

# Exhibiting apartheid: whites, Malays, and absent slaves in the displays of the South African Cultural History Museum

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## ABSTRACT

On 6 April 1966, there was a whites-only display opening for the newly established South African Cultural History Museum in Cape Town. A week later, on 13 April, there was a separate opening for the Malay community. This paper chronicles the attitudes and circumstances leading to the creation of the displays and the ideological imperatives that informed them. It demonstrates that Malays and slavery were both included in the first display schedule, developed in 1959, although the emphasis was on European culture, white nation-building, and 'ancient civilisations'. Yet when the museum opened in 1966, slavery was omitted, despite the fact that it was housed in the Slave Lodge, while the Malays were given an expanded format, without reference to slavery, even though many had been brought to the Cape as slaves. The reasons for this outcome are explored, proposing that apartheid ideologues were continuing a trend in their understanding of Cape history that denied slave history for decades in order to avoid uncomfortable questions being asked about the labour that had been used to build the Cape colony. In contrast, the Malays were included to emphasise their perceived link to the Afrikaners, such as their role in the development of Afrikaans.

KEY WORDS: Apartheid, 'civilisation', displays, ideology, slavery, Malays, museum.

The representation of the past in museums must always be considered within the political and cultural contexts.<sup>1</sup>

It has been evident for several decades that museums are ideologically driven, influenced by political and socio-economic considerations.<sup>2</sup> In the South African context, Wright and Mazel<sup>3</sup> argued in the mid-1980s that "The museum is not, and cannot be, an ideologically neutral institution given simply to the factual display of past and contemporary themes", while more recently Crooke<sup>4</sup> has proposed with reference to museums in South Africa and Northern Ireland that history can be conveyed in a manner that

denies the past, manipulates the truth and deliberately misleads. In an environment where culture and identity is highly contested, exclusion from the canon of the established notion of history can be interpreted as a deliberate act of suppression.

Reflecting on the relationship between museum displays and ideology, Macdonald<sup>5</sup> referred to museum displays as "historical signatures of their time", while Luke has pointed out that

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## NOTES AND REFERENCES

<sup>1</sup> E. Crooke, 'Dealing with the past: museums and heritage in Northern Ireland and Cape Town, South Africa', *International Journal of Heritage Studies* 11 (2), 2005, pp. 131–42, p. 134.

<sup>2</sup> For example, D.J. Meltzer, 'Ideology and material culture', in R.A. Gould & M.B. Schiffer, eds., *Modern material culture: the archeology of us*. New York: Academic Press, 1981, pp. 113–25; J.B. Wright & A.D. Mazel, 'Bastions of ideology: the depiction of precolonial history in the museums of Natal and KwaZulu', *SAMAB* 17 (7 & 8), 1987, pp. 301–10.

<sup>3</sup> J.B. Wright & A.D. Mazel, 'Bastions of ideology', p. 301; see also J.B. Wright & A.D. Mazel, 'Controlling the past in the museums of Natal and KwaZulu', *Critical Arts* 5 (3), 1991, pp. 59–78.

<sup>4</sup> Crooke, 'Dealing with the past', p. 135.

<sup>5</sup> S. Macdonald, *Behind the scenes at the science museum*. Materializing Culture series. Oxford: Berg, 2002, p. 87.

History exhibitions formalize norms of how to see without being seen inasmuch as the curators pose as unseen seers, and then fuse their vision with authority. In the organization of their exhibitions' spaces, the encription of any show's textual interpretations, and the coordination of an exhibit's aesthetic performances, curators are acting as normative agents, directing people what to see, think, and value.<sup>6</sup>

Luke commented further that museum displays “create conventional understandings”.<sup>7</sup> This paper aims to reveal the intent behind the apartheid exhibits produced for the newly founded South African Cultural History Museum (SACHM) in the 1960s. In essence, the exhibits were created both to normalise and reinforce the racial, social, and cultural order being promoted by the National Party (NP) and the Afrikaner Broederbond (AB) ideologues.<sup>8</sup>

Ideologically informed displays concern both the material included in displays, and what is omitted. In South Africa, this was especially palpable during apartheid. Not only was it evident at the SACHM, but also, for example, in the museums of Natal in the 1980s, where Wright and Mazel<sup>9</sup> highlighted the implications of ignoring the precolonial history of African people. Acknowledging this history in the displays would have meant confronting awkward questions about what colonisers had done to acquire their land. It was, therefore, convenient “to exclude African people from history altogether, and, since their existence can hardly be denied, push them off into separate ethnic rooms and into separate museums”.<sup>10</sup>

The apartheid period in South Africa (1948–94), which was founded on racial classification, discrimination, subjugation and exclusion, provides a cogent lens through which to investigate the relationship between ideological imperatives and museums. Museum practices of the 1950s and 1960s provide a salient example of racially informed ideologies that influenced museum practices as white NP and AB ideologues and their supporters, newly in power and implementing racially informed separate development practices, were recasting national cultural institutions, including museums, to embed and strengthen their apartheid vision.<sup>11</sup> A central tenet of this process was the establishment of the SACHM through the split of the South African Museum (SAM).<sup>12</sup> This resulted in the Archaeology and Anthropology collections, which relate to South Africa's indigenous Khoisan and Bantu-speaking inhabitants, being retained by the natural-history focused SAM. The cultural and historical collections that focused on whites, Europe and the European colonisation of South Africa, and ancient ‘civilisations’ formed the basis of the newly created SACHM. This institutional division promoted the notion that the indigenous people of South Africa formed part of the natural rather than the cultural history of South Africa.

Elsewhere I argued that the SACHM was in part inspired by the 1952 Van Riebeeck Tercentenary Festival (VRF), which represented a public display of white nation-building. Similarly, the museum's exhibits demonstrated how cultural and historical narratives, including the determination to establish an integrated white nation, were filtered through the lens of apartheid and offered as authentically South African.<sup>13</sup> This involved fostering the separation of the races in all aspects of life and promoting the notion that black and indigenous South Africans were ‘uncivilised’ and inferior to whites, although, as will be shown, there was ambivalence in the treatment of the Malay community. In effect, the museum and its displays served to mediate

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<sup>6</sup> T.W. Luke, *Museum politics: power plays at the exhibition*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2002, p. 3.

<sup>7</sup> Luke, *Museum politics*, p. 3.

<sup>8</sup> A.D. Mazel, ‘Apartheid's child: the creation of the South African Cultural History Museum in the 1950s and 1960s’, *Museum History Journal* 6 (2), 2013, pp. 166–202.

<sup>9</sup> Wright & Mazel, ‘Bastions of ideology’, ‘Controlling the past’.

<sup>10</sup> Wright & Mazel, ‘Controlling the past’, p. 65.

<sup>11</sup> Mazel, ‘Apartheid's child’.

<sup>12</sup> Mazel, ‘Apartheid's child’.

<sup>13</sup> Mazel, ‘Apartheid's child’. See also, L. Witz, *Apartheid's festival: contesting South Africa's national pasts*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2003.

what Bennett has referred to as the “the relations between particular forms of expertise and citizens in the context of programmes of social and civic management”.<sup>14</sup>

Although the SACHM was officially established in 1964, the displays opened only in 1966. They included coverage of Malay communities<sup>15</sup> who were considered ‘civilised’, but were discriminated against under apartheid on the basis of their colour. Omitted from the exhibits, though, was the concept of slavery, which ironically was how Malays, for the most part, came to be in the region. According to H. Vollgraaff,<sup>16</sup> the museum’s displays remained largely unchanged until the crumbling of apartheid from 1989 onward. They were therefore seen by many thousands of people over an extended period of time, contributing to a distorted public understanding of the cultural landscape of the Cape. These factors emphasise the importance of investigating the machinations informing the development of the displays, including how slavery, which formed part of the initial display schedule in 1959, came to be excluded when the museum exhibitions opened in 1966. Furthermore, the investigation will enhance our insights into the legacies of South African cultural institutions, especially as during the 1950s and 1960s when NP and AB ideologues who had recently come to power were striving for ways to communicate their vision of apartheid and so appeal to a broader white constituency in order to augment their still rather vulnerable political position.

The aims of this paper are to:

- demonstrate the SACHM display themes were not fixed from the beginning of the process,
- show how the display process twisted and turned as the planners wrestled with content and ideological pressures between 1959 and 1966, although there was a persistent emphasis on white supremacy,
- demonstrate how the museum’s displays supported the ideological imperatives of apartheid, particularly with the inclusion of Malays and the exclusion of slavery, and
- highlight the roles of key players in the development of the displays.

I first investigate the changing emphases of the proposed displays, primarily from 1959, through to their opening in 1966. Thereafter, I reflect on how the displays supported the ideological mission of apartheid, with specific reference to Malays and slavery. I have intentionally quoted documents at length to ensure accurate representation of the voices of the people involved in the development of the displays.

## SACHM DISPLAYS: PROCESS AND PRODUCT

### *First steps, 1955–60*

In 1955, the Duminy Commission—established by the national Department of Education, Art and Science (DEAS)—made specific recommendations about the provision of cultural history at the Transvaal (Pretoria) and National (Bloemfontein) museums without mentioning the SAM.<sup>17</sup> A general recommendation made by the commission, however, was that national museums, which included the SAM, should take steps to ensure the “appointment to their staffs of properly trained historians, to increase the importance of the historical collections in museums

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<sup>14</sup> T. Bennett, ‘Civic laboratories: museums, cultural objecthood and the governance of the social’, *Cultural Studies* 19 (5), 2005, pp. 521–47, p. 523.

<sup>15</sup> According to Martin, Malays were middle- and working-class Muslims who “distinguished themselves from the other groups by claiming relations (real or mythical) with the political exiles from the East”; D.-C. Martin, ‘What’s in the name “Coloured”’, *Social Identities* 4 (3), 1998, pp. 523–40, p. 526.

<sup>16</sup> H. Vollgraaff, ‘Geskiedenis van die Suid-Afrikaanse Kultuurhistoriese Museum. Kaapstad: Suid-Afrikaanse Kultuurhistoriese Museum.’ Unpublished manuscript, 1998.

<sup>17</sup> Duminy Commission, ‘Report of the Committee on the financial position of State-Aided Institutions under Act No. 23 of 1931 dated to 9 May 1956’, held in the National Archives of South Africa (Pretoria), File UOD X6/6/vol2, State-Aided Institutions Grant in Aid General.

for subjects for display and research”.<sup>18</sup> Despite this recommendation, it was only on 3 January 1957, that Under-Secretary of DEAS J.J. Op’t Hof wrote to the SAM Director about the possible establishment of a cultural history section at SAM, asking whether they needed “extra exhibition cases and other facilities for the proper display of the material; if so, what will the cost be?”<sup>19</sup> On 8 February 1957, SAM Director A.W. Crompton responded that the Board was “aware that such a section to the S.A. Museum is especially necessary in Cape Town as the exhibitions at the main museum and Koopmans de Wet House do not adequately cope with this subject”.<sup>20</sup> In the light of Op’t Hof’s letter, the SAM Board started investigating the provision of additional exhibition space. This was reflected by an item heading ‘Africana Museum’ at its meeting on the day before Crompton’s response, i.e. 7 February 1957, the minutes of which stated:

It was decided to ask the Department of Education, Arts & Science to negotiate with the Dept. of Defence for the permanent loan of certain galleries of the Castle where an Africana Museum as a sub-department of the S.A. Museum could be established.<sup>21</sup>

SAM Board member C. Albertyn<sup>22</sup> offered to discuss the matter with the Minister of Defence, but nothing appears to have emerged from this, as there is no further mention of it.

In 1957, DEAS informed SAM that it had granted funding to the museum for the development of a cultural history division from 1 April 1958, and that it could appoint a professional officer (i.e. historian) to do the work.<sup>23</sup> M.A. Cook took up this appointment on 12 May 1958.<sup>24</sup> Thereafter, attention turned to securing a venue for cultural history displays. This was resolved at a public gathering on 7 March 1959, when Governor-General E. Jansen of South Africa announced that the Old Supreme Court (OSC),<sup>25</sup> which originally had been a slave lodge, would partly be used for cultural history displays.<sup>26</sup> Then, in either July or August 1959, a decision was made to use the entire OSC as a museum.<sup>27</sup> At roughly the same time, architect Magda Sauer was commissioned to undertake the restoration of the building.<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> Duminy Commission, ‘Report of the Committee on the financial position of State-Aided Institutions’, p. 10.

<sup>19</sup> Letter on behalf of the Secretary (DEAS) to the Director (SAM) dated 3 January 1957, held in the Iziko SACHM Archives, File D3/1. This letter was signed by Op’t Hof. A copy of this letter was also found among the papers of Van Zyl in the National Archives of South Africa (Cape Town), A1793. At the time, Van Zyl was a SAM Board member. In 1958, he became the Chairperson of the Board. For more information about him, see Mazel, ‘Apartheid’s child’.

<sup>20</sup> Letter from the Director (SAM) to the Secretary (DEAS) dated 8 February 1957, held in the Iziko SACHM Archives, File D3/1.

<sup>21</sup> Minutes of the SAM Board meeting held on 7 February 1957, held in the Iziko SAM Archives.

<sup>22</sup> For more information on Albertyn, see Mazel, ‘Apartheid’s child’.

<sup>23</sup> Letter from the Secretary (DEAS) to the Director (SAM) dated 12 November 1957, held in the Iziko SACHM Archives, File D3/1. This letter confirmed that the Minister had approved the post.

<sup>24</sup> For more information about Cook’s appointment, see Mazel, ‘Apartheid’s child’. Also pertinent are: telegram from the Secretary (DEAS) to the Director (SAM) dated 7 May 1958, held in the National Archives of South Africa (Pretoria), File UOD X6/93/45, Staff General and Creation of Posts; M.A. Cook, ‘Department of History’, in ‘Report of the South African Museum for the Period 1st April, 1958–31st March, 1959’, held in the Iziko SAM Archives.

<sup>25</sup> H. Vollgraaff & A. Mazel, *Heritage Day—24 September 1998—Focus on slavery*. South African Cultural History Museum. Unpublished report in the author’s possession.

<sup>26</sup> Anonymous, ‘Old Supreme Court to be preserved for posterity: Governor-General’s announcement’, held in the Iziko SAM Archives. The newspaper, date and page number are unknown; however, it is likely to be either the *Cape Times* or the *Argus* on Monday 9 March 1959. The Governor-General made the announcement at the opening of the Flower-in-Art exhibition in the OSC on Saturday 7 March 1959.

<sup>27</sup> Mazel, ‘Apartheid’s child’, p. 181.

<sup>28</sup> Minutes of the Annual General Meeting of the SAM Board held on 28 May 1959, held in the Iziko SAM Archives.

Following Jansen's announcement, Cook and Crompton produced the first display schedule in 1959 (Fig. 1).<sup>29</sup> J. van der Meulen, who was the SACHM Director between 1963 and 1964, indicated in his handwritten note of 4 June 1964 on a copy of the display schedule that "These lists were drawn up by Dr Cook at Dr Crompton's personal instigation.... Because Dr Cook would not, or could not, draw up an overall scheme Dr Crompton appears to have worked it out with her".<sup>30</sup> Although the schedule might have been drawn up at Crompton's 'personal instigation' it is unlikely that he provided any, or much, of the content as he was a palaeontologist who "was a totally driven scientist, who showed no interest in cultural history".<sup>31</sup>

Cook's display schedule was divided into four main sections, with subsections (Fig. 1). The main sections were:

1. Africana, i.e. Cape Africana: The social life of the Cape area,
2. General History of South Africa,
3. Background History, and
4. Special displays.

The general background history section emphasised material from Europe and the east. Significantly, the 'Africana' section included a room for 'Slaves' and another for 'Malays'. Furthermore, it was noted that the display dealing with the 'Story of the Building' would cover the 'Conversion from Slave Lodge into Government offices', which would have meant acknowledging that it was built, in 1679, to house slaves.<sup>32</sup>

Support for the inclusion of slavery in the museum's displays was forthcoming from various quarters. When L. Stevens (Director, Public Works) forwarded M. Sauer's architectural and display proposals regarding the future of the OSC to Op't Hof, which incorporated those of Cook's, he commented:

I also wish to point out an aspect of the building's history that seems to have escaped comment. The conversion of the Slave Lodge was the first practical step to reduce slavery at the Cape—long before any other steps were taken.<sup>33</sup>

In her report, Sauer had, however, noted that

The situation of this old building is very attractive for the proposed purpose.... Its historical interest is great owing to the important part it has played in the life of Cape Town, first as the Dutch East India Company's Slave Lodge, then as the Supreme Court and the home of Government offices and of the first Legislative Assembly.<sup>34</sup>

Sauer's 'preliminary plans' were accepted by The Cultural History Advisory Committee meeting on 7 April 1960.<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> 'Memorandum on use of the Old Supreme Court by the S.A. Museum', held in the Iziko SACHM Archives, File D3/1. The Memorandum is undated.

<sup>30</sup> J. van der Meulen's handwritten comment in his bi-monthly report 'Cultural History' dated 12 June 1964, held in the Iziko SACHM Archives, File D3/1.

<sup>31</sup> Email from Frank Talbot to the author on 28 April 2007. In the author's possession. Talbot was Assistant Director of the SAM from 1960 until 1964.

<sup>32</sup> H. Vollgraaff, *The Dutch East India's Slave Lodge at the Cape*. Cape Town: SACHM, 1997.

<sup>33</sup> The comments on Sauer's report formed part of a series of documents sent by L.S. Stevens to the Secretary for Education, Arts and Science on 22 August 1959. Stevens noted that "Copies of the comments of my Architectural Division on the proposals of Miss Sauer are also attached", held in the Iziko SACHM Archives, File D3/1.

<sup>34</sup> 'Report on Conversion of Old Supreme Court for use as an historical museum', held in the Iziko SACHM Archives, File D3/1. The document is unsigned but a note at the top of the report in Van der Meulen's handwriting reads "Report of Magda Sauer".

<sup>35</sup> Minutes of the Cultural History Advisory Committee held 7 April 1960, held in the Iziko SACHM Archives, File D3/1, noted that "Miss Sauer's preliminary plans were discussed, and it was decided that they were acceptable to the Committee. It was decided that a meeting be called to discuss the final plans when these were ready." Sauer attended the meeting.

Support for including slavery and the OSC's slave history in the displays was forthcoming in the press. After the Governor-General announced that the OSC would be used for the museum,<sup>36</sup> the *Cape Argus* reported on 9 March 1959 that the building had

been at the heart of much of South African history, and it is to be hoped that as a museum it will not just become just a haphazard repository of mementoes of the past. It should be a proper gateway into yesterday. Possibly the old slave dungeons could be reconstructed and also the rooms in which the old Cape Legislative Council assembled.<sup>37</sup>

Moreover, another newspaper article, presumably from the *Cape Times*, remarked that

The future of the Old Supreme Court, which is said to be the second-oldest building in South Africa—began its chequered career as a slave lodge in 1679—has been in the balance for many years.<sup>38</sup>

Shortly afterwards, the *Cape Argus* addressed the difficulties of converting the OSC into a museum, commenting that this “is not a chip of stone or a trowelful of plaster put there by the original builders who were slaves, using such material as the V.O.C. could spare for a slave lodge in 1697”.<sup>39</sup> The *Cape Times* and the *Argus* are both English-language newspapers and their open support could perhaps be linked to the English pride in having stopped slavery and may represent an English liberal anti-Afrikaner sentiment that prevailed in South Africa at the time. A few months later, on 15 June 1959, *Die Burger*, a prominent Afrikaans-language newspaper, noted that as a “basis for further discussions, Dr Cook's plan was approved last week” by the Advisory Committee for a new Historical Museum, which included exhibits about slavery and Malays.<sup>40</sup> Following the approval of Cook's schedule by this committee there appears to have been no further engagement with it for over a year as the focus turned to the restoration of the OSC.<sup>41</sup>

Then, on 29 November 1960, Talbot, in his capacity as Acting Director (SAM), wrote to Macdonald (Chief Architect, Public Works Department (PWD)), indicating that they were “very keen to put on a temporary display concerning the Malay Quarter in the Old Supreme Court hall in January”.<sup>42</sup> Nothing appears to have come from the letter as, on 13 January 1961, Crompton wrote to the PWD District Representative to establish whether the main hall would be free from 1 February onwards.<sup>43</sup> No documentation has been located to indicate whether or not the exhibit went ahead, but it would appear not.

Thus, between 1955 and 1960 there had been progress from the initial suggestion that SAM consider the provision of cultural history displays, to the appointment of a historian, the decision to convert the OSC into a museum, and the creation of a display schedule for it. The

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<sup>36</sup> Anonymous, ‘Old Supreme Court to be preserved for posterity’.

<sup>37</sup> Anonymous, ‘Renewing the Old Supreme Court’, *Cape Argus*, 9 March 1959, page number unknown, held in the Iziko SAM Archives.

<sup>38</sup> Anonymous, ‘Museum plans for the Old Supreme Court—saving of the building welcomed’, page number and date unknown, held in the Iziko SAM Archives. In the Iziko SAM press cutting scrapbook it is pasted alongside an editorial in the *Cape Times* of 9 March 1959; it is suggested that as the editorial discusses the Governor-General's announcement about the OSC that it is of the same date and appeared in the same newspaper.

<sup>39</sup> Anonymous, ‘Spirited support holds the Old Court together’, 11 April 1959, page number unknown, held in the Iziko SAM Archives.

<sup>40</sup> Anonymous, ‘Africana Museum in Old Supreme Court’, *Die Burger*, 15 June 1959 (translated from Afrikaans), held in the Iziko SAM Archives. The committee being referred to is the ‘Advisory Committee for new Historical Museum in the Old Supreme Court’, which was constituted at ‘A General Meeting of the Trustees of the South African Museum’, held on 28th May 1959. The committee was also referred to as the ‘Historical Museum Advisory Committee, as indicated in a letter from Crompton to the Secretary of DEAS on 5 January 1960, held in the Iziko SACHM Archives, File D3/1.

<sup>41</sup> Mazel, ‘Apartheid's child’, p. 182.

<sup>42</sup> Letter from Talbot, the Acting Director of the SAM while Crompton was on study leave, to Macdonald on 29 November 1960, held in the Iziko SACHM, File D3/1.

<sup>43</sup> Letter from Crompton, the Director (SAM), to the PWD District Representative, with attention: Mr Carter, on 13 January 1961, held in the Iziko SACHM Archives, File D3/1.

schedule focused on white and colonial history and ‘civilisations’, but included displays of slavery and Malays. There is no evidence to suggest that slave descendants and Malays were consulted in the drafting of the plans.

#### *Von Moltke intervention, 1961–62*

Early in 1961, it was agreed that an Assistant Director post was needed to plan the OSC exhibits: “The building up of the new museum from the beginning would require a senior post, and to prevent a long delay when the Old Supreme Court cane [sic] available”.<sup>44</sup> Moreover, an undated and anonymous memorandum, likely to have been written by Crompton, stated that while Cook was knowledgeable about South African material culture and had worked hard cataloguing the museum’s collections and dealing with the public, that the “organization required for a display taxes her physical and mental strength to an alarming degree”.<sup>45</sup> Furthermore, the memorandum noted that with “the presentation” of the OSC the nature of the post of historian had changed considerably:

Not only must the incumbent have knowledge of South African cultural history but also a wide knowledge of background culture which presumably will also be displayed in the Old Supreme Court and an adequate knowledge of the specific techniques employed in cultural history museums.

This sentiment was emphasised in a letter from Crompton to Op’t Hof on 5 June 1961:

The Director of the New Museum must have extensive knowledge of cultural history, administrative experience and be knowledgeable about exhibition methods regarding Cultural History museums, including knowledge of South African cultural history. He must have good organisational and people skills in order to work with different types of people. It will be extremely difficult to find a suitable person for this position. The South African Museum is very fortunate in this regard, as an extremely suitable person with excellent qualifications is willing to consider accepting this post; he is Dr J.W. von Moltke, now Assistant Director of the South African National Art Museum. Not only is Dr J. W. von Moltke knowledgeable about cultural history, but he is also familiar with our country.<sup>46</sup>

It is likely that the Board’s decision to appoint Von Moltke was based on his understanding of European cultures, which was closely linked to the ancestry of South Africa’s white population. This is reflected in a memorandum that noted that he was ideally placed to not only “portray” South African cultural history in the new museum, but “also that of Europe”.<sup>47</sup> Furthermore, as Crompton commented in 1960, the new museum “will naturally [give attention] to the history of the Cape, but considerable space will be allocated to the background cultures of Europe and Asia which so markedly influenced our own”.<sup>48</sup> Von Moltke’s reputation as an internationally respected art historian, his positions as Assistant Director of the South African National Gallery and guest lecturer at the University of Cape Town, together with his noble Prussian descent, would have enhanced the view that he would provide national and international legitimacy for the museum.<sup>49</sup>

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<sup>44</sup> Minutes of the SAM Board meeting held on Thursday 17 February 1961, held in the Iziko SAM Archives.

<sup>45</sup> The anonymous and undated memorandum is entitled ‘Cultural History Museum’, held in the Iziko SACHM Archives, File D3/1. It is likely to have been written by Crompton, SAM Director, as it states that the “The Director wishes to suggest that the actual organisation of the Old Supreme Court is too great a task for Dr. Cook”. A note at the top of the Memorandum in Van der Meulen’s handwriting reads “earlier in 1961 apparently shortly before May”.

<sup>46</sup> Letter from Crompton (Director: SAM) to Op’t Hof (Secretary: DEAS) on 5 June 1961, held in the Iziko SACHM File D3/1.

<sup>47</sup> Mazel, ‘Apartheid’s child’, p. 183.

<sup>48</sup> A.W. Crompton, ‘Recent advances at the South African Museum’, *Lantern: Journal of Knowledge & Culture* 9 (3), 1960, pp. 252–61, p. 261.

<sup>49</sup> J. Dolby, pers. comm., 2012. Von Moltke became a member of the Historical Museum Advisory Committee in 1959 and was, therefore, well known to the Board; Letter from Von Moltke to Director (SAM) on 12 November

Between June 1961 and March 1962, deliberations between SAM and DEAS revolved around the creation of an Assistant Director post and SAM's strong desire to appoint Von Moltke. This was until Von Moltke informed Crompton that he had accepted the position of director of the Bielefeld Art Museum.<sup>50</sup> Prior to accepting the Bielefeld position, Von Moltke took an active interest in the renovation of the OSC and the content of the displays, so much so that in August 1959 he accepted an invitation to join the Cultural History Advisory Committee.<sup>51</sup> In a document entitled "Memorandum—re Supreme Court", most likely written by Von Moltke in late 1961,<sup>52</sup> he set out his vision for the OSC displays (Fig. 2). The memorandum addressed the displays from a largely material and art historical perspective, which emphasised European material culture such as silver, jewellery, glass, and stamps, but also included photographs of the "Supreme Court before the restoration". Unlike Cook's 1959 schedule, there was no mention of slavery, Malays or the history of the building, other than noting that "a set of photographs taken of the Supreme Court before the restoration ... could be used ... to show what work had been done".

Van der Meulen was also of the opinion that the above-mentioned Memorandum (i.e. Fig. 2) was written by Von Moltke<sup>53</sup> as in a memorandum, of 6 June 1963, entitled 'Cultural History Museum—origin, and development of its policy' he noted that

The appointment of Dr Von Moltke therefore seems to be one of the most important steps in the direction towards becoming a *Museum of Art History* in broader terms.... His main themes seem to have been alternating exhibitions (para 2), for instance silver (para 3), jewellery (para 4) and glass (para 5), besides a type of 'Post Museum' (para 7) and period rooms (para 10) where the approach would have been the cultural settings of Holland, France, England and Germany. [my emphasis]

Furthermore, Van der Meulen indicated that the memorandum corresponded with the information that Von Moltke had conveyed to him in their two meetings in Cologne and Bielefeld prior to and after Van der Meulen's appointment.<sup>54</sup> According to Van der Meulen, Von Moltke "wanted to concentrate on silver and porcelain and by using the culture of its European origin to give the new institution a supra-Africana slant".<sup>55</sup>

#### *Van der Meulen, 1963–64*

So having lost Von Moltke as their first choice, Van der Meulen, a South African art historian who had been living in Germany, joined the SAM as Assistant Director: Cultural History on 29

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1959 accepting to the appointment, held in the Iziko SACHM Archives, File D3/1; Mazel, 'Apartheid's child', pp. 182–6.

<sup>50</sup> Letter from Von Moltke to Crompton on 9 March 1962, held in the Iziko SACHM Archives, File D3/1.

<sup>51</sup> Letter from Von Moltke to Crompton on 26 August 1959, held in the Iziko SACHM Archives, File D3/1. In the letter he thanks Crompton for his letter of 12 August "asking him to serve on the Advisory Committee for the New Historical Museum". It was written on Von Moltke's private stationery.

<sup>52</sup> 'Memorandum—re Supreme Court', held in the Iziko SACHM Archives, File D3/1. The memorandum is undated but a note at the top of the document in Van der Meulen's handwriting reads "Later than 2 XI 1961". The memorandum was probably written by Von Moltke because at the time he had already been offered the Directorship of the SACHM. Furthermore, he mentioned that he was enclosing with the memorandum a catalogue on an exhibition in Birmingham (UK). In an undated personal letter to Crompton, who he refers to as Fuzz, Crompton's nickname, he indicates that he "saw something at Birmingham which might be something useful for the future"; this personal letter is held in the Iziko SACHM Archives, File D3/1. A handwritten note at the top of the personal letter in Van der Meulen's handwriting reads "undated, probably enclosure in letter of 11 7 1961". Further confirmation is provided in a letter Von Moltke wrote to the Secretary (DEAS) titled 'Cape Town: Old Supreme Court Building: Conversion to Museum', on 20 September 1961, held in the Iziko SACHM Archives, File D3/1, in which he mentions a visit to the Rijksmuseum, which is also referred to in the above-mentioned Memorandum.

<sup>53</sup> Memorandum entitled 'Cultural History Museum—Origin, and development of its policy', held in the Iziko SACHM Archives, File D3/1. A note on the top right-hand side of the document, in Van der Meulen's handwriting, states: "Memorandum tabled for the consideration of the Board on the 6th June 1963".

<sup>54</sup> Memorandum entitled 'Cultural History Museum—Origin.'

<sup>55</sup> Memorandum entitled 'Cultural History Museum—Origin.'

March 1963.<sup>56</sup> At the time, there was optimism that the displays would be completed soon, as expressed in a report in the *South African Museums Association Bulletin (SAMAB)* stating that the renovations of the OSC to “house the Cultural History Museum should be complete in January. This museum will be opened to the public as from July but temporary exhibitions have been arranged to take place from January”.<sup>57</sup> It was indicated further that

In spite of serious administrative set-backs and shortage of staff, it is hoped to open the first displays in the new museum towards the middle of 1964. The rear rooms (Parliament Street) are, however, to be used from January 7th to 11th 1964, for the National Convention of the South African Numismatic Society. An exhibition of coins and medals is planned in conjunction with the convention, which will be opened by His Excellency, the Minister of Finance.<sup>58</sup>

The aspirations to erect the initial displays in 1964 did not materialise. The ‘Minutes of the first meeting of the Cultural History Sub-Board of Trustees of the South African Museum’ on 16 April 1964 noted that

The Director reported that the Museum will not be opened in June as envisaged due to unavoidable circumstances like the problems regarding the appointment of professional staff and the delay in the completion of the building. He promised the Board that there would be an attempt to install a temporary exhibition in a section of the building before September. In the main exhibition an attempt would be made to create an exhibition explaining the problems of Cape cultural history, whereas the displays in the other rooms will concentrate on large donations under the names of the donors. This will serve the scientific ideals of the institution, but at the same time satisfy the needs of older donors. The Board accepted these proposals with thanks and a decision was made to have a partial opening in September, whilst the opening of the entire Museum would have to be postponed to the following year.<sup>59</sup>

Plans to have a “partial opening in September” were also not realised, as Van der Meulen commented on 28 August 1964:

As the building works should be finished by December it will therefore, be possible for the new Director to carry out this display [i.e. of loan material] during the coming Summer (perhaps even in January)—provided that the administration can initially be left largely to the interim staff.<sup>60</sup>

In his final report before leaving the museum, Van der Meulen indicated additional reasons for the delay in the displays were that “the conditions under which the material has had to be stored, and the lack of card index of the collections indicated that no display could be aimed at until-mid 1964 at the earliest”.<sup>61</sup>

Although he never developed any displays, Van der Meulen was clear about widening the scope and direction he wanted to take the museum. For him, the Minister’s approval of his and Von Moltke’s appointments

determined the future policy of this section . . . which had in the past been retarded to a certain extent by the conception of its function as a “History” department. Whereas early in 1961 the department was referred to as only comprising the Koopmans de Wet House and a small collection of antiques, the

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<sup>56</sup> Minutes of the SAM Board meeting of 4 April 1963, held in the Iziko SAM Archives.

<sup>57</sup> Anonymous, ‘The South African Museum, Cape Town’, *SAMAB* 8 (2), pp. 63–4, p. 63.

<sup>58</sup> Anonymous, ‘The South African Museum’, pp. 63–64.

<sup>59</sup> Minutes of the first meeting of the Cultural History Sub-Board of SAM Board held on 16 April 1964, held in the Iziko SACHM Archives, File A6/2/3.

<sup>60</sup> J. van der Meulen, ‘Report to the SAM Board for June, July and August’, dated 28 August 1964, held in the Iziko SACHM Archives, File A6/2/3.

<sup>61</sup> J. van der Meulen, ‘Report to the SAM Board for 1 April 1963 to 10 September 1964’, held in the Iziko SACHM Archives, File A6/2/4.

Museum's field of activity was soon widened to cover Koopmans de Wet House, Africana, European objects [sic] d'art, Numismatics, Philately, Greek and Roman antiquity, Chinese ceramics etc.<sup>62</sup>

In the same report, he commented that he and the Board were resolute in their desire to elevate the 'standard' of the new museum above that of a "mere historical 'Africana' Museum" and to create a "cultural history Museum" on international standards, which in their minds equated with having a European bias. He supported this insight by stressing that the Board had twice appointed qualified art historians (i.e. Von Moltke and himself) despite the difficulties; for example, relocating him from Europe.<sup>63</sup> Van der Meulen's views about the institution's direction was further emphasised by his comment in *SAMAB* that the museum, which was "popularly mistaken for a so-called 'Africana' museum—is to provide a sound basis for the study of the History of Art".<sup>64</sup>

*Finally, the museum is opened with Malay displays but not slavery*

G. Wacha succeeded Van der Meulen as Director on 1 April 1965; he remained in the post until 10 April 1966.<sup>65</sup> Wacha was brought from Austria to head up the institution. Wacha's appointment and that of his deputy W. Schneewind,<sup>66</sup> neither of them ever having been to South Africa prior to their appointments, was initially rejected by the Minister of Education, Arts and Science. At a special meeting convened by the Board to discuss this, "Dr Louw listed the collections in the Museum, pointing out its cosmopolitan [i.e. European] nature and its emphasis on cultural history on a world-wide basis".<sup>67</sup> As with Von Moltke and Van der Meulen previously, the Board was, therefore, keen to appoint a Director who had international expertise in 'cultural history', especially as W.E.G. Louw, chairperson of the Sub-Board (cultural history) of the SAM, stated at the opening of the museum in 1966,

many of our friends expected this to become another Africana Museum pure and simple. This was not possible, nor indeed, desirable ... some of our own material culture could be shown and studied in its wider European and Asiatic context ... [the museum] would try to be in its own modest way a truly art historical museum, showing indigenous material against the background and in the context of art through the ages and art both European and Asiatic.<sup>68</sup>

Wacha explained to me in 2007 that he

was tasked to set up a museum in the restored Old Supreme Court in Adderley Street and the buildings adjoining it, using the collected objects.... From the minutes of the Board of Trustees meetings (under the chairmanship of Dr. W.E.G. Louw, resident of Belvedere Street) it would be possible to see in detail how the suggestion was made to the board regarding those items to be exhibited and how the object grouping on the ground floor would be done.<sup>69</sup>

According to him, the

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<sup>62</sup> J. van der Meulen, 'Department of Cultural History', held in the Iziko SACHM Archives, File A6/2/1. The document is undated, and the dates "1961–1963" after the title of the document have been scratched out; however, it appears to have been written after Cook's resignation on 31 October 1963. .

<sup>63</sup> J. van der Meulen, 'Department of Cultural History'.

<sup>64</sup> Anonymous, 'The South African Museum', p. 64. It is likely that this comment about cultural history was written by Van der Meulen as he was already in the post and the perspective expressed is consistent with his views.

<sup>65</sup> Letter from G. Wacha to the author dated 28 July 2007. In the author's possession.

<sup>66</sup> W. Schneewind assumed duties on 12 May 1965. Wacha report to the SAM Board for 2 April–1 June 1965, held in the Iziko SACHM Archives, File A6/2/4.

<sup>67</sup> Minutes of a Special Meeting of the SAM Board held on 7 December 1964, held in the Iziko SACHM Archives, File A6/2/3.

<sup>68</sup> Speech by Louw at the opening of the SACHM displays on 6 April 1966. Cited in Vollgraaff, 'Geschiedenis van die Suid-Afrikaanse Kultuurhistoriese Museum,' p. 5. The quotation originates from SACHM File D3/3, which could not be located during my research.

<sup>69</sup> Letter from Wacha to the author.

first weeks of my [Wacha's] stay in Cape Town began with perusing the items to hand. It was clear that it would not be possible to develop an overview based on the most important European countries (so for example, France, Italy etc [sic]).<sup>70</sup>

By the end of September 1965, Wacha had produced a display schedule (Fig. 3),<sup>71</sup> which probably represented “the final planning for the exhibitions in the Old Slave Lodge”.<sup>72</sup> Comparison of Cook's (1959, Fig. 1) and Wacha's (1965, Fig. 3) schedules show that while the display themes had been readjusted there was considerable overlap between them in terms of content. Wacha represented his display ‘vision’ as follows:

to establish a history of archaeology (in the European sense) for the history of art and culture with collections covering the different fields from ancient Egypt and Rome, from China, Japan, Turkey and Malaya, to furniture, costumes, sculptures, coins, etc. of the different periods and countries in Europe. Special sections of the Museum are to be the “Arms and Armour”, the “Maritime Museum” and the “Cape Malay Section”. The museum should also become a centre for the study of history of the Cape, as well as Cape Town (architecture, paintings, prints and maps, furniture, silver, folklore, farming, viticulture and horticulture, trade) with a special reference library with its photographic section.<sup>73</sup>

Both Wacha's and Cook's schedules had a strong focus on the origin nations of white South Africa (i.e. Dutch, German, French and English), Cape history, and material culture. There were differences, however, as Wacha's scheme, for example, reflected a greater emphasis on material from ‘old civilisations’ (i.e. Egypt, Greece, Rome, as well as China and Japan, the Cape having been pivotal to European trade with the east) (Fig. 4) than on the historical development of Cape Town, although he commented that “The various specimens connected with the cultural history of the Cape will be displayed”.<sup>74</sup> Furthermore, he proposed that the museum should become a centre “for the study of history of the Cape, as well as Cape Town”.<sup>75</sup>

A significant difference between the schedules relates to how people of colour were treated. Unlike Cook's schedule, Wacha's omitted the display of slavery although the building's origin as a Slave Lodge was acknowledged. In contrast, the display of Malays had been expanded without any reference to their slave origins in the Cape. It needs to be clarified that although Wacha designated Room G as an ‘Indian Room’, he was not referring to the South African Indian community but that of the Indian subcontinent, because as Schneewind later remarked, “both rooms [i.e. G and H] are urgently needed for the display of Japanese, Indian, Persian and Malay collections, of which the Malay Silver (Robinson Collection) is the great asset in this section”.<sup>76</sup>

Wacha never intended to install all the displays in his schedule by the opening date of the museum on 6 April 1966 and expressed concern about the viability of erecting any displays without adequate funding. Anticipating potential problems with the timing of the exhibitions, Wacha warned in a memorandum on 2 August 1965 that the lack of funds to develop the displays might delay the opening of the museum for two years.<sup>77</sup> Significantly, Wacha commented to me that

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<sup>70</sup> Letter from Wacha to the author.

<sup>71</sup> G. Wacha, document entitled ‘Disposition South African Museum (Cultural History)’ dated 28 September 1965, held in the Iziko SACHM Archives, File A6/2/4.

<sup>72</sup> Vollgraaff, ‘Geschiedenis van die Suid-Afrikaanse Kultuurhistoriese Museum’, p. 23.

<sup>73</sup> G. Wacha, document entitled ‘Future development of the Cultural History Museum’ dated 20 October 1965. Tabled at the Sub-Board (Cultural History) of the SAM Board meeting of 20 October 1965, held in the Iziko SACHM Archives, File A6/2/4.

<sup>74</sup> Wacha, ‘Disposition South African Museum (Cultural History)’.

<sup>75</sup> Wacha, ‘Future development of the Cultural History Museum’.

<sup>76</sup> Schneewind replaced Wacha as Director of the SACHM in 1966. Minutes of the SACHM Board meeting held on 10 August 1966, held in the Iziko SACHM Archives, File 6/2/4.

<sup>77</sup> G. Wacha, ‘Memorandum on Show-cases’ dated 2 August 1965, held in the Iziko SACHM Archives, File A6/2/2.

By calling on the Rector of the University of Stellenbosch (whose influence in the Broederbond was important in relation to the government's decision)<sup>78</sup> the funding was secured and the successive installation of the basement floor therefore began.<sup>79</sup>

Wacha's observation about funding was supported by his report in January 1966 stating:

The Director wishes to report that through the endeavours and negotiations, particularly of the Chairman (Dr. W.E.G. Louw) and Dr. H.B. Thom, the request for additional funds for Showcases (R15,000, the full amount to be used by 31st March, 1966) has been granted by the Department of Education, Arts and Science.<sup>80</sup>

According to Wacha, "On 6.4.1966 the South African Education Minister opened the 21 rooms with a permanent exhibition of the Schausammlung [i.e. display collection] on the ground floor and three exhibitions".<sup>81</sup>

#### *Museum's commitment to the Malay displays*

The museum's steadfast commitment to the Malay displays will now be explored, particularly as it was proposed "that there would be a permanent Malay room and that for the first three or four months (April to July) there would be three temporary exhibitions one of which would be a 'Malay Exhibition'".<sup>82</sup> Moreover, provision was made for a display entitled "Small specimens (19th cent.), Arabic-Afrikaans Literature",<sup>83</sup> indicating how language linked the Afrikaners to the Malays.

Great determination existed within the museum to ensure the Malay display was ready for the opening. According to Wacha,

After long discussions with the Malays and the relevant spiritual leader, a Malay exhibition was installed in the upper floor, which showed the culture of the Malays and *indicated its significance for the development of Afrikaans*.<sup>84</sup> [my emphasis]

The spiritual leader referred to was likely Sheik Ahmed Behardien who was mentioned in a report on the cultural section, "In effecting the preparations for the Malay Exhibition, the Honorary Curator, Dr I.D. du Plessis, brought in helpers, e.g. Sheik Ahmed Behardien who kindly prepared texts of the Arabic/Afrikaans and Turkish books and specimens".<sup>85</sup> Moreover, Wacha stated that

The private collection of photographs of Dr. J. Lückhoff on the Malays and the Malay Quarter has been presented to the Museum, photographs have been selected for the exhibit and a start has been made on the catalogue.<sup>86</sup>

Further efforts to ensure the completion of the Malay exhibition included, for example, Wacha contacting "Mr. M.J. Mitchell of the City Council's Town Planning Branch to obtain plans of the

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<sup>78</sup> Wacha is referring to Professor H.B. Thom who was Rector of the University of Stellenbosch and had been Chairperson of the Afrikaner Broederbond from 1950 to 1960 (See Mazel, 'Apartheid's child', table 2 for further information about Thom.) It is emphasised that Wacha's comment about Thom's links to the Broederbond was unprompted.

<sup>79</sup> Letter from Wacha to the author, 2007.

<sup>80</sup> G. Wacha, 'Report for August 1965–January 1966', to the South African Board Museum (Cultural History), held in the Iziko SACHM Archives, File A6/2/2.

<sup>81</sup> Letter from Wacha to the author, 2007.

<sup>82</sup> Wacha, 'Disposition South African Museum (Cultural History)'.

<sup>83</sup> Wacha, 'Disposition South African Museum (Cultural History)'.

<sup>84</sup> Letter from Wacha to the author, 2007.

<sup>85</sup> G. Wacha, 'Report for 1 June–31 July 1965' to the SAM Board, held in the Iziko SACHM Archives, File A6/2/4.

<sup>86</sup> Wacha, 'Report for 1 June–31 July 1965'.

Malay Quarter (restored area) and ground plans of the old houses and survey maps” and Eckert offering “to give about 20 paintings and water-colours of Malays and the Malay Quarter from her private collection for the Malay Exhibition”.<sup>87</sup> In terms of the actual display preparation, the 1965 and 1966 Cultural History reports provide insights into the efforts to complete the Malay exhibition by the opening in April 1966. For example, in November 1965, it was reported that

The map on the staircase together with the lettering: MALEISE TENTOONSTELLING—MALAY EXHIBITION, has been completed (Miss Urquhart). When the Committee for the Malay Exhibition last met, the displays in the two rooms (Malay silver, Malay weapons—here we await still some loans of supplementary items) had almost been finished. Showcases have also been prepared for costumes, pilgrimage to Mecca, etc. in the other three rooms.<sup>88</sup>

Relations between the museum and the Malay community were not always comfortable. It was reported in January 1966 that “The members of the Malay Committee and of the Malay community are not so keen on lending or donating specimens in connection with the cultural history of the Cape Malays to the Museum”.<sup>89</sup>

The Malay displays prepared for the museum opening were not intended to be permanent. Soon after the opening, therefore, planning started towards permanent Malay displays based on Du Plessis’s report of 29 April 1966, which stated that the “current Malay Exhibition” had a dual purpose:

1. To see whether the available material justifies a permanent section, 2. And, To stimulate the Malay community and others to donate further items for such a section.
- This [temporary] exhibition shows that a Cape Malay section can only be justified if it is linked, on the one hand with cultural relics from Indonesia and on the other with Arabia. Even in the middle, specifically Cape Malay section *it may be advisable to show how the Cape Malay way of life has linked up with Cape Dutch traditions*.<sup>90</sup> [my emphasis]

Du Plessis stressed that the Malay permanent display

could serve as a reminder to the citizens of Cape Town and other visitors to the museum, *of the Cape Malay contribution to our cultural heritage*, and at the same time be a tribute to the Cape Malay community which has been linked with our arts and crafts since the beginning of the settlement.<sup>91</sup> [my emphasis]

Significantly, these statements omit uncomfortable information about the Malays being brought as slaves by the Dutch East India Company to supply labour for the refreshment station at the Cape.

In early June 1966, therefore, less than two months after the museum opened,

All the Malay Silver, costumes, books, documents, tombstones, etc. were unpacked and put in one room so that Dr. I.D. du Plessis, the Honorary Curator of Cape Malay Culture, could commence with the preparation of a Malay exhibit. In June, Dr. du Plessis wants to bring some important Malay people to the Museum to get their support and interest them in the Museum and obtain further specimens for the exhibit.<sup>92</sup>

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<sup>87</sup> Wacha, ‘Report for 1 June–31 July 1965’.

<sup>88</sup> G. Wacha, ‘Report for 1 October–30 November 1965’, to the SAM Board (Cultural History), held in the Iziko SACHM Archives, File A6/2/3.

<sup>89</sup> G. Wacha, ‘Report for 1 December, 1965–31 January 1966’, to the SAM Board (Cultural History), held in the Iziko SACHM Archives, File A6/2/3.

<sup>90</sup> I.D. du Plessis, ‘Report: Establishing Malay Section’ to the Director, S.A. Museum of Cultural History, dated 29 April 1966, held in the Iziko SACHM Archives, File A6/2/4.

<sup>91</sup> Letter from Wacha to the author, 2007.

<sup>92</sup> G. Wacha, ‘Report for 2 April–1 June 1965’.

Moreover, in August 1966 the Sub-Board (Cultural History) accepted Du Plessis's 29 April 1966 report, and he was "thanked for the part he has played in the building up of the Malay section".<sup>93</sup>

Schneewind,<sup>94</sup> who became SACHM Director in 1966, after commenting in November 1966 about how the "present low financial position of the Museum" was impeding its development, thanked Du Plessis for his "untiring endeavours", which meant that "the Cape Malay Room can now be established as a permanent exhibition with funds for show-cases generously donated by Messrs. Rembrandt Tobacco Corporation, Messrs. United Tobacco Co. Ltd., and the Cape Tercentenary Foundation".<sup>95</sup> Despite securing funding for the showcases, exhibition development was slow due to an overall lack of funds. As Schneewind indicated in late 1967 in respect of the Malay exhibits,

With great enthusiasm plans were made to arrange for the permanent displays on the first floor of the Old Supreme Court in order to continue the work commenced in 1966 with the Cape Malay Room under the care of Dr. I.D. du Plessis. But for this year all hopes dwindled when we were informed of our insufficient grant-in-aid for 1967 by the Department of Education, Arts and Science.<sup>96</sup>

Eventually, the first of the new Malay exhibitions was opened in late 1968:

On 3 August 3, Du Plessis welcomed ... the Committee and other members of the community of the Cape Malays. These could also admire the second Malay-Room with the fittings for dioramas into which new displays will be arranged next year.<sup>97</sup>

In January 1969, it was reported that

due to the never tiring efforts of Dr. I.D. du Plessis, a second Cape Malay Room is in the course of being arranged on the second floor of our premises. It is to be gratefully noted that the Community of the Cape Malays took more interest in the Museum and that donations in objects and funds had been received.<sup>98</sup>

The section has intentionally focused on the Malay displays, and particularly Du Plessis's "never tiring efforts" to secure them, which will be investigated further in the next section. The AB connection has also been highlighted. This was revealed by H.B. Thom (specifically) and Louw securing funding for the displays in general but also with specific reference to the Malay display through the donation of showcases from the Rembrandt Tobacco Corporation. Anton Rupert, the founder and head of the Rembrandt Corporation (which "had humble beginnings under Broederbond auspices"), was an AB member at the time of the donation.<sup>99</sup>

## REFLECTING ON THE INCLUSION OF WHITES AND MALAYS IN THE DISPLAYS AND THE EXCLUSION OF SLAVERY

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<sup>93</sup> Minutes of the Sub-Board (Cultural History) meeting of the SAM Board held on 10 August 1966 and adjourned until 17 August 1966, held in the Iziko SACHM Archives, File A6/2/4.

<sup>94</sup> W. Schneewind, 'Report for September–November 1966' to SAM Board (Cultural History), held in the Iziko SACHM Archives, File A6/2/2.

<sup>95</sup> Minutes of the Sub-Board (Cultural History) meeting of the SAM Board held on 10 August 1966.

<sup>96</sup> W. Schneewind, 'Report for December 1966–September 1967' to SAM Board (Cultural History), held in the Iziko SACHM Archives, File A6/2/2.

<sup>97</sup> W. Schneewind, 'Report for May 1968–August 1968' to SAM Board (Cultural History), held in the Iziko SACHM Archives, File A6/2/2.

<sup>98</sup> W. Schneewind, 'Report for August 1968–January 1969' to SAM Board (Cultural History), held in the Iziko SACHM Archives, File A6/2/2.

<sup>99</sup> I. Wilkens & H. Strydom, *The Super-Afrikaners: inside the Afrikaner Broederbond*. Johannesburg: Jonathan Ball Publishers, 1978, p. 428.

Although there were various schedules with different emphases between 1959 and the opening of the museum in 1966, the proposed displays retained a strong focus on the origin nations of white South Africa (i.e. Dutch, German, French and English), Cape history and material culture, and past 'civilisations' (the latter received greater focus in the Wacha schedule). Despite Van der Meulen's assertions about the desire of the Board to move the museum in an art historical direction to, as he put it, "establish and to preserve the essential aesthetic values of the material culture of South Africa",<sup>100</sup> and Louw's comments at the opening of the museum that it "would try to be in its own modest way a truly art historical museum",<sup>101</sup> this was not achieved and the focus throughout remained on whites and European history along with past 'civilisations' as a way of connecting them and white South Africans. While we could speculate about how the displays might have turned out had Van der Meulen or Von Moltke developed them, it is doubtful they would have deviated greatly from the essential thrust of the final displays, which was strongly aligned with the museum's support for apartheid. Although the focus on Malays might appear to diverge from the museum's apartheid message, this, too, resonated with promotion of apartheid, as will be discussed below along with the absence of slavery. First, however, we will briefly consider the overall ideological imperatives of the primary displays.

#### *Ideological emphases of the displays*

Mazel proposed that the goals of the newly established SACHM, whose initial displays focused on Cape colonial history, the colonists' (e.g. Dutch, Germans, French, and English) material cultural, and ancient 'civilisations' (e.g. Egypt, Near East, Greece, Rome, China, and Japan), resonated with the aims of the 1952 VRF, which celebrated the arrival of whites in South Africa and promoted white nation-building and identity, along with the 'civilising' mission of whites.<sup>102</sup> Furthermore, it was argued that while the VRF was a one-off event, the SACHM's establishment allowed the messages of white supremacy and nation-building to be reinforced publicly on an ongoing basis.<sup>103</sup> As Crooke asserted with regard to museums,

Success lies with the ease at which the national past can be presented as permanent, enduring and almost inevitable. In order to convey its political message, it is essential that the state can influence representation in museums.<sup>104</sup>

In essence, the SACHM provided an expedient and authoritative mechanism through which to highlight the perception of white national unity derived from ancestral white immigrants starting with Jan van Riebeeck, and to assert racial power and exclusivity. Furthermore, the white South African nation represented the torch of western 'civilisation' on the southern tip of Africa resonating with past civilisations.

The SACHM displays supported AB efforts to 'nationalise' the English speakers. According to Serfontein, the 'Afrikanerisation' of the English was one of the AB's key aims.<sup>105</sup> AB members increasingly dominated the SAM Board during the late 1950s and early 1960s and, it is suggested, that particularly through Louw they would have strongly influenced the composition of the displays.<sup>106</sup> Louw was a member of the AB and on the Executive Committee of the Federation of Afrikaans Cultural Organizations (FAK).<sup>107</sup> In 1956, Thom, FAK

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<sup>100</sup> Anonymous, 'Cultural history', *SAMAB* 8 (2), 1963, p. 64.

<sup>101</sup> Louw speech.

<sup>102</sup> Mazel, 'Apartheid's child', p. 190.

<sup>103</sup> Mazel, 'Apartheid's child', p. 190.

<sup>104</sup> Crooke, 'Dealing with the past', p. 134.

<sup>105</sup> J.H.P. Serfontein, *Brotherhood of power: an exposé of the secret Afrikaner Broederbond*. London: Rex Collings Limited, 1979, p. 144.

<sup>106</sup> Mazel, 'Apartheid's child'.

<sup>107</sup> It has been proposed that the FAK was a cultural front of the AB, which co-ordinated Afrikaner cultural action; D. O'Meara, 'The Afrikaner Broederbond 1927–1948: class vanguard of Afrikaner nationalism', *Journal of Southern*

Chairperson, welcomed Louw to his first FAK Executive Committee meeting as follows: “He trusted that Prof Louw, an active promoter of Afrikaner matters, would heartily work together with the FAK, and that his co-operation in particular could be counted on in the region which he represented”.<sup>108</sup> Essentially, the SACHM displays need to be understood in the context of their ideological purpose of promoting white supremacy and its ‘civilising’ mission.

### *Slavery in, slavery out*

The absence of slavery in the SACHM displays was symptomatic of how this history was treated in the Western Cape at the time. This was despite its inclusion in the first display schedule (1959; Fig. 1) and the support from the press, PWD and museum staff, and apparently from the museum’s governing body. According to N. Worden, “During most of the twentieth century, public awareness of slave heritage was well buried”,<sup>109</sup> while a recent pamphlet about the Slave Lodge<sup>110</sup> noted that “The history of Slaves at the Cape has been hidden, silenced, almost forgotten”.<sup>111</sup> This historical amnesia was reflected in school history textbooks, museums, tourist sites and heritage memorial sites, which concentrated on white settler history and completely disregarded slave history.<sup>112</sup> Worden singled out the SACHM as the

most notorious example of this neglect ... [as it] ... focused entirely on the history of white South Africans and their “Graeco-Roman/European” heritage, [even though it] was housed in the very building which had been a barracks for government-owned slaves.<sup>113</sup>

In a similar vein, S. North commented that “Cape Town’s problematic relationship with its slave past runs deeper.... Slavery is a history which until the fall of apartheid in 1994 remained largely forgotten in public memory”.<sup>114</sup> Indeed, acknowledgement of the building’s slave history only occurred in the late 1990s when, for example, the SACHM published a booklet about the Slave Lodge<sup>115</sup> and officially changed the name of the building to ‘Slave Lodge’ on Heritage Day in 1998.<sup>116</sup>

Worden asserted that public consciousness of the Cape’s slave heritage had already been “buried” when apartheid was being implemented in the 1950s, noting specifically that slavery did not feature in the VRF, in 1952.<sup>117</sup> Significantly, in contrast to this observation, and, as already indicated, the original SACHM exhibition schedule developed by Cook, in 1959, included slavery along with recognizing the building’s slave origins. Moreover, there appears to have been public and institutional support for this recommendation, especially as the SAM Board gave approval to the schedule, which on the surface, at least, provided tacit approval for displays about slavery. Cook was conscious about the presence of slavery at the Cape, and it was likely that it was included in the schedule through her initiative even though she was not complimentary about slaves. When interviewed in February 1958 (i.e. before her appointment as SACHM Historian)

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*African Studies* 3 (2), 1977, 156–86. See also H. Giliomee, “‘Broedertwis’: intra-Afrikaner conflicts in the transition from apartheid”, *African Affairs* 91 (364), 1992, 339–64.

<sup>108</sup> Minutes of the FAK Executive Committee meeting of 14 November 1956, held in the Contemporary Affairs Archives, University of the Free State.

<sup>109</sup> N. Worden, ‘The changing politics of slave heritage in the Western Cape, South Africa’, *Journal of African History* 50, 2009, pp. 23–40, p. 23.

<sup>110</sup> Vollgraaff & Mazel ‘Heritage Day—24 September 1998—Focus on slavery’.

<sup>111</sup> Anonymous, n.d. *Slaves at the Cape: oppression, life and legacy*. n.d. Iziko Museums of Cape Town.

<sup>112</sup> Worden, ‘The changing politics’, p. 24.

<sup>113</sup> Worden, ‘The changing politics’, p. 31.

<sup>114</sup> S. North, ‘University of Hull PhD candidate Samuel North explores Cape Town remembering and memorialisation of its slave past.’ <https://remembermeproject.wordpress.com/2016/05/23/remembering-the-enslaved-in-cape-town/> [accessed 17 November 2017].

<sup>115</sup> Vollgraaff, *The Dutch East India’s Slave Lodge*.

<sup>116</sup> Vollgraaff & Mazel, ‘Heritage Day—24 September 1998—Focus on slavery’.

<sup>117</sup> Worden, ‘The changing politics’, p. 25.

about an exhibition she was curating for the Cape Town Museum Society, she commented, “some of the ancient copper vessels for measuring wine was [sic] fabricated by slaves in Cape Town from the sheet copper off the hulls of wrecked ships”, and further that,

Not much was known of the type of wine glass used for drinking of the famous Constantia wines until, during the reconstruction of Groot Constantia, the deceit of a slave was exposed. Evidently the slaves were akin to some of the servants of to-day ... [as] ... A tray of glasses had been dropped and the fragments of the ornate glasses were hustled away into the handiest hiding place—down a kitchen drain.<sup>118</sup>

After 1959, however, there was no mention of slavery other than Wacha’s brief reference to the history of the building. It is assumed, however, that Wacha was provided with Cook’s schedule (Fig. 1) when he joined the SACHM in 1965, and, being new to South Africa and not acquainted with local politics, would have been informed or perhaps even instructed about what should be included in the displays. This task probably fell to Louw who was not only the Chairperson of Cultural History Sub-Board, but considered by the AB to be a specialist about ‘Coloured’ cultural matters,<sup>119</sup> and would have been *au fait* with the slave origins of the coloured community. The omission of slavery from the displays can, therefore, be understood as a deliberate act by the SACHM to expunge slavery from the local historical record. It is possible, perhaps even likely, that weak Cape liberal sentiments informed the inclusion of slavery in the 1959 display schedule and that support for it was then cast aside through surreptitious and pernicious ideological forces, such as those of the AB and FAK.

#### *Malays, displays, and apartheid*

Unlike slavery, Malays were not only included in the displays but in a more expanded format than what was initially envisaged in 1959. As already mentioned, D.-C. Martin noted that the Malays were middle and working-class Muslims who differentiated themselves from others by emphasising their connections with political exiles from the East.<sup>120</sup> They were generally associated with the area around the mosques of the Bo-Kaap close to the centre of Cape Town. Under the Population Registration Act (1950), the “Cape Malay[s] were proclaimed a distinct racial category, while the Malay Quarter [i.e. Bo-Kaap] was declared an area for Malay segregation under the Group Areas Act of the same year”.<sup>121</sup> After indicating that the “notion of being Malay is heavily contested”, G. Vahed and S. Jeppie acknowledged that, “in the South African context ‘Malay’ refers to coloureds of the Muslim faith who, until the twentieth century, were referred to as ‘Mohammedan’, ‘Malay’, ‘Mussulman’ or ‘Coloured Muslims’ in official records”.<sup>122</sup> Moreover, they argued that the Malay ethnic identity was constituted from the 1920s onwards gaining prevalence largely due to Du Plessis’s 1944 book, *The Cape Malays*,<sup>123</sup> which “formally isolated coloured Muslims from the broader coloured community by presenting them almost as a distinct Malay race”.<sup>124</sup> To address why the Malays were incorporated in the SACHM displays I first consider the perception of the Malays by apartheid ideologues, then I turn to the central role played by Du Plessis in ensuring the inclusion of the Malays. It is beyond the scope of the paper to fully address the complex racial politics of Cape Town in the 1950s and 1960s,

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<sup>118</sup> Anonymous, 19 February 1958. *Cape Argus*, title and page number unknown, held in the Iziko SAM Archives. The exhibition was titled ‘The tavern of the seas’, a name applied to Cape Town.

<sup>119</sup> E.L.P. Stals, ‘Gesiedenis van die Afrikaner-Broederbond 1918–1994’. Unpublished document held in The Afrikaner Broederbond/Afrikanerbond Archives, Voortrekker Monument, Pretoria, 1998. It is mentioned on p. 332 that in 1960 Louw delivered a presentation on this topic at an AB conference about ‘Coloured Matters’.

<sup>120</sup> Martin, ‘What’s in the name “Coloured”?’, p. 526.

<sup>121</sup> Worden, ‘The changing politics’, p. 26.

<sup>122</sup> G. Vahed & S. Jeppie, ‘Multiple communities: Muslims in post-apartheid South Africa’, in J. Daniel, R. Southall & J. Lutchman, eds., *State of the nation: South Africa*. Cape Town: AHRC Press, 2004–5, pp. 252–86, p. 254.

<sup>123</sup> I.D. du Plessis, *The Cape Malays*. Cape Town: Maskew Miller, 1944.

<sup>124</sup> Vahed & Jeppie, ‘Multiple communities’, p. 254.

however, aspects of it will be considered to contextualise the inclusion of the Malays in the displays

The Afrikaners perceived there to be a longstanding bond between themselves and the Malays. According to Jeppie,<sup>125</sup> this was reflected in D.F. Malan's 1925 speech, in his capacity as Minister of Interior and Education at the first Cape Malay Association meeting:

The Malay community earned themselves a definite status in South Africa, a status of which they can be proud. In the first instance, they formed one of the oldest elements of the South African nation. They came virtually at the same time that the white man came here and experienced the same history with the white man. The history of South Africa is also their history. The white man did not come here to give the Malays civilization. They were always civilized, and came here after they had adopted the white man's civilization. Afrikaans is not only their language but together with the Dutch speaking white man they developed that language. It is their language in the fullest sense of the word.

In this respect, L. Witz has suggested that up to the 1920s Afrikaner nationalists believed the Malays "to be part of South African history as the oldest element of the *volke* who had arrived at the same time as the whites and had always been civilized".<sup>126</sup> Furthermore, he believes that a distinct Malay identity was promoted "as separate and clearly distinguishable from an Afrikaner one" only from the 1930s onwards "when Afrikaner identity became associated much more closely with whiteness", and that Du Plessis was instrumental in this process.<sup>127</sup> The perceived connection between whites and Malays, however, persevered in the apartheid era as Du Plessis ensured that the Malays formed part of the SACHM exhibits in the 1960s.

As Jeppie has indicated, Malan, who in 1948 became the first apartheid Prime Minister, emphasised language and 'civilisation' in supporting the apparent close link between Malays and Afrikaners, as well as highlighting that the Malays represented one of the oldest elements of the 'South African nation'.<sup>128</sup> Furthermore, Jeppie proposed "in a certain sense the very existence of Malay culture, which shared a language with the Afrikaans speaking *volke*, added to the veracity of the Afrikaner nation".<sup>129</sup> Not only were the Malays considered "exotic" but "'their' history at the Cape had relevance to the geneology [sic] of Afrikaner culture as well".<sup>130</sup> Moreover, according to Jeppie "except for the exigencies of the political moment (rallying support for the government) the 'malays' remained 'different'",<sup>131</sup> and that Du Plessis, a friend of Malan's,<sup>132</sup> had set out to discover this 'other' community "in relation to its functionality to the Afrikaner cultural heritage".<sup>133</sup> Baderoon supported Jeppie, explaining that, "the relation with 'Malay' subordinates helped to give substance and individuality to Afrikaans identity"<sup>134</sup> and furthermore that the "colourful visibility of 'Malays'... [in cooking books] ... functioned to give white especially Afrikaans-speaking South Africans a way to claim a past with a substantial and elaborated history".<sup>135</sup>

Afrikaner leaders promoted the notion of Malay 'pride'. As we have already seen, Malan raised the issue in 1925. Many years later, in 1959, Prime Minister H. F. Verwoerd reiterated this standpoint at the launch of the Simon van der Stel Foundation:

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<sup>125</sup> S. Jeppie, 'Re-classifications: Coloured, Malay, Muslim', in Z. Erasmus, ed., *Coloured by history, shaped by place: new perspectives on Coloured identities in Cape Town*. Cape Town: Kwela Books, 2001, pp. 80–96, p. 85.

<sup>126</sup> Witz, *Apartheid's festival*, p. 130.

<sup>127</sup> Witz, *Apartheid's festival*, p. 130.

<sup>128</sup> Jeppie, 'Re-classifications'.

<sup>129</sup> Jeppie, 'Re-classifications', p. 86.

<sup>130</sup> M.S. Jeppie, *Historical process and the constitution of subjects: I.D. du Plessis and the reinvention of the "Malay"*. B.A.(Honours) thesis, University of Cape Town, 1986–7, p. 17.

<sup>131</sup> Jeppie, *Historical process*, p. 18.

<sup>132</sup> Jeppie, *Historical process*, p. 9. The person being referred to here is Prime Minister D.F. Malan.

<sup>133</sup> Jeppie, *Historical process*, p. 18.

<sup>134</sup> G. Baderoon, *Oblique figures: representations of Islam in South African media and culture*. PhD thesis, University of Cape Town, 2004, p. 18.

<sup>135</sup> Baderoon, *Oblique figures*, p. 19.

[it] must be remembered that the non-European community also had a heritage of their own, and that the ancestors of the Malay community left something on which we can all look with pride. The foundation should be prepared to become the guardian of other groups who want to preserve their heritage.<sup>136</sup>

Not only were Afrikaners promoting the Malay cause, but there were Malay cultural leaders who, in Cape Town's complex social and political terrain, aspired to 'whiteness' and "were involved in promoting" and nurturing "class hierarchy within the coloured population" supported by white people.<sup>137</sup> According to Martin, these people "worked relentlessly to prove that coloureds were different from the Africans" and it was this "alleged difference [which] allowed I.D. du Plessis to attach coloureds to the Afrikaner population, and thus to the whites, but in a subordinate position".<sup>138</sup> Moreover, as "part of this strategy of 'divide and rule' [promoted by whites] internal distinctions within the coloured community were sharpened, and 'Malay' culture was given precedence over coloured culture".<sup>139</sup> In this context, Bangstad argued that Du Plessis perceived "the 'Cape Malays' as an elite in the 'coloured' population of Cape Town and its surroundings",<sup>140</sup> despite acknowledging that "many Malays have only a small income, and live on or below the poverty datum line".<sup>141</sup>

Jeppie argued that Du Plessis "wanted to make the colonial to appear as the age of tranquillity (a Golden Age) for the Malays, by concentrating on political exiles instead of the hard life of the slaves".<sup>142</sup> In doing so, Du Plessis advocated the ethnic distinctiveness of the Malays, which is reflected in his report, in April 1966, about the establishment of a Malay section at the SACHM (see above).<sup>143</sup> Du Plessis's role in Malay identity construction was widely recognised among the white Afrikaner community, with D.F. Malan referring to him as the "king of the Malays".<sup>144</sup>

Du Plessis's approach resonated with NP/AB thinking in the Western Cape. According to H. Giliomee,

On the racial issue, the north [of South Africa] tended to be dogmatic, rigid and uncompromising, with a strong overlay of racism. The south [where the SACHM was located] was much more ambiguous and very often hypocritical. Theoretically, the coloured people could, over the long term, become part of the dominant group, but in practice they were held at arm's length. The southern nationalists were racial pragmatists, sceptical of utopian solutions or biblical justifications of racial discrimination. They wanted to defend white supremacy by keeping different options open. Hard-core racism was a red herring that complicated the task of choosing between strategic alternatives.<sup>145</sup>

Ultimately, as Giliomee noted, South Africa was a "white man's country" and "Apartheid was a flexible operational ideology for Afrikaner nationalism, attracting both those wanting to keep down all those who were not white and those who wanted to rehabilitate them and recognise their human dignity".<sup>146</sup> This resonated with Jeppie's insight that, "From the 1920s on the

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<sup>136</sup> Anonymous, 'Historic buildings must be preserved', 8 April 1959, *Cape Argus*, page number unknown, held in the Iziko SAM Archives.

<sup>137</sup> C.L. Besteman, *Transforming Cape Town*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2008, p. 170.

<sup>138</sup> Martin, 'What's in the name "Coloured"?', p. 527.

<sup>139</sup> Martin, 'What's in the name "Coloured"?', p. 527.

<sup>140</sup> S. Bangstad, 'Diasporic consciousness as a strategic resource—a case study from a Cape Muslim community', in L. Manger & A. Munzoul, eds., *Diasporas within and without Africa: dynamism, heterogeneity, variation*. Uppsala: Nordic Africa Institute, 2006, pp. 32–60, p. 39.

<sup>141</sup> I.D. du Plessis & C.A. Luckhoff. *The Malay Quarter and its people*. Cape Town: A.A. Balkema, 1953, p.69.

<sup>142</sup> Jeppie, 'Re-classifications', p. 89.

<sup>143</sup> I.D. du Plessis, 'Report: Establishing Malay Section' to the SACHM Director, dated 29 April 1966, held in the Iziko SACHM Archives, File A6/2/4. It was written three weeks after the opening of the SACHM.

<sup>144</sup> Witz, *Apartheid's festival*, p. 131.

<sup>145</sup> H. Giliomee 'The making of the apartheid plan, 1929–1948', *Journal of Southern African Studies* 29 (2), 2003, pp. 373–92, p. 378.

<sup>146</sup> Giliomee 'The making of the apartheid plan', p. 391.

‘Malay’ was constructed as a distinctive Afrikaans-speaking community close to, though not part of, the politically dominant white population of the country”.<sup>147</sup> A tangible expression of this deception is that although the Malays were included in the displays, they were not invited to the SACHM opening on 6 April 1966. Instead, there were two openings: the primary opening was on 6 April 1966, which at the time was a public holiday celebrating the arrival of van Riebeeck at the Cape, when the museum was officially opened by Senator J. de Klerk (Minister of Education, Arts and Science; Fig. 5), and a second opening a week later, on 13 April 1966, for the Malays.<sup>148</sup> Justification for the second opening was provided at the Sub-Board (Cultural History) in December 1965: “It was thought desirable to hold a separate function on the following Saturday [i.e. 13 April] for the Malay community, which could be enhanced by own its orchestra and choir”.<sup>149</sup>

Before considering Du Plessis’s role in the SACHM to secure the representation of Malays in the displays and collections, it is prudent to consider his political leanings or affiliations. According to D. Chidester, Du Plessis was “a member of the secret society, the Afrikaner Broederbond ... [who] ... directed his ideological and organizational work toward reinforcing a separate ethnic identity for Cape Muslims”, which involved “reinterpreting the history of Islam in South Africa in ethnic terms ... to serve the National Party government’s design for racial apartheid”.<sup>150</sup> My investigations into which SAM and SACHM Board members belonged to the AB<sup>151</sup> found no mention of Du Plessis. Similarly, Christoph Marx, who when asked about this, responded “I don’t know if he was a Broederbond member and I have no knowledge about his political affiliations either”.<sup>152</sup> Further evidence mitigating against his membership of the AB is that he was not on the AB’s ‘Coloured Group’, which was established in 1963,<sup>153</sup> even though he had been Commissioner of Coloured Affairs between 1930 and 1962.<sup>154</sup> It would appear, however, that he was a member of the FAK, as he was “Chairman of the FAK’s ‘non-European Committee’ and was tasked to recruit ‘malays’, ‘coloureds’ and ‘griquas’ to participate in the [Van Riebeeck] Festival”.<sup>155</sup> Furthermore, in 1959 Du Plessis became the first Chancellor of the University of the Western Cape, the apartheid university for coloured students. This would have entailed him having a strong working relationship with J.G. Meiring, the first Principal of the university.<sup>156</sup> Meiring served on the SAM Board between 1958 and 1960 as the representative of the Cape Provincial Administration and is known to have been a member of the AB.<sup>157</sup> Furthermore, as already mentioned, Du Plessis was a friend of D.F. Malan. While Du Plessis might not have been an AB member, there is little doubt about his strong connection to the AB and NP hierarchy in the Cape. Through his working networks and connections, he would have been at the heart of their ideological imperatives and used the SACHM as a vehicle for propagating apartheid ideology. While some people perceived Du Plessis as ‘protector’ of the Malays,<sup>158</sup> this was not a universally held view.<sup>159</sup> Instead, as Jeppie<sup>160</sup>

<sup>147</sup> Jeppie, ‘Re-classifications’, p. 80.

<sup>148</sup> Minutes of the meeting of the Sub-Board (Cultural History) of the SAM Board held on 8 December 1965, held in the Iziko SACHM Archives, File A/6/2/4.

<sup>149</sup> Minutes of the meeting of the Sub-Board (Cultural History) of the SAM Board held on 8 December 1965.

<sup>150</sup> D. Chidester, *Religions of South Africa*. New York: Routledge, 1992, p. 167.

<sup>151</sup> Mazel, ‘Apartheid’s child’.

<sup>152</sup> Christoph Marx, email to the author on 25 March 2007. In the author’s possession. Marx is a historian who has done extensive research in the AB archives.

<sup>153</sup> Serfontein, *Brotherhood of power*, p. 147.

<sup>154</sup> Jeppie, *Historical process*, p.1.

<sup>155</sup> Jeppie, *Historical process*, p. 77.

<sup>156</sup> Serfontein, *Brotherhood of Power*, p. 159.

<sup>157</sup> Mazel, ‘Apartheid’s child’, p. 171.

<sup>158</sup> Jeppie, *Historical process*, p. 17; I encountered this sentiment among some white people when I was Director of the SACHM between 1998 and 2002.

<sup>159</sup> Jeppie, *Historical process*.

<sup>160</sup> Jeppie, *Historical process*, p. 1.

proposed, “Du Plessis found himself creating tradition and instituting social control”, which spread into diverse aspects of life in Cape Town. It is therefore unsurprising that Y. Da Costa<sup>161</sup> argued that

when any history of [the Muslim community in the Cape] has been written (by writers such as I.D. du Plessis), it has been done to support the racial policies of the colonial governments in power rather than as an attempt to give these people their rightful place in the events of this country.

We now turn to Du Plessis’s engagement with the SACHM in the 1960s. Du Plessis had long believed that a museum was required to promote the Malays. Already in 1943, he started canvassing for the establishment of a Malay Museum in the Bo-Kaap via “The Group Working for the Preservation of the Malay Quarter”<sup>162</sup> and organised a Malay arts and crafts display as part of the 1952 VRF.<sup>163</sup> It is unsurprising, therefore, that Du Plessis engaged with the SACHM, from its earliest days, about Malay collections and displays. For example, an early 1963 report stated that the gift of his

personal collection of Malay pieces, which included some rare examples, is something for which the Department is extremely grateful. It is to be hoped that this, with the fine Malay silver which the Department already has, will form the basis of a really good Malay collection.<sup>164</sup>

Then, on 3 September 1964, the Cultural History Sub-Board of the Trustees indicated that it “appreciated the importance of preserving the Cape Malay Culture and the Museum Staff were unable to devote the necessary time to it” and decided to ask him to become its “Honorary Curator of Cape Malay Culture”.<sup>165</sup> The request was framed as follows:

Dr. I.D. du Plessis has for a long period of time generously offered to assist the Museum both with the display and collecting of Malay material culture at the Cape. Due to circumstances it must be admitted that almost no progress has been made on the part of the Museum and Dr. I.D. du Plessis may well be disheartened at the lack of positive support. . . . It must be stressed that the Malay culture is an essential and important aspect of the local development but that the staff of the Museum is not likely to be able to grant this department the attention it deserves for a long time to come. It is suggested to approach Dr. I.D. du Plessis with the request to take over full responsibility for the department with the authority of Honorary Curator of Cape Malay Culture.<sup>166</sup>

Du Plessis accepted the position<sup>167</sup> and, as shown earlier, acted as the bridge between the museum and the Malay community, including bringing members to the museum.

In 1967, Du Plessis was appointed to the SACHM Board and, in 1980, he became its Chairperson, a position he held until his death in 1981.<sup>168</sup> As an Honorary Curator and Board Member he wielded considerable influence within the museum. As mentioned previously, his strong contribution to the institution was acknowledged in a report to the SACHM Board, in 1969, where it was noted that his ‘never tiring efforts’ led to the development of a second Malay

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<sup>161</sup> Y. da Costa, ‘Introduction’, in Y. da Costa & A. Davids, *Pages from Cape Muslim history*. Pietermaritzburg: Shuter and Shooter, 1994, p. x; cited in Baderoon, *Oblique figures*, p. 55.

<sup>162</sup> Jeppie, *Historical process*, p. 148.

<sup>163</sup> Witz, *Apartheid’s festival*, p. 131.

<sup>164</sup> M. Cook, ‘Report for 1 April 1962–31 March 1963’ to SAM Board, held in the Iziko SACHM Archives, File A6/2/1.

<sup>165</sup> Minutes of Cultural History Sub-Board of the SAM Board, held on 3 September 1964, held in the Iziko SACHM Archives, File A6/2/3.

<sup>166</sup> J. van der Meulen, ‘Report to the SAM Board for June, July and August 1964’, held in the Iziko SACHM Archives, File A6/2/3.

<sup>167</sup> Minutes of Cultural History Sub-Board of the SAM Board, held on 10 September 1964, held in the Iziko SACHM Archives, File A6/2/3.

<sup>168</sup> Vollgraaff, ‘Gesiedenis van die Suid-Afrikaanse Kultuurhistoriese Museum’, p. i–ii.

display room and greater interest in the museum from the Malay community.<sup>169</sup> The ‘efforts’ also included securing funds for display cases from the Rembrandt Corporation, United Tobacco Ltd. and the Cape Tercentenary Foundation.<sup>170</sup> As mentioned, it is likely that these donations were ideologically informed.

## CONCLUSION

This paper has charted the conceptualisation and development of the SACHM displays from when the idea of displays was first mooted in 1957 through to 1969 when it was reported that due to Du Plessis’s efforts a second Malay exhibition was being organised. It has been done with specific reference to the ideological imperative of apartheid with particular emphasis on slavery and the Malays. It has demonstrated that this was not a straightforward matter as the display process twisted and turned along the way as different actors sought to influence it in terms of what they believed was required. This included, for example, the different emphases of the historian Cook, the art historians Von Moltke and Van der Meulen, and honorary curator Du Plessis. Furthermore, although the players thought it would be straightforward, the embedding of apartheid ideology and white supremacy within tight resources and questionable logic and thought made it a tediously long process.

In the end, the displays largely fulfilled the initial Cook schedule with modifications, in particular the greater stress on past ‘civilisations’ and, as has been elaborated, the focus on the Malays and the ignoring of slavery. The slavery/Malay dichotomy resonated with Crooke’s insight that history can be presented in a manner that “denies the past, manipulates the truth and deliberately misleads”,<sup>171</sup> while, at the same time, as Luke has argued about history displays, they “formalize[d] norms of how to see”.<sup>172</sup> It was not convenient for the NP and AB ideologues that controlled the museum to acknowledge the presence of slavery at the Cape and the brutal way in which slaves were treated. Instead, they “buried” it, as indicated by Worden.<sup>173</sup> This pattern resonates with Wright’s and Mazel’s observation, mentioned in the introduction, about the absence of precolonial history in the museums of Natal in the 1980s, and the avoidance of uncomfortable questions about them.<sup>174</sup> At the time, it was ideologically expedient, if perhaps inconvenient, for the AB-/NP-dominated SACHM to include the Malays with whom they believed they had a connection regarding language and ‘civilisation’, and to produce exhibitions that were, as Macdonald stated, “historical signatures of their time”.<sup>175</sup>

The Malay exhibits were removed from the OSC in the late 1970s as, in 1978, the Bo-Kaap Museum was established as a satellite of the SACHM. It could be suggested that this move was linked to the increasing entrenchment of apartheid, but this requires further research. The museum was decorated as a house that depicted the lifestyle of an 1800s Malay family. As already mentioned, the first tangible steps to acknowledging the slave history of the OSC occurred in the late 1990s with, for example, the publication of a booklet about the building<sup>176</sup> and renaming the building to ‘Slave Lodge’.<sup>177</sup> Since then, extensive slavery exhibitions have been

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<sup>169</sup> W. Schneewind, ‘Report to the SAM Board for August 1968–January 1969’, held in the Iziko SACHM Archives, File A6/2/3.

<sup>170</sup> W. Schneewind, ‘Report to the SAM Board for September 1966–November 1966’, held in the Iziko SACHM Archives, File A6/2/3.

<sup>171</sup> Crooke, ‘Dealing with the past’, p. 135

<sup>172</sup> Luke, ‘Museum politics’, p. 3.

<sup>173</sup> Worden, ‘The changing politics’; also see North, ‘University of Hull PhD candidate’.

<sup>174</sup> Wright & Mazel, ‘Controlling the past’.

<sup>175</sup> Macdonald, ‘Behind the scenes’, p. 87.

<sup>176</sup> Vollgraaff, *The Dutch East India’s Slave Lodge*.

<sup>177</sup> Vollgraaff & Mazel, ‘Heritage Day—24 September 1998—Focus on slavery’.

installed thereby rectifying a historical injustice surrounding this phase of South African history that was perpetrated 50 years ago (Fig. 6).

#### ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Thanks are due to Susannah Eckersley for translating the Wacha letter from German to English, Pam Warne for providing Fig. 4, Lailah Hisham and Esther Esmiol who facilitated my visit to the Iziko Social History Centre in 2015, Ann Macdonald for editorial assistance, and Cynthia Kros and Conal McCarthy for their helpful comments on the paper.

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#### Figure captions

Fig. 1. Display schedule produced by Cook and Crompton in 1959, held in Iziko SACHM Archives, File D3/1.

Fig. 2. Von Moltke's 1961 memorandum about what should be included in the displays, held in Iziko SACHM Archives, File D3/1.

Fig. 3. Display schedule produced by Wacha in 1965, held in the Iziko SACHM Archives, File A6/2/4.

Fig. 4. Display of ancient 'civilisations' at the OSC. Photographer: Unknown.

Fig. 5. Invitation to the opening of the SACHM, held in the National Archives of South Africa (Cape Town), A1793.

Fig. 6. Banners advertising the Slave Lodge exhibitions. Photograph: Aron Mazel. [16 June 2007]