while the latter handed over the Smuts Collection for display in the Museum. It was further agreed that the Archives would provide copies of any documents needed by the Museum, and would pass on all duplicate material.<sup>176</sup>

The ruling that documents presented to the Museum had to be sent to the Archives, except if a condition was stipulated that the entire donation should remain in the Museum, was in accordance with an agreement between the Transvaal Museum and the Archives.<sup>177</sup> The Historical Sub-committee was adamant that archive officials should not have free entry to the photograph and document sections at the Old Museum and that the Archives should, for their part, turn-over cultural objects to the Museum. These tenets were endorsed by the Board of Trustees and an Archives-Museum-exchange scheme came into being.<sup>178</sup> Objects received from the Archives were duly acknowledged.<sup>179</sup>

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From a museological, and in particular from a collections management point of view, the achievements of the period 1953 to 1964 with reference to the history section, override the neglect of the previous 40 years (1913-1953). In comparing and assessing the two periods it is clear that many factors influenced the changes that took place, such as the turn of events in South Africa, the general development of museums and the slow but steady emphasis on

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<sup>176</sup> Ibid., 1955 - 1956, p. 13.

<sup>177</sup> NCHMA, System 1 No 9 TM1/55 Jan - Sept., letters Coetzee to J.J. Booyens, dd 6 June 1955; System 1 No 11 TM1/56, to J. Pretorius, dd 21 June 1956 and J.M. Emmett, dd 3 July 1956.

<sup>178</sup> See Sub-committee minutes, meetings 8 and 31 August and 8 October 1956. Transvaal Museum Board of Trustees minutes, meetings 10 August, 7 September and 12 October 1956.

<sup>179</sup> See for example, NCHMA, System 2 No 10 NKB Bruikleen 1942 - 1978, receipt in acknowledgement of donation from N.L. Cronje.

cultural history. Two very different mind sets, each passionately involved in their chosen fields of interest, natural and cultural history respectively could primarily be held accountable for the manner in which fundamental tenets were implemented at the Transvaal Museum.

## CHAPTER VII

### ASSESSMENT OF COLLECTIONS MANAGEMENT PRACTICES AT THE TRANSVAAL MUSEUM

1913 - 1964

According to Roberts the assessment of the collections management practices may include aspects such as the standard of maintenance and the comprehensiveness of existing procedures, the effectiveness of the documentation for curatorial and control purposes, the scale of backlogs, the pressure of incoming and outgoing material, audit procedures and the effectiveness of staff time.<sup>1</sup> Although an assessment of these features is necessary to determine the effectiveness of collections management practices at the Transvaal Museum, an analysis is perhaps even more imperative to establish the attitudes and convictions that led to these practices during the period 1913 to 1964.

During the last decade of the twentieth century museums in Africa and other countries with a so-called colonial past have been scrutinized zealously because they have been blamed for shaping – by collecting certain objects and displaying them in a certain manner – only one cultural heritage to the detriment of a diversity of other social groups in their particular country. According to Küsel, former director of the National Cultural History Museum, Pretoria:

Museums in Africa were remnants of a colonial past that had not really adapted to African values and needs. Museums were a Western cultural procession of Western value systems with strong emphasis on the individual, specialisation, technology, science and the written word.<sup>2</sup>

Museums are the products of their age, reflecting the values and norms valid in that period, and thus operating on a different basis than is the case today. Various factors such as interests and inclinations of staff members, and perhaps even more significant, their convictions, cultural and historical milestones, political events and radical changes in government – all may affect the course of a museum, and the practices of managing the

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<sup>1</sup> D.A. Roberts, *Planning the documentation of museum collections*, pp. 132 - 134.

<sup>2</sup> U.S. Küsel, Negotiating new histories in a new South Africa, in D. McIntyre and K. Wehner (eds), *National Museums Negotiating Histories Conference proceedings*, p. 34.



collection. This certainly happened in the past, and it happened as much as it is happening today. Even now (2005) museums feel the need to debate the question of whether they are in danger of sacrificing artistic and curatorial judgement when they make decisions on collecting in the face of political considerations.<sup>3</sup> Perhaps within 50 or a 100 years, our descendants may blame us for changes made at the turn of the twenty first century. The history of the Transvaal Museum during the period 1913 to 1964 reflects the values and norms that were valid in the museum world, but also in the country at that particular time and should thus be considered in that light. The present day's concerns should not be superimposed on the past; nor should it detract from very real achievements during those years.

## 1. THE TRANSVAAL MUSEUM 1913 - 1953

The parent museum of the Transvaal Museum, the Staatsmuseum, was the national museum of the ZAR and took great pride in its collections. It's aim was to foster national solidarity among the citizenry of the Republic.<sup>4</sup> In the annual report for 1897 it was stated categorically that the Staatsmuseum had an ideal bigger than the mere preservation of objects. The Museum was "... het Grootboek, waarop geregistreerd wordt de vooruitgang van het volk ... Het is, meer dan eenige andere instelling in den Staat, de bewaarder der Historie van het Volk".<sup>5</sup>

In 1908 (after the Anglo-Boer War and the reorganization of the Staatsmuseum as the Transvaal Museum) Gunning wrote in retrospect that great attention had been paid to the collection of historical relics, and that the Staatsmuseum, by fostering love and respect for the country and for its glorious past, would have been instrumental in building a noble South African nation. He explains his view by stressing that the **second** aim of the Staatsmuseum was:

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<sup>3</sup> H-Museum ([Marra](mailto:marra@MUSEUMSLIST.NET))<[marra@MUSEUMSLIST.NET](mailto:marra@MUSEUMSLIST.NET)> , dd 19 April 2005, H-Net Network for Museum Professionals, <H-MUSEUM@H-NET.MSU.EDU>

<sup>4</sup> See E.Grobler, "Die Staatsmuseum van die Zuid-Afrikaansche Republiek en sy historiese en etnografiese versamelings" (unpublished M.A. dissertation, University of Pretoria, 1994), pp. 47 - 59.

<sup>5</sup> NCHMA, Jaarverslag van het Curatorium van het Staatsmuseum over het dienstjaar 1897, p. 4. [The Museum is 'the chronicle in which the progress of the people is recorded ... It is, more than any other state institution, the keeper of the history of the nation.' (Translated from the Dutch.)]

the stimulating of the national pride, the encouraging of the consciousness in the people that this State was but a part of a homogeneous complex of States and Colonies in South Africa, that the past of all these countries was the same, that the great men and great heroes of each component part belong *ipso facto* to the remainder, that origin, present and future, were and should ever be one and the same.<sup>6</sup>

Not only does this attitude deviate from the national ideals of the state museum of an independent government (the ZAR), but Gunning gives another aim of the Staatsmuseum, namely that it should provide practical aid to education, also a second place. But at the same time he stated with great conviction that the **first** (primary) aim of the Staatsmuseum was the promotion of scientific exploration within the state and the acquiring and preserving of scientific collections as the natural outcome of such explorations.<sup>7</sup>

Gunning's new interpretation of the goals of the Staatsmuseum can be explained by the fact that a new period had commenced with the new British dispensation after the Anglo-Boer War, and this had generated new ideals for the Museum. The role of the Museum changed from one contributing to the national consciousness of a single state, the ZAR, to that of a specialized museum, embracing natural sciences. Although the first three directors of the Transvaal Museum were all originally associated with the Staatsmuseum, they were also trained natural scientists and naturally espoused their predilection for the natural sciences. Throughout the first half of the twentieth century this penchant became the directive that prioritized activities at the Transvaal Museum. According to a director of the Museum, C.K. Brain, it had one aim, and that was to document the biodiversity of southern Africa. To that end, mainly through intensive field work, fundamental scientific information was collected,<sup>8</sup> and large natural history collections were established. The research results based on this material was published in local and overseas scientific journals and in-house publications, such as the annals, monographs, memoirs and special publications. Examples are *The birds of South Africa*, *The butterflies of Southern Africa* and *The lizards of South Africa*,<sup>9</sup> all of which contributed to the world wide recognition of the Transvaal Museum

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<sup>6</sup> J.W.B. Gunning, A short history of the Transvaal Museum, *Annals of the Transvaal Museum*, 1(1), April 1908, pp. 1 - 4.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid., my bold.

<sup>8</sup> C.K. Brain, Natural History at the Transvaal Museum 1901 - 1992, in N.J. Dippenaar (ed.), *Staatsmuseum 100*, pp. 16 - 18.

<sup>9</sup> For a complete list, see Transvaal Museum publications, price list.

as a research institution.

In attaining this laudable distinction, the Transvaal Museum was on an equal footing with the leading natural history museums in the world, institutions that had established themselves as research centres doing basic research. The main reason behind this accomplishment, according to L.V. Coleman, was that “the natural history museum in collecting, identifying, and classifying botanical and zoological species from throughout the world was for a time the leading scientific institution in the biological field”.<sup>10</sup>

Nevertheless there was an awareness at the Transvaal Museum and also among the members of the Museum Committee that the ethnology, archaeology and historical collections still remained an integral part of the Museum. As early as 1908 a sub-committee was appointed to compile a report on the scope and functions of the Museum.<sup>11</sup> This document was reviewed in 1913 when a report on the catalogues and collections was discussed by the Museum Committee. The first decision by the Committee deals with natural history, followed by the ethnology, archaeology and historical collections. The Committee resolved

That book catalogues should exist apart from card ones in all divisions.

That the cataloguing of the Ethnographical Division be completed as soon as possible.

That the Historical Division should be taken in hand at once and brought up to date.

That the collection of curios be put in order.

That the collection of Photos be taken in hand, catalogued and arranged in albums.

#### Newspapers

That the Government be approached with regard to having the collection of newspapers handed over to the Archives from time to time, as this Museum cannot afford the space nor the funds to have the collection bound.

#### Stamps

That no stamps are to be given out of the Building in exchange or otherwise prior to the collection being catalogued.

#### Coins

That better provision be made for the safety of the coin collection.

The cataloguing of this collection to be taken in hand.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> L.V. Coleman as quoted by E.P. Alexander, *Museums in motion*, p. 161.

<sup>11</sup> Transvaal Museum Committee minutes, meeting 9 October 1908. A copy of this report could not be traced.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid., 15 July 1913.

At this Committee meeting the urgency of beginning the cataloguing of the collections was pointed out by the acting director, Swierstra. As a result a clerk, J.T. Jenkins, who later became secretary to the Museum and the Committee, was seconded to catalogue such collections as were considered necessary and urgent **in his spare time**.<sup>13</sup> From the catalogues it is clear that some recording was done and the first numismatics catalogue was probably opened then.

In a memorandum of 1919 it was stated that

... there are 1360 Ethnographical species packed away, a collection of Bushmen engravings is waiting for exhibition, the Whitwell collection needs attention, the collection of Ovambo & Bushmen implements & or-naments ... must be exhibited, [as must] all the historical specimens acquired during these years.<sup>14</sup>

At this stage 60 historical and 1 700 anthropological and ethnological specimens were listed in comparison to 1 409 mammals, 1 693 birds, 1 473 reptiles, 1 991 spiders, 18 000 geological specimens, 22 000 insects and about 50 000 molluscs. This certainly showed how the Transvaal Museum succeeded in their exploration of the Union of South Africa. This is indeed a testimony to the attention the Museum was concentrating on the completion of the South African natural history collections. The exploration of the Union would continue in those branches where new material could be expected.

Items regarded as immediate necessities were pieces of apparatus such as glass jars, cabinets and glass cases. These should be obtained as soon as possible. An increase in the salaries of some staff members was also urgent. In view of the anticipated expenditure an increase in the grant to the Museum was proposed, including £550 for the purchase of specimens and a salary of £500 for an ethnologist.<sup>15</sup> Although an ethnologist on the staff was envisaged, the dire needs of the historical and archaeology collections were not addressed at all and no indication was made of the extent of cataloguing or indexing achieved at that stage. It was only with the arrival of Radcliffe-Brown in 1921 and Rossouw in 1924 that some progress was made.

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<sup>13</sup> Ibid. and 3 December 1914. My bold.

<sup>14</sup> Memorandum on the future policy of the Museum and the necessary expenditure connected with this, in minute book, Transvaal Museum Committee minutes, meeting 20 October 1919.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid.

When staff were appointed in one division, it was expected that attention should also be given to the other collections. For example, Rossouw put in a great deal of work in both the ethnology and history catalogues. This meant that attention was divided between two or more different and often incompatible sections of work. This had a negative impact on effective staff time. In addition, all the work on the collections was done by the professional staff because they did not, as happened with the natural history staff, have the advantage of an assistant. In this connection, Beukes says of the anthropology department:

In the past this particular division has suffered immensely through the absence of such an assistant. Technical work has often been done sporadically by the assistants of other departments with the result that very necessary scientific data was often not obtained from donors nor entered into the Ethnological Catalogue. In addition the packing and storing of undisplayed objects was often done in an unsystematic way with the result that no proper record of these articles could be kept.<sup>16</sup>

It was in response to the appeal by Beukes that an assistant for anthropology was appointed, but he only worked at the Museum for little more than a year. More than a decade later an assistant was also appointed for the history division without the direct supervision of a curator.

Often there were no professional staff at all for these divisions for a long period (figure 66), and the work had to be done by the director, or in exceptional cases by a natural history staff member. Swierstra, who was the entomologist, first assistant and later director is a case in point. The director was also responsible for the day to day running of the Museum and had to attend to natural history curatorial duties simultaneously. He even went on natural history field work trips. Although a decision was taken as early as 1914 that the director and the first assistant should not be absent from the Museum at the same time for longer than a few days,<sup>17</sup> work was very often behind. In 1929 the editor of *Die Volkstem* and beneficiary of the Museum, Engelenburg, wrote:

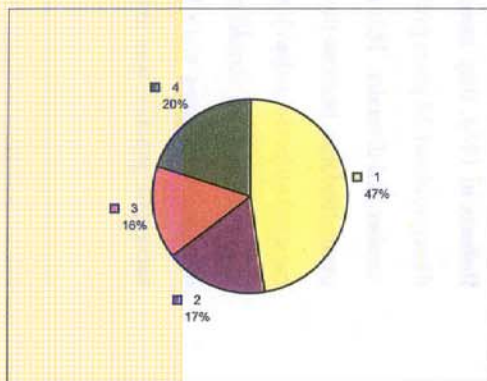
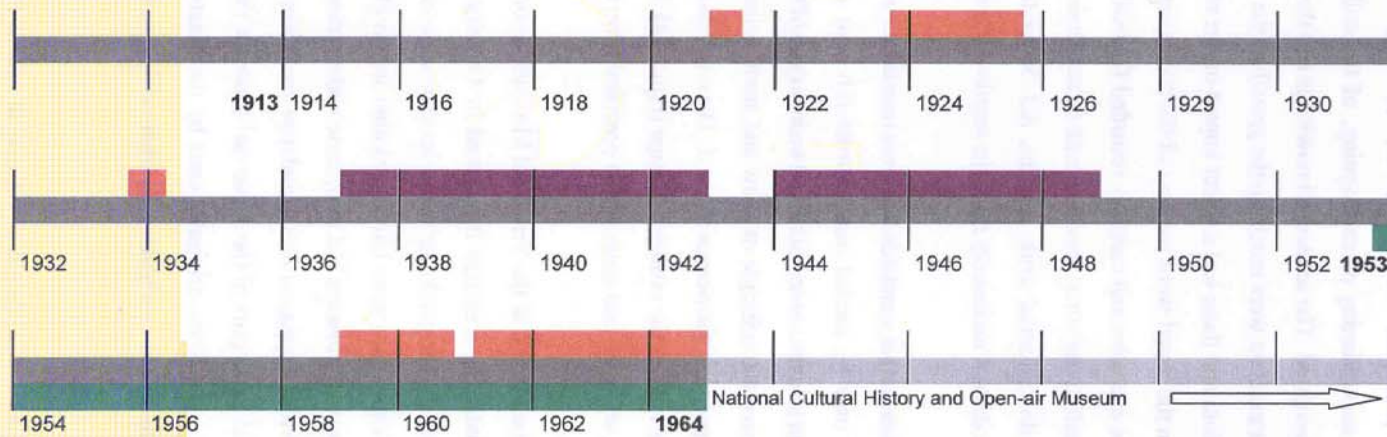
De reputatie van 't Staatsmuseum als aanvaarder van geschenken is niet al te goed! ... De toestand ... is dat uw Museum feitelijk maandelang bestuursloos kan wezen ... Maar zelfs voor 'n openbare instelling is 'n minimum-standaard van administratiewe doeltreffendheid geen luxe!<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> NCHMA, Box 137, TM14/34, letter Beukes to the director, dd 22 February 1934.

<sup>17</sup> Transvaal Museum Committee minutes, meeting 7 April 1914.

<sup>18</sup> NCHMA, System 1 No 2 TM1/27 - TM1/30, letter F.V. Engelenburg to Swierstra, dd 13 August 1928. [The reputation of the Staatsmuseum in accepting donations is not very sound ... The fact is that your Museum is without a manager for months ... A minimum standard of administrative efficiency even for a public institution is no luxury! (Translated from the Afrikaans.)]



- Anthropology
- Archaeology
- History
- No Staff

Figure 66

Periods of tenure of academically qualified professional staff in the anthropology, archaeology and history divisions at the Transvaal Museum, 1913 - 1964



There were no comprehensive written policies or formal procedures with regard to the collections management of the historical, anthropological and archaeological collections. Instead general museological principles were followed, allowing for the basic documentation tasks, such as acquisitioning or cataloguing, of the collections to be completed when time and staff permitted. The academic knowledge and the museological skills of the professional officer or assistant were crucial to the growth of the collection and the documentation of the collections and these had a direct impact on the effectiveness of the process. It was dependent on the sound work (or not) of the professional officer. An example of such endeavour is the extensive and carefully recorded field-collections made by Beukes.<sup>19</sup> From time to time staff (a clerk or a caretaker) with no academic qualifications was seconded or appointed to do curatorial work: Jenkins, A.J. Swierstra, Schiel and Malan. The quality of their work did not necessarily meet the required standards.

In practice this meant that there were no set standards that were maintained on a continuous basis. At best the work could only be carried out intermittently, not only as far as documentation was concerned, but also the conservation and maintenance of the collections. As the Transvaal Museum followed the principle of show and study collections, objects were put on exhibition as far as space and showcases allowed. The rest was stored without regard for material, shape, size or type, in the available storage (figure 14). There were no environmental control measures, although pest control was practised from time to time.

There were a great many catalogues in use at the Transvaal Museum according to Austin Roberts in 1944; they were maintaining a system introduced by Gunning while he was director, about 30 years previously.<sup>20</sup> The catalogues show an almost alarming increase in number and diversity. That new catalogues were introduced after the Anglo-Boer War is understandable, because the Transvaal Museum had to operate under a new dispensation, but catalogues were abandoned without apparent reason and new ones were opened almost indiscriminately. It should be said in support of the Transvaal Museum that most of the obsolete catalogues were kept, even those originally used by the Staatsmuseum. The acceptable practice was that each division maintained its own catalogue, based on serial

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<sup>19</sup> Ibid., Diary, FitzSimons, 1947, letter N.J. van Warmelo to FitzSimons, dd 1 January 1946.

<sup>20</sup> A. Roberts, Proceedings of eighth annual general meeting of the South African Museums Association, 10 May 1944, *SAMAB*, 13(6), June 1944, p. 176.



numbers.<sup>21</sup> The result was that there was no standard procedure for cataloguing, and the way in which accessioning was done in the natural history divisions was not necessarily suitable for the anthropology, archaeology or history divisions. The use of different record systems caused inefficiency in the documentation for control and curatorial purposes, in particular with regard to location or storage details, and often routine work had to be repeated.<sup>22</sup> Basic collections documentation activities such as accessioning were replicated, but it was done fairly well. Little wonder that the catalogues had to be revisited again and again and were regarded as workbooks by the staff who dealt with these collections. This is clearly indicated by the numerous annotations in the catalogues.

Although the scale of the backlog of unprocessed material in the anthropological, archaeological and historical collections is difficult to determine, there is evidence in all the catalogues that there were objects that had been acquisitioned and accessioned a long time after the objects were originally donated or purchased. This can in some small measures be ascribed to the pressure of incoming and outgoing material, since new acquisitions were received on a continuous, if irregular basis, but purchases were almost never made and loans were few and far between. The backlog was to a great extent also the result of the fact that there was seldom staff to deal with the collections. From time to time there were efforts to deal with the backlog, for example, when A.J. Swierstra, assistant for anthropology, took on the acquisitions in the history division.

The general result was, as Roberts asserts, that few collections in museums have more than rudimentary records.<sup>23</sup> This was also the case at the Transvaal Museum. On the one hand the catalogues recorded only the most basic information – sometimes not even that. For example, in the coins and medals catalogue, some accessioning was done as follows: with Nu Accession Nos. 641 to 656 the words *Japan Different Copper Coins Different coins* are written vertically in the Country column. There is no other information (figure 31) and no attempt was made to enhance or enrich the basic information. On the other hand copious information was entered by some curators, such as Beukes, who was particularly

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<sup>21</sup> NCHMA, Box 515, File Memoranda dealing with Tvl Museum matters - space, finance, collections etc. etc., Functions of a museum questionnaire - Transvaal Museum, p. 4.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid., Box 137, TM14/34, letter Beukes to the director, dd 22 February 1934.

<sup>23</sup> D.A. Roberts, Proposals for a survey of cataloguing practice in British museums, *Museums Journal*, 75(2), September 1975, p. 78.

conscientious in this regard.

Almost no index cards still exist today that were used during that period. There is no indication whether index cards were produced before accessioning and for how long the card catalogue was maintained. Professional curators like Radcliffe-Brown and Rossouw did extend the card indexes. The information book and indexes compiled by Schiel were probably only used by him and thereafter by Coetzee. But they were of little value for the general retrieval of information and the general effectiveness of this documentation for curatorial purposes was therefore very limited.

During this period there was no available training in museology and no in-house training was provided on essential collections management tasks for the anthropological, archaeological and historical collections. More often than not, the professional staff working in these collections, who had a background of academic training, left the Museum after a short stay. Radcliffe-Brown, for example, studied at Trinity College Cambridge,<sup>24</sup> Rossouw obtained his doctorate at the University of Chicago and Beukes studied in Heidelberg, Germany.<sup>25</sup> None of them were trained in the wider spectrum of human sciences. The assistants had no training at all.

The status of the human sciences division and its position in a natural history museum is also indicated by the posts that were approved and created and those that were filled. For many years there was a divide between the natural history and the history sections. Since the 1930s natural history was sub-divided into botany, mammalogy, ornithology, palaeontology and physical anthropology, lower vertebrates and invertebrates, general entomology, lepidoptera, coleoptera and heterocera. And usually there was a professional officer, with an assistant, for each division.<sup>26</sup>

By way of contrast, from 1913 to 1953, the professional post for ethnologist was filled only

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<sup>24</sup> See letter by Radcliffe-Brown in J.A. van Schalkwyk, Radcliffe-Brown at the Transvaal Museum, *Research by the National Cultural History Museum*, vol. 5: 1996, pp. 39 - 40.

<sup>25</sup> C.S. van der Waal, "Gesiedenis van die Volkekunde-Afdeling van die Nasko-Museum, Pretoria 1893 - 1977" (unpublished article), p. 3.

<sup>26</sup> NCHMA, *Komitee van Ondersoek na openbare museums in Pretoria, 1960 - 1961*. Memorandum van die Raad van Kuratore van die Transvaalse Museum aan die Komitee van ondersoek na openbare museums in Pretoria, p. 10.

very sporadically and only once was there an assistant. Two temporary part-time assistants for history was appointed from 1947 to 1951. The first professional officer in archaeology was appointed in 1937, but again also for a limited period, and for history the first, Coetzee, was only appointed in 1953. Little wonder that Robinson, the assistant director of the Museum and professional officer in charge of the department of physical anthropology and vertebrate palaeontology, wrote that the activities on the cultural history side of the Museum were very limited for many years because of the acute shortage of both staff and funds.<sup>27</sup>

The status of the human sciences division as part of what was primarily a natural history museum is indicated by the annual reports of the Transvaal Museum. Initially the work done in archaeology, ethnology and history was recorded in the first assistant's report. In the director's general report matters such as acquisitions and show and study collections were recorded, whereas copious reports were written by the curators for higher vertebrates, lower vertebrates and invertebrates, entomology, botany and palaeontology. The first exception to this rule occurred when the Kruger Museum was opened: a page-long report was drawn up by the director on the activities at the Paul Kruger Museum for the year 1 April 1934 to 31 March 1935. The next exception was the work done by Beukes. While he was still working for the Transvaal Museum as honorary curator he wrote annual reports for ethnology for the years 1934 - 1935, 1935 - 1936 and 1936 - 1937.

In the annual report for 1939 - 1940 there was a significant deviation: for the first time a **separate** report was written for the archaeology, ethnology, numismatics and philately departments, albeit by the director.<sup>28</sup> This procedure was repeated in the report for 1940 - 1941. The 1941 - 1942 report was written by Haughton, with an added note on "Historical" matters. In 1942 - 1943 no report was written, and for the next two years the report was only for archaeology, ethnology and numismatics, and philately formed part of the library report. In the 1946 - 1947 report there is still another change: history was added. The report was thus written for ethnology, archaeology, history and numismatics. The following year (1947 - 1948) no report at all was written for these divisions. A separate report for the division of history was written by the director for the period 1 April 1948 - 31 March 1949

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<sup>27</sup> Ibid., J.T. Robinson, Memorandum on the accommodation problems of the Transvaal Museum, p. 1.

<sup>28</sup> My bold.

in which no mention is made of ethnology, archaeology, numismatics and philately. It was only in the annual report for 1950 - 1951 that a pattern was established for separate reports for all three divisions, that is history, archaeology and ethnology, and numismatics and philately. My investigations have yielded nothing on the control of the collections, the audit of objects on record, or the movement of objects in terms of the show and study collections.

### **Anthropological collection**

From the inception of the Transvaal Museum after the Anglo-Boer War, the Museum Committee members and director were sympathetic towards the needs of the ethnology collection in particular. Gunning was interested in the ethnology collection, and especially in the possibility of an ethnographic survey of the entire country.<sup>29</sup> The responsibility for the ethnology collection was given to Swierstra, who had been first assistant at the Transvaal Museum since 1905.

The ethnology collection was regarded as the most important of the three collections (anthropology, archaeology and history) as far as staff was concerned, because the Transvaal Museum Committee discussed the possibility of appointing an assistant for ethnography and anthropology as early as 1910, and for the following reasons:

the necessity for the creation of this post is so universally admitted, that it is unnecessary to enlarge on this subject ... The ethnographical collection in the Transvaal Museum is the largest and most important one in South Africa, and it is necessary that this collection should be worked catalogued and prepared for exhibition before it is moved into the New Museum building.<sup>30</sup>

The appointment of an honorary curator for that collection was discussed as early as 1913.<sup>31</sup>

In 1915 the director was of the opinion that a separate ethnological department should be established.<sup>32</sup> The matter was taken up again in 1917 when the Museum Committee instructed the director to draw up a memorandum highlighting the necessity of having a

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<sup>29</sup> See E. Grobler, The origin of the Anthropology collection of the National Cultural History Museum, Pretoria (1892 - 1921), *Research by the National Cultural History Museum*, vol. 5: 1996, pp. 16 - 18.

<sup>30</sup> Transvaal Museum Committee minutes, special meeting 28 November 1910.

<sup>31</sup> Transvaal Museum Committee minutes, meeting 21 October 1913.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, 5 October 1915.

scientific assistant for ethnography.<sup>33</sup> The government was accordingly requested to appoint an assistant for ethnology.<sup>34</sup>

The first curator who was appointed in the ethnology division was Radcliffe-Brown, followed intermittently by Rossouw and Beukes. They were attached to the ethnology division in particular, although all three seem to have worked with the archaeology and history collections as well. After the resignation of Rossouw and the disbandment of the honorary curatorship of Beukes, the vacancy for an ethnologist was left vacant due to financial constraints. As early as 1925 the Museum Committee had already decided not to fill the post, owing to the fact that the money required for proper research work in the ethnology division would place a great strain on the funds of the Museum.<sup>35</sup>

In 1938 there was a vacancy on the staff for one professional officer for the historical **and** ethnological division, but once again this post could not be filled because of financial considerations. At this stage, according to the annual report, it was regrettably impossible to appoint a full-time ethnologist – no mention was made of an archaeologist or historian – on the staff until the Museum’s financial position improved, but it was also felt that:

The study of Ethnology is to a great extent neglected in this country and with the passage of time it is becoming more and more difficult to study the fast disappearing original culture of the indigenous native tribes. In addition, the original household utensils, musical instruments, agricultural and war implements ... will disappear and be unprocurable.<sup>36</sup>

It was not only at the Transvaal Museum that there were staff shortages to cope with anthropology collections: very few museums in South Africa had staff whose special task this was. According to Jones anthropology was regarded as the “Cinderella” of the sciences and the most neglected subject, and that it had not attracted as many workers as the more fully established branches of natural history.<sup>37</sup> More than ten years later, the situation was

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<sup>33</sup> Ibid., 4 September 1917.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid., 3 December 1918.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid., 22 September 1925.

<sup>36</sup> Transvaal Museum Annual Report, 1938 - 1939, pp. 2 and 7.

<sup>37</sup> N. Jones, The place of anthropology in the museums of South Africa, *SAMAB*, 2(15), September 1942, p. 369.

unchanged, because Shaw – appointed at the South African Museum in Cape Town in 1933 and for about 25 years the only museum ethnologist in South Africa<sup>38</sup> – stated that ethnology attracted far fewer serious students than **any other branches of natural science**.<sup>39</sup> The need for a trained anthropologist in every museum and the necessity of anthropological work was also discussed at SAMA.<sup>40</sup> It seems that the Transvaal Museum recognized the importance of anthropology but nonetheless the post was not filled permanently.

One of the most important contributing factors to this situation as far as natural history museums is concerned is ascribed to the grouping together of anthropology and natural history collections.<sup>41</sup> Davison asserts that this was the result of the distinction between “them” and “us”, in other words a conceptual boundary from an Eurocentric perspective, that “we had history, including cultural history, whereas *they* had timeless tradition ...”<sup>42</sup> Although the existing situation as regards anthropology in South African natural history museums was unsatisfactory, in the United States, says Porter, no other branch of enquiry has attracted more attention throughout the development of natural history museums than ethnography.<sup>43</sup> Anthropology was grouped together with natural history at the Smithsonian Institution in Washington, the American Museum of Natural History and the Field Museum of Natural History.<sup>44</sup> In South Africa, this was also the situation in the South African Museum, Cape Town and the Transvaal Museum in Pretoria. This also ties in with the perception that anthropology was regarded as having “mainly a pure-science nature”.<sup>45</sup>

Although it was a powerful incentive that the structure of the Transvaal Museum was in line

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<sup>38</sup> R.F.H. Summers, *A history of the South African Museum 1825 - 1975*, pp. 142 - 143.

<sup>39</sup> My bold. E.M. Shaw, Museums and ethnology research, *SAMAB*, 6(12), December 1957, p. 301.

<sup>40</sup> E.C. Chubb, The first eight years of the South African Museums Association’s experience, *SAMAB*, 13(6), June 1944, pp. 161 - 162.

<sup>41</sup> P. Davison, Rethinking the practice of ethnography and cultural history in South African Museums, *African Studies*, 49(1), p. 151.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 150.

<sup>43</sup> C.M. Porter, The natural history museum, in M.S. Shapiro (ed.), *The museum a reference guide*, p. 11.

<sup>44</sup> E.P. Alexander, *Museums in motion*, pp. 50 - 57.

<sup>45</sup> A. Roberts, Museums, their function and scope, *SAMAB*, 4(2), June 1947, p. 23.

with such accepted practice, there were priorities other than anthropology for a Museum devoted to natural history. The research work at the Transvaal Museum involved the documentation of the biodiversity of southern Africa.<sup>46</sup> This meant that the permanent natural history collections were built up in a continuous and purposeful manner, in particular through intensive fieldwork.<sup>47</sup> The care and proper management of the permanent natural history collections was and still is the core function of a natural history museum such as the Transvaal Museum.<sup>48</sup>

In comparison with the above the Transvaal Museum's documentation with regard to the ethnology collection showed a lack of collections management. No need was felt to inventorize or even to check the items in the ethnology collection after the Anglo-Boer War because the Transvaal Museum was, in practice, the old Staatsmuseum. New donations, purchases or field work objects were not always acquisitioned and accessioned immediately; often this was only done months, or even years, afterwards. Beukes was of the opinion that:

the general organisation of this department [ethnology] has suffered immensely through different systems having been employed by successive departmental heads. Apart from the sufficient organisation thus caused much routine work has been repeated in the past - but according to different systems.<sup>49</sup>

The range of sources, such as acquisitions entry registers and catalogues, shows many consistencies and available information was transferred from one register/catalogue to the other fairly accurately. The entries were made in numerical order, but with apparently little regard for sequence of deposits. Furthermore there was almost no indication of the name of the staff members who made the entries, the post held, and the date of the entries. The cross references sometimes give links between the various sources, but not in all instances.

The fact that new acquisitions were accessioned in a catalogue was on par with the method used by other museums for their ethnology material. According to a survey on ethnography collections in museums in southern Africa in 1943, undertaken by Jones, 17 museums used

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<sup>46</sup> C.K. Brain, *Natural History at the Transvaal Museum 1901 - 1992*, in N.J. Dippenaar, (ed.), *Staatsmuseum 100*, p. 18.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 18 - 46.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 27.

<sup>49</sup> NCHMA, Box 137, TM14/34, letter Beukes to the director, dd 22 February 1934.



an accession book in which their newly-acquired African objects are entered. Seven museums also used a card catalogue, while three were about to begin doing so.<sup>50</sup> This was probably the result of the encouragement given by Shaw to museums to implement an ethnographical card index system, as had happened at the Transvaal Museum.

The following assessment of the ethnology collection at the Transvaal Museum in 1946 by Van Warmelo, an South African anthropologist, summarizes the position well:

I would like to put it on record that as far as I can see you have an extremely varied and valuable collection. As in most museums, much of the older material is very fine, but its value much impaired by the unmethodical recording of the old days. A closer study of the subject will enable us to place numerous items. The most valuable part is no doubt the extensive and carefully recorded field-collections made by Dr Beukes, and some things contributed by my Department. This shows that the best method is to let a specialist do the collecting. We found almost no traces of moths or borers, but one thing seems necessary: to go through all the objects carefully to see to their numbers, because a fading ink has been used on some, and this is becoming illegible. The storage room is of course somewhat limited, but nothing to complain of. The absence of someone to attend to the collection appears the most important to me at present.<sup>51</sup>

### **Archaeological collection**

The archaeology collection only came into its own with the appointment of a trained archaeologist on the staff in the person of Haughton in 1937. She took the collection in hand and started with the archaeology catalogue, but during her stay at the Museum she also had to assume responsibility for the history, philately, numismatics and ethnology collections and divided her attention and time between these. After she left, almost 20 years elapsed before another archaeologist was appointed.

The first accessions in the archaeology catalogue were rewritten from volumes 1 and 2 of the Main Catalogue of the Department of Ethnology Africa. When Haughton started doing fieldwork, the descriptions in the catalogue changed considerably and even included hand-drawn maps. These may be compared with the site charts that were regarded as supplementary to the catalogue system of the Archaeological Survey of the Union of South

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<sup>50</sup> N. Jones, Ethnography in museums in Southern Africa, *SAMAB*, 3(3), September 1943, p. 64.

<sup>51</sup> NCHMA, Diary FitzSimons, 1947, letter N.J. van Warmelo to FitzSimons, dd 1 January 1946.

Africa described by the director, Van Riet Lowe (annexure 6).<sup>52</sup> This system may have influenced the accessioning done by Haughton, as details were published during her stay at the Transvaal Museum.

### **Historical collection**

During the period under review, history was regarded as a peripheral field of study in a museum. In his paper on the functions and scope of museums, the renowned Austin Roberts enumerates the subjects in general and in special museums on which experts were working at the time. He mentions geology, palaeontology, archaeology, ethnology and the biology sciences, such as botany, zoology and entomology. He does say, however, that general museums display historical or ethnological relics and that museums fulfil an important role in cultural and scientific labours.<sup>53</sup>

The management of the history collection in the Transvaal Museum always took second place to ethnology during the period 1913 to 1953. Indeed it had little call on the duties or obligations of the staff members in charge. The work in that division was delegated to either the director, the ethnologist or an assistant, and could therefore only be done part-time. There was little interest in the historical collection and almost no expert knowledge about it. To say the least, the administration of the history collection was in a chaotic condition,<sup>54</sup> because there was no qualified historian or cultural historian on the staff.

For a very short period, while Rossouw was working at the Museum, there was a revival in the interest in history, because he felt that the history division of a museum should display the history of a people (Afrikaans: *volksgeskiedenis*) so that posterity need not only read about or hear of history, but could also see it.<sup>55</sup> He called the history division the

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<sup>52</sup> C. van Riet Lowe, Catalogue system of the Archaeological Survey, Union of South Africa, *SAMAB*, 2(15), September 1942, pp. 325 - 327.

<sup>53</sup> A. Roberts, Museums, their function and scope, *SAMAB*, 4(2), June 1947, pp. 21 - 25.

<sup>54</sup> According to a letter by Coetzee "... was die administrasie van die Historiese Afdeling destyds in 'n chaotiese toestand. Toe was ene mnr Zwierstra, 'n Hollander, direkteur." [... the administration of the Historical Section was in a chaotic condition. At that stage a Mr Zwierstra, a Hollander, was director]. NCHMA, System 1 No 14 TM1/59, letter Coetzee to F.O. Dentz, dd 23 February 1959.

<sup>55</sup> NCHMA., Box 515, "Die 'Generaal Louis Botha' versameling" (unpublished pamphlet), p. 1. The pamphlet was probably written by Rossouw.

“Department of Historiography” and styled himself as the historiographer.<sup>56</sup> Rossouw showed considerable interest in the Botha Collection and the objects received from the Zuid-Afrikaansch Museum in Dordrecht.

The history collection was unplanned and activities were sporadic as many years elapsed between the various entries into the catalogues. Although the transfer of information from one catalogue to another was sometimes done meticulously, in other cases this was not done and as a result observations such as the following were made:

H.C. 5401. ‘n Ou klok, moei, waarskynlik van die eerste helfte van die 19de eeu. Geen inligting of besonderhede is sover te kry nie. Dit staan waarskynlik nog van die ou Staatmuseum Z.A.R. af.<sup>57</sup>

In the late 1940s a change took place in the attitude that had previously prevailed at the Transvaal Museum with the appointment of Schiel as part-time assistant for the historical division in 1947. He had to sort, check, catalogue and list all the items in the historical collection.<sup>58</sup> Schiel found a huge amount of most interesting historical material in storage at the Old Museum. Many of these objects could have been exhibited had there been enough space.<sup>59</sup> Schiel’s activities engendered a new appreciation for the historical collection. In a significant statement the director, FitzSimons, wrote:

**Throughout the year under review, Mr A. Schiel, as a temporary part time assistant, has been engaged in sorting, arranging, listing and cataloguing the mass of historical material which has been accumulating in storage at the Old Museum. In the course of this work he has made numerous interesting discoveries, which have aroused the active interest of historians and archivists throughout the country ...**

**As I have seen most of the material that has passed through Mr Schiel’s hands in the course of the year, I have come to realise more than ever what a vast store of invaluable historical material we have in the Museum. It is also patent to me that this material can provide for years of historical research and that we should do our**

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<sup>56</sup> Ibid., Box 515, list, Botha Collection, dd 8 April 1924. See glossary.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid., System 1 No 13 TM1/1958, note.[H.C. 5401. An old clock, pretty, probably dating from the first half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. No information or particulars have so far been found. It probably dated from the days of the Old Staatsmuseum Z.A.R. (Translated from the Afrikaans.)]

<sup>58</sup> Transvaal Museum Annual Report, 1947 - 1948, p. 5.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid., 1948 - 1949, p. 4.

**utmost to see that a qualified historical research officer is appointed as soon as possible.**<sup>60</sup>

Although Schiel's appointment may be regarded as a watershed in the shifting fortunes of the history collection, the work done by Schiel and Malan, his successor, was not museologically speaking of a particularly high standard:

Deur die jare moes opsigters wat in die meeste gevalle 'n afgetrede polisieman of messelaar of garagewerker was, die voorwerpe wat geskenk is, ontvang, inskrywe en verpak. Verkeerde metodes deur hierdie opsigters gebruik, gebrek aan wetenskaplike kennis om die museumpeste waaraan die voorwerpe blootgestel was, te bestry, verkeerde en onvoldoende gegewens wat neergeskrywe is, het oneindig baie skade aan die versameling veroorsaak. In baie gevalle is geen gegewens, selfs nie eers die naam van die skenker neergeskrywe nie.<sup>61</sup>

A similar situation is discussed by E.C.N. van Hoepen with regard to the National Museum in Bloemfontein, although he refers to the period at the end of the nineteenth century, when a caretaker was responsible for accessioning. Van Hoepen comes to the conclusion that even though the first members of staff were very keen, their hard work yielded little, because they lacked the necessary knowledge of museum methods.<sup>62</sup> Although the entries made by Schiel contain basic information, there was no question of any classification as was later advocated by Coetzee (see figure 57).

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<sup>60</sup> Ibid., departmental report for the division of history, p. 1. My bold.

<sup>61</sup> NCHMA, System 2 No 38 KNO(1) 1955 - 1970, Memorandum vir voorlegging deur die Historiese Genootskap van Suid-Afrika aan Sy Edele die Minister van Onderwys, Kuns en Wetenskap, p. 3. [In the past the donated objects were accepted, accessioned and packed by a caretaker, who in many cases was a policeman, a bricklayer or a garage attendant on pension. These caretakers used the wrong methods, lacked the scientific expertise to eradicate museum pests to which objects are subject, and wrote down incorrect and incomplete particulars that caused endless harm to the collections. In many instances no details, not even the name of the donor, was written down. (Translated from the Afrikaans.)]

<sup>62</sup> E.C.N. van Hoepen, Die Nasionale Museum, *SAMAB*, 9(3), March 1945, p. 256.

Although FitzSimons was responsible for the first appointment in the history division, his primary consideration remained the growth and advancement of natural history. He received many kudos for his achievements in his own discipline, and he excelled throughout his career at the Museum, both as scientist and as director. On his retirement it was said : “There is probably no natural history organisation in South Africa which has not benefited from the richness of his experience”.<sup>63</sup> FitzSimons’ personal endeavours to develop the history division were laudable, despite the fact that his first interest was natural history.

### **Causes for neglect**

To justify the low standard of collections management practices in the ethnology, archaeology and history collections at the Transvaal Museum two main reasons were usually provided, namely the lack of adequate space and financial constraints. Time and again these reasons are reiterated in annual reports, memoranda and other museum documents.

#### Available space

The space available in the new museum building in Paul Kruger Street, Pretoria, was “barely adequate for the natural history collections alone and, as a result the cultural history collections had perforce to be left in the Old Museum”.<sup>64</sup> In 1951 the director, FitzSimons, explained that the New Museum had been occupied by government offices until the early 1920s, after which the natural history collections were transferred to the building. The Geological Survey Division still occupied a part of the building, with the result that it was decided that the historical collections should remain at the Old Museum. FitzSimons was adamant that the situation could only be rectified by full occupation of the New Museum building and the erection of the two wings that had originally been planned.<sup>65</sup>

In a memorandum written in 1955 on the conditions at the Transvaal Museum it was stated that the state of congestion that had been reached was unimaginable and was quite inexcusable in a national museum, that should be in a position to present the best in

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<sup>63</sup> N a, Editorial, *SAMAB*, 8(11), December 1966, n.p.

<sup>64</sup> NCHMA, System 2 No 38 NKO(1) 1955 - 1970, Memorandum re proposed new museum of cultural history, p. 2.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid., pp. 1 - 2; V. FitzSimons, Historical collections of the Transvaal Museum, *Pretoriana* 1(1), September 1951, p. 9.

museology that the country could offer.<sup>66</sup> In the annual report the situation was described as follows:

A desperate stage has been reached in most sections of the Museum due to over-crowding, as a result of which an additional burden is being placed on the scientific officers concerned, through them having to work in what now become storerooms. This regrettable state of affairs not only affects their work but involves the loss of much valuable time in constantly re-arranging the existing collections to house incoming material, and at the same time preserve some semblance of working space for themselves.<sup>67</sup>

This report refers to the New Museum, but the same could equally be said of the Old Museum, where the bad conditions and the unsuitability of the building to safely house the collections, were reiterated again and again in annual reports.<sup>68</sup> The Old Museum is described

as a building with much wood in its construction and thus a constant fire hazard; the corrugated iron roof springs new leaks after every storm, with consequent damage to material; termites are undermining the floors and plaster is constantly falling off the walls and pediments ... storage and exhibition space is at a premium. All these factors ... directly militate against the proper functioning of the institution by the restriction of research output and other normal museum activities ...<sup>69</sup>

In a questionnaire on the functions of a museum,<sup>70</sup> this last point is elucidated as follows:

Study material, which forms the basis of all scientific work carried on in the Museum, is all carefully numbered, catalogued and stored according to its nature ... overcrowding has now reached such a state that accessibility and proper supervision is being rendered extremely difficult, not to mention the wastage of valuable time involved and the constant risk of deterioration of material.

This point refers to the cataloguing of scientific specimens,<sup>71</sup> and not to the cataloguing of the history, archaeology and ethnology collections.

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<sup>66</sup> NCHMA, Box 515, File Memoranda dealing with Tvl Museum matters - space, finance, collections etc. etc., Memo on conditions at present existing in Transvaal Museum, 1955.

<sup>67</sup> Transvaal Museum Annual Report, 1954 - 1955, p. 10.

<sup>68</sup> Ibid., 1946 - 1947, p. 7; 1947 - 1948, p. 9, 1948 - 1949, p. 7 and 1958 -1959, p. 1.

<sup>69</sup> Ibid.

<sup>70</sup> NCHMA, Box 515, File Memoranda dealing with Tvl Museum matters - space, finance, collections etc. etc. Functions of a museum questionnaire - Transvaal Museum, 1955, p. 3. There is no indication of the respondent.

<sup>71</sup> Ibid., p. 4.

The stark reality is that until 1953 the display and storage of the anthropological, archaeological and historical collections in the Old Museum was under the supervision of a caretaker, while the professional staff and natural history collections were located at the New Museum. The result was that collections management practices for these collections were at best carried out in a desultory fashion as there was no professional staff on location (except periodically) who were responsible for documentation and conservation. There is no indication of the locality where documentation was carried out, although it can be taken for granted that acquisitioning was done at the New Museum. New donations were probably handed in at both Museum buildings, but where accessioning and marking were done and under what circumstances the catalogues were kept, is unknown. Whether the movement of objects between the two buildings was monitored and how they were transported, is also not known. All in all, insufficient space at the Old and the New Museum, coupled with the fact that the two buildings were located a distance away from each other, certainly had a marked detrimental effect on the anthropological, archaeological and historical collections.

#### Inadequate finances

Another contributing factor to the neglect of the anthropological, archaeological and historical collections was the inadequate financial provision made by the government for the Transvaal Museum, with the result that the Museum had no money to rectify the situation.<sup>72</sup> After Union in 1910, the Transvaal Museum received a grant-in-aid from the Department of the Interior, plus the salaries of the staff, and privileges such as the free printing of the annals, free postage and stationery and a reduction in rail fares. In 1914 the grant was £5 200, but during the First World War the grant was decreased considerably and in addition wartime bonuses had to be paid without remuneration from the government.<sup>73</sup>

By 1949 all the privileges and some salaries were stopped, although the grant was increased in lieu of special circumstances, for example the management of Kruger House, the special appointment of Broom and the addition of the Janse Entomological Collection. By the financial year 1948/49 the expenses had more than doubled in comparison to 1930, but not the grant. In fact the total grant received in 1930 was £8 100 and in 1948/49 it had only

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<sup>72</sup> Ibid., System 1 No 6 TM1/52 - TM1/53, K. Roodt-Coetzee, Die Kultuurhistoriese Museum, Boomstraat, Pretoria, p. 3.

<sup>73</sup> Memorandum on the future policy of the Museum and the necessary expenditure connected with this, in minute book, Transvaal Museum Committee minutes, meeting 20 October 1919.



been increased by £150 to £8 250. The Museum could barely make ends meet by using its reserve fund. A solution that the Board would have to consider was the closing down of some sections.<sup>74</sup>

The dire financial straits in which the Museum found itself, occur like a never-ending refrain in all the annual reports. For example in 1951 the director explained the position as follows:

In spite of repeated representations over the past years, the Government still does not appear to appreciate that an institution, such as the Transvaal Museum, which is constantly growing and expanding, needs far greater financial support than it has been receiving up to now ...

As a direct result of inadequate financial support, follows the shortage of staff, which is now becoming a matter for serious concern ...<sup>75</sup>

FitzSimons also makes it quite clear that the government should be held responsible if they did not provide adequate support for the proper utilisation and display of the wealth of material in the Museum, and refers to “the mass of valuable and unique material” in the Old Museum.<sup>76</sup> Should this not happen, argued FitzSimons, the national heritage would, for the most part, moulder in cellars and storerooms.<sup>77</sup> Nonetheless, at this stage there were six professional officers, all with academic qualifications, one taxidermist and four museum assistants in the natural history departments. But as yet there was only **one part-time temporary assistant** in history, a person who had no qualifications, and there were no such appointments at all in archaeology and ethnology.<sup>78</sup>

Representations were made to the government to increase the grant and to improve conditions, but these appeals met with no success. In 1960 the chairman of the Board asserted that the board members were overcome by dejection as the result of the fact that there was no response to their attempts to improve the existing circumstances.<sup>79</sup> This year

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<sup>74</sup> NCHMA, Box 515, File Memoranda dealing with Tvl Museum matters - space, finance, collections etc. etc. Financial position of the Transvaal Museum, typed copy, p. 2.

<sup>75</sup> Transvaal Museum Annual Report, 1950 - 1951, pp. 7 - 8.

<sup>76</sup> V. FitzSimons, Historical collections of the Transvaal Museum, *Pretoriana*, 1(1), September 1951, p. 9.

<sup>77</sup> Ibid., p. 11.

<sup>78</sup> My bold.

<sup>79</sup> Transvaal Museum Annual Report, 1959 - 1960, p. 1.

was also the first in which the Transvaal Museum had perforce to charge an entrance fee of 1s. for adults in an attempt to alleviate the financial position in some measure.<sup>80</sup> It was only in 1963 that there was some financial relief for the Transvaal Museum with an increase of R5 000 in the grant-in-aid from the government and R1 000 from the City Council of Pretoria. The Museum could also look forward to the implementation of many recommendations by the two Commissions of Enquiry of 1960 - 1961 that were destined to bring about considerable improvement.<sup>81</sup>

Although the lack of adequate space and financial constraints contributed to the low priority given to the management of the anthropological, archaeological and historical collections at the Transvaal Museum, the conviction that the Museum was first and foremost a natural history museum – and not a general museum – and the attitude that natural history research should be given priority, was crucial in the Museum's decision making and was detrimental to the management of these collections.

## **2. THE TRANSVAAL MUSEUM 1953 - 1964**

Despite the fact that the Transvaal Museum had struggled with inadequate resources for many years, Coetzee nevertheless blamed the government for not appointing a staff member to manage the history division at the Old Museum.<sup>82</sup> FitzSimons also could not understand the indifference of the Government to the needs of the Museum.<sup>83</sup> In 1948 the future of history museums and history sections in museums came under the scrutiny of a government Commission of Enquiry on state-aided institutions. This Commission recommended that the annual grant for the Transvaal Museum should be adapted to enable the Museum to implement its true functions, and also that a post for a professional officer in history be created and an appointment made as soon as possible.<sup>84</sup> This eventually resulted in the appointment of a qualified curator for the history collection in 1953. Even after her appointment Coetzee asserted that the staff were not to be blamed for the poor conditions;

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<sup>80</sup> Ibid., p. 6.

<sup>81</sup> Ibid., 1962 - 1963, p. 5.

<sup>82</sup> NCHMA, System 1 No 6 TM1/52 - TM1/53, letter Coetzee to F.O. Dentz, dd 4 December 1953.

<sup>83</sup> Transvaal Museum Annual Report, 1948 - 1949, p.

<sup>84</sup> Ibid., *Verslag van die Kommissie van Ondersoek na sekere staatsondersteunde inrigtings*, p. 175.

instead it was people or departments “wat die historiese sy van ons Volkslewe so afskeep” [who neglect the historical aspect of the life of our people].<sup>85</sup> The two words “ons Volkslewe” [the life of our people] refer to the cultural wealth of the Afrikaner people, and it was this aspect of history that, for the next decade, would imbue the activities, including collections management practices, in the history and later the cultural history division.

The recommendation of the Commission was not the only reason for the change in attitude by the director and the Board of the Transvaal Museum. It may also be attributed in some measure to the upsurge in national pride and awareness of their heritage shown by the Afrikaners. This was in particular linked to the centenary of the Great Trek in 1938 and the presentation of many precious heirlooms to the wagons that took part in the symbolic ox wagon trek. In Pretoria, the neglect of important objects in the Old Museum which had historical and cultural historical worth – the heritage of the Staatsmuseum in fact – had already been noted and brought to the attention of cultural bodies. They in their turn brought pressure to bear on the Transvaal Museum and also testified at the Commission.

Another contributing factor, which played no small role in alerting the Board to the possibilities of the Old Museum and its collections, was the appointment of an assistant to deal with the history division. His activities resulted in the discovery of a large amount of most interesting historical material in the storerooms,<sup>86</sup> probably previously unknown. This new awareness came at a propitious time because the Transvaal Museum, as the only Museum in Pretoria with a history division, also became involved in the establishment of a Voortrekker Museum in Pretoria.<sup>87</sup> By 1949 the creation of this museum was imminent as even more enthusiasm was engendered among Afrikaners by the inauguration of the Voortrekker Monument, and in particular by the staging of an exhibition of some of the objects from the Old Museum at the Voortrekker Monument. A display, now enlarged, was also set up at the Old Museum. These two exhibitions awakened great interest and strong representations were made to the Board to give serious attention to the development of its

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<sup>85</sup> Ibid., System 1 No 12 TM1/59, letters Coetzee to J.C. Bergh, dd 12 November 1959 and System 1 No 15 TM1/60, Coetzee to M. Roux, dd 16 March 1960.

<sup>86</sup> Transvaal Museum Annual Report, 1948 - 1949, p. 4.

<sup>87</sup> Ibid., 1953 - 1954, departmental report for division of history, p. 39.

history division.<sup>88</sup> In 1953 a sub-committee on which the Transvaal Museum had a seat was formed to explore the possibilities of establishing a museum at the Voortrekker Monument.<sup>89</sup> The next event which stimulated enthusiasm for the past was the Van Riebeeck Festival. The display in Pretoria, in which the Transvaal Museum – and the history collection – played a big role, was another incentive. There was also a change in the Board and the hard core of natural history scientists were supplemented to some extent by historians.

Additional staff appointed also reflect the changed circumstances of the history division. The first assistant for history was appointed at the end of 1954, to deal in particular with cataloguing, and a second assistant was added in August 1955. The greatest change in staff after the appointment of Coetzee was that the need for a restorer was recognized and he was appointed on 1 January 1957. Although the staff had thus increased considerably since 1953, Coetzee still regarded the shortage of skilled staff as the greatest obstacle to the progress of the cultural history division. This was very apparent as it became more and more independent, and the administrative duties of the professional officer increased.<sup>90</sup> The fact was that the activities in the cultural history division had increased to such an extent, that the staff, although it had increased from one person in 1953 to six in 1960, could not cope with the workload. Even when staff time was used more than effectively, Coetzee and her colleagues often had to work after hours. To the detriment of the quality of work, there was also a turnover in staff, the very reason being that there were not enough people to cope with the increasing workload under difficult conditions.<sup>91</sup>

The changed status of the human sciences division and its place in a natural history museum is reflected clearly in the annual reports. Three separate annual reports for the divisions of history, archaeology and ethnology and numismatics and philately for the year 1952 - 1953 were still being written by the director. In the next year Coetzee handled two divisions, those of history and archaeology and ethnology, and the director only dealt with

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<sup>88</sup> NCHMA, Kotie Roodt-Coetzee Archives, file Memo's 1965 - Speech by the Minister of Education, Arts and Science, 20 October 1967, p. 2.

<sup>89</sup> Transvaal Museum Annual Report, 1953 - 1954, departmental report for division of history, p. 39.

<sup>90</sup> Ibid., 1957 - 1958, departmental report for cultural history division, p. 34.

<sup>91</sup> Ibid., departmental report for cultural history division, p. 30.

numismatics and philately. For the first time this pattern was changed when Versfeld assumed responsibility for the numismatics and philately annual report for 1958 - 1959. For the year 1959 - 1960 another change is reflected namely the report for ethnology and archaeology was written by the professional officer-in-charge. From the year 1961 - 1962 the departmental reports were divided into two sections: the natural sciences section and the cultural history division. In the annual report of 1963 - 1964 the staff list also reflects this division.

### **Anthropological and archaeological collections**

As professional officer for the division of history, Coetzee readily assumed responsibility for the anthropology and archaeology divisions in 1953. For the next five years she dealt with enquiries, new acquisitions, storage and whenever possible, also with the displays. This was a problem as the space available for the ethnology and archaeology displays was very limited, and only small changes could be effected and the objects re-arranged.<sup>92</sup> Although the introduction of dioramas was envisaged, this was not accomplished.<sup>93</sup>

She also realized that staff with specialized training were needed to develop the collections, as she herself and other staff could only give limited attention to this division.<sup>94</sup> Representations to the government to allocate a post of ethnologist met with no success.<sup>95</sup> Coetzee assessed the situation in the archaeology and ethnology department at the time as follows:

These two sections are still without the guidance of a trained official and the work has had to be performed by the staff of the section for Cultural History. In order to expand our collections the immediate appointment of a qualified Ethnologist is necessary, as the collection of material and work on research has, in the course of years, been neglected to such an extent that there is enough work and a definite need for a team of workers in both these sections.<sup>96</sup>

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<sup>92</sup> Ibid., 1953 - 1954, departmental report for archaeology and ethnology, p. 39, 1954 - 1955, p. 31 and 1957 - 1958, p. 35.

<sup>93</sup> Ibid., 1955 - 1956, departmental report for archaeology and ethnology, p. 30.

<sup>94</sup> Ibid., departmental report for cultural history, p. 33 and 1957 - 1958, departmental report for cultural history division, p. 34.

<sup>95</sup> Ibid., 1956 - 1957, departmental report for cultural history, p. 33.

<sup>96</sup> Ibid., 1957 - 1958, departmental report for cultural history division, p. 34.

More than five years after Coetzee's appointment, the post of a professional officer was filled in the ethnology division on 1 January 1959, and she could devote her time to its needs. At this stage, then, the situation was assessed as follows:

It is impossible for an outsider to realize the extent of the backlog work, the hiatus in the collections and the confusion caused by caretakers who tried to register donations in the past, that exist. The seriousness of the situation is very great and the only way to assure progress is by the service of at least three additional assistants ... There should be at least one professional officer for the Bantu groups and one professional post for the Coloureds, as well as assistants to each.<sup>97</sup>

The fact that additional staff was urgently needed by these divisions, were repeated again and again.<sup>98</sup> The appointment of an assistant improved the handling of administrative matters, but the backlog could still not be addressed and the accumulation of unprepared material became problematical.

As a result of the fact that the anthropology curator also had to work in the cultural history division at the Old Museum, a report on the condition of the archaeology and anthropology divisions was delayed. The report, eventually probably prepared in May 1960, makes it clear that the situation was far from satisfactory with regard to all the aspects of collections management in the anthropology and archaeology divisions. As far as storage was concerned, the assessment was short: "In die pakkaste heers chaos" [There is chaos in the storage cupboards]. A short history of the various catalogues that were in use and had contributed to the confusion in documentation, is given and the existing card catalogue is curtly described as "worthless". At this stage there still were many objects without numbers or labels and some were broken or in a bad condition. Exhibits both in the exhibition rooms and display cabinets were described as uninteresting, ill-assorted, unnatural and colourless.<sup>99</sup> There were, nevertheless, some redeeming features: in this report the lacunae in the ethnology collection were identified and as a result a campaign was launched to acquire ethnology material. The cataloguing of new acquisitions was kept up to date.<sup>100</sup>

Since his appointment at the beginning of 1961, the ethnologist, Du Toit, devoted all his

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<sup>97</sup> Ibid., 1959 - 1960, departmental report for ethnology and archaeology, pp. 38 - 39.

<sup>98</sup> Ibid., and 1960 - 1961, p. 36.

<sup>99</sup> NCHMA, File ET1/60 Etnologiese Afdeling, Konsepverslag: Toestand in Museum, p. 2, n. d.

<sup>100</sup> Ibid., pp. 3 and 5.

time and energy to anthropology. New collections management practices in the ethnology division were initiated. With regard to documentation the existing catalogue was retyped on loose-leafed pages and a start was made with the systematic photographing of the objects for the card catalogue. Attention was paid to the restoration of broken objects and material was sorted and re-arranged (figure 67 and 68).<sup>101</sup> New displays were also initiated and an exhibition on the living pattern of the Northern Sotho was staged.<sup>102</sup> Field work and research was undertaken and the collection supplemented by judicious collecting.<sup>103</sup> Despite many years of inertia, interspersed by bouts of activity, the ethnology division had at long last come into its own and in the next period the high standards set by Beukes and Du Toit were maintained.<sup>104</sup> The archaeology division would remain on the periphery of collections management activities until a post was created by the National Cultural History and Open-Air Museum for an archaeologist in 1966.<sup>105</sup>



**Figure 67**

Broken clay pots, that had been reconstructed, on display at the Old Museum in 1961  
(D. Faraday, Mapungubwe bewaar sy geheim, *South African Panorama*, October 1961, p. 41)

<sup>101</sup> Transvaal Museum Annual Report, 1960 - 61, departmental report for division of ethnology and archaeology, pp. 35 - 36.

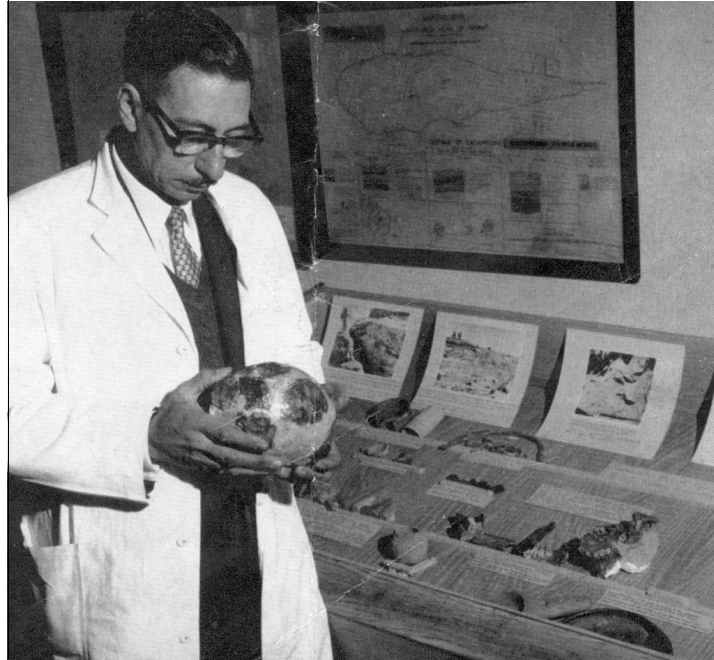
<sup>102</sup> Ibid., 1963 - 1964, departmental report for ethnology and archaeology, p. 33.

<sup>103</sup> C.S. van der Waal, "Gesiedenis van die Volkekunde-Afdeling van die Nasko-Museum, Pretoria 1893 - 1977" (unpublished article), p. 4.

<sup>104</sup> Ibid.

<sup>105</sup> Letter director of the National Cultural History and Open-Air Museum to A.M.E. Janse van Rensburg, dd 1 December 1966, received from A.M.E. Judson.





**Figure 68**

The professional officer for ethnology, A.P. du Toit, at an ethnology display in the Old Museum  
(D. Faraday, *Mapungubwe bewaar sy geheim*, *South African Panorama*, October 1961, p. 41)

### **Cultural history collection**

Dynamic and continuous change took place in the history division during the period 1953 to 1964. From its status as a negligible part of the Transvaal Museum the history division was regenerated into a vital, significant, unprecedented and new component of the Museum. The name of the division was not only changed from history to cultural history, but the vision of a cultural history museum, portraying the lifestyle of people by using objects that were regarded as cultural documents, was implemented by means of standardized collections management practices within the Museum and the new exhibitions that could be viewed by the public.

In these formative years, Coetzee, sometimes by trial and error, blazed the way for the establishment of the National Cultural History and Open-Air Museum. For the first time, the management of the history collection, or the cultural history collection as it was later called, was

second to none. The work in the division was the responsibility of a trained cultural historian, in the person of Coetzee, who worked full time in this division and was responsible for its rejuvenation. The changes wrought can be described as follows:

Furthermore with the upsurge in interest in our cultural history among the public in general, assisted in no small measure by the activities of the present staff, material is pouring in at an ever increasing tempo and the position has now been reached when space for its safekeeping, let alone display, is no longer available; in fact the position is now so bad that a large section of the collections is being exhibited in the New Museum building, (where it is completely out of place among exhibits of natural history), and storage space had to be sought outside the confines of the Museum ...<sup>106</sup>

This tribute deals with two aspects of the contribution engineered by Coetzee, namely the growth of the collection and the displays.

### **Displays**

In the exhibition Coetzee created at the Voortrekker Monument in 1949 (figure 6a) mixed objects were placed together in an artistic manner. The period rooms which featured so richly in Coetzee's displays, showed a marked development from this kind of display. They were also a far cry from the stereotype wall cases and freestanding cases (figure 69) normally used in museum exhibitions. The Africana Museum in Johannesburg, for example, used such cases (figure 70) and Coetzee, too, did not hesitate to use these cases if she felt they were needed. In the Old Museum oblong free standing cases were used to display the Eastern ceramics collection, and upright wall units to exhibit period costumes and accessories. In the previous period, multi-leaf pedestal cases had traditionally been used for the display of the Elliott photographs and the Botha honorary addresses.<sup>107</sup>

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<sup>106</sup> NCHMA, System 2 No 38 NKO(1) 1955 - 1970, Memorandum re proposed new museum of cultural history, p. 2.

<sup>107</sup> Transvaal Museum Annual Report, 1946 - 1947, pp. 3 - 4.

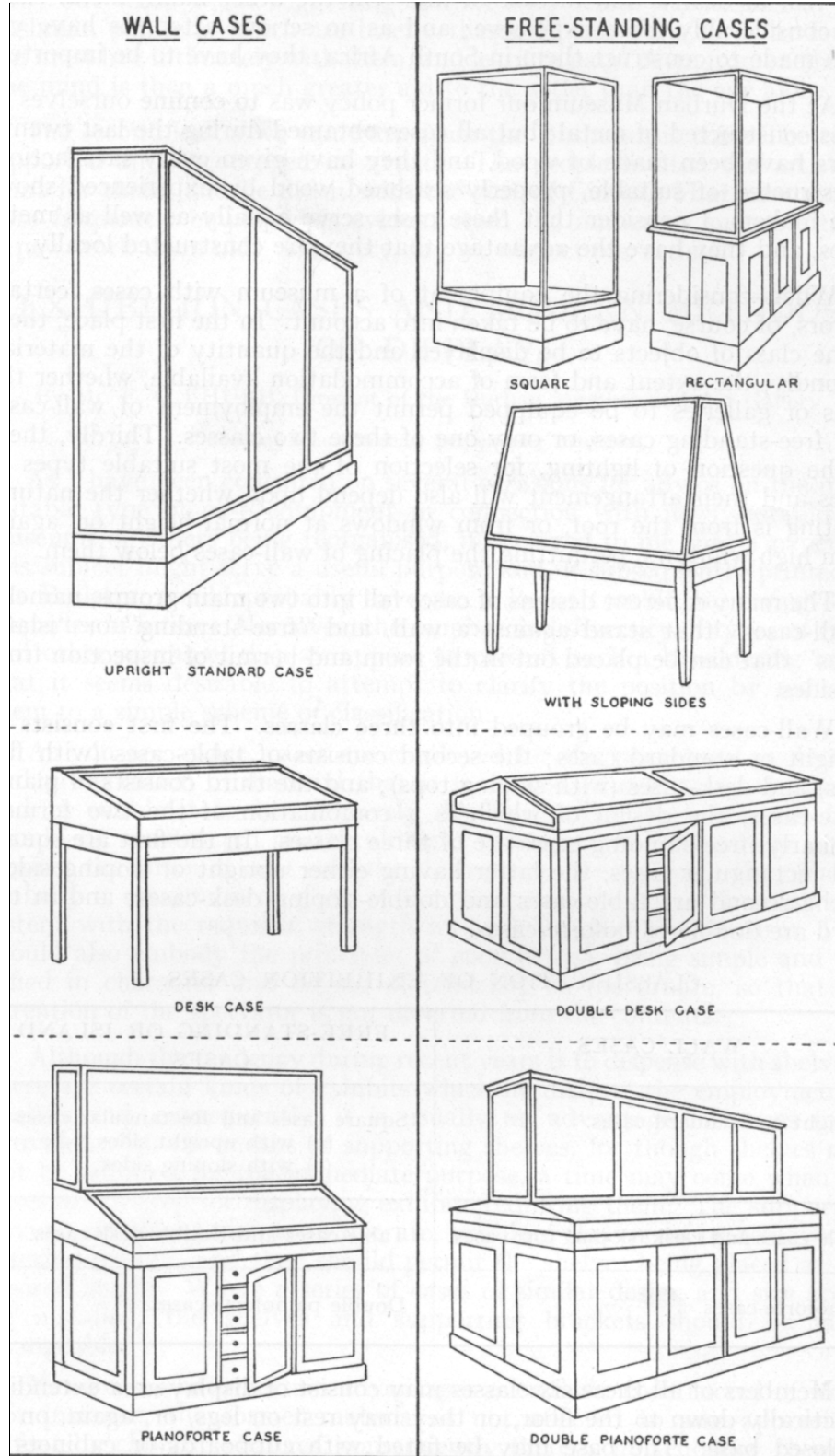
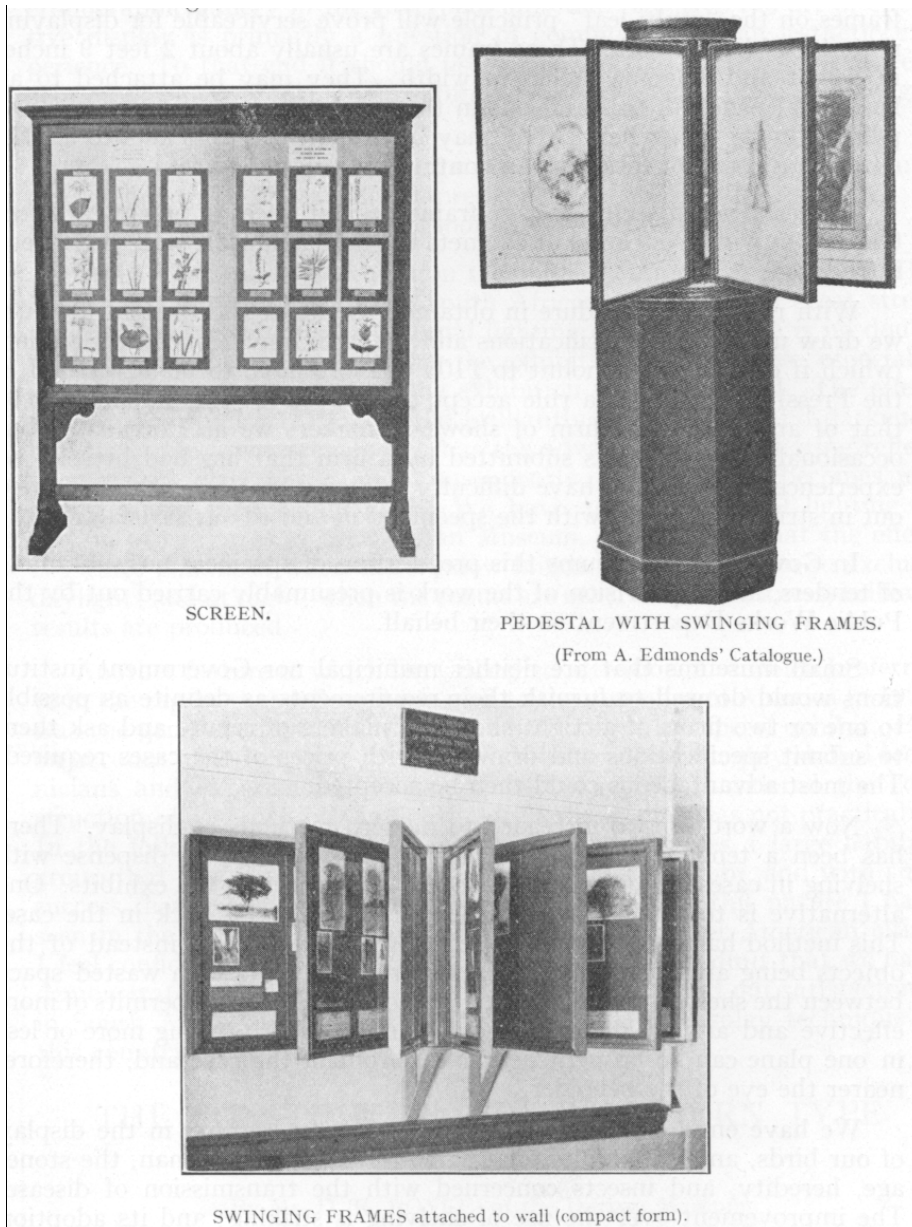


Figure 69a



**Figure 69b**

Typical display cases available for museum use  
(*SAMAB*, 2(12), March 1942, pp. 306 - 307)





**Figure 70**

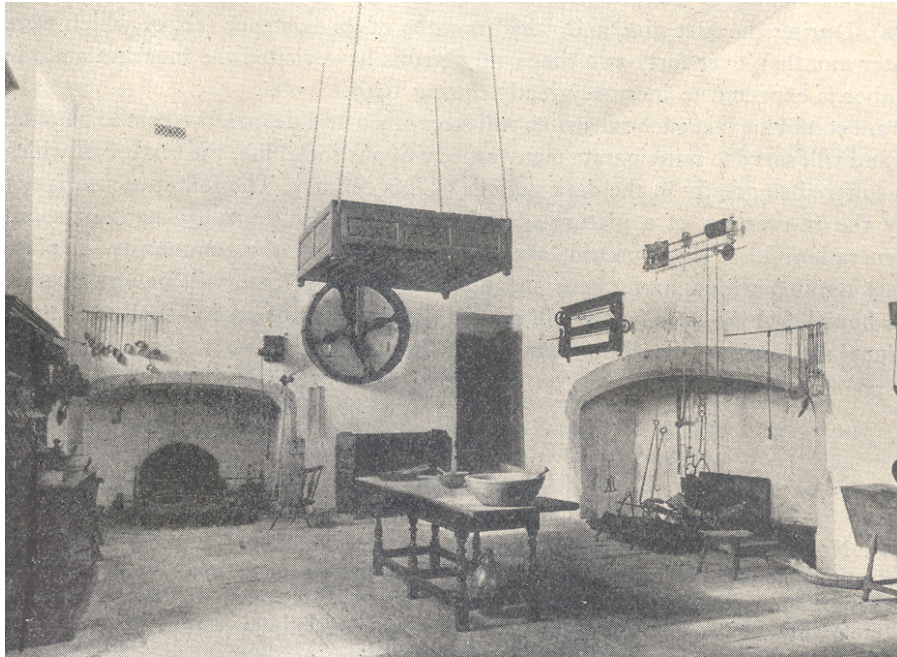
Desk cases and swinging frames in use at the Africana Museum, Johannesburg

(A.H. Smith, *Treasures of the Africana Museum*, p. 11)

Visitors to natural history museums were accustomed to the so-called habitat-group type of exhibit in which animals are represented in their natural surroundings. This effect may have been the stimulus for Coetzee to do the same for people and for cultural history objects that belong together – and she did so with great success. Coetzee may also have been influenced by photographs of rooms furnished to represent a lifestyle in detail, particularly in European folk museums (figures 71 and 72 ).<sup>108</sup> She devised period rooms, either in “real” rooms where the objects were protected from visitors by a glass front, or as open displays, where there was only a rope barrier between the visitor and the display. A period room gives the visitor a glimpse of the lifestyle in days gone by (figure 73), whereas one may look at only one object at a time in a more conventional display where different objects are put haphazardly together, such as the display of several tables and chairs, armoires and cupboards and a bed in the Africana Museum (figure 74).

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<sup>108</sup> See for example, the photographs of the Welsh Folk Museum in I.C. Peate, The Folk Museum, *Journal of the Royal Society of Arts*, XCVII (4803), 9 September 1949, pp. 800 - 803.



**Figure 71**

The kitchen at St Fagans Castle, Welsh Folk Museum, Cardiff, 1949  
(I.C. Peate, *The Folk Museum*, *Journal of the Royal Society of Arts*, XCVII (4803),  
9 September 1949, p. 803)



**Figure 72**

A Voortrekker kitchen with open hearth, cow dung floor strengthened with peach stones and a reed ceiling, erected in the Voortrekker Monument Museum

(Collection: National Cultural History Museum Christmas card (brochure), Volkskas, 1972)





**Figure 73**

Period room on display at the Old Museum, showing furniture, ceramics, copperware, silver key plates and handles in context

(Collection: National Cultural History Museum Christmas card (brochure), Volkskas, 1972)



**Figure 74**

Furniture, glassware and silver displayed separately at the Africana Museum, Johannesburg  
(A.H. Smith, *Treasures of the Africana Museum*, p. 10)





**Figure 75**

Camping scene with ox wagon, displayed  
for the first time for the Pretoria centenary, 1955

(Collection: National Cultural History Museum HKF 4823)



**Figure 76**

Outspan scene at the Voortrekker Monument Museum,  
showing ox wagons as an integral part of the display

(*Museum Memo*, 6(3), November 1978, p. 7)



**Figure 77**

Coach at the Africana Museum, Johannesburg,  
standing in isolation, next to a desk display case and swinging frames

(*SESA*, vol. 1, p. 58)

An object in its natural setting has more appeal than an object in isolation. For example, in the first ox wagon scene, devised by Coetzee for the Pretoria centenary in 1955 and the ox wagon at the outspan scene at the Voortrekker Monument Museum (figures 75 and 76), natural elements are combined with people and objects, to provide a realistic display. A scene set in this way appeals to the museum visitor through its pictorial representation of life. On the other hand, an object exhibited without context, such as the display of the coach in the Africana Museum (figure 77), would not give the visitor the same insight in the contemporary lifestyle.

The experience that the museum visitors enjoyed when confronted by the new displays, in particular those at the Old Museum and the Voortrekker Monument, changed the image of museums for many people. Coetzee's contribution here should be recognized: not only did she devise these designs, but she also planned and assembled the objects in accordance with a set of accepted rules, and she thus raised the standard of displaying cultural history material.

### Growth of the collection

To achieve her goals Coetzee had to ascertain which objects were lacking in the history collection of the Transvaal Museum. The expansion of the cultural history collection was carefully planned and executed. A collections policy was devised and Coetzee set out clear principles for collecting. Her greatest gift to cultural history museums lies in her new perception of objects and the way in which this perception is reflected in her collections management activities. She regarded an object as a document of the past, a testimony to the lifestyle, work and even to the thoughts of the people who made the object.<sup>109</sup> Coetzee succeeded in persuading the staff working under her, the other staff at the Museum, the board members and the public in general to accept this credo, and even many years after she had left the Museum, a former staff member still testified:

Die één ding wat ek by Kotie Roodt-Coetzee geleer het, was dat dit in die museum nooit net om die voorwerp en die versamelstuk mag gaan nie. Daardie versamelstuk, hoe kosbaar-uniek of eenvoudig-algemeen dit ook mag wees, het te doen met die mens. Iemand het dit gemaak, gebruik, waardeur en 'n waarde daaraan geheg. Dit vertel 'n geskiedenis van mense wat in hulle eie tyd sin wou gee aan hulle eie lewensomstandighede en van 'n worsteling om met skeppende arbeid hulle lewensruimte te veredel of moontlik net daarin te oorleef.<sup>110</sup>

In the context of the South African museum scene, historical or cultural historical objects were traditionally regarded as “specimens,” thereby placing man-made history or cultural history objects on the same unemotional level as natural history specimens. Even Beukes talked about “a fair number of interesting specimens pertaining to Bantu life”.<sup>111</sup> This may well have been a remnant of the traditional British museum system which had been prevalent in South Africa, but Davison argues that the object is only diminished to become a specimen after it has been catalogued, because this process reduces the meaning of the object.<sup>112</sup> Other words that have been used frequently are “relics” and “curios” or accessions or acquisitions,

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<sup>109</sup> NCHMA, System 1 No 18 TM1/6, K. Roodt-Coetzee, *Uitstalling van Kaapse Silwer en meubels*, radio talk, p. 2.

<sup>110</sup> P. de Beer, Die merkwaardige Mev Kotie Roodt-Coetzee, *Museum Memo*, 22(1), March 1994, p. 2. [The one thing that Kotie Roodt-Coetzee taught me was that the object or museum piece is not primarily the mainstay of a museum. That piece, whether it is valuable and unique, or simple and commonplace, deals with a person. Somebody made, used, and valued it. It tells the history of people who in their life and times wanted to make sense of their unique circumstances, of their struggle to enrich their living space with creative labour, or perhaps just to survive. (Translated from the Afrikaans.)]

<sup>111</sup> Transvaal Museum Annual Report, 1935 - 1936, departmental report for ethnology, p. 1.

<sup>112</sup> P. Davison, *Material culture, context and meaning*, p. 123.

or even worse, “curiosities”. These words all convey the impression that a historical or cultural historical object has been regarded as a keepsake, valued and kept in the museum solely for its rarity or interesting association with a famous person or outstanding event, or even for its strangeness or unusual qualities.

The term “Africana” was also widely used. According to Bradlow this “term is applied to books, pictures, printed matter, objets d’art and furniture pertaining to Africa, and in South Africa, particularly to Southern Africa ... The primary requisite of any object of Africana is that it must have some association with Southern Africa ...”<sup>113</sup> The definition of the term Africana as used by the Africana Museum, corresponds in the main with Bradlow’s: “the kind of Africana which is suitable for museums, especially historic pictures, furniture and crafts, coins and medals, banknotes and all those miscellaneous items which can be classed as historic relics”.<sup>114</sup>

Yet another term that was used (also by Coetzee in the very beginning of her career) was “antique”. The Historical Monuments Commission used the word to refer to moveable objects of aesthetic, historical, archaeological or scientific value of more than 100 years old. This meaning did not appeal to the Africana Museum, as many objects worth preserving were less than a 100 years old. Of more importance to the Africana Museum were two other aspects, namely the intrinsic and the record value of the objects, the latter referring to the broad educative usefulness of awakening interest in and understanding of South Africa’s past.<sup>115</sup>

In all these terms the very crux of the object had still been overlooked, the fact that every object reflects the creative spirit behind its existence. It is this aspect that Coetzee highlights by giving an entirely new meaning to a historical or cultural object, one that goes beyond the ordinariness of the above terms. This is a far cry from the opinion held by the Africana Museum in Johannesburg that the object in itself was of prime significance. An object was, according to Coetzee, a document – in modern museological parlance, a message-bearing

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<sup>113</sup> F.R. Bradlow, *Africana Books & Pictures. A selection of published papers*, p. 3.

<sup>114</sup> H.G. Oliver, The importance of preserving and recording Africana, *SAMAB*, 10(2), September 1941, p. 241.

<sup>115</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 242.

entity<sup>116</sup> or a data carrier<sup>117</sup> – from which could be read the life and style of the maker or user of the object. The object in itself need not be rare or pretty or unusual, or associated with an important individual or event, but it must be imbued with the spirit of the maker or user and the times in which he or she lived.

Collecting *per se*, said Coetzee, was not the final aim; she wanted to explain the spirit of the past that pervaded the objects to her own people and to others. Special efforts had to be made, through the radio and press to collect objects lacking in the collection.<sup>118</sup> Although there was still no comprehensive collections policy in use at the Transvaal Museum for its anthropological, archaeological and historical collections, the basic tenets adhered to by Coetzee were clearly reflected in the systematic way in which she enlarged the cultural history collection, either by donation, purchase or loan.

One of the most important reasons for Coetzee's success was the effort she made to meet people on a personal level. Her conviction was that she was not working for personal gain, but for a cause, and this persuaded them to respond to her request for objects. She made personal contact with people who visited the Old Museum in search of historical information or to pursue their studies.<sup>119</sup> Many of the letters she wrote to ask for donations and information – which she called “my nasionale bedelary” [my national begging campaign]<sup>120</sup> – were conducted in a free-and-easy manner that reflected the fact that she had indeed made friends with the people concerned. She would often add personal details, asking for example, after the person's health, or their children.<sup>121</sup> She also made a special effort, either by letter or personal contact, to get to know collectors, connoisseurs, curators, antique dealers and even the bureaucracy, hoping that they could in some way or another aid her in her work.

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<sup>116</sup> See S. Pearce, Objects as meaning; or narrating the past, in S. Pearce (ed.), *Objects of knowledge*, p. 127.

<sup>117</sup> See P. van Mensch, Methodological museology: or, towards a theory of museum practice, in S. Pearce (ed.), *Objects of knowledge*, p. 146.

<sup>118</sup> Transvaal Museum Annual Report, 1953 - 1954, departmental report for division of history, p. 35.

<sup>119</sup> Ibid., p. 34 and 1957 - 1958, departmental report for cultural history division, p. 36.

<sup>120</sup> NCHMA, System 1 No 18 TM1/62, letter Coetzee to D. Malan, dd 26 September 1962.

<sup>121</sup> Ibid., System 1 No 11 TM1/56, letters Coetzee to A. Grabe, dd 28 December 1956 and System 1 No 12 TM1/57, to L. Pretorius, dd 3 January 1957.



She also followed the traditional way of collecting material for the Transvaal Museum: field trips. Collecting began to take place on a continuous basis as a spirit of preservation was awakened in the citizens of Pretoria,<sup>122</sup> and which later spread throughout the country. By 1964 there were still parts of the Cape Province that had not been visited, but Coetzee claimed it was becoming more and more difficult to acquire objects for the Museum because many people were assembling private collections and purchase prices for such objects were rising.<sup>123</sup> This may have been, in part, the result of Coetzee's endeavours to inspire country-wide interest in cultural history objects.

One of the most important ways in which objects needed at the Old Museum were publicized were the many public lectures and talks that were presented by Coetzee on every aspect of the collection, preservation and study of objects.<sup>124</sup> She addressed women's associations, cultural boards and associations, students and school children, teachers' associations, historical and art societies and town councils.<sup>125</sup> In one year she delivered no less than 11 papers to various audiences in Pretoria and Johannesburg, but also in towns like Koffiefontein and Rustenburg.<sup>126</sup> For Coetzee, this was not a new venture: she had been interested in the preservation of the cultural heritage of South Africa, and specifically that of the Afrikaners, for many years. She received many invitations to address organizations and student bodies during and after the Voortrekker Centenary celebrations in 1938 and was also involved in organizing old fashioned wedding ceremonies and giving advice on period clothes.<sup>127</sup>

Except for the occasional newspaper article that appeared, Coetzee's high profile and passionate promotion, in such a variety of ways, of the importance of the history collection and the deficiencies in the Museum collection was a completely new way of persuading

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<sup>122</sup> T. Venter, Huldeblyk aan Mev Kotie Roodt-Coetzee, *Museum Memo* 22(1), March 1994, p. 4.

<sup>123</sup> Cultural History Committee agenda, meeting 7 February 1964.

<sup>124</sup> See for example, Transvaal Museum Annual Report, 1953 - 1954, departmental report for division of history, p. 36.

<sup>125</sup> Ibid., 1954 - 1955, departmental report for history, p. 33 and 1956 - 1957, departmental report for cultural history, p. 34.

<sup>126</sup> Ibid., 1956 - 1957, departmental report for cultural history, p. 34.

<sup>127</sup> See NCHMA, Kotie Roodt-Coetzee Archives, correspondence in files Persoonlik 1 and Voortrekker-kultuur 1938.

people to part with heirlooms and other treasured objects. The growth of the history collection is at the heart of the changes she wrought. The fact that the historical collection in particular continued to grow, is an accolade to Coetzee's endeavours and she received many expressions of thanks from the public. The collections, and the accompanying documentation, that she amassed for posterity are one of the most positive and praiseworthy aspects of her collections management style and her expertise was also reflected in her displays.

Her influence is also apparent in the collections management practices she introduced, including classification, cataloguing, marking and information retrieval. These were executed with single-mindedness and reflect the care and attention given to detail. The new procedure for classifying and cataloguing the objects was comprehensive. For the first time control over the location of objects was in place by annotating the catalogues with respect to storage or display locations. The growth of the collection exceeded all expectations, and the clearance of incoming material could barely be sustained. With the establishment of the National Cultural History and Open-Air Museum forthcoming, Coetzee anticipated that the staff would have to be increased considerably to keep abreast of the continuous influx of material.<sup>128</sup>

Coetzee did not start a new series of catalogues to incorporate her own particular style. Instead she used the existing catalogues in a new manner by classifying each object and by recording these particulars in the catalogue. The catalogues bear ample witness to her curatorial expertise, as she could also account for the collection by using the catalogues. She also designed and implemented a new information retrieval system in the form of a card catalogue for the history division. The standard of maintenance of the cataloguing was on a high level, because Coetzee did much of the work herself, or had the work done under her supervision.

The new procedure was a comprehensive one and dealt with the immediate entry of the objects in the documentation system and into the collection. The daily routine, as Coetzee called it, consisted of seeking out antiques, cataloguing, numbering and setting out these

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<sup>128</sup> Transvaal Museum Annual Report, 1963 - 1964, annual report from the acting director, Old Museum, p. 11.



items on display.<sup>129</sup> The result, unfortunately, was that there was no time to work on the backlog of cataloguing.<sup>130</sup> Many objects, either without accession numbers or not yet accessioned, were unearthed and had to be documented. Although work on the backlog did progress slowly,<sup>131</sup> by 1959 it was reported that “the arrears are so overwhelming that the most diligent efforts of the staff seem to have little visible effect in making up the leeway”.<sup>132</sup> The pressure of the backlog remained throughout this period, as uncatalogued objects kept cropping up. Nonetheless vigorous attempts were made to establish a reliable and up-to-date cataloguing and information retrieval system. This is one of Coetzee’s most commendable documentation activities, particularly if it is taken into consideration that she established a card index system of at least 16 712 entries in ten years (see table 6).

Coetzee was also aware of the importance of preserving the collections in a correct and professional manner. The standard of maintenance of the objects was high as objects were sorted and then arranged in an orderly manner in storage. She also put into practice “a more scientific method of packing”<sup>133</sup> and where possible, conservation measures were taken for the objects on display. Another landmark reached in collections management practices, was the introduction of a conservation section. Historical material was restored in the Museum itself after the appointment of the first restorer, but objects outside his field of expertise were also contracted out and in this way satisfactory progress was reported in the field of restoration.<sup>134</sup> At a later stage an assistant was appointed, who, under Coetzee’s tuition, became an expert in textile preservation and the manufacture of replicas. Coetzee’s conservation knowledge was also enhanced by two overseas visits.

### **Training**

Although there was still no training in museology available, Coetzee regarded in-house training as essential and the work on the card catalogue in particular could not be placed in

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<sup>129</sup> Ibid., 1954 - 1955, departmental report for history, p. 32.

<sup>130</sup> Ibid.

<sup>131</sup> Ibid., 1956 - 1957, departmental report for cultural history, p. 36.

<sup>132</sup> Ibid., 1958 - 1959, departmental report for cultural history division, p. 38.

<sup>133</sup> Ibid., 1954 - 1955, departmental report for Africana division at Old Museum, p. 32.

<sup>134</sup> Ibid., 1957 - 1958, departmental report for cultural history division, p. 37.

the hands of an untrained person.<sup>135</sup> She gave instruction to the professional staff and the assistants on a continuous basis, but, says a former staff member, more important than this professional training was the moulding influence she had on them and the way she instilled an affinity for their own cultural goods.<sup>136</sup>

As the need grew for cultural history museums throughout the country, Coetzee unceasingly gave advice at both provincial and local levels on the establishment, organization and requirements for local cultural history museums.<sup>137</sup> Either by letter or lecture, the collections management principles that she underwrote were spread country-wide. She stressed the importance of the classification and cataloguing of the objects according to factual information rather than hearsay or stories.<sup>138</sup> The eventual establishment of a post-graduate diploma course in museology at the University of Pretoria in 1976 can be ascribed to Coetzee's unstinting efforts and convincing argument that there was a dire need for the training of museologists.<sup>139</sup> In the training courses offered on documentation, collections, collections policy and collecting, conservation and exhibitions, basic collections management principles featured strongly.

### **Factors that influenced Kotie Roodt-Coetzee**

Many factors influenced the mind set of this prime mover in the history division, many of them dating back to years before Coetzee's appointment at the Transvaal Museum. She regarded herself as an Afrikaner.<sup>140</sup> This was to a great extent the result of her upbringing, which was the most decisive factor in her life. She was born in the district of Lichtenburg, in the Transvaal, but grew up in the vicinity of Wolmaransstad. The family later moved to the district of Bronkhorstspuit, where they lived on the historical farm Nooitgedacht. Her mother, a teacher in the ZAR, influenced her to become a nationalist. Her father was a respected figure in both church and political circles. From him she learnt many things about

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<sup>135</sup> Ibid., 1957 - 1958, departmental report for cultural history division, p. 38.

<sup>136</sup> O.J.O. Ferreira, Kotie Roodt-Coetzee, kulturele mentor en voog van vele, *Museum Memo*, 22(1), March 1994, p. 3.

<sup>137</sup> Transvaal Museum Annual Report, 1960 - 1961, departmental report for cultural history, p. 32.

<sup>138</sup> See for example, NCHMA, System 1 No 14 TM1/59, letter Coetzee to C.J. Joubert, dd 25 November 1959.

<sup>139</sup> Ibid., Kotie Roodt Coetzee Archives, file Memorandums. Memorandum oor die Opleiding van vakkundige personeel vir kultuurmuseums, n.d.

<sup>140</sup> A. Gay, Africana collection, *South African Country Life*, no. 21, September 1996, p. 37.

the vicissitudes of the Boer pioneers and a love for their material culture, how they built houses, made furniture and cured hides.<sup>141</sup>

As a student at the University of Pretoria, Coetzee studied cultural history in the new department of Afrikaans Art and Culture that was established in 1931. The head of the department was Prof. M.L. du Toit, an inspired and gifted teacher. Under his guidance a cultural and art society with the name *Castalides-kunsvereniging* was established to give its members insight in the beauty of the Afrikaans culture, to promote art and to assemble a collection of Afrikaans cultural objects.<sup>142</sup> Whether this last aim was ever realized, is unclear, but as chairperson of the society, Coetzee had already developed a close relationship with cultural history objects. As first year student she had to write a paper on the Boer prisoners of war. At the Old Museum she worked with “’n rommelkis met ongeïdentifiseerde, ongedokumenteerde en ongenommerde voorwerpe uit die verskillende kampe” [a chest filled with oddments, unidentified, undocumented and unaccessioned objects from various camps]. She describes this experience as follows:

Saam met hierdie eerste kennismaking met ‘n kultuurmuseum groei die besef van die noodsaaklikheid van stoflike voorwerpe by die teoretiese studie van kultuurgeskiedenis en die vraag ontstaan: Hoe beskryf ‘n mens sulke voorwerpe?<sup>143</sup>

Under the auspices of the Department of Afrikaans Art and Culture students decided to publish a new magazine, *Castalia*, with a view “om ons eie die vergetelheid te ontruk en aan ons voor te hou” [to save what is ours from oblivion and hold them close to our hearts].<sup>144</sup> Two articles appeared in this first issue, the one entitled *Die krygsgevangenes as ‘n kultuurgroep*, written by Kotie Roodt in conjunction with P.C. Coetzee. The other article was *Sosiale basis van Kuns*, and was also by Kotie Roodt.<sup>145</sup> In this article, albeit with

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<sup>141</sup> NCHMA, Kotie Roodt Coetzee Archives, C.V. Kotie Roodt-Coetzee en die kultuurhistoriese museumwese in Suid-Afrika, pp. 1 - 2.

<sup>142</sup> Ibid., p. 394.

<sup>143</sup> K. Roodt-Coetzee, My herinneringe aan die voorgeskiedenis van die Nasional Kultuurhistoriese en Opelugmuseum, *Museum Memo*, 17(3), September 1989, p. 5. [Along with this first acquaintance with the cultural museum, the realization grew that it is essential that material objects should also form part of the theoretical study of cultural history. And the questions arises: How does one describe such objects? (Translated from the Afrikaans.)]

<sup>144</sup> H.G. Viljoen, ‘n Nuwe tydskrif, *Castalia*, no. 1, October 1934, p. 3.

<sup>145</sup> K. Roodt and P.C. Coetzee, Die krygsgevangenes as ‘n kultuurgroep; K. Roodt, Sosiale basis van kuns, *Castalia*, no. 1, October 1934, pp. 13 - 18 and 36 - 39.

reference to art, Coetzee uses for the first time the words that would become her manifesto,

**Dit is as't ware 'n dokument**<sup>146</sup>

**[This is, in truth, a document]**

and adding that art has to express something of the environment and the spiritual aura in which it has been created. In the years to come she would extend and expand upon this view and come to include all cultural objects.

Prof. (P.C.) Coetzee was a trained librarian and later became professor of library science at the University of Pretoria. As such he was knowledgeable about documentation and information retrieval systems. Prof. Coetzee also had an excellent knowledge of philosophy, the classical cultures and in particular Western cultural history.<sup>147</sup> Throughout their married life, during the years of Coetzee's involvement in the Voortrekker festivities of 1938 and 1949, during her career at the Transvaal Museum and later as director of the National Cultural History and Open-Air Museum, he remained her friend, mentor, inspiration and teacher par excellence in all matters regarding cultural history and its documentation and museology.

Her view on the cultural heritage of the Afrikaner was augmented by avid reading of Afrikaans writers such as F.C.L. Bosman, who wrote about Afrikaans culture<sup>148</sup> and S.P.E. Boshoff, who propounded the theory of inherited goods, own goods and borrowed goods (Afrikaans: *erfgoed, eiegoed en leengoed*)<sup>149</sup> that would later find a place in Coetzee's own way of viewing cultural objects.

Another decisive influence that shaped Coetzee's ideas and ideals for a cultural history museum was an address delivered at the opening of the University of Pretoria on 25 February 1938 by Prof. J.F.W. Grosskopf. He spoke about the museums that he had seen in the Scandinavian countries with their collections of buildings and cultural objects. He was of the opinion that no other kind of display would bring visitors so intimately into contact

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<sup>146</sup> My bold. K. Roodt, *Sosiale basis van kuns*, *Castalia*, no. 1, October 1934, p. 39.

<sup>147</sup> K. Roodt-Coetzee, *My herinneringe aan die voorgeskiedenis van die Nasionale Kultuurhistoriese en Opelugmuseum*, *Museum Memo*, 17(3), September 1989, p. 5.

<sup>148</sup> NCHMA, Kotie Roodt-Coetzee Archives, F.C.L. Bosman, *Afrikaanse kultuur en kultuurbesit*, 'n oorsig. Reprint from *Die Burger*, 15 - 18 December 1931, dated 1934 in Coetzee's handwriting.

<sup>149</sup> S.P.E. Boshoff, *Volk en taal van Suid-Afrika*.

with their ancestors than this complete image of the past.<sup>150</sup> Yet another important influence on her philosophy probably was a paper, delivered at a meeting of the Royal Society of Arts in 1949, found in her archives and also describing folk museums. Here she probably found many links with her own views that objects were “precious thoughts of the past”<sup>151</sup> and that a folk museum is

a museum of life and culture and consists, in its most satisfactory form, of two sections: a museum block of galleries and an area of park land ... [that] provides what may be termed the ecological setting, where specimens are exhibited in houses, while the houses are set out in their true environment ...<sup>152</sup>

Giliomee, in a recent publication, claims that

During the 1950s the Afrikaners in growing numbers saw themselves as part of a *volksbeweging*, a people on the move, putting their imprint on the state, defining its symbols, making bilingualism a reality, adapting to an urban environment and giving their schools and universities a pronounced Afrikaans character.<sup>153</sup>

He could with justification have added:

... and inspired by Kotie Roodt Coetzee, who gave new meaning to their cultural goods and their assemblage in cultural history museums.

### Testing the hypotheses

In view of the above assessment the following conclusions can be made:

There is a direct relationship between previous collections management practices for the anthropology, archaeology and history collections at the Transvaal Museum for the period 1913 - 1953 and the problems encountered at present (2005) by the collections management department of the National Cultural History Museum. The fact that the Transvaal Museum was for all practical purposes a natural history museum, contributed to a large extent to these problems. The changes in collections management over time can also be explained in terms of the prevalent features of the period under discussion and the museological

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<sup>150</sup> K. Roodt-Coetzee, ‘n Opelugmuseum vir Pretoria, *Pretoriana*, no 46, December 1964, pp. 7 - 8.

<sup>151</sup> I.C. Peate, The Folk Museum, *Journal of the Royal Society of Arts*, XCVII (4803), 9 September 1949, p. 794.

<sup>152</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 796 - 797. Coetzee also quotes from Peate’s paper in her article, ‘n Opelugmuseum vir Pretoria, *Pretoriana*, no 46, December 1964, p. 18.

<sup>153</sup> H. Giliomee, *The Afrikaners, biography of a people*, p. 491.

dynamics of the time.

It is clear that many problems experienced in the pre-1953 period were addressed in the one that followed (1953 - 1964), especially with regard to cultural history, but subsequent events leading to the development of the National Cultural History and Open-Air Museum are probably responsible for additional collection and management issues that remain unresolved. It is recommended that another research project be undertaken for the period 1964 to the present to unravel still outstanding issues.

## GLOSSARY

- Accessioning* The formal inclusion of an acquisition as part of the permanent collection of the museum by means of a unique accession number in the accessions register, called the catalogue (see Cataloguing: Historic use), and physically marking the object with that number as it is entered into the catalogue
- Accession number* The control number assigned to each individual object in the catalogue, unique to that object, with the purpose of identifying that object
- Accountability* The duty of a museum to take responsibility for and to control every object in its collections, i.e. to hold, preserve and safeguard the collections, by meeting basic documentation requirements, such as an accessions register and a formal inventory, by observing a scheduled programme to check the locality of every object in the collection and by implementing standard conservation measures
- Acquisition* Addition to the collection (additional object or group of objects)
- Acquisitioning* The entry documentation of or recording of an acquisition with its initial entry into the museum in an acquisitions entry register
- Acquisition number* The number assigned to an acquisition in the acquisitions entry register, usually a temporary number. (This number differs from the accession number)



- Anthropology/  
anthropological*** Name used interchangeably with ethnography/ethnographical and ethnology/ethnological for the division at the Transvaal Museum dealing with the collection of objects used by the black people of southern Africa
- Audit*** See collections audit
- Catalogue***
1. Historic use: Accessions register (a bound volume with numbered pages) used for the formal permanent inclusion of an acquisition in the museum's collection by means of a unique accession number (Afrikaans: *Grootboek*)
  2. Publication listing and describing objects in an exhibition or collection
  3. Sometimes used as synonym for Aquisitions entry register
- Cataloguing***
1. Historic use: The formal inclusion of an acquisition in the museum's collections by means of a unique accession number in an accessions register, called the catalogue (used in this meaning in the text)
  2. Current use: Compiling and maintaining details, either manually or by computer, with regard to each acquisition by means of a permanent and structured/uniform record, for collections management use, such as access to and auditing of the collection. Categories of information such as identification, associated and inherent information, management information and information obtained by research are used in cataloguing.
  3. Classification or arrangement of similar objects (see Classification)
  4. Creating and maintaining a manual card index system consisting of the object records and added entries, using catchwords

<b><i>Catchword</i></b>	Approved standard terms, usually in an alphabetical list, used consistently in cataloguing and indexing
<b><i>Classification</i></b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. <u>Historic use</u>: Recording of details of an object with regard to country of origin, date of origin, material, production technique, characteristics, condition, history, donation or other means of procurement, date of donation or procurement (as defined by Kotie Roodt-Coetzee)</li><li>2. The identification and placement of an object with other objects of like kind in a systematic arrangement based on various aspects such as material, function, origin, collection, even academic discipline</li><li>3. List of similar object types grouped together and separate from dissimilar ones.</li></ol>
<b><i>Code</i></b>	A group of letters, indicating a specific catalogue or collection, used as prefix to the accession number to distinguish that object from another object with the same number
<b><i>Collection</i></b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. The body of acquired objects and information about the objects in the care of the museum</li><li>2. Objects associated with each other for some reason (for example association with a place, a person, an event or the nature of the objects). A museum may have one collection, or many such collections</li><li>3. A collection of items accumulated by a collector</li></ol>
<b><i>Collections audit</i></b>	Assessment or verification of control measures over the collections existing in a museum to demonstrate accountability
<b><i>Conservation</i></b>	Procedures or actions taken to retard the deterioration of objects or to prevent damage to them, including environmental control, good housekeeping, the correct use, handling and packaging of objects, and treatment

<b><i>De-accessioning</i></b>	The formal process of permanently removing an object from the collection by documenting in the catalogue (accessions register)
<b><i>Department</i></b>	One unit (usually associated with an academic discipline or auxiliary science) in the curatorial organization of the Transvaal Museum, used interchangeably with the terms division and section
<b><i>Division</i></b>	See department
<b><i>Documentation</i></b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. The process of documenting each object in a collection in a museum by acquisitioning, classification, cataloguing, field records, labelling and indexing.</li><li>2. The physical records or documents pertaining to the collection</li></ol>
<b><i>Documentation system</i></b>	The procedures used to manage the documentation or information of the collection
<b><i>Donation</i></b>	Addition to the collection by means of a gift to be accessioned into the collection
<b><i>Ethnography</i></b>	See anthropology
<b><i>Ethnology</i></b>	See anthropology
<b><i>Entry form</i></b>	Proof of an acquisition (usually a donation, but also for other reasons such as identification) with its initial entry into the museum, and given to the presenter/donor by the museum, the details of which are usually recorded in an acquisitions entry register or entry form book
<b><i>Field records</i></b>	Documenting objects outside the museum, for example on location during a field trip

- Historiographer*** Name used by G.S.H. Rossouw to designate his position as curator of the history division at the Transvaal Museum
- Historiography***
1. Historic use: Name given to the catalogue, i.e. the Historiography Catalogue (H.C.), by G.S.H. Rossouw, for the history collection in the Transvaal Museum; still used for the cultural history collection at the National Cultural History Museum (not to be confused with the use of the term in the academic sense: see below)
  2. Current use: The study of the development of historical method, historical research and writing: any body of historical literature
- Index*** Directory acting as a guide to information about the collection, usually in alphabetical order, and often including details of where to find the objects, usually on cards, i.e. a manual system, but also on computer files
- Inventory***
1. An itemized list of objects for which a museum assumes responsibility
  2. The process of locating these objects and recording the location
- Label***
1. Information about the object, such as the accession number, the object name and the donor's name, usually on a card or a label, attached to the object
  2. Information about the object on display, usually on a card or a label
- Lender*** A person or an institution who loans objects to the Museum
- Loans***
1. Loans-in: Objects temporarily loaned to the Museum by a lender for a stated purpose, such as research or exhibition
  2. Loans-out: Objects temporarily loaned out by the Museum for a stated purpose, such as research or exhibition

<b><i>Location control</i></b>	The recording of the movements of an object in a museum to and from its permanent location in the museum's storage. For example, an object could be moved for exhibition, research or loan purposes, within the museum or to other institutions outside the museum
<b><i>Marking</i></b>	Affixing the accession number on an object permanently (but in such a manner that it could be reversed), using a technique that will not cause damage to the object
<b><i>Movement of objects</i></b>	The movement of an object in a museum to and from its permanent location in the museum's storage (see location and storage control)
<b><i>Objects</i></b>	The variety of items in museum collections, for example, furniture, ceramics, photographs, tools, manuscripts and documents
<b><i>Register</i></b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Book (a bound volume with numbered pages) used to enter an acquisition into the museum, called an acquisitions entry register</li><li>2. Book (a bound volume with numbered pages) used for the formal permanent inclusion of an acquisition in the museum's collection by means of a unique accession number, also called a catalogue or accessions register</li></ol>
<b><i>Registration</i></b>	Synonym for accessioning
<b><i>Restoration</i></b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Synonym for conservation</li><li>2. Actions taken to change the object to represent the original or a known earlier state</li></ol>
<b><i>Section</i></b>	See department
<b><i>Standard terms</i></b>	The controlled use of standard terms or catchwords, usually contained in an approved alphabetical list to enable the recording of information in a consistent manner

***Storage control***

The recording of the permanent location of an object in the museum's storage and its removal from this location (see also location control)

## SOURCES

### I. ARCHIVAL SOURCES (UNPUBLISHED)

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UOD Z15/6 - 15/8, Annual Reports for 1912-1919  
W 21, Inventaris van Transvaalse Museum-stukke

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##### Diaries

Diary Dr V.F.M. FitzSimons 1947  
Diary Dr V.F.M. FitzSimons 1949

##### Directors' Archives

- Kotie Roodt-Coetzee Archives
  - Envelope Geskiedenis van NASKO-Museum
  - File Briewe A.T.K.V. - MUSEUM
  - File Voortrekker Kultuur – 1938
  - File Persoonlik 1
  - File Persoonlik 2
  - File Kursus in museumwese, opsomming van lesings
  - File Memo's 1965
  - File C.V. Kotie Roodt-Coetzee en die kultuurhistoriese museumwese in Suid-Afrika
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##### Letter Books

No. 2 25 July - 7 December 1917  
No. 3 3 October 1917 - 11 December 1918  
No. 4 15 October 1918 - 13 October 1919  
No. 5 13 October 1919 - 13 April 1921

##### Minutes

- Minutes of the meetings of the Museum Committee and the Board of Trustees of the Transvaal Museum
  - Minute Book, January 1905 - 18 December 1906
  - Minute Book, 12 June 1908 - 1 June 1915
  - Minute Book, 16 June 1915 - 3 October 1921
  - Minute Book, 13 December 1921 - 14 December 1926
  - Minute Book, 4 April 1927 - 20 October 1931
  - Minute Book, 11 February 1932 - 18 June 1934
  - Minute Book, 8 August 1934 - 25 March 1937
  - Minute Book, 17 June 1937 - 20 January 1940
  - Minute Book, 15 August 1940 - 18 November 1943



Minute Book, 20 January 1944 - 8 August 1946  
Minute Book, 5 September 1946 - 7 May 1948  
Minute Book, 18 June 1948 - 9 December 1949  
Minute Book, 10 February 1950 - 7 March 1952  
Minute Book, 25 April 1952 - 9 April 1954  
Minute Book, 3 February 1956 - 17 August 1962  
Minute Book, 16 November 1962 - 29 Mei 1979

- Minutes of the Historical Sub-committee of the Transvaal Museum (incorporated in the minutes of the meetings of the Board of Trustees of the Transvaal Museum) 18 June 1955 - 7 February 1964
- Minutes of the meetings of the Board of the National Cultural History and Open-Air Museum and the National Cultural History Museum

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Agenda and Minute Book, 21 May 1986 - 18 February 1987  
Agenda and Minute Book, 20 May 1987 - 10 February 1988  
Agenda and Minute Book, 19 November 1991 - 18 February 1992

- Minutes of the meetings of the Committee for general matters and Committee for financial matters of the National Cultural History and Open-Air Museum

Joint meeting 9 October 1964

- Minutes of the meetings of the Management Committee of the National Cultural History Museum

Meeting 20 January 1992 (Box D1.3, vol. 3)

Museum catalogues and registers (see annexure 3)

Record systems (closed records)

- System 1
  - No 1 TM 1/12 - TM 1/26
  - No 2 TM 1/27 - TM 1/30
  - No 3 TM 1/31 - TM 1/33
  - No 4 TM 1/34 - TM 1/42
  - No 5 TM 1/43 - TM 1/51
  - No 6 TM 1/52 - TM 1/53
  - No 7 TM 1/53 - TM 1/59 KR
  - No 8 TM 1/54
  - No 9 TM 1/55 Jan - Sept
  - No 10 TM 2/55 Okt - Dec
  - No 11 TM 1/56
  - No 12 TM 1/57
  - No 13 TM 1/58
  - No 14 TM 1/59
  - No 15 TM 1/60
  - No 16 TM 1/61 Jan - Jun
  - No 17 TM 2/61 Jul - Dec

No 18 TM 1/62

No 19 TM 1/63

No 20 TM 1/64

- System 2  
NKV Maandverslae personeel 1955 -1963 (Wrong file No 57)  
NKO(1) 1955-1970 (Wrong file No 38)
- Other NCHM Files (not incorporated in the official record systems)  
Collections Management, departmental file, loans-in file 7/1/3/2, Tower of London  
Collections Management, departmental file, Opname van museum voorwerpe  
File Bedank: nuwe aanwinste vir 1956  
File ET1/58 - 59 Etnologie Afdeling, April 1958 - December 1959  
File ET1/60 Etnologiese Afdeling 1 Jan.  
File Korrespondensie 1921: Etnologie (File TM137/21)  
File TM 19/24 (original file at the Transvaal Museum)  
File Transvaal Museum Departement van Historiografie. Die “Generaal Louis Botha” versameling  
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File 20, Argiewe lys van foto’s. Eiendom van Transvaalse Museum  
Files in boxes  
    No. 514 Art  
    No. 515 History  
    No. 137 Ethnology  
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NKB Bruikleen 1942-1978  
NKP66/1  
Personal file: E. Grobler

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Konsepverslag: Toestand in Museum, File ET1/60 Etnologiese Afdeling

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Jaarverslag van die voorsitter van die Raad van Kuratore van die Kultuurhistoriese en Opelugmuseum vir die jaar geëindig 31 Maart 1966

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Report for the year ending 31 March 1941, including the report of the director and the report of the departments of archaeology, ethnology, numismatics and philately

Report for the year ending 31 March 1942, including the report of the director and the report of the departments of archaeology, ethnology, numismatics and philately

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Report for the year ending 31 March 1948, including the annual report of the director

Report for the year ending 31 March 1949, including the report of the director and the report of the division of history

Report for the year ending 31 March 1950, including the report of the director and the report of the division of history

Report for the year ending 31 March 1951, including the report of the director and the reports of the divisions of history, archaeology and ethnology, and numismatics and philately

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## DIE PROBLEME VAN MUSEALE WAARDE\*

deur

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Die titel van hierdie referaat is nie volledig nie; dit behoort te wees: *Die Probleem van museale waarde met betrekking tot die kultuurhistoriese museum in Suid-Afrika*. Natuurkundige museumversamelings word hier buite beskouing gelaat en in die wye veld van die kultuurkunde word slegs die skeppinge van die Blanke in Suid-Afrika met betrekking tot die museum behandel.

In ons land word daar min oor die kultuurhistoriese museum gepraat of geskryf en ons Afrikaanse geleerdes staan betreklik skepties teenoor die wetenskaplikheid van die soort museum. Die rede waarom hierdie onderwerp dan ook gekies is, is om geesteswetenskaplikes 'n insig te probeer gee van wat 'n volwaardige kultuurhistoriese museum vir die geesteswetenskappe en vir die volk kan beteken.

Met die doel voor oë sou mens kon begin met 'n uiteensetting van beginsels van die oogmerke en funksies van museums en dan voortgaan met afleidings uit daardie beginsels. So 'n abstrakte benadering sou egter minder gepas wees vir 'n geleentheid soos hierdie en ek het besluit om die museumvoorwerp self as uitgangspunt te neem, deels ook omdat in die museum hoofsaaklik met konkrete voorwerpe gewerk word.

'n Museum kan gedefinieer word as 'n geordende versameling voorwerpe. Hoewel dit 'n definisie is wat veel van die eienskappe van die moderne museum weglaat, is dit vir die leek voldoende en bevredigend, want vir hom is die meeste voorwerpe vertoonwaardig en hulle kan in die een of ander orde ingeplaas word. Daarenteen is die kernvraagstuk vir die museumkundige: wanneer is 'n voorwerp nou geskik om in die geordende versameling opgeneem te word, m.a.w. wanneer het dit museale waarde?

Nou is dit juis hierdie aspek van die museumwese waaroor ons helderheid behoort te kry. Dit is opvallend hoe vaag en onomlyn die mening oor die museumwaardigheid van kultuurhistoriese voorwerpe by leke, by geleerdes en selfs by diegene is wat hulle beywer vir die opbou van museums en wat die rigting en beleid moet neerlê en hulle moet beheer. Die saak is nog ernstiger, want dit moet ongelukkig aanvaar word dat museumpersoneel, veral museumkundiges (wat ook vakkundiges is) nie altyd die vraag as probleem aanvoel en 'n duidelike antwoord daarop gevind het nie.

As mens baie van die kultuurhistoriese museums in ons land besoek, moet jy glo dat daar eintlik net twee maatstawwe toegepas word om museale waarde te bepaal, naamlik dat 'n voorwerp oud moet wees of snaaks. Nog onlangs het iemand wat in die afgelope jaar veel met museums te doen gehad het en aan wie se opinie die owerheid baie

\* Gelewer op die vergadering van die Werkgemeenskap van Pretoria (v. d. Suid-Afrikaanse Akademie) op 27 April laaslede.



waarde heg, in 'n gesprek verklaar dat die kultuurhistoriese museum se funksie is om alle "eenaardige dinge" in die land bymekaar te maak en uit te stal. Nou moet ek erken dat daar 'n historiese rede vir hierdie opvatting is. Een van die prototipes van die moderne museum was naamlik die sewentiende- en agtiende-eeuse rariteitekabinette in Europa, waarin daar, naas natuurfratse, ook "artifakte" en veral eenaardige knutselwerkies was, of stukke wat moesaam, met tydrawende arbeid gemaak was en wat op die een of ander raaiselagtige kunsgreep berus het.

Die grootste versamelings van die aard was in Duitsland. Een van die bekendste was die "Münchener Kunstammer", met voorwerpe wat deur die Beierse vorste versamel is en waarvoor Maximilian I, om die jaar 1600, 'n aparte gebou van verskeie verdiepings opgerig het. Veel beroemder was die enorme versameling in Dresden, wat die Saksiese keurvorste byeengebring het. Die pronkstukke van die kunshandwerkers in diens van dié vorste het 'n hoogtepunt bereik wat sedertdien nie weer geëwenaar is nie. Daar was ivoorsnywerk; stukke uit silwer en goud met korale, robyne en smaragde beset; mosaïekwerk; voorwerpe met skilpaddop en emalje versier; fyn geslypte en gesneë glas en bergkristal; ryk gedekoreerde oorlosies met bewegende figuurtjies en musiek-voorstellings met meganies-dansende poppies. Dit alles is hoofsaaklik vanweë hulle rariteitswaarde versamel.<sup>1</sup>

In die Suid-Afrikaanse museum bestaan dié soort kunshandwerk uit skepies wat in 'n bottel ingebou is; uit modelle van die tweede kerk wat op Kerkplein, Pretoria, gestaan het, of van die Voortrekkermonument wat saamgestel is uit vuurhoutjies (die aantal vuurhoutjies en werkure is natuurlik 'n noodsaaklike vermelding!); eenaardige figure opgebou uit skulpe met fantastiese vorms; volstruiseier- of neutedoppe waarin patrone kunstig uitgesny is; speelgoeddosies waarvan die werking op 'n raaiselagtige kunsgreep berus en wat meesal deur die Boerekrygsgevangenes in 1900-1902 gemaak is. Verder is daar hoede van mense wat deur die weerlig getref is, en 'n naald of koeël wat iemand so of so lank in sy liggaam rondgedra het. Dit is die dinge wat baie mense verwag om in 'n kultuurhistoriese museum te sien. Eintlik benader hulle die museum in dieselfde gees as waarin hulle die kuriositeite-stalletjies by 'n sirkus besoek of waarin hulle 'n vertoning van 'n toorkunstenaar bywoon.

Die begeerte om verwonderd te wees en om wonderlike dinge te sien, is blykbaar diep in die mens se natuur ingewortel, maar as die museum sou bestaan om die publiek op hierdie manier te vermaak, sou daar geen rede vir ons geesteswetenskaplikes wees om die wetenskaplike waarde van ons kultuurhistoriese museums te erken nie en net so min rede om by die staat vir ondersteuning aan te klop.

Op enigsins hoër vlak staan die opvatting dat 'n museumvoorwerp sy waarde ontleen aan 'n assosiasie met 'n belangrike gebeurtenis of met een of ander voortreflike persoon, een by voorkeur wat in die volksgeskiedenis 'n rol gespeel het. Dit is die opvatting van die meeste museumbesoekers in Suid-Afrika en een wat ook deur die bestuur van meer as een museum onderskryf word. Meer nog, dit is die opvatting van verskeie historici.

Dit is 'n feit dat die meeste voorwerpe in ons museums in hierdie kategorie geplaas kan word. 'n Uitsondering moet hier gemaak word vir die kultuurhistoriese museums in Kaapstad. In hulle is daar min voorwerpe met 'n definitiewe assosiasie, soos byvoorbeeld die stoel waarin goewerneur Van Noodt sou gesterf het. In die ander museums in ons land is dit meestal die historiese verband wat waarde aan die artikel verleen.



So is daar in die pakkamers van die Ou Museum (die kultuurafdeling van die Transvaal-Museum in Pretoria) talle afgedraagde hoede wat op sigself geen waarde het nie, maar slegs betekenis kry omdat hulle tydens die Tweede Vryheidsoorlog deur vegtende burgers gedra is. Dieselfde geld 'n verflenterde swart handskoentjie wat keiserin Eugenie verloor het toe sy die graf van haar seun, Prins Napoleon, in Zoeloeland besoek het en na aanleiding waarvan die oorhandiger — iemand wat baie goed in geskiedenis onderleg is — gevra het dat dit op 'n spesiale ereplek vertoon moes word. Ewe gering in voorkoms en materiaal is 'n klein blikbekertjie wat ek hier vertoon, en waaruit twee Vryheidsvegters in 1881 'n sopie gedrink het voordat hulle die hange van Majuba uitgeklim het. Vir die meeste museumbesoeke is dit 'n gewaardeerde erfnis, waarvan die waarde verhoog word as die bloedbevlekte klere van een van die vegters wat daar gesneuwel het, daarby uitgestal word en as daarby vermeld word dat die oorlewende in 1900 voor die Krygsraad verskyn het omdat hy die Britse magte by Donkerhoek laat deurbreek het — ten gevolge van te veel sopies.

Dit is opvallend dat die blikkie aanvanklik meer aandag by lede van die publiek geniet as hierdie silwerbakkie (wat ook hier vertoon word) wat in ongeveer 1780 deur Daniël Heinrich Schmidt, een van die voortreflikste Kaapse silwersmede, gemaak is. Aan eersgenoemde is daar immers 'n storie verbonde, terwyl niemand weet wie die silwerbakkie laat maak het en deur wie dit gebruik is nie. Trouens, die waarde van die silwerstuk lê dan ook op 'n heeltemal ander vlak en dit kan eers gewaardeer word nadat die kultuurhistorikus dit vir die besoeker verklaar en geïnterpreteer het.

In 'n museum waar die beleid van insameling en keuring op historiese assosiasie gegrond is, sou 'n voorwerp soos die goue snuifdoos van P. E. Roubaix, lid van die Uitvoerende Komitee van die Verteenwoordigende Regering aan die Kaap, 1872, 'n uifers gesogte besit wees, (as dit opgespoor kan word) nie vanweë sy intrinsieke kosbaarheid nie maar omdat die vervanging van "Verteenwoordigende" deur "Verantwoordelike Regering" uitsluitlik van die snuifdoos afgehang het.<sup>2</sup>

Die belangrike historiese rol van die snuifdoos word erken; ook dat dit 'n hoë kunsgehalte en intrinsieke waarde gehad het en vir enige kultuurmuseum sal dit 'n belangrike aanwinst wees. Tog is daar talle minder kosbare oudhede met veel geringer estetiese en assosiatiewe kwaliteite wat vir die kultuurhistoriese museumkudige van net soveel, indien nie van nog meer, belang is nie.

Die algemene publiek soek egter na voorwerpe met so 'n historiese verband en as daar 'n enigsins sensasionele gebeurtenis aan verbonde is, lok dit soveel meer besoekers. Daarom kyk hulle graag na die klere wat van genl. C. F. Beyers se lyk afgesny is nadat dit uit die Vaalrivier opgediep was, en hulle soek na die stoel waarop dr. Verwoerd gesit het toe 'n aanslag op sy lewe gemaak is, en na die balk waaraan die Slagtersnek-Rebelle opgehang is.

Uit die gevoel dat die waarde van 'n voorwerp afhang van sy verband met 'n historiese gebeurtenis of persoon, moet waarskynlik verklaar word waarom baie skenkers van Voortrekkerkappies die versekering gee dat hulle in die Slag van Bloedrivier gedra is — ofskoon daar geen enkele vrou by Bloedrivier was nie —; waarom die meeste harde, stinkhoutstoele met 'n enkele knipmes gemaak is of slegs met 'n handbyltjie, en waarom oudhede wat aan mense met Franse vanne behoort, juis die vlugtog van



die Hugenote uit Frankryk meegemaak het.

Hierdie gevoel kan soms ook daartoe lei dat 'n assosiasie versin word. So moes lord Montgomery by 'n besoek aan die museum in die Voortrekkermonument hoor dat die gate in die seil van die kakebeenwa deur asse-gaaisteke veroorsaak is in die loop van 'n geveg gedurende die Groot Trek, en die wa het sommer daar en dan 'n fiktiewe naam gekry: Die Liebenbergwa. In werklikheid is net die onderstel van hierdie wa outentiek en die res is later gemaak. Enige persoon met 'n klein bietjie kennis van houtwerk kan selfs deur die glas die sirkelsaagmerke in die hout van die bodeel van die wa sien en die sirkelsaag is eers in ongeveer 1880 gepatenteer.

Omdat die assosiasies en nie die estetiese of intrinsieke of enige ander waarde nie by hierdie voorwerpe op die voorgrond staan, is die museum-amptenaar baie afhanklik van die gegewens wat die skenkers verskaf en daardie gegewens berus maar alte dikwels op geheue of op tradisie, en die is dikwels foutief en kan moeilik gekontroleer word. Hoe kan dit bo alle twyfel bepaal word of die handskoentjie werklik deur keiserin Eugenie en nie deur iemand anders gedra is nie, en of die onderbaadjie met die koeëlgat werklik die is wat generaal Beyers op sy laaste dag aangehad het en nie afkomstig is van iemand wat in 1900 gesneuwel het nie? Dit is duidelik dat waar voorwerpe ter wille van assosiatiewe waarde ingesamel word, uiters noukeurig ondersoek ingestel moet word. 'n Geval van die aard is dat al seker 'n halfdosyn orreltjies en eettafels van pres. Kruger aan die Krugerhuis-museum te koop aangebied is en elke verkoper is oortuig dat hy die regte meubelstuk het.

Verwant aan die histories-assosiatiewe gedagte is 'n ouer opvatting dat daar van sekere voorwerpe 'n wonderlike krag uitgaan, wat veranderinge in die beskouer of sy lewe teweeg kan bring. Dit is hierdie oortuiging wat daartoe gelei het dat in Europa in katedrale en kapelle relikwieë van heiliges bewaar en vertoon word. Miskien is dit hierdie selfde gedagte wat hom in Suid-Afrika openbaar in die versameling en vertoning van voorwerpe wat herinner aan die lye van ons volk. Bloedbevleete onderbaadjies, 'n boekie wat 'n koeël afgeweer het, gewere, oorlogsklere, die pen waarmee die Vrede van Vereeniging onderteken is — dit is die voorwerpe waarna baie besoekers as 't ware 'n pelgrimstog onderneem en wat hulle op gereelde tye kom bekyk, omdat hulle op nasionale gebied daardeur geïnspireer raak.

Uitstallings van stukke met so 'n histories-assosiatiewe waarde kan geregverdig word omdat hulle piëteit en patriotisme bevorder, en inderdaad kan hulle opvoedkundig wees omdat hulle 'n sekere besef skep van die realiteit van die verlede: die historiese figure het in dieselfde wêreld gelewe as die waarin ons lewe; hulle dade en lye is reël.

Dit is duidelik dat baie van hierdie soort voorwerpe, ontbloot van hulle historiese verband, geen ander kwaliteite het wat hulle bestaansreg in 'n museum kan regverdig nie. Indien 'n museum hom dus uitsluitlik sou toelê op die versameling van voorwerpe met assosiatiewe waarde, kan daar weinig sprake wees van diens aan die wetenskap.

Veel minder naïef is die benadering van die privaatversamelaar wie se versameling dikwels die *nucleus* van 'n nuwe museum vorm, of uiteindelik in 'n bestaande museum beland. Daar is die versamelaar wat sonder onderskeid voorwerpe van allerlei aard, uit alle periodes of kulture bymekaarbring. Ons land het 'n paar mooi voorbeelde van die aard: een op Laingsburg, die dorpsmuseum van Beaufort-Wes, die A.T.K.V.-versameling op



Hartenbos, om net 'n paar te noem. Daar is ander versamelaars wat hulself op 'n enkele tema toelê, soos resepte en rate, pype, lugposbriewe, spotprente (en dan dikwels net van een tekenaar), posseëls, munte, medaljes, e.d.m. Ons het in Afrikaans eintlik nie 'n term waarmee hierdie mense so spesifiek aangedui word soos met die Engelse term "Collector", of waarmee die stukke wat hulle versamel so ondubbelsinnig aangedui word as met "Collector's items" nie.

Gelukkig is daar ook die kenner of "connoisseur" as versamelaar, en hier het ons te doen met iemand met 'n diepgaande kennis van kuns en kunshandwerk, wat met smaak en die strengste oordeel stukke uitsoek en 'n kosbare versameling opbou. Ek moet hier melding maak van die unieke versameling Kaapse silwer wat die Ou Museum van dr. F. C. L. Bosman gekry het.

Die meeste versamelaars heg tog nog 'n ander waarde aan hulle stukke as wat die kultuurhistoriese museumkundige daaraan heg. Hulle versamel die stukke omdat hulle uniek is of omdat hulle nodig is om 'n stel of reeks te voltooi, en dikwels speel die aansien wat die versamelaar deur die besit van sulke voorwerpe kry, hierby ook 'n rol. Hulle is geneig om die museum te sien as 'n plek waarin reekse voorwerpversamelings byeengebring is en hulle verwag dat die museumkundige 'n kenner moet wees wat hulle van advies moet dien, wat die stukke vir hulle kan identifiseer, dateer en veral waardeer ten opsigte van die geldwaarde daarvan. Nou ontbreek dit nie aan museumkundiges wat met hierdie opvatting saamgaan en wat binne die raamwerk van die museum blote versamelaarsneigings botvier nie. Daar word dan eindelose reekse medaljes, seëls, munte en medaljons byeengebring, of daar word probeer om 'n volledige reeks van skooldrag-uniforms te versamel (sonder om aan ander kostume te dink), of die museum lê hom daarop toe om voorwerpe met assosiasies ten opsigte van 'n enkele sendeling (byvoorbeeld Lindley) op te spoor. Dié soort uitstallings is fragmentaries, sonder 'n bindende leidraad wat die reekse in 'n groter verband laat sien.

Die opvatting dat die werk van die museum hierin bestaan, is trouens die moeilikste wanbegrip om aan die kaak te stel en een wat die kultuurhistoriese museumkundige die meeste hoofbrekens gee. Waar steun vir die kultuurhistoriese museum gevra word, stuit mens dikwels op die geamuseerde verset van persone wat dink dat jy net 'n liefhebberij wil bevorder op owerheidskoste.

Daar is egter een soort versamelaar met wie die kultuurhistoriese museumkundige baie goed klaarkom. Dit is die persoon wat met wetenskaplike oogmerke 'n bepaalde soort voorwerp versamel. 'n Oudheid is vir die soort versamelaar in die eerste plek van belang om sy dokumentêre waarde. Dit gaan met ander woorde nie oor intrinsieke kosbaarheid of oor assosiasies nie, ook nie oor die estetiese waarde as sodanig nie. Dit gaan hoofsaaklik oor die waarde van die voorwerp as bewysstuk, as getuieis oor die kultuur, die tegniek en die bedrewenheid van 'n periode of 'n vervaardiger. Wanneer versamelings van hierdie aard in die museum opgeneem word, sal dit dikwels tot sy waardevolste besit behoort. In ons land kan verwys word na die Alfred De Passe-versameling wat in Groot Constantia opgeneem is; na die stukke wat wyle dr. W. F. Purcell, die groot vriend van mev. De Wet, versamel het en wat gedeeltelik in die Koopmans-de Wet-huis beland het; na die William Fehr-versameling wat tans in die Museum in die Kasteel gehuisves word en na 'n deel van die versameling van mev. M. M. Jansen, wat betekenis en status aan die



## Kultuurhistoriese Afdeling van die Ou Museum gee.

Hiermee het ons gekom tot die eerste positiewe kriterium van museale waarde, naamlik die betekenis van 'n voorwerp as uitdrukking van die menslike gees. Of dit kuriositeitswaarde of assosiatiewe waarde of versamelerswaarde het, is van bykomstige belang. Of dit uniek is, of kosbaar, of esteties hoogstaande, is vir die museumkundige van sekondêre betekenis. Primêr is: wat kan ons daaruit aflei omtrent die mense wat dit gemaak en gebruik het, omtrent hulle lewenspatrone en hulle lewenshouding, hulle herkoms en hulle skeppingsvermoë? Hierdie soort voorwerpe vorm die studiemateriaal waardeur die kulturele lewe, die groei en ontwikkeling van alle menslike wesens in Suid-Afrika nagegaan kan word, van die oertyd tot vandag. Dit moet aantoon hoe die mens in die omstandighede waaronder hy geleef het, deur sy vernuf middele en werktuie gevind het om in sy behoeftes te voorsien. Dit moet lig werp op sy pogings om 'n dak oor sy hoof te hê, vanaf die grot van die vroegste inwoners tot by die modernste wolkekrabber van sintetiese materiaal. Alles in en om hierdie woonplekke waaruit die struktuur van die mense se sosiale lewe kan blyk, moet versamel en vertoon word.

Om ons in besonder te bepaal by die blanke kultuurgroepe in Suid-Afrika, sal daar in die museum die voorwerpe versamel word wat ons meedeel hoe die lewe in die lande van herkoms van die betrokke groepe was in die tyd toe hulle na hierdie nuwe vaderland gekom het, en veral die lewe van die sosiale laag waaruit hulle gestam het. As mens weet wat om te soek, sal die reste van die Europese opper- en volkskultuur wat hier ter sake is, nog hier en daar in ons land te vinde wees. Verder is daar die soort voorwerp wat die aanpassing van die Wes-Europeër in Suid-Afrika, met sy veranderde omstandighede, uitbeeld. As voorbeeld kan genoem word die "kapstyl"-huis, wat vandag nog aangetref word in streke soos Vredendal in Suid-Namakwaland en by Vermaaklikheid naby Albertinia. Dit is wonings wat maar effens afwyk van 'n tipe woning wat in Wes-Europa reeds voor die geboorte van Christus gebou is, maar daar in so 'n mate verdwyn het dat 'n outentieke huis nie meer vir 'n opelugmuseum gevind kan word nie, terwyl dit nog in enkele streke in ons land gebou word.

Hier by ons is ook 'n variant van die tipe wat herinner aan die Duitse "Ständer-Häuser" maar wat net kleiner is as die Duitse prototipe, omdat die Boere nie nodig gehad het om hulle vee onder dieselfde dak te huisves nie. Ook die soort voorwerp moet versamel word wat op eie bodem ontstaan het en wat in die veranderde lewenspatroon, en deur die nuwe geografiese omstandighede 'n eie vorm verkry het. Daar is verder ook die voorwerpe wat getuie is aflê van die wisselwerking tussen Blanke- en Nie-Blanke-kulture en 'n mooier voorbeeld kan nie gevind word nie as die matjieshuis van Namakwaland, waarvan die byekorfvorm later deur die Boer in klip en klei gebou is.

By die insameling van hierdie materiaal wat dien as dokumente van hulle tyd, word dus nie in eerste instansie gevra na die estetiese aard, of die seldsaamheid of verband met 'n historiese gebeurtenis of persoon nie. Of hulle skoon of minder skoon is, kom nie meer in oorweging soos dit vroeër die geval was nie. Hierdie nuwe opvatting blyk die duidelikste in die kultuurhistoriese museum, die "National Museet", Kopenhagen. Vroeër het hierdie museum sy stylkameruitstallings beperk tot die weer-



gawe van die lewe van die hoëre sosiale kringe in verskillende kultuurperiodes. Slegs die mooiste en kosbaarste voortbrengsels van die kunshandwerk van die Renaissance, die Barok en die Rokoko is vertoon: Wandtapyte van sy en vlas, met voorstellings van 111 Deense konings<sup>3</sup>, mure met panele in nagebootste Sjinese rooi lakwerk; silwer- en goue voorwerpe en gesneë glaswerk; borduur- en kantwerk; kleinskulptuur in ivoor; kunskabinette versier met skilpaddop, goud en perlemoer; meubels beklee met dekoratiewe goudleer en Vlaamse weefstowwe.

Vandag is, naas hierdie weelde-vertonings, die powerste tweekamer-vissershutjie van 'n enkele paar voet in die vierkant, skrynnend in sy armoede, die tuiste van 'n egpaar met hulle talryke kroos. Want dit was die werklike lewe. Die "Kunstkamer", met sy rariteite en vorstelike weelde, moes 'n ontwikkeling van drie, vier eeue deurmaak om tot die stand van vandag te kom, naamlik dat die kultuurhistoriese museum 'n lewensgetroue, wetenskaplike weergawe van die verlede wil wees.

Dit is duidelik dat eers dan, wanneer die museum hierdie beleid handhaaf, hy werklik in staat sal wees om 'n hydrae aan die kultuurwetenskap te lewer. Maar dit vereis 'n begrip van hierdie taak by die museumkundige. Waar dit ontbreek, en hy ook nie oor die nodige kultuurhistoriese kennis en insig beskik om die dokumentêre waarde van stukke te herken nie, word die klem baie maklik op die bykomstige elemente, soos kuriositeit, assosiasie, skoonheid, e.d.m. gelê. Dit is dan waarskynlik ook die rede waarom soveel Suid-Afrikaanse museums hulle aandag op hierdie sekondêre faktore toespits en die besoeker weinig anders in die museum sien as 'n versameling eienaardige dinge en dinge met assosiasies.

Om dokumentêre waarde te bepaal, vereis 'n kritiese benadering. Ek wil in dié verband net op een sy daarvan wys, naamlik op die beoordeling van die egtheid en originaliteit van stukke. Enige museum verkies natuurlik stukke wat origineel en eg is, maar kan in uitsonderlike gevalle volstaan met kopieë mits hulle getroue weergawes van die oorspronklikes is en hulle geskiedenis bekend is. In Europese museums word Oud-Germaanse kledingstukke wat opgegrawe is, dikwels oorgeweef en die originele stukke wat uitmekaar val, word weggepak.

In sommige gevalle is dit nie maklik om tussen die originele en die kopie te onderskei nie, veral wanneer die kopie as outentiek aangebied word, soos so dikwels met skilderye in Europese museums gebeur. In Europa moet die museumkundige trouens ook versigtig wees by die aankoop van meubels, keramiek en metaalwerk, en daar bestaan verbasende praktyke hoe om stukke te vervals. In Suid-Afrikaanse museums weet ek net van een tipe voorwerp wat vervals is — en dit nogal glas, wat nie een van die makliks bewerkbare media is nie. In 1938 is verskeie stukke V.O.C.-glas te koop aangebied, wat deur die fatsoen, dekorasie en wielgravering, met die V.O.C.-monogram en 'n paslike spreuk, op die leek die indruk van egtheid moes maak. Verskeie versamelaars het van die stukke, wat vervalsings was, gekoop. U sal besef dat dit 'n hoë mate van kennis van materiale soos tekstiel, glas, keramiek, metaal, hout, en van vervaardigingsmetodes en die merke wat outentieke gereedskappe op die stowwe gelaat het, vereis om te onderskei tussen die egte voorwerp en die vervalsing.

Die probleem van vervalsing raak die museum nog in 'n ander opsig, naamlik die van in hoeverre 'n voorwerp herstel kan word sonder om sy dokumentêre waarde aan te tas. In Europa sal in 'n skulptuur-afdeling van 'n museum nie eers oorweeg word om 'n ontbrekende deel van 'n



houtbeeld wat uit een of ander kerk afkomstig is, aan te las nie. Tog word dit as geregverdig beskou om dit by 'n meubelstuk te doen, mits dit op 'n verantwoordelike wyse geskied. In Europese museums is restourasie so 'n belangrike deel van die museum se werksaamhede dat meer as een meester-restourateur 'n professorale betrekking aan 'n universiteit beklee of vroeër beklee het — gewoonlik in die departement Chemie. In Denemarke, met 'n bevolking van vier en 'n halfmiljoen, het een museum, die "National Museet" in Kopenhagen, alleen 55 restourateurs op die personeel. In die hele Suid-Afrika was daar tot onlangs slegs een museum, die Ou Museum in Pretoria, met een restourateur op die personeel. Die neiging is hier alte veel om 'n stuk te laat in die toestand waarin dit gevind is, hoe verwaarloos en onvolledig ook al. Die regverdiging van herstel van oudhede is dat dit wenslik is om 'n voorwerp te laat sien soos sy makers en gebruikers dit gesien het, en nie in 'n vervalte en gebroke toestand nie. Eers dan kan die voorwerp werklik getuig en help om 'n beeld van die kultuur te skep.

Die vraag van restourasie is egter so 'n gespesialiseerde, museum-tegniese aangeleentheid dat ons hier nie verder daarop kan ingaan nie.

Daar is egter nog 'n ander regverdiging van restourasie wat nie in eerste instansie met dokumentêre waarde te doen het nie, maar met demonstrasiewaarde. Daarmee het ons gekom tot 'n tweede kriterium van museale waarde, naamlik die betekenis van 'n voorwerp as 'n vertoonstuk aan die publiek, en sy bruikbaarheid as verteenwoordigende voorbeeld van die handewerk of kuns wat in 'n kulturomgewing ontstaan het. Die opvoedkundige of vertoonwaarde van 'n stuk is beslis 'n belangrike sy van sy museale waarde. Die kultuurwetenskaplike moet hierop let, want hy het nie slegs 'n plig teenoor die wetenskap nie maar ook teenoor die volk vir wie hy uitstal. Nie alle voorwerpe wat vir die wetenskaplike van belang is vanweë hulle dokumentêre waarde, is noodwendig die geskikste vertoonstukke nie. As medium van onderwys en sosiale opvoeding is dit die taak van die museum om in sy uitstallings 'n beeld te skep van kultuur, van vreemde kultuur sowel as van eie kultuur. Die kind, die student en die volwassene as belangstellende leek, moet in die museum die geleentheid kry om hom in te leef in die onmiddellike werklikheid van 'n periode van sy eie kultuur, of van 'n vreemde kultuur. Of iets mooi is of nie; of dit kosbaar is of sonder geldwaarde, dit word versamel as dit uitgestal kan word, om daarmee 'n vervloë tyd te rekonstrueer. Die museum is wat dit betref 'n driedimensionele plate-album.

'n Goed georganiseerde museum stal slegs 'n klein deeltjie uit van wat hy besit. Die grootste gros van sy materiaal is in die studie-afdeling, wat vir navorsers toeganklik is. Ongelukkig sit elke museum nog met 'n derde afdeling opgeskeep, naamlik met materiaal wat feitlik geen dokumentêre waarde en hoegenaamd geen demonstrasiewaarde het nie, maar wat nogtans uit piëteitsoorweging bewaar moet word. Orals word egter probeer om die soort stof soveel moontlik te beperk. Meestal het 'n museum nog 'n kleiner afdeling, vir die bewaring van stukke met 'n hoë intrinsieke waarde en stukke wat te broos is om aan lig en lug blootgestel te word.

Dit is bewys dat die demonstrasiewaarde van stukke gedeeltelik verlore gaan as te veel voorwerpe bymekaar uitgestal word. In Europa is selfs die mening uitgespreek dat die bombardering van die museums daar nie



'n ongemengde ramp was nie, omdat dit die toepassing van nuwe uitstalmetodes moontlik gemaak het, selfs al is daar veel verloor. Een van die grootste besware teen sommige plaaslike museums is dat hulle in hulle gretigheid om alles wat hulle besit, uit te stal, soms blote opstapelplekke word wat herinner aan 'n groterige pandjieswinkel.

Daarenteen word die demonstrasiewaarde van stukke verhoog deur hulle in een of ander sisteem te vertoon. Hierdie sisteem kan 'n blote chronologiese opeenvolging wees of 'n ontwikkelingsreeks. Die ondervinding leer egter dat die orde wat die duidelikste spreek, dié is wat met outentieke voorwerpe 'n rekonstruksie gee van 'n deel van die kultuurlewe. Gewoonlik neem dit die vorm van 'n stylkamer aan waar byeenhorende voorwerpe in lewende verband met mekaar gebring word. In Suid-Afrika is daar een so 'n poging, naamlik in die Voortrekkermonument-museum.

As 'n uitstalling werklik opvoedkundige waarde moet hê, vereis dit van die museumkundige aanvoeling en estetiese insig, en 'n wetenskaplike kennis wat tot in die fynste besonderhede strek. Die uitstalling moet gesien word as 'n mededeling van kennis en stel nie minder hoë eise nie as die skryf van 'n wetenskaplike monografie.

Ek hoop dat ek met die bespreking van die valse waardes wat sommige lede van die publiek, en selfs geesteswetenskaplikes en museumkundiges, aan oudhede toedig, kon bydra tot die opruiming van 'n paar wanbegrippe en dat ek deur die aandag te bepaal by die demonstrasie- en dokumentêre waarde, in 'n mate daarin geslaag het om aan te toon dat die kultuurhistoriese museum 'n belangrike plek het, en kan hê in die navorsingsarbeid van die geesteswetenskaplikes, en ook in die opvoeding van kinders en volwassenes. Wat laasgenoemde betref, wil ek nog dit toevoeg. Die museum spreek deur sy uitstallings, maar kan sy boodskap nie volledig daardeur oorbring nie. Dit is noodsaaklik dat daar ook toeligtig moet wees, en dat die toeligtig verstrekkend word deur persone wat daartoe bevoeg is deurdat hulle studie van kultuurgeskiedenis gemaak het en die werk van die museum uit ondervinding ken. In Suid-Afrikaanse museums is daar meesal geen voorligting nie en waar dit tog gegee word, word dit toevertrou aan onopgeleide persone.

Die gebrek aan opgeleide gidse vir besoekers en skoolkinders is in die natuurwetenskaplike afdelings van die vier staatsondersteunde museums: Die Transvaal-Museum, Pretoria; Die Nasionale Museum, Bloemfontein; Die Suid-Afrikaanse Museum, Kaapstad en die Natal-Museum, Pietermaritzburg, net so groot as in hulle kultuurhistoriese afdelings maar wat navorsing betref, het die natuurwetenskappe 'n geweldige voorsprong. Hierdie afdelings het hulle huidige posisie en aansien hoofsaaklik te danke aan die omstandigheid dat ons hele museumwese vir meer as 'n halfeeu onder die leiding van natuurwetenskaplikes staan. Van al vier hierdie museums is die direkteurs dierkundiges. Hoewel hierdie museums onderskeidelik in 1892, 1877, 1825 en 1903 tot stand gekom het en in 1962 gesamentlik 19 vakkundiges in die natuurwetenskaplike afdelings gehad het, is daar nog maar slegs één enkele opgeleide kultuurhistorikus.

Hierdie vier museums het daarin geslaag om die belangstelling en aktiewe medewerking van natuurwetenskaplikes aan ons universiteite en navorsingsinrigtings te kry en hulle afdelings uit te bou tot institute waar belangrike natuurwetenskaplike ondersoek gedoen word. Sommige van hierdie museums lê soveel klem op navorsing dat dit die natuuruitstallings ver oorskadu maar, eienaardig genoeg, het elkeen van die



museums uitstallings van kultuurhistoriese voorwerpe omdat besef word dat hierdie voorwerpe vanweë hulle kuriositeits- en assosiatiewe waarde, 'n goeie lokmiddel vir besoekers is, en hierdeur word die valse indruk geskep dat kultuurvoorwerpe hulle nie leen tot wetenskaplike navorsing nie. Die verbasende is dat daar Afrikaanse geesteswetenskaplikes is wat hierdie opvatting onderskryf.

As die kultuurhistoriese museum nou hierdie agterstand teenoor die natuurmuseum, wat navorsing betref, wil inhaal, is dit nodig dat die owerheid en ons geleerdes 'n duidelike insig in die taak en funksie van die kultuurmuseum moet kry en hom moet help om dit uit te voer. Tot op die huidige tydstip kon die kultuurhistoriese personeel nog nie daarin slaag om enige navorsingsfasiliteite of -toelae te ontvang nie.

Daar is egter nog 'n rede waarom die kultuurhistoriese museum in 'n hoë mate deur die Afrikaanse geesteswetenskaplike misken is. Dit lê in die aard van die kultuurstryd wat die Afrikaner vir 'n groot gedeelte van die eeu besig gehou het. Dit het gegaan om erkenning van sy taal en om die opbou van 'n eie letterkunde. Dit het daartoe gelei dat ons byna gewoon geword het om kultuur en taal te vereenselwig en daarby vergeet het, of nooit besef het nie, dat ons volk sy eienaard ook op ander maniere tot uiting gebring het. In 'n mate het die beeldende kuns reeds erkenning verkry, maar dit word nog nie ingesien nie dat die Afrikaner op ander gebiede, soos in sy meubelkuns, die edelsmedery en volksargitektuur, hoog geprester het en dat hierdie skeppinge as uitinge van die volksaard ewe belangrik is as dié op taal- en letterkundige gebied.

Die Wonder van Afrikaans het geskied en die tyd het sekerlik nou aangebreek dat ons stryd en strewe 'n nuwe oriëntasie vereis. Ons moet bereid wees om, soos ons die werke van 'n Vondel of Rubens, met hulle ryk komposisie en vol beweging, as uitinge van die Barok sien, so ook Afrikaanse skeppinge soos die versierde preekstoel in die Groote Kerk of die woning "Rust en Vrede" in Buitekantstraat, Kaapstad, of die klein silwerbakkie van Daniël Schmidt as dokumente van dieselfde kultuurfase, die Prag-en-Praaltyd, te sien.

In hierdie oorsig oor die wantoestand in ons museums dring die vraag homself na vore of die feit dat die kultuurgoedere wat ingesamel is nadat pres. Kruger in 1892 die museum in Pretoria hoofsaaklik as historiese museum gestig het, en wat sedert 1900 tot 1953 in kelders en pakkamers weggeberg was, uitsluitlik aan natuurwetenskaplik-georiënteerde beheer en beleid gewyt moet word?

Is die kultuurleiers onder ons Afrikaanse geesteswetenskaplikes heeltemal vry te pleit daarvan dat die eerste persoon wat aangestel is om kultuurhistoriesvakkundige, d.w.s. ook wetenskaplike werk in die Ou Museum te doen, 'n gepensioneerde opsigter was ('n oud-kadet met slegs 'n std. 6-skoolopleiding), terwyl gegraduateerdes in Kultuurgeskiedenis tevergeefs na geleentheid gesoek het om hulle wetenskap te beoefen?

As die wetenskaplike aard van die museum dan nie aanvaar was nie, moes daar tog piëteit gewees het vir die onderneming wat pres. Kruger met soveel vertroue en hoë verwagting begin het.

Laat ons hoop dat die geslagte wat kom die wantoestand van die kultuurhistoriese museums in ons land nie gedeeltelik gaan soek nie in die sydigte kultuurbeskouing van ons Afrikaanse geleerdes in die eerste helfte van hierdie eeu. Dit is tyd dat die Afrikaner nugter en met kennis oortuig word van die prestasies van die geslagte voor hom en dat daar nie net gevoelvol oor onbekende skepping gepraat word nie. Hy moet dit



aanskou. In geen ander inrigting kan dit so doeltreffend as in die museum geskied nie. In Europa is bewys dat die kultuurmuseum 'n magtige opvoedkundige krag is en ons behoort dit in Suid-Afrika ook in te span. Maar daarvoor het ons hulp nodig — van die owerheid en van u, die Afrikaanse geleerdes.

Dat hierdie onderwerp vanaand in 'n Werkkring van die Akademie bespreek word, bewys u belangstelling. Nou gebeur dit nie elke dag dat mens die geleentheid kry om voor so 'n illustere gehoor op te tree nie, en om hulp en medewerking vir jou hoogste ambisie te vra nie. Daarom is my slotwoord: help die kultuurhistoriese museum in Suid-Afrika daadwerklik deur sy materiaal te bestudeer; deur ontbrekende stukke te help insamel; deur die inhoud van die museum te help bekend stel; deur by die owerheid aan te dring om ons geldelik in staat te stel om dié diens aan die wetenskap en die opvoeding te bring waarvoor die museum bestem is om as middel te dien.

1 'n Gedeelte van die voorwerpe in August die Sterke (Keurvors van Sakse, 1694-1733) se versameling word soos volg beskrywe:

"Nicht nur kostbare Kannen und Gefässe wurden mit reicher Reliefarbeit verziert, nicht nur ganze Figuren ausgeführt, sondern auch hier liebte man die Künsteleien, zu denen diese Technik reiche Gelegenheit bot. So sah man einen Ständer mit einer Kugel, die jeden Augenblick herunterzufallen drohte, ineinander gearbeite Kugeln mit Oeffnungen, durch die jeweils die kleinere sichtbar wurde, bis in die kleinsten das Reliefporträt eines Kurfürsten eingeschlossen war. Dann wieder genossen besonderen Ruf Ketten mit vielen ineinandergefügten Gliedern, die alle aus einem Stück gearbeitet waren, ein Becher, der hundert andere enthielt, ein Arrangement von einem Dutzend Spinnrädchen und einer Kutsche, die alle zusammen auf der Fläche eines sächsischen Pfennigs Platz hatten. Solche minutiösen Spielereien werden in allen Beschreibungen erwähnt". Valentin Scherer, *Deutsche Museen*; Jena. 1913; p. 24.

2 Maurice Green, "An Historic Epic Snuff-box". *Africana Notes and News*, 6 : 62-64 (Junie 1949), waarin verwys word na René Juta, "The Cape Peninsula", 1910, p. 93 en Ralph Kilpin, "The Romance of a Colonial Parliament", 1930, p. 95.

In 1872 is 'n wetsontwerp in die Kaapse Parlement ingedien dat Verteenwoordigende Regering deur Verantwoordelike Regering vervang moes word. In die Hoër Huis sou die nuwe vorm moontlik met slegs één stem wen, en ondersteuners van die bestaande vorm het pogings aangewend om ten minste een lid van die Hoër Huis te verhinder om te stem, naamlik die heer P. E. de Roubaix. Volgens 'n petisie van ene R. W. Murray sou De Roubaix nie voldoen het nie aan die vereiste dat elke lid van die Hoër Huis roerende goedere van ten minste £2,000 moes besit. De Roubaix se finansiële posisie was in 'n benarde toestand, maar sy vriende ontdek in sy besit 'n goue snuifdoos wat die Sultan van Turkye aan De Roubaix, wat eens Konsul-generaal vir Turkye was, geskenk het. Hierdie snuifdoos van goud en emalje was beset met diamante, robyne en smaragde, dit was versier met blare en kloue in goud uitgesny en binne-in was miniatuurtonele van Konstantinopel en die Bosphorus.

'n Gekose Komitee wat De Roubaix se sake moes ondersoek, het die snuifdoos deur 'n Kaapse juwelier, G. Boettger, laat waardeer, wat die waarde op £3,000 gestel het, en deur 'n Kaapse diamanthandelaar, M. Joseph, wat dit op £630.3.6 gestel en verklaar het "for which price I would be glad to make such a box and would allow a handsome discount".

Die Gekose Komitee het egter meer waarde aan Boettger se waardasie geheg en De Roubaix se snuifdoos was die beslissende faktor dat Verantwoordelike Regering in die Kaap ingevoer is.

3 Nationalmuseet, Kopenhagen.

*Middelalder og nyere Tid*, 1946; p. 74.

Hierdie III Deense konings sluit ook in die legendariese konings deur Saxo Grammaticus genoem in sy *Gesta Danorum*.



22 SEPTEMBER 1933]

DIE HUISGENOOT

33

## IN DIE OU MUSEUM IN PRETORIA

Deur SANNI METELERKAMP

TYDENS 'n onlangse besoek aan Pretoria het ek een heuglike uur lank die verleden deurleef in die geskiedenis van ons land 'n eeu gelede. Vir die eerste maal het ek rondgegaan tussen die oorblyfsels van verbyge dae in die Ou Museum in Boomstraat en my die lewe van die voorvaders van ons huidige geslag voor die gees geroep. Hoe verkillend is hulle nie van die agtermaakar jong man en die vroegwysse jong dame van vandag nie, wat op alle opvoedingsfasiliteite geniet, gladweg geëls in verskillende tale oor onderwerpe wat vir hul voorvaders onaanraakbaar was en wat hul plek onder die jeug van die wereld voortdurend handhaaf.

Die museum is gebou om 'n binneplein wat beskut is deur plaantaarome en waar 'n blombeddingsaanleg is wat ter tyde van my besoek weldadige gepeyk het met roosroos, oranje en diep-rooi kannas, omsoom met blou violette.

Een van die eerste dinge wat 'n mens tref hulle en binnekan die gebou, is die ou kanonne uit verskillende tydperke wat 'n mens laat terugdenk aan die oorloë van die verleden. Die uitstekende manier waarop sommige van hulle vervaardig en afgewerk is, laat 'n mens dink aan die dae van die eerste Hollandse bewind toe „Jan Kompanjie“ die op grond beluste Europese mages op 'n afstand gehou het.

Ander wees van 'n eenvoudiger aard, is dene die Boere, byna 'n eeu gelede gebruik. Daar is by voorbeeld „On Grietjie“, wat van wabande gemaak is en watter dikkes was dit nie! en vasgemaak is op die voorstel van 'n trekwa, en 'n ander een wat net so primitief is, maar wat albei doeltreffend gebruik is teen Daniëls in 1835. Dit laet tye stam die twee kanonne wat 'n verneme rol gespeel het in die Tweede Vryheidsoorlog; naamlik „Long Tom“, waarmee Ladysmith tydens die langdurige beleë van 119 dae meedoënloos gebombardeer is en wat die Boere uitmuntlik in die lug laat vlieg het om te voorkom dat die Engelse dit in die hande sou kyk; en die ander „Lady Roberts“, wat deur die Boere tydens die veldtog in Natal buitgemaak is en wat hulle vernietig het toe hulle ontdek dat dit swaar was om te vervoer.

Soos te verwagte is, beslaan die Kruger aandenkings 'n groot gedeelte van die ruimte. Die seremoniële statiese waarmee die ou Transvaalse President by geleentheid deur die strate gery het, word 'n mens voor die gees geroep deur die sierlike staalkoets met sy fluweelbehangsels en pragtige beslag. Dit word bewaar net soos by dit gebruik het. Daar naby staan sy massiewe wat van gepolyte stinkhout, met sy lang-ruim tent, katel, soliede wakkies en die outodiese brik en remskoen. Op 'n koperplaat staan daar dat dit gemaak is deur 'n vrou, Helen Fouché, nou mev. Abel van Wyk.

Dit is interessant om daarop te let dat die Engelse dit buitgemaak het in die Tweede Vryheidsoorlog, toe lord Kitchener dit na Engeland gestuur en dit aan die stad Londen present gegee het. In

1926 het dit teruggekom as 'n geskenk aan die Suid-Afrikaanse Volk, sodat dit nou weer 'n tuisland gevind het waar dit hoort.

Die Voortrekker-wa wat tydens die Groot Trek (1836-1837) gebruik was, staan in sterk teenstelling daarmee; dit is ruwer en eenvoudiger, met die merke van Kaffer-aggaans en die modder en tekens van verweer daarop, nadat dit oor die ongebaande wê moes getrek het.

Daar is bekoedlike modelle van skepe — een van die stoomskip Saxon, wat as posboot gedien het tydens die Tweede Vryheidsoorlog; in ander van die stoomskip Dusek, (deur sir Donald Currie van president Kruger) en geskenk gegee; en 'n pragtige model, met die sierlike bou van 'n jag van admiraal Tromp se beroemde ou vaartug, met die besem bo aan die mas net klaar om die Engelse van die see af te veer. Aan my is gesê dat hierdie model eens behoort het aan die beroemde Nederlandse seelieder Koekoek.

Hier sien ons ook die sterk opvoelafel van tamboekiehout wat behoort het aan die trekwa van Marthinus Wessel-Pretorius, die eerste president van die Transvaal, asook die danke van die eerste Nederlands-Gereformeerde kerk in Transvaal, wat langtyd gebruik is in die huis van generaal Piet Joubert.

Verder is daar nog 'n hele aantal sierlike meubelstukke waaraan historiese herinnerings verbonde is. Daar is by voorbeeld 'n besonder bekoedlike rusbank waarvan die rug- en armleunings afgesny is in die vorm van die „In onderwese Kieis“ is daar allerlei kurosieste, vervaardig deur die Boere-gevangenes op Ceylon, St. Helena, en elders. Baie van hulle toon besondere aanleg en is pragtig afgewerk.

Huisliker en musieker daarom juis sprekender, is die voorwerpe van 'n mens herinner aan die bekende lewenswyse van die Voortrekkers; 'n ou tuis-vervaardigde ploeg, primitiewe huisgereedskap en ruwe, maar sterk meubels wat die kwaaieste gebruikstoets kon deurstaan en maklik van die een plek na die ander kon vervoer word.

In die kamer wat gewy is aan geskenk van pres. Kruger en sy bewind is daar portrette van die ou President en sy amptenare en medaljes, plaatties en ordes wat hy van baie lande ontvang het. Hulle maak 'n pragtige vertoning, net soos sy amptelike serp wat deur die vroue van Pretoria aan hom gegee was, en die vlag van die stoomskip Batavia, waarmee sy stoffiks omsket van Antwerpen na Kaapstad vervoer is. Van die drie groot wragte kranse wat na sy begrafnis gestuur is, moes meer as die helfte na 'n rakkie verbrand word weens hul bederfbaarheid. Van die res word die wat van silwer en ander metale is en baie verwyderde lande en gemeenskappe verferpwooring, in die Museum vertoon.

Onder die swaarde van die President is die een wat hy gedru het as Kommandant-Generaal van die Re-

publeikaanse magte en die ere-swaart wat hom deur Duitse offisiere aangebied is, toe hy tydens die Tweede Vryheidsoorlog in Duitsland was.

Die meer huislike stukke trek 'n mens sterker aan en roep jou die forse ou President kragtiger voor die gees — die klein dingetjies wat hy daaglik gebruik het, soos sy pyp, wandelstokke, bril, akkergeredskap, busels en kamme. Hier sien ons die pen waarmee hy moetsaam sy bekende, bewrige naamtekening geskryf het, en as 'n mens staan en kyk na die versameling sakmesse, wonder jy watter een van hulle dit was waarmee hy daardie slag sonder aarseling sy tuisland verhoor het toe sy gewet in sy hand gebars het.

Hoe meer 'n mens daartoe nadenk, hoe treffender dit jou aandoen hoedat hierdie eenvoudige, bykans ongetelende jong Boer wat ru in die veld grootgeword het, deur sy sterk persoonlikheid en aangebore insig hom verhef het tot President van 'n staat wat die georganiseerde magte van die Britse Ryk byna drie jaar lank die hoof gebied het.

Aan die mure van die portretgalerie sien ons die beeltenisse van baie geskiedkundige persone. Daar onder is die van die dapper en edelmoedige Andries Pretorius, die held van die slag van Bloedrivier, waar die stroom van barbaardom in Suid-Afrika geker is en wat vir ons „Dingansdag“ tot 'n feesdag gemaak het, en die van sy jong seun Marthinus, wat soos reeds vermeld, Pretoria gestig het en die eerste president was van Transvaal van 1857 tot 1871.

Dan is daar die portret skilderye van nog ander uit die gelukkige dae van die Republiek soos pres. Steyn, genl. Joubert, die ongelukkige De la Rey, pres. sir John Brand, wat genoem is die Vader van sy Volk, staatskretaris dr. Leyds, wat beskon is te die moedike man van sy tyd in Suid-Afrika, en prokureur generaal Koeter.

Dan is daar stukke wat weens hul grootte en belangwekkendheid dadelik die aandag op die mure vestig soos Maschaupt se uitstekende na-maaksel van Rembrandt se Nagteg, 'n geskenk uit Holland wat pres. Düsselde grootte het as die „oon-spronklike skilderstuk in die Ryksmuseum in Amsterdam, en die geskiedkundige skildery van die Volksraad deur Wichgraff, 'n Duitse kunstenaar wat Transvaal besoek het tydens die uitbrek van die Tweede Vryheidsoorlog en hierdie stuk klaai gemaak het net voor sy vertrek aan die begin van 1900.

Hierin word 'n volle sifting van die Volksraad voorgestel, met pres. Kruger as voorsitter en naas hom staatskretaris Reitz, toe hulle 'n burger-afvaardiging met 'n versoek om die oorlog te verklaar teen Engeland op 9 Oktober 1899, die dag waarop die Republiek se nimmastam in die hande gestel is van die Britse gesant in Pretoria, is woord staan. Die persone is byna lewensgroot geskilder, en daar hulle getrou weer-gawes is, kan 'n mens jou die ge-

skiedkundige waarde van die stuk voorstel.

Onder die ere-swaarde, behalwe die wat aan pres. Kruger behoort het, is daar twee wat besondere vermelding verdien; die een wat aan genl. Smuts geskenk is deur die in-gesetenes van Pretoria na afloop van die Tweede Vryheidsoorlog en geplaas is tussen 'n hele aantal verluete adresse en goue kassies waarmee die ere-burgerskap van verskeie stede aan hom toegesig is, die ander een die wat aan genl. Cronje geskenk is deur Franse patriote en wat 'n mens daaraan herinner dat bloed dikker is as water. In die tuiste van sy voorvaders is dit nog nie vergeet nie dat hy algestam het van die Hugenoot Cronier, wat hom in die Kaap kom vestig het in 1688 na die herroeping van die Edik van Nantes.

In die groot kamer met die geskenkstukke van generaal Botha word 'n mens die eerste getref deur die twee vlak van Transvaal en die Vrystaat waaronder hy in die Tweede Vryheidsoorlog geveg het, terwyl daar aan die muur aan die oorkant portretskilderye in volle lengte van hom en mev. Botha hang. In gransieuse houding staan hulle daar, en 'n mens'vul dankbaar dat die kunstenaar hulle vir ons en vir alle tye verewig het op 'n tydskyn in hul lewe, toe hulle mis-kien die innemendste was. Hulle is geskilder in die buiteland, deur Anton van Welle, 'n Nederlandse portretskilder wat in Engeland en op die Vasteland bekendheid verwerf het.

Daar is drie borsbeelde van die Generaal wat op verskillende stadia van sy loopbaan gemaak is en heel-partly groot fotografiese groepe van historiese belang. Hierby is onder andere een van die krygsraad wat in 1899 in Colenso gehou was, een van die ontmoeting tussen Botha en Kitchener op Middelburg Transvaal, in 1901 en een van die vergadering van die Transvaalse Kabinet in 1907, toe Botha deur lord Selborne ingesweer is as Eerste Minister van Transvaal.

As bewys van 'n watter ere hy het en verre gehou was, is daar kassies van soliede goud of silwer van verskillende ontwerpe waarmee hom die ere-burgerskap van Londen, Edinburgh, Manchester, Glasgow en ander plekke toegesig is, 'n silwer-sigaardoos en 'n silwer-tafelreger en 'n groot aantal silwertroffels wat aantoon hoe dikwels hy die hoekstee van openbare geboue gelê het. Dan is daar nog talryke verluete adresse aan hom. 'n Besonder mooie is die uit Engeland, met goudletter op skippladdop gegraveer en die „Union Jack“ en die „Vierkleur“ in elke hoek.

Behalwe hierdie genoemde stukke is daar nog 'n uitstekende versame-liking klippes, Boesman-relieke, Kaffer-kurosieste en skatte uit Griekeland, Italië, Peru en verskillende dele van Asie, Australië en elders. Maar soortgelyke voorwerpe kry 'n mens ook in ander museums te sien. My doel was maar net om te wys op 'n paar silwer Suid-Afrikaanse stukke wat in ver-

(Vervolg op bladsy 41.)



## MENEER VAN OS WORD HIPNOTIS

Deur P. W. HAVENGA

"HIPNOTISME" is meneer Van Os, is 'n toestand van slaap aangebring deur suggestie—

sogestie deur 'n ander persoon met 'n sterker wilskrag. Dit word natuurlik beweer dat enige persoon deur 'n sekere mate van studie die bevoegdheid kan verkry om ander persone aan sy wil te onderwerp, maar myns insiens behaaf sulke mensse nooit volstaan sukses en word hulle nooit beoehdlike hipnotiste nie. Persoonlikheid, meneer, persoonlikheid is een van die verstaanste verstandes. Jy moet 'n man van karakter wees en intellektuele krag besit. Waar jy jou ook al begeef, moet jou teenwoordigheid gevoel word. Ander mense moet teenoor jou 'n minderwaardigheidskompleks ontwikkel.

Nou ja, laat ons aanneem dat 'n persoon daardie hoedanigheid besit, dan kan hy deur intensiewe studie daardie eienskappe so ontwikkel dat hy die handeling en gevoelens van ander persone kan beheer. Basie sal natuurlik ook afhang van die geestesgesteldheid van die persoon wat jy onder jou beheer wil kry. 'n Persoon by voorbeeld wat in 'n toestand van vrees verkeer, sal 'n baie gunstige onderwerp wees. Skep daarby 'n atmosfeer van misterie, en die effek is volmaak.

Nou ja, oor die voor of nadele van hipnotisme wil ek nie uitwy nie, meneer. Moontlik sal 'n toeg met my daaroor van mening verskil, maar ek meen stellig dat die mate van sukses wat daarmee in mediese kringe behaal is, ons bepaald stof tot gunstige ooringing laat.

Ek is tans binnegom om lesings te kry van 'n professor in Yale, en ek moet eerlik erken dat die paar toets wat ek tot dusver uitgevoer het met ongeloflike sukses bekroon is; maar natuurlik het ek die kennis baie maklik geassimileer. Dit kom nie vir ekken so maklik te staan nie. U sien, meneer, 'n mens moet verstand besit en jy moet kan toepas wat jy daar geleer het. Binne nog 'n paar maande meen ek om heeltemal 'n bedrewe hipnotis te wees!

Die paar maande was dan ook spoedig verstreke en die noodlot het spoedig vir meneer Van Os die geleentheid gebied om sy hipnotiese krag op sonderlinge wyse te toets.

Dit was 'n nag, soos Suid-Afrika alkeen ken, 'n nag van sterrepij, 'n nag swanger met geheimen. Dit was die uur wanneer die mens se weerstandvermoë om sy sagste peil is en wanneer hy minder vas slaap.

Soos 'n storm wat plotseling ophou, so word mnr. Van Os se onharmoniese gestoor beëindig, en hy keer terug van die land waarheen sy strome hom geveer het, waar hy as wêreldberoemde hipnotis voor konings en sidders sy kuns beoefen het. Die sturms wat op onseremontese wyse inbruk gemaak het op mnr. Van Os se roemryke loopbaan, het daar eens in die duister binne die winkel beweeg.

Die gekraak van 'n vloerplank onder 'n ligte voetstap was oorsaak dat mnr. Van Os homself in 'n koue sweelbad bevind, maar die gedagte dat iemand besig was om hom van

party van sy aardse besittings te berof, het hom moed ingeboesem en hy het besef dat hy dadelik handelend moes optree. Twee dinge moes hy in hande kry—sy flitsig en sy rewolwer. 'n Gloed van woede oormeester hom en 'n soot van bloeddors pak hom beet.

Dat iemand dit kon wag om by sy winkel in te breek! Die gedagte word onthoudbaar. Maar wag, hy sal die karnallie laat les ope, dit wil sa as sy moed hom nie verlaat nie! Laat hy maar net eers die rewolwer in hande kry, en, ja, die boeie wat hy by sommige van sy toetsgebruik het—dit moet hy nie vergeet nie.

Al die genoemde voorwerpe het mnr. Van Os sonder moeite gewinnend om 'n enkele stoel omver te loop of om sy groottoon op gevolgelyke wyse met die spieëlglas in holting te bring. Tot aan die tande gewapen het mnr. Van Os homself met versigtige voetstap na die winkel begeef. Die groot moment was daar! Die knoppie van die flitsig word plotseling afgedruk en 'n helder-wit ligstraal spel oor die vloer en teen die toonbank. 'n Oesluid, half geskreu en half gemoepel, kom van die rigting van die rakke. 'n Paar oe waarin vrees duidelik te sien is, staar mnr. Van Os aan.

"Hande op, of ek skiet!" en mnr. Van Os beweeg die rewolwer dreigend.

Met die woorde herwin mnr. Van Os weer sy kalmte. Die ooringing is binne sy bereik. Sy stem en sy handeling is kalm en vasberade.

"Draai met jou gesig na die muur toe! Hande agter die rug!" Die bevel van mnr. Van Os word uitgevoer.

"So ja,—hande bymekaar!" Eensklaps word die boeie toegeklap oor die polste van die inbreker en mnr. Van Os is meester van die toestand. Hy glimlag tevred.

Vir die gevangene is daar niks anders te doen as om homself aan sy lot te onderwerp nie.

"Jy is 'n inbreker," sa mnr. Van Os, "en jy is gevang! Dit sal jou vyf jaar kos!"

Wat nou gemaak? Hom aanja polisiekantoor toe?

Dit was toe dat mnr. Van Os 'n inspirasie gekry het. Hier is die kans van sy lewe!

"Kyk in my oe!" gebied hy. Mnr. Van Os se oe kyk stip in die van die ander, asof hy 'n gat in sy kop wil boor. Dan maak hy 'n reeks geheiminnige bewegings met sy hande. In die oe van die gevangene kom daar 'n uitdrukking van leegheid; en in die van mnr. Van Os triomf. Hy praat met 'n dromenge stem: "Herhaal alles wat ek jou voorsê—Ek is 'n inbreker!"

"Ek is 'n inbreker!" herhaal die gevangene met 'n klanklose stem. "Jy het getrag om vir my, meneer Siegfried van Os, van Stuursvlei, van my wettige eiendom te berof! Herhaal dit!"

Op dieselfde klanklose en meganiese wyse word die gesegde herhaal.

"Goed," sa meneer Van Os, "at nou maar!" Die bevel word uitgevoer.

"Jy het inbraak gepleeg met die doel om my te berof, ja selfs te vermoor, miskien. Ek is van voorneme om 'n brief aan die polisie te rig. Die brief sal jy persoonlik gaan aflewer, en dan sal jy daar wag totdat jy gearrester word! Herhaal nou alles wat ek gesê het!" Die gevangene doen soos hy gebied word, en vir 'n paar minute nog staar mnr. Van Os in die oe van sy slagoffer, en maak nog 'n paar bewegings met sy hande. Hy haal die boeie van die man se hande af, gaan by 'n klein tafeltjie sit en skryf die volgende brief:

Die Sersjant van Polisie, Stuursvlei.

Meneer.—Die draer hiervan is 'n inbreker wat ek op heterdaad betrap het. Sy persoon is my onbekend. Ek het hom onder hipnotiese kontrole geplaas en hom gelas om homself aan u te gaan oorges. Myre tree ek weer met u in verbinding.

S. van Os.

Die brief word sorgvuldig toegevoeg en in die hande van die atnie drommel geplaas.

"Skud jou sakke uit!" gebied mnr. Van Os. Dit word gedoen en 'n paar ringe, armbande en enige geldstukke kom te voorskyn. Mnr. Van Os was eers van plan om die gestelde om te plaas, dit terug in die sakke van die gevangene. Ook stap hy nog na die vertoonkas, haal daar 'n paar goue horlosies uit, en voeg dit by die ander goet. Dit sal die bewyse teen die misdadiger versterk.

Na 'n tydjie maak mnr. Van Os die voordeur oop en stoot sy prisoemier uit in die koue naglug met die woorde: "Loop nou en doen net soos ek jou gebied het!" Daarna keer hy terug na sy lekker warm bed om te droom van die roem en eer wat hom voor die deur staan. Die koerante sal vol wees van sy verrigtings van die nag. Sy naam sal op elke se lippe wees. "n Genie op die gebied van hipnotisme" sal hulle hom noem.

Intussen het die inbreker van fluites loers ingestaan langs die hoofstraat van Stuursvlei. Op 'n hoek bly hy staan om eers die artikels in sy sak te inspekteer, terwyl 'n skalkse glimlag oor sy mond speel. Langs die straat af kom 'n persoon, 'n mynwerker op weg werk toe. Hy hardloop yinnig die man tegemoet, en uitasem versoek hy hom om hom te beduie waar die polisiekantoor is.

"Regop langs die straat—die vierde straat links!" was die antwoord.

"Hoever?"

"Omtrent 'n kwart myl—maar wat makeer?"

"Ek is dodelik gewond—'n geval van moord en inbraak hier onder. Ek moet sorg dat ek dadelik 'n dokter in die hande kry!"

Met die woorde prop hy die brief van meneer Van Os in die hande van die verbaasde man. "In die naam van die Koning gebied ek jou om hierdie brief dadelik in die hande van die polisie te besorg! Hier is twee sjielings vir jou moet!"

Daarop verdwyn hy toe om, soos hy beweer het, 'n dokter te gaan soek onderwyl die arbeider die brief na die polisiestasie neem.

'n Mynwerker wat 'n paar uur sonder rede in 'n sel moes verduur, en gevolglik hopeloos laat vir sy werk is, is nie 'n alte redelike persoon nie, en toe mnr. Van Os met stralende gesigt, later sy verskyning by die polisiekantoor maak om die uitdaging van sy hipnotiese kontrole te verneem moes vir kort, dik beentjies hom net lelik dra om te verhoed dat hy lewendig verstand word.

Die inbreker van die vorige nag, 'n onbekende persoon in die omgewing, was spoorloos verdwyn te same met meneer Van Os se besittings, asook met die paar goue horlosies wat hy hom present gegee het!

## IN DIE OU MUSEUM IN PRETORIA.

(Vervolg van bladsy 33.)

band staan met ons gekiedenis en daardeur miskien ook andere te bewoog om daarheen te gaan.

Die Ou Museum word so genoem om dit te onderskei van die Nuwe Museum, waarin die dierkundige en geologiese versamelings gehuisves is. Die twee saam word genoem die Transvaalse Museum.

Die hoop word gekoester dat in hierdie jaar nog die "Krugerhuis" geopen sal kan word onder beheer van die Transvaalse Museum. Die huis van die President, met die leuse by die ingang wat geskrik is deur mnr. Nellmapius (daar sal onthou word hoeveel stryd hierdie saak indertyd uitgelok het) is onlangs ontrent deur die Moedersbond, wat dit 'n aantal jare gebruik het as 'n moedershuis. Die woning word nou weer gevind en herstel om so na moontlik daar weer soos in die dae van die President uit te sien. As dit klaar is sal al die Kruger-gedenkstukke wat nou in die Ou Museum is, daarheen oorgebring word en sal die kamers so gerangskik word dat dit omtrent weer so is as toe Oom Paul en Tant Sannie daar gewoon het.

'n Student wat geld wou hê, skryf aan sy vader: "Met my gaan dit nog goed, net my beurs is leeg."

Sy vader antwoord: "Met my gaan dit net so goed, net ek het glad nie meet 'n beurs nie."

Hy: "Jou neef het geweier om my op die dansparty te herken. Hy dink seker dat ek nie sy gelyke is nie."

Sy: "Natuurlik is jy sy gelyke. Hy is niks anders as 'n swaap nie."

## LIST OF CATALOGUES AND REGISTERS

1913 - 1964

### Staatmuseum

#### Acquisitions entry registers

- December 1893 - December 1897
- September 1897 - 28 August 1900

#### Catalogues

- Anthropological collection
  - Catalogus der Etnographische Collectie van het Staats Museum (Catalogue P)
- Historical collection
  - “Bescheiden, voorwerpen, enz, betrekking hebbend op de Transvaalsche Deputasie in Europa 1883/1884”  
followed in the same catalogue by  
“Documenten, van min of meer belang voor de Geschiedenis van Transvaal”



**LIST OF LETTER CODES USED AS PREFIX WITH  
ACCESSION NUMBERS TO INDICATE  
A SPECIFIC CATALOGUE OR COLLECTION**

<b>ARG</b>	Archaeology objects in Catalogue of Archaeological specimens
<b>ARGF</b>	Photographs in Catalogue of Ethnological and Archaeological photographs and drawings (started by Radcliffe-Brown), but probably used only from 1953/4
<b>B</b>	Kruger Catalogue (accession nos. 805 - 838), volume 1, p. 137 (abbreviation for Afrikaans: <i>Bygekom</i> ).
<b>B W</b>	Used on some objects (Boer War?)
<b>C</b>	Used for objects regarded as curios; catalogue missing (see figure 30)
<b>Docum</b>	Documents in the catalogue “Bescheiden, voorwerpen, enz, betrekking hebbend op de Transvaalsche Deputasie in Europa 1883/1884”  followed in the same catalogue by  “Documenten, van min of meer belang voor de Geschiedenis van Transvaal”
<b>E</b>	Probably used for objects in the missing ethnology catalogue
<b>E.C. or ECat</b>	Ethnology objects in Ethnographic Catalogue Africa (note by Rossouw)
<b>E.E.</b>	“Foreign” ethnology objects in E.E. (European/Elsewhere?) Catalogue
<b>ET./Et</b>	Anthropology objects in the Main Catalogue of the Department of Ethnology Africa; may have come into use very late, as all the extant cards of the card catalogue give an accession number without a prefix. Haughton used the prefix <b>TM</b> , later on replaced by ET. (See figure 46, top corner left)
<b>Eth.</b>	Used for objects in the Ethographica Catalogue (missing)

## ANNEXURE 5

Rough estimate for Index.

To compile or formulate an index for the "Old Vicarage", the following items should be taken into consideration:

1. The different rooms, show- and other cases used for storing specimens should be numbered for index-reference. This can be done at any convenient time.
2. All specimens to be compared with the old books.
3. The index must be worked out on different files which are to be in alphabetic order. They must be of a good paper, so to be bound into a book after the work is done.
4. It does not matter which file is worked out first. Say if in the Director may decide that the Botha - Pursuits... or other collections should be started with in view of the coming election-campaign, it could so be done without interfering with the alphabetic order. Of course a once started division should be finished before others are tackled.
5. Every division, f. in Art, Botha Coll. etc. etc. must have enough space left in the files for reference to possible alterations and additions for which space should be left at the end of the indexbook.
6. The stored specimens should be assorted, packed and labelled according to index. This of course is the most difficult part of the work in view of former mistakes in labelling, through which now every specimen has to be carefully compared with the books.

(It means work for a good many months, dependent on present conditions).



## CATALOGUE SYSTEM OF THE ARCHÆOLOGICAL SURVEY, UNION OF SOUTH AFRICA.

By C. van RIET LOWE, D.Sc., Director,

1. ACQUISITIONS.—Acquisitions to the museum are recorded in an ACQUISITION BOOK which reflects the date of receipt, the name of the donor, catalogue number and a brief description of the acquisition and locality from which it originated. Each acquisition is given a serial number by years—a new series starting every year. The first acquisition in 1944 is numbered 1/44, the second 2/44 and so on serially, up to n/44. All specimens from the same geological horizon of the same site are given the same number. If a site has more than one horizon, or if it is necessary to differentiate between portions of a site, sub-numbers are given; such as 1/44/3 to specimens from the surface, 1/44/2 to those from a particular horizon below the surface, and 1/44/1 to those from a lower, specified stratum at say, bed-rock.

Except in the case of microliths, this catalogue number is written in Indian or Chinese ink on each specimen. When specimens are too small to be marked, they are placed in containers labelled externally and internally, with as far as possible, a few marked specimens in the container.

Except under special circumstances, subsequent acquisitions from the same site are given the same number. A surface site may have yielded Cat. No. 23/37 in 1937 and is not revisited until 1944 when more specimens are collected. Provided they belong to the same assemblage and occur on the same horizon at the same site, these later finds are also numbered 23/37.

When necessary to retain the identity of a collection by one donor, the collection is retained and, as often as possible, exhibited under the donor's name as, for example, "THE KISSACK COLLECTION," and given a serial catalogue number. In such cases each site and/or horizon is given a sub-number under the comprehensive catalogue number assigned to the collection.

The museum catalogue is linked with a record or filing system to facilitate reference to correspondence concerning any acquisition. The general ACQUISITION FILE covers all casual donations. Sub-files are opened for field workers who constantly submit material to the museum. Special files exist for the Geological Survey with which the Archæological Survey enjoys the fullest collaboration. File or sub-file numbers are recorded on the catalogue cards and catalogue numbers are endorsed on the relevant correspondence, so that the link between specimens and correspondence is maintained. This link is an important feature of the system followed by the Survey. It not only provides the date of acquisition, but also the donor's report on the place, circumstances, etc., of his discovery.

2. CATALOGUE.—Because it only deals with one subject, the museum of the Archæological Survey is highly specialised. Every specimen or group of specimens in the museum needs to be catalogued and cross-indexed in such a way that it can be traced by the number marked on



it, by the name of the donor, by its cultural horizon, by the scene of its discovery or by its position in the museum. References to publications and relevant correspondence must also be readily available.

A donor may visit the museum and ask to be shown the specimens he donated; one student may wish to study the remains of a particular culture, another the remains from a given locality, and so on. In each case the starting point is different, but there must be no hesitation or hitch—especially in the case of a donor wishing to see the material he sent. The catalogue, card indexes and cross-references must therefore be arranged in such a way that one is enabled to ascertain immediately all the available information about any specimen from whatever angle one may approach it. The system must therefore be foolproof, yet flexible.

The collections are neither classified nor catalogued typologically—in the general sense in which that term is employed. They are essentially “study collections” with as much emphasis on the technological and geological backgrounds as on the typological. A worker might conceivably wish to study a particular element or tool-type, as Goodwin has recently done in the case of bored-stones, but this approach is so seldom employed that special provision for it is not considered necessary.

3. CARD INDEX.—There are four card indexes. These are filed under (1) Catalogue number, (2) Locality, (3) Donor and (4) Culture.

Each card includes the Catalogue number, the locality of the discovery, geological horizon, material culture, the position in the museum, donor and a space for notes on (a) correspondence which bears the catalogue number, (b) publications and (c) comparable material.

Cards are of thin cardboard and measure 6 ins. by 4 ins. A typical specimen is:—

CATALOGUE NO. . . . .	9/43.
LOCALITY . . . . .	“Rainbow Cave,” Makapansgat No. 317, Potgietersrust, Transvaal.
HORIZON . . . . .	Basic Breccia.
CULTURE . . . . .	Pietersburg.
MUSEUM POSITION . . . . .	Case 28, Drawers 12, 13 and 14.
DONOR . . . . .	Archæological Survey.
REMARKS . . . . .	See (a) File B. 20/3.
	(b) van Riet Lowe, C.: “The Makapan Caves: An Archæological Note,” S.A.J. Sci., Vol. XXXV, pp. 371-381. Illus. 1938.
	(c) van Riet Lowe, C.: “Further Notes on the Makapan Caves,” S.A.J. Sci., Vol. XL, pp. 289-295. Illus. 1943.
	(d) cf. 23/44.

All the information given on the CATALOGUE CARD is repeated on the cards filed under DONOR, LOCALITY and CULTURE.

4. SITE CHARTS.—Supplementary to the catalogue system are the site charts. These are of paper of foolscap size. Space is provided for



such details as appear in the Catalogue, but the real object of the chart is to provide space for brief descriptions of the site, the artifacts, their associations (faunal remains, etc.), a LOCALITY SKETCH and GEOLOGICAL SECTION. In the absence of a guide, the locality sketch is the only record that enables one to locate and therefore to visit the site. For example, the locality "Rainbow Cave, Makapansgat No. 317, Potgietersrust, Transvaal" given in the example of a Catalogue card reproduced above, is not very helpful to future workers unless they have access to a locality sketch that shows the position of the cave in relation to readily recognisable features in the vicinity. The main purpose of these charts is therefore to simplify and ensure identification of sites, to recognise geological horizons and to add brief additional notes.

Unless a co-worker or informant is known to be a sufficiently reliable observer, charts are generally confined to sites which have been examined by a member of the staff of the Survey; they can naturally not be completed for every acquisition, but are in regular use for all Survey field-work.

5. GENERAL.—All cataloguing is controlled by an expert who is personally responsible for filling in the first card. He leaves the typing and completion of the remainder to a typist. In similar fashion, the complete marking of specimens is left to a lay assistant under supervision. Specimens which have been described and illustrated are marked by an indelible red dot immediately below the number previously marked on them.

While the system generally works very well, it is by no means perfect. It is, however, sufficiently flexible to permit the prehistorian to cope with such fine and accurate records as are demanded of him. For example, material recovered from stratified deposits from an excavation demands special treatment. Cataloguing by sub-numbers is often clumsy and tedious and, on occasions, even impossible. Where the specimens are large enough to be marked, the level at which each specimen was found is marked on it; and objects from each level are stored in containers which are labelled (externally and internally) with the catalogue number, the grid number and the level concerned. Only a few specimens within the container are marked. In the case of small, especially microlithic material, the best containers are cloth bags. In this way, "x," "y" and "z" co-ordinates as measured from a fixed point of origin and datum line, are attached to the specimens and any future worker can readily place each individual specimen in its exact position in relation to that of any other recovered from the excavation. In this connection, see Mr. B. D. Malan's contribution on "Archæological Method in Cave Excavation" published in SAMAB, Vol. 3, No. 8, p. 224 of December, 1944.



A SYSTEM OF  
CATALOGUING ETHNOGRAPHIC MATERIAL  
IN MUSEUMS.

ANNEXURE 7

The Scheme that is here described for the compilation of a card catalogue of ethnographic material in museums is the outcome of considerable study of the routine needs of a museum ethnographic department and the convenience of students, and of anxiety over the very backward state of our records of the material culture of the native peoples of South Africa. The scheme was originally outlined in SAMAB, September 1940, with arguments in favour of its adoption which need not be repeated here. Such modifications as now appear are the result of my own attempt to put the scheme into practice, and of some helpful criticisms and suggestions from other museum workers, and in particular from Dr. N.J. van Warmelo, Government Ethnologist.

The most important change is that general information concerning the different specimens no longer appears on the individual cards. This will be discussed later.

To assist those who undertake the work there are included lists of terms to be used for the various objects, a list of works where terms to be used in descriptions of some of the objects may be found, and a table of South African tribes arranged and numbered according to groups. There is also a specimen of the cards to be used with particulars as to where they may be obtained.

It is earnestly hoped that all South African museums which have in their collections objects of South African ethnography, however few they may be, will adopt this system of cataloguing, in order that we may have a uniform system throughout the country, and that we may through it be enabled to build up a proper picture of South African native material culture.

INSTRUCTIONS.

Each object should have a separate card, unless a number of objects are identical, e.g. several arrows. Even if several objects have been given the same number they can be separated as 1a, 1b, 1c, etc.

The following information should be given:-

1. Registered number of object, preceded by the museum's initials, e.g. SAM 56.
2. Tribe or group and number indicating division and subdivision as shown in table, p.
3. Locality, district, and province, where object was obtained.
4. Name of object, according to terminology given later.
5. Native name of object. This should be given in the singular and checked in the latest standard dictionary of the language concerned.
6. Photograph or sketch of object, with scale or measurement. The main measurement should be given and in some cases where photography is used it may be necessary to sketch details that do not show up, e.g. incised patterns.

7. Description of object. a. details of appearance such as are not evident from the picture, e.g. nature and colour of the materials, or the shape of such parts as cannot be seen, e.g. the concave base of a basket. Particular care should be taken to be accurate in describing materials, e.g. not to call all basketwork material "grass". Where possible the scientific name of the raw-material should be given. b. information obtained with the specimen and pertaining to it alone e.g. "belonged to Dingaan's favourite wife".
8. How and when obtained - by whom collected, given, or sold, and date of entry into museum. Loan collections, if accepted, should be kept apart, and not given to ordinary serial registration numbers.
9. Where object is to be found in museum - noted in pencil for domestic convenience.
10. For items 2,3,5 and 7b, it should be indicated whether the information is known to be absolutely authentic or is merely concluded from various types of evidence. This should be done by putting next to the statement a letter referring to the following key of the possible classes of information.
  - A. Information supplied by donor, seller or collector and known to be authentic.
  - B. Information supplied by donor, seller or collector but not certain.
  - C. Conclusion from known collecting field of donor, seller or collector.
  - D. Conclusion from evidence in record book or on label on specimen.
  - E. Conclusion from correspondence or conversation.
  - F. Conclusion from comparison with authentic specimens.
  - G. Conclusion from nature of materials or technique used.
  - H. Conclusion from native name given.
  - I. Conclusion from place name given.
  - J. Conclusion from tribal name given.
  - K. Conclusion from literature.

All but "A" to be marked in red ink, so as to make it at once apparent that the information is not absolutely authentic. Without this precaution it is impossible, in the present state of our collections, to approach the study of material culture in a scientific manner.

Attached hereto is a specimen of the card that should be used, showing the way of setting out the information. The information should be written in a clear hand or typewritten. If any item of information is uncertain, and there is reasonable hope of being able to check it, it may be written temporarily in pencil.



The arrangement of the cards in the filing cabinet, after the information has been recorded on them, depends largely on the reference requirements of the museum concerned. For ordinary reference purposes it seems to me that the most useful is a first division according to objects, with sub-divisions according to tribal groups. Division into subjects is a research requirement, and one which would itself need considerable research. Rather than divide the cards themselves into subjects, which would involve making duplicates for objects that belong to more than one subject, it would be better to keep a short separate index, with a card for each subject, and on the card the names of all objects likely to be connected with that subject.