



SUMMARY

South African history writing is influenced by the racial, class and ideological complexities of South African society. These complexities lead to two basic assumptions in the study of South African history writing. Firstly that Blacks have produced no history of their own or secondly that race is not a criterion to define a school of history. The first assumption arises amongst historiographers who only study history written according to "scientific" criteria. Technically this argument is correct, but limits the scope of enquiry for the historian as he will not enquire into those viewpoints raised in the sources consulted for this dissertation.

The second assumption argues that to define a "Black school" heightens racial divisions in South Africa. The idea of a "Black school" is also dismissed because it detracts from a proper understanding South African society based on a class analysis. Doctrinaire adherence to a class analysis has deprived South African historiography of the insights of Blacks who perceive the past in terms of their being-Black.

To answer these objections sources that were studied would not normally have been considered, namely literary works and those that dealt with the status of Blacks within in society. Political documents were studied, not for what they said, but for how and why they said it.

There was a distinct correlation noticeable between the articulation of a perception and the era in which it developed. Certain themes that were noticeable in all the eras that were considered, as well as amongst all the generations of writers that were studied. Preeminent was the question of land dispossession. The question of landownership was intertwined with a number of other themes, but remained the most prominent theme. Other identifiable themes were those that related to different kinds of dispossession. The latter concepts dealt with the loss of a cultural, ethical, philosophical, economic, political and social heritage. It was here that the most marked contrast was notice-



able between the early and modern writers. Early writers were conditionally optimistic about the changes wrought in society by colonization.

Modern writers addressed the same questions but were vociferous in their condemnation of what had happened in the past. Their perceptions developed at a time when the alienation between Black and White had intensified. Modern writers discerned a deliberate pattern in historical developments intended to relegate Blacks to the position of an exploitable mass irrespective of whether this was by economic or other methods. There was a noticeable correlation between perception and ideology.

Irrespective of the era in which the perception developed all writers showed that they were not concerned with the past for its own sake, but indicated that they were trying to understand the present in terms of the past. Thus the historian attempting to interpret the South African past should remember that Blacks also have a number of questions to put to the past that might give different answers to those expected.



OPSOMMING

Suid-Afrikaanse geskiedskrywing word beïnvloed deur die rasse, klasse en ideologiese kompleksiteite van die Suid-Afrikaanse samelewing. Hierdie kompleksiteite het twee basiese aannames tot gevolg by die studie van Suid-Afrikaanse geskiedskrywing. Eerstens het Swartes tot nou toe geen geskiedenis geskep nie, tweedens dat ras nie 'n kriterium is waarvolgens 'n geskiedenis skool gedefinieer kan word nie. Die eerste aanname ontstaan onder historiograwe wat slegs geskiedenis bestudeer wat volgens "wetenskaplike" kriteria geskryf word. Streng gesproke is hierdie argument korrek, maar dit beperk die terrein van ondersoek vir die historikus want hy sal nie vanselfsprekend let op die gesigspunte wat na vore gekom het gedurende die verloop van hierdie verhandeling.

Die tweede aanname lui dat die aanvaarding van 'n "Swart skool" van geskiedskrywing sou bydra tot rasse-spanninge in Suid-Afrika. Die begrip "Swart skool" word ook verwerp omdat dit afbreuk sou doen aan 'n volledige begrip van die Suid-Afrikaanse samelewing gebaseer op 'n klasse analise. Die doktrinêre navolging van 'n klasse analise het die Suid-Afrikaanse geskiedskrywing ontnem van die insigte van Swartes wat die verlede sien op grond van "Swart-wees".

Daar was 'n duidelike wisselwerking tussen die daarstel van 'n persepsie van die verlede en die era waarbinne dit ontwikkel het. Sekere temas was bespeurbaar in al die tydperke wat aandag geniet het, asook onder opeen volgende geslagte Swart skrywers. Die onteiening van grond het voorrang geniet. Die grondbesit vraagstuk is vervleg met ander temas, maar bly primêr. Ander identifiseerbare temas het ook saamgehang met onteiening of verlies van 'n kulturele, etiese, filosofiese, ekonomiese, politieke en sosiale erfenis. Dit is by hierdie aspekte dat die onderskeid tussen vroeë en moderne skrywers merkbaar was. Vroeë skrywers was tot 'n mate optimisties oor die veranderings in die samelewing wat kolonisasie te weë gebring het.



Moderne skrywers het dieselfde vrae aangespreek maar was uitgesproke in hulle veroordeeling van wat in die verlede gebeur het. Hulle persepsie het ontwikkel in 'n tyd waar die vervreemding tussen Swart en Wit verskerp het. Moderne skrywers het 'n opsetlike patroon in die historiese ontwikkeling gesien wat daarop gemik was om Swartes in die posisie van uitbuitbare massa te plaas, ongeag of hierdie posisie deur ekonomiese of ander metodes bereik is. Daar was 'n duidelike samehang tussen persepsie en ideologie.

Ongeag die era waarin die persepsie ontwikkel het, het alle skrywers getoon dat hulle nie in die verlede op sigself belang gestel het nie, maar hulle het getoon dat hulle poog om die hede in terme van die verlede te verstaan. Dus moet die historikus wat poog om die Suid-Afrikaanse verlede te vertolk in gedagte hou dat Swartes ook 'n aantal vrae aan die verlede het wat ander antwoorde sal oplewer as wat tans verstrek word.