

Fakulteit Geesteswetenskappe Faculty of Humanities

The Department of Historical and Heritage Studies

invites you to a seminar entitled

Dubious dealings in the Transvaal: The Kruger state, Corruption and the Transvaal Concessions Commission, c.1900

In October 1900, with Pretoria and Johannesburg firmly under British control, the British government launched a commission of enquiry, which was set to determine whether the concessions granted by the Transvaal government still had to be honoured. The Transvaal Concessions Commission, as it became known, exposed some of the rampant corruption in the Transvaal state, and in particular, the graft surrounding its most controversial concession: the dynamite monopoly. While the Dynamite Company's witnesses squirmed and stonewalled, the commissioners painted a picture of bribes paid to Volksraad members and enormous profits for its international shareholders at the expense of the government's own royalties.

Yet, while this picture fits the stereotypical image of a corrupt state and a beleaguered mining industry, the commissioners essentially echoed the grievances and charges compiled by the British government to justify its war against the Transvaal. This was later reflected in much of the historiography on the causes of the South African War, as well as the Jameson Raid. The war became a retrospective lens through which historians examined the Transvaal in the 1890's, which made for rather linear explanations of the era. In spite of this – or perhaps as a result – there has been surprisingly little analysis of the dynamite monopoly, corruption and of the relationship between the Kruger state and the mining industry in the 1890's. Removing this lens could provide for a more complex picture, which would consider the implications of a relatively weak state being a theatre for international competition, where all the parties concerned built alliances along existing networks and rivalries to achieve their ends.

Presenter: Dr Lindie Koorts, Department of Historical and Heritages Studies, UP

Date : 18 April 2013

Time : 2:00 – 4:00 pm

Place : HSB 18-26

RSVP : history@up.ac.za



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