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Views on Race and Gender in Roman Catholic Girls' Education: A Case Study of Embakwe 'Coloured' School Experiment, 1922-1965

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Abstract
Colonial education created a racially segregated education system with each race accorded education that would fit it in the socially stratified society. The colonial settlers had a European type of education while the black majority received education that demoted them to menial and clerical jobs. The colonial system, however, had to find another educational category within the system for a new ethnic group, the mixed race or 'coloureds', who were the progeny of sexual liaisons between 'white masters' and their African women servants. This paper demonstrates how this specially designed education system, which fell within a broader framework of a racially segregated education system, was crafted in such a way as to make the coloured people take specific roles in a racially segregated colonial society. At Embakwe, gender as a social category was constructed side-by-side with that of race, both categories being indispensable to the colonial order. The extent to which 'coloured' girls at Embakwe were agents in shaping female 'coloured' identity within the colonial context, as well as their agency in resisting the colonial and missionary design to 'emancipate' the 'coloured' children by separating them from their mothers permanently is discussed. The colonial mastery failed to undo the effects of racial separation as evidenced in Coloureds reconnecting with their African mothers.

Introduction
At Embakwe and Empandeni missions, educational provision started off as multi-racial, with African and 'Coloured' children sharing the same educational facilities. Since race and ethnicity as categories were used to organise society in colonial Rhodesia, the school became a site for casting people deemed to be of 'mixed race', a distinct social stratum between the dominant white minority and the African majority

(Adhikari, 2009, p. ix). Race in this case is understood as a social construct rooted in physical differences, the most prominent attribute being skin colour, or tone. Ethnicity, on the other hand, is understood as being centred mainly on the geographical origins of one's ancestors (Caliendo & Mcllwain, 2011, p. xxii). Race was used to distinguish between, as well as separate, groups of people in a way that would preserve power for the dominant group (Caliendo & Mcllwain, 2011, p. 6). The Embakwe 'Coloured' school became the place at which, through a specific educational curriculum, the settler government and the Roman Catholic missionaries attempted to impose their version of a 'coloured' identity on the so called 'half-caste' children. The Roman Catholic missionaries (especially the nuns), played a big role in implementing segregationist educational policies imposed by the state, which ensured the demarcation of social identities into black, white and 'coloured', actively promoted racial differentiation.

Racialism at Embakwe

From 1921, with the assistance of colonial education officials, Roman Catholic education at Empandeni and Embakwe was gradually constituted on racial bases, conforming to colonial policies of separating blacks and whites and creating an in-between race, the 'coloureds'. The racial categories of 'whiteness', 'blackness' and 'colouredness' became the primary social, economic and political identifiers (Scully, 2004, p. 201), which determined which school a child went to, the type of education s/he received, as well as the type of work they would do after school. The colonial administration justified the racial basis of its education system by claiming that education was intended to 'render the individual more efficient in his, or her condition of life', and 'to promote the advancement of the community as a whole' (NAZ S824/68/1). Education, which aimed at achieving different goals for the different races and genders, became one of the essential pillars of racial discrimination, which was projected at Embakwe mission by the creation of the 'coloured' identity. The desire to create a reformed, distinguishable race out of the 'half-caste' children is what Bhabha calls colonial mimicry. Bhabha (1994, p. 122) argues that in order for the exercise of colonial authority to be effective, it required the production of differentiators, individuations and identity-effects through which discriminatory policies could be practised on colonial subjects. At

Embakwe mission after 1921, the dynamics of the colonial, racial categories of inclusion and exclusion, which maintained the boundaries between the colonised and the colonisers (Scully, 2004, p. 199), were clearly illustrated. The 'coloured' school girls were, however, not passive recipients, but were agents in the creation of the 'coloured' identity at Embakwe.

The settler distinction between 'half-castes' and 'coloureds'

In Rhodesia, distinctions were drawn between 'half-castes' and 'coloureds' before viewing them as one entity. The Cape Coloureds, in keeping with the racial differentiation of the time, distinguished themselves from the 'half-castes' whose identity was a result of miscegenation. The Cape Coloureds believed miscegenation did not play a predominant role in their ancestry. Some of the Cape Coloureds claimed not to have any European ancestry at all, as their ancestors were Khoisan and Malay. This racial pride, and their language which derived mainly from Afrikaans, were the major markers of the Cape Coloured identity.

The existence of 'half-castes' in rural communities of south-western Zimbabwe predate colonialism. John Smith Moffat reported in 1891 that outside the government camp and the London Mission Society (LMS) mission station at Inyathi, there was scarcely a white man who had not at least one African mistress (Moffat, 1921, p. 235). During Lobengula's reign, John Lee, who farmed and traded on the Mangwe frontier, had children with his Ndebele partners (Vaughan-Williams, 1947, p. 13. Frederick Courtney Selous, a famous hunter in Southern Africa, is known to have married two African women besides his European wife (Seftel, 1992, p. 31). In rare cases, 'coloured' children were born out of sexual liaisons between European women and African men. At Embakwe there was only one case in the statistical records, but no details are available.

In the urban history of south-western Zimbabwe, particularly in Bulawayo, most 'half-caste' children were born out of wedlock as a result of sexual liaisons between mainly European men and African women. In an attempt to explain the casual inter-racial sexual relationships, Blake (1978:119) noted that in March 1895, there were 1

329 white men and 208 white women in Bulawayo, a gender imbalance which may have led European men to seek sexual pleasure among African women. The official view was that these 'half-caste' children were 'the living legacy that abrupt, casual, often coerced unions had left behind' (Young, 1995, p. 24). The so-called 'immorality files' for Bulawayo are full of evidence of all manner of sexual liaisons between European men and African, or mixed race women in the African township of Makokoba (NAZ S1222/1).

In Southern Rhodesia, the term 'coloured' came to include persons who belonged to a later generation of the group 'half-caste', who had been prepared through education at schools such as Embakwe to adopt the 'coloured' identity. This process would not have been possible without the Roman Catholic missionaries.

The conversion of 'half-castes' into 'coloureds'

The Roman Catholic Missionaries saw it as their duty to intervene on behalf of the 'coloured' children who were 'despised by whites and blacks but loved so much by the Good Lord' (ND Archives Liverpool Embakwe Annals, December 6, 1926). They saw the existence of the 'half- caste' children as a disgrace to the European community, and the colonial government saw it as their duty to do something about it. They decided that the children should be removed from the rural environments and African townships in which they were living, and the African schools where they were being educated.

Having identified the need to separate the mixed race children, and while the debates were going on, school inspectors liaised with nuns and priests at Empandeni, where mixed race children were being schooled side-by-side with African children to create separate facilities for them. Empandeni was initially chosen as the school to start this project, because 'coloured' children were already learning side-by-side with Africans.

Racial separation at Empandeni

As soon as the decision to separate the children according the 'coloured' children at Empandeni began to sit separately from the African children in what can be described as the beginning of educational apartheid.

Mixed race children also started receiving preferential treatment, such as extra tuition, ostensibly because they were 'so eager to learn' (Kay, 1984, p. 78). Government assistance afforded the nuns the means to give better treatment to mixed race children. The nuns soon suggested Embakwe to be a much more safeguarded locality for the 'coloured' children, compared to Empandeni, which was too crowded (NDA, Liverpool Sr. Ita to Sr. Bernard, 20 November 1921, Letters from Empandeni 1920-1922). The Department of Education offered to provide a special grant, building material and furniture for 'coloureds' school. Teachers' salaries would also be paid through a grant-in-aid of £90 per annum, payable quarterly (NDA, Liverpool Sr. Ita to Sr. Bernard, 20 November 1921, Letters from Empandeni 1920-1922).

Although the original plan was that Embakwe Coloured school would be for girls, following the 1930 takeover of Embakwe by the Mariannhill missionaries, boys were admitted to the 'coloured' boarding school. In 1932, there were 20 girls and 11 boys at Embakwe Coloured school, all of them boarders (NDA, Liverpool, Correspondence 1950-1959). As soon as the local people knew that a school for 'coloured' children was under construction at Embakwe, the nuns began to receive requests for the enrolment of mixed race children from the farms around Embakwe where mixed race marriages were common, from Bulawayo and other parts of the colony (NDA, Liverpool, Random Memories of Sr. Ambrose, 1929-1955). Embakwe soon attracted children, not just in south-western Zimbabwe, but in the whole of Rhodesia as well as Zambia and Botswana.

Education of 'half-castes' and 'coloureds' at Embakwe played the social function of embedding a 'coloured' consciousness among these children. The first step taken was the language policy of the school. As part of the process of embedding a 'coloured' consciousness in the 'mixed race' children the school embarked on replacing siNdebele with English (NDA, Liverpool, Letters from Sr. Ambrose to her Family, 5 March 1932). The language policy facilitated the creation of what Muzondidya refers to as 'a symbolic terrain of 'colouredness' (Muzondidya, 2002, p. 78). By discouraging the children from conversing in siNdebele, the nuns assisted the children to cut ties with their African side of the family. The children were also to be kept at the

school as much as possible.

Education for 'coloured' girls at Embakwe

It is important to clarify what being 'coloured' meant in social terms, so as to be able to analyse the role played by 'coloured' girls in creating the 'coloured' identity. Being 'coloured', took more than being of mixed race. It was more than an inherent quality derived out of miscegenation, neither can it simply be described as having been imposed by the colonial state. Being 'coloured' arose out of a historical process which involved both self- definition and definition by others, which began in the 1890s and continued throughout the colonial period (Muzondidya, 2002, p. 74). The education offered at Embakwe had much to do with this historical process. Mandaza (1997, p. 209) argues that for most 'mixed race' children, 'coloured' life began with entry to a 'coloured' school because the question of colour was of little social significance in an environment numerically dominated by Blacks. Upon leaving the school, instead of living like Africans, the 'coloured' graduates of Embakwe could join the greater 'coloured' community, and enjoy the privileges of being 'coloured' that were provided for within the racially segregated colonial society. They could take up jobs set aside for 'coloureds'. Being 'coloured' meant that one had to be a member of a community, while the so-called 'half- castes' were isolated individuals usually living with their mothers in the African townships, or villages (McCulloch, 2000, p. 168). Some mixed race people refused to be called 'coloured', and insisted that they were African, while others could pass for white, and regarded themselves as white and, as long as they were not caught, could enjoy the privileges of being white.

For the 'coloured' girls, apart from the already mentioned fear of the negative effects of the 'half-caste' children growing up like Africans, there was the added concern that they did not seem to avert from village life the way male 'coloureds' did. The European settlers also expressed the fear that, 'while many of the half-caste girls have an inclination to co-habit with white men or men of their own colour, it is not unusual to find them legally married to black men' (NAZ, S824/68/1, Thomas to the Assistant Native Commissioner, 31/10/33). This settler attitude was particularly popular after 1930, and is the reason why it was preferred that the girls should stay at Embakwe as long as possible to give them

time to mature and possibly find marriage partners while still being schooled among 'coloured' boys at Embakwe.

From the point of view of the colonial administration, education for 'half-caste' children was meant neither to equip them to fit into the 'coloured' community, nor to benefit the 'coloured' children. It focused more on making the children useful to the colonial economy and society.

Educating 'half-caste' was gendered in that males were educated to avoid importing technical manpower from South Africa. Technical skills were believed to be the area of specialisation for 'coloured' people from South Africa (NAZ S824/68/1, Statements and views of the President of the Committee of Inquiry into 'coloured' Education, 27 November 1933). Coloured girls were mainly destined to do domestic service after school. Therefore, apart from the usual courses of primary education, all branches of domestic training would be taught to the girls. One of the pre-conditions of the government granting grants to the school was that the children should be taught manual labour. It was, therefore, a requirement that there be facilities for the teaching of 'industrial' and 'manual work' in all 'coloured' schools. For girls, manual labour centred around domestic skills, that is why Sr. Bridget and Sr. Elizabeth were put in charge of domestic training for the girls at the school's inception.

Unlike the African girls who were primarily taught domestic skills so that they could be good wives, the 'coloured' girls were trained in domestic skills primarily to equip them for employment domestic service, and this was supposedly done as 'a provision for their future' (JAHre, Box 300, Empandeni). Colonial officials who visited the school, and in their reports expressed satisfaction that 'girls were being prepared for earning their own living in those branches of domestic science for which they were most fitted and there is always demand for such trained helpers' (NDA, Liverpool, Some Account of first beginnings of Embakwe 'coloured' School, 1942 or 1943).

Domestic training focused on cookery, especially baking, needle work and handiwork, laundry and cleaning. The nuns ensured that practical

training on domestic skills was embedded into the daily lives of the girls. They had days designated for collecting firewood, doing the laundry, the weekly bath, with Sunday being the day when the children would wear special clothes, have special food and sometimes go for picnics (Interview with Mrs Martin, nee Peel, Bulawayo, 22 May, 2010). In this way, the girls were not only 'trained to take their share of work in the school' (NDA, Liverpool, Sr. Ita to Sr. Bernard, 20 November 1921, Letters from Empandeni 1920-1922), but their routine was meant to mirror the way their domestic responsibilities would be structured in the European households in which they would eventually work.

The girls would wake up at five each morning, about the time domestic servants were expected to start work in European households, help the nuns with the baking before going for mass at 6.30am. In the school bake-house, the girls would help the nuns make enough buns to feed 356 hungry children (NDA, Liverpool, Embakwe Annals, 11 July 1950). They would also make cakes for the religious feast days, of which there were many on the Catholic school calendar. The girls were burdened with domesticity, providing un-paid labour for the nuns under the guise of domestic training.

After 1950, commercial subjects were introduced to give them the chance, albeit remote, to branch away from domestic service. By the beginning of the 1950s, the Embakwe school curriculum was under criticism for its failure to broaden the academic aspect. The focus on manual work was beginning to worry the school inspectors, who noted that the school day started at 8:15 and lasted till 12:45, leaving the rest of the day for hostel duties called 'charges' for which the children were responsible. For girls, these included cleaning the hostels, the dining room and the church, while boys helped in the general maintenance of the school. Inspectors were concerned that this reduced the classroom time, resulting in less time being devoted to subjects such as history, geography, nature study and art. The 1951 inspection report, for instance, pointed to insufficient reading material, especially for the senior pupils. The report was critical of how the practical work was closely connected to the life of the institution, and how 'the skills imparted were limited in their application'. The report recommended

more academic education as a way of motivating the girls to achieve better, and less emphasis on 'using the pupils as labour to run the institution', (NDA, Liverpool, Correspondence 1960-1972, Inspection Report, 1951).

'Coloured' girls made their own efforts to break away from the yoke of domestic service. Not surprisingly, these girls detested the prescribed role of 'nannies', a tag which was used for them even when they were not employed in that service. Mrs Martin, a former pupil at the school, remembered how European children would call any 'coloured' girl whom they saw in the streets a 'nanny' (Interview with Mrs. Martin, Suburbs, Bulawayo, 22 May, 2010). Some academically gifted girls were given the chance to go to South Africa to train as teachers, or hospital nurses. In 1930, Celina Clark, who had spent eight years in the mission, became the first 'coloured' girl from the mission to train as teacher. She left the school to train as a teacher at the Holy Cross Mission in Cradock, South Africa (NDA, Liverpool, Embakwe Annals, 30 January 1930).

The role of the 'coloured' girls in creating the 'coloured' identity at Embakwe

It was outside the official curriculum that the 'coloured' children, particularly the girls, exercised their own agency in the creation of their own identity. At Embakwe, the older 'coloured' girls had a big part to play in making the school 'a homely community especially for the younger 'coloured' children who came initially from different parts of rural Matabeleland' (At Kalahari's Brink:16), and later, from the 'coloured' suburbs of Bulawayo and Salisbury, and other smaller towns in Rhodesia. In 1938, Embakwe was certified as an institution under the Children's Protection and Adoption Act which authorised it to cater for 'orphans' of mixed race. Generally, an orphan is a child who has lost both parents. However, at Embakwe, the term orphan was used within the context of the designs of the missionaries and the colonial administrators to remove 'half-caste' children from African homes. As part of their home-craft and child-care lectures, the older girls would be in charge of the little girls' and boys' bathing and hair washing, and supervise their dressing. This was all part of the 'practical bias' of the girls' education, but at the same time the girls found themselves

stepping into the shoes of the mothers of whom the children were deprived, either by death, or by the government policy of removing 'half-caste' children from African communities (NDA, Liverpool, Embakwe Annals, 19 March 1930). This role of social motherhood enabled the girls to make a major input passing the coloured consciousness to the younger children. Some of the children who came from 'coloured' families would take the girls who came from African homes (and who were discouraged from returning to the villages), to their homes over the school holidays, in order to give them a taste of real family life (Interview with Mrs. Martin nee Peel, 22 May 2010, Bulawayo).

The girls made greater efforts than the boys to re-connect with their mothers after finishing school. For example, Julie Wolfenden saw to it that her mother was baptised on her deathbed (NDA, Liverpool, Embakwe Annals, 6 August 1935). This signifies the agency of the 'coloured' girls to resist complete domination by the colonisers, and the failure of the colonial power to completely dominate the colonised. The fact that some were able to reconnect with their mothers after all the effort that had been made to break the relationship signifies how some 'coloured' girls undermined the colonial differentiation based on race. By reconnecting with their African mothers, these 'coloured' girls were demonstrating the creativity and adaptability of the subaltern in the face of colonial power.

Conclusion

The creation of a 'coloured' consciousness at Embakwe was an important part of the curriculum, and the nurturing roles of the older girls had a big part to play. Their social skills and roles were as important as the intellectual and manual skills that were imparted to all the children at the school. For the 'coloured' girls at Embakwe, Roman Catholic missionary education was preparing them not only to fit into the in-between rung of the three tier racial system, but also for them to play specific roles within it. Although missionary education played a major role in creating the 'coloured' identity, the 'coloureds' themselves were not passive in the process. The role played by the 'coloured' girls at Embakwe highlights the agency of the 'coloured' people in creating their identity. Education also enabled the girls to craft their own

agendas, which were different from the missionary agenda especially with regards to employment. Some of the girls were able to wriggle out of the domestic roles that colonial missionary education ascribed to them at institutions such as Embakwe, and venture into jobs that were viewed as predominantly male, such as motor mechanics. Others were able to undo the effects of racial separation by reconnecting with their African mothers, undermining the differentiation that was used as the basis of colonial power. This process, shows that though colonial mastery was constantly asserted, it was always incomplete, always slipping (Abrahamsen, 2003:205). This is reinforced by the fact that in 1964, Embakwe started enrolling African children.

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