

**Presidential address delivered at the Biennial Conference
(History Wars, Wars in History & other Southern African
Histories) of the
Historical Association of South Africa conference, Durban, 26-28
June 2014 , University of KwaZulu-Natal, 26-28 June 2014**

**Warring societies? Towards a community of historians
HASA and SAHS (1956–2014)**

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Introduction

Exactly a year ago almost to the day, many of us were gathered together in Gaborone for the first SAHS conference beyond the borders of South Africa.¹ It marked the conference that was to physically validate the decision taken some eight years earlier to change the name of the South African Historical Society to the Southern African Historical Society. We therefore crossed over the border and travelled 120 km into Botswana.² It was at the opening of this conference in June 2013 that the idea – or perhaps more accurately the reaction – for this paper was prompted. In an address made by one of the keynote speakers, a couple of issues related to the two oldest historical organisations were touched upon referring to, if not accentuating, the very different natures of the origin and profile of these organisations. Although it was concluded that the “relationship between the two organizations is [now] an amicable one and their philosophies are far closer than they once were”,³ the schism between the two remains palpable in certain arenas and the idea of a history of distinct linguistic division has been perpetuated.

Only a fortnight ago a former postgraduate student of mine, now enrolled at another university for further study in a direction in which they specialise and in close proximity to her primary sources, asked her lecturers whether or not they would be attending this HASA conference in Durban, only to receive a stern retort to the effect that they “did not do HASA conferences”.⁴ This attitude is also sometimes prevalent among international scholars where the “great divide” has been perpetuated long after its apparent bridging. I therefore decided that it was high time that this issue should be addressed and explained – particularly to our younger fellow historians who are often gullible to the pronouncements or pontifications of their older mentors. I do not however purport to present some form of a Von Rankean “truth”, nor a “real story” about these two organisations, but rather wish to highlight what the archival record and a number of academic articles already indicate. I wish to address this apparent divide in popular consciousness and also indicate how crucial it is for the two organisations to

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1. Southern African Historical Society, 24th Biennial Conference, “All for One and One for All”, University of Botswana, Gaborone, 27–29 June 2013.
2. For various administrative, bibliographical and technical reasons the name of the journal, *The South African Historical Journal*, remained the same.
3. J. Carruthers, “To Rescue the Past from the Nation”, Keynote address presented at 24th Biennial Conference of the Southern African Historical Society, University of Botswana, 27–29 June 2013.
4. Anonymous, June 2014.

continue to co-exist and shoulder both the highs and lows of being in this discipline together as we move into the twenty-first century.

Belonging to an organised discipline

The first attempt to create a historical society in South Africa took place in the early twentieth century.⁵ This was very much in line with how other professional historical organisations developed in both the West and the East.⁶ Once History was recognised as an independent academic discipline at university level the need or desire for an organisation of professional historians arose.⁷ In fact it has been argued that the emergence of these academic discipline-related organisations was an “important symbol of the maturation and modernization of academia”⁸ and was regarded as one of the elements of the “professionalization of the discipline”.⁹ In the mid nineteenth-century West, the first such organisations emerged in Germany (1859), France (1834) and England (1868) and were often affiliated to newly established university history departments or linked to the establishment of academic journals. The largest and most active historical association in the world, the American Historical Association (AHA), was founded in 1884 and in line with others its prime intention was the promotion of the study of history, the teaching of the subject and the collection of historical materials.¹⁰ In 1889 it was granted a congressional charter “for the promotion of historical studies, the collection and preservation of historical manuscripts, and for kindred purposes in the interest of American history, and of history in America”.¹¹

In the East, the first organisations specialising in History emerged at the turn of the twentieth century when the “modern academic model for independent disciplines became popular”.¹² One of the first specialised historical organisations to appear in 1908 was the Guizhou Military Elementary School Historical Research Association. Interestingly it was affiliated with a revolutionary faction and its primary activity was to create “contact networks among students” and spread the “ideology of nationalist revolution via lectures on history”.¹³ Needless to say the Qing dynasty banned it after only two lectures. In contrast, another early Chinese historical organisation, founded in 1908, was the Hubei Historical Society. It also attained official permission and was formally registered and had members emanating from the “imperial civil service, notable scholars, school instructors of all levels and members of the provincial legislature”.¹⁴ As academic reconstruction gained momentum in China after 1912, numerous universities established historical associations to “unite people of like minds in the study of history”.¹⁵

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5. C. Saunders and B. le Cordeur, “The South African Historical Society and its Antecedents”, *South African Historical Journal*, 18, November 1988, p 1.
 6. R.B. Townsend, *History’s Babel: Scholarship, Professionalization, and the Historical Enterprise in the United States, 1880–1940* (University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 2013), p 14.
 7. J.S. Bergh, “Historiese Verenigings en Tyskrifte in Suid-Afrika: Verlede, Hede en Toekoms”, *Historia*, 38, 2, November 1993, p 33.
 8. F. Hu, “The Rise and Operation of Modern Chinese Historical Associations”, *Chinese Studies in History*, Winter 2011/Spring 2012, 45, 2/3, p 70.
 9. Townsend, *History’s Babel*, p 14.
 10. B.C. Shafer (ed.), *Historical Study in the West* (Appleton-Century-Crofts, New York, 1968), p 22.
 11. <http://www.historians.org/about-aha-and-membership> accessed June 2014.
 12. Hu, “The Rise and Operation of Modern Chinese Historical Associations”, p 71.
 13. Hu, “The Rise and Operation of Modern Chinese Historical Associations”, pp 71–72.
 14. Hu, “The Rise and Operation of Modern Chinese Historical Associations”, p 73.
 15. Hu, “The Rise and Operation of Modern Chinese Historical Associations”, p 73.

In a totally different context, Keith Breckenridge and Simon Szreter have claimed that

Publicly affirming membership of a defined group typically establishes some form of obligation towards the other members and the shared authority structure of the group; and reciprocally it is also perceived by the individuals to offer them some valued benefits (non-exclusion, at the least).¹⁶

They further contend that the “nature of the mix of obligations and benefits engenders various reasons why certain rules about membership and participation usually arise”, but also point out that these are subject to change.¹⁷ They conclude that:

[w]hile there has been much historical study of the processes and consequences of exclusion, inclusion also needs to be problematized by historical research into the agencies involved and the diversity of forms that result.¹⁸

Within the context of a divided and discriminatory twentieth-century South African past, much of the history writing over the past half dozen decades has indeed been very much absorbed in focusing on the “excluded”, the marginalised and those who were relegated to the periphery of the state. In fact this dimension still persists as we strive to fill the void in our historical narrative. It is however to the issue of “inclusion” which Breckenridge and Szreter allude to that this paper turns. Who were the individuals who were permitted to be included, perhaps even embraced in the various historical organisations? Why were distinct lines being drawn between those who could belong and those who could not, as well as those who did not want to belong?

Organising to 1956

Although the origin of universities in South Africa dates back to 1858,¹⁹ the introduction of History as an independent discipline only began to emerge at the turn of the twentieth century. In 1898 and 1901 respectively, Victoria College (later the University of Stellenbosch) and the South African College (later University of Cape Town) introduced History as a separate division which led to the founding of “chairs” in History in 1904 and 1903.²⁰ Not unlike their Western and Eastern counterparts, it was in the wake of this development that the first South African historical organisation was founded. According to meticulous research done by Christopher Saunders and Basil le Cordeur, the first South African Historical Society (SAHS) was established in 1913 after a meeting held in Pietermaritzburg. Its founder members comprised professors from these relatively recently established university colleges, including Rhodes University College in Grahamstown, the University of Cape Town (UCT) and Grey College in Bloemfontein, along with an amateur historian from Pietermaritzburg. The purpose was “for the encouragement and promotion of the study of South African history”

16. K. Breckenridge and S. Szreter (eds), *Registration and Recognition: Documenting the Person in History* (Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2012), p 17.

17. Breckenridge and Szreter (eds), *Registration and Recognition*, p 17.

18. Breckenridge and Szreter (eds), *Registration and Recognition*, p 17.

19. H. Phillips, “A Caledonian College in Cape Town and Beyond: An Investigation into the Foundation(s) of the South African University System”, *South African Journal of Higher Education*, 17, 3, 2003.

20. F.A. van Jaarsveld, *’n Inleiding tot die Studie van Geskiedenis* (Kaapstad, Nasou Beperk, n.d.), p 7.

and its five-fold aims and objectives included the preservation of historic buildings and sites; collection and archiving of documents; interviewing of both white and black elderly people (oral history in the making); historical research and publication; and finally the “further encouragement of the study of South African history in our Schools and Colleges”.²¹

At this particular historic moment in time, Professors George Cory and George McCall Theal were both of the opinion that history was a vehicle for the promotion of “English-Afrikaner reconciliation in the new united South Africa”.²² Although this first historical organisation (SAHS) did not survive beyond the First World War, it had initiated, albeit limited, historical awareness across the country and brought together academic historians for intermittent meetings from the fledgling university colleges of Cape Town, Bloemfontein, Rhodes, Stellenbosch and Pretoria.²³

Before the next attempt at founding a historical society occurred in the interbellum years, one of the oldest surviving historical fraternities was established – the Van Riebeeck Society (VRS). Not unlike the SAHS, this had also emerged from a movement that aligned itself with attempts to “forge a common identity which would overcome the divisions between Afrikaners and English-speaking South Africans”.²⁴ A librarian from the South African Public Library, A.C.G. Lloyd, and John X. Merriman, former prime minister of the Cape Colony and trustee of the library were the founder members.²⁵ Having begun under the auspices of the library, in 1918 it was inaugurated as the “Van Riebeeck Society for the Publication of South African Historical Documents” with the purpose of “making primary sources available in a readable and enjoyable form to anyone interested in Southern²⁶ African history”.²⁷ Since its inception, it has continued to publish a volume virtually every year and is entirely dependent on its members’ subscriptions for its survival.²⁸

The next attempt at founding a historical society occurred prior to the outbreak of the Second World War, but similar to its predecessor, also did not survive it. Although sometimes referred to as the South African Historical Society, its name was officially recorded in 1937 as the “Historical Society of South Africa” (HSSA) and it aimed to foster the “study of South African history” and “to encourage the publication of a South African Historical Magazine”.²⁹ Ms M.K. Jeffreys of the Cape Archives was the honorary secretary, and although it boasted a membership of over 100 and hosted popular monthly excursions, it was not supported by the History Department at the University of UCT, nor did it manage to produce a journal.³⁰

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21. Saunders and Le Cordeur, “The South African Historical Society and its Antecedents”, p 1.
 22. Saunders and Le Cordeur, “The South African Historical Society and its Antecedents”, p 7.
 23. Saunders and Le Cordeur, “The South African Historical Society and its Antecedents”, pp 3, 7.
 24. <http://www.vanriebeeksociety.co.za/home.htm> Accessed June 2014.
 25. <http://www.vanriebeeksociety.co.za/home.htm> Accessed June 2014.
 26. In a similar vein as the SAHS, it appears that the “south” was replaced by “southern” at a later stage.
 27. <http://www.vanriebeeksociety.co.za/home.htm> Accessed June 2014.
 28. <http://www.vanriebeeksociety.co.za/home.htm> Accessed June 2014.
 29. Saunders and Le Cordeur, “The South African Historical Society and its Antecedents”, p 7.
 30. Saunders and Le Cordeur, “The South African Historical Society and its Antecedents”, pp 7–8.

At about the same time, another attempt at organising within the historical fraternity emerged – this time with the intention of launching the first scholarly historical journal. However, in stark contrast to the hitherto English-Afrikaans conciliatory tone of the earlier attempts, this was an explicitly Afrikaner nationalistic endeavour which emerged from the intensified historical consciousness that coincided with the centenary celebrations of the Great Trek.³¹ Under the editorship of Prof Izak Bosman of the University of Pretoria (UP), a journal entitled *Historiese Studies* was founded that was unashamedly intent on promoting the study of *Vaderlandsegeskiedenis* (history of the fatherland, or patriotic-nationalistic Afrikaner history).³² The journal lasted a mere decade (1939–1949) and lost momentum as the 1950s approached and *Vaderlandsegeskiedenis* appeared to lose its grip on the Afrikaner nation and in particular the younger generation.³³

It was in the context and as a result of this loss of interest in *Vaderlandsegeskiedenis* at school level that the Historiese Genootskap van Suid-Afrika (HGSA) was to emerge. Described as extremely perturbed and equally enthusiastic about history, a school inspector, Dr J.J. van Tonder, took up the cause to address the serious shortcomings within the teaching of school history as well as the declining enrolments among school children, particularly for matric.³⁴ In 1954 he facilitated two meetings in Boksburg each of which were attended by over 300 history teachers. As a result of this interest, as well as various other problems that were raised, in 1955 Van Tonder took the matter up with three members of the Department of History at UP – Professor A.N. Pelzer, Dr F.J. du Toit Spies and Dr T.S. van Rooyen. Thereafter he organised a meeting in the Pretoria town hall on 11 February 1956 to discuss the matter further and drew a crowd of over 400 people. It was overtly apparent that the nationalistic patriotic dimension of the teaching of the subject as *Vaderlandsegeskiedenis* was at the heart of the matter. History was seen to encourage a “*liefde vir ons eie land*” (a love for our own country) and an “*egte nasie-trots*” (genuine pride in the nation). Moreover, history was only to be taught by a “*egte patriot*” (genuine patriot).³⁵ On the recommendation of Prof. Pelzer it was decided that a historical organisation should be established and on 24 March 1956 the founding meeting of the Historical Association of South Africa (HASA) was held at the University of Pretoria.³⁶ Dr J.J. van Tonder was chosen as the first chairperson of HASA, a position which he retained for the following two decades.³⁷ It was apparent that the spirit of these various developments was aligned with the National Party *nasie-bou* (nation building) politics of the day.

In its constitution the HASA resolved to promote the study of history – and specifically South African history – among “high school pupils, university students,

31. A. Grundlingh and H. Sapire, “From Feverish Festival to Repetitive Ritual? The Changing Fortunes of Great Trek Mythology in an Industrialising South Africa, 1938–1988”, *South African Historical Journal*, 21, November 1989, p 19.

32. F.A. van Jaarsveld, “Dr J.J. van Tonder: Stigter van die Historiese Genootskap van Suid-Afrika”, *Historia*, 21/2, September 1976, p 91; P.H. Kapp, “n Kwarteeu Oud: Die Historiese Genootskap van Suid-Afrika, 1956–1981”, *Historia*, 25, September 1980, p 49; Van Jaarsveld, “Dr J.J. van Tonder”, p 91.

33. Kapp, “n Kwarteeu Oud”, p 49. See also F.A. van Jaarsveld, “Die Historikus in die Samelewing”, *South African Historical Journal*, 3, November 1971, pp 26–27.

34. Van Jaarsveld, “Dr J.J. van Tonder”, p 95.

35. Kapp, “n Kwarteeu Oud”, p 50.

36. Anon., “Tien Jaar Historiese Genootskap”, *Historia*, December 1965 p 224; Bergh, “Historiese Verenigings en Tyskrifte in Suid-Afrika”, p 38.

37. Bergh, “Historiese Verenigings en Tyskrifte in Suid-Afrika”, p 38.

and the general public".³⁸ This was to be achieved by producing a historical journal, convening conferences, forming study groups and supporting archive services and historical museums.³⁹ The membership of HASA also reflected on this rather more open and inclusive approach to the discipline.⁴⁰ This broad ambit was very much in line with the inclusive nature of societies established in America and elsewhere, such as the AHA, which was established for "the promotion of historical studies, the collection and preservation of historical manuscripts and for kindred purposes in the interest of ... history".⁴¹ Its membership also "brings together historians from all specializations and professions, embracing their breadth, variety, and ever changing activity".⁴²

The Historical Association's journal, *Historia*, was to be as all-encompassing as possible to accommodate academia, both primary and high schools as well as the layperson. Johan Bergh posits that the impracticality of this approach probably led directly to the birth of *Historia Junior* which was adapted to accommodate the teaching of history at primary and high school and became a forum for contributions for school children.⁴³ This in turn eventually allowed *Historia* to be more research focused and to publish "*wetenskaplike*" (scientific) articles.⁴⁴ Van Tonder's obsession with and commitment to school history was evident in the fact that at one stage *Historia Junior* had a subscription base of some 9 000 as opposed to the 1 500 who subscribed to *Historia*.⁴⁵

Although he did not succeed with his lobby to have history approved as a compulsory matric school subject or manage to halt the decline in the number of school children taking the subject, Van Tonder was able to rescue history from being sidelined as an independent subject. Not unlike the current situation,⁴⁶ in 1955 there had been a move to do away with history as an independent subject in the secondary phase and relegate it to a combined Social Science package. By the late 1960s this had been rectified.⁴⁷

Despite its initial federal-type structure, relatively open constitution and bilingual language parity,⁴⁸ in these first decades HASA was dominated by the Transvaal, the school teaching fraternity, Afrikaans and Van Tonder himself. This led to estrangement and even hostility from other provinces, Afrikaans and English-speakers and a range of academics across the country. Added to this was the highly publicised English and Afrikaans textbook debate of the late 1950s and early 1960s and the concomitant criticism regarding the presentation of certain aspects of history at Afrikaans and English schools. This included an English

38. Saunders and Le Cordeur, "The South African Historical Society and its Antecedents", p 8.

39. Kapp, "'n Kwarteeu Oud", p 51.

40. Historical Association of South Africa, "Constitution", 2011, pp 1–2.

41. Townsend, *History's Babel*, p 7.

42. <http://www.historians.org/about-aha-and-membership> Accessed June 2014.

43. Bergh, "Historiese Verenigings en Tyskrifte in Suid-Afrika", pp 38–39.

44. Van Jaarsveld, "Dr J.J. van Tonder", p 91.

45. Kapp, "'n Kwarteeu Oud", p 54.

46. <http://www.education.gov.za> Basic Education, National Curriculum Statement, CAPS, Social Sciences, p 7, Accessed June 2014.

47. Kapp, "'n Kwarteeu Oud", p 56.

48. In the initial HASA constitution membership was apparently not limited to whites, however whether this impacted on membership is not overtly apparent. See Kapp, "'n Kwarteeu Oud", p 52; P.H. Kapp, "Sinvol of Sinister? Die Historiese Genootskap van Suid-Afrika Vyftig Jaar Oud", *Historia*, 51, November 2006, p 14.

media field day where Afrikaans writers and teachers were accused of “sinister motives” and “nationalistic propaganda”.⁴⁹

Organising from 1965

It was in the midst of this debacle that the South African Historical Society (SAHS) was established. Increasingly more and more influential academic historians – including both English and Afrikaans speakers – began to distance themselves from HASA which was becoming subsumed by school matters. Influential historians who withdrew from the activities included J.J. Oberholster of the then University of the Orange Free State (UOFS) and C.F.J. Muller of the University of South Africa (Unisa). They began to contemplate a movement in which only professional historians could participate so that there could be an exclusive focus on research.⁵⁰ This founding rationale was to be embodied in the SAHS constitution where membership is exclusively for “any person who is active in the field of history and who holds, or is obtaining, a post-graduate qualification in history or a related discipline”. In addition, at the discretion of the Council, “membership can be granted to an applicant who does not have a post-graduate qualification but is in full-time professional employment as an archivist, historian, librarian, heritage consultant or museologist”.⁵¹ From as early as 1961 the first feelers were put out to consider such a move and eventually the Department of History at the then University of the Orange Free State (now UFS) in collaboration with Unisa, Prof. E. Axelson of UCT and Prof. D.J. Kotzé of the University of Stellenbosch, took the initiative to send an invitation to historians at all the universities to participate in a meeting in Bloemfontein. The purpose of this meeting would be the consideration of forming such an organisation.⁵²

It is this latter trite point that casts a very different, and one might add, significant spin on what has become “organisational myth” included in papers, articles, other accounts and assumptions as well as popular acceptance about the foundation of the SAHS across a wide spectrum of historians. Put more bluntly, one can assert that the great divide or schism between the Association (HASA) and the Society (SAHS) is partly founded on an erroneous assumption, one which I believe needs to be de-mythologised.

Yes, the SAHS was “founded in 1965”; yes it was at “the height of apartheid”; yes it was partly launched by a “group ... of historians ... who were reluctant to ally themselves to the older *Historiese Genootskap van Suid-Afrika* / Historical Association of South Africa; and yes, “[b]roadly speaking, its purpose was to give voice to alternative interpretations of the nation’s history that many professionals believed the *Genootskap* did not reflect”. But, and this is the big “but”, it was not “launched by a group of mainly English-speaking historians at liberal universities who were reluctant to ally themselves to the older *Historiese Genootskap van Suid-Afrika* / Historical Association of South Africa”.⁵³ On 5 February 1965 a total of 37 historians met in Bloemfontein and on a suggestion

49. Kapp, “n Kwarteeu Oud”, p 52.

50. Kapp, “Sinvol of Sinister?” p 18.

51. Southern African Historical Society, “Constitution”, 2009, p 1.

52. National Archives: F.A. van Jaarsveld Collection, volume 100; Kapp, “Sinvol of Sinister?”, p 18.

53. Carruthers, “To Rescue the Past from the Nation”; J. Carruthers, *The Changing Shape and Scope of Southern African Historical Studies*, *South African Historical Journal*, 62, 2, June 2010, pp 385–395.

made by Kotzé of the University of Stellenbosch the SAHS was established. According to the archival record these 37 historians comprised 31 Afrikaans speakers and only 6 English speakers.⁵⁴

One may then ask: can one speak of “... the ideological divisions among academic historians” as being “palpable”?⁵⁵ That there were indeed serious misgivings about the focus and activities of HASA is paramount to the conception and birth of SAHS, is evident. Under the leadership of Van Tonder HASA had become focused on school teaching, and was dominated by Transvaal teachers. It was a (conservative) Afrikaans organisation, obsessed with *volksgeskiedenis* and blatant in its bolstering of National Party ideologies. Furthermore it had a partisan journal that was not internationally – or nationally – recognised.⁵⁶ The “step” that the SAHS took “away from the Genootskap”⁵⁷ was for a society that would accommodate professional historians; have a specific academic research focus; accommodate both English and Afrikaans speakers; accomplish closer unity and communication; and organise appropriate academic conferences.⁵⁸ It is at this point of the narrative that clarity needs to be provided because this casts a very different light on the nature of the “cause” of the so-called “warring societies”.

After 1976, Van Tonder was succeeded by George Chadwick, an English teacher from Natal as chair of HASA for a very brief interlude of a year.⁵⁹ Thereafter, Floors van Jaarsveld, who had recently taken over as editor of *Historia* also became the chair of HASA at a time in his career when he was regarded as highly contentious – both in Pretoria circles as well as among many Afrikaners.⁶⁰ Under his leadership (1978–1985), and that of his successor, Johan Bergh (1985–2011) the Association gradually reinvented itself, moving away from the school teacher-centred focus to become an internationally accepted organisation with an accredited status and an IBSS listing. Moreover, to the disdain of Van Tonder who deplored the establishment of SAHS as a “*teruslag en teenvoeter*”⁶¹ (drawback and counter-opposition) many of the members of the former HASA joined SAHS.

Over the years many academics retained their membership or became members of both organisations. So much so, that there came a time when the chairperson of HASA, Johan Bergh, was simultaneously also the president of the SAHS, and there were members of the HASA executive who also served as presidents of SAHS.⁶² This is surely tangible evidence that the two organisations were no longer “warring societies” – and the same can be said of the broader South African historical fraternity.

54. National Archives: F.A. van Jaarsveld Collection, volume 100; Kapp, “Sinvol of Sinister?”, p 18.

55. Carruthers, “To Rescue the Past from the Nation”.

56. Bergh, “Historiese Verenigings en Tyskrifte in Suid-Afrika”, p 40.

57. Carruthers, “To Rescue the Past from the Nation”. It heralded an explicitly new relationship among historians.

58. Bergh, “Historiese Verenigings en Tyskrifte in Suid-Afrika”, pp 38-39.

59. Kapp, “Sinvol of Sinister?”, p 14.

60. See F.A. Mouton, *History, Historians and Afrikaner Nationalism: Essays on the History Department of the University of Pretoria 1909–1985* (Kleio, Vanderbijlpark, 2007), chapter 6.

61. Kapp, “Sinvol of Sinister?”, p 19.

62. Johan Bergh was chair and president, while others include E.L.P. Stals, D.J. van Zyl and L. Barnard. See Kapp, “Sinvol of Sinister?”, p 25.

Thus, what Saunders and le Cordeur refer to as the “antecedents” of the SAHS (pre-1965),⁶³ were essentially organisational attempts over a period of half a century to try to either bridge or bolster the great chasm between the English and Afrikaans speakers in the profession. This is a divide that had its antecedents in the Anglo-Boer War (South African War) at the turn of the previous century, and one which appears, in certain quarters, to persist even today.

Divided we stand?

While professional history in South Africa has undergone numerous changes,⁶⁴ many of the issues of concern have remained the same. A brief perusal of the presidential addresses and themes of the conferences held alternately by HASA and SAHS over the past half century, as well as the editorials of the two respective journals, reveal how much the two societies have drawn closer and how their concerns converge and overlap.

In 1977, in his SAHS presidential address Rodney Davenport implored historians “as individuals engaged in a common enterprise, and heirs in different senses of a common experience” to “reflect [together] on the human and inhuman story which flows through the veins of us all”.⁶⁵ In 1984 E.L.P. Stals addressed the question of division in his SAHS presidential address, cautioning historians to reflect on the damage that internal strife was creating. But he added that to strive intentionally for uniformity would be just as fatal as having no basis for communication.⁶⁶ In 1993, as chair of HASA and writing about the past, present and future of South African societies and journals, Johan Bergh reiterated the point made by the AHA that “if we do not stand behind the cause of history ... no one else will do so”.⁶⁷ In 1995, Paul Maylam’s SAHS presidential address also pointed to the nature of the divisions within the discipline and called for historians to synergise their efforts to address these issues.⁶⁸ In a 2008 editorial marking the 60th issue of the South African Historical Society, Cynthia Kros also made this point apparent, reiterating many of the weaknesses of South African history that former SAHS presidents had raised in previous years.⁶⁹ And in 2010 in her SAHS presidential address Jane Carruthers alluded to these problems which “will be raised time and again in decades to come as they have in decades past”.⁷⁰ Three of the themes of the more recent conferences held by HASA and SAHS – “Belonging and Not Belonging”,⁷¹ “Breaking Boundaries, Blurring Boundaries”⁷²

63. Saunders and Le Cordeur, “The South African Historical Society and its Antecedents”.

64. Carruthers, “The Changing Shape and Scope”, p 384.

65. R. Davenport, “The Tiger in the Grass”, *South African Historical Journal*, 9, November 1977, p 12.

66. “Om eenvormigheid doelbewus na te streef sal ewe fatal wees as om geen basis vir kommunikasie te hê nie”, E.L.P. Stals, “Ewewig”, *South African Historical Journal*, 16, November, 1984, pp 1–2.

67. Bergh, “Historiese Verenigings en Tyskrifte in Suid-Afrika”, p 49.

68. P. Maylam, “Tensions within the Practice of History”, *South African Historical Journal*, 33, November 1995, pp 3–11.

69. C. Kros, “Editorial on the Occasion of the 60th Issue of the *South African Historical Journal*”, *South African Historical Journal*, 60, 1, 2008, pp 3–6.

70. Carruthers, “The Changing Shape and Scope”, p 388.

71. Conference of the Historical Association of South Africa held in 2006 at the University of Pretoria.

72. Conference of the South African Historical Society held in 2009 at the University of South Africa.

and “All for One and One for All”⁷³ hint at the division as well as the need for collaboration.

Thus while debate and deliberation lie at the heart of our discipline, there has been a sense among many of the chairs and presidents of the two South African historical organisations – since very early on – that when it comes to the historical fraternity there needs to be greater convergence in terms of defending or standing up for our discipline. In the light of what has been referred to as a “present-minded society”⁷⁴ we in the historical fraternity need all the help we can get. Moreover, the so-called onslaught on or undermining of history is not something unique to the southern tip of Africa – it is a trend which is apparent in much larger fraternities, such as those in the USA. Leaders of our two respective organisations (HASA and SAHS) have on occasion made comparisons with the AHA and what was happening in the United States.⁷⁵ This was in terms of history as a subject at universities and schools as well as the general profile and status of the discipline. For example, our education system sheepishly followed in the footsteps of the Americas on two occasions – 1955 and again in 2005 – in downgrading history from an independent subject to a mish-mash social science subject. Although beyond the boundaries of academia, this move seriously impacted on the place of history at the tertiary level.⁷⁶ Maylam refers to the countless “problems which aggravate the many other tensions which divide the profession and which ... divide the individual historian, pulling her / him in different directions”.⁷⁷

To conclude, if we are looking for a means to differentiate between the two organisations, perhaps Robert Townsend’s recent monograph published in 2013 has something to offer. Entitled *History’s Babel: Scholarship, Professionalization and the Historical Enterprise in the United States of America*,⁷⁸ he differentiates between, on the one hand, academic history dealing with history as a “discipline”, “an organized body of knowledge”, “the professional historian” – that with which the SAHS membership identifies. On the other, he also refers to “history as a profession”, “an organized form of work” what he also calls the “historical enterprise” in the sense of the broad range of activities where such knowledge about the past is produced and used”. These are the “history workers – the archivists, historians at universities and school teachers” – who essentially align with the HASA membership. Therefore, I believe, there is a place and a need for both organisations. In order to keep the academic fraternity alive and well we need to nurture those interested in our discipline and yet fall outside of the walls of academia. We need them on board.

It is within this context and in the de-mythologising of the two, that I ask you to support both our organisations – HASA and SAHS – and I look forward to converging in Stellenbosch next year for the SAHS conference; and meeting in

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73. Conference of the South African Historical Society held in 2013 at the University of Gaborone.
74. T. Bender, P.M. Katz, C. Palmer and the AHA Committee on Graduate Education, *The Education of Historians for the Twenty-first Century* (University of Illinois Press, Urbana, 2004), p 3.
75. Bergh, “Historiese Verenigings en Tyskrifte in Suid-Afrika”, pp 33–49; Carruthers, ‘The Changing Shape and Scope’, pp 384–393.
76. R. Siebörger, “Don’t Rob our Pupils of Crucial Lessons in History”, *Pretoria News*, 19 June 2008.
77. Maylam, “Tensions within the Practice of History”, p 3.
78. Townsend, *History’s Babel*, p 14.

North-West the year after to exchange ideas about our discipline at the HASA conference.

Abstract

This address proposes to trace the history of the two leading historical societies in South Africa: the Historical Association of South Africa (HASA) and the South African Historical Society (SAHS). Having been founded as two separate organisations just after the mid-twentieth century, they represented historians with distinct – if not apparently opposing – ideological dispositions. This paper seeks to unpack how this initial polarisation has gradually transformed and eventually converged. Echoing the work by Karl Dietrich Erdmann and that of Robert Townsend it also briefly considers “cleavages, debates, and forging of ties among historians” as well as the existing division within the discipline, thus situating these local developments within the context of the broader global historical fraternity.

Keywords: South African historical organizations; Historical Association of South Africa; South African Historical Society; Southern African Historical Society; *Historia*; *South African Historical Journal*.

Opsomming

Hierdie voorlegging wil graag die geskiedenis van die twee voorste historiese verenigings in Suid-Afrika nagaan: die Historiese Genootskap van Suid-Afrika (HGSA) en die Suid-Afrikaanse Historiese Vereniging (SAHV). Gestig as twee afsonderlike organisasies net na die middel van die twintigste eeu, het hulle historici met bepaalde verskillende – indien nie blykbaar teenstrydige – ideologiese gesindhede verteenwoordig. Hierdie artikel het ten doel om uit te pak hoe hierdie aanvanklike polarisasie geleidelik verander en uiteindelik konvergeer het. Aansluitend by die werk van Karl Dietrich Erdmann en dié van Robert Townsend kyk dit ook kortliks na die “gleufies, debatte, en smee van bande onder geskiedkundiges” sowel as die bestaande skeiding binne die dissipline, en plaas dus die plaaslike ontwikkelings binne die konteks van die breër globale historiese gilde.

Slutelwoorde: Suid-Afrikaanse historiese organisasies; Historiese Genootskap van Suid-Afrika; Suid-Afrikaanse Historiese Vereniging; Suider-Afrikaanse Historiese Vereniging; *Historia*; *Suid-Afrikaanse Historiese Joernaal*.