

# From ethnographic knowledge to anthropological intelligence

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**From Ethnographic Knowledge to Anthropological Intelligence:  
An Anthropologist in the Office of Strategic Services in Second World War Africa**  
by Insa Nolte, Keith Shear, and Kevin A. Yelvington (15,295 words)

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## **From Ethnographic Knowledge to Anthropological Intelligence: An Anthropologist in the Office of Strategic Services in Second World War Africa**

*This article explores the overlapping modalities and practical purposes of anthropological ethnographic knowledge and political-military intelligence gathering – the commonalities as well as the boundaries between them – through an analysis of the career of the anthropologist Jack Sargent Harris (1912-2008), a secret operative for the United States’ Office of Strategic Services (OSS) during World War II in Nigeria and South Africa. Calling upon archival and oral historical sources, the article relates Harris’s training in Boasian cultural anthropology and as a professional ethnographer of African societies and cultures to the ways he recruited informants, conducted surveillance, related to foreign Allied officials, utilized documentary evidence, and worked to establish authority and credibility in his wartime intelligence reporting. The article argues that political purpose is a central artifact of anthropological ethnography as it is in other ethnographic modalities even if the justifications for these endeavours remain distinct.*

*Keywords: History of Anthropology; Anthropological Ethnography; Government Anthropology; Anthropology and the Military; Office of Strategic Services*

### **Introduction**

It was 5 June 1944. Half a world away Allied intelligence organizations were concealing the impending invasion of Normandy, but in South Africa another counter-espionage war was unfolding. Driving the 1942 Dodge sedan was Heimer “Tiny” Anderson, an Afrikaans-speaking former army officer described as being “six feet seven inches, ... about 240 pounds, not an ounce of which [was] surplus fat, though ... ‘solid ivory from the shoulders up’”. The passengers were Jack Sargent Harris of the secret United States Office of Strategic Services (OSS) and Oren Stephens of the US Office of War Information. They were going to see Dr. Johannes (Hans) Frederik Janse Van Rensburg, once a senior state official but now the leader of the Ossewabrandwag (OB),<sup>1</sup> a pro-Nazi Afrikaner extra-parliamentary mass movement. The OB openly resisted the government and South Africa’s involvement in the war, and spread anti-Semitic, anti-capitalist, and anti-democratic propaganda. Van Rensburg traversed the country addressing audiences, covertly supported sabotage against strategic infrastructure, and secretly collaborated with Axis spies in Southern Africa.<sup>2</sup>

Crossing a narrow stream en route to Van Rensburg’s farm northwest of Pretoria, Anderson, the OB leader’s assistant-cum-bodyguard, scoffed that this was “the famous [Aapies] river” Winston Churchill boasted of swimming to escape internment during the South African War. Anderson, the Americans inferred, “impl[ied] that Churchill – and all Englishmen – talk big about little accomplishments”. The OB, however, craved publicity in English-language outlets, which is

why its leader would receive them. Van Rensburg wanted Americans to know about his movement and regretted that an interview he had given *Life* magazine was never published.<sup>3</sup>

For Harris, under cover as the Special Assistant to the US minister to the Union of South Africa, this was a chance to penetrate an organization that OSS and British Intelligence considered the source of their many difficulties in Southern Africa.<sup>4</sup> One difficulty was that OB harbour workers exploited poor port security to obtain information about Allied shipping – the cause, it was believed, of many ships rounding southern Africa being sunk by U-boats (Harris 1991; Turner, Gordon-Cumming, and Betzler 1961). Second, OB sabotage, industrial espionage and theft, armed robbery, diamond smuggling, and civil service infiltration had subverted South Africa's war effort by lowering economic output, limiting the fighting forces the government could risk sending abroad without compromising internal security, and in other ways supporting the enemy (Bunting 1964; Hagemann 1992). Third, the OB protected German wireless operators within South Africa in contact with Berlin, and maintained cross-border human communication channels with Axis regional espionage networks headquartered in neutral Portuguese Mozambique (Fedorowich 2005; Harrison 2007). Finally, Harris and his British colleagues' efforts to have the couriers and wireless operators arrested were impeded by the South African Police, whose chief detective, Colonel Coetzee, they suspected of collusion with Van Rensburg and the OB (Chavkin 2009, 186-266; Shear 2013). "Thus it was a European nationalist movement that The OB, in short, "posed the main internal threat to South Africa's war effort" (Jackson 2006, 251).

Why Prime Minister Jan Smuts's government tolerated all this and refused to touch Van Rensburg perplexed many, as the opening paragraph of Harris and Stephens's report of their five-hour meeting with the OB leader emphasized:

The most striking of the many anomalies of the Union of South Africa is the fact that while it is allied with the other United Nations in the fight to the finish against Hitlerism, it permits its local brand of Hitlerism to thrive virtually unchecked. Still on the loose are its local "fuehrer" and all but a few of his followers, although their declared objective is the overthrow by revolutionary means of the government now in power. The incredulous observer from abroad finds that while loyal "Springboks" are fighting and dying to destroy the Nazis of Europe, the Nazis of South Africa are carrying on with only slight interference their campaign to establish a National Socialist state.<sup>5</sup>

Smuts's forbearance was explained at the time in terms that are still rehearsed: the OB's antics discredited *all* his anti-war Afrikaner nationalist opponents, inside parliament and out; Van Rensburg was secretly working for Smuts, or at least was a moderating influence on his more extremist followers because he feared to lead an open rebellion and counted on an Axis victory to bring him to power; Smuts's hold on the machinery of state was so tenuous that he dared not suppress the OB, intern Van Rensburg, or even allow Allied intelligence agencies to engage too vigorously in counter-intelligence because of what they might expose about his weaknesses. Increasingly, the British and Americans favoured the last of these explanations.

Arriving in southern Africa in September, 1943, following postings in Nigeria and at OSS's Washington headquarters, Harris had joined agents of Britain's MI5, MI6 and Special Operations Executive (SOE) in efforts to capture the German wireless operators the OB was protecting and thereby uncover sufficiently incriminating evidence about Van Rensburg's role to force Smuts to act against the movement and its leader. Repeated failure, for which they blamed Coetzee's police, led the British to withdraw by May, 1944 (Shear 2013). Left alone in the field, Harris sought new ways to further his counter-espionage brief – among them, this chance alongside Stephens to observe Van Rensburg in his own milieu, where South Africa's "local 'fuehrer'" would perhaps even incriminate *himself*. The two Americans considered their 8,500-word report an attempt to

produce new knowledge – “to bring the entire subject up to date, while duplicating ... earlier reports [on Van Rensburg and the OB] as little as possible”.<sup>6</sup>

Harris, 31, although in appearance “much older”,<sup>7</sup> had a Ph.D. in anthropology from Columbia University and was teaching at Ohio State University when the United States entered the war. Expressly recruited by OSS for his ethnographic skills, developed in field research among Native Americans and West Africans, Harris retained his identity as an anthropologist. He and Stephens, a journalist in peacetime,<sup>8</sup> would have to write persuasively yet dispassionately about their encounter with Van Rensburg. For Harris, the report would draw deeply on his training in producing ethnographic knowledge – adducing evidence of a profound grasp of context rooted in “witnessing”, being “on the scene”, and obtaining “the native’s” point of view – not to meet standards of scholarly evaluation but to generate intelligence that compelled action.<sup>9</sup> Smuts, a keen reader of ethnographies and author of forewords to many of the classics of South African anthropology, would be shown the report.<sup>10</sup> And while it would not have the full effect Harris desired, the report would achieve more than the British and Americans’ earlier efforts, which had left Smuts unmoved.

Harris’s recourse to the techniques of his academic training in his intelligence work illuminates anthropology’s relationship to governance differently from literature foregrounding the discipline’s instrumentality. After the First World War, Franz Boas, the founder of modern North American anthropology, excoriated anthropologists who had “prostituted science by using it as a cover for their activities as spies” (quoted in Price 2008, 16). While endorsing this view during the interwar period, many American anthropologists served in their professional capacity in the Second World War, notably in the OSS (Allen 2011; Price 2004; Mandler 2009a), and contributed to operations abroad subsequently, albeit less prominently from the 1950s onwards. Concerns, though, about the instrumentality and instrumentalization of anthropology in the service of power continue to inform the discipline practically and theoretically (American Anthropological Association 2012). For more sceptical critics, anthropology became an academic discipline alongside the expansion of universalist technologies of domination, negotiating the identities of local populations and rational observers. For them, ethnography was inescapably a method of both domination and self-control. Shaped equally by the specific circumstances of the field, and by modern methods and disciplines that envisioned the unknown as a field, the boundary between ethnography and colonial intelligence was, such critics argue, superficial (Pels 1997, 165, 167).

Harris’s case permits detailed consideration, beyond generalisation and speculative analogising, of whether ethnography and intelligence gathering are intellectually and practically cognate pursuits. It is a window onto a specific period’s intellectual history and a single anthropologist’s actions and writings in these two spheres, casting new light on the relationships between ethnography and the production of governmentality and difference. Harris’s wartime use of his ethnographic skills drew on exceptional personal repertoires of reserve and empathy, and a particular hatred of Nazism, but his experience resonates with that of better known mentors and colleagues, including Margaret Mead. Perhaps in challenging consensual understandings of the relationship between ethnography and intelligence, Harris’s work is the exception that proves the rule. Even so, his case points to the limits of analyses emphasising a simple subsumption of anthropology into politics. Harris’s life and work in the 1930s and 1940s – spanning North America and opposite ends of Africa, and revealed in his scholarly articles, personal and professional letters from the field, research notes and diaries, and operational dispatches – permit reconsideration of the politically transformative potential of ethnography.

### **Making of the Anthropologist**

Although Harris came to anthropology circuitously, his background resembled that of other graduate students in Columbia University’s Anthropology Department in the 1930s. Born Jacob

Herscovitz in 1912, Harris was the third of six surviving children of Jewish immigrants from Romania who owned a small Chicago grocery store over which the family lived.<sup>11</sup> They inhabited a neighbourhood of mostly Polish, Italian, and Irish Catholic immigrants, for whom Jews were “the despised minority”. Harris wanted “desperately” to conform to a white “full American” ideal, causing him initially to consider “other peoples”, particularly African Americans, “inferior”. His brother, sensitive to anti-Semitism, suggested that the family anglicize its name; “Sargent”, Harris’s middle name, came from a novel (Yelvington 2008, 450-451, 453).

After high school, Harris worked for a publisher, but with few prospects once the Depression began in 1929 he moved to New York and became a merchant sailor. For nearly three years, he went around the world, doing “stupid reckless things . . . , going over the side or climbing a mast in a rough sea” as he experienced his body transform into a strong young man’s and with it a sense of masculinity entailing risk-taking, self-reliance, respect for but a need to obviate established authority, and sexual confidence. Returning to Chicago, Harris, at a friend’s suggestion, and aided by student loans, and work-study and off-campus employment, enrolled at Northwestern University, a “rich man’s school” (Yelvington 2008, 451). A class with Melville J. Herskovits, an anthropologist, student of Franz Boas, and a specialist in African and Afro-American cultures, “hooked” him on anthropology (Edelman 1997, 8).

He took every course he could with Herskovits, to whom Harris’s experience and worldliness, unusual in an undergraduate, appealed. Herskovits granted Harris special privileges, inviting him to the Faculty Club for lunch and to sit in on graduate seminars where he met the dancer-ethnographer Katherine Dunham (then a Ph.D. student), and visiting scholars like the Howard University political scientist Ralph J. Bunche and Cambridge physical anthropologist Jack Trevor. He became friends with William R. Bascom, who was preparing to do doctoral fieldwork in Nigeria, and went with Willard Z. Park, anthropology faculty at Northwestern at the time, to jazz clubs on Chicago’s south side where theirs were often the only white faces in the crowd (Yelvington 2008, 453). Continuing to work on merchant ships between sessions, Harris sent long, descriptive letters to Herskovits from ports around the world. A 1935 letter written between Naples and Alexandria, evocatively describing Italian soldiers boarding troopships bound for the invasion of Ethiopia, so impressed Herskovits that he sent it to the liberal-intellectual *New Republic* magazine for publication.<sup>12</sup>

From Herskovits, Harris imbibed the Boasian paradigm, retrospectively known as “historical particularism” (Harris 1968, Ch. 9), which discarded evolutionism for the idea that each group, or “culture”, had a singular historical development not comparable to any other. For Boas, cultural lifeways were explicable by environmental conditions, psychological factors, and above all historical processes. One culture might influence another, but the strength of each culture’s *Geist* meant that borrowed elements were moulded to the contours of the receiving culture. This was a cultural-centric, or “culturalist”, approach where “culture” was often both explanandum and explanans, but it did much to replace “race” in accounting for human behaviour. Methodologically, the Boasian approach committed anthropologists to long-term fieldwork, learning indigenous languages, and collecting historical materials such as folklore. Native Americans – whose cultures ethnographers felt pressed to “salvage” (Gruber 1970) before white encroachment displaced them altogether – were obvious subjects. Cultural relativism – the insistence that no one culture was superior to or worthier of study than another, that invidious comparisons were unscientific and dangerous, and that anthropology could combat nativism and racism – was what Boas taught the first generation of anthropologists in the United States who went on to found university anthropology departments, including Herskovits (Baker 2010; Darnell 1998, 2001; Gilkeson 2010; Hyatt 1990; Patterson 2001; Stocking 1974). Having initially advanced the assimilationist argument that African Americans had fully acculturated to mainstream “American culture”, Herskovits spent his career charting what he called “Africanisms” – African cultural “survivals” in the New World that he and others identified in cultural forms like speech, family organization, co-operative labour,

and especially religion (Apter 1991; Gershenhorn 2004; Jackson 1986; Price and Price 2003; Scott 1991; Yelvington 2006, 2011). Championing cultural relativism, Herskovits earned praise for studying African Americans seriously and attacking prejudice in the palpable inter-war racist and nativist atmosphere. *The Myth of the Negro Past*, for example, maintained that rather than a deficit (of) culture, African Americans had a proud past in Africa's ancestral cultures, extending back beyond slavery, and manifested in Africanisms which demonstrably contributed to American culture (Herskovits 1941).

Herskovits's cultural relativist and constructivist lectures on "race" had a "blinding effect" on Harris, who came to "understand the integrity of other cultures", that "other peoples had their dignity", and that he was a child of his own culture (Yelvington 2008:451, 453). One lecture defining Jews – Herskovits had trained to be a rabbi when young but gave it up – as those that others characterized as Jews (see Herskovits 1927; cf. Frank 2001; Yelvington 2000) impressed Harris, who would retain Herskovits's cultural relativism and anti-racism, but whose formation in a working-class immigrant neighbourhood and as a seaman made him doubt the culturalist paradigm. He read the evolutionist Lewis Henry Morgan as well as Friedrich Engels's *Anti-Dühring*. He wrote to Herskovits in October 1934 that while "rebel[ling] more against the 'orthodox' Marxian evolutionary pattern of society", he "had always experienced a sullen rebellion against [Herskovits's] teachings that culture, arising from a complex of conditions, is its own justification because it exists, ... is capable of ... an almost infinite number of forms[,] ... that it follows no set evolutionary process".<sup>13</sup>

Two years later, at Columbia, Harris "still th[ought] that anthropology from the viewpoint of dialectical materialism would be a fruitful thing".<sup>14</sup> Many of his fellow graduate students were children of immigrants, Jewish, working-class, and steeped in radical political traditions; Harris himself supported industrial action by longshoremen and seamen (Madden 1999). Harris's theoretical and political understanding was based in his practical experience: "I understood labor problems at first hand from my life as a seaman", he said (quoted in Yelvington 2008, 455). Protestant students from rural or western, middle- to upper-class backgrounds contributed to a vibrant intellectual mix (McMillan 1986; Murphy 1991). Harris's anthropological interest in the economic bases of society was encouraged by several of his teachers, including Alexander Lesser, who helped him see "natives as honest-to-God humans with work to do, with food to get and eat, who sweat and belch and fornicate".<sup>15</sup>

Travel and Herskovits had stirred Harris's interest in Africa; he took a course with the Belgian Africanist anthropologist Frans Olbrechts. Fieldwork funding was scarce during the Depression, however, and Harris had to accept what he was offered. Ralph Linton, the Columbia department's chair, had contracted to edit a volume on "acculturation". Linton, Herskovits, and the University of Chicago's Robert Redfield, under the auspices of the Social Science Research Council (SSRC), had recently issued an influential "Memorandum for the Study of Acculturation" (Redfield, Linton, and Herskovits 1936; see, also, Herskovits 1938), which they defined as the adjustments, conflicts, and contradictions that resulted when "different cultures [came] into continuous first-hand contact". Linton's project meant money for Columbia graduate students to research this theme among several Native American groups for their Ph.D. dissertations.<sup>16</sup> Harris was assigned the White Knife Shoshoni of the Duck Valley Reservation in remote Owyhee, northern Nevada, where he arrived with his wife Martha in June, 1937.<sup>17</sup>

The Western Shoshoni were of great contemporary anthropological interest and importance (Thomas, Pendleton, and Cappannari 1986). Harris's publications on the White Knives, emphasising subsistence strategies in a harsh environment, betray his materialist perspective (Harris 1938, 1940a). "Acculturation here", he wrote to his Columbia mentor Ruth Benedict, "is most unexciting", but he gathered data for Linton's project nonetheless.<sup>18</sup> Unable immediately to engage informants or interpreters because the reservation's residents were busy in the hayfields, Harris consulted files in the local office of the federal Indian Affairs bureau, "dusting off the historical

background and learning agency administration". Access to these records and the assistance of the bureau's agent in Owyhee, Emmett McNeilly, were authorised in an official letter that Harris obtained from Washington with Benedict's help.<sup>19</sup> Harris was cautious, however, of associating too closely with whites; he refused an offer to live "with the minister – a young, bewildered guy" because he "did not want to jeopardize [his] relations with the Indians".<sup>20</sup> He later concluded that the White Knives' "attitude towards white civilization ... [was] marked with mild approval and resignation", with only "a thin layer of disapproval, mainly from the older people".<sup>21</sup> Yet it was "from the minds of [these] tired old men" that he "had to extract information" (Yelvington 2008, 459). Finding a "right smart informant ... willing to talk ... but not at the expense of letting his forty acres shift for itself", Harris paid a third person to work part-time for the informant.<sup>22</sup> This was an expensive but efficient research strategy, and Benedict later commended Harris's resourcefulness and "good judgment" in "the emergencies of primitive field work".<sup>23</sup> Co-operating with local officials, combining documentary research with first-hand experience and observation, political acumen and practicality in unfamiliar settings, were ethnographic fieldwork skills that he would later employ in the intelligence field.

Figure 1: Harris (on the left) with an informant during fieldwork in the summer of 1937. Photo courtesy of Jonathan Harris.

While writing up his Ph.D. dissertation, Harris won SSRC funding for fieldwork among the Igbo in eastern Nigeria.<sup>24</sup> He had told Herskovits he was interested in peoples of African descent in Latin America or the Caribbean but wanted to research an African society first. Herskovits agreed that this would provide "more information concerning the background of New World Negroes". Once "immersed ... in that living, vibrant Ibo culture going on under [his] nose", Harris "ignored" the emphasis on Africanist research as primarily about "establishing the cultural baseline for the Afro-Americas", but, as Herskovits predicted, it was the most convincing justification for studying an African society to propose to the SSRC.<sup>25</sup>

En route to Nigeria in late 1938, Harris stopped in England to equip himself for his fieldwork, speak to scholars and former Nigerian officials, and collect permissions and letters of introduction.<sup>26</sup> In Cambridge he reconnected with Jack Trevor, who had already "been princely" in writing on Harris's behalf to his friend G.I. Jones, the district officer (DO) in Bende, where Harris intended basing himself. Jones had responded directly to Harris "in the friendliest terms", offering "his place as a headquarters" and assistance "smoothing over the rough spots" during Harris's first weeks in Nigeria.<sup>27</sup> Jones, whom Harris, once in Nigeria, "found to be not only a charming host, but intelligently interested in anthropology",<sup>28</sup> helped Harris locate a suitable village, Ozuitem, in Bende District, have a house built there, and meet informants (Yelvington 2008, 459). As with McNeilly, the Indian Affairs agent in Nevada, Jones was someone Harris needed to keep on side in Nigeria. Here too, however, he sought distance from "other whites", contracting with Jones that the DO himself would stay away from Ozuitem "so that the natives [would not] have cause to associate [Harris] with those who bring with them a chain of unpleasant connotations".<sup>29</sup>

Ozuitem tested Harris's resourcefulness and political faculties far more than Owyhee. His arrival coincided with rumours – fueled by the impending war and the British-American Tobacco Company's activities in southern Nigeria – that Britain might cede Nigeria to the United States. To prevent his presence encouraging anti-colonial agitation, British officials asked Harris to conceal his nationality. He consented, but within two days of relocating to Ozuitem he was "answering [Igbos'] questions about America".<sup>30</sup> The difficulty was that his "servants couldn't help knowing [he] was an American", which only multiplied the rumours until he convinced the authorities "that it would be better to tell the people the truth".<sup>31</sup> Harris's work in Nigeria depended not only on his skill in understanding the Ozuitem community, but also on a willingness to appear to accommodate the colonial power-holders' wishes, and to dissemble either with Igbo or British or both.



While Ozuitem residents worried his arrival was a “cuss” portending “new tax levies or land-absorption schemes”,<sup>32</sup> Harris delighted in what he styled “a virile, flourishing primitive community” for whom “all the ‘bizarre’ things” anthropologists studied had immediate significance, and did not, as in Owyhee, “have to [be] beat[en] out of the minds of old, tired informants”.<sup>33</sup> Some village men soon invited him to join them in their agricultural labour, which “greatly pleased” him for had he suggested it himself “they might be suspicious of [his] motives”.<sup>34</sup> The villagers may really have wanted to keep Harris under observation while they worked, but he now had an opportunity to earn their confidence. Having briefly tried being British, he possibly perceived the research benefits of “acting” Ozuitem, but the vigorous local life also appealed to his pride in performing demanding physical labour. He described to Benedict his relish for village activities:

I like to get out and work with them, to take off my shirt and trousers and in a loincloth and towel about my neck cut the thick bush on their farms with a machet, for the ants are murderous and clothes therefore impossible and with every three strokes of the machet goes a flick of the towel.<sup>35</sup>

Preparedness to adopt another’s loincloth, so to speak, bettered Harris’s understanding of the practical, material concerns of agrarian life, and would similarly serve him later as an intelligence agent.

Sharing their work, Harris cultivated relationships with the villagers. These relationships charmed him personally and situated his interlocutors in larger social units and patterns of activity. At night, he was “thronged with native friends” who spoke as “never ... before to a white man”.<sup>36</sup> Treated as a full human being, he was asked to participate in dances and festivities, to marry his male informants’ sisters and daughters, and to share in their sexual banter.<sup>37</sup> A month after coming to Ozuitem, he believed his friendship with one informant, Ezeala, sufficiently established for Ezeala “to reveal to [him] faithfully each day the economic activities of 5 families in his *ezi*”.<sup>38</sup> An *ezi* was a compound of loosely-related households – Harris called it an “extended family” – comprising some 50 to 200 individuals who recognised the authority of one of the household heads. There were 85 such compounds in Ozuitem and Harris hoped to analyse several others, but he believed that Ezeala’s “just about cover[ed] the range of Ozuitem life”.<sup>39</sup> Substantial portions of his Nigerian field notes documented the daily activities of members of Ezeala’s *ezi* in a methodical format that prepared him for the systematic surveillance of individuals and political reporting that intelligence work required.<sup>40</sup> Similarly, his letters to Benedict and Herskovits, disclosing broader reflective perspectives on his anthropological research, read like his later pouch letters to OSS’s Africa Desk covering items on specific events and suspects from the intelligence field.

Harris’s friendships with both British officials and Ozuitem residents afforded insights into individual financial obligations and marital and household economic responsibilities in a colonial context. For a fee, and having reassured himself that his “material would serve as a corrective for what otherwise might be misadministration” and could not “conceivably be used in the exploitation of the natives”, he was prepared to share his knowledge of the local economy with the government. To an Agriculture Department officer desiring crop and livestock improvement, Harris detailed “highly pertinent...obstacles...practically unknown to him”: “the political and economic importance of women, the magico-religious farming beliefs, [and] the ceremonial importance of both men’s and women’s crops”.<sup>41</sup> Well before becoming an intelligence agent, Harris was practised at aligning his ethnographic skills with governmentality, and, as he thought, to his discipline’s credit.

Figure 2: Harris shortly after arriving at Bende in southeastern Nigeria in 1938. Photo courtesy of Jonathan Harris.

When he left Nigeria in late 1939, Harris had demonstrated an ability to insert himself plausibly at points across the colonial spectrum, from Ozuitem agriculturalists to British officials, who deemed his presence “fortunate” and wrote admiringly of his having “obtained the confidence of the natives to an astonishing degree”.<sup>42</sup> His participation in local patterns of labour and sociality revealed a preparedness to take seriously the interests of those he encountered in the field and to redefine his tasks in light of local relations of power. It also drew on personal predispositions like his pleasure in physical work and his capacity for friendship. His publications showed a concern with the day-to-day problems of making a living, economic planning and budgeting, the sexual division of labour and women’s roles, and the affective and material sources of Ozuitem Igbo’s attachment to the land (Harris 1940b, 1942a, 1943, 1944). At the Association for the Study of Negro Life and History’s annual meeting in late 1942, his study of slavery in Nigeria (Harris 1942b) was announced runner-up for the prize for the best article published that year in the *Journal of Negro History* (see the notice in the *Journal of Negro History* 1943). Harris was not present to hear it; he was back in Nigeria, but for a different purpose.

### **Making of the Intelligence Officer**

In September, 1940, Harris became an instructor in anthropology and sociology, and a year later an assistant professor of anthropology, at Ohio State University.<sup>43</sup> The US entry into the war in December 1941 interrupted this academic career. In January, 1942, helped by Bunche, Harris and his friend Bascom, another former Herskovits student, procured interviews at the Office of the Coordinator of Information (COI) in Washington.<sup>44</sup> The COI, established by President Roosevelt in July, 1941, was conceived variously as a clearing-house for information bearing on national security produced by other agencies; an independent collector and analyser of foreign intelligence that the State Department and armed services overlooked; and a counter-espionage and special operations organization. Reincarnated as OSS in June, 1942, it increasingly focused on the second and third remits, which particularly appealed to its action-oriented head, William J. Donovan. Generously financed and permissively audited, COI expanded quickly but unsystematically (Brown 1976, 9-11, 42-49).

The two Nigerianists – Bascom did fieldwork among the Yoruba in 1937-38 – volunteered to serve together. They argued that they might be particularly useful as intelligence-gatherers drawing on their professional identity as anthropologists for cover.<sup>45</sup> Their claims evidently convinced, for both were invited to work for COI under the guise of carrying out an anthropological study, co-sponsored by Ohio State and Northwestern Universities, on “acculturation” among the Igbo and Yoruba;<sup>46</sup> they thus joined numbers of other anthropologists the organization was hiring (Price 2008, 220-261; Harris and Bascom are discussed on 244-248). Harris and Bascom became part of a large intelligence-gathering operation that employed a number of academics throughout its hierarchy in research and analysis roles (Katz 1989).

Figure 3: The letter of authorization of 28 January 1942 by Ohio State University’s president Howard L. Bevis providing an academic cover for Harris’s and Bascom’s activities. Source: Carton 37, Folder 2, William R. Bascom Papers, BANC MSS 82/163 c, The Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley. Used with permission.

Harris and Bascom justified their employment in a February, 1942 document explaining Nigeria’s strategic and economic importance. Surrounded by Vichy and former German-

controlled territories, and producing valuable raw materials, Nigeria was critical to the Allies in West Africa, a region which vitally resupplied the North African war theatre. Nigerian production rested “upon the native population”, whose size moreover had “potential ... for military enterprises”. Thus “native morale” was paramount, but “British officials ha[d] failed to comprehend native attitudes and opinions”, causing “grievances”. Anthropologists like themselves – “trained especially” to study African opinions, with proven “cordial and cooperative” relations with Europeans and Africans at “all levels of Nigerian society” – were needed to “plan effective counter-active measures” against Axis propaganda, to access intelligence from migrants and traders travelling to and from adjacent colonies, and to communicate “vital information” timeously to Washington.<sup>47</sup>

Figure 4: Harris in Washington, DC, in the spring of 1942 before leaving for Nigeria. Photo courtesy of Jonathan Harris.

In April, 1942, Harris and Bascom left for the field under the code names Kenneth Wilson and Robert Vaugh(a)n. Their approved objectives, based substantially on their own claims, included developing contacts with Africans in Nigeria and its neighbours to obtain sensitive information, especially concerning the Vichy French territories; discovering “secret enemy activity” in Nigeria; studying how the United States could expand its intelligence capacity in Nigeria should the need arise; and creating an operation that would allow others to replace them in time.<sup>48</sup> Harris later wrote that he and Bascom were “amateur bunglers in the field of intelligence” (Lawler 2002, 135, citing personal communication from Harris of 21 December 1995). It was naive thinking they could implement their plans independently of or without antagonising the British, who were however notified of their mission.<sup>49</sup> But their optimism reflected the ambience of urgency and possibility within COI in early 1942.

Despite their anthropological training and previous experience in Nigeria, the two men struggled to set up after arriving in Lagos in May, 1942. Well-equipped for the ethnographic field, but ill-prepared for the changes the war had wrought, they reported that they could not obtain the car or radio supplies central to their project.<sup>50</sup> Washington’s response illustrates the early COI/OSS’s financial strengths but logistical limitations: while headquarters readily advanced the agents’ agreed expenses for six months,<sup>51</sup> the requested car – a 1941 Pontiac Station Wagon – was not shipped until September, 1942 and then sunk en route.<sup>52</sup> After seven “expensive and annoyingly inactive” weeks in which they also failed to secure a residential base in overcrowded Lagos, Bascom announced that he would move west to Badagry near the Dahomean border to “begin [the] actual work” of reporting on Vichy French colonies; by then, he and Harris had bought a used car, which would get him there.<sup>53</sup> Harris meanwhile flew northwards to Kano, close to Niger. Both agents were soon sending back by weekly air pouch “a sizeable quantity” of “the most detailed sort of information”, which headquarters considered “most gratifying”.<sup>54</sup>

Washington’s gratification depended on its agents’ skills in establishing productive exchanges with headquarters itself, with representatives of other Allied organizations in the field, and with African informants. Poor communication with Washington – another feature of organizational incipience – had crippled the effectiveness of Erwin H Watts.<sup>55</sup> Watts, trained in code and “indoctrinated” in Special Operations (SO), had the cover of Special Assistant to the US Consul in Lagos,<sup>56</sup> a title that Harris, discarding his previous cover, himself adopted when setting up office in the consulate in August, 1942.<sup>57</sup> Watts was supposed to prepare the ground for an SO team assigned to engage in subversion, the restriction of Axis agents’ activities, and the cutting of Axis supply lines.<sup>58</sup> This was a fanciful brief for the men sent out, who, disguised as Pan American Airways employees, were confined largely to Accra, far from Watts in Lagos. Unable to understand his role in this operation – still in planning even after his recall and five months after the men had arrived in West Africa – Watts resented Washington’s sparse, contradictory, even “facetious”,

cables.<sup>59</sup> Aubrey Hutcheson, touring West Africa in the third quarter of 1942, reporting on OSS's field agents and recommending organizational changes, prized Watts's "contacts with which one can practically get anything done ... from secret information to buying matches". Hutcheson had "never seen a more perfect case of misunderstanding between a field man and the home office".<sup>60</sup> For Harris, working closely alongside Hutcheson in Lagos, Watts's experience was a valuable lesson, and Harris himself praised Watts's "wholehearted efforts" and "extremely co-operative" and "highly effective" manner.<sup>61</sup>

While effective communication with Washington was essential, establishing good relationships in the field was paramount, as Harris and Bascom discovered in attempting independent undercover research along Nigeria's Vichy borders. Although better prepared to engage with Africans than many other Americans – or Europeans – of their time, they were clearly identifiable as outsiders. Given the paucity of whites in West Africa, their appearance alone singled them out. Their cover possibly convinced other Westerners, but Harris's experiences in Ozuitem illustrate that gaining Africans' trust was difficult. Moreover, while both had successfully conducted smaller-scale anthropological research, they had no guidance on managing relationships in enough localities to obtain useful information. Above all, their activities risked competing with or duplicating those of their British allies. And contrary to the assumptions in their February, 1942 document, the British had built on their administration in Nigeria to produce good intelligence. As Hutcheson delicately put it, the British had "every good native in their employ".<sup>62</sup>

Difficulties of access, communication and conspicuousness, and an entrenched British intelligence organization, compelled the two anthropologists to redefine their objectives. Harris in particular cultivated members of the various, then still haphazardly coordinated, British intelligence agencies in Nigeria, and studied the politics of their interrelationships.<sup>63</sup> Much of the gratifyingly detailed information that he and Bascom sent to Washington originated from these British sources.<sup>64</sup> Hutcheson's mission, to negotiate OSS representatives' status as liaison officers in Allied-controlled West African territories, confirmed Washington's recognition of the expediency of intelligence collaboration with the British.<sup>65</sup> Here Harris's ethnographic field skills in forming relationships with both rulers and ruled served him well, certainly compared to Bascom, who was recalled in August 1942 because he "had failed to get along satisfactorily with the British",<sup>66</sup> who "definitely [did] not like him and [would] not cooperate fully with him", which left Bascom "in an untenable position".<sup>67</sup> Bascom left OSS in October, 1942.<sup>68</sup>

After Bascom's departure, Harris – under his new cover at the US Consulate in Lagos, and with his advocacy of more open co-operation ("liaison") with the British intelligence services endorsed by Hutcheson<sup>69</sup> – was given more focused "prime directives". These included supplying information about cross-border enemies; counter-espionage; and analysing "factors impeding the war effort". Much of this involved his sourcing information from the British as OSS's "chief Nigerian man", and observing and commenting upon the relations among the British agencies that produced this information.<sup>70</sup> Harris's task involved managing a field in which he had limited direct access to the most immediate intelligence sources, and therefore understanding where and by whom relevant information was held and how power was distributed locally.

### **Cultivating Informants**

Harris's fieldwork in Owyhee and Ozuitem gave him a lead among his OSS colleagues in understanding the incumbent authorities. As an ethnographer, he strove to cultivate "confidence of the most intimate sort" in informants,<sup>71</sup> a quality which in the intelligence field helped Harris adjust from the position of moral superiority articulated in his and Bascom's February, 1942 document to the role of junior partner to the British. Building on his familiarity with their social repertoire and his capacity for friendship, Harris sought to draw his British informants to him through a careful evaluation of, and response to, their personal concerns, habitual activities and preferences. His

reports to Washington, like his letters to Benedict and Herskovits from his ethnographic research contexts, adopted a mode of self-presentation and recognition which cast his British opposites as anthropological subjects.

This ethnographic engagement paralleled other American anthropologists' interest in their ally. Margaret Mead, Benedict's close associate, conducted sustained field research into the "ethos" of British culture. Wanting to aid wartime co-operation through mutual understanding, and theoretically interested in psychological factors shaping national character, Mead travelled through Britain in 1943, taking notes much as she had in Samoa, New Guinea or Bali (Mandler 2009b). Such practice challenges the notion of colonial-era anthropology as necessarily implicated in power differentials between "natives" and rational observers. In Nigeria, Harris sought knowledge already constituted as rational from parties whose position vis-à-vis him was not primarily defined by difference. Although asymmetrical in some respects, his relationship with the British also reflected a largely shared ontology and mutual political interests. Harris's use of ethnography, like Mead's, to establish the British as invested in a mutual endeavour, illuminates anthropology's practical potential for encounter, negotiation and collaboration.

Harris's thoughts on the qualities needed in prospective OSS agents in Nigeria resemble methodological passages in his field journals. Plausible cover, he wrote, required agents' having professional backgrounds as "scientists" – medicinal plant collectors, linguists, economists – and therefore longer-term reasons to be in West Africa "without exciting too much suspicion". In their training and by inclination, many colonial officers pursued similar studies and "could readily smell out a phony".<sup>72</sup> While operationally valuable, Harris's assessment of the British as informants was empathic; he admitted admiring the "intellectual excitement" of many colonial officers (Edelman 1997, 10; Yelvington 2008, 462).

Manners and social standing mattered too. In 1938, Harris had wondered "[w]hy in hell" he needed a "tuxedo" and could not "travel second class to Nigeria".<sup>73</sup> In 1942, however, he explained that OSS operatives had to exhibit the public habits of the colonial officer class. One description of typically unsuitable behaviour from colonial officers' perspective shows Harris's abilities as a closely observant anthropologist in his intelligence work:

... no matter how well trained in our work or in scientific work, [agents] *must* have the knack of getting on with other Europeans; they must observe the social graces upon which much stress is placed here so please do not send one who farts, belches or picks his nose or teeth in public. I am not being facetious.<sup>74</sup>

His empathy with the colonisers did not preclude sensitivity to the feelings of their African subjects. Washington, Harris advised, should "not send any Southerners", for Nigerians were "quick to discern antagonisms in manner and speech", which would cost OSS "their cooperation".<sup>75</sup> Harris himself rented a house in Yaba, a predominantly African neighbourhood, away from the "European" parts of Lagos and the consular offices. Given his enjoyment socialising in Ozuitem, this was not eccentric in itself, and may have facilitated his access to African opinion. It was, however, "the only [house] to be had", and his description of the neighbourhood as "[u]nfortunately ... mixed" reflects OSS agents' privileging of relations with the British, who did not endorse easy integration, over relations with their allies' African subjects. This contrasted with the distance Harris kept from whites in Owyhee and Ozuitem.<sup>76</sup>

Harris's ethnographic insights into the manners and priorities of his British counterparts aided his appraisal of their information and methods. Interacting with representatives of a dozen uncoordinated British intelligence outfits in Lagos, Harris observed that the reputations of two of these representatives as "intellectual lightweight[s]" meant that they seemed inefficient and received little professional assistance from others. In attending to how personal regard influenced the flow of information, Harris identified an important factor in British institutional politics while

also accessing the most productive intelligence.<sup>77</sup> His success as an intelligence agent drew on the interpersonal and observational skills that had served him equally well as an anthropologist.

While the British had information that flowed more readily to Americans who observed their protocols, they did not have OSS's abundant access to money, equipment, and facilities. Material exchanges are important in ethnographic settings too, and Harris knew how to insert them in his intelligence relationships without evoking sensitivities. For example, he secured from Washington "a dozen National Geographic maps ... to be distributed among our British friends in West Africa for good-will purposes".<sup>78</sup> Later, from South Africa, he reported that "one must hold up his share of entertaining ... to continue in the round of the people and officials and friends from whom information is obtained".<sup>79</sup> For this and other aspects of Harris's South African mission, OSS provided him with a "task fund" of \$18,700 (\$259,700 in 2016 dollars).<sup>80</sup> He understood however that more personal, smaller gestures of generosity were "of real help" professionally, and asked Washington for items "impossible to get" in South Africa, including vitamin pills, jazz records, and "about 2 dozen good quality" lipsticks, which would "be about the best builders of good will and gratitude in the proper quarters than any other single item".<sup>81</sup>

Emphasizing the war's disciplining impact, Price argues that participation forced anthropologists to work in the service of larger bureaucracies and address questions posed by others (Price 2008, 50). Harris's postings, often placing him in positions with few clear instructions, illustrate otherwise. Certainly during his Nigerian tour, OSS had still to develop the capacity to manage field agents there productively. Yet Harris produced results precisely because he could fall back on ethnographic skills enabling him to adopt the perspectives of, and make himself acceptable to, his British counterparts, who provided the most useful "native" point of view. That Harris's collaboration with the British was considered successful despite Washington's initial reservations suggests that by relying on an ethnographic understanding of what could be achieved in a particular location, anthropologists could also shape bureaucratic practice and procedures.

Harris left Nigeria at the end of 1942 after seven months during which OSS was still establishing itself. Harris himself remarked, in a letter to Accra from the Africa Desk in Washington in early 1943, that as OSS's "organization bec[ame] stronger" it could "no longer rely upon getting total information from the British" – implying that had been the position when he was in the field – but would have to reciprocate.<sup>82</sup> His next field posting presented precisely this challenge, but in South Africa too Harris's ethnographic experience helped situate him in specific localities and in relation to institutions and individuals within them.

### **Operationalizing Intelligence: Towards the Van Rensburg Report**

Within weeks of arriving in Southern Africa, Harris, replicating his West African method, developed contacts in South African, British and other American agencies – possibly too many, for his Washington desk supervisor recommended he "take it easy ... [and] eliminate [the] least productive liaisons".<sup>83</sup> As in his ethnographic research, however, Harris strove first to gain "a fairly rough picture of the whole"<sup>84</sup> before focusing his enquiries, and he cultivated connections accordingly. At the highest levels, his cover as special assistant to the US minister afforded direct access to Lord Harlech, the British High Commissioner, and Douglas David Forsyth, Smuts's permanent secretary and "one of the few Union officials whom the British consider[ed] completely sound and discreet".<sup>85</sup> Harris soon saw that South African officials' sensitivities to the appearance of British interference in the country's internal affairs might affect their view of his associations, thereby curtailing his effectiveness. A US naval colleague, taking Harris to meet senior figures in the South African military and police, confirmed "emphatically" that it was "far better" that an American should make such introductions than "Col. Webster [MI5's Cape Town representative] or any other English officer, since the South Africans were jealous of and did not fully cooperate with their English opposite numbers". Harris's OSS predecessor Goodhue Livingston's openly "close

association with Webster [had] not endear[ed] him to South African officials".<sup>86</sup> As in Nigeria, Harris's ethnographic experience helped him adroitly negotiate the politics of the intelligence-gathering field.

Unlike in Nigeria, however, Harris could not here avoid progressively identifying himself with one faction among the Americans' numerous competing "allies at war" (Furlong 2005). The principals of this faction were Michael Ryde, an MI5 agent based in the Union since March, 1943; Leonard Hawkins, heading SOE's mission in southern Africa; and Henry Lenton, South Africa's Controller of Censorship. Ryde, holding Smuts's authorisation discreetly to investigate the regional Axis espionage network provided he left Union nationals alone, had found that all his leads implicated Van Rensburg's OB. Hawkins's goal was to disrupt the network's activities in Mozambique. For Lenton, a pro-war anglophile with ambitions to direct a national secret intelligence organization, Ryde and Hawkins were valuable allies in a campaign to discredit his rivals within the South African state, notably Colonel Coetzee, the country's senior police detective, whom all three considered a deliberately obstructive anti-war Afrikaner (Shear 2013). After a heavy drinking session with the chief detective, Harris, already briefed about him by Ryde, Hawkins and Livingston, independently reported that Coetzee admired Germany (which he had visited before the war), and was both "bitterly anti-Semitic" and consistently anti-British.<sup>87</sup> In his letter covering this report, Harris admitted that liaison was "much closer with the British", who were "opening up" to him, than with the South Africans.<sup>88</sup>

Ryde, who quickly became Harris's closest collaborator, was introduced to him by Livingston days after Harris's arrival in South Africa.<sup>89</sup> The following month Harris saw Ryde again in Pretoria to discuss information from Washington about a possible U-boat rendezvous with the OB to land wireless and sabotage equipment.<sup>90</sup> They stayed in the same hotel and "got along very well": Ryde was Harris's "own age" and had "similar likes and dislikes". Their rapport led Ryde to confide to Harris that he was unearthing evidence implicating the OB in German aims "affect[ing] the war outside the Union". This would allow London to show Smuts that the OB was not purely his domestic political concern and force him "to completely outlaw" the OB. Ryde, "short-handed" and underfunded, promised to share information with Harris obtained from his local agents and from London in exchange for Harris's assistance.<sup>91</sup> Their relationship is barely perceptible in Ryde's communications with London; fearful of indiscretions with information obtained secretly by decoding German wireless intercepts, London would have disapproved of their intimacy. Harris therefore impressed on Washington that nothing he reported about his relationship with Ryde should get back to London, which "would be to [Ryde's] discredit and would, for [Harris], dry up this flow of information".<sup>92</sup>

In early 1944, Harris confirmed his ongoing closeness with Ryde, who kept Harris "adequately and even intimately informed of his operations". Together with Hawkins they met frequently, "a governing body of three ... thrash[ing] out all intelligence problems". Harris claimed the better part in trading information. Hawkins and Ryde, he wrote, "show me the original dispatches from their agents, even though I do not show them mine from Ebert [OSS's representative in Lourenço Marques]".<sup>93</sup> Washington queried whether Harris was "in Ryde's 'hip-pocket' or vice-versa", but accepted that he was "getting [his] full share of information under the arrangement". "Your letters", Washington added, "reveal that you seem to be sitting in on a lot of ruling committees these days".<sup>94</sup> The comment implied possibly that Harris overstated his significance in the southern African intelligence field, or that he preferred joining others to working independently. "I sometimes wonder", Harris responded,

if you realize how much we have to depend upon the British, at least in this area. For one thing they have the charter from Smuts to operate, and we have not. Therefore they have far more intelligence opportunities than we have. Furthermore, Ryde and Hawkins receive clues and leads from London regarding enemy activities in this area that our representatives do not

or cannot receive from Washington, i.e., intercepts of enemy code messages and transcripts of interrogations of enemy and suspect agents and prisoners of war.<sup>95</sup>

Ryde's "charter" and access to sources convinced Harris that it was "best ... for effective moves against the enemy" if he supported Ryde in working "his already opened channels".<sup>96</sup> Harris saw little sense in "do[ing] a tremendous groundwork" independently, "competing with Ryde, to the detriment of the best interests of both [British and US] organisations".<sup>97</sup>

Harris maintained some critical distance from Ryde, albeit in ways that underlined his dependence on him. Thus when Ryde told him that a German wireless station was "no longer providing fruitful intercepts", Harris noted that there was "no way for [him] to check this".<sup>98</sup> Harris often gave information from Ryde a relatively high B2 reliability evaluation,<sup>99</sup> indicating a "previously or probably reliable" source and "information supported by other evidence or considered probably true".<sup>100</sup> This was not an unconditional endorsement. Methodologically, however, developing the "most productive liaison" – establishing "an efficient liaison service" with other agencies rather than an independent "intelligence network", as Washington summarised "Harris' modus operandi"<sup>101</sup> – while an intuitive approach neither for a field intelligence agent nor the anthropologist Harris had become in the 1930s, was plausible given his shallow cover in an ostensibly friendly territory part of whose population sympathised with the enemy. And as in Nigeria it did draw on his professional anthropologist's skill in cultivating informants.

It was plausible too because Harris, Ryde, and Hawkins were pressured by time. The Mediterranean had reopened to Allied shipping, reducing Southern Africa's strategic significance, and MI5 and SOE were contemplating withdrawing altogether from South Africa. Expecting their imminent recall, Harris's British colleagues planned with him to "launch an all-out attack against the enemy organisations".<sup>102</sup> Their success would partly accomplish Harris's own mission. Joining them, however, entailed adopting some of their perspectives – particularly their assessments, and "likes and dislikes", of local officials. Failure risked leaving him exposed after their departure – vulnerable to being disappointed by the vacating partners' local friends if he sought support against their enemies. This was the danger in Harris's not developing his own local relationships and contacts and depending on other outsiders like Ryde to mediate his access to information and sub-agents. Local informants would be the more valuable because the British would take with them their access to decoded wireless and cable intercepts, which so far had made Harris for Washington a more effective reporter on Axis activities in southern Africa than he otherwise might have been.

The stakes in accessing Britain's "most secret sources" rose sharply following Ryde's departure. Lenton, the hitherto helpful censorship head, now viewed Harris as a rival for "sole contact with the London services". Lenton, Harris believed, saw him "as the only outside agent with power whom he cannot control ... and ... a threat to the position which he wishes to display in the eyes of the Union authorities, namely, chief of all intelligence".<sup>103</sup> Washington, although agreeing that Lenton's antagonism was "bad news", responded phlegmatically. It had expected that with Ryde would also go the "very satisfactory" co-operation "so well cemented" on the basis of "field relationships". Harris's "British Brothers ... would close down on information of much significance being passed along" to him and "[p]erhaps [he would] want to reduce them to the relationship of cousin". And he also had to "realize the South African viewpoint", which feared "amateur or professional American SI men finding out too much".<sup>104</sup>

Lenton may also have resented Harris's cultivation of Lenton's own "chief undercover man", Harry Posner, on whom Ryde, with Lenton's blessing, had come to rely for local assistance in the absence of police co-operation. Posner was loathed by the police for exposing its Cape Town deputy commissioner for having "as his mistress a suspect German agent".<sup>105</sup> Coetzee and the police, learning of Ryde and Posner's connection, "got on to" Ryde, "determined to run him out of business".<sup>106</sup> They succeeded when Coetzee alleged (substantially correctly) in April, 1944 that Posner, in Ryde's presence and on Ryde's instructions, had held up a civilian couple at gunpoint,



thereby violating the condition Smuts had placed on MI5's mandate. Only the intervention of Lord Harlech and Justice Minister Steyn forestalled Ryde's arrest and he quickly left the country, permanently ending MI5's presence in South Africa.<sup>107</sup> Harris, who participated in the April, 1944 operation – part of the failed “all-out attack” planned with Ryde and Hawkins – had hoped to succeed Ryde in working with Posner, who appeared to know more about Afrikaner extremists “than any other individual or organisation”.<sup>108</sup> But Lenton's “changing attitude” and the police heat on Posner frustrated this possibility.<sup>109</sup>

Harris's chance to interview Van Rensburg – right when his initially most “productive liaisons” had fallen away, but before he could cultivate new contacts – was thus particularly opportune. Indeed, the interview with Van Rensburg represented a culmination of Harris's career as an intelligence agent that drew deeply on the resources of his ethnographic training. Although continuing afterwards to develop other means to complete the task of unravelling the OB-German axis, Harris was hemmed in by Washington's unwillingness to endorse this task unambiguously given Lenton's withdrawal of co-operation. Washington feared that like Ryde he would “jeopardize [his] cover position” by placing himself “in a position where the local officials [could] point their finger at [him] as a meddler in [their] affairs”.<sup>110</sup> Interviewing Van Rensburg – unlike accessing government files on interneers and suspected subversives that Justice Minister Steyn had explicitly denied Harris sight of for “local political” reasons<sup>111</sup> – did not entail this risk.

Harris and Stephens were not the first Americans to interview the OB leader. In November, 1943, Harlan Clark, a career foreign service official and Middle East specialist,<sup>112</sup> but based then in Pretoria as the US Legation's Third Secretary, spent an evening at Van Rensburg's farm. He typed up this “bizarre” experience the next day in an eleven-page memorandum describing the OB's “singular workings” and its leaders' “medieval approach ... to 20th Century problems”. He discussed the demeanour and political views of Van Rensburg's acolytes, and the leader's own assessments of the war and German intentions, of Smuts's government, and of the scope of the OB's subversion, sabotage and state infiltration. Harris, who thought Clark “extremely bright”,<sup>113</sup> admired the document, which in outline, from its details of how Clark was invited to meet Van Rensburg and of his conversations with the underling who transported him, to its vignettes of the personalities he encountered, modelled Harris and Stephens's report of their own interview with the OB leader. By mid-1944, however, Harris knew he could extract more from such an encounter than Clark.<sup>114</sup>

Although resembling Clark's, Harris's report with Stephens, produced over five weeks, was far more carefully composed. It was also longer, with subtitled analytical sections – “Ideological Basis of the O.B.”, “Relationship to Germany”, “Sabotage and Violence: Safety of Van Rensburg's Position”, “The Nationalist Party and the O.B.”, “Natives”, etc. – indicative of its greater breadth and depth. As in Harris's research articles, its close observation of people, surroundings and incidents drew on his facility for recording ethnographic detail. A full paragraph described the impression created by Van Rensburg's initial appearance, including his demeanour, speech, size, dress and hair (“close-cropped, German style”). Van Rensburg's nervous conversational manner when seated was deftly conveyed in a description of his “[c]hain-smoking ... fumb[ing] repeatedly with matches, flick[ing] ashes when there were no ashes to flick, and on several occasions dropp[ing] his cigarette”.

Figure 5: Van Rensburg and Anderson holding the OB flag. Photo by Hart Preston/The LIFE Picture Collection/Getty Images.

Consistent with their intention to produce new incriminating knowledge that would impel Smuts to curb the OB, Harris and Stephens quoted Van Rensburg directly and at length expounding his admiration of Germany and Hitler; the OB's “revolutionary role” in bringing about national socialism in South Africa; his followers' acts of robbery, sabotage, and violence against informers;

his desire to recruit demobilised soldiers; and his contempt for his constitutionalist rivals for leadership of the Afrikaner nationalist cause. Their opening theme – the “anomal[y]” of South African Nazis thriving “unchecked” by a government whose overthrow they sought for sending soldiers “to destroy the Nazis of Europe” – was revisited often in an apparent effort to shame Smuts for his forbearance. The Americans pointedly observed, for instance, that they met their driver, Van Rensburg’s lieutenant Anderson, at a Pretoria building that housed army offices alongside the OB’s. And the OB leader boasted “slyly” that he had followers among the close relatives or even bodyguards of senior government figures, who knew that if they were “foolish enough to put [him] into prison ... at least five cabinet ministers ... would be killed or at least badly beaten up that same night” (Harris quoting Van Rensburg). Van Rensburg, Harris and Stephens concluded, was “a shrewd, cunning, intelligent man who as long as he remain[ed] at liberty constitute[d] a menace to any democratic [*sic*] government in the Union”. While “South Africa could never constitute the same threat to world security as Nazism in Germany[,] it [might] one day constitute a troublesome, festering sore on the anatomy of the new world [the Allies] hope[d] to build after th[e] war”.<sup>115</sup>

The Van Rensburg report did not have the full effect upon Smuts that Harris wanted; the prime minister neither proscribed the OB nor arrested its leader. However, his government’s tone in handling extremist anti-war Afrikaner nationalist movements noticeably hardened in the second half of 1944, for which Harris received credit. Harry Lawrence – who as Justice Minister after the war pursued Van Rensburg, such that the OB leader “lived in fear of being charged with high treason” and began to draft his legal defense, including a speech from the dock (Marx 2008, 521; van der Schyff 1991, 262-266) – praised the report. The Director of Military Intelligence “was extremely grateful” to Harris because he himself had long tried “to needle Smuts ... in taking a firm line with van Rensburg”, and the report “add[ed] fire to the new born government campaign of publicity and action against the Ossewabrandwag and other Nazi-type groups”.<sup>116</sup> A copy was lodged in MI5’s file on Van Rensburg,<sup>117</sup> and the OSS’s official history noted its contribution to the cabinet’s bolder policy (Brown 1976, 174). Harris was proud of his efforts (see Yelvington 2008, 464). Finally, George Cloete Visser – a police detective with the team Smuts sent to Europe in 1946 under Lawrence Barrett, the Law Officer for Union War Prosecutions, to study captured German documents and collect evidence from internees leading to South Africans (beginning with Van Rensburg) being charged with treason – considered the report so insightful that he reproduced it in full in his book on the OB. Barrett’s report was not ready until the end of 1947, however, and with an impending election Smuts’s cabinet decided not to act on it. The Nationalists, in power from May, 1948, unsurprisingly took no action themselves but diligently ensured that every copy of Barrett’s report was accounted for (Visser 1976, 148-185, 193-194, 197-199; Lawrence 1978, 183; Chavkin 2009, 217-219).

## Conclusion

Harris’s grounding in ethnographic practice, and self-identification as an anthropologist, remained with him throughout his OSS years. Familiarising himself with anthropology in southern Africa, he later published a short report based partly on his impressions while resident there (Harris 1947). In July, 1944, he wrote to his mentor Herskovits, possibly for the first time since arriving in South Africa, saying how “far away from [his] life” anthropology seemed. Yet anthropology’s “problems” were “the ugliest ones” South Africa faced, “fantastic problems which demand bold, unequivocal answers”. And with his recent visit to the OB leader surely in mind, he concluded that “[o]nly the foes of democracy here meet the issue squarely but their answer is the same one we’ve learned to hate”. Right then, completing the report on his interview with Van Rensburg, a task requiring him to draw deeply on his academic background, Harris could hardly have been closer to anthropology and undoubtedly was prompted to re-establish contact with Herskovits for precisely this reason.<sup>118</sup>

Harris's confidence that anthropology might shape state policy in an anti-fascist and anti-racist direction was particularly evident during his South African tour. While his British colleagues and Washington handlers feared upsetting the South African status quo, Harris's approach to the OB reflected a politics mediated by a specifically anthropological disposition. Racism had been exposed as unscientific by the leaders – not least Herskovits himself – of the discipline in which he had trained. Hemmed in by the constraints of the intelligence field, Harris's anthropological skills enabled him to adduce further evidence. The Van Rensburg report reflects a profound grasp of context rooted in ethnographic methodologies including physical presence and risk, and systematic observation with a view to obtaining the “native's” point of view. While the report was not as sympathetic to the “natives” it studied as advocated by Boas's cultural relativism, it challenged the OSS and Smuts's government by drawing on explicitly anthropological values and forms of knowledge. The production of the report and its impact on South African politics point to the limits of discourses centering on anthropology's complicity with power.

Despite anthropology's explicitly anti-racist focus in the interwar years, Harris's research was from the outset shaped by methods that reveal anthropology as a form of governmentality and his positionality anticipated later debates on the politics of ethnography (e.g., Behar and Gordon 1995; Clifford and Marcus 1986; Harrison 1991). His Ph.D. on the White Knife Shoshoni drew on material held by the Bureau of Indian Affairs. His study of the Igbo in Nigeria relied on collaboration with British administrators, and eventually even informed colonial agricultural policy. Harris's service in the intelligence field might seem an incremental extension of this earlier work; his and Bascom's February, 1942 memorandum suggests he initially understood it so himself.

However, Harris's career as an anthropologist and intelligence agent also indicates the complexities of directly comparing ethnographic method in the two roles. In the former, his consistent maintenance of distance from local administrators reflects Harris's awareness of, and unease with, the potential complicity of his own position. Presenting himself in one way to the people studied and in another to those associated with the larger interests defining the field, he was conscious of occupying a “duplex” position (Pels 2008, 293). But unlike a spy, he adopted this position in good faith towards both sides. Providing information on Igbo agricultural practices to the colonial government oriented Harris as a mediator ensuring greater government consideration of local interests. This was ethnography as an “open-ended ethics of negotiation”, albeit within existing relations of power (Pels 2008, 294). Practised in the more exigent intelligence field, these ethics of negotiation proved productive among enemies and allies alike.

Harris's ethnographic exposé of Van Rensburg and the OB may appear to re-establish the asymmetrical categories often associated with colonial anthropology. It does offer a perspective on a “native” group where ethnographer and reader are ostensibly positioned as rational observers. Harris's ethnographic analysis of the OB, however, sought neither salvage nor domination within a framework of governmentality, but rather to intervene in the domestic and international politics of wartime South Africa. As in interactions with his British opposites, Harris's engagement with the OB was less distorted by epistemological differences than colonial anthropological encounters. But the racist ideology of the OB, itself at odds with the anti-racist ethics of anthropology, legitimated Harris's unsympathetic portrayal of the group and its leaders. Taking Van Rensburg seriously as a political force, Harris perceived his ethnography confronting a powerful political adversary by provoking Smuts's government to action. His report, and indeed his repertoire of ethnographic practice, show anthropology's core methodology of personal engagement directly engaging and challenging wider relations of power. At the same time, Harris's case suggests how anthropologists in their various guises have often despite their discipline's self-representations had to mediate systems of authority in situations of crisis.

## **Disclosure Statement**

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the authors.

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## Notes

<sup>1</sup> The National Archives, London (hereafter TNA), Records of the Security Service (hereafter KV), 2/907, 62a, Lt. Cdr. Montagu to D.G. White, 15 August 1944, encl. "Interview with Dr. J.F.J. Van Rensburg, Kommandant-General [*sic*] of the Ossewabrandwag" (hereafter "Interview with Van Rensburg"). This document was published with some reformatting in Visser (1976, 148-175).

<sup>2</sup> Works on the OB include Marx (2008); Roberts and Trollip (1947); Furlong (1991); and Visser (1976). Van Rensburg's memoir is *Their Paths Crossed Mine: Memoirs of the Commandant-General of the Ossewa-Brandwag* (1956).

<sup>3</sup> "Interview with Van Rensburg".

<sup>4</sup> See TNA, KV 2/757 through KV 2/768 for records of British surveillance of South African pro-Nazi organizations. Compare the OSS and British Intelligence presence in South Africa to that in the Belgian Congo to secure uranium (Williams 2016).

<sup>5</sup> "Interview with Van Rensburg". Stephens and Harris's joint authorship of the report is confirmed in National Archives and Records Administration, College Park, Maryland (hereafter NARA), Records of the Office of Strategic Services, Record Group (hereafter RG) 226, Entry 108C, Box 13, Folder 73, Item No. 361, "General Operations Report: Flagg", 16 June 1944.

<sup>6</sup> "Interview with Van Rensburg".

<sup>7</sup> NARA, RG 226, Entry 224, Box 315, Personnel File: "Harris, Jack Sargent", Whitney H. Shepardson, Director, S.I., to William A. Kimbel, 21 July 1943.

<sup>8</sup> *Northwest Arkansas Times*, 2 February 1949, 10.

<sup>9</sup> For Harris's account of the interview and report, see Yelvington (2008, 463-464). For Harris's account of his wartime activities, see, also, Edelman (1997, 11-12). See the fascinating "biographical novel" by Jack Harris's brother Alvin Harris that combines factual reporting with recreations of Jack Harris's life and exploits, including those documented in this article (Harris 2013).

<sup>10</sup> TNA, KV 2/907, 62a, Lt. Cdr. Montagu to D.G. White, 15 Aug. 1944.

<sup>11</sup> Kevin A. Yelvington, interview with (brother) Alvin Harris, 8 Dec. 2011, Palm Desert, California.

<sup>12</sup> Northwestern University Archives, Evanston, IL, 35/6, Melville J. Herskovits Papers, 1906-1963 (hereafter HP), B[ox] 9, F[older] 13, Harris to Herskovits, 3 Sept. 1935. See Harris (1935).

<sup>13</sup> HP, B9, F13, Harris to Herskovits, 25 Oct. 1934.

<sup>14</sup> HP, B9, F13, Harris to Herskovits, 29 Oct. 1936. Although Harris became a victim of McCarthyism in the 1950s (see Harris 2013), he later told Yelvington (2008, 455) that he "never thought of [him]self as a Marxist".

<sup>15</sup> Archives and Special Collections Library, Vassar College, Poughkeepsie, NY, Ruth Fulton Benedict Papers (hereafter RBP), Series I, B29, F1, Harris to Benedict, 19 February 1939.

<sup>16</sup> RBP, Benedict to Harris, 7 July 1937.

<sup>17</sup> RBP, Harris to Benedict, 25 June 1937. Harris refers to "Shoshoni" which was anthropologically acceptable as the name for the group. Some current academic convention has "Shoshone" as the name for the people and "Shoshoni" as their language. However, in their practice they call themselves "Newe", which means "people".

<sup>18</sup> RBP, Harris to Benedict, 2 August 1937.

<sup>19</sup> RBP, Harris to Benedict, 13 July and 2 Aug. 1937.

<sup>20</sup> RBP, Harris to Benedict, 25 June 1937.

<sup>21</sup> RBP, Harris to Benedict, 2 August 1937.

<sup>22</sup> RBP, Harris to Benedict, 9 August 1937.

<sup>23</sup> RBP, SSRC reference, undated (early 1938). For an assessment of Harris's role in defining the White Knives anthropologically, see Clemmer (2009).

<sup>24</sup> The grant, a predoctoral fellowship, meant that Harris could not officially be awarded the Ph.D. until after his return from Nigeria. HP, B9, F13, Harris to Herskovits, 24 June 1938. Harris consistently

refers to the “Ibo”; reflecting current academic convention and Nigerian practice, we use the phonetically more accurate “Igbo”.

<sup>25</sup> HP, B9, F13, Herskovits to Harris, 23 December 1937 and Harris to Herskovits, 31 January 1938; Yelvington (2008, 458-459).

<sup>26</sup> HP, B9, F13, Harris to Herskovits, 11 November 1938.

<sup>27</sup> HP, B9, F13, Harris to Herskovits, 21 September 1938; University of California, Berkeley, Bancroft Library, MSS 82/163c, William R. Bascom Papers (hereafter WRBP), Carton 2, Folder 65, Harris to Bascom, 9 October 1938.

<sup>28</sup> HP, B9, F13, Harris to Herskovits, 23 December 1938. Jones later taught anthropology at Cambridge.

<sup>29</sup> RBP, Harris to Benedict, 19 Feb. 1939.

<sup>30</sup> Northwestern University Libraries, Africana Archives No. 30, Jack Sargent Harris Papers (hereafter JSHP), B1, F1, J[journal] I, 11 January 1939. This was four weeks after he first visited Ozuitem on 15 December 1938: JSHP, B2, F11, C1, “Daily Economic Activities – Amankwu”, 12 February 1939.

<sup>31</sup> RBP, Harris to Carl Withers, 24 January. 1939.

<sup>32</sup> RBP, Harris to Benedict, 19 February 1939.

<sup>33</sup> RBP, Harris to Carl Withers, 24 January 1939.

<sup>34</sup> JSHP, B1, F1, JI, 11 January 1939.

<sup>35</sup> RBP, Harris to Benedict, 19 February 1939.

<sup>36</sup> RBP, Harris to Benedict, 19 February 1939.

<sup>37</sup> RBP, Harris to Carl Withers, 24 January 1939.

<sup>38</sup> JSHP, B1, F1, JI, 11 February 1939.

<sup>39</sup> RBP, Harris to Benedict, 19 February 1939.

<sup>40</sup> See the numerous folders, “Daily [Economic] Activities – Amankwu”, in JSHP, Boxes 2 to 6.

<sup>41</sup> RBP, Harris to Benedict, 15 July 1939.

<sup>42</sup> National Archives of Nigeria, Ibadan, Records of the Chief Secretary’s Office, Lagos, 26, File No. 11930, Vol. XV, “Owerri Province Annual Report, 1939”, Part II, E.N. Mylius, Senior District Officer, “Native Administration Affairs: Owerri Province”, 6.

<sup>43</sup> NARA, RG 226, Entry 224, Box 315, Personnel File “Harris, Jack Sargent”, Coordinator of Information, Application and Personal History Statement, 15 January 1942.

<sup>44</sup> WRBP, Carton 2, Folder 65, copy for Bascom of Harris to Bunche, 9 January 1942; Edelman (1997, 11; Yelvington 2008, 463). Harris expressed frustration at not being able to see high-level officers, until he finally had an audience with William L. Langer in the Research and Analysis Branch and David K.E. Bruce, who later becomes OSS’s London bureau chief. Given Harris’s experience as a seaman, the COI’s Robert C. Tryon, a University of California psychologist, suggested that Harris be assigned to surveil seamen, but Harris wanted to volunteer to go to Africa. Harris says it was Bruce’s assistant, Henry Field, a fellow anthropologist, who understood the potential for social science in the war effort.

<sup>45</sup> NARA, RG 226, Entry 224, Box 41, Personnel File “Bascom, William R.”, Bascom to Coordinator of Information, 20 January 1942; NARA, RG 226, Entry 210, Box 400, WN#14885, “The Significance of Nigeria in the Present War Situation”, 12 February 1942; WRBP, Carton 2, Folder 65, Harris to Bascom, 26 and 29 January 1942.

<sup>46</sup> NARA, RG 226, Entry 210, Box 400, WN#14885, Bascom to “H.C.”, 18 February 1942;

<sup>47</sup> NARA, RG 226, Entry 210, Box 400, WN#14885, Harris and Bascom to Colonel Donovan, “The Significance of Nigeria in the Present War Situation”, 12 February 1942.

<sup>48</sup> NARA, RG 226, Entry 210, Box 411, WN#15591, “West Africa Project Number 2”, attached to I.D.S[hapiro] to Major David Bruce and Mr. David Williamson, 6 April 1942.

<sup>49</sup> NARA, RG 226, Entry 210, Box 411, WN#15591, “West Africa Project Number 2”, attached to I.D.S[hapiro] to Major David Bruce and Mr. David Williamson, 6 April 1942. Only very few people in West Africa were told about the anthropologists’ links to COI, including Colonel Louis Franck of Britain’s SOE and Walter Stratton Anderson, the US Vice-Consul in Accra who, until December, 1941, had been in Lagos. TNA, Records of the Special Operations Executive 3/74, “S.O.E. Missions in West Africa”, 9 May 1942, summarises SOE’s work in West Africa from its beginnings in December, 1940 to the period immediately before Harris and Bascom arrived in Lagos. On Anderson, see United States Department of State (1943, 90).

<sup>50</sup> NARA, RG 226, Entry 211, Box 30, WN#19857, “Weekly Progress Report Ending Saturday, June 6th”, 13 June 1942.

<sup>51</sup> NARA, RG 226, Entry 211, Box 30, WN#19857, “Program of African Division”, 18 June 1942.

<sup>52</sup> NARA, RG 226: Entry 224, Box 41, Personnel File “Bascom, William R.”, John J. McDonough to John W. Williams, “Re: Pontiac Station Wagon – Lagos”, 9 September 1942, encl. copies of shipping documents; Entry 92A, Box 1, Folder 9, A.W. Schmidt to John J. McDonough, “Station Wagon”, 10 February 1943.

<sup>53</sup> NARA, RG 226: Entry 92A, Box 1, Folder 9, Robert Vaughan to Office of Strategic Services, 16 July 1942; Entry 210, Box 492, WN#17972, “Report No. 10 of Kenneth Wilson [Harris]”, 5 September 1942.

<sup>54</sup> NARA, RG 226, Entry 210, Box 312, WN#12644, “O.S.S. Undertaking in British West Africa”, 26 October 1942.

<sup>55</sup> Before being sent to Lagos, Watts had served with the American Field Service from September, 1939 until November, 1941. See NARA, RG 226, Entry 224, Box 820, Personnel File “Watts, Erwin Hoy”.

<sup>56</sup> NARA, RG 226, Entry 210, Box 358, WN#14091, “British West Africa”, undated (ca. 1944).

<sup>57</sup> NARA, RG 226, Entry 210, Box 492, WN#17970, Kenneth Wilson [Harris], “O.S.S. (S.I.) Organization in Nigeria”, Lagos, 28 August 1942.

<sup>58</sup> NARA, RG 226, Entry 210, Box 405, WN#15332, Secret West Africa Project No. WA-1, 14 November, 1942.

<sup>59</sup> NARA, RG 226, Entry 210, Box 62, WN#00208: A. D. Hutcheson to I.D. Shapiro, 17 July 1942.

<sup>60</sup> NARA, RG 226, Entry 210, Box 492, WN#17970, Report from 256 [Aubrey D. Hutcheson], Lagos, 26 August 1942.

<sup>61</sup> NARA, RG 226, Entry 210, Box 405, WN#15332, Excerpt from “Report No. 10 of Kenneth Wilson [Harris]”, Lagos, 5 September 1942.

<sup>62</sup> NARA, RG 226, Entry 210, Box 492, WN#17970, “Report from 256 [Aubrey D. Hutcheson]”, Lagos, 26 August 1942.

<sup>63</sup> RG 226 Entry 210, Box 492: WN#17970, Kenneth Wilson [Harris], “O.S.S. (S.I.) Organization in Nigeria”, Lagos, 28 August 1942; WN#17972, “Report No. 10 from Kenneth Wilson [Harris]”, Lagos, 5 September 1942.

<sup>64</sup> RG 226 Entry 211, Box 30, WN#19857, “Summary Report on West Africa,” 29 July 1942; Lawler (2002, 135).

<sup>65</sup> NARA, RG 226, Entry 210: Box 358, WN#14091, “British West Africa”, undated (ca. 1944); Box 489, WN#16193, “Report on a Trip Made to West African Coast by A.D. Hutcheson July 25 to October 25, 1942”, 6 November 1942 (hereafter “Report on a Trip”).

<sup>66</sup> NARA, RG 226, Entry 210, Box 358, WN#14091, “British West Africa”, undated (ca. 1944).

<sup>67</sup> NARA, RG 226, Entry 210, Box 492, WN#17970, Report from 256 [Aubrey D. Hutcheson], Lagos, 26 August 1942.

<sup>68</sup> NARA, RG 226, Entry 224, Box 41, OSS Personnel File: “Bascom, William R.”, I.D. Shapiro to Capt. O.C. Doering, 19 October 1942; W.R. Bascom to W.L. Rehm, Resignation, 30 October 1942. Bascom joined the Board of Economic Warfare and then the Foreign Economic Administration based in the Gold Coast.

<sup>69</sup> NARA, RG 226, Entry 210, Box 62, WN#003003, Final Letter of Instructions to British West African Liaison Officers, 16 October 1942.

<sup>70</sup> NARA, RG 226, Entry 210, Box 492, WN#17970: Kenneth Wilson [Harris], “O.S.S. (S.I.) Organization in Nigeria”, Lagos, 28 August 1942; Report from 256 [Aubrey D. Hutcheson], Lagos, 26 August 1942. See also “Report on a Trip”.

<sup>71</sup> RBP, Harris to Benedict, 9 February 1939.

<sup>72</sup> NARA, RG 226, Entry 210, Box 492, WN#17970, Kenneth Wilson [Harris], “O.S.S. (S.I.) Organization in Nigeria”, Lagos, 28 August 1942.

<sup>73</sup> RBP, Harris to Benedict, 27 August 1938.

<sup>74</sup> NARA, RG 226, Entry 210, Box 492, WN#17970, Kenneth Wilson [Harris], “OSS (S.I.) Organization in Nigeria”, 28 August 1942 (emphasis in original).

<sup>75</sup> NARA, RG 226, Entry 210, Box 492, WN#17970, Kenneth Wilson [Harris], "OSS (S.I.) Organization in Nigeria", 28 August 1942. This comment reflects a "normalized" under- or non-representation of African-American OSS agents in Africa.

<sup>76</sup> NARA, RG 226, Entry 210, Box 492, WN#17972, "Report No. 10 from Kenneth Wilson [Harris]", 5 September 1942.

<sup>77</sup> NARA, RG 226, Entry 210, Box 492, WN#17972, "Report No. 10 from Kenneth Wilson [Harris]", 5 September 1942.

<sup>78</sup> NARA, RG 226, Entry 210, Box 417, WN#15710, Africa Section to Trout, 23 December 1942.

<sup>79</sup> NARA, RG 226, Entry 214, Box 2, WN#21109, Item No. 205, "General Operational Report: Pouch 16: Flagg", Cape Town, 28 January 1944. "Flagg" rather than "Wilson" was Harris's code name in South Africa.

<sup>80</sup> NARA, RG 226, Entry 214, Box 2, WN#21109, Gibbs L. Baker to Harris, Pouch Letter #3, 24 September 1943. Conversion done using United States Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, CPI Inflation Calculator, available at [http://www.bls.gov/data/inflation\\_calculator.htm](http://www.bls.gov/data/inflation_calculator.htm), accessed on 7 July 2016.

<sup>81</sup> NARA, RG 226, Entry 108C, Box 13, Folder 73, Item No. 33, Pouch Letter No. 6, Flagg: General Operational Report, Cape Town, 21 October 1943. The Acting Commissioner of Police, Brigadier Baston, declared his eagerness "to get some Granger tobacco" and Harris asked Washington to "send out about three pounds of the foul stuff" for Harris to "present" to Baston. NARA, RG 226, Entry 210, Box 202, WN#08590, Item No. 79, "Coetzee: Head of C.I.D.", 5 November 1943.

<sup>82</sup> NARA, RG 226, Entry 210, Box 417, WN#15710, Jack Harris to Theodore H. Ryan, Pouch Letter No. 31, 16 February 1943.

<sup>83</sup> NARA, RG 226, Entry 214, Box 2, WN#21109, AWS [Adolph William Schmidt] to GB [Gibbs Baker], 25 November 1943.

<sup>84</sup> RBP, Harris to Benedict, 13 July 1937.

<sup>85</sup> NARA, RG 226, Entry 108C, Box 13, Folder 73, Item No. 76, "Meeting with Lord Harlech: British Intelligence", 5 November 1943.

<sup>86</sup> NARA, RG 226, Entry 108C, Box 13, Folder 73, Item No. 10, Pouch Letter No. 5, "Flagg: General Operational Report", Cape Town, 14 October 1943.

<sup>87</sup> NARA, RG 226, Entry 108C, Box 13, Folder 73, Item No. 79, "Coetzee: Head of C.I.D.", 5 November 1943.

<sup>88</sup> NARA, RG 226, Entry 214, Box 2, WN#21109, Item No. 75, "General Operational Report: Flagg", Cape Town, 5 November 1943.

<sup>89</sup> NARA, RG 226, Entry 214, Box 2, WN#21109, "Flagg: Operational Report No. 2", Cape Town, 8 October 1943.

<sup>90</sup> TNA, KV 2/762, 225a: Telegram from Webster, Cape Town, 25 October 1943; "Addendum to Memorandum on Axis Espionage in the Union", 29 October 1943; Telegram from Ryde, Pretoria, 30 October 1943.

<sup>91</sup> NARA, RG 226, Entry 108C, Box 13, Folder 73, Item No. 77, "Major Ryde", 5 November 1943; TNA, KV 2/907, 29A, copy of telegram from Ryde, 3 November 1943 (on Coetzee's obstructiveness).

<sup>92</sup> NARA, RG 226: Entry 210, Box 202, WN#08589, Item No. 174, "Pretoria Meeting", Cape Town, 24 December 1943; Entry 214, Box 2, WN#21109, Item No. 205, "General Operational Report: Pouch 16: Flagg", Cape Town, 28 January 1944.

<sup>93</sup> NARA, RG 226, Entry 214, Box 2, WN#21109, Item No. 205, "General Operational Report: Pouch 16: Flagg", Cape Town, 28 January 1944.

<sup>94</sup> NARA, RG 226, Entry 214, Box 2, WN#21109, Pouch Letter #17, Julien J. Mason to Jack S. Harris, 24 February 1944.

<sup>95</sup> NARA, RG 226, Entry 214, Box 2, WN#21109, Item No. 280, "General Operational Report: FLAGG", Cape Town, 25 March 1944.

<sup>96</sup> NARA, RG 226, Entry 214, Box 2, WN#21109, Letter No. 9 to Ebert, Cape Town, 9 December 1943.

<sup>97</sup> NARA, RG 226, Entry 210, Box 202, WN#08589, Item No. 174, "Pretoria Meeting", Cape Town, 24 December 1943.

<sup>98</sup> NARA, RG 226, Entry 210, Box 474, WN#17696, Item No. 206, "Secret Enemy Radio Station in Transvaal", Cape Town, 21 January 1944.

<sup>99</sup> See e.g. NARA, RG 226, Entry 210, Box 202, WN#08589, Item No. 150, “London Pressure on Smuts”, 3 December 1943.

<sup>100</sup> Ratings ranged from A1, indicating complete trustworthiness of both source (letter) and information (numeral), to D4, denoting an unreliable source and improbable information: NARA, “OSS Grading of Reports”, available at <http://www.archives.gov/research/holocaust/finding-aid/military/rg-226.html>, retrieved on 7 July 2016.

<sup>101</sup> NARA, RG 226, Entry 210, Box 510, WN#17454, R. Boulton, Divisional Deputy, S[ecret] I[intelligence], Africa Div., to Chief, SI, 19 January 1945.

<sup>102</sup> NARA, RG 226, Entry 214, Box 2, WN#21109, Item No. 244, “General Operations Report”, Cape Town, 17 February 1944.

<sup>103</sup> NARA, RG 226, Entry 210, Box 471, WN#17746, Item No. 417, “Changing Attitude of Lenton”, Pretoria, 20 July 1944.

<sup>104</sup> NARA, RG 226, Entry 214, Box 2, WN#21109, Pouch Letter #28, 314 [Weaver] to 186 [Harris], 16 August 1944.

<sup>105</sup> NARA, RG 226, Entry 210, Box 187, WN#08382, Item No. 332, “Consequences of Attempt to Get 855”, 6 May 1944.

<sup>106</sup> TNA, KV 4/195, Liddell Diaries, Vol. 11, 6 November 1944, 230.

<sup>107</sup> TNA, KV 3/10, “Southern Africa”, 75-77; Chavkin (2009, 207-208, 210).

<sup>108</sup> NARA, RG 226, Entry 214, Box 2, WN#21109, Item No. 255, “General Operations Report”, Cape Town, 9 March 1944.

<sup>109</sup> NARA, RG 226, Entry 216, Box 6, WN#26391, Item No. 348, “Posner”, 18 May 1944.

<sup>110</sup> NARA, RG 226, Entry 214, Box 2, WN#21109, Pouch Letter #31, 314 to 186, 27 September 1944.

<sup>111</sup> NARA, RG 226, Entry 210, Box 382, WN#14546, Item No. 480, “Meeting with Colin Steyn”, Pretoria, 29 August 1944.

<sup>112</sup> “No Social Whirl at Fletcher School for Budding Diplomats in Massachusetts”, *Schenectady Gazette*, 25 November 1954.

<sup>113</sup> NARA, RG 226, Entry 214, Box 2, WN#21109, Item No. 401, “General Operations Report: Flag”, Pretoria, 13 July 1944.

<sup>114</sup> NARA, RG 226, Entry 210, Box 202, WN#08590, Item No. 140, “Meeting with Van Rensburg”, 19 November 1943, attaching Harlan B. Clark, “Memorandum to the Minister: Visit to Dr. Van Rensburg”, 10 November 1943.

<sup>115</sup> “Interview with Van Rensburg”.

<sup>116</sup> NARA, RG 226, Entry 210, Box 382, WN#14546, Item No. 458, “Some Aftermaths of the Van Rensburg Report”, Pretoria, 21 Aug. 1944.

<sup>117</sup> TNA, KV 2/907.

<sup>118</sup> HP, B33, F18, Harris to Herskovits, 5 July 1944. After the war, Harris took up Bunche’s invitation to join the United Nations’ Trusteeship Council which Bunche led and worked for decolonization in Africa and fought racism there as an activist diplomat (see Harris 2013; Yelvington 2008).

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