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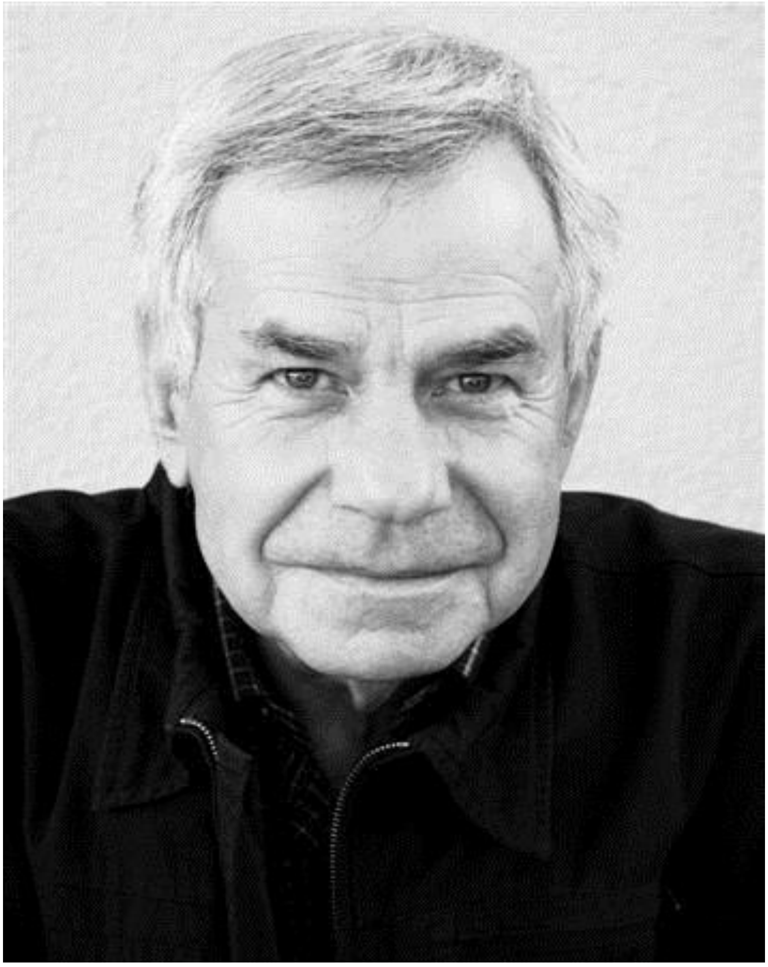
In Memoriam



O.J.O. (Cobus) Ferreira (19.09.1940 – 12.09.2018)

Johan Bergh*

Met die onlangse afsterwe van professor O.J.O. (Cobus) Ferreira is ons van 'n hoogaangeskrewe en produktiewe kollega en vriend, enkele dae voor sy 78ste verjaarsdag, ontneem.

Cobus Ferreira is een van weinige akademici wat spontaan deur kollegas en vriende met sy sewentigste verjaarsdag met 'n *Festschrift* vereer is.[1] Schalk W. le

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Roux en Roger C. Fisher, beide professore in Argitektuur, het die leiding hiermee geneem. Sowat 49 akademici en kennisse van verskillende dissiplines, universiteite en ander instansies het tot hierdie publikasie bygedra. Menings wat in 2010 in hierdie publikasie uitgespreek is, is steeds van toepassing en daarom word vir die doel van hierdie bydrae kortliks daarby stilgestaan.

Oor Cobus se publikasies het Pieter Kapp in 2010 geskryf: "Van sy artikels is wel internasionaal in Portugees en Engels gepubliseer, maar sy benadering was en is deurgaans dat die deeglikheid en sistematiese aard van sy navorsing kennis moet ontsluit wat vir die nie-vakpersoon toeganklik is." Kapp noem dat Cobus in daardie stadium reeds meer as 90 artikels, asook ongeveer 15 bydraes tot ander groter publikasies, gelewer het. Sy vernaamste akademiese bydrae was egter 26 boeke, waaronder sy twee proefskrifte. Pieter onderskei elf terreine van navorsing ten opsigte van Cobus se boeke en beskou sy werke oor die "Portugees-Afrikaanse pionier" as sy "grootste bydrae". Pieter skryf: "Met hierdie publikasies voeg Ferreira 'n nuwe rykdom kennis by dit wat tot stilstand gekom het met die werke van Eric Axelson, C.R. Boxer, W.J. de Kock en D.W. Krüger".[2]

Louis Changuion is in 2010 van oordeel dat van Cobus se bydraes in hierdie verband *Montanha in Zoutpansberg* (Proteaboekhuis, Pretoria, 2002) uitgesonder kan word as "een van Cobus se beste boeke".[3]

Sedert 2010 het Cobus verskeie nuwe boeke gelewer (sommige in samewerking met Schalk le Roux). Die werke sluit in *Serpa Pinto amongst Boer and Brit: His Travels through the Transvaal and Natal, 1879* (Tormentoso, Jeffreys Bay, 2012); *Diocleciano Fernandes Das Neves (1829–1883): His Residence in Mozambique and his Visit to the Transvaal* (Tormentoso, Jeffreys Bay, 2013); *Anna Neethling-Pohl en haar Portugese Dagboek* (Tormentoso, Knysna, 2015); en *Portugese Nadraai van die Rebellie (1914–1915)* (Die Erfenisstigting, Pretoria, 2017). Cobus het homself met hierdie publikasies ongetwyfeld gevestig as die vernaamste skrywer oor die tema van die Portugese in suidelike Afrika.

Cobus het in sy leeftyd ook uitstaande bydraes tot histories-akademiese liggame en tydskifte gelewer. In hierdie verband was hy onder andere voositter van verskeie vakverenigings en redakteur van vaktydskrifte. Hy was in 'n wyer verband betrokke by onder meer die *Suid-Afrikaanse Tydskrif vir Kultuurgeskiedenis*, *Historia*, *Tydskrif vir Volkskunde en Volkstaal*, *Militaria*, *Contree*, *Tydskrif vir Geesteswetenskappe*, *South African Journal of Art History* en die *Suid-Afrikaanse Biografiese Woordeboek.*[4] Die formele grondlegging en eerste jare van funksionering van die U.P.-Argief was verder 'n besondere veer in Cobus se hoed.[5]

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1. S.W. le Roux en R.C. Fisher (reds), *Festschrift ter ere van O.J.O. Ferreira* (Adamastor, Gordonsbaai, 2010).
2. *Festschrift*, pp 38, 42.
3. *Festschrift*, pp 3–4.
4. *Festschrift*, p 40.
5. *Festschrift*, pp 33–36.

Erkenning vir sy wye verskeidenheid en uitstaande bydraes het nie uitgebly nie. Cobus is deur onder meer die Suid-Afrikaanse Akademie vir Wetenskap en Kuns (twee keer), die Historiese Genootskap van Suid-Afrika, die Federasie van Afrikaanse Kultuurverenigings, die Suid-Afrikaanse Vereniging vir Kultuurgeskiedenis en die Genootskap vir Afrikaanse Volkskunde op verskillende wyses met toekennings vereer. Na sy aftrede is hy daarbenewens as ere-professor aan die Departmentent Historiese en Erfenisstudies van die Universiteit van Pretoria aangestel.[6]

Enkele persone het in 2010 hulle herinneringe aan Cobus op ʼn besondere wyse verwoord:

Louis Changuion:

"Hy het my van die begin af beïndruk met sy standvastigheid en pligsgetrouheid. … Hy was altyd daar vir my in lief en leed … geesgenote …".[7]

Cas Bakkes:

"… hoe hy daarin geslaag het om vir hom as historiograaf ʼn spesiale nis te verower … deur hom toe te spits op die aandeel en bydrae wat die Portugese tot die Afrikaner se wieg en volkswording in Suid-Afrika gelewer het".[8]

Marie van Heerden:

"Cobus Ferreira is ʼn fyn, beskaafde en sensitiewe persoon . . . Vriendskap met Cobus Ferreira is hartlik, lojaal en verrykend".[9]

"Cobus was ʼn gewilde dosent en sy oud-studente, sommige waarvan lewenslange vriende geword het, onthou hom en sy klasse met waardering. … Sy nugtere oordeel, logiese denke en wye kennisveld het van hom ʼn uitstekende studieleier vir veral nagraadse studente gemaak."[10]

Karina Sevenhuysen:

Cobus Ferreira se grootste bydrae op sy lewenspad en in sy kontak met studente, kollegas en vriende is nie sy uitstaande en presiese navorsing en taalgebruik, bydraes tot vakverenigings en –tydskrifte en doseerwerk nie, maar is ongetwyfeld sy opregte belangstelling, lojaliteit, vriendskap en pretensielose menswees. Dit oorskadu sy akademiese prestasies en is sy onuitwisbare en blywendste nalatenskap.[11]

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6. *Festschrift*, p 18.
7. *Festschrift*, pp 1, 4.
8. *Festschrift*, p 13.
9. *Festschrift*, pp 16, 18.
10. *Festschrift*, p 16.
11. K. Sevenhuysen, 5 Oktober 2018.

Karen Harris:

“Ferreira’s solid commitment to the foundation of the Archives for the University of the Pretoria left an indelible mark for posterity and remains integral to its memory bank”.[12]

Japie Brits:

“Die tyd met Cobus Ferreira was vir my as historikus en mens verrykend. Nie net het ons mekaar geïnspireer as historici nie, maar ook as geesgenote ’n lewenslange band gesmee”.[13]

Pieter Kapp:

“In die Afrikaanse en Suid-Afrikaanse geskiedskrywing beklee Cobus Ferreira ’n besondere plek vanweë sy veelsydigheid en die kontinuïteit van sy navorsing … Die laaste tien jaar getuig daarvan dat Ferreira se grootste bydrae lê in die belangrike ontsluiting van kennis oor die geskiedenis van Portugese verbintenisse met Suid-Afrika in die algemeen en die Afrikaners in die besonder”.[14]

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12. *Festschrift*, p 36.
13. *Festschrift*, p 22.
14. *Festschrift*, pp 38, 42.

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O.J.O. (Cobus) Ferreira (19.09.1940 – 12.09.2018)

With the recent passing of Professor O.J.O. (Cobus) Ferreira a few days before his 78th birthday, we have lost a highly regarded and productive colleague and friend.

Cobus Ferreira is one of very few academics who was honoured spontaneously by colleagues and friends on the occasion of his seventieth birthday with the publication of a commemorative *Festschrift.*[1] Schalk W. le Roux and Roger C. Fisher, both professors of Architecture, took the lead in this initiative. About 49 academics and acquaintances from different disciplines, universities and other institutions contributed to the publication. Opinions expressed in the *Festschrift* are still applicable and therefore for the purposes of this contribution, we pause briefly to reflect on what was said.

On Cobus's many publications, Pieter Kapp wrote in 2010 (here translated into English): "Some of his articles are published internationally in Portuguese and English, and throughout, his approach was that the careful and systematic nature of his research should make knowledge accessible to the scholar and non-professional reader alike." Kapp mentions that even at this stage (2010), Cobus had already produced more than 90 articles, and had made some 15 contributions to other larger publications. However, his most significant academic contribution was 26 books, including his two theses. Pieter distinguishes eleven areas of research covered by Cobus's books and sees his work on the "Portuguese-Afrikaans pioneer" as his "greatest contribution". Pieter writes: "With these publications Ferreira provides a new wealth of knowledge in this field, something which came to a halt with the works of Eric Axelson, C.R. Boxer, W.J. de Kock and D.W. Krüger.[2]

In 2010, Louis Changuion was of the opinion that of Cobus's contributions in this regard, *Montanha in Zoutpansberg* (Proteaboekhuis, Pretoria, 2002) can be singled out as "one of Cobus's best books".[3]

Since 2010, Cobus produced a range of new books (some in collaboration with Schalk le Roux). These include *Serpa Pinto amongst Boer and Brit: His Travels through the Transvaal and Natal, 1879* (Tormentoso, Jeffreys Bay, 2012); *Diocleciano Fernandes das Neves (1829–1883): His Residence in Mozambique and his Visit to the Transvaal* (Tormentoso, Jeffreys Bay, 2013); *Anna Neethling-Pohl en haar Portugese Dagboek* (Tormentoso, Knysna, 2015); and *Portugese Nadraai van die Rebellie (1914–1915)* (Die Erfenisstigting, Pretoria, 2017). With these works, Cobus undoubtedly

1. S.W. le Roux en R.C. Fisher (reds), *Festschrift ter ere van O.J.O. Ferreira* (Adamastor, Gordonsbaai, 2010).
2. *Festschrift*, pp 38, 42.
3. *Festschrift*, pp 3–4.

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established himself as the foremost author on the theme of the early Portuguese people in southern Africa.

In his lifetime, Cobus also made outstanding contributions to historical-academic bodies and journals. In this regard, he served as chairperson of various scholarly associations and editor of academic journals. In a wider context, he was involved in the activities of the *Suid-Afrikaanse Tydskrif vir Kultuurgeskiedenis*, *Historia*, *Tydskrif vir Volkskunde en Volkstaal*, *Militaria*, *Contree*, *Tydskrif vir Geesteswetenskappe*, the *South African Journal of Art History* and the *Suid-Afrikaanse Biografiese Woordeboek/The Dictionary of South African Biography.*[4] In addition, the formal establishment of the U.P. Archives and its first years of functioning, were a special feather in Cobus's hat.[5]

There was no dearth of recognition for Cobus's wide range of noteworthy contributions. He was the recipient of many accolades and awards from among others the Suid-Afrikaanse Akademie vir Wetenskap en Kuns (on two occasions), the Historical Society of South Africa, the Federasie van Afrikaanse Kultuurvereniginge, the South African Society of Cultural History, and the Genootskap vir Afrikaanse Volkskunde. Furthermore, after his retirement he was appointed as an honorary professor in the Department of Historical and Heritage Studies at the University of Pretoria.[6]

A number of people have expressed their thoughts and memories of Cobus, some in 2010 in the *Festschrift*, others since his death – each in a special way (here translated into English):

Louis Changuion:

"From the outset he impressed me with his steadfastness and diligence ... he was always there for me through thick and thin ... [we were] kindred spirits".[7]

Cas Bakkes:

" ... as a historian he managed to carve out a special niche for himself ... by focusing on the role and contribution of the Portuguese to the emerging way of life and development of the Afrikaner *volk* in South Africa".[8]

Marie van Heerden:

"Cobus Ferreira is a refined, genteel and sensitive person ... Friendship with Cobus Ferreira is cordial, loyal and enriching".[9]

"Cobus was a popular lecturer and his former students, some of whom became lifelong friends, remember him and his classes with appreciation. … His careful

4. *Festschrift*, p 40.
5. *Festschrift*, pp 33–36.
6. *Festschrift*, p 18.
7. *Festschrift*, pp 1, 4.
8. *Festschrift*, p 13.
9. *Festschrift*, pp 16, 18.

judgment, logical thinking and his wide field of knowledge made him an excellent supervisor, especially for postgraduate students."[10]

Karina Sevenhuysen:

Cobus Ferreira's greatest contribution on his life's journey and in his contact with students, colleagues and friends is not his outstanding and precise research and use of language, his contributions to scholarly societies and journals and his skill as a lecturer, but is undoubtedly his genuine interest, loyalty, friendship and unpretentious humanity. This overshadows his academic achievements and remains his indelible and enduring legacy.[11]

Karen Harris:

"Ferreira's solid commitment to the foundation of the Archives for the University of the Pretoria left an indelible mark for posterity and remains integral to its memory bank".[12]

Japie Brits:

"The time with Cobus Ferreira was enriching to me both as historian and as a person. Not only did we inspire one another as historians; we formed a lifelong bond as friends who shared a similar outlook and attitudes".[13]

Pieter Kapp:

"In Afrikaans and South African historiography, Cobus Ferreira occupies a special place because of his versatility and the continuity of his research … The last ten years testify to the fact that Ferreira's biggest contribution lies in the important disclosure of knowledge about the history of Portuguese relations with South Africans in general and with Afrikaners in particular".[14]

10. *Festschrift*, p 16.
11. K. Sevenhuysen, 5 October 2018.
12. *Festschrift*, p 36. Original in English.
13. *Festschrift*, p 22.
14. *Festschrift*, pp 38, 42.