

## **A Faint Light: Dutch Mission and Overseas Church in Cape Colony, 1652-1795**

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### Abstrak

Keberadaan Tanjung Harapan dalam peta sejarah Afrika Selatan telah diakui oleh banyak peneliti dan sejarawan sebagai salah satu tonggak penunjuk penting yang mampu menceritakan bagaimana peradaban Barat membentuk wajah nasionalisme dan pluralisme kebudayaan di benua Afrika. Dalam hal pewarisan akulturasi dan nilai-nilai keagamaan, pemerintahan kolonial Belanda tidak lebih dan tidak kurang memiliki andil yang cukup besar dalam perjalanan sejarah Afrika Selatan. Tidak seperti pendahulunya, pemerintahan kolonial Portugis, yang begitu dalam mengikutsertakan alasan penyebaran agama dalam misi ekspansi globalnya, pemerintahan kolonial Belanda menganggap kekristenan atau nilai Calvinisme yang dianutnya tidaklah menjadi dorongan dasar mengapa mereka membangun kekuatan kolonial di ujung Selatan benua Afrika tersebut. Lebih dalam artikel ini ingin melihat apa sebenarnya alasan di balik pendirian dan pembentukan organisasi gereja di koloni Tanjung Harapan di masa pemerintahan kolonial Belanda dan bagaimana kisah orang-orang Kristen dan Kristenisasi semasa Belanda menduduki Afrika Selatan. Pada akhirnya keberadaan gereja dan institusi yang terkait dengan keagamaan yang dibawa bersama ekspansi kolonial Belanda tidaklah pernah dimaksudkan untuk menjadikan masyarakat pribumi setara seperti yang seharusnya terdapat dalam nilai-nilai Calvinisme sejati. Sekat-sekat sosial yang kemudian terbentuk karena pemerintah menaruh gereja dan institusinya di dalam masyarakat dalam esensinya malah menunjukkan tujuan pemerintah kolonial Belanda yang hakiki adalah ekspansi, dan topeng keagamaan dan kristenisasi adalah media yang digunakan untuk mencapai tujuan akhir tersebut.

**Kata kunci:** Kolonialisme, akulturasi dan peradaban, perbudakan, segregasi sosial, kristenisasi.

### **Introduction**

History is not only about dates and years, but it has something to do with reality and deserves to be comprehended thoughtfully. These reasons drive many scholars to observe deeply to the past records, which exemplify the story behind every pace and event. Among all stories and chronicle about Dutch colonies, what were the reasons that made the Cape exceptional? The Cape was founded in 1486 by the Portuguese explorer, Bartholomeus Diaz.

In the middle of seventeenth century the Dutch took over this station, when *De Heeren XVII*, the Directors of Dutch East India Company had received written reports from Jan van Riebeeck and other Dutch seamen, and decided that a permanent colony should be established to transform the Cape into a refreshment station and also to set a small halfway station aside from the homeland to the east, a refreshment port (Wilmot, 1869: 30-33). As a hustling seaward-looking community, Cape of Good Hope developed as a melting pot for intergroup relations like *Khoikhoi* (natives people), settlers (*De Nederlander*), slaves and free blacks, stored an intricate and compromising identities of different kind of cultural background caused by difference religion, culture and physical appearance (Elphick and Giliomee, 1979:116-117). This elaborated society needed a local government which was set up by the VOC. Nowadays; this subject becomes more and more attractive for some current researchers to extract mutual information about the history of acculturation and civilization.

Among these mixed ethnic variety (German, English, French, Dutch and indigenous people, Khoisan) and other religious cluster, the Church institution (*Dutch Reformeerde Kerk*) which was brought by the settler, turned into Dutch East India Company prolongation for the company's purpose. Comparing to the former authority of the Cape, the Portuguese Empire, who really took a grip in specific religious issues, the Dutch Colonial State seemed to have given little or no thought to the possibility of spreading their beliefs outside the country but on one hand, there was an invisible burden to carry out the Calvinist doctrine inside the company's policy. In reality, although there were no official policy existed at that time, they did sent *predikants* or preachers with many laymen to fulfill spiritual needs of their servants (Boxer, 1990:133), although this approach seemed to be fouled up in the end. One of the most appealing puzzles is whether Calvinism was an influencing factor for the Directors in Netherland and overseas.

Some previous works had already been conducted to put up this treasure in front of public. Boxer's *The Dutch Seaborne Empire, 1600-1800* covered a glimpse of this Calvinist mission pictures in different kind of Dutch Colonial possession around the world and the church relationship with the company policies. Then the most up-to-date writing is a biography which accounted a native *Khoikhoi* initiator who confirmed and converted into Christian (Viljoen, 2006), but at infrequent intervals they would talk about the church effort for the society and disclosure the obstacles which stood between the institution and the environment. Considering this point of view and proposing this kind of objective, I try to identify some major factors behind the Calvinist mission in the Cape of Good Hope, observing the church institution at that period and how the connection was established inside the community. Moreover, I want to exemplify the Christianity pattern in the society and grab the concept of

Calvinism inside the company and why they did not want to manage other active religious faiths on their settlement, especially the Cape.

At the end of this essay, hopefully, the description of Dutch mission and overseas church in South Africa at colonial period can give another bold perspective for our history, especially to enlighten narration of civilization process and farseeing journey of mankind in the term of colonial expansion.

### **The Establishment of Refreshment Station: The Chronicle**

The Dutch Empire history would never be the same without the discovery of Cape of Good Hope and journeys to the East, which contributed large amount of goods into its treasury. The needs of gain in East Indies caused a spin-off product recognized as a refreshment station which grew larger and became a complex stratified society (Wesseling, 2004: 98). As the Dutch and English engaged in a contest for the Cape possession, this colony added a rich collection of multicultural history and cultural interaction.

Many people supposed that other nations beside the Europeans had already made the journey and preserved a map to represent the evidence of their visits. But only after Bartholomew Diaz voyage in September 14, 1486, *Cabo das Tormentas*, later renamed Cape of Good Hope by King of Portugal, the Cape was known all over the world. What was never expected became happening when a Dutch ship *Haarlem* was wrecked near the Cape in 1648, and the crew had to wait for five months before the ship was ready to sail again. During this inadvertent staying, these men used the opportunity to study, exploring the land and the surroundings, and befriended with the indigenous people. Afterwards, as they returned to Holland, they signed petition letter with a strong note asking *De Heeren XVII* considerably gave a thought in establishing "fort and garden", so to say, at the Cape of Good Hope. The report from Leendert Jansz and Nicolaas Proot, Dutch seamen, were supported by Jan van Riebeeck who acted as a surgeon in the fleet of *Geluyzen*. Despite his confirmation about the arguments from the previous report, he also added some doubtfulness around the honesty and fidelity account of the natives, saying, "(...) I have often heard, from men deserving of credit, that our people have been slain by them without giving the slightest cause." (Wilmot, 1869: 30-33).

At the same time, when the Dutch East India Company (VOC) expanded and countered the other companies from English and French for international trade and commerce, they found the permanent settlement which sustained the fleet of the company that sailed to the East. The board in Holland hastened and raced with time in building sort of fortification and refreshment station for their ships. On account of these purposes, the Chamber of Seventeen also handed in brief and clear instructions to Riebeeck which showed the goal of the leading expedition. This particular journey was adjusted with three ships,

*Dromedary, Heron and Good Hope* which set sail on the 14<sup>th</sup> December, 1651. They finally arrived at the cape after 115 days sailing across the ocean.

It was on 6<sup>th</sup> April 1652; they saw the inland horizon and with dearest hope these settlers expressed a delightful feeling about the new place. The occupation and formation of this infant colony was never more than a simple connection between the Netherlands and the central of eastern empire, *Batavia*. At first place, it was intended to establish just as a small fortified base, enough to provide some stocks of meat from the inhabitants and fresh vegetables to ward off that curse of every traveler across the sea, scurvy. In some extent, *De Heeren XVII* would never consider that the Cape could be developed into somewhat profitable and important port for transiting ships from everywhere.

There were three processes creating a minor staging point into large, significant and perplexed settlement in only a period of ten years. These practices were resolved to help Governor Riebeeck settling some basic problems in the colony such as, labors and fresh crops and those were not only for daily needs but also for ships supplies.

First, because of the company rule regarding to the relationship between the settlers and local inhabitants which was appointed in the beginning instructions the local authority notice the shortage of available labor in the colony, so they discharged several of its employees and gave them a part of company's landholdings. They, called as *free burghers*, were employed to plant some vegetables and cultivate grain. Afterwards, they sold the harvest to the company at fixed prices. This policy put the foundation of durable economy at the colony. Second, the company also thought to give countenance to the first policy and what happened next was the shipment of slaves' in 1657 in order to provide workers to build basic facilities and supported the settlement, for instance, a fort, a jetty, roads, orchards, vegetation and farm land. Third, as the Dutch settlement expanded slowly from the shore of Table Bay, engrossed and enclosed land for cultivation, the local pastoralists took the benefit, by withdrawing the fresh water resources and the rich pastures of the northern part of the land or remaining there as servants or clients to the Dutch. These practices were claimed to be very economical and useful which means simply applied, low-cost and simultaneously worked all together.

The creation of a settler community led into conflicts which continuously progressed and hardly resolved by the government. Slaves, free blacks (freed slaves), European settlers, Chinese, Company officials, free-burghers, missionaries, European travelers, religious and political exiles (for instance, *the Huguenots*), soldiers, *trekboers*, Khoikhoi and San, these distinct background abruptly interrelated and jumbled up in daily existence of the colony (Viljoen, 2006: 1-2). In the Cape territory, the formation of city-like and pastoral district did exist. There was a cross-cultural expansion between European and Asian,

some of the examples were language evolution (a pidgin Dutch combined with other minor lingua franca such as French or Low Portuguese) and cultures borrowing from the local ruler, mythology, music and religion (Elphick and Giliomee, 1989: 155-160). It was obvious that cultural change intruded each and every part of the settlement life.

From time to time, the Cape in some extent was developed into a vast territory from the southern part to the northern part, included the hilly Table Mountain, where the soil and the reliable winter rainfall made it a proper area for cultivation and agriculture activities. While Jan van Riebeeck and his successors intended to practice intensive agriculture according to the Dutch model, the practical farming abilities became troubles. Soon many of these appointed free-burghers, who were come from the lower and least successful classes in Dutch society, gave up farming altogether and became artisans and traders. The rest of these burghers became combined farmers, cultivating grain and wine, pasturing sheep and cattle far beyond the limits of their land grants. By the end of seventeenth century, the effort to make farming profitable on *Karoo*<sup>1</sup> declined gradually, because of tyrannical policy adopted by the Company, for instance, stopping open immigration, monopolized trade, combined the administrative, legislative and judicial powers into one body, told the farmers what crops to grow, demanded a large percentage of every farmer's harvest, and harassed them (Wilmot, 1869: 130-132).

Based on these reasonable factors, some of the settlers who later on were known as Boers<sup>2</sup> had a bad impression to government. They decided to escape the oppression of the Dutch East India Company, by trekking by avoiding the power of authority to the hinterland. They continued to farm the land and to pasture a few livestock of their own. They herded the invaders' cattle and sheep. They drove their ox wagons, and they did their domestic chores. These *trekboers* managed to live in the wagons in which they used to travel, and they rarely live at one location for an extended period of time.

### **Faith in and Between: The Church Struggles**

In 1652, when the colony was finally constructed in Cape of Good Hope by General Jan van Riebeeck, the Dutch Colonial government tried to determine and exercised social policies to the local settlement, including the policy regarding the protestant church that was usually conducted and organized by church council in the fatherland.

1 Or *veld* is a fertile valley. This area was first explored by European settlers in the late seventeenth century, who encountered only Khoisan people living in this rather dry area. Modern farming methods have brought productivity and wealth to this district.

2 Or Trekboer, had a similar character with old Dutch farmers for many generations, were nomadic pastoral descendant of Dutch settlers with a small numbers of Huguenots, Frisians and Scots. Few generations later, their offspring (*Voortrekkers*) continued to exist as an economic class in the border area. They began migrating from the areas surrounding what is now Cape Town (such as Paarl, Stellenbosch and Franschoek) during the 1690s throughout the 1700s.

Whereas in United Provinces Godfried Udemans<sup>3</sup>, challenged the States-General policy to balance the gain and godliness in overseas trade which was contested in his work, *The Spiritual Rudder of the Merchant Ship*. (Boxer, 1990: 114) He stated, "Commerce and the calling to be a merchant are an effective means to increase the kingdom of Christ to the ends of the world; so it was through merchants that the truths of the Gospel...spread in the Netherlands...through these means the Holy Gospel and the Sun of Righteousness is daily being made known among the Indians, both in the East and the West Indies," (Van den Tol, 1965)<sup>4</sup>. In the book he also indicated that the Companies' conquests are properly necessary and legitimized, while the divine power should be used to support the Calvinist mission to the heathen land. Nevertheless, only a small part of people in religious society, the Calvinist *predikants* so to speak, had shown concern in Dutch East India Company abroad.

At the time of Portuguese Empire started their *conquista do oriente* in vast regions of Africa, Asia and Brazil, they brought along the Catholic missions and ecclesiastical establishments (one of the characteristics of the empire) to exercise the spiritual jurisdiction over the discovered territories which was granted by the Papacy. According to the writings of a soldier, Diogo do Couto, and Fr. Paulo da Trindade, a Franciscan chronicler, to conquest and the cross, always combined together to accomplish worldly prosperous and eternal felicity in the next life (Boxer, 1990: 228-231). Moreover, The Portuguese Royals enforced the right and sphere of their influence in all part of religious activities, such as the placement of bishop overseas or missionaries sending abroad. The results of carrying out this policy were an act of refusing the validity of and obstinately opposing their position against Papacy power. The presence of militant Roman Catholicism really preceded and survived its challenge in the Far East and the rest of its colonist.

Referred to the experience of Portuguese occupation, the *De Heeren XVII* believed the term of *Cuius regio, illius et religio*<sup>5</sup>, means the faith of the ruler was the official faith. It would be a great assessment in the term of propagating colonial influence. The Directors of the Company never realized the possibilities of evangelistic problem could be happened when they started to colonize the Cape. Then this awareness of making some provision for the spiritual needs was purposed to control their mental and spiritual behavior, and considered the other deeply rooted religions (Catholicism, Islam, Hinduism

3 He was chief embodiment of Dutch Puritanism, a pastor in the province of Zeeland, the southwest corner of the Netherlands, directly across the channel from England.

4 't Geestelyke Roer van 't Coopmans Schip (Dordrecht; Van den Tol, 1965 = Dordrecht: Boels, 1640). This book is very irregularly number and varies between folios and page numbers.

5 Famous quotation derived from the document allowed German princes to select either Lutheranism or Catholicism within the domains they controlled, ultimately reaffirming the independence they had over their states as a result of The Peace of Augsburg, which was known as a treaty, signed between Ferdinand, who replaced his brother Charles V as Holy Roman Emperor, and the forces of the Schmalkaldic League, an alliance of Lutheran princes, on September 25, 1555 at the city of Augsburg in Bavaria, Germany.

and Buddhism) and social systems of the colony.<sup>6</sup> This certain obligation managed some difficulties for the Dutch in homeland, either serving their servants with qualified church clergy but cost a good deal, in this case the Director had to organize the mission with Church Council in the Netherland or flexibly arranged the missions with the local authority in each colony.

As a result, his procedure of religious endorsement came after. The Company decided to send 1.000 preachers and several thousand lay-readers and schoolmasters, constructed building for churches and schools, and instituted several seminaries for *predikants* or clergymen training<sup>7</sup>. They printed and distributed Bibles and devotional literature in large amount. They also settled the most important policy and that was putting the overseas churches under their own authority. This practice theoretically based on the same ground like the Catholic mission, who controlled not only the placement of their priests but also exercised their right to censor all correspondence letters between the churches in the colony and the Church authorities in the Netherlands. They indeed forced their local officers to be part of church council everywhere, took over the responsibility to pay the entire church employee salaries and regarded them as Company servants (Boxer, 1990: 133-135). From the beginning, the Company viewed the church as a part of its task in administrating the colony.

The Cape was adequately provided by the Company with ministers and *ziekentroosters* or *krankbezoekers*<sup>8</sup>, but these men served only limited social class even though according to the church council this task gave opportunity to convert many souls into the Dutch Reformed Church. The did not not preach but could read sermons from selected and approved book which was pointed by the local officials. This was happened when Governor Jan van Riebeeck was admonished by Batavia government about Willem Wylant incident (J.N. Gerstner, 1991:175)<sup>9</sup>, the list included forbidding people to read, except for public prayers. The most important secular task for the church which the Company fully trusted was education. This function had an aim to teach people the essential doctrine of Christian and Dutch language. Since the school also had to request permission from Church authorities, some of the scholars described this period as the "Dark Ages" of education, because, like the middle Ages in Europe, all education was primarily of a religious nature (E.G. Malherber, 1925:19).

6 Both East India Company and West India Company found out the needs of spiritual help from their official correspondence which asked these matters.

7 The missionary training-school (Seminarim Indicum) established at Leiden, in 1622, but was closed because the graduates refused to be picked and appointed overseas.

8 Known also as comforters of the sick, usually an unordained man who were responsible for religious needs, took the place of ministers when he was unavailable and assisted wherever he was.

9 Willem was *ziekentrooster* but had a terrible eyesight, so he tried memorized the text and performed the sermon.

By using such methods of education and took a high note in religious aspects, one was conditioned with Christian faith. On the authority of Dutch Reformed Church, the settlers of the Cape were guaranteed to have the same level of education and religion, and the Company worked on this policy for the spiritual welfare despite its material interest. This endless course of action perfectly synchronized and marked the unity of church and states purpose. It was van Riebeeck who demonstrated the respect of bringing the Gospel to the indigenous population. The first conversion to Christianity was Eva Krotoa, a *Khoikhoi*, the interpreter of the Company.<sup>10</sup>

The only clear case where the Company overruled the Church on an issue was when it dissolved Combine Church Assembly<sup>11</sup>. Although there was a constant correspondence between the Classis of Amsterdam and the Cape congregations, there was only a little help which the Classis of Amsterdam could influence the Directors in Netherlands. In a attempt to overcome this situation, the churches in the Cape decided to form their own classis. The Classis of Amsterdam responded that it was permissible to have the meetings, but not to call the meeting a classis, since it has no right to examine students theologically and or ordain them for the ministry. The Combined Church Assembly instituted the examination of each congregation by delegates from the other congregations. It overruled a case of excommunication by a local church council, and even suspended a minister.

So this body of institution was suspended permanently by the Board in homeland, without specific reason. The Cape had never corresponded with any other classis than Amsterdam and through it to the provincial Synod of North Holland. So the point is the more contacts the church had, the easier it was to put pressure on the Board. *De Heeren XVII* then was convinced that the Cape Church was becoming too independent. The Assembly was never reinstated. There was never happened before that much more interference were made overseas, but still technically the Church acquiesced without enough struggle and the Company seemed taking more consideration upon the Church.

Dutch proselytizing activity was almost entirely directed against the other prejudice over the legal disabilities, which were not imposed on people because of their race, but of their faith. This logic statement led naturally to the effect that if one changed his religion, then he could change his official status and his social position in the settlement. MacCrone put it like this, if an indigenous person was baptized, soon he was acknowledged as a member of

10 From the hand of Maria de la Quellerie, van Riebeeck's wife, and by her influence, this native woman was taught how to pray and memorized Psalm.

11 The notable difference between the Church in South Africa and the Fatherland was that the nearest higher church gathering was thousands of miles away. What is unusual about this is that although magistrates in the Netherlands at times suspended ministers for far from religious reasons, they had weighty reasons from their perspective in comparison to this trivial reason. The fear of giving colonial bodies the power to ordain had become the common sense in Netherlands Church Council.



European society and if he was a slave, he attained his freedom afterwards (MacCrone, 1937:76)

The rites of baptism would be started with the acceptance of formal knowledge about the doctrines of Christian faith, when it was assumed enough and satisfied the clergy then he or she can be baptized. However, this assimilation which was planned by the company sparsely bears the fruit, and many failures discouraged the Company from further ventures of proselytization<sup>12</sup>. It is considerably right that the Christian beliefs had implications which weakened the practice of slavery, and Dutch Reformed Church clearly supported the right of freedom for slaves<sup>13</sup>, but not until Governor Goske (1671) and Governor Van Reede (1685) established the right of manumission, this privilege did exist. In fact, the function of this regulation was doubtful in the sense of it nearly was effective.

### **The Consequences in the Settlement and Happily Ever After?**

The remarkable unity between the Church in the Cape with the Company, which was represented by the local government, and the application of colonial policies over the Protestant mission showed the function of religion that had a significant role in handling some of administration issues. The church operation and organization depended on the district government. Referred to these basic rehearsals upon the Church, their relationship grew intimately and transformed the social pattern in the Cape.

### **Manumission**

Even though the term of freeing slaves in South Africa was supposed to be successful at some point, because the Company support Baptism practice<sup>14</sup>, but it came to reality that the rate of manumission was very low, contrasted with the pace of baptism. It might be a little bit confusing because in fact, there were no such privileges which were given to either the manumitted slaves or the baptized ones, and as a result the manumission velocity was depleted.

Throughout the Company period, the Cape government constantly tightened manumission regulations (Elphick and Giliomee, 135-144). It said that the owners could manumit their slaves only upon guaranteeing the freed slaves from poverty, and this condition was more complex in the following years. Based on some "slavery" scholars, the reason why this period showed

12 The famous Eva Krotoa, who served the Company as an interpreter, after her husband's death she became a prostitute and drunkard. There were also another Khoikhoi who declared their allegiance to Christianity and Dutch Culture, but who were not baptized, one committed suicide, the other renounced their new allegiance.

13 It was resolved that those who had been baptized ought to enjoy equal right of liberty with the other Christians and ought not to be handed over again to the powers of the heathens by their Christian either by sale or by any other transfer of possession.

14 By the end of the 17<sup>th</sup> century, it was an accepted prerequisite of manumission that a slave should be baptized, speak good Dutch, and have a guarantor who would pay the Poor fund, which might provide relief if the freed slave became destitute.

a poor consideration over manumission are because the manumitted slaves were the old ones who were seen as unproductive labor<sup>15</sup>, the physical appearance<sup>16</sup>, the ability of their master to upkeep them. In the end, the term of manumission that was happened because testamentary trust<sup>17</sup> was the most reasonable and the largest category of recorded manumission.

### **Miscegenation and intermarriage**

A second possible opportunity to get social status for slaves and the natives was miscegenation and intermarriage with the dominant European settlers and officials; theoretically these sexual relations might result in greater rights or chance for the non-European partners or their children. The miscegenation discussion among historians usually referred to the Company slave lodge, which was a famous house of prostitution. At the moment when Governor van Reede took an exact census at the Cape, it was revealed that almost half of ninety-two Company slave children had European blood (from their fathers). Later on, he carried out regulations regarding the miscegenation issues, but regrettably these guidelines were abandoned by the local ruler.<sup>18</sup>

Generally speaking, many of this miscegenation were happened inside the Cape, committed by VOC employees (resident and transient) and rarely around the pastoralist areas. These miscegenation and intermarriage at the Cape did not enable large numbers of blacks and Khoikhoi to obtain the privileges of the European citizens. Neither mother nor child gained permanent social advantages from such liaisons: comparatively, few of them obtained their freedom and a negligible number achieved burgher status. In the Cape, the miscegenation and intermarriage scarcely ever threatened European dominance.

### **Free black**

Neither separately nor together did the conversion, miscegenation and manumission permit large numbers of blacks, Khoikhoi, or their mixed descendants to obtain the status and privileges of the European settlers and officials. However, each process contributed significantly to regional variation in the culture and society of the Cape Colony, which also helped to form a

15 This practice was indeed a problem at the Cape, as an early *plakkaat* against manumitting *uitgeleefdes* (worn-out slaves) bears out. However, it seems that this callous procedure gradually declined at the Cape, perhaps because of the government's vigilance. It was proven that none of these slaves were casually abandoned.

16 Broadly speaking, the closer in skin color and physical appearance to their masters', the greater were their chances of freedom. Governor Van Reede favored slaves with European fathers in his manumission regulations of 1685. Still, these dramatic figures don't necessarily confirm the somatic theory of manumission.

17 The slave was only freed once the master could no longer make use of them. In general it was also much more common for old slaves to be given freedom, that is to say once they have reached the age where they are beginning to be less useful.

18 In 1671, Commissioner Isbrand Goske reported that fully three-quarters of the children born to Company slave women were of mixed parentage. In 1685 Commissioner van Reede put an effort to stop further miscegenation (even through marriage).

small but visible status group – the free blacks.

The free blacks' gained their livelihood by selling handicrafts and petty retailing. Their fortunes must have oscillated wildly with the presence or absence of ships in the bay. Their slow demographic growth ensured that they never posed a real threat to the ever burgeoning European settler population. They always appeared as a marginal group whose legal status—like the freedman in Roman law – were ambiguous and, as the power of the colonists waxed and that of the VOC waned, increasingly subject to local interpretation.

### Cultural change

What was more obvious from the Cape transformation through the Dutch Reformed Church was language. The language of the immigrants (Dutch among Europeans and Portuguese among slaves) became the means of communication in *trekboers* society. This was due largely to the difficulty of the Khoikhoi language and the teaching of Dutch as the medium language at Church. Furthermore, the impact of transferring this pidgin language, which subsequently was recognized as *Afrikaans*, was the demise of indigenous Khoikhoi language. By the late of eighteenth century, the main cultural cleavages were no longer between ethnic or status groups but between regions.<sup>19</sup>

### Trekboers

In eighteenth-century, the greatest hurdle of cattle farmers, or *trekboers* as they were called, was crossing the first mountain barrier, behind the Cape. Once this was overcome, they moved on to the great inland plateau of South Africa, thousands of square miles of dry scrubland, where movement was easy and population sparse. The "loan farm"<sup>20</sup> system of land tenure facilitated the expansion of the *trekboer*. In this harsh interior of the Cape, in the Karoo with its extremes of temperature and monotonous landscape, the cattle farmer was thrown very largely on to his own resources. The local government could hardly control these settlers, who became accustomed to handling emergencies on his own and taking the law into his own hands.

19 In Cape Town, a mixed European and Asian culture was shared by Company officials, some burghers, and slaves, though some of the latter managed to retain more traditionally Asian traits, especially through conversion to Islam. In the agrarian southwestern Cape, slaves and Europeans seem to have shared in a culture which was predominantly of European origin. In the *trekboer* regions the prevailing languages were Dutch and Portuguese, but otherwise the culture of slaves and colonists was a composite of European and Khoikhoi influences, appropriate to a livestock economy. Here the remaining cultural cleavages were between Europeans, slaves, Bastards and a few acculturated Khoikhoi on the one hand, and the more traditional Khoikhoi on the other.

20 Formalized in 1714, with minor reforms, this system, whereby farmers could lease land indefinitely in exchange for a nominal rent, remained the basic form of land tenure until the nineteenth century. Despite the leasehold nature of the tenure, the Company rarely, if ever, took back land, even when the colonists defaulted on their payments, and many farms were not even registered.

The *trekboers* were also depended on the Cape market to sell their cattles, butter, soap, ivory and other animal products, in exchange for the essential arms and ammunition, and luxuries like clothing, sugar, tea, coffee and brandy. The *trekboers* became Africanized; nevertheless they also retained considerable contact with the more settled and prosperous community in the south-west, with whom they were linked to kinship and interest. The *trekboer* pastoralists required a less extensive labor force and because of their comparative poverty, they relied less on slaves than on Khoikhoi who were subject to unofficial controls. Their farms were even further from Cape Town, and among them European culture soon became diluted.

More or less, the Company policies related to the use of the land, forced this social group to its existence. The manumission over slaves-possession was also one of their protests and it triggered the resistance over the local ruler. These tensions at some eventual time, spring out into rebellion.

## Conclusion

The existing studies about Dutch Reformed Church and their mission in the Cape represented the vagueness of the Dutch Colonial history. The extent, to which the Dutch Reformed Church in Cape subordinated to the civil power, was emphasized in every common way of religious activities and practices. VOC and the Calvinist church in its dominions, particularly in South Africa, were just like the two-sided of a coin and many scholars have been criticizing the procedures and guidelines of Dutch East India Company in these matters.

However, a more thorough study of the position of the Calvinist Church in public life and of the administration of baptism, in the Netherlands as well as in South Africa and other parts of the Dutch Seaborne Empire, reveals that Dutch Calvinism was much less dominant and exclusive, and much more missionary. The church in the overseas was multicultural and multiracial; it included freemen and slaves, Dutch settlers and foreigners. Slavery was accepted by the church, but on condition that the slave owner had his slaves educated in the Christian faith and would not sell them to non-Christians. This policy was successful; and large numbers of slaves were baptized. In the Cape, indigenous Christians were not numerous, but in South Africa the church included socially disparate groups. The administration of baptism was not different from that in the Dutch. In Cape, it was even more inclusive than elsewhere. Moreover, in the eighteenth and early nineteenth century, a number of colored-people became full church members, participating in the Lord's Supper together with white Christians. Church and society at the Cape were certainly no social or spiritual paradise, but neither was they, would have it, a breeding ground of racial segregation (Schutte, 1998:38-39).

The social condition and community deviation in the Cape were not by chance but resulted from several religious policies which were exercised by

the local Dutch ruler within the Church. Manumissions, miscegenation and intermarriage, *free black* and *trek Boer*, were simply showing the evidence of Company's interference in the society. This region was soon characterized by the assimilation of blacks to European culture, but not by their incorporation into the church or *freeburgher* society. A clear social distinction between Europeans and blacks was established soon after the settlement. Prestige and local power became more associated with land-possession. The practice however had been accused of providing the ideological foundation for apartheid and practicing an early form of that abominable system. Cape colonial society was rigid, even by some contemporary standards. The position of the lower status groups did not improve. Slaves had comparatively little opportunity to become free, even in Cape Town. Khoikhoi never enjoyed the rights of burghers, and free blacks and baptized *Bastaards* gradually lost the privileges they had once had. All these groups lived in a twilight world neither slave nor wholly free (Elphick and Giliomee, 1989: 161-162).

From the beginning, it was the Church which functioned itself as an extension of the VOC government, and its position as the government's right hand synergistically worked out to implement mutual policy which put the economic good of the colony. Even though there was no such literal evidence could prove that the Church influences were a part of Erastianism<sup>21</sup> manifestation, many of its Governors and Dutch government in the Cape depicted such conscious concept of State religion. They supported the Church as the only tolerated religion<sup>22</sup>, which was effective in getting people who were not members of the Dutch Reformed Church. It should be clearer now that Calvinism made little impression for the natives in the Cape where it was preached in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Calvinism could make no lasting impression once the government withdrawn their efforts.

While Calvinism in the age of forefathers of reformation became a vivid light which set the faith of Protestant believers on fire, the Dutch Reformed Church followers contributed only a small part of its sparkling through decades of colonization at the Cape. Yet, the civilization and transformation of the heathens land there, owed their form from the Church. ●

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21 The state is supreme in church matters or state exercising spiritual authority over the church, for ideally it could function as a sign of the unity of spiritual goals of church and state. The idea was founded by Thomas Erastus, a Swiss theologian.

22 Preventing at its request the Lutheran church from being established until 1780, and expelled the Moravian missionary Georg Schmidt for administering the sacrament of baptism to his converts.

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