



**Inside African Anthropology**  
**Monica Wilson and her Interpreters**

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Inside African Anthropology offers an incisive biography of the life and work of South Africa's foremost social anthropologist, Monica Hunter Wilson. By exploring her main fieldwork and intellectual projects in southern Africa between the 1920s and 1960s through a massive personal archive, the book offers insights into the personal and intellectual life of a leading African anthropologist. Beginning with her origins in the remote Eastern Cape, the authors follow Wilson to Cambridge University and back into the field among the Mpondo of South Africa, where her studies resulted in her 1936 book *Reaction to Conquest*. Her fieldwork focus then shifted to Tanzania, where she teamed up with her husband, Godfrey Wilson. She later returned to South Africa to begin her teaching career at Fort Hare University and record her Tanzanian research. In the 1960s, Wilson embarked on a new urban ethnography with a young South African anthropologist, Archie Mafeje, one of the many black scholars she trained. This study also provides a meticulously researched exploration of the indispensable contributions of African research assistants and co-researchers to the production of this famous woman scholar's cultural knowledge about mid-twentieth century Africa.

Provides the first detailed biography of one of the leading students of African culture during the twentieth century and the woman who is certainly South Africa's foremost and most influential social anthropologist

Gives an account of the extent of collaboration with African interpreters that went into the making of cultural knowledge in South and Central Africa

Based on a vast, newly-uncovered archive of personal letters, fieldnotes and professional correspondence

Provides the first published images of the working lives of Monica Hunter and the African researchers with whom she collaborated.

## **Reviews & endorsements**

"Inside African Anthropology ... not only provides engaging insights into anthropology and anthropological research in twentieth-century Africa, but it is also a celebration of Monica Wilson as a teacher, mentor, and human being."

**Owen J. M. Kalinga, African Studies Review**

"This deftly organized, meticulously researched, and thoughtful volume places Monica Hunter Wilson at its core ... Inside African Anthropology contributes to disciplinary and regional understanding of the co- or perhaps ensemble nature of anthropological scholarship through its manifold discussions of race, gender, and fieldwork methods in Southern Africa. It adds to a growing corpus of work on typically unseen co-producers of such knowledge, which in certain arenas includes Wilson herself."

**Christopher M. Annear, International Journal of African Historical Studies**

"Inside African Anthropology is an extremely important book because it brings to light the once 'hidden' relationship between Monica Wilson and the field assistants and some of the students she had. It also serves as a model for which other disciplines (physical, health and humanities sciences) need to explore their own complicities. The book places emphasis on the 'experiential' – the practice of fieldwork or ethnography, and the downplaying of the structural context. Such an approach shows the complexity of these relationships and by implication shuns a simplistic notion that it was a one-dimensional 'hidden form of colonialism', or that it provided in an equally simplistic way the space for an indigenous intelligentsia to emerge."

**South African Journal of Science**

"... a substantial achievement which successfully uses South African material to illuminate issues that lie at the heart of anthropology."

**Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute**

"... the volume is not only about intellectual history. It is also a social history of the micro-politics of fieldwork. In this regard it is an advance on the pioneering work of Lyn Schumaker (2001), among others, offering superb studies on the production of knowledge at the rock face. It effectively destroys the image of a few lonely isolated minds rising like mountain peaks above their compatriots. It demonstrates that the clouds can hide other peaks and routes as well."

**Anthropology Southern Africa**