



RESEARCH ARTICLE

# Intimacy, labour and sexual violence: Nama and Baster women in Namaqualand's copper mining district, c. 1879–1900

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## Abstract

This article explores the intersection of labour, sexual violence and intimacy in the late nineteenth-century copper mining district of Namaqualand, focusing on the impact of male labourers' brutalities on local Nama and Baster women. Small in scale, lacking state interference and offering vast employment opportunities to women, Namaqualand's mines and the towns that grew around them were a key destination for local female labour migration. Due to these unique characteristics, however, women were also exposed to unwanted attention and sexual abuse by male labourers, particularly miners. Women used the Cape's legal system to protest, but the indifference shown towards their suffering by colonial officials and the public allowed men to use violence without much restraint, rendering women's legal efforts futile. Ultimately, sexual violence reinforced gendered and racial hierarchies, restricting women's socio-economic agency and autonomy. The article argues that these dynamics highlight the violent (re)shaping of colonial and patriarchal power asymmetries in the north-western Cape between two major colonial wars after the stabilization of the northern frontier by means of armed conquest.

## Résumé

Cet article explore l'intersection du travail, de la violence sexuelle et de l'intimité dans le district minier de cuivre du Namaqualand, à la fin du XIXe siècle, en se concentrant sur l'impact des brutalités exercées par des ouvriers sur des femmes nama et baster locales. De petite taille, sans ingérence de l'État et offrant aux femmes de vastes opportunités d'emploi, les mines du Namaqualand et les villes qui se sont développées autour d'elles étaient une destination clé pour la migration de main-d'œuvre féminine locale. En raison de ces caractéristiques uniques, les femmes étaient cependant également exposées à une attention non désirée et à des abus sexuels de la part des ouvriers, en particulier des mineurs. Les femmes ont utilisé le système juridique du Cap pour protester, mais l'indifférence manifestée à l'égard de leurs souffrances par les autorités coloniales et le public a permis aux hommes de recourir à la violence sans grande retenue, rendant inutiles les efforts juridiques des femmes. En définitive, la violence sexuelle a renforcé les hiérarchies genrées et raciales, restreignant l'agentivité socio-économique et l'autonomie des femmes. L'article soutient que ces dynamiques mettent en évidence le (re)façonnement violent des asymétries de pouvoir colonial et patriarcal dans le nord-ouest du Cap, entre deux guerres coloniales majeures, après la stabilisation de la frontière nord par la conquête armée.

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## Resumo

Este artigo explora a intersecção entre trabalho, violência sexual e intimidade no distrito mineiro de cobre de Namaqualand, no final do século XIX, centrando-se no impacto das brutalidades dos trabalhadores masculinos nas mulheres locais Nama e Baster. De pequena dimensão, sem interferência do Estado e oferecendo vastas oportunidades de emprego a mulheres, as minas de Namaqualand e as cidades que cresciam à sua volta eram um destino privilegiado para a migração da mão de obra feminina local. No entanto, devido a estas características únicas, as mulheres também estavam expostas a atenções indesejadas e a abusos sexuais por parte dos trabalhadores masculinos, em particular dos mineiros. As mulheres recorreram ao sistema jurídico do Cabo para protestar, mas a indiferença demonstrada pelos funcionários coloniais e pelo público em relação ao seu sofrimento permitiu que os homens fizessem uso da violência sem grandes restrições, tornando inúteis os esforços legais das mulheres. Em última análise, a violência sexual reforçou as hierarquias de género e raciais, restringindo a agência socioeconómica e a autonomia das mulheres. O artigo argumenta que estas dinâmicas põem em evidência a (re)configuração violenta das assimetrias de poder colonial e patriarcal no Cabo Noroeste, entre duas grandes guerras coloniais, após a estabilização da fronteira norte através da conquista armada.

## Introduction

On a bright moonlit night in early August 1884, smoke rose from the ‘native’ settlements on the periphery of the town of O’okiep, the centre of copper mining in Namaqualand. Around midnight, Lena Cloete had set fire to a mat house<sup>1</sup> where the Nama woman lived with a mining labourer. Earlier in the evening, she had gathered her belongings from their mutual home and left to end her relationship with the man, most likely a migrant labourer from the Eastern Cape or Delagoa Bay. The fire was put out quickly, and Lena Cloete was arrested. It remains unclear why the woman who had once migrated from southern Namibia to Namaqualand’s copper mines set fire to the mat house.<sup>2</sup> Put in context, however, Cloete’s actions appear as a beacon of protest against the violence African women were subjected to in and around Namaqualand’s mining towns in the late nineteenth century.

This article investigates the interplay between labour, sexual violence and intimacy in the late nineteenth-century north-western Cape in the two decades between the !Kora War (1878–79) and the South African War (1899–1902). More broadly, it studies the violent (re)shaping of colonial and patriarchal power asymmetries between the two major colonial wars. The article shows that Nama and Baster women<sup>3</sup> worked in Namaqualand’s mining district to mitigate the structural

<sup>1</sup> A mat house (or *matjieshuis* in Afrikaans), traditionally made from tree branches and reed mats, was widely used by Namakhoë and other groups in south-western Africa, especially as it was easy to transport (Carstens 2007: 130–1).

<sup>2</sup> *Queen v Cloete* (1884), criminal record, AG 2863, no. 42, Western Cape Archives and Records Service (WCARS), Cape Town.

<sup>3</sup> The women this article focuses on were members of the communities that resided on Namaqualand’s mission lands, dominated by families with Nama and Baster ancestry. The latter group in particular often had a diverse background, being of white and African/slave descent. I refer to the women as ‘Nama and Baster’, ‘local’ or ‘African’ women throughout the article.

constraints of settler colonization, capitalist exploitation and patriarchy. Drawing on notions that intimacy can be one-sided, a source of distress and coerced (Geschiere 2013: xvii, 23; Stoler 2006: 15), it demonstrates that, in the mining district, women were also subjected to unwanted attention and forced sex by men, particularly miners. In contrast to other mining sites, such as the Witwatersrand or the diamond fields of Griqualand West, Namaqualand's copper mines witnessed no major growth in the late nineteenth century. The mines and towns expanding around them remained small in scope, with population figures in the low thousands. However, they offered a range of employment opportunities and movement and interaction remained relatively free, given the Cape government's and the mining companies' lack of commitment and means to regulate social life. This unique setting allowed Nama, Baster and other women to manage household demands while engaging in waged and self-employed work. At the same time, however, it exposed the women to the closeness of men who sexually harassed and abused them.

The article further outlines that, in Namaqualand's mining district, male labourers could use sexual violence without much restraint, although women regularly used the Cape legal system and spoke out against their tormentors, particularly in court. Issues of the intimate were often regulated from afar (Glovinsky 2020; Povinelli 2006) by central state authorities, missionaries, political organizations and public discourse, as was the case in late nineteenth- and twentieth-century Africa more widely.<sup>4</sup> In Namaqualand, however, measures to control enforced intimacy were half-hearted, inconsistent and ineffective, given the Cape judiciary's and general public's indifference towards African women's exposure to sexual assaults. The article concludes that their continued subjection to sexual violence constrained women's socio-economic agency. The bodily and mental injuries they sustained at the hands of men endangered their health and labouring capacity and impeded (if not ended) their pursuits for more autonomy and secure livelihoods. The central argument this article makes is that, in Namaqualand's copper-mining district, dynamics of labour, intimacy and sexual violence unfolded that reinforced gendered and racial hierarchies and colonial power asymmetries more broadly after the stabilization of the northern Cape's frontier through armed conquest.

The article brings into dialogue and contributes to two strands of literature. Historiographies on the northern Cape have firmly established the crucial role of violence in settler-colonial encroachment in the late nineteenth century. They have demonstrated that a series of wars waged by Cape forces against Khoesan groups and massacres by *commandos* (particularly against the San population) provided the foundation for settler colonization in the northern Cape (Ross 1975; Legassick 2006; Dooling 2009; de Prada-Samper 2012). Mohamed Adhikari (2015: 6) outlined that the copper-mining industry contributed to frontier violence by providing infrastructure and a ready market for pastoral produce to future settlers. However, this body of work rarely ventured into the realm of intimacy. The work of Wayne Dooling (2009) is among the exceptions, demonstrating that settlers in the northern Cape tried to uphold their claimed authority with 'extreme and routine violence' against their African servants (*ibid.*: 400, 406–10). Despite these advances, however, historians have

<sup>4</sup> See, for instance, Kombo (2024) as well as Van Onselen's work on legal and public intervention in rape cases on the Rand (1982b: 49–50).

not addressed sexual violence in Namaqualand's copper-mining district or the issue of intimacy in greater detail.

Industrial mining in colonial Southern Africa in the nineteenth and first half of the twentieth century has also received considerable attention from scholars. In the past decades, historical research has touched on everyday life in and around the mines, the perceptions and experiences of migrant labourers, and the larger setting of colonialism and imperialism, capitalism and politics in which industrial mining emerged and gained ground.<sup>5</sup> Several studies have analysed the brutal working conditions to which miners were subjected and the violence they inflicted on themselves and others (Breckenridge 1998; Moodie 2005; Kynoch 2011). Moreover, this body of literature has looked at the mining areas and urban locations as arenas in which women's agency, social stratification and state power were formed and contested (Moroney 1982; Van Onselen 1982a; 1982b; Bonner 1990). In contrast to work on the northern Cape, historiographies of mining have thoroughly engaged with intimate matters. Scholars have studied South Africa's mines and labour compounds as sites for the (re)shaping of sexuality and intimate relations (Moodie *et al.* 1988; Harries 1990; Weiss 2011). Nevertheless, the interplay between labour, intimacy and sexual violence – particularly by male labourers against African women – in mining contexts remains to be studied systematically.<sup>6</sup> Tellingly, historians have omitted Namaqualand's copper mines and the towns growing around them almost entirely.<sup>7</sup>

Drawing on historical and feminist scholarship (Gqola 2015; Bourke 2020), I conceptualize sexual violence – including acts such as rape and harassment – as gendered practices of physical aggression that aim to enforce dominance over the female body and sexual integrity.<sup>8</sup> The main sources my article builds on are colonial criminal records produced by the Cape colonial judiciary. In addition to general details about the cases (offences, verdicts, etc.), these records often contain transcribed versions of affidavits by local women, originally given before Namaqualand's resident magistrate or the regional court at Springbok. The records need to be approached and read critically. Pamela Scully rightly warns that witnesses' voices have been distorted by 'linguistic, colonial, and gendered translations' (Scully 1995: 348). Nonetheless, thoroughly contextualizing the records, contrasting them with other sources and closely reading the testimonies generate valuable insights into the perceptions and behaviour of the men inflicting and the women suffering violence.<sup>9</sup>

The first section of the article traces the historical developments that shaped the specific character of Namaqualand's mines and towns, rendering them attractive for female labour while giving way to enforced intimate encounters. The second section briefly charts the economic struggles of Namaqualand's communities and outlines the relevance of female work in the mining district. The third section then analyses sexual

<sup>5</sup> See, for instance, Van Onselen (1982a; 1982b), Worger (1987), Harries (1994), Phimister (1994), Maloka (1998), Gewalt (1999), Carstens (2001), Cleveland (2015) and Press (2021).

<sup>6</sup> Edmonds and Nettelbeck (2018: 2) have called for expanding research to a diverse set of sites of intimacy and violence. However, mines have rarely been approached as such.

<sup>7</sup> Davenport (2014) was among the first scholars to thoroughly situate copper mining in Namaqualand within South Africa's history of industrial mining.

<sup>8</sup> On a narrow conceptualization of violence generally, see van Walraven and Abbink (2003: 17–18).

<sup>9</sup> On colonial court records and their value as sources for African history, see Roberts (2005), Benson and Chadya (2005) and Burrill *et al.* (2010: 18–20).

violence, its effects on women and local power asymmetries more broadly. Subsequently, the influence of official and public indifference, colonial (in)justice, racism and masculinity in enabling such violence is discussed. Finally, all the findings are further elaborated through the lens of a specific case: that of the attempted rape of Anna Carolus.

### Namaqualand's copper mines

Industrial copper mining in Namaqualand commenced in the 1850s, after the Cape Colony had incorporated the vast tracts of land south-west of the Orange River into its territory in 1847 (Davenport 2014: 7–10; Smalberger 1975: 11–15, 33–4). Particularly in its early stages, the colonial mining industry depended on 'the intense involvement' of the state. It provided the legal framework to acquire land and block Africans' prospecting and mineral rights (Brown 2019: 161). These structures allowed the Cape Town-based trading company Phillips & King to commence the first large-scale colonial mining venture in Namaqualand. In 1850, merchants bought tracts of farmland incorporating surface copper deposits from the Cloetes, a Baster family who had settled in the area in the first half of the nineteenth century (De La Harpe 2015: 10–11, 39, 43–4). In addition to enabling the purchase, Cape legislation granted the company extensive mineral, water, property and land rights. Unknowingly, the Cloete family had thus lost effective control over their entire farmland. Phillips & King swiftly utilized the structural advantage, acquiring the remaining tracts of land in the following years (*ibid.*: 43–4). In 1852, the company's mining operations took off, exporting the first 11 tons of copper ore from Namaqualand (Smalberger 1975: 70).

Despite intense yet often fruitless speculation and the Cape government's reluctance to provide capital (Davenport 2014: 22–5), copper had become the colony's second most important export by 1860 (Smalberger 1975: 65–9). Industrial copper mining in Namaqualand intensified in 1865 when the newly formed Cape Copper Company (CCC)<sup>10</sup> bought the property of Phillips & King, invested in machinery and infrastructure, and moved the mining of copper underground (CPP 1899: 11). O'okiep quickly developed into the region's mining centre (Figure 1). In 1868, *The Cape Monthly Magazine* found its industry 'very striking', having 'no equal in South Africa, or, perhaps, on the Continent of Africa at all'.<sup>11</sup>

Unsurprisingly, Namaqualand's mines soon became a nodal point of global labour migration. Most of the skilled workforces the companies contracted were miners from Cornwall (Noble 1875: 80), known to the nineteenth-century world for their underground mining skills (Payton 2019). Labourers from the German, Austro-Hungarian and Russian empires and the USA also made their way to Namaqualand's mines.<sup>12</sup> To meet their demand for cheap labour, Namaqualand's mining companies also employed African migrant labourers from the southern and central parts of today's Namibia, the Eastern Cape and Mozambique.<sup>13</sup> These workers were employed to fill the ranks of unskilled 'native' labour, mining above and below ground for a daily

<sup>10</sup> In earlier years, the company was known as the Cape Copper Mining Company.

<sup>11</sup> 'The copper mines of Namaqualand: in two chapters', *The Cape Monthly Magazine*, 1870, p. 46.

<sup>12</sup> The criminal records document the presence of men with respective nationalities.

<sup>13</sup> Letter from J. T. Eustace to under colonial secretary, 30 December 1880, 1/SBK 5/1/7, WCARS, Cape Town; letter from J. T. Eustace to Ellis, 22 March 1883, 1/SBK 5/2/4, WCARS, Cape Town; letter from J. T. Eustace to under secretary for native affairs, 29 December 1884, 1/SBK 5/1/8, WCARS, Cape Town.



**Figure 1.** O'okiep, in approximately 1890. The photograph shows parts of the processing machinery of the mining plant and the town. Source: WCARS, AG Photographic Collection, I 1522.

wage (Dunn 1872: 168; Noble 1875: 80).<sup>14</sup> Moreover, reflective of the racialized perceptions and organization of work (Brown 2019: 155, 163–4), African labourers were paid substantially less than their counterparts. In 1898, for instance, the monthly wages they received from the CCC were approximately 65 per cent lower than those of white workers (CPP 1899: 17).<sup>15</sup>

Despite these developments, the copper-mining industry soon stagnated. From the 1860s onwards, the global copper price dropped consistently (Smalberger 1975: 127, 139), while companies struggled with high transportation costs and delays because of droughts (Davenport 2014: 33). By the 1880s, the mining of copper had become an increasingly unattractive business. In 1881, Namaqualand's mining companies exported copper ore worth £261,110. In contrast, diamond exports in that year were at a staggering £4,176,000. While the value of copper production again rose to £577,053 in 1887, it was still far from the £4,242,00 made in the same year with diamonds (Smalberger 1975: 127; Mabin 1986: 6). In the 1890s, the value of mined copper remained at a low level. Between 1891 and 1898, it never surpassed £300,772.

<sup>14</sup> See also letter from J. T. Eustace to under secretary for native affairs, 29 December 1884, 1/SBK 5/1/8, WCARS, Cape Town; letter from W. C. Scully to under secretary for native affairs, 11 December 1891, 1/SBK 5/1/11, WCARS, Cape Town.

<sup>15</sup> In 1898, white men earned between £12 to £15 per month while 'natives' were paid between 3s and 3s 6d per day. (In pre-decimal English currency, 'd' were pence and 's' shillings.)

The year 1899 saw a slight increase to £446,985, but by then the Witwatersrand had already produced gold worth around £15,000,000 (Van Onselen 1982b: 2; Smalberger 1975: 127–8).

The copper mines and the towns growing around them thus remained small. By 1882, O'okiep counted only approximately 2,000 inhabitants (Smalberger 1975: 108). In contrast, more than four times as many Africans resided in informal settlements on the diamond fields at that time (Harries 1994: 55), next to an average of 17,000 African labourers working the mines (Worger 1987: 103). By 1891, O'okiep's population had decreased to 1,901 (CPP 1892: 43). Although statistics for later years are missing, the fact that the largest mining companies combined employed only 1,802 workers in 1898 (CPP 1899: 17) suggests that O'okiep's population figures remained in the low thousands. In comparison, on the Rand, Johannesburg had grown into a mining metropole with approximately 100,000 residents by 1900 (Van Onselen 1982a: 2).

Because of their moderate size, the mines and towns of Namaqualand's copper district were particularly suitable for female labour. Distances between homes and the workplace remained short (Figure 1), which was vital for local women to reap profits. As elsewhere, they had to juggle the demands of waged and self-employed work with domestic responsibilities, the latter dwarfing 'any other labour time allocation' (Bryceson 2019: 301). However, having the sorting floors, fountains, shops and employers' homes close by allowed women to better manage the demands of production units and remunerative work.<sup>16</sup> The fact that spatial and social mobility remained relatively unrestricted amplified these advantages. Women's movement and interactions were not limited by compound walls. Encounters between men and women occurred daily – for example, in shops and canteens, on the mines' dressing floors, or in each other's homes. In contrast, from the 1880s onwards, exclusive male social spheres emerged on the Griqualand West diamond fields with the establishment of closed labour compounds, restraining workers' movement and relationships with women (Mabin 1986: 12–15; Weiss 2011: 58).

Moreover, in Namaqualand, interactions between men and women often took shape outside state and company control. Both Cape officials and the mining companies had issues with intimate relations, particularly between African women and white miners, as they were believed to hamper the latter's productivity.<sup>17</sup> Officials also feared that such intimate relations and the possible children stemming from them would undermine the racial order they hoped to establish (Scully 1995: 343). However, the government and the mining companies lacked the resources and determination to enforce the latter. Thus, while racially stratified and characterized by relationships of unequal nature, up to the late nineteenth century the social structure of Namaqualand's copper-mining district continued to show signs of fluidity (Scully 2007 [1913]: 207).<sup>18</sup>

<sup>16</sup> Washing and other forms of informal labour were particularly suited to meeting conflicting demands, as they could be carried out in combination with domestic chores (Scully 1997: 96).

<sup>17</sup> Letter from W. C. Scully to under secretary for native affairs, 11 December 1891, 1/SBK 5/1/11, WCARS, Cape Town. Such racist thinking was also prominent in other mining contexts in Africa (Brown 2019: 164, note 55).

<sup>18</sup> Letter from W. C. Scully to under colonial secretary, 31 January 1891, CO 3674, WCARS, Cape Town.

In addition to providing proximity and mobility that rendered female labour productive, Namaqualand's mining district also offered a much wider variety of urban professions to African women. On the Witwatersrand, they were closed off from 'virtually all avenues of wage labor' by the twentieth century, restricting income-generating activities to brewing beer and other sources of informal work (Bonner 1990: 222). At the same time, washing – one of the key informal professions in urban Africa (Barchiesi 2019: 49–50) – was firmly in the hands of men, further limiting African women's income activities.<sup>19</sup> In contrast, in Namaqualand's mining district, it was Nama and Baster women who dominated certain sections of the labour market, outnumbering men and women of other backgrounds in domestic service and laundry work (CPP 1876: 495; 1892: 468–9).

### Female labour in the mining district

Nama and Baster women made ready use of the copper-mining district's opportunities. In the second half of the nineteenth century, their communities came under increasing economic pressure. Due to the Cape's annexation and land seizures by mining companies and settlers, the access of community leaders and their followers to pastures necessary for pastoral farming had been drastically reduced (CPP 1890: 5, 7; Kelso 2010: 168–70; De La Harpe 2015: 49–50). Many took up residence on the lands of the European mission stations. The mission grounds were among the most productive lands in the wider area and lay outside formal government control. However, being left with less land to graze and water their livestock and thus induced to rely more on agriculture, the communities became much more vulnerable to Namaqualand's droughts and dry seasons (CPP 1890; Kelso 2010; De La Harpe 2015). Therefore, the communities' dependence on the colonial economy and cash income increased. While the former allowed them to market their agricultural and pastoral produce, the latter gave them access to food and consumer goods (Carstens 1984: 28; 2001: 10–11).

Working in the mining district formed a central part of the communities' livelihood strategies.<sup>20</sup> Members migrated to the mines between harvest and sowing time to supplement farming on the mission lands with waged work. They set out for the mines particularly in times of want when they could no longer live off their produce (CPP 1894: xxiv).<sup>21</sup> Women were undoubtedly among the communities' labour migrants. In addition to making their households, some laboured on the dressing floors of the mines and as domestic servants in settler homes. Others engaged in self-employed work, such as washing laundry for the urban elite or selling firewood (CPP 1866: 93; 1876: 495; 1892: 468–9).<sup>22</sup> There is reason to believe that female labour power had become a key asset in households' and communities' pursuit to sustain themselves. As mentioned above, Namaqualand's copper mines and towns

<sup>19</sup> Van Onselen (1982a: 106–7) further demonstrated that women engaged in sex work on the Rand, given the lack of employment opportunities.

<sup>20</sup> Carstens (2001: 10) came to a similar conclusion.

<sup>21</sup> Letter from H. Hegner to Rhenish Mission Society, 8 February 1870, RMG 1.600a, Vol. 1, Archives of the United Evangelical Mission, Wuppertal.

<sup>22</sup> Evidence on female labour in the mining district is patchy. Census statistics and criminal records are among the very few sources that provide insights.



allowed women to productively combine household chores with waged and self-employed labour like no other industrial mining site in Southern Africa at the time. The additional income women were able to bring home gave households more financial leeway to purchase products from local markets. Crucially, such purchasing had not only become a necessary supplement for Africans' production but was also very costly; the living expenses – including food prices – in Namaqualand were among the highest in the entire Cape Colony.<sup>23</sup> At the same time, women could take care of the everyday needs of their male relations and ensure the productivity of the household.<sup>24</sup>

Additionally, taking up waged and/or self-employed work also allowed women to challenge the patriarchal structures that dominated many local households by that time (Carstens 1984: 23; Webley 1997: 177–8, 189). As Webley writes, waged labour in the mines had profoundly disrupted gender relations among Namaqualand's communities; men who left their wives behind to care for the children were elevated into a 'position of considerable financial power', controlling much of the household income (1997: 189).<sup>25</sup> However, bringing home their own earnings allowed women to reduce men's hold over finances and shape the household economy in their interest.

To be sure, women received less money for their work than men. In 1868, for instance, the mining companies paid unskilled female labourers daily wages ranging between 4d and 9d, while their male counterparts received between 1s and 1s 6d.<sup>26</sup> Three decades later, the gendered difference in pay had widened, with female labourers receiving only a third of the lowest pay rate of men instead of three-quarters (CPP 1899: 17). Women engaged in domestic service also seemed to have received lower wages; in 1891, male servants on average received 20s per month by employers in Namaqualand, women only 15s.<sup>27</sup> Moreover, while self-employed labour such as laundry work was firmly in the hands of women (CPP 1876: 495; 1892: 468–9), the profits from such labour were often meagre, rendering an existence outside unwanted male control complex.<sup>28</sup>

Nevertheless, the cash earnings women brought home unquestionably helped to alleviate the economic pressures of settler colonization and industrial mining. As the

<sup>23</sup> 'The copper mines of Namaqualand: in two chapters', *The Cape Monthly Magazine*, 1870, p. 94; letter from J. T. Eustace to colonial secretary, 9 June 1884, 1/SBK 5/1/8, WCARS, Cape Town; letter from W. C. Scully to under colonial secretary, 1 April 1891, CO 3674, WCARS, Cape Town.

<sup>24</sup> According to Webley (1997: 178), traditional domestic activities of Namakhoe women included collecting firewood, plant foods and water, manufacturing clay vessels and reed mats for the houses, preparing sour milk and butter, as well as working the skins of slaughtered stock.

<sup>25</sup> As Webley (1997: 177–8) showed, prior to the introduction of waged labour, women's position in Nama society was comparatively high, as they controlled much of the domestic economy, including parts of the household's livestock. Carstens (1984: 23) suggested that the Baster communities had inscribed women's inferior position in domestic affairs into the constitutions they had written up together with European missionaries around the mid-nineteenth century.

<sup>26</sup> 'The copper mines of Namaqualand: in two chapters', *The Cape Monthly Magazine*, 1870, p. 93.

<sup>27</sup> Letter from W. C. Scully to director of the census, 11 December 1891, 1/SBK 5/1/11, WCARS, Cape Town.

<sup>28</sup> The St Helenian woman Leya Richards stressed this in an affidavit. L. Richards, affidavit, resident magistrate's court, Springbok, 1 November 1895, *Queen v Richards*, 1/SBK 1/1/12, no. 326, WCARS, Cape Town.

above examples illustrate, women who laboured on the mines' dressing floors increased their household income by quite a margin (at least another 30 per cent of men's wages). Women engaged in domestic service also made budget savings; as a rule, as well as paying monthly wages, employers compensated domestic workers with food (Cape of Good Hope 1863: 152–3). At the same time, labouring in the mining district seems to have allowed women to regain control over at least part of the household finances. This was particularly the case when women bore the main brunt of the domestic burden, replacing the labour power of their male relations.<sup>29</sup> Not least, the case of Anna Carolus will show that, thanks to their labour, women could live relatively autonomous existences outside male control.

### **Precarious closeness, enforced intimacy: labouring in the mining district in the interwar period**

In the period between the !Kora War and the South African War, local women frequently came into unwanted intimate contact with men due to the unique characteristics of Namaqualand's mines and towns. Some were subjected to sexual violence by male labourers after work. Saturdays were particularly dangerous as this was when the labouring population spent its earnings on liquor and other stimulants at the end of the working week. In 1884, Sarah Cloete was raped and killed by a group of Cornish miners while attending one of the common Saturday night parties at Spectakle.<sup>30</sup> Sarah Gertze, who had accompanied her, was beaten and chased by one of the Cornish men when she resisted his demand for sex, barely escaping the scene.<sup>31</sup> On the same Saturday night, Elsie Cloete had just left work at her mistress's house when she was also attacked, chased and sexually violated by a Cornish miner.<sup>32</sup>

In the years to follow, local women continued to be sexually violated while socializing. On another Saturday in late March 1893, Anna Christian was thrown to the ground and raped by a Nama labourer, after she had shared some of the brandy she had just bought with him and his wife.<sup>33</sup> Such attacks occurred in public and private places, including people's homes. On a Saturday evening in late February 1891, for instance, Anna Afrikander went to converse with a woman of her acquaintance who lived only a few paces away from her residence at O'okiep. However, when she entered the woman's house, she encountered only two Nama miners – the woman's husband and a male relation of his – who eventually overpowered her, forced her back into the house, and raped her multiple times.<sup>34</sup> On another Saturday evening in late December of the same year, the domestic servant Catrina Joseph was sexually

<sup>29</sup> S. July, affidavit, examination before the resident magistrate, Concordia, 26 January 1900, *Queen v Losper*, AG 3085, no. 1, WCARS, Cape Town.

<sup>30</sup> See the files in *Queen v Craddick, Barbary and Aver* (1884), criminal record, AG 1863, no. 37, WCARS, Cape Town.

<sup>31</sup> S. Gertze, affidavit, examination before the resident magistrate, Springbok, 12 March 1884, *Queen v Craddick, Barbary and Aver*, AG 2863, no. 37, WCARS, Cape Town.

<sup>32</sup> E. Cloete, affidavit, examination before the resident magistrate, Springbok, 11 March 1884, *Queen v Craddick, Barbary and Aver*, AG 2863, no. 37, WCARS, Cape Town.

<sup>33</sup> A. Christian, affidavit, resident magistrate's court, Springbok, 4 April 1893, *Queen v Vries*, AG 2962, no. 3, WCARS, Cape Town.

<sup>34</sup> A. Afrikander, affidavit, examination before the acting resident magistrate, Springbok, 27 February 1891, *Queen v Claase alias Hotteep and Gertze*, AG 2936, no. 26, WCARS, Cape Town.

harassed and attacked by a Baster miner in her O'okiep home, the latter having invaded the house with the expressed intention to sexually abuse her.<sup>35</sup>

Women were also exposed to sexual violence while pursuing their work. In June 1891, Meitje Mey returned home from one of Springbok's shops, where she had procured food and spirits for male household members, when she was harassed, robbed of her money, and raped by a Baster miner.<sup>36</sup> In early November 1893, Anna Carolus was sexually violated by a Cornish miner at a fountain near Springbok, where she washed and dried clothes.<sup>37</sup> Sannah July suffered a similar fate in 1900. As a widowed mother of four, she sold wood, carried water and washed clothes to sustain herself and her children. On a late January Saturday evening, she returned from a fountain near Concordia where she had fetched water when two Baster men, one of whom was a miner, approached and eventually raped her multiple times.<sup>38</sup>

Adolescent female labourers, including those of other African communities, were also exposed to such brutalities at work and after work. In early November 1893, teenager Sophia Rooi was subjected to sexual abuse by a Nama labourer at Matjieskloof, between Springbok and O'okiep. Rooi was cleaning the fireplace of a blind man she was taking care of when her tormentor called her into the man's house and raped her.<sup>39</sup> In November 1883, the seventeen-year-old Herero copper picker Margaretha Cornelis was sexually assaulted by a Herero miner in a dry riverbed close to O'okiep village. As usual, she left the dressing floors of the O'okiep mine, where she laboured with her mother, before noon. However, this time, her tormentor awaited her at one of the village shops.<sup>40</sup>

Many of the women who survived such attacks were able to fend off the perpetrators, some receiving assistance from bystanders or household relatives.<sup>41</sup> However, they still suffered massive physical and mental pain. As the records of their initial statements before the magistrate and the court at Springbok reveal, their injuries endangered their health and labouring capacity. Anna Afrikander, for instance, confessed that she still felt 'very ill' and was 'hardly able to walk' several days after the attack, adding that she felt 'the greatest pains' on her hips and back and that it hurt her 'very much when standing up'.<sup>42</sup> Sannah July reported that she could not procure water or carry wood because she felt sick and was 'suffering from [her] spine' as a consequence of the sexual violence.<sup>43</sup> Similarly, young Sophia Rooi

<sup>35</sup> C. Joseph, affidavit, examination before the resident magistrate, Springbok, 23 November 1891, *Queen v Jenkins alias Cloete*, AG 2936, no. 35, WCARS, Cape Town.

<sup>36</sup> M. Mey, affidavit, examination before the resident magistrate, Springbok, 29 June 1891, *Queen v Niekerk*, AG 2936, no. 29, WCARS, Cape Town.

<sup>37</sup> A. Carolus, affidavit, resident magistrate's court, Springbok, 7 November 1893, *Queen v Menhenott*, 1/SBK 1/1/8, no. 291, WCARS, Cape Town.

<sup>38</sup> S. July, affidavit, 26 January 1900.

<sup>39</sup> S. Rooi, affidavit, examination before the resident magistrate, Springbok, 22 November 1893, *Queen v Kok alias Quarrie*, 1/SBK 1/1/8, no. 307, WCARS, Cape Town.

<sup>40</sup> M. Cornelis, affidavit, examination before the resident magistrate, Springbok, 26 November 1883, *Queen v Cornelis*, AG 2863, no. 36, WCARS, Cape Town.

<sup>41</sup> E. Cloete, affidavit, 11 March 1884; C. Joseph, affidavit, 23 November 1891; M. Mey, affidavit, 29 June 1891; A. Christian, affidavit, 4 April 1893.

<sup>42</sup> A. Afrikander, affidavit, 27 February 1891.

<sup>43</sup> S. July, affidavit, 26 January 1900.

emphasized how she had been laid up in bed for days after being violated and unable to move because of the stiffness she was suffering in her thighs, arms and legs.<sup>44</sup>

Some women also showed signs of trauma. Elsie Cloete, for instance, recalled how she could not sleep the night she had been attacked on the streets of Spectakle when returning home from her mistress's house.<sup>45</sup> Sophia Rooi stressed that she had been 'crying very much' shortly after suffering violent abuse in the premises she had been cleaning.<sup>46</sup> Others reported that feelings of distress had taken hold of them. Sannah July, for instance, mentioned how she was overwhelmed by shame when she was raped,<sup>47</sup> which possibly translated into self-hatred (Abrahams 1996: 20). Tragically, women also died because of men's brutalities. Reporting about the rape and murder of Sarah Cloete in 1884, the *Cape Argus* stressed that it had become 'quite common – far too common – to find women dead under similar suspicious circumstances'.<sup>48</sup> Through such dramatic repercussions, sexual violence restrained the socio-economic agency of local women and their households. Bodily disabled, traumatized, or even robbed of their life, women struggled to put to use their labour power, which had become so crucial for securing their livelihoods and unsettling patriarchal and colonial power structures.

### 'White peril', colonial (in)justice and extreme masculinity

Men's brutality was enabled and fuelled by the indifference towards local women's violent subjection and suffering by colonial officials and the colonial public. In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, sexual violence – not least in mining areas – triggered public outrages and official concerns in today's South Africa. On the Rand, 'black peril' scares captivated colonial society from the 1890s onwards, following African male domestic servants' alleged rape of white women. In this context, drastic measures to curb sexual violence by African men and protect white women were debated hysterically, culminating in street aggression and racial hatred (Van Onselen 1982b: 49–50).

Sexual violence in Namaqualand's copper-mining district also made headlines in Cape newspapers and caused unease among the colonial administration and society. Remarkably, however, no measures were discussed (let alone implemented) to protect victims of sexual violence. In Namaqualand, official and public concern centred on the fact that some of the perpetrators were white and British subjects. In 1884, the *Cape Argus* alarmed its readers about acts 'of the most filthy and disgusting nature' that miners from Cornwall had committed by raping and murdering a local woman. Moreover, the paper voiced its concern about the magistracy's failure to prevent such brutalities.<sup>49</sup> Together with officials and local settlers, the *Argus* feared that this undermined white authority and delegitimized Cape colonial rule in Namaqualand.<sup>50</sup>

<sup>44</sup> S. Rooi, affidavit, 22 November 1893.

<sup>45</sup> E. Cloete, affidavit, 11 March 1884.

<sup>46</sup> S. Rooi, affidavit, 22 November 1893.

<sup>47</sup> S. July, affidavit, 26 January 1900.

<sup>48</sup> 'Outrage at Springbok', *Cape Argus*, 22 March 1884.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>50</sup> See circular from F. J. Dormer, 15 March 1884, *Queen v Craddick, Barbary and Aver*, AG 2863, no. 37, WCARS, Cape Town; letter from S. van Niekerk to attorney general, 17 March 1884, *Queen v Craddick*,

Crucially, however, in the wake of this ‘white peril’ scare, colonizers did not allude to the sexual integrity and safety of the miners’ victims: local women. Moreover, the shock about white cruelty soon dispersed, as it became clear that fears about possible political consequences would not materialize. Even though the miners walked free, a few months after the *Argus’s* commotion, the issue had vanished from the Cape’s public and political agenda. The judiciary even stopped prosecuting sexual violence in Namaqualand’s copper district for the remainder of the 1880s.<sup>51</sup> When African women’s legal charges were again followed up in the 1890s, the press and officials in Cape Town and Springbok made no fuss about them.

Against this backdrop, local women’s legal protests often remained futile. In the Cape Colony, cases of sexual violence – including rape, attempted rape and indecent assault – were adjudicated according to Roman-Dutch law, just like any other criminal act (Thornberry 2019: 148). Nama and Baster women frequently used the Cape’s legal system, speaking out about what men had done to them before the resident magistrate and the colonial court. Tragically, however, their efforts could do little to push back male aggression. Not only had women’s safety been neglected in discussions about white brutality, but officials had actively lowered the stakes for sexual violence. The judicial authorities in Cape Town preferred to remit local rape cases, charging perpetrators for lighter offences such as indecent assault to save government expenditure. In the Cape Colony, rape cases went through several judicial instances. Crucially, case files from regional courts had to be transmitted to the attorney general in Cape Town, who then decided whether a prosecution was to follow (Thornberry 2019: 148–52). If he did, the accused, complainants and witnesses were obliged to go to Cape Town along with the district surgeon and policemen guarding the persons under criminal charges. Given Namaqualand’s distance from the Cape Colony’s capital, administering local rape cases was particularly costly. To spare the government these expenses, the attorney general remitted them.<sup>52</sup>

Moreover, the central judicial authorities did not take the sexual abuse of African women seriously. As Elizabeth Thornberry has shown, interpretations of rape by Cape judges and magistrates centred on the issue of individual consent. However, the judge’s understanding of consent was shaped by racialized and gendered perceptions of sexuality and respectability. The efforts of African women – stigmatized as promiscuous and inciting men to sex – to prove their lack of consent were thus often fruitless (Thornberry 2019: 151–2; Scully 1995: 344–5). As in the case of Anna Afrikander and Sannah July, the attorney general tended to decline prosecution when evidence suggested that the women had had sexual intercourse or expressed ‘familiarity’ with the perpetrators before the rape.<sup>53</sup> The central judicial authorities

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*Barbary and Aver*, AG 2863, no. 37, WCARS, Cape Town; letter from J. T. Eustace to secretary to the law department, 26 March 1884, 1/SBK 5/2/4, WCARS, Cape Town.

<sup>51</sup> Up to 1889, not a single case of sexual violence in the mining district was documented by Namaqualand’s resident magistrate or the attorney general’s office in Cape Town.

<sup>52</sup> See the attorney general’s handwritten remarks in *Queen v Thomas* and *Queen v Cornelis*. *Queen v Thomas* (1883), criminal record, AG 2849, no. 25, WCARS, Cape Town; *Queen v Cornelis* (1884), criminal record, AG 2863, no. 36, WCARS, Cape Town.

<sup>53</sup> See the remarks in *Queen v Claase alias Hotteep and Gertze* and *Queen v Losper and Peters*. *Queen v Claase alias Hotteep and Gertze* (1891), criminal record, AG 2936, no. 26, WCARS, Cape Town; *Queen v Losper and Peters* (1900), criminal record, AG 3085, no. 1, WCARS, Cape Town.

were especially dismissive of local women's sexual integrity and rape charges. In 1891, resident magistrate Scully, who worked against the neglect of the rule of law in Namaqualand, criticized 'that Rape cases from these parts raise[d] the smile of scorn' among the staff of the justice department in Cape Town.<sup>54</sup>

Additionally, by the 1890s, racist discourses gained ground that portrayed as worthless the lives of those members of Namaqualand's Nama and Baster communities who were perceived to be useless for the Cape colonial project. Influenced by social Darwinist thought, Cape politicians called for replacing 'idle, improvident and non-progressive' Nama and Baster individuals residing on Namaqualand's mission grounds with people 'of a higher type, possessing more industry, energy and enterprise' (CPP 1890: 7–8; see also CPP 1896: 20). Local women were surely among 'the worthless people' (CPP 1896: 38) whom colonizers wished away. Those residing on the mission lands were portrayed as lying around 'doing absolutely nothing' (*ibid.*: 20); those who laboured in the mining district played no explicit role in the economic considerations of officials and private employers except as a threat to European men's productivity.<sup>55</sup>

The judiciary's failure to crack down on sexual offences and its neglect of women's sexual integrity motivated men to enforce intimacy through violence. Tellingly, before sexually assaulting Catrina Joseph, the miner William Jenkins allegedly said, 'I will show you I will do as I like, the Magistrate will be able to do nothing to me.'<sup>56</sup> The abject, violent behaviour of male labourers was further radicalized by narcotic consumption and shaped by a culture of extreme masculinity favouring physical strength and aggression (Brown 2019: 154–5; Breckenridge 1998: 670; Van Onselen 2019: 98, 101). As in other industrial mines of (Southern) Africa, labourers in Namaqualand coped with the harsh and dangerous realities of mining by fighting among themselves and turning to excessive drinking. As the criminal records reveal, Namaqualand's magistracy frequently tried cases in which mine labourers in particular used violence to settle disputes over debts, goods, social conduct, work, women and race, often in an intoxicated state. Revealingly, Tryn Dirk stressed that the miner who had raped her near Springbok in 1898 had been drunk, overtly aggressive, and saying that 'he would hammer people',<sup>57</sup> thus using symbolic vocabulary that miners adopted to frame the violence they experienced at their workplace (Breckenridge 1998: 674).

Such an 'allure of violence' (Breckenridge 1998) also drove miners to interfere with the administration of justice. While some men forcibly hindered the colonial police in the execution of its duty,<sup>58</sup> others shielded each other before the court and intimidated witnesses. In 1884, for instance, the Cornish men who had raped and killed Sarah Cloete brought the criminal investigation against them to a halt by screening each other 'by some uniform story'.<sup>59</sup> A correspondent of the *Cape Argus*

<sup>54</sup> Letter from W. C. Scully to Giddy, 15 November 1891, AG 2948, WCARS, Cape Town.

<sup>55</sup> Letter from W. C. Scully to under secretary for native affairs, 11 December 1891, 1/SBK 5/1/11, WCARS, Cape Town.

<sup>56</sup> C. Joseph, affidavit, 23 November 1891.

<sup>57</sup> T. Dirk, affidavit, examination before the resident magistrate, Springbok, 25 July 1898, *Queen v Cloete*, AG 3049, no. 7, WCARS, Cape Town.

<sup>58</sup> Letter from W. C. Scully to under colonial secretary, 7 December 1891, 1/SBK 5/2/7, WCARS, Cape Town.

<sup>59</sup> Letter from J. T. Eustace to secretary to the law department, 26 March 1884, 1/SBK 5/2/4, WCARS, Cape Town.

also predicted that the miners would start pressuring witnesses, thus 'further defeating the ends of justice, in the event of a further inquiry'.<sup>60</sup>

In the two decades leading up to the South African War, the subjection of women to violently enforced intimacy thus continued without much interruption. Ultimately, this worked to sustain relations of colonial dependency and to reinforce gendered and racial hierarchies in Namaqualand's copper-mining district after the phase of military conquest. Through labour, local women had helped to mitigate the economic impact of settler colonialism and industrial mining on their production units and communities and had unsettled gendered household structures. However, the injuries they sustained (often fatal) ended their pursuit of secure livelihoods and more autonomy in domestic affairs.

### The case of Anna Carolus

The attempted rape of Anna Carolus in 1893 by a Cornish miner provides deeper empirical insights into the dynamics of labour, intimacy and sexual violence. In early November 1893, Anna Carolus went to a fountain outside Springbok village to wash clothes for her clients. At the fountain, she encountered other laundry workers, convicts under the supervision of a police constable filling the jail's water cart, and a miner from Cornwall named William Menhenott, her tormentor.<sup>61</sup> Details of Anna Carolus's early life are, unfortunately, missing. However, being categorized as Baster by colonial officials, it can be assumed that she was part of the local communities. From the record of a civil lawsuit Carolus filed in 1884, we learn that she had lived in Springbok and washed laundry professionally in the decade leading up to the rape. The file also discloses that Anna Carolus employed a female servant, indicating a decent socio-economic position.<sup>62</sup> Apparently, her work had allowed her to leave the immediate realm of increasingly male-dominated Baster households. The affidavit she gave in 1893 to bring her tormentor to justice further reveals that she had ended several relationships with men on her own accord but without compromising her status. As she claimed, Carolus even lived independently for some time.<sup>63</sup>

Retaining good relations with Springbok residents and a respectable character in the eyes of colonial society remained crucial to selling her labour and maintaining the life she had built. With the 1884 civil lawsuit, Anna Carolus tried to clear herself from the accusations of the chief constable's wife that she had been involved in a theft. To the court, she made abundantly clear what was at stake: her laundry work. None of her clients had ever questioned her reliability. Nevertheless, she feared this would now change. 'I feel the imputation cast on my character very much,' Carolus told the court. 'I think that unless I am cleared to-day[,] I will lose the washing & ironing I have at present to do.'<sup>64</sup> At the same time, close and frequent contact with potential clients was of vital importance for the laundry businesses of local women such as Anna

<sup>60</sup> 'Outrage at Springbok', *Cape Argus*, 22 March 1884.

<sup>61</sup> See the evidence collected in *Queen v Menhenott* (1893), criminal record, 1/SBK 1/1/8, no. 291, WCARS, Cape Town.

<sup>62</sup> Anna Carolus, affidavit, resident magistrate's court, Springbok, 17 July 1884, *Queen v Warin*, 1/SBK 2/1/3, no. 55, WCARS, Cape Town.

<sup>63</sup> A. Carolus, affidavit, 7 November 1893.

<sup>64</sup> A. Carolus, affidavit, 17 July 1884.

Carolus. Hoping to secure more jobs, several years before the attack, Carolus had visited her tormentor's house on two occasions to consult with his wife over dress samples.<sup>65</sup>

Crucially, however, the proximity to men and the need to retain a respectable reputation made local women vulnerable to unwanted sexual advances and abuse. At the fountain, Carolus was exposed to Menhenott's gaze and intrusive advances. Moreover, the Cornishman took advantage of Carolus's professional capacity and her dependency on reputation and clientele. As he had torn his trousers in the buttocks area, the miner induced Anna Carolus not only to mend them but – under the moral pressure of not doing so in public – to follow him into a building, close to the fountain but out of bystanders' sight.<sup>66</sup>

The sexual violence Anna Carolus suffered at the hands of the miner threatened to put an end to the relatively independent socio-economic position she had carved out for herself. Being self-employed, Carolus was heavily reliant on her bodily and mental health to wash, mend and iron clothes, despite the assistance she received from her servant. As Carolus testified before the court, it was particularly a bite wound on her hand, inflicted by Menhenott, that was the cause of much distress: 'I have suffered much pain, and I have not been able to use it [the hand] since.' Moreover, she refrained from immediately reporting the matter to the magistrate, first collecting the clothes she had hung out to dry at the fountain out of fear of losing not only them but also clients and income.<sup>67</sup> However, Carolus thus risked being discredited by the colonial judiciary, which counted time that passed between sexual assaults and women's complaints in favour of perpetrators.

Eventually, Anna Carolus's complaint was partially successful. The defence tried to discredit Carolus by accusing her of promiscuity and alcoholism. Nevertheless, Namaqualand's then-resident magistrate Henry McArthur Blakeway pronounced William Menhenott guilty of 'assault with intent to commit rape'. He sentenced him to pay a fine of £25, roughly two months' wages (CPP 1899: 17), or to submit to six months' imprisonment with hard labour.<sup>68</sup> Carolus's apparent knowledge of the Cape's criminal law and court procedures played a crucial role. In excruciating detail, she recounted how she resisted the man's intrusive behaviour and fiercely fought the rape. Moreover, she made the wise decision to go through the humiliating process of showing her bodily marks to the women at the fountain, the district surgeon and the court, as long as they were still visible.<sup>69</sup>

However, there is good reason to believe that the sentence did not alter Menhenott's violent behaviour or that of other (white) miners. The Cornish man's conviction was delayed by several months. Although the hearings began on 7 November, no judgment was pronounced until 19 December.<sup>70</sup> It then took another month and a half for the magistrate's ruling to come into effect. After Menhenott's trial, the case file was mislaid by Namaqualand's court messenger.<sup>71</sup> Consequently, the

<sup>65</sup> A. Carolus, affidavit, 7 November 1893.

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>68</sup> See the verdict in *Queen v Menhenott* (1893).

<sup>69</sup> A. Carolus, affidavit, 7 November 1893.

<sup>70</sup> *Queen v Menhenott* (1893).

<sup>71</sup> Circular from F. Schaw, 5 February 1893, 1/SBK 1/1/8, no. 291, WCARS, Cape Town.



evidence and the magistrate's sentence were not transmitted to Cape Town for review by the attorney general before 6 February 1894.<sup>72</sup> The judicial authorities eventually certified the conviction, but not without casting doubt over the truthfulness of the evidence and the magistrate's decision.<sup>73</sup> During all this time, William Menhenott walked free. Acquaintances of his (Cornishmen among them) deposited the required £50 as bail.<sup>74</sup> As he had a support network of local colonizers with considerable financial means to fall back on, it is also likely that the miner had no trouble paying the financial penalty the magistrate had sentenced him to.

Anna Carolus could continue her laundry work, but both the assault and the delay of the judicial procedures left deep traces. Approximately two months after the attack, the police arrested her because she was found drunk in front of one of Springbok's canteens, verbally assaulting one of the women who had been with her at the fountain on that fateful day in November.<sup>75</sup> According to Yvette Abrahams, such behaviour can be read as a symptom of self-hatred from which rape survivors commonly suffer (Abrahams 1996: 21). There also appears to have been a connection between Carolus's despair and the obstruction of justice; the incident occurred only a few days after Menhenott had been pronounced guilty but was still at large.

## Conclusion

The story of Anna Carolus illustrates that labouring in the setting of Namaqualand's copper district allowed local women to live a relatively autonomous existence outside patriarchal control and to cope with the mounting economic pressures of industrial mining and settler colonization. Tragically, however, Carolus's case also shows that it was hardly possible for women like herself to work towards an autonomous existence without being subjected to sexual violence. While the north-western Cape entered a period of relative peace with the defeat of !Kora forces in 1879, African women continued to suffer from violence. Namaqualand's copper-mining district not only provided unique working opportunities to women but – given its characteristics – also exposed them to unwanted attention and enforced emotional closeness by male labourers in the form of sexual violence. The mental and bodily injuries they sustained due to men's attacks impacted their capacity to work, impeding their pursuits for secure livelihoods and autonomy in domestic affairs, if not ending them altogether. The indifference of Cape officials and the public towards ending African women's subjection to sexual abuse further sustained this process. Whereas outside interventions commonly impacted intimate relations in colonial and postcolonial Africa, in the case of Namaqualand, judicial and public interference in enforced intimacy remained half-hearted, irregular and ineffective. Consequently, men could deploy violence without much restraint, while women's legal actions often remained without consequence. In the two decades leading up to the South African War, women's efforts to work against the socio-economic changes imposed on them, their production units and their communities were thus often futile. Ultimately, in the

<sup>72</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>73</sup> See the supreme court's remarks in *ibid.*

<sup>74</sup> See the bail bonds in *Queen v Menhenott* (1893).

<sup>75</sup> J. July, affidavit, resident magistrate's court, Springbok, 26 December 1893, *Queen v Carolus*, 1/SBK 1/1/8, no. 339, WCARS, Cape Town.

copper-mining district, the unique intertwining of labour, intimacy and sexual violence reinforced gendered and racial power asymmetries and the colonial order more broadly. Following the military conquest of earlier decades, in these parts of the northern Cape, patriarchal social norms, exploitation and racial hierarchies on which colonial rule rested continued to be enforced by violence.

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