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DOI: http://dx.doi.org/10.18820/24150479/aa50i2.3

ISSN:0587-2405

e-ISSN: 2415-0479

Acta Academica • 2018 50(2): 52-74

A century of mountaineering: race, class and the politics of climbing Table Mountain, 1890 – 1990

First submission: 31 May 2017
Accpetance: 29 September 2018

Mountaineering in Cape Town was first practised as a sport by the colonial elite during the late 19th Century. This historical review of two mountain clubs analyses the linkages between race, class and mountaineering in Cape Town, South Africa. The origins of mountaineering are inextricable from the racial hierarchy of colonial society, which was founded upon discrimination, segregation and unequal power relations between black and white. This is evident in the development of the exclusively white Mountain Club of South Africa – an organisation deeply embedded in the privileged political establishment. Similarly, the racialised power relations of the 20th Century would be reflected in the club's distant, exclusionary and paternalistic relationship with local black mountaineers and the Cape Province Mountain Club. Through an exploration of the developmental trajectories of these two, at one time racially exclusive, mountaineering clubs, their interaction with each other and their navigation of the contemporary socio-political context, this paper tells the history and politics of climbing Table Mountain between 1890 to 1990.

Keywords: race, politics, mountaineering, South African mountain club history

1. Introduction

The politics of race and class has been deeply embedded in mountaineering in South Africa since the sport's early days. Given the Cape's colonial history of slavery, segregation and discrimination, race and class configure particular social dynamics (Bickford-Smith 1989). In the contemporary political context shaped by a long history of "white dominance and black subordination" (ibid: 47), the historically exclusive white sporting organisations continue to assert their ideological domination while rhetorically claiming to have broken away from the apartheid past (Nauright 1997: 43). Mountaineering, similarly, exposes such historically inherited racial, class and ideological tensions in contemporary Cape Town.

This leisure pursuit of the Cape's social, professional and governing elite developed into a formal sport in the late 19th Century. By the early 20th Century, when racial segregation and discrimination was fast becoming the norm in society (Bickford-Smith 1989: 50), racial exclusion became thoroughly entrenched in the field of sport (Nauright 1997: 43, Odendaal et al. 2016: 265). As I shall show in this paper, the sport of mountaineering in South Africa was no different. Technically more complex rock and rope climbing, as opposed to mountain walking, would become the preserve of the white elite, while the underclasses (the servants and labouring poor, who were primarily black and coloured[1]) would be systematically excluded from such advancements. As a result, the technical knowledge of mountaineering would remain largely with the members of the previously whites-only Mountain Club of South Africa (MCSA), while the Cape Province Mountain Club (CPMC) of local black mountaineers would find itself in a unequal paternalistic relation with the former.

This paper, therefore, reflects on the inextricability of sport, race and politics in the development of mountaineering in Cape Town, to show how these dynamics influence the social relations among and within the two mountain clubs today. Broadly, the paper is structured in two parts. The first part explores the historical roots of recreational mountaineering in the Cape. Examined through a socio-political lens, the second part traces the development of mountaineering as a formal sport, from the late 19th Century Cape Town, through the segregation era,

1 In this paper, "blacks" refers to all persons of colour, i.e. Africans, coloureds and Indians. These divisions were based on an ethnic hierarchy determined by the white elite, which placed coloureds at the top of a social, political and economic hierarchy and Africans at the bottom, with the fewest rights of all. The coloured group was regarded as being of mixed racial heritage.

to the end of the apartheid era in 1990.[2] While there were at least five mountain clubs based in Cape Town during this period,[3] this paper will focus primarily on two, the MCSA and the CPMC. The fundamental aim of this paper is to reflect on how the history and politics of race, class and mountaineering informs the relations and experiences of those who climb Table Mountain.

A combination of primary and secondary sources, including archival materials (such as minutes of club meetings, transcripts of interviews conducted by other researchers with mountaineers) at the University of Cape Town, the MCSA and the District Six Museum, personal communication (in person and email interviews), books, websites, newsletters and magazines, were used in constructing this history. While the history of the MCSA is available through a comprehensive written record, the same does not apply to the CPMC. Consequently, experience of recreational mountaineering among blacks has remained a 'hidden' aspect of Cape mountaineering history. Particularly through oral history interviews with the members of CPMC, black mountaineers in general, and their descendants, this paper brings to life this hidden history.

2. The roots of mountaineering at the Cape

The sport of mountaineering at the Cape finds its roots in quests to climb to the summit of Table Mountain. The leisure or recreational activity of mountain walking may be dated back only as far as the era of European exploration prior to Dutch settlement in 1652, when traders and sailors stopped at the Cape to top up on water and barter for cattle *en route* to South East Asia. Some, such as Antonio de Saldanha, who made the first recorded ascent of Table Mountain in 1503, took this as an opportunity to get his bearing on the surroundings (Kruger 2016: 5-6). Many others climbed to get some exercise (often after being confined to a cramped ship for months on end) as well as simply "for recreation" (Raven-Hart 1967: 41, 118).

The permanent native inhabitants of the Table Valley (i.e. the area in and around Table Mountain), the Khoi, knew Table Mountain and its surrounding mountains intimately, as the early settlers observed that they roamed freely over the mountain chain, hunting wild animals and gathering wild fruits, roots and nuts for consumption, as well as plants for use as traditional medicine (Thom

2 The unbanning of extra-parliamentary political organisations such as the African National Congress and the release of Nelson Mandela in 1990 signalled the end of the apartheid era in South Africa, and the beginning of the transition to democracy (Thompson 2014: 246-247).

3 Excluding the Scouts and several school-based mountain clubs, these clubs included the University of Cape Town Mountain and Ski Club (1933), the Western Province Mountain Club (1967) and the University of the Western Cape Mountain Club (date of establishment unknown).

1958: 113). The roots and nuts, such as wild almonds (*Brabejum stellatifolium*), which grew in abundance on Table Mountain, formed an important part of the Khoi's diet especially in winter (ibid: 196). The familiarity of the Khoi with the mountain was amply demonstrated when Autshumato, a member of the Table Valley Khoi, guided a party of colonists to the summit of Table Mountain in September 1652 (Thom 1952: 64). The Table Valley was also the seasonal home of semi-nomadic Khoi herders who trekked into the area with their cattle and sheep each year (Elphick 1977: 91-92). These groups were similarly familiar with the mountain chain, as they used its slopes and forests for their encampments and for pasturing their cattle (Thom 1952: 103,122; Raven-Hart 1967: 100). Given the hard, physical nature of the way of life followed by both the permanent and seasonal Khoi groups at the Cape, it is highly likely that their interaction with the Table Mountain chain was for reasons of survival rather than for recreation.

During the ensuing centuries, the use of Table Mountain for recreational purposes by the local elites and visitors to the Cape became well established. The mountain became a place of sumptuous picnics, breakfast feasts (Mentzel 1921: 89) and 'champagne tiffins' carried by hired porters (Murray 1953: 38-39). The mountain was also attractive to the professional elite as a "site of scientific and romantic pilgrimage" (van Sittert 2003: 163), where visiting scientists, botanists and naturalists made scientific observations and collected specimens. By the mid-to-late 19th Century, climbing to the summit of the Table Mountain had become a popular activity among visitors and affluent locals alike (Lady 1963: 37), but most recreational users confined themselves to the "three or four easy routes to the top" and did not attempt face-climbing (Burman 1966: 8).

For the underclasses, however, (the slaves, the servants and the labouring poor, including the remnants of the Khoi), the mountain was primarily a place of work to which they went only to chop wood and fetch water. As a result, they knew the mountain intimately, and therefore were among the most experienced mountaineers during most of the colonial era (van Sittert 2003:163). So well-known was their expertise that explorers, naturalists and scientists such as Francois le Vaillant, Carl Thunberg and William Burchell often used slaves and servants as mountain guides and porters to carry their specimens (le Vaillant 1796: 108 – 127, Burchell 1967: 48, Forbes 1986: 14).

Female servants and slaves were not as familiar as men with the upper reaches of the mountain, as they did not usually chop wood or fetch fresh water. Occasionally, however, they did form part of picnic parties to the summit (Robinson et al. 1994: 218). More commonly, the role of poor women on the mountain was confined to washing clothes and picking wildflowers for sale. Until at least the end of the 19th Century, there were large groups of washerwomen lining the banks of

the streams flowing down Table Mountain, washing clothes and beating the linen on the rocks (Anderson no date: 24, 32, Warner and Warner 1985: 55).

Among other subsistence strategies of the poor in the late 1880s were to pick wildflowers from Table Mountain for sale to the affluent folk of Cape Town (van Sittert 2002: 110). This required a good knowledge of the mountain as well as knowledge of the location of the wildflowers most popular among the public. From the late 19th Century onwards, wildflower-picking for sale was to come under attack (van Sittert 2002: 112), with increasingly restricted access for poor coloured flower-sellers, who were regarded as a threat to the indigenous flora (Boehl 2013: 134). These initiatives, ostensibly aimed at conserving indigenous flowers, as claimed in the public discourse on the issue, as well as in speeches in Parliament (Boehl 2013: 134), were among the early efforts to create debate on conservation along race and class lines.

The race and class divides constructed during the colonial era determined how different people would come to interact with Table Mountain. It effectively meant that whites used the mountain for pleasure, while blacks used it for survival purposes. One notable exception to this strict division was the mid-19th Century excursions undertaken by the pupils of Zonnebloem College, an Anglican institution on the slopes of Table Mountain, which was intended to educate the sons and daughters of African chiefs (Hodgson 1975: 2). The pupils, accompanied by their teachers, went on regular mountain walks as an integral part of their school programme. They also went hiking on the mountain on their own during their leisure hours, and male pupils regularly assisted in fire-fighting activities (ibid: 260-262). Arguably, these mountain trips would mark the beginning of leisure use of the mountain by blacks, a pursuit that up until this point had largely been the preserve of white elites.

Although mountaineering among the Khoi in the Cape could be traced back to precolonial times, the recreational use of the Table Mountain chain, as well as the formal distinction between work and leisure activities, only began during the European explorations and exploits. Mountains were crucially important to the survival of the Khoi, so they were intimately familiar with the mountain and its natural resources. The recreational use of the mountain by the elite firmly entrenched the race and class divisions that were to prevail during the colonial era. While the children of the African elite did use Table Mountain for recreational purposes, this was short-lived. Instead, as the next section shows, in the wake of the formalisation of rock and rope climbing as a sport and the establishment of the MCSA, the racial and class constructions and divisions within the sport were consolidated.

3. The establishment of mountaineering as a sport

The recreational use of the Table Mountain chain developed into the formal sport of mountaineering (including rock and rope climbing) at the Cape in the wake of the arrival of experienced climbers from Britain and Europe from the 1860s onwards, when local mountaineers "looked at the unclimbed face of Table Mountain with new eyes" (Burman 1966: 8). British climbers had led the way in this field in the Alps in Europe, where many peaks had been conquered for the first time in the early 1860s (Band 2008).

The MCSA was established in Cape Town in 1891, not only to cater for the adherents of this new sport, but also to answer the pressing need for a mountain search and rescue organisation (MCSA 1894: 7). The membership composition of the new club drew exclusively on the social, professional and governing elite of Cape Town (Burman 1966: 16). The social standing and powerful position of the club was demonstrated by the fact that, over time, three prime ministers would join it (Cecil John Rhodes, WP Schreiner and General Jan Smuts), as well as two governors-general (Burman 1966: 3). In this, the MCSA was no different to its counterpart, the Alpine Club in Britain, whose members were from the upper middle class (Koen 2011), and the American Alpine Club in the United States, which began as a "social club for elite adventurers" (Putnam 2011).

4. Mountaineering and the politics of exclusion – no women, no Jews, no blacks

As befitting a club for the elite, the MCSA vigorously practised the 'politics of exclusion' along race, class and gender lines. Women were not allowed to be members at first. While honorary memberships were granted to a select few women, the total prohibition did not last long due to robust engagement on the issue by keen (white) female mountaineers (MCSA 1893, MCSA 1894: 9). The original prohibition was undoubtedly due to the Victorian notions of passive femininity that held sway. There was a widespread acceptance of the perception that, given their childbearing function, sport in general and strenuous activities in particular, were unsuitable for women (Guttman 1991: 2, Hartman-Tews and Pfister 2003: 267-268). Despite this, female mountaineers abroad – in particular British climbers – challenged these gender stereotypes through summiting the same Alpine peaks as their male counterparts (Roche 2013: 2). The female members of the MCSA followed suit, ably participating in a number of difficult climbs (A Lady Member 1899: 15, T-J 1904-1905: 13, MCSA 1906: 10).

Jews were also not welcome in the club, although this was an unwritten rule rooted in anti-Semitism. While anti-Semitism was present in South Africa prior to the 20th Century, it grew in intensity during the 1920s and '30s (Shain 1994: 3-4, 137-138). The issue of the lack of Jewish members in the MCSA was timidly raised by a member in 1929 but was quickly quashed (MCSA 1929). In the 1930s a member proposed one of his Jewish friends for membership but this was declined, leading to the resignation "in protest" of the member concerned (Lawson 2006). Jews were excluded from the club until the 1940s when an application from the Jewish friend of one of the Club's "most respected rock climbers," was proposed and accepted (ibid).

The exclusion that would be sustained and become entrenched over a century of mountaineering was the one constructed along racial lines. Since its establishment, the MCSA's Constitution did not contain a clause barring admission on racial grounds (MCSA 1894: 1). Notwithstanding, the notion of black members in the Mountain Club was unthinkable, given the practice of racial segregation in all other social, political and economic spheres of Cape society of the time.[4] The exclusion of black members was not spelt out because the MCSA considered it inappropriate as well as unnecessary for a "social club" in which members were free to choose their own associates (MCSA 1954b). Instead, applications from anyone "not desired", would "simply be blackballed," that is, declined (MCSA 1954b).

Still, it would be inaccurate to claim that blacks were absolutely excluded. Since the early years of the club, blacks were incorporated in subservient roles, as servants and porters, facilitating mountain excursions. Shortly after its establishment, the club decided to formalise the role of the many experienced black mountain guides in existence at the time (MCSA 1894: 1), by securing the services of "competent men" familiar with Table Mountain who could act as "trustworthy guides" or carriers (MCSA 1891 and 1892). By 1895 however, the number of mountain guides employed fell drastically and thereafter "gradually disappeared" (Burman 1966: 17). Although porters continued to be used by the public on Table Mountain (Bean 1904-1905: 41), the MCSA did not do so as they did not require porters for their climbs, thus ending any further role for blacks in the MCSA in Cape Town.

4 That is, an informal *de facto*, rather than a *de jure* exclusion of blacks from the institutions and facilities that the white elite frequented (Bickford-Smith 1995: 121-122).

5. The politics of mountaineering during the 20th century

5.1 The segregation era: 1910 – 1947

The MCSA's close identification with the ideology of the governing class and concomitant hostility to the aspirations of blacks was especially evident in the wake of the political unification of the country in 1910. This unity had come at the expense of black South Africans, whose hopes of the extension of the non-racial Cape franchise for men were dashed (Horrell 1978: 1). This unity marked the beginning of relentless restrictions on the land and franchise[5] rights of Africans, and institutionalised racial segregation and discrimination (Horrell 1978: 1-8; Thompson 2014: 154-155, 163-170, 180-183). The speeches at two MCSA annual dinners in the aftermath of political unity clearly nailed to the mast the MCSA's political colours. In 1912, the toasts "to South Africa" supported "the welding together of the two White races in this country" (MCSA 1913: 45); while the following year, the speeches not only emphasised the necessity of bringing together the "English and the Dutch," but portrayed the club as playing a key role in nation-building – all the while effectively ignoring and excluding blacks (MCSA 1914: 123).

Despite the MCSA's exclusion of blacks, the use of the mountains for leisure by the poor black communities living in close proximity to the Table Mountain chain (from Signal Hill to Cape Point) gained popularity during the early years of the 20th Century. The communities living adjacent to the mountains (especially the District Six community) consisted of predominantly coloured, but also smaller numbers of African, people.[6] The young people in these communities would regularly go rambling on the mountains close to their homes (Khan 2013a and 2013b, Khan 2017: 6). In particular, District Six, at the foot of Table Mountain, would be among the most important nurseries of mountaineering talent. Due to the activities of organisations such as the Marion Institute, the Silvertree Boys Club, the Scouts and the Cowley Brothers (an Anglican order), enthusiastic youngsters were exposed to the sport of mountaineering (Khan 2016: 17, Khan 2017: 8).

By the beginning of the 1930s, Table Mountain was attracting increasing numbers of predominantly coloured hikers and climbers (MCSA 1931c). Most of these leisure-seekers were coloured, because the increasingly rigorous

5 The hopes of the extension of the non-racial franchise to Africans in the rest of South Africa upon unification in 1910, were dashed; and were completely destroyed by the removal of African voters from the common voters' roll in 1936 (Horrell 1978: 1).

6 The authorities had deliberately targeted African residents in urban areas such as District Six, forcibly removing them, using the outbreak of bubonic plague in 1901 as justification, as well as the establishment of the segregated African location of Langa in 1927 (Saunders 1984: 223).

implementation of the residential segregation of Africans meant there were fewer Africans in urban Cape Town. The authorities had also been limiting African migration to the Western Cape through various measures (including 'influx control' and a Coloured Labour Preference Policy') since the early years of the 20th Century (Goldin 1987: 51, 66).

By this stage, the racial stratification of society in Cape Town was already so entrenched (Bickford-Smith 1995: 14) that there was no question of admitting these keen mountaineers to the club, nor did the latter seek to do so. Instead, the treasurer of the MCSA reported that, early in 1931, he was "approached by a Coloured person with a request for information with a view to forming a Coloured mountain club" (MCSA 1931a). The MCSA took no action, but by mid-1931 the CPMC was established (MCSA 1931b), and a year later, the MCSA reported: "The new club has the sympathetic support of the Mountain Club of South Africa" (MCSA 1932: 130).

Upon its establishment, the CPMC began to meet at St Marks School in District Six (Alexander 2016). The founding members of the club were: Carl Fisher (Climbing Leader), C ('Binder') Petersen (Chairman), Mrs K Petersen (Treasurer), Cecil Townshend (Secretary), Henry Flowers, J Kannemeyer and Bill Steyn (CPMC 2011). Although little is known of the socio-economic standing of the club's membership, members were probably drawn from the lower middle classes. Petersen, for example, was a bookbinder by trade (CPMC 2012) while Fisher and Townshend worked for the Cape Town City Council as mountain rangers (MCSA 1954c: 473).

The subordinate political and economic status of blacks at the time meant that unequal power relations between the two clubs was inevitable. Shortly after its establishment, a deputation from the CPMC attended a meeting of the MCSA, where its aims and objectives were put forward and the assistance of the MCSA requested (MCSA 1931b). This was the second time the new club had requested the assistance of the older, more experienced and better resourced club, giving the MCSA a paternalistic edge over the CPMC. The MCSA's 40 years of exclusionary policies, its well-educated, affluent and politically influential membership, had put the newly-formed CPMC at an immediate disadvantage. The MCSA could afford to rent premises in the centre of town, operate its own library of specialised books, as well as pay a librarian (MCSA 1930: 147-148). Indeed, the paternalist and separatist tone was set from the very beginning, as the MCSA's records note:

> The recently-formed non-European Club should be given sympathetic help, as it could not be otherwise than a step in the right direction to organise into a responsible club the increasing numbers of non-Europeans frequenting Table Mountain (MCSA 1931c).

Clearly, the 'sympathetic help' that the MCSA extended to the CPMC was less a collegial gesture to a fellow mountaineering organisation, but rather a mechanism for monitoring the increasing numbers of blacks using Table Mountain through 'a responsible club'. This perception of the CPMC as separate and unequal is further evident in the MCSA's reluctance to include the CPMC in its 'search and rescue' operations. The CPMC was eager to be involved, but was limited to only playing an informal role in MCSA rescues (MCSA 1940 and 1946). While the MCSA donated a stretcher and gave training in search and rescue procedures to CPMC members (CPMC 2011), the former declined to formalise its joint 'search and rescue' missions, or even to mentor the eager youngsters from the CPMC (MCSA 1946).

5.2 The apartheid era: 1948 – 1990

In 1948, the National Party won the national election on an 'apartheid' platform and proceeded to pass a body of laws which consolidated and extended existing racially discriminatory legislation. This had the effect of further subordinating blacks and permanently excluding them from the mechanisms of economic and political power (Thompson 2014: 190-191), and had many negative implications for the sporting sector because of economic discrimination and lower wages for blacks (Thompson 2014: 195, 200, 202). Further, blacks were left with inferior sport and recreational amenities, as these were overwhelmingly skewed in favour of whites (Archer and Bouillon 1982: 45-46, Booth 1998: 64-72). For the CPMC, apartheid meant that its members were usually unable to afford expensive mountain boots and equipment (Pasqualle 2017), nor could the CPMC charge the high subscriptions necessary to improve their mountain hut or hire permanent premises to hold their meetings. The lower wages of CPMC members also meant that they did not have access to the private transport required to travel to up-country destinations in order to climb mountains further afield, let alone abroad. Further, given the prevailing racial prejudices, particularly in the rural areas, it was often not possible for the CPMC to develop cordial relationships with white farmers whose land had to be crossed in order to reach mountains (Pasqualle 2017).

Despite the restrictions and racial discrimination, the club sought to overcome this by undertaking its first expedition abroad (Kilimanjaro in 1951), acquiring mountaineering expertise through interaction with foreign mountain clubs and nurturing the next generation of talented mountaineers (Burman 1966: 52, CPMC 2011). The sharing of mountaineering skills with white climbers was difficult since 'mixed' climbing was frowned upon by the MCSA. Nonetheless, this did occur on rare occasions, such as when individuals like Barry Fletcher formed a partnership

with the CPMC's leading climber, Charley Hankey, during the 1950s[7] (Fletcher 2017). As members became affluent enough to acquire private transport from about the 1970s onwards, there were more opportunities to develop mountaineering skills on other mountains in the Western Cape (CPMC 2012).

The 1960s saw groups of young climbers in the MCSA opening up new and difficult routes on Table Mountain and further afield, as well as abroad (Burman 1966: 110-120, 151-156). The MCSA also extended the strong and cordial links it had with the (British) Alpine Club (MCSA 1957: 68) by forging links with other foreign mountain clubs, such as the English branch of the Austrian Alpine Club (MCSA 1977: 169) and the Rhodesian Mountain Club (MCSA 1979: 328). Through these links the club was able to send members on advanced mountaineering courses abroad (MCSA 1970: 124 and 1977: 169), funded or partly funded by the government, with whom it continued to enjoy a special relationship (MCSA 1974: 146).

The MCSA's favoured position was in large part due to its wholehearted acceptance and promotion of the political ideology of apartheid – a stance it had adopted half a century before apartheid was formally and aggressively institutionalised. The MCSA's assiduous courting of the government was evident in its tradition of inviting senior leaders of the ruling party to serve as honorary presidents, such as CR Swart, the State President of South Africa (MCSA 1964: title page) and its regular invitations to cabinet ministers (such as Minister of Mines and Planning JFW Haak, who was also an MCSA member), to its annual dinners (MCSA 1966: 9). So eager was the MCSA to demonstrate its allegiance to the apartheid regime that, although under no legislative compulsion to do so, it began cracking down on those members who climbed with "Non-Europeans". The executive demanded resignations from those who persisted in continuing to climb with coloureds, arguing that the "prestige" of the club would be affected (MCSA 1954a and 1954b).

Throughout most of the apartheid era, it was clear that the MCSA had little interest in any contact with black mountaineers. Their paternalistic and limited contact with the CPMC also suggested that this was to serve the purpose of

7 This however, was the exception, as most MCSA members were not interested in forming such partnerships for either ideological reasons, or because they were not prepared to jeopardise their club privileges.

managing the impact that increasing numbers of black (predominantly coloured)[8] mountain users might have on the environment (MCSA 1960: 2). Moreover, on those occasions when the two clubs *did* interact, these interactions remained grudging and ungracious. For example, when the MCSA invited the CPMC to attend a lecture and demonstration on rock climbing techniques, this rare event was *not* held at the club room and all arrangements were carried out with "discretion … so as to avoid any embarrassment" (MCSA 1955), presumably to the CPMC members. Evidently, the most important stumbling block in the acquisition of mountaineering skills by the CPMC was the reluctance of the MCSA to create opportunities for the mutual exchange of knowledge, expertise and other material resources. This lays bare the extent of racial prejudice that CPMC members had to deal with in order to acquire the skills and experience needed to become expert mountain climbers.

For the most part, the CPMC seemed to have accepted the terms of its relationship with the MCSA and was resigned to the fact that apartheid ideology dictated racially separate clubs (February 2009). However, Caspar Blouws (possibly a CPMC member, although not described as such in the press) in 1962 publicly called on the president of the MCSA to resign, because "the club accepts only white members" and urged that "everything should be done to discourage apartheid mountain clubs" (MCSA 1962: 58). The MCSA remained unmoved – the response of its secretary, W Eastman, was that the club "has never had a non-white member. We only admit whites" (MCSA 1962: 58). By the 1970s, interaction with black mountain clubs had improved slightly to the point where an official joint activity was agreed to. The MCSA accepted an offer from the 'coloured'[9] Western Province Mountain Club (WPMC) to join them on a Table Mountain clean-up (MCSA 1971: 76) and also agreed to deliver a talk on mountaineering to that club (MCSA 1973: 127). Matters next 'progressed' to the point where the MCSA did not take its usually unequivocal stand on the matter of "non-white members," by rejecting the notion outright. Instead, the club opted for inaction on the matter, as "it was considered undesirable to do anything at this stage" (MCSA1978: 296).

8 Very little information is available on the leisure use of the Table Mountain chain by Africans during the 20th Century. However, it is known that a number of African families managed to avoid evictions and continued to live in District Six until the 1960s (Swanson and Harries 2001: 70), so their involvement in recreational mountain walking cannot be ruled out. Further, the African township of Luyolo, on the mountain slopes outside Simon's Town, existed until the forced removal of its residents took place in 1965 (Thomas 2001: 83). It is thus highly likely that, given its location, residents (especially young people) would have gone mountain rambling for recreation.

9 This club, which was established in 1967 (Carolus 2016), was granted a hut on Table Mountain by the Cape Town City Council, on condition that their constitution stated that they were a 'coloured club' (Petersen 2015).

Frustrated by the MCSA's racist attitudes, a group of young mountaineers in Cape Town established an informal, non-racial club in the early 1970s called the Bats Climbing Club (February 2017a). This move elicited great hostility from the MCSA, especially after an article appeared in a British climbing magazine, quoting Dave Cheesmond (a member of the MCSA's Natal section), which was heavily critical of the "conservative" MCSA and its disapproval of the racially-mixed Bats (Salkeld c1976: 11). Infuriated by Cheesmond's actions, which the MCSA regarded as part of an effort to "discredit" it, the Cape Town section decided to declare him *persona non grata* (MCSA 1976: 228).

The status quo among the mountain clubs remained more or less the same until the 1980s, when the government began to make small political concessions, signalling cracks in the apartheid edifice (Thompson 2014: 224-230). The mainstream environmental organisations also began to respond to these changes, albeit in a rather timid incremental manner (Khan 2001: 216-217). The MCSA responded in similar fashion, and began reaching out to the three Cape Town-based black mountain clubs (the CPMC, WPMC and the University of the Western Cape Mountain Club), in a slow, extremely gradual process (MCSA 1980: 31).

The issue of "non-white membership" emerged again in 1984 when the MCSA was approached by a member of the public (MCSA 1984a: 139). This began a 20 month-long consultation with farmers, forestry officials, and members from the various sections of the club (MCSA 1984b: 183). A sub-committee was formed "to look into all aspects of non-white membership" (MCSA 1984c: 210). By September 1985, despite the concerns of some members, the MCSA decided to give in to the political pressures and reality that "attitudes are changing" and that they were "living in a changing world" (MCSA 1985: 296, 301). These changes were not without resistance, and some argued that any move towards 'open membership' would lead to "the thin end of the wedge" (MCSA 1985: 295), and could result in the MCSA being "swamped by herds of non-whites" (MCSA 1985: 301). Still, pragmatism prevailed, as the then chairman, PJ van Zyl, put it:

> All indications are that .... the increasing integration in the political and government systems in South Africa will make open membership an advantage rather than a disadvantage .... in future (MCSA 1985: 301).

Therefore, expediency and a sense of historical inevitability fed into the MCSA's decision to accept a new membership policy, in which "the race of an aspirant member [would] be no impediment" to admission (MCSA 1985: 295).

From the mid-1980s onwards, the MCSA embarked on a series of changes in its relationship with black mountaineers and clubs, including: a decision to

enter reciprocal relationships with the Malawi and Zimbabwe Mountain Clubs (MCSA 1986a: 44); holding the first joint meetings and 'meets' (MCSA 1986b: 87); launching 'outreach' programmes with schools where the CPMC had contacts (MCSA 1986c: 91); admitting its first black member in 1986 (Lawson 2006), and organising a mountaineering expedition to Chile in 1987 in which members of the CPMC and WPMC were also participants (MCSA 1988:1).

These initiatives may be compared to those taken by white sports administrators who responded to the sports boycotts of the period by claiming that the South African sports environment was normal and integrated, while changes were effectively minimal (Booth 1998: 137-138). Hence it is likely that an eagerness to become part of the global mountaineering community was part of the motivation behind the MCSA's 'outreach'. The fact that the club wasted little time in sounding out the British Mountaineering Council about the possibility of joining the *Union Internationale des Associations d'Alpinisme* (UIAA) (MCSA 1987: 172), makes this motivation likely. However, the MCSA chairperson was informed that such an application would not receive support from the council at that time. Giving further credence to the view that the MCSA was motivated in its initiatives (at least in part), by expediency, was the role its members played as international sports ambassadors for South Africa. In this regard, the Directorate of Sport Advancement, which had awarded two MCSA members a grant to attend a snow and ice climbing course in Switzerland, had written approvingly:

In times when other sportsmen are debarred from competition abroad, the Directorate of Sport values the role played by MCSA members as sports ambassadors for South Africa (MCSA 1986: 155).

Up until the early 1990s, the groundwork for cordial relationships among the Cape Town-based mountain clubs was being laid. There were talks to discuss the possibility of the CPMC and the WPMC formally becoming sections of the MCSA (MCSA 1991: 206). Ultimately, both the CPMC and WPMC opted to retain their independence, particularly fearing the loss of their history and institutional identity (Bruyns 2017, Fortuin 2016). After this short period of friendly and close interaction, the CPMC and the WPMC have now mostly lost touch with the MCSA (Lambourne 2015, Bruyns 2017), with the CPMC and WPMC largely focusing on mountain hiking, not climbing (Haupt 2013, Petersen 2017). The MCSA remains South Africa's premier mountain club,[10] and despite its vigorous outreach and development programmes aimed at the youth from disadvantaged communities (MCSA 2018), it remains with a predominantly white membership (Moseley 2018). Indeed, that is the case with many of the country's major environmental

10 The MCSA is a member of the global mountaineering association, the UIAA (MCSA 1992: 1, 3).

organisations, despite their efforts to diversify and offer membership without any form of discrimination (Khan 2018: 217-220).

There is perhaps an element of inevitability about the MCSA's membership profile, as mountaineering seems to attract the educated middle class, which in South Africa is still overwhelmingly white.[11] It remains this group which can afford the expensive equipment and has the necessary leisure time. Another factor that plays into the maintenance of the racial character of the mountain clubs in post-apartheid South Africa has to do with the residual bitterness felt by many older black mountaineers. The racial and class privileges enjoyed by MCSA members for most of the 20th Century stand in glaring contrast to the discrimination experienced by talented and keen black mountaineers in the past and the way in which this impeded their development as athletes. Not only did the CPMC not receive any state support in the early years of its establishment and throughout the apartheid era, the lack of opportunities to advance in their sport stunted the development of its members (February 2017b, Holloway 2016, Johnston 1998). This has added to the residue of bitterness felt in a club that started in District Six, and that lost its pool of young talent as well as easy access to Table Mountain when forced removals took place from the late 1960s onwards (Swanson and Harries 2001: 63). Perceptions of the MCSA (unfair or not) as an elitist organisation (MCSA 2004: 4), where one would feel "out of place" (Pietersen 2016), persist, and undoubtedly fuel the tensions and resentment which continue to underlie the relationship between the clubs even up to the present time.

6. Conclusion

The impress of history has been particularly deep in the sphere of mountaineering as a leisure pursuit and as a formal sport. Hence I have sought to show that, since the first recorded instances of the non-subsistence use of the Table Mountain chain, the nature of leisure interaction with the mountain has been governed by the overlapping factors of race and class. This was due in large part to the fact that notions of white domination and black subordination provided the socio-political and economic foundation of society from the colonial era into the late 20th Century. It is this political context which directly impacted on the history and development of the sport of mountaineering at the Cape, as well as the development of the two mountain clubs I have focused on in this paper.

11 Only about 20% of South Africa's population may be described as middle class, which means that most blacks fall outside this category (Southern Africa Labour and Development Research Unit 2017).

The MCSA, cocooned by the class and race privileges it enjoyed during the period under review, has been able to consolidate its privileged position for more than a century, right into the present. The converse of this situation is that the development of historically black mountain clubs, principally the CPMC and WPMC, was stunted through their exclusion from decades of government support, and their members were handicapped by the racial discrimination and prejudice that prevailed among the white mountaineering fraternity and farmers in rural areas, and their development held back by the deliberate prevention of the free flow of knowledge, expertise and interaction across the racial divide. The story of mountaineering at the Cape is the story of the way in which indigenous people, and later the underclasses, were alienated from the mountain environment. They were transformed from being 'expert mountaineers' to mere porters and eventually outsiders, whose presence on the mountain as fellow leisure-seekers and mountain climbers was barely tolerated by the white climbing fraternity. This process of estrangement continued during the 20th Century when de facto segregation practices were used by the MCSA to further render black mountaineers as outsiders. Apartheid, whether in the form of legislation or practice, merely perpetuated and consolidated the 'outsider' and 'junior' status of black mountaineers. It is therefore unsurprising that the consequence of a century of racialised and unequal power relations in the field of mountaineering, is that the sport has been indelibly affected by its historical legacy. Indeed, such has been the negative and enduring impact of the past, that it continues to shape the direction of the historically white and black mountain clubs, and continues to influence the relationship between them.

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