

**CLASHES OF WORLDVIEWS IN THE EARLY HISTORY
OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH IN SOUTH AFRICA:
THE STRUGGLES OF FR ALOYS MAJONGA MNCADI
WITH HIS WHITE SUPERIORS (1877-1933)**

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Abstract

This article critically examines the life of the second Catholic indigenous priest in South Africa, Fr Aloys Majonga Mncadi. The article briefly gives a background to the training of the black priests in South Africa and outlines key conceptual themes from the Comaroffs. The successful missionary approach of the Trappists is briefly outlined as they had successful missions among the Zulu people in Natal. Finally, the article looks at the conflict which Fr Aloys experienced in the light of the conceptual themes from the Comaroffs. The article is a revised version of a chapter in my doctoral thesis entitled “The establishment of the black Catholic clergy in South Africa from 1887 to 1957” submitted to the Faculty of Humanities at the University of Natal in 2000.

1 BACKGROUND

Serious work relating to the training of African Catholic priests in South Africa was initiated by the Trappist monks in Natal, through the institutions they set up when they started the mission in 1882: “These were principally the mission farm, the school, and the care based institutions such as hospitals, clinics and orphanages” (Hermann 1984:9-10). The first Zulu Catholic priest was Edward Mnganga who returned from Rome in 1898 after his ordination. He had been sent there in 1887 by the Trappist Abbot, Franz Pfanner to study for the priesthood. Three more Zulu men were also sent to Rome to study at

the Propaganda Urbanum College in Rome: Aloys Mncadi, ordained in 1903, and Julius Mbhele and Andreas Ngidi ordained in 1907. This was to be the initial period in the training of the African Catholic priests in South Africa. After these four ordinations, the training for priesthood was only resumed in 1925, after Rome had issued the encyclical *Maximum illud* in 1919.

In this article we shall focus on Aloys Mncadi. (The sources sometimes refer to him as 'Alois', the second black priest. I shall use these two names interchangeably in the article.) Before we look at his background, we shall briefly look at the history of the Trappists in Natal and then highlight the conceptual tools which will help us look beyond the mere events.

2 THE TRAPPISTS IN NATAL

In 1882 the Trappists arrived in Durban from the Eastern Cape. Prior Franz Pfanner purchased the farm *Zeekoegat* from the Colonisation Company and met Bishop Charles Jolivet in Pietermaritzburg on 19 December 1882. The bishop welcomed the monks, but declined to have any financial involvement in their undertakings. A few days later, the prior gave the farm a name.

He called it Mariannahill: "In the Cistercian tradition in honour of our Lady, and St Anne, the grandmother of the Lord." He also did it pious remembrance of his stepmother, who bore the names of Mary and Anne (Hermann 1984:10).

Under Bishops Jolivet and Delalle, the Trappists expanded their mission; they erected a school, cultivated lands and printed material amongst other things. By 1886, they had expanded to Polela, Einsiedeln and Mariathal; in 1887 to Oetting; and in 1888, to Kevelaer, Loretto, Lourdes, Rankweil and Centocow. By 1890, they had established missions at St Michael's and two years later at Maria Ratschitz. In this early period, the Abbot already started initiatives in indigenising the local clergy. In 1887, Edward Mnganga was sent to Rome to train for the priesthood. He was ordained in 1898 and

worked for a period of time in Zululand (*Vergissmeinnicht* 1945:235-238).¹

Abbot Pfanner was succeeded by Abbot Amandus Schölzig, who was in charge from 1893 to 1900. He also continued the training of converts. On 24 August 1894, he sent two more young men to study at the Propaganda College in Rome – Aloys Mncadi from Mariathal and Charles Mbengane from Mariannahill. The latter fell ill and was taken to Würzburg in Germany for treatment, where he later died. He is buried in the Würzburg cemetery. Aloys Mncadi successfully completed his studies and worked in the Mariannahill missions until his untimely death in 1933 (*Vergissmeinnicht* 1934:38-40).² We shall now look at some conceptual tools which will highlight an interesting transaction between the German missionaries and the indigenous community.

3 THE COMAROFFS' THEORY

For the Comaroffs, the study of Christianity is more than the mere analysis of religious change. It is part of the process in historical anthropology of consciousness, colonialism, culture and power, “of an anthropology concerned at once with the coloniser *and* colonised, with structure *and* agency” (Comaroff & Comaroff 1995:11). In their study, they critically examine the evangelisation of the Tswana people, where a group of British missionaries thought they would make history for an Africa community and help them on the road to civilisation. This encounter was not far removed from the life-world; it was “an integral part of the cultural and social revolution that accompanied the rise of industrial capitalism, an expression of the expansive universalism that marked the dawn of modernity” (Comaroff & Comaroff 1995:21).

In their investigation, a discussion of culture plays a vital role, since in culture you find products that determine our day-to-day interaction, such as power, ideology and consciousness. Drawing greatly on Gramsci (1971:21), the Comaroffs “take culture to be the space signifying practice, the semantic ground on which human beings seek to construct and represent themselves and others – and hence, society and history” (Comaroff & Comaroff 1995:15). Culture is a very important medium through which human beings interact; it is not only a collection of messages, a hodgepodge of signs to be flashed

across *a tabula rasa*. Culture has “form as well as content; it is born in action as well as thought; is a product of human creativity as well as mimesis; and, above all, is empowered. But it is not all empowered in the same way, or all of the time” (Comaroff & Comaroff 1995:22).

At this point, we need to examine the Comaroffs’ understanding of ideology and hegemony. They suggest that there is a triangular relationship between culture, ideology and hegemony. Having placed power at the centre of their analysis, they see hegemony and ideology as the two faces of power (West 1998:23).³ Through ideology and hegemony, a relationship between culture and power can be grasped.

The Comaroffs (1995:21) argue further that power is Janus-faced. “Sometimes it appears as the (relative) capacity of human beings to shape the actions and perception of others by exercising control over production, circulation, and consumption of signs and objects, over the making of both subjectivities and realities.” But most interestingly, power hides itself in the forms of everyday life. This is usually ascribed to entities beyond us – transcendental, “suprahistorical forces (gods, or ancestors, nature or physics, biological instincts or probability), these forms are not easily questioned” (Comaroff & Comaroff 1995:21). They seem to serve human needs and are too natural and ineffable. This type of power is termed *nonagentive* and it propagates outside the domain of institutional politics; it is found in things like aesthetics and ethics, medical knowledge, built form, and bodily representation and amorphous usage. It may not even be experienced as power at all because there is no apparent compulsion. But most importantly,

... they are internalised, in their negative guise, as constraints; in their neutral guise, as conventions; and, in their positive guise, as values. Yet the silent power of the sign, the unspoken authority of habit, may be as effective as the most violent coercion in shaping, directing, even dominating social thought and action (Comaroff & Comaroff 1995:21).

Relying on Marx, Bourdieu, Gramsci, and others, the Comaroffs

(1995:23) define ideology and hegemony in the following way:

Hegemony ... refers to that order of signs and practices, relations and distinctions, images and epistemologies - drawn from a historically situated cultural field - that come to be taken-for-granted as the natural and received shape of the world and everything that inhabits it. It consists ... of things that go without saying because, being axiomatic, they come without saying; things that, being presumptively shared, are not the subject of explication or argument.

Hegemony is habit forming because its power lies in what it silences, "what it prevents people from thinking and saying, what it puts beyond the limits of the rational and the credible" (Comaroff & Comaroff 1995:23). It is seldom directly contested except in the dreams of revolutionaries. However, once "its integral contradictions are revealed, when what seemed natural comes to be negotiable, when the ineffable is put into - then hegemony becomes something other than itself, it becomes an ideology ... *which* is an articulated system of meanings, values, and beliefs of a kind that can be abstracted as (the) 'worldview' of any social grouping" (Comaroff & Comaroff 1995:23). It acts as an organising scheme or, as the Comaroffs put it, a "Master narrative for collective symbolic production". The reigning ideology of a period of time and place is that of the dominant group and it is likely to be protected and enforced to its full extent. Other subordinate groups (e.g. communal identities and, in our case, local clergies) also have ideologies; if they want to overturn the existing relations with the dominant, they too must call up their ideologies. Such struggles, though seen to be political, are ideological struggles "for it necessarily involves an effort to control the cultural terms in which the world is ordered and, within it, power legitimized" (Comaroff & Comaroff 1995:24).

A basic difference between hegemony and ideology is that "the first consists of constructs and conventions that have come to be shared and naturalised throughout a political community; the second is the expression and ultimately the possession of a particular social group, although it may be widely peddled beyond". Hegemony is beyond direct argument and is not negotiable, whilst ideology "is more

susceptible to being perceived as a matter of inimical opinion and interest and therefore is open to contestation. Hegemony homogenises, ideology articulates. Hegemony at its best is mute; by contrast ... all the while ideology babbles on" (Comaroff & Comaroff 1995:24). The two are interdependent. The making of hegemony involves the control of different types of symbolic production with regard to education, ritual processes, socialisation, political, legal, style and self-representation, public communication, bodily discipline, and health. This control must be sustained over time and to such an extent that it becomes invisible. As the Comaroffs (1995:24) write: "For it is only by repetitions that signs and practices cease to be perceived or remarked; that they are so habituated, so deeply inscribed in everyday routine, that they may no longer be seen as forms of control - or seen at all."

Hegemony, then, is always intrinsically unstable, always vulnerable (Comaroff & Comaroff 1995:27). Once something leaves the area of hegemony it usually becomes a major site of ideological struggle. There can sometimes be no well-formulated opposing ideology, nothing clearly and consciously articulated among the subordinate groups, but rather a struggle and a contest (Comaroff & Comaroff 1995:26-27): as Scott says, an 'unremitting struggle' may still occur in the form of refusal, trying to reverse things, and a negation of the known genre (Scott 1994:14). James C Scott illustrates this point quite well in his book entitled *Domination and the arts of resistance: Hidden transcripts*. According to Scott, throughout history, people have been designated roles which they fulfil. In a social grouping, the public performance of the dominated will be such that it pleases or fulfils the expectations of the dominant, which Scott terms as the "public transcript" (Scott 1994:4).

From this outline of the Comaroffs' conceptual framework, the pertinent aspect to our investigation is the fact that hegemony is always unstable and always vulnerable. Once the hegemonic realm is shaken, it becomes an ideological struggle, which can be expressed in the form of a refusal, an attempt to reverse things and negations. Hence, there is always a struggle for ideology by different hegemonic groups. But the one which is triumphant at any given time is that of the dominant. This struggle for ideology, the threat of a

constant danger of usurping the existing hegemony is the main focus in the establishment of the black Catholic clergy. This struggle still continues today.

We shall now look at the Trappists' mission approach and then examine the life of Fr Aloys Mncadi.

4 THE TRAPPISTS' MISSION APPROACH

When the Trappist monks started their initial work among the Zulu people, their approach was different from that of some Protestants⁴ and early Oblate missionaries. The latter's approach was to build a mission first and then invite the people to come and listen to the message, to educate their children and, hopefully, to attract some catechumens – a slow but steady process. The Trappists, in contrast used a different method (Hermann 1984:10-14). Rather than starting a mission station they started with the development of a huge and fertile farm.

This was intended to attract the interest of the black people in the surrounding countryside; they came to see for themselves rather than being approached by the missionaries. It was a living amalgamation of Christian religion and genuine culture, which in the final analysis, takes its origin from manual labour (Brain 1982:131).⁵

The missionaries came to spread the gospel, but they were also influenced by their political and religious backgrounds, and deeply attached to their Western culture. This surfaced in their work in mission stations and also, in turn, influenced the perceptions of the new converts. As the Comaroffs say, whilst being evangelised, the Zulu converts were inevitably drawn into the culture of modern capitalism "... only to find themselves enmeshed, willingly or not, in its order of signs and values, interests and passions, wants and needs" (Comaroffs & Comaroff:1995:xii; Ela 1997:21). By 1879, after the Battle of Ulundi, the Zulus were fully subjected to the British rule.

In 1885, Franz Pfanner became Abbot, and by the end of that year he had built roads, residences for monks, workshops and schoolrooms.

Huge fields were already ploughed or in the process of being ploughed (Hermann 1984:12). In establishing this, Pfanner “intended to develop (the Zulu peoples) agricultural potential, while nurturing the spiritual and educational development of the Africans living on the properties. He planned, eventually to divide the properties among the African tenants” (Brain 1997:199). Seen from another perspective, bearing in mind that we use the Comaroff’s study on the Tswana people to shed light on a similar situation in Natal, we can say that the Abbot and his men came to “... save Africa: to make her peoples the subject of a world-wide Christian commonwealth. In so doing they were self-consciously acting out a new vision of global history, setting up new frontiers of European consciousness, and naming new forms of humanity to be entered onto its map of civilised mankind” (Comaroff & Comaroff 1995:309). The Abbot was to embark on this project through schools (Hermann 1984:12), where he would have access to the local people. His first school was opened in 1884 and by 28 December 1884, the first four converts, some schoolboys, were baptised. It was from these schools that the Abbot selected his first candidates who were sent to Rome.

A girls’ school was opened the following year. At first, the schools were days-schools, but the monks realised that the children were still exposed to their ‘pagan tribesmen’ when they returned home after school. It is evident that the monks wanted the schools to be one of the means of conveying Christianity and civilisation to children at an early age. The children had to think like the Germans and at times they became alienated from their own cultural background. This kind of practice created the situation whereby the *Kholwas*⁶ did not really know where they belonged. They thought they could associate with the whites but, due to racism in South Africa, they were treated differently. Their kinsmen were also alienated from them because some, for example, were not circumcised and were thus considered to be ‘half men’. Tiyo Soga, for example, was not fully accepted among his own Xhosa people and some missionaries despised him despite the fact that they were supposed to be his companions.⁷

A boarding facility was then provided, first for boys and later for girls. “At the same time, at the suggestion of David Bryant, the curriculum was altered so that every child spent the morning in the classroom

and the afternoons in the fields or workshops under the supervision of the many skilled monks” (Brain 1982:139). This practice was to be inculcated in the training of priests in South Africa, and up to today, manual labour is part of the training.

We shall turn to the life of Fr Aloys Mncadi and examine his experiences in the light of the conceptual tool outlined above.

5 ALOYS MAJONGA MNCADI

Aloys Majonga Mncadi was sent to Rome on 24 August 1894 and was ordained in 1903 (*Um-Afrika* 1933:3).⁸ *The Catholic Directory* shows that he was working at Maria Linden I 1921, and that from 1925 to 1927, he worked at Mariannahill and also at Lourdes, Centocow, Ixopo, St Michael’s, Himmelberg, St John’s and Maria Trost.⁹ Shortly before he left the Mariannahill Vicariate, he worked at Highflats before finally going to Zululand in 1933. Mariannahill was Mncadi’s original diocese, but after his negative experiences, he decided to leave and join the Vicariate Apostolic Eshowe in 1933, currently known as the Diocese of Eshowe. He died on 28 October of the same year. He had been a priest for 30 of his 59 years (*Um-Afrika* 1933:1).¹⁰

From the available sources, we see that Mncadi was involved in two conflicts as a priest in Mariannahill (1903-1932). The first was with Fr Florian, rector at Maria Trost mission in 1918, where Florian vehemently objected to Mncadi’s staying with his niece at St Michael’s; and the second conflict was with Bishop Fleischer and involved the ownership of a farm. We will look at these conflicts in the following sections.

5.1 Mncadi’s conflict with Fr Florian

In the Durban Archdiocesan Archives, the available correspondence on Mncadi deals with a conflict he had with Florian, rector at Maria Trost in 1918. Here we see a typical situation: The black priest’s worldview was supposed to have been replaced by a new Western way of looking at the world. Florian was trying to impose on Mncadi the Western individualistic lifestyle of living alone, without relatives or

a maid. This was a case of imposing a foreign cultural signifier of individualism, whilst Mncadi was used to a communitarian kind of life. He resisted and thus contested the process of establishing new cultural signifiers.

Mncadi wanted Christina, his brother's daughter, to live with him, so that she could help him. Under pressure from Florian, she left the mission. As Mncadi says:

... she is asked to go now to Johannes Mncadi her father, by him (Fr Florian), but I am sorry that there is somebody interfering and provoking her to do so. So I tell you that according to the court and Zulu law she belongs to my family and besides my family she belongs to nobody. I was astonished to hear that your attitude is against the wishes of my family, while these being such are wishes of me too.¹¹

He continued by saying that he was going to put the case before the court. He said:

I am going to protect the rights of my family and nobody can prevent me from doing so. Therefore, I give you a chance to get away from this trouble in which wrongly you involve yourself.¹²

Florian forwarded the letter to the Abbot and commented on "the style of the letter in which it is done, the proud and arrogance it contains." He continued by saying:

Sometime ago he (Mncadi) endeavoured to get the girl to St. Michael in order to become his servant maid, but I (Florian) persuaded her not to be willing, as other people would talk about it. I spoke to the Abbot who was also against this ... The principal reason of course why Father Aloys is so excited against me is because the girl refused to come to him; I admit that I influenced her to abstain from that and will again if necessary.¹³

Florian said that if the brother came to collect her, he would not have a problem. He would, however, protest if

Fr Aloys should try again to make her his servant maid or chambermaid. The Abbot is against this. I have also sent him a copy of the letter.¹⁴

No further documentation is available to show what finally transpired.

5.2 Mncadi's conflict with Bishop Fleischer

In 1918, Mncadi bought a farm in the Umzimkulu area. He employed a farm manager to manage the affairs of the farm whilst he continued to work as a priest. His farm prospered and he was able to pay the loan on his farm from the profits he made through selling agricultural products. This was to change after Fleischer was elected bishop of Mariannhill in 1922.

In 1924, Bishop Fleischer wrote to Mncadi, saying that he had been disobedient and he should have sold the farm. The bishop wrote:

Under the 4th September this year I ordered you to dispose of your farm before Christmas, because the possession of your farm will one day become a great danger to you of not listening to your bishop and risking eternal damnation whilst you need no farm as the bishop will care for you paternally as long as you are his loyal priest. Under the 28th of November I reminded you of your duty, but you answered by two very irrelevant letters to say not more. At the same time you wrote a very bad letter to Fr Julius in which you try to undermine the authority of the Bishop. I upon this suspend you from saying hl (holy) mass. Now today before me Fr Superior and Fr Julius Mbhele you declared that you did not try nor are willing to do so in the future, to dispose of your farm. I shall put your case before the Apostolic delegate.¹⁵

As a result of a campaign organised by Julius Mbhele amongst the black priests, Ngidi formulated a petition which was sent to the

Apostolic Delegate in 1924. The priests who signed this petition believed that they should be allowed to continue owning farms. The three priests (Mncadi, Mbhele and Ngidi) managed to have an interview with the Apostolic Delegate, Giljswijk.¹⁶ Archbishop Bernard Giljswijk was the first Apostolic Delegate of Southern Africa (1922-1944). An Apostolic Delegation was established by Pope Pius XI, by decree, on 7 December 1922, and consisted of the Republic of South Africa, Namibia, Lesotho, Botswana and Swaziland (*Catholic Directory* 2005:2). Archbishop Giljswijk had clear orders from Rome to establish the local clergy in South Africa. During this interview, the Delegate said, *inter alia*, “even from the beginning to the end, that there was no question about your right in possessing the landed property even your bishop did not ... deny that you have that right”. Then he went on to make *distinctiones scolasticae*, in stating that “they have freedom as far as the possession is concerned, but in regard to the exercise of your right upon it, the bishop might have to interfere with it, and rightly for certain he could and can transfer you from the place nearest to your farms to a far distance – supposing he added, the bishop sends you to Pondoland! How then could you exercise your rights in it?” (*Catholic Dictionary* 2005).

In reply, the black priests retorted that their managers could do all the work and it would not make any difference whether they were far or near. The Delegate went on to say that “... it would have been better if you had no farms; it does pain me much to see that you are only four Native priests and you could not avoid the trouble with your bishop ...”¹⁷

5.3 Analysis of the two conflicts

In the conflict between Mncadi and Florian we see that there was a contest over signifiers which these priests used to make sense of their lives. There was a contradiction in one of the ordinary categories of life, that is, to live with a family member, in this case a niece. Mncadi, according to his African worldview, took it for granted that he could stay with his niece; it was natural to him and part of his cultural background. Florian, however, coming from a religious and European background, thought that this was awkward. In other words, Florian

wanted Mncadi to abandon his communitarian lifestyle and adopt a Western one.

Mncadi's refusal meant that there was no 'consensus'; instead, the situation was debated and Mncadi appealed to the bishop. If there is resistance there cannot be hegemony, according to the Comaroffs. The significance of hegemony is that it offers an explanation of how power can be exercised and contested in such a way that it generates 'consensus' across a whole spectrum of class and non-class ideologies in society, in this case the black priests. The process of establishing hegemony works through cultural signifiers which ordinary people use to make sense of their lives. In our case, Mncadi wanted to live with his niece and Florian was objecting to this.

In the conflict between Mncadi and Bishop Fleischer, we see a typical case of a 'hidden transcript' becoming 'public' (Scott 1994:14). The bishop wrote a letter to Mncadi to instruct him to dispose of the farms but the latter refused in his letters to the bishop. His protests became public and the bishop had to warn him. Mncadi's denials became public and were no longer a hidden discourse. Or, to put it differently, the process of trying to impose new power structures was resisted and no 'consensus' was achieved. The land issue played a vital role in the lives of the first black clergy.

5.4 Mncadi's later pastoral work

The next interesting piece of documentation is Mncadi's application to come to Inkamana in 1932. Concerning this, Bishop Spreiter wrote:

... Rev Alois wrote to me applying to come for some time to Inkamana. The answer I have sent is attached here with this letter. Of course I will help, but cannot if his bishop has not given consensus that is '*conditio sine qua*' and also that he can say mass.¹⁸

He was allowed to come to Inkamana in 1933. When he came he was already sickly as the Chronicle of Inkamana observed:

Fr Mncadi was already sickly and weak when he came to us. Nevertheless, he worked hard from the day he arrived. He gave instruction, preached, heard confessions and visited outstations on horseback. Nothing seemed too much for him. From about July, his health deteriorated alarmingly. The doctor diagnosed cancer. Fr Alois had problems with his digestion; he lost weight. It was only with great effort that he could celebrate Mass ... He left us on October 2 and died on the October 28th, suffering from cancer of the liver.¹⁹

There are scanty sources available on Mncadi in the archives. However, from the little that I found, I managed to see how the missionaries tried to overturn the worldview which Mncadi took for granted. By denying what to him were normal everyday requests, for instance to live with a niece and to own a farm, the missionaries wanted to exercise their power over Mncadi and generate 'consensus' among the black priest(s). However, Mncadi contested this process and so there was a contradiction. He said the whole process was against the Zulu culture and he wrote letters to the bishop and even wanted to sue Florian in a court of law.

Relying on our written sources, one could conclude that life was very difficult for these first black priests. They had been to Rome and acquired doctorates in theology and philosophy, and this in itself created some problems. Firstly, most of the missionaries received basic priestly training, while the black priests completed licentiates and doctorates, which might have created feelings of jealousy on the part of the other missionaries; it might also be that the black priests behaved rather proudly or arrogantly.²⁰ Secondly, the black priests were, to a certain extent, aware of the two worldviews, that is, Zulu and Western. Sources suggest that they were aware of the power struggle between their culture and the Western culture and this may have made their lives difficult. Initially, they may have thought they could associate with the white priests, but when they were continually ill-treated the trust broke down. Due to their level of education they were probably alienated from African society. All these factors had an influence on the interaction between the missionary priests and the first black priests.

While one suspects that these might have been the difficulties they faced, we cannot necessarily conclude that the priests indeed had these problems. The definition of 'problems' is a matter of perspective. The problem could have been with the missionaries who did not fully comprehend the dynamics of African culture. As the Comaroffs suggest, it is from culture that we develop salient aspects of human existence, hegemony and ideology. The missionaries came with the superior idea that Africa was blank and needed their God, and they wanted to completely wipe out the culture which had developed over several centuries. So, by not understanding the culture of the indigenous people, they misunderstood their *modus operandi* and were convinced that African priests had problems.

It is important to note that the black priests transcended these misconceived 'problems' and all died as priests. The experiences of the black priests were highlighted by Bishop Biyase of Eshowe diocese as follows:

[their experience ...] can enrich us... first of all in the manner of approach to this priesthood or pastoring to people. They were gentlemen who were really dedicated and I would imagine more especially today having a little bit of knowledge of the priest of today, some of the young fellows who come out of the seminary are thinking already too high. There is usually a number whom you find that they are flying too high, they seem not to be ordained for their people but for certain class. So I would imagine that studying the acts of these guys just like the Acts of the apostles would help us a lot to see how already at that time, last century, how in our country these fellows took the situation and more especially when we compare their time with ours today, we live in a so called New south Africa, and they were in the old South Africa in the colonial South Africa, in fact at the beginning of it was the first time that a black man came in.²¹

Bishop Biyase was one of the first black bishops in South Africa. He was consecrated on 28 June 1975. Biyase supported Mncadi's position because he had similar experiences as young

priests and believed strongly that some of the attitudes still persisted amongst some of the white priests in his diocese.

6 CONCLUSION

Building on the analyses of the Comaroffs and Scott, I believe that we need to look beyond the mere stories of the conflicts between the local clergy and the missionaries. Their interaction was characterised by contestation, compliance, repulsion and fascination. The missionaries proved to be more than capable of imposing their cultural background on the colonial field, but the black priests were not passive recipients of the European culture, they also resisted. For the Comaroffs, modes of resistance extend on a wide spectrum. As they say: "At one end is organised protest, explicit moments and movements of dissent that are easily recognisable as 'political' by western lights. At the other are gestures of tacit refusal and iconoclams, gestures that sullenly and silently contest the form of an existing hegemony" (Comaroff & Comaroff 1995:14). The black priests' resistance can be linked with the latter. The priests resisted the missionary campaign to reconstruct some aspects of their everyday lives. They struggled to retain control over words, space and the use of the Zulu language itself.

In our case, we saw that the resistance of the black priests ranged from simple gestures of refusal, writing rebellious letters and petitions, arguing over the mastery of the Zulu language to refusing to obey some of the commands from the bishops. We could say that their resistance was not very radical, as it did not actually overturn the existing power structures and effect change. In other words, they demonstrated short-term resistance in the face of the current crisis rather than resistance which was going to effect change in the whole church in South Africa. I suggest that the early black priests, to some extent, used survivalist tactics in order to cope with their crisis as Catholic priests. I think it is vital to distinguish between the different forms of resistance in society. More advanced forms of resistance usually effect change as they are directed at the whole power structure which is questioned and then sometimes overturned. In the Roman Catholic Church, even though the first priests resisted and contested the different worldview which was imposed on them, in

reality they did not effect any long-term change. Today the Catholic Church is still rigid in its structures; the black priests still feel 'homeless' and are still fighting white dominance in the church.

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ENDNOTES

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- 1 Der erste Priester aus dem Stamme der Zulus, in *Vergissmeinnicht*, no 63, 1945, 235-238.
 - 2 See Otto Heberling, Mariannahiller: neueste Missionsnachrichten, in *Vergissmeinnicht*, 1934, 38-40. Archives of Mariannahill Monastery.
 - 3 West, G 1998. Discerning the contours of domination and resistance in liberation hermeneutics: Do the poor and marginalized speak? in *Bulletin for contextual theology in Southern Africa and Africa*, 4(3).
 - 4 It is important to note that some other missionaries had a similar approach, for instance, Bishop Colenso at Ekhukhanyeni, see Hinchliff, P, 1963 *The Anglican Church in South Africa: an account of the history and development of the Church of the Province of South Africa*, London: Darton, Longman & Todd.
 - 5 See also Dahm, J. 1950. *Mariannahill; seine innere Entwicklung, sowie seine Bedeutung für die katholische Missions-und kulturgeschichte Südafrika*.dissertation zur Erlangung des theologischen Doktorgrades an der kath.-theol. Fakultät der Universität Wien, 1949, Mariannahill, Missionsdruckerei.
 - 6 For Norman Allan Etherington a *kholwa* was an “African who chose to reside on mission stations (and) were, for the most part, outcasts from traditional society and detribalised people from all parts of South Africa who came seeking land, security, and employment.” See *The rise of the Kholwa in south-east Africa: African Christian communities in Natal, Pondoland and Zululand, 1835-1880*. PhD thesis, Yale University, 1971.
 - 7 See, Attwell, D 1995. The transculturation of enlightenment: The exemplary case of Rev Tiyo Soga, African nationalist, in Philippe Denis (ed), *The making of an indigenous clergy in Southern Africa*. Pietermaritzburg: Cluster Publication.
 - 8 *Um-Afrika*, (3 November, 1933), 3.
 - 9 See Otto Heberling, “Mariannahiller: neueste Missionsnachrichten” in *Vergissmeinnicht*, 1934, 37. Archives of Mariannahill Monastery. See also *Um-Afrika*, (3 November, 1933), 3.
 - 10 *Um-Afrika*, (10 November, 1933), 1.
 - 11 Alois Mncadi, letter to Fr Florian, St. Michael’s 25/6/1918. Archives of the Archbishop of Durban: File on the first Black Priests.
 - 12 Alois Mncadi, letter to Fr Florian, St Michael’s 25/6/1918. Archives of the Archbishop of Durban: File on the first Black Priests.
 - 13 Fr Florian, letter to Bishop Delalle, Maria Trost Mission, 2/7/1918. Archives of the Archbishop of Durban: File on the first Black Priests.
 - 14 Fr Florian, letter to Bishop Delalle, Maria Trost Mission, 2/7/1918. Archives of the Archbishop of Durban: File on the first Black Priests.
 - 15 True Copy of Bishop Fleischer letter to Aloys Mncadi. Mariannahill, 28/12/1924. Archives of the Archbishop of Durban: File on the first Black Priests.
 - 16 Aloys Mncadi, Letter to Andreas Ngidi, Mariannahill, 18/02/1925. Archives of Inkamana Monastery, Vryheid: Andreas Ngidi; File 1.
 - 17 Ibid.
 - 18 Thomas Spreiter, Bishop, letter to Father Julius Mbhele, Inkamana, 13th October 1932. Archives of Inkamana Monastery, Vryheid: Clergy File 1.
 - 19 See Otto Heberling, Mariannahiller Rundfunk:Neueste Missionsnachrichten” in *Vergissmeinnicht*, 1934, 38-40
 - 20 Der erste Priester aus dem Stamme der Zulus in *Vergissmeinnicht*, no 63, 1945, 237. Archives of Mariannahill Mission.
 - 21 Bishop Mansuet Biyase, interview conducted in Eshowe, 22 April 1997.