

AN INVESTIGATION INTO THE SUPPOSED LOSS OF THE KHOIKHOI
TRADITIONAL RELIGIOUS HERITAGE AMONGST ITS DESCENDANTS,
NAMELY THE COLOURED PEOPLE WITH SPECIFIC REFERENCES TO
THE QUESTION OF RELIGIOSITY OF THE KHOIKHOI AND THEIR
DISINTEGRATION

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ABSTRACT

This study is about the Khoikhoi, known as the "Hottentots" who are today no longer to be found in their original state in South Africa. It deals with their religion and disintegration, especially the land issue. The author upholds that there are remnants of Khoikhoi religion and cultural elements present among the descendants of the Khoikhoi, namely the Coloured people, especially those in the Cape. These Khoikhoi religious and cultural elements give the Coloured people a dignified continuation with their forebearers. The author also demonstrates that the Khoikhoi were religious people in spite of misconstrued perceptions of their being, culture and traditions. These elements the author further states should be included in the discipline of African theology.

In constructing this dissertation, the author had to rely on historical records such as travellers, missionary diaries and letters. Official records and historical writings by writers such as O. Dapper, G.M. Theal and P. Kolbe were also used. Missionaries like, T. Hahn, A.W. Hoernlé also wrote careful observations of the Khoikhoi traditions. Modern writers like I. Schapera (not so modern), M. Wilson, B. Witbooi, et al, give a useful

insight into Khoikhoi life. These writings, together with the discussions with the Griqua in Kokstad, the Nama in Steinkopf and the people in Bishop Lavis, provide a reasonable picture of the Khoikhoi and their descendants.

This provides useful insights into the rites of the Khoikhoi, through the explanation of the Nau concept of transitions. Many of the Khoikhoi religious residues cited in the study are still very much part of the life of the Coloured community. It is these remnants, that provide material for the development of African theology which provides a place in the sun for that which has been ignored for years by western Christian theology.

DECLARATION

I declare that this dissertation is my own, unaided work. It is being submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree, Master of Social Science in the University of Cape Town. It has not been submitted before for any degree or examination in any other University.

A.C. Nissen

_____ day of _____, 1990.

DEDICATED TO CHARLENE, MATTHEW AND DANIEL

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PREFACE

In 1980, whilst I was studying at the Federal Theological Seminary, I was prompted to do research for our Faith and Culture Studies, which later became the African Studies Department. The Faith and Culture studies of the seminary focussed mostly on the Nguni and Sotho Tswana culture and Christianity. One felt such a gap and distance from these studies and one was forced to take a Western position to these studies. I was encouraged by my history lecturer, Dr. Ian Derby and Bennie Witbooi to write something on the Khoikhoi. I prepared a paper on the Khoikhoi and Coloured folklore beliefs and compared it to customs and traditions in the Coloured community. This interest was further motivated by Prof. Gabriel Setiloane, who encouraged me to take up the challenge and specifically referred to it as an important field of study, which holds tremendous potential for the development of African theology in S.A. I, subsequently completed a honours dissertation on the Khoikhoi religion in 1987.

This work is not simply for a dissertation, but it touches on the contradictions within the Coloured community, of which I am a part.

We must, however, note that although we cannot bring the past back, the history, culture and religion of the Khoikhoi cannot be erased from the history and culture of the South African people.

My thanks go to my wife, Charlene and my two sons Matthew and Daniel, who have stood by me in difficult times. My thanks also to the Department of Religious Studies, the Head of the Department and all the staff, who understood and for the patience, especially the times that I have been in detention, and to Dr. Jerry Mosala, whose paper I wrote in Pollsmoor Prison.

Finally, I would like to thank Dr. W. Masimisa for his guidance, patience and support.

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PRELIMINARY REMARKS

The South African community is beset by racism and racist terms, therefore it is of the utmost importance that the following terms are explained, for they will appear throughout this paper.

Khoikhoi: This is the name for the pastoralists, whom the travellers and Europeans met when they made contact on the South Western coast of the Cape. It means men of men, people of pure race and it is the one name for the different tribes.

San: This is the name of the hunter-gatherers. They share linguistic and other cultural features with the Khoikhoi and at one stage were one group of people with them, the Khoisan.

The terms Hottentot and Boesman/Dushman are derogatory, racist terms denoting Khoikhoi and San respectively, and have been used in this paper only when quoting from the works of other people.

Coloured: This is a racist term to describe a certain sector of the S.A. community, who are not white. The Coloureds consist of the descendants of the Khoikhoi, slaves and European and African miscegenation.

It is my conviction that the people of South Africa are South Africans. This conviction is drawn from the Freedom Charter, adopted in 1955 in Kliptown, at the Congress of the people.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

This study is about the Khoikhoi people and their descendants, specifically about Khoikhoi religion. The Khoikhoi and San have become the subject of much discussion to both anthropologist and historian. There is still uncertainty about their unity and separation. The difference and there were many, were not enough to constitute a rigid division between the two. Studies have revealed that they could be grouped together, hence Schapera ¹ refers to them as the Khoisan people. The Khoikhoi were the closest to the white settlement and the first to be affected by the encroachment of western civilization. The San also suffered most severely at the hands of the colonists, as is stated elsewhere in this study. The Khoikhoi were nomadic pastoralists, while the San were the hunter-gatherers. The former also included small scale hunting and gathering in their mode of production. The Khoisan names, words and places suffered under the pen of white travellers, soldiers and officials.

There were many tribes in the Cape specifically within

the Cape Peninsula. There were at least eight tribes within the confines of the Broader Peninsula, which encountered white settlement first. They were the Gorachouquas (Tobacco thieves), Goringhaiquas (Cape men), Goringhaikonas (Water men), Great and Little Horichunquas, Hesequas, Chainoquas and the Kobanas.²

When these and other Khoikhoi societies were aggressively subjugated under Dutch domination, their disintegration was bound to follow. Alongside the imported slaves from Madagascar, Angola, Malaysia and the San, they had to compete for recognition in a society, which did not tolerate their existence and who subjected them to the harshest form of rejection, namely racism. The European settler, soldier and seaman, all contributed significantly to the emergence of this "baster" class. Out of this combination emerged the Coloured people.

The past of the Coloured people can never be wished away or ignored, precisely because of the hurt and the suppression of a rich cultural heritage that accompanied their formation. Any attempt, scientific or otherwise to explain the cultural and religious dilemma of the Coloured people, without taking cognizance of their past, will never do justice to the history of South Africa.

There has always been talk about the Coloured people as

a people without culture other than that of the whites. In fact, politically, the Coloureds were lured into being a buffer between the Whites and the majority of the South African people. The lifestyle, religion and culture of the Coloureds reflects that of the Whites. Historically, the Coloureds were taught to despise their background and to reject whatever reminded them of their African forebears and were taught to appreciate their white ancestry. Baladji Idowu, a West African theologian, is very sympathetic to this process and states that:

"... there are those areas where people find a curious compensation under gross oppression and exploitation is striving to forget their antecedents and identifying themselves with the culture of their oppressors."³

The African ancestry becomes non grata, unimportant. The Khoikhoi origins of the Coloured people becomes an anathema and are rejected as major players in the formation of the Coloured community. Throughout our primary education we heard that the Khoikhoi were lazy, stinking thieves.⁴ Even today the Coloured community is not free from these attitudes, whereby Coloured people are described as:

"The habit of drinking to excess implanted from generation to generation, is still one of the besetting sins of the Coloured people."⁵

There are striking differences between the history of the Khoikhoi and that of the Nguni and Sotho Tswana people. On reflection one sees a total change which transformed the Khoikhoi from an independent and free people into servitude and non-identity, whereas the Nguni and Sotho Tswana managed to maintain much of their original culture and traditions. As descendants of the Khoikhoi we were alongside the other Africans under oppression, but more than them we have

"adapted the language, religion and many customs
of the Europeans" ⁶

The Khoikhoi suffered severely at the hands of the Dutch and the other white settlers at the Cape. This will be picked up in later chapters. However, it is useful to say that at this stage the Khoisan were treated as non-human beings. They were just nothing to them as they put it in the Dutch language, "Schepsels", creations of satan and Khoikhoi lives were worth nothing. ⁷

The ancestry of the Coloured people is as complex as their composition. Today, apart from the Muslims amongst the Coloured people, the majority are Christians belonging to a variety of denominations including "breakaways" from the mainline churches. Is there anything of the Khoikhoi religion, culture and customs in the Coloured community? Many would argue that it is a futile exercise to look for

them. Others like myself believe that there are many remnants of Khoisan culture, religion and tradition in the Coloured community especially those communities which are in the rural areas. It is my conviction that we must maintain the link between the Khoi past and that which is still to be found in whatever form within the Coloured community. These remnants of the past should be appreciated and can contribute to the cultural richness of South Africa and especially a new South Africa. The objective of this thesis is not to romanticise about the exotic past of which we know so little and understand even less, but to focus on the Khoikhoi and their religion and to see where in the Coloured community we can locate this cultural and religious continuity with the Khoisan past. Before one can arrive at this, it is necessary to discuss the Khoi, the religion and to ask the question if such a cultural and religious continuity would fit into the religious/theological scene today.

Many people have written about the Khoikhoi and their writings are of utmost importance to the understanding of the Khoikhoi. Witbooi and Bredekamp are two scholars from the Coloured community, who have ventured beyond the others in the sense that they have brought the Khoikhoi to their legitimate context.⁸ There were others who wrote about the hospitality of the Khoikhoi and painted a different picture of that which was recorded. There were also other travellers who passed by the Cape and

who wrote about the Khoisan, but their writings were limited by both the time that they spent there and their obvious curiosity, that remained at a superficial level.

In Chapter 2, I shall at first attempt to give a description of the religiosity of the Khoisan, and the perception of early writers and later missionaries on the question of the religiosity of the Khoikhoi. This chapter will conclude with a brief description of the role of mission stations and the mission effect on Khoikhoi traditional life. The Khoi's religion was seen by early historians from a western civilization perspective, whereas the religion of the Khoikhoi was embodied in their daily life activities.

Chapter 3 will focus on the disintegration of the Khoikhoi at the beginning of the 18th century and the virtual obliteration of their culture as fundamental to the origin of the Coloured people. Special reference will be made to the socio-economic and political factors which caused the Cape society to change from a pastoral nomadic Khoikhoi society, to a settlement of colonists. The study of Richard Elphick, on the Khoikhoi⁹, in which he describes the factors which led to the decline of the Khoikhoi community is useful. Here the focus on the land issue as the major factor in the disintegration of the Khoikhoi. Other factors such as

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cattle, trade, dispossession of the Khoikhoi and miscegenation, are factors which contributed to the disintegration of the Khoikhoi.

Chapter 4 will focus on the new class and what is left of the Khoikhoi tradition amongst the Coloured people. The Khoikhoi, alongside the slaves, the bastards,¹⁰ developed into a new class of people, who later became the Coloured people of the Cape. It was traditionally held that these people have in common with the Whites, the heritage of European civilization, which at the initial stages of European settlement was a Dutch culture. It has also been held that in all cultural aspects, they are closer to the Whites.¹¹ The Coloured people, then are spoken of as a group without a culture of their own, other than the European culture.

This paper will further attempt to demonstrate that today there are still residues of Khoi traditional religion, which have developed alongside the European cultural heritage. I shall show that a remnant of the Khoikhoi religious heritage is evident amongst the Coloured people even though it has been suppressed over the years. From time to time it emerges in folktales, ceremonies, rituals etc. It can therefore be said that the Khoikhoi culture has remained in a latent form alongside elements inherited from the Dutch culture. This is evident in a specific

strata in the Coloured community, mostly amongst the working class people of the Western Cape. Lastly, this chapter will maintain that the Khoikhoi traditional religious residues, amongst the Coloureds need to be salvaged by a discipline such as African theology, which can restore dignity to the tradition of the descendants of the Khoikhoi. In this section we shall only deal briefly with the challenges of further discussion and debate on this matter.

THE LIMITATIONS OF THIS PAPER

In 1972 a workshop was organized on the future of the Coloured people, where a broad group of people (with the exception of progressive political leaders) discussed the present socio-economic position of the Coloured people. This workshop was not only racist, but also sought to create a western Christian picture of the Coloured people, as quasi-westerners. Another workshop was held¹². This was an improvement on the image of the Coloured people, but it was not as detailed as one would expect. There have also been other attempts to describe psychological and social conditions of the Coloured people and also Social Anthropological research.¹³ It is, however, a fact that very little has been done to make a definite connection between the Khoikhoi and the Coloured people. Furthermore, virtually nothing has been done to establish

a cultural continuity between the Khoikhoi and the Coloured descendants, except maybe by Bennie Witbooi, who has attempted to make a strong case for continuity, by comparing beliefs, rituals and customs.¹⁴ Very little research has been done on the religious cultural heritage of the Khoikhoi amongst the Coloured people.

In order to establish the continuity, this paper has had to rely on historical and anthropological research and sources, noting that historical and anthropological sources have an inherent problem of limitations due to speculation and changing conditions.

The historical writings, the missionary reports and the official correspondence between the Dutch settlers and their masters in Holland, reflect not only their partiality to Western civilization, but also their arrogance towards the indigenous culture and religion of the people. In most cases, the Khoikhoi were regarded as a people without religion. Instead of inquiring into the tradition of the Khoikhoi, their kraals were destroyed and their culture trampled upon. They were moved onto farms, forts, army posts and mission stations, where they were taught a Western civilization.

The Khoikhoi religion and tradition were trampled upon, for a dispossession of cattle and land meant an end to

their tradition.¹⁵

Christianity was presented as the alternative to everything else; thus the karos¹⁶ was changed for a jacket. In its most negative form, Western Christianity came into South Africa to perform the function of legitimizing slavery, oppression and exploitation and most of all served to rob the Khoikhoi of their most precious possession in face of white settlement and control, namely their religion.¹⁷ Therefore, when the descendants of the Khoikhoi came to realise themselves as a new class, not out of choice, but through force, they found that their traditional religion was annihilated.

I would like to argue that the Coloured community has never fully accepted its position as junior heirs of the Western culture, but has time after time displayed its anger and disgust at what happened to its Khoikhoi and slave forefathers.¹⁸ There has not been much attention given to this, especially when it comes to African theology. Attention has always been focussed on those linguistic groups who survived to some extent the total onslaught of missionary and colonialist. As an unfortunate sector of the community, the African heritage of the Coloured people has been dominated by white ideals and values in religious thinking and experience. There is therefore, no homogeneous understanding of traditional

beliefs, rites and customs for the descendants of the Khoikhoi.

I maintain therefore, that not all the elements of the traditional lifestyle were destroyed with the integration of the Khoikhoi, but that some elements were carried into this new group, which remained with them to this day as evident in the folklore, rites and customs of the Coloured people and needs to be accorded a place in the sun of African theology.

CHAPTER 2

THE RELIGIOSITY OF THE KHOIKHOI

WESTERN RELIGIOUS ATTITUDES TOWARDS THE KHOIKHOI

MISSION AND ITS EFFECTS AMONGST THE KHOIKHOI

THE RELIGIOSITY OF THE KHOIKHOI

In this chapter, I am cautioned by E.G. Parrinder; that whilst we are sometimes amazed at the depth of ancestral religion and traditions, we should guard against the tendency to glorify our past, and not to speculate

"... for correct knowledge is more important than theory" ¹

For one could easily lose sight of the facts and significance of Khoisan religion and culture.

Khoi religion was complex and consisted of many fables, tales, rituals and myths.² Khoi religion embodied a highly philosophical element. The universe was not simply detached from them, neither were they detached from nature. This is a common perception in African traditional religion.³ The closeness to nature has often been misinterpreted as the Khoikhoi worshipping nature.⁴ Religion was not a pietistic show of faith, but was intertwined with the daily life experiences of the Khoikhoi. What is

significant though, is that Theal's observation seem to differ from that of Schapera when he recalls that the religion of the Khoikhoi is connected with customs which include the rites, traditions and beliefs which were handed down.⁵ This locates the centrality of the Khoikhoi's religious nature.

The Khoi religion included a philosophical or mythical plane, which distinguished itself to some extent from the Nguni and Sotho Tswana.⁶

The customs, rituals, dancing at the full moon, veneration of the ancestors in the symbolic ancestor, Heitsi Eibbib⁷ are all part of Khoi religious expression. Heitsi Eibbib was believed to have come from the East and was the most revered ancestor. He has been seen by many writers as representing the Deity.⁸ This is a wrong concept.

Schapera argues that many of the ceremonies, rituals and beliefs were expressed in secular activities, but does not really explain their religiosity:

"The beliefs and usages to death, on the other hand, lead more directly to a consideration of religion since this supreme and final crisis in human life is one of the most important sources for the Hottentot conceptions of supernatural agencies."⁹

Schapera's observation needs to be understood against the background of the division between the sacred and the secular, the primal and technology. For a long time Western scholars have perpetuated the division and it was only after the Second World War, that we have seen the emergence of an African consciousness, which allowed for the development of African sacred and secular to be put into a proper context.¹⁰ This has cast new light on the understanding of the religiosity in Africa.

When travelling (which the Khoikhoi were used to because of their nomadic lifestyle) and on passing a grave of a fellow Khoi, you placed a stone on the grave and pray at the grave. Every grave represents that of Heitsi Eibib and involved in this mythology is the protection that it afforded you. In paying tribute to Heitsi Eibib in which all ancestors have their origin, you are assured of protection against evil on your journey. The following is the prayer that was offered to Heitsi Eibib:

"Heitsi Eibib

Thou our Grandfather

Let me be lucky,

Give me game

Let me find honey and roots

That I may bless thee again

Art thou not our great

Grandfather

Thou Heitsi Eibib" 11

There were also the folktales on the origin of death. Death came into being, because of the disobedience of the hare. The mythology of death is here again connected with the universe. It connects the natural and universe into oneness. It is said that the moon commissioned the louse with an important message to the human beings:

"The moon said: 'Go to men and tell them, as I die and dying live, so you shall die and dying live.' The louse it was said, started with the message, but on its way was overtaken by the hare who asked on what errand he was bound. The louse repeated the message of the moon. Then the hare said, 'as you are an awkward runner, let me take the message.' With those words, he ran off, and when he reached men, he said, 'I am sent by the moon to tell you, as I die and dying perish, in the same manner, you shall also die and wholly come to an end.' Then he returned to the moon and told him what he said to men. The moon angrily reproached him, saying: 'Did you dare tell people a thing that I did not say?' And taking up a piece of wood, he struck the hare on the lip. Since that day the hare's lip was split."¹²

The hare's disobedience was the cause of death into the world and ever since the Khoikhoi people did not eat the flesh of the hare.

Whatever the Khoikhoi possessed culturally, in terms of their religion, rites and beliefs, were of no use to the colonists. Theal recorded a rich heritage of the Khoisan's great faith in the success of charms to protect them against evil.¹³ This is further connected with their magic, which according to Elphick caused together with other factors the considerable antagonism that prevailed between the slaves and the Khoikhoi. He mentions the case of a slave who accused a Khoisan woman of bewitching him.¹⁴

Theal reports on the Khoikhoi intellect as being far advanced in what he calls "their power of imagination". In underlying this statement he said:

"they speculate upon objects in nature, in a way that no Bantu ever did, and their ideas on these subjects though absurd, at least bear evidence of a disposition to think. They had names for many stars and groups of stars, which they believed were endowed with life."¹⁵

George Schmidt, in his diary, states that the Khoikhoi had an annual ceremony at the return of the seven stars, when they assembled and danced the "rieldans"¹⁶ and sang and prayed to Tiqua¹⁷ for a good year.

There is a reservoir of Khoisan religious thinking, but little has been recorded, for those first travellers who encountered the Khoisan were limited in both time and space, and those who wrote at a later stage during the

blooming of the white settlement, wrote about a tradition already in decay. These include recordings like those of Hoernlé and the man who has done the most important work on the Namaquas, Theophilus Hahn. ¹⁷

The problem is that very few have enquired systematically into the religiosity of the Khoisan, except maybe for Hahn. ¹⁸ Schapera maintains :

"..it is perhaps hardly possible, therefore, to arrive at anything like a full conception of the original religious cult of the Hottentots" ¹⁹

Monica Wilson, through anthropological research, has largely reconstructed the religion of the Khoisan people of S.A. Even Schapera, has divided the religion of the Khoisan into - supreme beings, ancestor, funeral, burial rights, magic folklore etc. ²⁰

The Khoikhoi's existence was intertwined with his belief in the supreme beings and the heroes of the sky. Tiqua, they believed, controlled the rain which was regarded as very holy. The African religious context did not possess highly elaborate temples or many earthly resemblances of the Deity or whatever name he was known by. In this respect, it differs from a number of other religions in the sense that it did not have physical images.

"The great creator has very few images or temples but is almost believed in everywhere" ²¹

There is no African that does not believe in the creator

or by whatever name it is known.

One of the earliest writers who gives a description of Khoikhoi religion has tried to systematize it in the following manner, namely, Tsui Goab, the moon as inferior Deity, Heitsi Eibib, Gaunab and the Mantis.²²

Kolbe expresses a very important fact which could have had a bearing on descriptions of Khoikhoi religion. He says that it was very difficult getting the Khoikhoi to speak about their religion. They were very reluctant to talk about their traditions and customs. This raises a number of questions as to what was recorded, as being simply observation or whether it was because of that interrelationship and interviewing which made it possible for early writers to write about Khoikhoi religion. He records that:

"Europeans made up their minds when Hottentot did not answer their questions, because Hottentot realised that the Europeans did not simply ask a question, but serving their own ends against the peace and security of the Hottentots."²³

Whilst this assumption may be true for many an earlier writer, it is definitely not true for writers like Theophilus Hahn, A.W. Hoernlé and others in their category.

The idea of Supreme Being or God has already been mentioned.

There are at times different translations of the name. George Schmidt, a Moravian missionary has mentioned the word "Tiqua" for God among the Hessequas at Genadendal. Even Kolbe translates Tsui Goab as Gaunyu Gaunyu, Gaunyu Ticqua - God of all Gods.²⁴ Tsui//Goab means the one who has a wounded knee. This was an injury which Tsui Goab received while in battle, with the Evil one or Gaunab. The former is the one who is the creator of all things, the Good one. He is the one who makes rain and who provides for the cattle. Theophilus Hahn, the missionary, recorded a prayer which was offered to Tsui // Goab during a rain ceremony:

"Thou o Tsui//Goab
 Father of our Fathers
 our Father'
 Let stream the thunder cloud
 Let our flocks live,
 Let us also live, please:
 I am so very weak
 From thirst,
 From hunger,
 Let me eat field fruits
 Art thou not our Father
 Father of our Fathers
 Thou Tsui Goab.
 That we may praise thee,
 That we may bless thee,
 Thou our Lord,
 Thou, Tsui// Goab."²⁵

This prayer together with the rain-making ceremony, indicated a sort of institution. However, Kolbe is of the opinion that Tsui//Goab was far removed and was not revered as much as the moon and Heitsi Eibib²⁶. This confusion was taken up by later scholars, who emphasised the importance of Heitsi Eibib as a deity. It is unlikely that Heitsi Eibib or the moon could have been above Tsui//Goab, the supreme one, who made all things. The two prayers cited in this chapter, clearly indicate that it is Tsui Goab from whom things are asked that could have only possibly granted by someone who had creative powers and who controlled the rain. The prayer to Heitsi Eibib is to bring luck and protection. Gaunab is the evil one. He is depicted as the opponent of Tsui Goab.

The moon did in fact fulfil an important function. It was not a deity. The moon as we have seen played a significant role in the mythology of life and death of the Khoikhoi people:

"The moon was therefore associated with immortality.

Every night when it was full moon or new moon, the Khoikhoi would sing and dance in worship."²⁷

The moon in its message to the louse assured men of immortality and the deceit of the hare invoked the anger and wrath of the moon. There is also a prayer offered to the moon during the full moon dance which was an whole night ceremony with people moaning and groaning as though

suffering with great pain as recorded by Hahn.²⁸
Kolbe also describes this dancing and singing and at the end he says, people go back to their homes very satisfied as other people do when finished with their religious obligations.²⁹

The prayer for the moon is as follows:

"I salute you or your are welcome
grant us fodder for our cattle
and milk in abundance."³⁰

It can be said that the moon does not fall within the supernatural beings like Tsui Goab, Gaunab and Heitsi Eibib. Although Kolbe is of the opinion that the moon is the representative of Tsui//Goab.

Another important part of the mythology or religious consciousness of the Khoikhoi is the mantis (hotnotsgod). It is said that if a mantis lands on you, luck and fortune has struck you. The mantis was revered amongst the Khoikhoi.

When faced by drought, the Khoisan, like other linguistic groups in South Africa, slaughtered an animal as a communal ritual to appease the ancestors and to bring rain. Tiqua was seen as their protector.

The decoration of sheep fat and bladders on their bodies and the isolation of old people to die rather than to face

WESTERN RELIGIOUS ATTITUDES TOWARDS THE KHOIKHOI

One of the problems that we have inherited from the early writers, whether historians, missionaries, state officials or others, was their perceptions of Africans and their yardstick by which they measured the religiosity of the Africans. They could not perceive that the Khoikhoi and the indigenous people had a religious experience prior to the coming of the missionaries. The indigenous people according to them, had no idea or knowledge of God, and thus the task of the missionary was to lead them out of savagery to the knowledge of the European God. In this process they disregarded the culture and religious pattern of the Khoikhoi.

There are two basic perceptions of Westerners towards Khoikhoi religion. On the one hand some acknowledge the existence of such and on the other hand reject all notions of religion amongst the Khoikhoi. Both positions are negative and do not take the African thought pattern and customs into consideration.

George Schmidt and others before him, like Theal, and much earlier Grevenbroek, who recognised the existence of religion amongst the Khoi. - whilst Schmidt recognised the supreme being, Tiqua. Grevenbroek records in 1659, that the Khoikhoi worshipped the sun and valued it

highly as the provider of all good. The moon, they despise. They call the sun - sore and the moon - cha, the latter also being the word for dying.³¹ Here one suspects a misunderstanding, for the Khoikhoi was closer to the moon than to the sun. There could have been some antagonism to the moon, because of the confusion around the message of death. However, at full moon, the Khoikhoi would dance and even Schmidt recorded that many of his converts would dance at full moon.³²

At the same time, the reports which early Europeans got from early recorders and travellers contributed to their negative attitude towards the Khoikhoi. That led them to conclude that the Khoikhoi were less than human and not capable of religious experience. These are the famous words of an eminent biographer, Emil Ludwig, who was

"told of what missionaries were doing in Africa, teaching the Africans about God. Ludwig was perplexed. Then he made his notorious remarks 'How can this be? .. Deity is a philosophical concept which savages are incapable of framing...'"³³

Although this was said many years ago, there is still a great deal of thinking which refuses to rid itself of this arrestation on African perception.

George Schmidt was mocked for his attempts to convert the Khoikhoi of the Hesequa tribe. The colonists, whites and

even Dutch Reformed church leaders did not expect anything to come from his efforts.³⁴

This was because of the belief that the Khoikhoi was incapable of religious thought:

"All the kaffirs or hottentots are bereft of all science and literature, very uncouthly and in intellect more like beast than men. Some, however, through steady intercourse with our country men gradually let the sparks of their human nature come to light, just as several at the fort are beginning to grasp the Dutch language..."³⁵

Furthermore in the absence of cathedrals, churches, bishops and other religious infrastructures as those they were used to whether in Lisbon or Amsterdam. This was clearly shown in the thinking of Olaf Dapper when he remarked that:

"they had no churches or any sort of congregations".³⁶
This is either a reflection of Dapper's lay understanding of Christianity or his naivety as representative of the thinking of Europeans.

"It seems deplorable"
as Walter Schouten noted in 1665,

"that Hottentot, although descendant from our father Adam, yet show little of humanity that truly they more resemble the unreasonable beast, than

reasonable man, having no knowledge of
God nor what leads to salvation"³⁷

echoes Elphick, the popular understanding of the time. The Khoi religiosity was measured by the European Christian doctrine of the Trinity, angels and the theological developments during that time.

It was therefore, the failure to find an European religiosity amongst the Hessequas, that led George Schmidt on his arrival, to make the following observation in a letter on 1737:

"Another thing my brother, the Hottentots worship nothing, they have the name of God in their language, which they call Tiqua, but they have no understanding of Jesus and of angels they know nothing. The devil, they call Gaunab"³⁸

George Schmidt reveals exactly the Western Christian and ecclesiastical prejudices in his failure to understand precisely what Tiqua and Gaunab meant, for even here, two social orders are reflected. Tiqua is the name of the supreme being, who is the provider and protector of the Khoikhoi and from whom all the Khoikhoi come. Gaunab is the name of the devil, who inflicts diseases upon the people and who at times employs people to cause evil unto other people.

One of the earliest recorders of Khoikhoi society was Olaf Dapper, who made a study of the Khoikhoi, and concerning their religion he said,

"No one, however, thoroughly he has enquired has been able to trace among all the Kaffirs, Hottentots and Beachrangers any trace of religion or any show of honour to God or the devil."³⁹

Their European prejudice and context of thinking, had led them to see nothing valuable emerging out of the Khoikhoi socio-cultural context.

One can understand why early writers and missionaries could not detect or understand the religiosity of the Khoikhoi. Both groups searched it with the Western Christian civilization detectors, and when they could find what they were looking for, they believed that there was no religion. It was only at the turn of the last century that serious investigation into the Khoikhoi religion was launched, which Schapera, Hoernlé and Hahn recorded. But it was not adequate to present a full analysis of Khoikhoi religious beliefs, for the Khoikhoi tradition at that stage was already in decay.

These speculations about the religiosity of the Khoikhoi

by early historians such as Olaf Dapper, cannot be recorded as historical facts. The knowledge of God and religion was not absent amongst the Khoikhoi and the other indigenous people, for the Khoikhoi in spite of the differences with the other linguistic groups shared in a rich religiosity that was bound up with their very existence and subsistence. However, the introduction of Christianity with Western civilization, left no room for the Khoikhoi thought and philosophy.

MISSION AND ITS EFFECTS AMONGST THE KHOIKHOI

This is a very important area of study and in itself needs a thorough discussion which cannot be contained here. Missionaries came to Africa with western 19th century rationalism. Therefore, the rejection of African culture and tradition must be seen against this background. Perhaps more arrogantly, African religious tradition or religiosity was rejected, because of white supremacy and the infusion of Westernism and Christianity which presented prejudices towards the "savages". As already stated there was opposition to George Schmidt working among the Khoikhoi. This opposition was later spearheaded by the Dutch Reformed Church, which opposed the baptism of Khoikhoi. The Dutch Reformed Church regarded itself as the state church and only official ministers could administer the the sacraments and the Dutch Reformed Church challenged his ordination. Their opposition continued and they therefore, wrote to the Classis in Amsterdam (council) saying that they had not found any evidence of conversion among the Khoikhoi.⁴⁰ Thus we ask whether they were opposed to Schmidt's baptism of the Khoikhoi, because of their opposition of heathenism or whether it was doctrinal issues.

Later on this attitude changed especially the farmers

who saw the effects of mission on the Khoikhoi. Farmers changed their minds, because they discovered that the mission station at Baviaanskloof contributed to their wants, and that a reliable conscientious and intelligent Moravian convert, even if paid reasonable wages, was a more profitable employee than a drunken, stealing, ignorant, savage though practically unpaid.⁴¹

The mission stations and especially Genadendal housed many refugees and wandering Khoikhoi and Khoikhoi who left the neighbouring farms.

Missionaries came with a zeal for preaching the good news and were not interested in contextualizing and indigenizing the gospel. Perhaps to have expected it would have been naive. Theophilus Hahn had the following to say regarding missionaries and their attitude towards Khoikhoi religion:

"Missionaries are too apt to treat the religions of the heathens as devil's work, as the inspirations of Beelzebub, and they do not hesitate to express this to their converts; nay they even ridicule and expose their superstitions and religious manifestations. Hence, the fear of a savage to communicate the sacred feelings and yearnings of his heart, especially to a man who is sent to destroy them."⁴²

Another problem was the reorganization of the people's lives. Bennie Witbooi, is of the opinion that people on the mission stations obeyed the missionaries, because they were under obligation to do so; and those who did not obey the regulations were expelled from the community and would have to seek employment on the neighbouring farms. ⁴³

The missionaries have become, and naturally so, from an oppressed point of view, the target of regret and bitterness. While they are hailed in some circles as men of great faith, the oppressed today have recognised them as bulldozers who flattened the road for the colonist. Perhaps we need to understand the missionary in his own milieu and should not measure him/him with measures of today. Having said that, it is important to recognise the weaknesses of the missionary enterprises, whether they understood it or not, they could only be understood within their own milieu.

Under missionary influences and especially at the the mission station the Khoikhoi entered the process of transition from a nomadic to permanent settlement. It was not only the Khoikhoi who were nomads but also to a large extent those who were cattleless and marginalized who attached themselves to mission stations at times for protection and livelihood. The mission station introduced

a rigid discipline and did not allow anything that was connected with the Khoikhoi tradition.

"...if a baptised person behaved contrary to the acceptable (Christian-western) moral standards he/she was excluded from the priviledges which other members enjoyed. An unbaptised person who behaved badly, however, had to leave the institute. Great emphasis was laid on the Christian way of life" ⁴⁴

This practice is still continued at many mission stations within the Western Cape.

The missionaries were agents of change and they ignored Khoikhoi mythology which they viewed as pagan. In the case of the Khoikhoi one wonders, whether one could have expected better from them.

CONCLUSION:

In conclusion, it cannot be overstated that the Khoikhoi believed in supernatural beings, described as Tsui Guab, Gaunab, Heitsi Eibib and in the Moon. These beliefs were intertwined with the totality of their existence. In spite of earlier European writers, travellers and officials and later perceptions which still linger on, the Khoikhoi religion is one that is not recorded on paper and in books, but it demonstrates, attributes/ elements which could make it a very contextual theology. The missionaries totally ignored and disregarded the Khoikhoi religion as paganism, which had to be rooted out and replaced with Western Christianity.

CHAPTER 3

DISINTEGRATION OF KHOIKHOI SOCIETY

- ADAPTATION OR COERCION
- THE LAND ISSUE
- SLAVERY, MISCEGENATION AND TRADE
- !NAU RITE DE PASSAGE

ADAPTATION OR COERCION

There are many questions surrounding the disintegration of the Khoikhoi community. Many reasons have been advanced as to why the Khoikhoi community has disintegrated. Suspicion cannot be ruled out when people speculate that the main ingredient was fragility or weak social organization or of the Khoikhoi which could not withstand the aggressive encroachment of the Dutch settlement and Colonial society.

Of all the Khoikhoi tribes, there are only two tribes left today in South Africa and few in Namibia. The tribes in Namibia are probably in a much better traditional position than those in South Africa, namely the

Nama (Namaqualand) and the Griquas in Kokstad. These two groups do not function as tribes, but have retained the language (mostly in Namaqualand) to a large extent and other traditional customs.

It would be naive to think that adaptation and assimilation into Dutch society was an easy one, one without difficulties. The following statement is, therefore, difficult to accept:

"It is in the readiness of man borrow inventions and accept new ideas and techniques that civilization has been built. Groups whose members fail to adapt to changing circumstances are dinosaurs doomed to extinction, but those who adapt live transformed."¹

This is an argument that one cannot accept without debate, for it leaves one with the impression that the Khoikhoi community in order to survive, readily accepted their new cultural and economic home. Adaptation was very difficult for the Khoikhoi. Even Krotao and Autshoma (Eva and Harry) discarded their western clothing when they reached their kraals on visits.² The idea that Khoikhoi readily accepted their position is refuted by the theory that their assimilation and disintegration was by coercion.

Bredenkamp upholds this position and refutes the theory of Giliomee that there was fluidity in social relationships³. There appeared a systematic mechanism of subjugation of the Khoikhoi which left the Khoikhoi without land, cattle and culturally confused. The latter being rescued by the work and support of the missionaries, who clothed these "savages" in Western Christianity.

The missionaries' teaching and influence through the Dutch language assisted the threatened and marginalized Khoikhoi to cope with this new social order. Yet it was this very mechanism which destroyed Khoikhoi culture. Thus while missionary enterprise was in the end beneficial to the Khoikhoi it was also a key ingredient in the disintegration. For the mission stations secured a permanent abode for the nomadic Khoikhoi who had since become dispossessed.

It was when the economy of the Khoikhoi was threatened by the loss of grazing land and cattle through raids and wars by the colonists, that the Khoikhoi community experienced the falling apart of their community. When this became apparent there were other Khoikhoi who moved further inland to avoid subjugation into colonial society.

It is uncertain exactly what the nature of social relationships were. It is obvious that there existed at least for some time, a great animosity between the Khoikhoi and Europeans. The slaves to some extent became the buffer between the Khoikhoi and Europeans in later years. However, there were Khoikhoi who had better relations with the Europeans than the others. This close contact also had other implications, namely intimacy, which led to sexual unions between slave, European and Khoikhoi, which in turn procreated "half-breeds". Other than this, there were also health considerations. Since close contact meant the spreading of diseases, which was to disadvantage the Khoikhoi and to a lesser extent the slaves, whose diet differed and could not offer a strong resistance, especially against the small pox outbreak of 1713.

Another factor which perhaps is not a cause, but a facilitator of one stage to another, is found within the Khoikhoi religious transitional rite, namely Nau. To the Khoikhoi community, which was leaving the old behind and facing a future which was unknown, which they were forced to enter, the Nau rites de passage became an important tradition on which they could fall back on.⁴ This was a way to cope with the new situation. For the presentation of a new social order presented devastating

effects for the Khoikhoi. The environment of the Khoikhoi was cut off from them and they were left at the mercy of the new order, in which they were cut off from what was known to them.

In their own world/social order they had a network, which allowed and nurtured the survival of the family unit, the clan, tribe and nature and allowed them to cope with disease, evil and misfortune. Ngugi, a West African writer says it aptly:

"The elaborate system worked out to cope with nature and with one another, were often destroyed, leaving human beings at the mercy of a social order more cruel and more incomprehensible in its chaos, its illogicality and its contradictions than Nature itself."⁵

It is the contradiction in this new social order that has haunted the descendants of the Khoikhoi to date.⁶ It is amazing that Khoikhoi society only started to disintegrate after the beginning of a permanent white settlement at the Cape. The Khoikhoi had had contact with European people for a number of decades prior to the establishment of the colonial society. Yet these contacts did not adversely affect them the way the Dutch settlement did.

THE LAND ISSUE

The disruption of the Khoikhoi community life started with the infringement of the right to the land. The Khoikhoi were nomadic people, who moved with their flock and cattle from one place to another; from one grazing field and waterholes or river to another. The seizure of these commodities by other hostile forces meant an end to Khoikhoi existence.

When the Dutch East India Company discovered the immense profitability of a refreshment station at the Cape, they began to foster a white settlement, by allowing the formation of a free citizens' (vryburghers) community, under the banner of their governor. This meant that land was given to them to venture agricultural enterprises. This move inevitably led to conflict. For the free citizens, became detached from the Dutch East Indian Company's Cape detachment, ploughed the fields on which the Khoikhoi grazed their sheep and cattle. This angered the Khoikhoi, who had until then been trading with the Dutch company.⁷

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The Peninsula Khoikhoi were quick to see this new development, impinging upon their way of life. They subsequently resisted this development in protection of their right

to the land.⁸ This resulted in a war (1659) in which the free men (vryburghers) were given endless power of killing the Khoikhoi and seizing their cattle. This is known as the first Khoikhoi-Dutch-War, which Jan van Riebeeck records as the war between the Gonjemans and the Dutch.⁹ Some of the Khoikhoi warriors fell captive and upon interrogation as to why they were attacking the Company's settlement and the Dutch

"Eykamma, one of the warriors who was injured in the war, replied by asking why the Dutch had ploughed over the land of the Hottentots, and sought to take the bread out of their mouth by sowing corn on the lands to which they had to drive their cattle for pasture, adding that they had never had other or better grazing grounds. The reason for all their attacks, he continued was nothing else than to revenge themselves for the harm and injustice done to them ... They saw their land divided before their eyes."¹⁰

Van Riebeeck's response was recorded in his diary in which he claims that the land is now lawfully theirs.

"They press this point (grazing land) so hard that their lands should be evacuated by us that we were finally compelled to say, that in the consequences of war made against us

they Hottentots had completely forfeited their rights and that we are not to restore them as the country had become the property of the Company by the swords and the right of law of the war."¹¹

At the very centre of the Khoikhoi mode of production was land and cattle, which not only symbolised their independent existence, but also their self-respect, upon which rested the vestibule of their traditional life. Therefore to the Khoikhoi land and cattle were inseparable and the one would be meaningless without the other.

The Khoikhoi tribes had the luscious plains of the Peninsula and Western Cape, which fattened their cattle and continued to exploit the full meaning of life in their tradition and community, but did not belong to any individual. This was contrary to the Western concept¹² and understanding of property rights and land rights. The Khoikhoi understanding of land was that of guardianship, good stewards of the land. Land ownership was not that of the individual.

"All the land claimed by a tribe was the common property of that tribe. It could under no circumstances become the property of an individual; nor was it the property

of the chief; and it was generally regarded as inalienable. In the early Cape records several instances are noted of land have been sold to the colonists by the Hottentot chiefs. It is more probable that such sales were looked upon by the Natives themselves not as alienation but as the granting of usufruct, and the "purchase" money as analgous to tribute paid for this use. Even in more recent times, when the concepts of sale and purchase had become generally familiar to the Hottentots, the alienation of land to other tribes was extremely rare. The chief had no right to dispose of land or any portion of it without first obtaining the consent of the families under his rule, and the purchase money had to be divided equally amongst them." 13

Whether the latter happened or not or whether some chiefs or even individuals who acted as estate agents, cannot be denied. What is important though, is that the principle which governed the right to the land was not understood by the Dutch. The Dutch understood private ownership, namely a cart and transport transaction. The generosity of the Khoikhoi in granting permission for the

use of the land which was misconstrued as granting the right of ownership.

It is notable that the Khoikhoi lost their land more rapidly than their cattle.

"Already in 1658 the Peninsula Khoikhoi had to remind Van Riebeeck that they viewed the area occupied by the settlers as part of their land. Van Riebeeck refuted this claim and after the establishment of the free burgher community along the Liesbeeck river in 1657, he ordered the Gorihaikas to remain east of it. This instruction meant to them a loss of their best grazing lands and traditional source of water."¹⁴

The dispossession of the Khoikhoi took place through wars, trade and granting permission for the usufruct of the land. Thus from very beginning land became an issue would dominate the history of South Africa to date.¹⁵ The loss of the land was not an easy thing for the Khoikhoi in fact, that it putting it mildly. The alienation from the land which they had inhabited for centuries was a traumatic experience for the Khoikhoi.

Earlier on in this study, we have mentioned that some

authors used the word "fragility" in describing the nature of the Khoikhoi independence and economy. Richard Elphick and Bredekamp argue that this tragic development resulted from the fragility of the social structure in the Khoikhoi society.¹⁶ They argue that because of its looseness and nomadic social relationship and not being able to build a powerful tribe, but different tribes and clans, they could not counter the Dutch colonization of the Cape. Andrew Smith who looks at the disruption of the Khoikhoi society is very cautious if not sceptical about this argument that the fragility of the Khoikhoi social structure contributed to the inevitability of the loss of land. He argues that the Khoikhoi were not only reluctant¹⁷ to alienate their land, but also their cattle.

"Perhaps the real answer (for this) may ultimately lie in the concepts of conservation that seems to have existed among those pastoral people. This ideology included both the needs to conserve the animals for food and breeding, as well as the land for maximizing their reproductive advantages."¹⁸

In spite of what Giliomee, Marks and Elphick advance as inherent weaknesses within the pastoral economy¹⁹, even Bredekamp and Newton King speak of fragility of Khoikhoi

independence. This argument brings to mind the question as to whether the Khoikhoi has ever experienced any disaster before. There are no written documents to shed light upon the history of the Khoikhoi. There is no doubt that the Khoikhoi must have experienced drought and perhaps severe drought. Apart from this, the contact with whites over a few decades had not weakened them prior to the settlement of the company. Hence it is important to understand Smith who speaks of the culture of ecology in the Khoikhoi tradition. He is of the opinion that a traditional

"pastoral economy was not so precarious and that inter-family relations were reciprocal"²⁰

He further compares it to examples from a nomadic tribe of West Africa, namely the Tuareg of the Sahel and of how they survived the drought of 1968-1973 through

"making use of available resources through cooperation"²¹

This case study provides important insights into understanding Khoikhoi consciousness of land and cattle. Smith's theory of reciprocity also suggests that the Khoikhoi came to one another's aid in times of need. This is perhaps clearly demonstrated by the wars of resistance against Dutch settlers and frontier boers. Thus, the major blow to Khoikhoi existence came as a result of loss of land and cattle.

"The main reason for the rapid disintegration of this recipient class structure suggested here were the pressures on the means of

production -- as a result of the loss of traditional pastures lands to the Dutch settlers and the bartering of Stock for non-productive commodities. This in turn created immunillogical stress within the pastoral community making them prone to alcoholism and epidemic diseases and leaving them no alternative but to enter the new Cape society at the bottom as menials"²²

The Khoikhoi did not simply alienate their land, precisely because of their existence and future. However, a people without land and cattle was like a people without a home, for the Khoikhoi had nowhere to stay and nothing to tend they then were forced to accept their role as unpaid or meagrely paid labourers or go to the mission stations.

SLAVERY, MISCEGENATION AND TRADE

Systematically, the Dutch deprived the Khoikhoi of their cattle, through bartering, war and cattle raids. The tension between Dutch and Khoikhoi was never absent. The Khoikhoi wanted to protect their land and cattle and the Dutch wanted everything they possessed. This systematic dispossession of the Khoikhoi, marked the beginning of the end of the community's disintegration.

After the war of 1658, in which the Dutch claimed victory, a new policy directed by the Here Sewentien in Amsterdam was executed by Van Riebeeck, who was the governor of the Cape. This policy was to establish a settlement which could mix cultivation and cattle breeding to become less dependent on the Khoikhoi, who at this stage became increasingly suspicious of the white settlement. In fact, the war was the result of this consciousness on the part of the Khoikhoi of the threat constituted by the white settlement and the bartering of cattle.

The Cape was now recognised as the property of the Dutch East India company and a fullscale utilization of the Cape was necessary to facilitate the Dutch East India Company's fleets which made the Cape the halfway station between the Netherlands and the East. For this project

to be viable labour was needed. At the initial stages there was a strong directive from the Here Sewentien, that the Khoikhoi were not to be antagonized, for they produced the cattle so much needed. Therefore, the plans of Jan van Riebeeck to forcefully enslave the Khoikhoi failed. He further motivated that the Khoikhoi were lazy and that labour was needed for the viability of the refreshment station and therefore requested more slaves.²³ Thus, labour was imported from abroad into the Cape as slaves.

Slave labour became an important factor in the expansion of the Dutch imperialism. In 1658, slaves were imported from Angola, Dahomay, Madagaskar and Mozambique. Even the Dutch East India Company fleets brought slaves from the East, Malaysia and Ceylon to the Cape. Slave trade at that time was very profitable and a great demand arose at the Cape for slaves.²⁴ Armstrong in particular makes special mention of the fact that there were large imports of African slaves between 1795 and 1808.²⁵ African slaves from different parts of the continent, with different backgrounds formed a large proportion of the the slave society in 1808.²⁶ The slaves with different languages and backgrounds were thrown together and the only medium of communication was the master's language, which was an underdeveloped Dutch and later became Afrikaans. The slaves lived in fear of their lives and did all sorts of work, from

the dirtiest to being chaperones. They were threatened with death and severe punishment for the most minor offences. The establishment of slaves at the Cape as a permanent feature influenced the disintegration of the Khoikhoi. The descendants of the Khoikhoi, Europeans and slaves did not develop on their own as distinct classes, but formed one class, because of their social status as bastards and servants. This was aggravated by the 1809 Pass law and the 1881 Masters and Servants Act.²⁷ It also appears that slaves were not only for economic purposes, but also to an assertion that masters were Christians and slaves were heathens,²⁸ thus even the controversy about baptising "heathens".

An important factor is that the slave women alongside the Khoikhoi women, were the centre of development at the Capo. Miscegenation took place on a large scale between slave and soldier and slave and owner, until well into 1834. This was welcomed in most cases by both sides of the fence; with different motives. To the slave women, according to Peter Kolbe, sexual contact, miscegenation meant the possibility of pregnancy, which would result in a six week exemption from hard labour.²⁹ For the colonist, the trader and the white settlement, it meant population growth and at the same time it was financially attractive, because it reduced the dependency on importing slave labour.³⁰ This of course was the motive for a long

term goal.

"At times a European-slave intercourse was encouraged (for it produced a stronger worker) to increase production output. It is recorded that a farmer employed an Irishman for the sole purpose of improving his stock (slaves)"³¹

Mentzel gives a demographical and topographical description of the life of a slave woman at the Cape, who was exploited by soldiers and describes how the soldiers stood in a queue at the residence of some of the slaves waiting for their turn.³² Mentzel believes that in spite of some legislation this sexual contact was encouraged, precisely for it was seen as the production of a local labour force. Slaves were also used as studs in the production of stronger slaves as mentioned before. Robert Ross on the other hand argues that whilst Mentzel was correct in his description of the actual position of the slave woman, he was wrong in his demography, for the company still had to import slaves to supplement the local labour.³³ MacCrone, however, supports the idea that sexual contact and miscegenation was encouraged between the various groupings on a large scale:

"so as to get a stronghold in the native country and to strengthen trade."³⁴

The Khoikhoi not only bartered with the Dutch, but the

Dutch also took Khoikhoi women as concubines. Only a few cases were reported of women actually marrying the Dutch, as in the case of Eva or Krotoa to Peter Van Meerhof, the surgeon.³⁵ The result of such cohabitation and sexual contact was the birth of a third group that was the link between Khoikhoi and European contact.

With the introduction of the slaves, the sexual contact took on a broader dimension between slave and Khoikhoi and slave and European. This miscegenation produced a class of people which increased whilst the Khoikhoi numbers decreased. Eventually this new class of people replaced both slave and Khoikhoi. Richard Elphick argues that unlike the other tribes in the Southern African context, where people had been conquered and subjected, the Khoikhoi's subordination was not only structural but also cultural.³⁶

The descendants of the Khoikhoi adopted the language, religion and many of the customs of the Europeans.³⁷ The Khoikhoi community had not only the "bastards" in their midsts, but also felt the European pressure to civilize the Cape including the Khoikhoi. The relations between the slaves and the Khoikhoi also introduced foreign elements in the Khoikhoi community. The Khoikhoi community was in turmoil, because of the decimation of their numbers

through the repressive raids, imprisonment, wars and European diseases. All these served as factors which threatened to disintegrate the Khoikhoi community.

"Any community can carry a number of foreign elements and even absorb them, provided the number remains limited, when such capacity is exceeded, however, we reach a breaking point."³⁸

The Khoikhoi, who by the mid-eighteenth century had lost its land and cattle and therefore, its traditional mode of life, by being assimilated into a new economy, could not resist further cultural pressure to be assimilated into the Western cultural life. Through the pressure which was put on the Khoikhoi community, it disintegrated.

The breaking point for the Khoikhoi was in those social factors which impinged upon the very essence and basis of Khoikhoi society and culture. The alien culture was not interested in establishing just a presence in the Khoikhoi community, but rather in establishing a new Amsterdam. This had serious implications for the immediate descendants of the Khoikhoi and in later years for their children. Their absorption into a new social order left them with no option, but to suppress their own culture which could not be accommodated in the new social order, which prescribed its own culture.

Although MacCrone disagrees with the idea that there was European supremacy at that stage, it was the Khoikhoi culture which was under attack, and it was the Europeans, regardless of their own social behaviour (for they were baptised), who demanded the Khoikhoi to be civilized. George Schmidt did, however, not think very highly of some of the Whites at the Cape and set out to convert some of them.³⁹

With regard to miscegenation, it seems that maybe on one level it was demanded that a distinction be made in terms of the Western culture vis-a- vis Khoikhoi culture, but that human nature disregards culture. In spite of their disgust at Khoikhoi culture and the smell of the decorations on their bodies, this did not prevent the Dutch from trading with them.

The Khoikhoi became an important factor in the commerce, trade and economies of the world. As such they were treated with the utmost sensitivity by those in charge of the Dutch company, the Whites who displayed antagonism towards the Khoikhoi were cautioned by the Here Sewentien in Amsterdam. On the one hand, good relations were encouraged officially, while on the other hand cattle thieving and Khoikhoi annihilation continued amongst the white settlers.

Systematically the Khoikhoi lost their cattle through raids and trade. When those things which constituted their very essence were taken away from them, their ability to survive was lost. By the end of the eighteenth century, the Khoikhoi were a landless proletariat. They were introduced on to a labour market, if they did not want to move further north and, secondly, they were subjected to the Colony's judicial system. There was very little they could appeal to. Any Khoikhoi who was not in the service of a White was a vagrant. So, together with the slaves and other persons of colour, they constituted the class of labourers. They were no longer only one group of Khoikhoi, they were landless and cattleless and their numbers had been reduced through European raids and diseases. There was nothing in the immediate vicinity to appeal to in the face of the devastating encroachment of Western civilization.

The disintegration of the Khoikhoi into a working class sector of Dutch settlement had occurred amidst a complex web of socio-economic and cultural factors.

!NAU CONCEPT

The Khoikhoi traditional customs were marked by a variety of rites and ceremonies, which governed the daily activities, events and lives of every Khoikhoi. When the Khoikhoi reached certain stages in his/her life, i.e. puberty or manhood or when certain calamities or even occasions like remarriage, birth etc. had befallen the Khoi, he/she dealt with it in a certain manner:

"All periods of crisis in the life of a Hottentot involve his separation from his usual surroundings and finally his reception in this group."⁴⁰

The Khoikhoi found themselves cut off and alienated. It was a crisis in the life of the Khoikhoi. They were !Nau and were in need of entering a new stage in their life history.

Bennie Witbooi⁴¹ explains part of the transitional loss of the cultural heritage of the Khoikhoi, by explaining the concept of !Nau. !Nau is a ritual of transition from one status to another. A woman who gives birth becomes !Nau. Before the birth she was regarded as a maiden and after the birth she joined the ranks of those who are mothers. After giving birth, she was secluded and observed a number of ritual restrictions, for she was regarded as profane. After she fulfilled the observance

of the ritual restrictions, she was purified by a mother with water⁴² and thereafter welcomed with a sacramental feast into the ranks of those who had given birth.⁴³

The concept of !Nau was therefore, a ritual of separation amongst the Khoikhoi and it served as a threshold from which the transitory process was made possible.⁴⁴

This concept was mainly explained and explored by Hoernlé.⁴⁵ She explained that at certain ceremonies, such as burials and puberty rites, that people who had been affected were separated from their ordinary day to day activities and only after fulfilling the prescribed rites and customs were they allowed to enter into full membership of the Khoikhoi community. Witbooi explains the Nau concept in his employment of A. van Gennep's rite of passage, wherein he outlines three positions of persons separating him/herself from his/her surroundings.⁴⁶

The Khoikhoi were marginalized by the beginning of the eighteenth century. Their daily life activities were not the same without their land and cattle. They were in need of a transition and therefore !Nau. The influence from outside on their traditional community and its disintegration made those who survived the onslaught profane, and therefore did not belong to any community

at that stage of disintegration. It is here that Christianity officiated in the preparation for their transition into a new community. Hence education became a priority in the life of the missionary church. Baptism and western clothing fulfilled the rite of transition and acceptance into the Dutch society. George Schmidt was opposed by the Dutch Reformed Church and in particular by Rev. Van Lier and as mocked by the Europeans at his attempts to convert the Khoikhoi. His baptism of Vehetge (Moeder Lena) and four other Khoikhoi caused a controversy over his position and constituted grounds for his departure from Genadendal. Later it was the same Dutch Reformed Church who undertook to convert and christianize the Khoikhoi. It is significant that this took place (after 1737) at a time when the Khoikhoi society was in fact in decay and the indigenous people and slaves were in a state of subjugation. However, the Dutch Reformed Church assisted the process of bringing the descendants of the Khoikhoi into western culture and Christianity.¹⁷

The impression given here is that the Nau concept facilitated the transitory period, for when the social changes demanded a change of culture, the Khoikhoi could relate it to their own experience of !Nau.

It was, however, not the first time that the Khoikhoi had been in contact with other groupings and the !Nau concept

had been a transitory rite amongst the Khoikhoi for a long time. But, Witbooi recognizes it only as a rite of passage as used by Christianity, unconsciously, in preparing the Khoikhoi for the new Dutch society.

There have also been attempts by nineteenth century evolutionists who put forward the argument that from time to time, cultural changes do take place in terms of universal stages, which they call unilinear evolution, which postulates that all societies pass through similar development stages.⁴⁸ Steward, however, does not agree with this, and argues that cultural changes in a society do not take place, because its time has come, but rather there are socio-political causes that spark off cultural changes.⁴⁹ Changes in culture are not so much a natural phenomenon, but must be seen in the broader socio-political changes around it.

Bennie Witbooi, is therefore, correct in saying that as a necessity, when the entire social structure of a given society changes, a change in the cultural pattern follows naturally.⁵⁰

CONCLUSION:

Much has been said about the Khoikhoi disintegration. The land issue has been dealt with extensively and it was the disruption by a settler free men (vryburger) community, which infringed upon the rights of the Khoikhoi which led to war, raids and dispossession. The Khoikhoi suffered under the hands of the Dutch settlers and when they were cut off from their very means of existence, the Khoikhoi became victims of social evils such as alcohol. This was further complicated by intermarriages and miscegenation and the involuntary use of the Dutch language. It is sad, indeed that the principle that governed the true steward of the land had been crushed under the heels of Dutch colonialism, which was fuelled by greed and selfishness of the first white settlers at the Cape.

This disintegration of the Khoikhoi had tremendous psychological consequences for their descendants, This has not been dealt with in any real study.

"The tremendous dislocation and confusion which must have followed the transition from a pastoral life, free from foreign and white interference, to a life in subjugation to a foreign power, is clearly seen in the position of the Khoikhoi and the eventual disintegration of the Khoikhoi community"⁵¹

It is in this transitional period, that one can find the supposedly lost heritage, which was obscured in the cultural foundations of this new class of people.

In their trading they were the people who determined the relationship between them and the Dutch, but when the Dutch were in control, because of the war and dispossession of the Khoikhoi, the Dutch determined the relationship. For the Khoikhoi were cut off from the means of production and were subject to the demands and commands of the ruling class.

In their existence as pastoralists and nomadic people, their tradition was strong and their cultural values and norms intact, but when their existence changed, their values and norms also changed. The Khoikhoi therefore, changed from a pastoralist free traditional community to a landless proletariat and subjected workers.

The !Nau rite of transition assisted the process of transition from the Khoikhoi's social position of alienation and marginalization into a new community, namely, the Christian Dutch community. It can thus be argued that without the !Nau concept, Christianity might have had a difficult task in converting the Khoikhoi. For the !Nau rite of transition indicates the Khoikhoi's understanding of his position and his

need to go into a better position. Thus the success of Christianity was not so much the success of the charisma of the preachers and the repression, but of the conviction of the Khoikhoi.

Christianity took over the function of the rite of transition, namely !Nau. This is an indication that the Khoikhoi were not moulded from nothing into something in a process which they did not understand, but in fact that they could identify with it, for their own religion demanded that one who is alienated needs to be brought back to take up his rightful place in the community of believers

CHAPTER 4

THE CULTURAL POSITION OF THE DESCENDANTS OF THE KHOIKHOI

The descendants of the Khoikhoi has occupied a very special yet incomprehensible position in the cultural scenario of in South Africa. The Coloured people, the descendants of the Khoikhoi have traditionally been aligned with the Western culture, because their whole lifestyle, it seems appeared to have been that of the white people. There is also a tendency among Coloured people to view themselves as better than the African people, because of the European blood. They would easily show pride of their English or Dutch grandparents, but not of the African ancestry. These are of course generalizations and generalizations are dangerous, bordering on unfound facts. Yet one cannot help to see the suppression of what reminds them of their Khoikhoi past.

Everything is not lost. There is still much to unearth within the Coloured community, the remnants of Khoikhoi culture and tradition. Doing this excavation amongst the ruins of Khoikhoi past, one discovers our wealth of culture and tradition that accompanied the formation of the Coloured community.

This is not going into the past to affirm tribalism and racism, but as stated by Bennie Witbooi:

"it must be seen as an attempt to transform radically the self-image imposed by the ruling elite and to discover anew the roots that now constitute the self."¹

It must also not be seen as a going back to the roots per se, in the sense that the present is abandoned. It must be perceived as an end to compensate the loss by clinging to the oppressive culture and a rejection of roots and formation. However, there are also danger signals on this road, which caution that culture should be understood fully and not

"have some mystical notion that culture is carried in the blood and those who abandon their traditional culture cannot acquire any other, speak of loss"²

This, however, is built on the assumption that, that which is lost can never be traced.

To maintain that the Khoikhoi culture can be salvaged in its original form, is a gross misunderstanding of the nature of culture and what has happened to the Khoikhoi. Further more it is a "cul de sac". It would hardly be possible to introduce the Khoikhoi language or anything of which the Coloured community has long since left, like the rite of incision. What is needed though, is to accord

the remnants of Khoikhoi culture its rightful place in the Coloured community and cultural context of South Africa. Furthermore it should be accorded a place in the development of African theology, for it falls within the discipline of African Traditional Religion. Nguni and Sotho Tswana has dominated the African theology debate south of the Limpopo. Now is the time to introduce the Khoikhoi religious heritage also into the debate of African theology, which will become increasingly important in the light of the changing political conditions within the country.

The Coloured people is a group of people whose cultural tradition is guaranteed by the Freedom Charter. They are part of the South African people as a whole. They are not special in the sense that any group in South Africa is special. Yet we must recognize that their formation is different from any other group within the South African context. It is very difficult to keep the term, race out of this discussion, because of the fact that race has governed the daily lives of all citizens of the South African people. Therefore, whilst race is unaccepted, it is necessary that it will appear especially when there are references to the groupings that combined to form or to contribute to the formation of the Coloured community. However, race is in any case a nonsensical word. There is only one race, the human race, but human beings in

pursuit of political power have created many races and that dominates perceptions, opinions and judgements. Race and racial traits are inborn. This has been proved wrong.

"Applying mental tests to racial groups so far, however, psychologists have not succeeded in devising a test which will measure inborn ability. The results obtained indicate only performance and the latter obviously depends not only on inborn gifts, but also on his/her education, his/her environment, his/her temperament and his/her general outlook on life."³

We can then safely conclude that race and traits are not inborn abilities, but depends on outside factors.

There were many descriptions of the Coloured people. This was in line with the racist pattern of description which was laid down by early writers. There are many descriptions of the forebearers of the Coloured people. To go into them would be a useful exercise, but not appropriate at this stage. Though it is important at least to give examples of such descriptions of the Khoisan people:

"The Bushman, who seemed to have been the aboriginal race, where dwarf in size, loose-skinned, with yellowish brown complexion.

abnormally ugly faces and scaly hair which
grow in isolated tufts ..."⁴

They were to be exterminated, many lost their lives. In the same vein as the above quote, the writer continues to describe the Khoikhoi as

"equally ugly and lazy"⁵

and with the aid of western civilization, they might improve.

These are the unfortunate perceptions that have permeated the South African society and which were prevalent within missionary ideology. Most of their descriptions include racial prejudice. Strassberger, whose parents were Rhenish missionaries, who worked among the Khoikhoi and their descendants wrote this about the Coloured people by way of describing them:

"From a racial angle, the Coloureds are the most difficult group to classify, possessing as they do no unifying characteristics of race or origins or customs as in the case of the Bantu."⁶

This idea was so internalized, that at one stage it was probably the only way of understanding the Coloureds as close to the Whites, the backyard or stepchildren of the Whites. Although many other groups like slaves and European contributed it is in fact the Khoikhoi community which refused to die and the descendants of the Khoikhoi

continued as the Coloured community.

Facial features or racial traits as anthropologists describe it are not the criteria, for among the Coloured people there are many people who still resemble the old Khoikhoi. What is indeed pathetic is the fact that the language has disappeared and that they are cut off from the land, although their forebears collectively owned the Cape.

The Coloureds have been given a status as a people in the making. This of course becomes a great point, given the current political developments and the history of resistance which have united a large sector of the Coloured people into the programme of the African National Congress. Is the Coloured then not a "new race" or is it part of the population of South Africa alongside the other groups?

"When the hybrids from a significant proportion of the population, they tend to become isolated from either parent race and a stabilization of a new racial type occurs. In such a case we observe the genesis of what is in effect a new race. This is true of S.A. Coloureds who are in every sense of the word a race in ⁷ Statu Nascendi"

Since the end of the eighteenth century, the descendants of the Khoikhoi, slaves and Europeans in the Western Cape,

have been known first as Bastards, Basters, Brown people and today the Coloured people.⁸ They have essentially remained a working class sector. The cultural position of the Coloured people has always been a point of serious discussion and disillusionment. During the transitional period and integration, the Khoikhoi descendants in the Cape were assimilated into the Dutch culture, which was stronger due to the Dutch socio-economic infrastructure; they became wholly christianized in the Western religion and culture.

This was not the case with the Khoikhoi further inland, such as the Griqua and Namaqua groups, who have to date preserved some of their original Khoikhoi tradition. They managed in spite of white intrusion and domination, to maintain their cultural heritage to a lesser extent than those of the Nguni people. Therefore, while they maintained to a large extent a hegemonic nature, their counterparts in the Western Cape, remained heterogeneous due to their experience. This experience include the large scale miscegenation, decimation of their numbers, slave and European cultural influences and the disposs-
ession of land and cattle.

A commission into the socio-economic and political position of the Coloured people, known as the Theron commission,

found that the Coloured people are wholly westernized. The only group which to some extent has retained its identity in spite of its constant trekking is the Griquas⁹

In another case study by J. Leeuwenberg, on Leliefontein, he maintains that some Nama ancestral beliefs concerning death and burial still persisted in that community and that the "rieldans" is still a favourite.¹⁰ Yet, he also argues that many of the Nama customs which have remained with them, have undergone transformation.¹¹

What made the Griquas, especially those under Adam Kok III, different from other groups, was their ability to maintain their political structure until a few years ago.¹²

It was obvious that the working class had developed out of the ruins of the Khoikhoi community and could not appeal to any other political structure based on an African tradition, rites and beliefs, for there was not such a structure after the social change took place.

A further factor, apart from their position as workers was the missionization of this working class, which gave them a sense of belonging to a certain class of people. Christianity has, according to Van Gennep's theory, prepared the slaves and Khoikhoi; and has brought them from their

alienation into the ranks of the Christian believers.

This working class community, the Coloureds, became the closest to Western Christianity, closer than even the Nguni communities. This was because, they were a group of people from different backgrounds, subjected to the Dutch colonial powers and culture and language, whereas the Nguni tribes were not exposed to white domination before the middle of the eighteenth century and did not have the same socio-cultural experience such as the Khoikhoi. It appears that nothing had been transferred from the original tradition of the Khoikhoi, who formed the largest part of their ancestry, into this new Western life and tradition.

Van der Merwe, who took part in the Theron commission, remarked, that outwardly, the primitive religion which the forefathers of most of them had ascribed to, had disappeared.¹³

Theron, therefore, concludes that the present day Coloureds share with the present day Whites, an European heritage, in terms of religion and culture.¹⁴ This, however, needs to be discussed. The descendants of the Khoikhoi did not choose to be Coloured, but were forced by the socio-political changes which took place during the first hundred years of white occupation at the Cape, and have over the years

suffered in more than one way.

"Through their slavery and subsequent dependence, the Coloureds involuntarily took on a culture that in nearly all respects is the same as that of the white South Africans, an important exception is the Muslim religious subgroup."¹⁵

The Muslim religion, Islam, is a religion that governs the ordinary life activities. Religion is their culture.

MacCrone speaking of slavery at that time argues that

"slavery was no longer a form of cheap labour, but an institution and the slave was no longer the unpaid servant of his master, but a valuable piece of property belonging to his owner."¹⁶

When the Church Council of Batavia responded to the baptism of slave or heathen children, it said that should such a child be baptised, the owner has the responsibility to bring them up and teach them so that they can make a confession and on the day of confirmation be set free. Many of the colonists and slave owners, for fear of losing their slaves, encouraged their slaves to remain followers of Islam or heathens.¹⁷

However, the colonists demanded from the Khoikhoi and the slaves, a certain behaviour pattern and mannerisms in their social relations, which were not contrary to theirs. This

is then the failure of those scholars and scientific researchers who co-opt the Coloureds into their cultural milieu without explaining the reasons that led to such an involuntary acceptance of European culture.

It is true to a large extent that the Coloureds share with the Europeans most of their cultural traits, but it is not true to argue that the Khoikhoi and slaves were too eager to accept white civilization and culture. It is correct that at the beginning of white settlement, the Khoikhoi and slaves were not forced to be assimilated into the European culture. But,

"The whites have been the rulers of the Cape for a long time. There, their ideas have been the ruling ideas, their perceptions upon which policies have been formed, their vision of non-whites. The one with which non-whites have been forced to deal."¹⁸

Perhaps the most devastating effect on the life of the Coloured community, which has made that community a constantly changing one, is the result of the twentieth century Apartheid policy and in particular the Group Areas Act.

"The Coloureds of S.A. followed closely by the Indian community, have suffered the most from the Group Areas Act removals."¹⁹

The Group Areas act never allowed the Coloured community a chance to foster meaningful rehabilitation of their

ancestral heritage. District Six is the symbol of the Coloureds' agony of removals. For removals mean that different people are constantly thrown together all the time. Uprooted from one tradition into another. Clearly a sense of unity and solidarity takes years to take root. This is seen today in the townships. Older townships which have not been affected so much by the Group Areas Act have shown a remarkable strength of unity.

Van der Merwe²⁰ is therefore correct in saying that in the Coloured community, outwardly, there appears to be no sign of their ancestral religious heritage, apart from the slave-islamic influences. But, the descendants of the Khoikhoi have always been exposed just to the Christian religion and Dutch-British culture.

"The ideas of the ruling class are in every epoch the ruling ideas, i.e. the class which is ruling, the material force of society is at the same time the ruling intellectual force. The class which has the means of material production at its disposal, has control at the same time over the means of mental production so that thereby, generally speaking, the ideas of those who lack the the means of mental production are subjected to it. The ruling ideas are nothing more than the expression of the dominant material relationships grabbed as ideas."²¹

Therefore, Christian missionization was done on the basis of strengthening the position of the ruling class.

Even those missionaries who were not of Dutch origin, when it came to social life did not necessarily introduce their own native culture, but that of the dominant power. In the case of the German Moravian missionaries, Rev. Moos of Elim Mission station said that the German ministers taught and ministered in Dutch and not in German. Socialization therefore, took place in a Dutch medium and environment.²² Not only did the descendants of the Khoikhoi accept the dominant culture, but they also accepted what was said about them. The initial negative image of the descendants by the Europeans came also to an extent to be accepted by the dominated.

"Therapeutic as well as reformist verify the sad truth that in any system based on suppression, exclusion and exploitation, the suppressed, excluded and exploited unconsciously accept the evil image, they are made to represent by those who are dominant."²³

History, has however, shown us that the dominated class never has accepted its domination and image as non-entities without protest. The Khoikhoi resisted the encroachment upon their liberty, through wars and guerilla attacks

on the intruders. The European powers, however, forced them to subjugation, in spite of some success. Those who refused to be landless and under white domination, went further inland and joined other Khoikhoi tribes, but they were few in number.

A number of traditional Khoikhoi beliefs have remained with the descendants, unlike the belief that they have been lost or destroyed during both the transitional and disintegration period. This residue of Khoikhoi beliefs, religion and tradition, have been suppressed and not destroyed and has in a latent form remained alongside Afrikaans with the Coloured people from the Dutch settlement period till today.

In an unpublished paper²⁴ which contained research into the rites and beliefs of the Coloured people, which I have done primarily in Bishop Lavis, a township in Cape Town and in Kokstad, amongst the Griquas, for the Federal Theological Seminary's Faith and Culture course, a number of Khoikhoi religious beliefs and traditions emerged. Most of the people interviewed in the research in Bishop Lavis were from the working class, which corroborates Gerald Stone's²⁵ thesis that the lower class Coloureds identify much easier with the Khoikhoi ancestor as opposed to the middle class quasi-whites, who would only identify with a distant forefather in Europe.

The Khoikhoi culture was latent and was never given an opportunity to surface, due to the historical dominance of Christianity on the thought pattern of the Coloureds. The descendants of the Khoikhoi were taught all the bad and ugly things about the Khoikhoi and even the museums displayed figures of the Khoikhoi, that provoke a mockery of their bodies and face. This negative attitude has been cultivated by the education system and the propaganda. In spite of that, from time to time, the Khoikhoi culture emerges at funerals, at the grave side, in folktales and moral lessons. Even the mantis has remained as a symbol of good luck and prosperity. The rain is still regarded as holy and controlled by God.

After a burial those who attended are to wash their hands at the gate of the deceased's house. This ritual signifies the cleansing of those who were at the burial. Water is still seen as an element of purification. Even the sea is perceived as a purifier. When a person experiences bad luck, or comes from jail he/she is to wash him/herself in the sea. Even when there is a quarrel between neighbours, it is sometimes said that the one insulted the other so much that even the sea cannot wash it off.

When you visit the grave, you must put a stone or handful of soil on to the grave to greet the deceased person and

at the same time talk to the deceased.

The problem today is not that the Coloured community lacks traditional cultural heritage and religiosity, but rather that the historical formation of the Coloured people has made it virtually impossible for its traditional heritage to come into the new formation and integration with other groupings. The cultural religious heritage has been carried along, like a second skin, and has from time to time been exposed. The Black consciousness in the seventies, was no doubt an opportunity for this to be shown, and had culturally at least given a home for many Coloured in the face of white racism and Western domination.

AFRICAN THEOLOGY?

"Why is it," said he "(the San)" that we are persecuted and oppressed by the Christians? Is it because we live in desert lands, clothe ourselves with skins, and feed on locusts and wild honey? Is there anything morally better in one kind of raiment or in one kind of food, than another? Was not John the Baptist, a Bushman? Did he not dwell in a wilderness? Was he not clothed with a leathern girdle such as we wear? And did he not feed on locusts and wild honey? Was he not a Bushman? Yet Christians acknowledge John the Baptist to have been a good man. Jesus Christ (whose forerunner he was) said that there has not risen among men a greater than John the Baptist. He preached the doctrine of repentance to the Jews, and multitudes attended his ministry; he was respected even by the Jews, and preached before a great king. It is true that John the Baptist was beheaded, but he was not beheaded because he was a Bushman, but because he was a faithful preacher; and where then, do the Christian men find anything in the precepts or example of their religion to justify them for robbing and shooting us, because we are Bushmen?²⁶

This statement by a "heathen" shows not, only a theologically

active mind, but also an exposure to the abuse of Christianity by men and women who professed to be followers of Jesus Christ. The Khoisan were religiously very active and as pointed out were perceived as people with God and Religion. This inquisitive mind of the J.B. Philips interview (in the previous quote) shows not only an understanding of Christianity but even wants to draw some comparisons.

The Khoikhoi, as stated earlier were people who were close to nature, and at times they were accused of being nature worshippers. Their religious consciousness was all inclusive, the land, rain, cattle, rituals and traditions were all part of it. They lived in nature and nature was part of them. It was this closeness to nature which was not understood. This has led

"to a judgement on the Khoikhoi religion, which was essentially part of the African tradition religion, in a very negative manner."²⁷

The Khoikhoi-African was not aloof from his environment and missionaries ignored the African context and contribution it could have made to make Christianity indigenous in a context where such a process was and still is needed to make Christianity more meaningful to the Africans. Theology after all is rooted in:

"among other things, man's experiences or a people's experiences"²⁸.

However, the African experience did not count for Western Christianity and Western culture were inseparable. Especially the missionaries were more zealous in stamping out everything that was connected with heathenism. Their mission stations were so organized in order not to let the converts form part of the former life. The people were taken out of their normal surroundings into a new settlement, new set of guidelines, that regulated everything, eating, drinking, sleeping and clothing.

"The African religious consciousness and Weltanschauung were not acknowledged as possessing much validity or value. 29

It is in this context that a discipline like African theology becomes important.

African theology has also been misunderstood as a way of taking people back to the past, back to heathenism. Perhaps questions are raised when this discipline seeks to embody elements of a long lost religious culture. In no way is African theology a way back into the past. It is a recognition of what makes the African whilst being a Christian, turn back to the ways of the forebears. Within Khoikhoi descendants there are also factors which are still prevalent in the community. In our community we too have diviners and people call them "slim manne" or "Doekoms". When a person is in need, is sick or at times of calamities, he/she goes to the diviner. Many of

these people are Christians. Even the whirlwind which was connected with the souls of the departed is still today regarded as such. Children are usually warned not to go near a whirlwind, lest the evil spirit gets them. The ritual around the burial may not be as it was in the past, yet today we wash our hands after the burial. We bid the departed farewell with the words: Greet the others, we are following soon.

When we went to visit the grave of my father, my mother took some soil in her hands and touched the forehead of my son. I compared this with the practice of the Nama. Upon entering the hut (netmathuisie) of the semi-nomadic Nama in the North western Cape all the young children are greeted by the host by wiping his or her hand on the mud floor and taking the dust and touching the forehead of small children. In response to a question as to why they do this, they asked whether the child was restless or uncomfortable, which no one was. This they said, was proof that the ancestors were happy and had welcomed us.

African theology is an investigation into this; traditional African religion.³⁰ It attempts to bring out the elements in African theology, which can complement Christianity in its task of spreading the gospel to the Africans.

What is needed today, is a process whereby what is latent, becomes visible and takes its rightful place in the thinking of that sector of the community, which has long been the children who played in the backyard of western civilization. What is called for, is not so much a retraditionalism, but a fresh appreciation of the past. To take the Coloureds back to the original Khoikhoi tradition of which most had been taught to forget, and of which most know very little, would be too ambitious and from the onset, a cul de sac.

"But a move towards renewed respect for indigenous ways and the conquest of cultural self-contempt, may be minimal conditions for cultural decolonization."³¹

This is an important aspect in the liberation of enslaved people, the cultural captivity, which has led to some of the socio-political problems in the community.

Leopold Songhor states:

"the cultural imperialism as we too often forget, is the most dangerous form of colonialism, because it obscures awareness. The lack of political will for an economic transformation may in part be due to a state of mental and cultural dependency. We have seen that there can be no political liberation without cultural liberation."³²

This is then where the folklore and parts of the suppressed culture of the descendants of the Khoikhoi can contribute to the development of African theology in S.A. African theology can rescue the remnants of indigenous religious and cultural traditions of the Khoikhoi in the Coloured community, for African theology has done the rehabilitation of the African consciousness.³³

African theology for G. Setiloane is an attempt to verbalize African reflection about Divinity (do theology) from the perspective of African grassroots background and culture.³⁴

CONCLUSION:

Therefore, the task of African theology is twofold, one of salvaging those cultural religious elements which face not only suppression, but also extinction by Western Christianity. Secondly, African theology should employ the Nau concept to bring back the descendants of the Khoikhoi to a better understanding of themselves and their religious experience. Also it must be used to open the eyes of the descendants of the Khoikhoi, to see that the Christianity which was handed down to our forefathers and foremothers in western garb,

"was not distilled and purified and can never be found in that state anywhere." ³⁵

There are a number of Khoikhoi symbols, the moon, the mantis, the grave rites, which can be incorporated into the Christian experience to liberate the descendants of the Khoikhoi from the schizophrenic which has plagued the community for nearly three centuries.

NOTES

CHAPTER 1

1. Schapera, I. (1930) *The Khoisan People, Bushmen and Hottentots*. London, George Routledge House.
2. The early cape Hottentots described in the writings of Olaf Dapper (1668) Willem Ten Rhyne (1686) and J. De Grevenbach (1695) ed. I Schapera (1933) *Cape Town, Van Riebeeck society*. p. 77
3. Baladji, I (1969) *Biblical Revelation and Africa* eds. Kwesi Dick and Paul Ellingworth London (1969) Lutherworth Press. p. 15
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5. Marais, J. (1968) *The Cape Coloured People*, Johannesburg University Press. p. 3
6. Elphick, R. (1985) *From Kraal to Castle*, Johannesburg Ravan Press p. 175
7. Taylor, J. (1901) *A History of Moravian Missions in South Africa*. Bethlehem Times Publishing Co. p. 15
8. Witbooi, B. (1983) *The Decline of the Khoikhoi - From Freedom to Bondage*. M.A. Thesis University of California.
9. Elphick, R. (1985) *From Kraal to Castle* Johannesburg Ravan Press.
10. Bastards or baster (Afrikaans) was the name given to the offspring of Khoikhoi and European union.
11. Botha, D. (1972) *Die plok van die kleurling*, in *Coloured Citizenship in S.A.* Workshop report eds. M. Whisson and H. van der Merwe. The Abe Bailey Institute of Interracial Studies U.C.T. p. 79
12. *Occupational and social change among Coloured people in S.A.* Centre for Intergroup Studies. (1976) eds. H. van der Merwe and C.J. Groenewald. Cape Town, Juta Company.
13. *The Theron Commission, Die kleurling bevolking van Suid-Afrika*. (1964) eds. E. Theron and M.J. Swart Stellenbosch, University Press.
14. Witbooi, B. (1986) *Liminality, Christianity and Khoikhoi tribes: Hammering swords into ploughshares*. eds I.J. Mosala and B. Thlagale. Mary Knoll Orbis Books.

15. Debroey , S. Zuid-Africa naar de bronne van de apartheid Kasterele. Debroey p. 19 argues that cattle was their only guarantee to their independence. The Cape Times (21/01/88) reported on the Namas in Karkams (Garagams) in the Leliefontein district, where a Nama prevented his stock from being confiscated by the Coloured Management committee, saying:"if I lose my stock, It would have been losing my life"
16. Karos was a piece of leather clothing which covered most of the top of the body. It is made of sheepskin.
17. Debroey , S. Zuid-Africa naar de bronne van de Apartheid Kasterele p. 81
18. Mary Simons in a paper on organized political movements traces the contribution of Coloureds to the liberation movement from the last century to Gomas and Alex La Guma and the African Peoples Organization of Dr. Abduraghman et al.

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1. Parfunder, E.G. (1962) African Traditional Religion London S.P.C.K. p. 13
2. Schapera, I. (1930) The Khoisan people, Bushmen and Hottentots. London, George Routledge p. 357
3. Dickson, K. (1984) Theology in Africa Maryknoll Orbis Books p. 73
4. Du Plessis, J. (1965) A History of Christian mission in S.A. Cape Town Kruik p. 6
5. Theal, G.M, (1964) History of South Africa before 1505, C. Struik Cape Town reproduced from the Star edition.
6. Schapera, I (1930) The Khoisan People p. 357
7. Wilson, M and Thompson, L. eds History of South Africa to 1870 London (1982) (3rd edition) Oxford University Press. p. 7
8. Ibid p. 62
9. Schapera, I (1930) The Khoisan People p. 357
10. This happened after the rise of African Nationalism swept the African continent and the emergence of African theology. The European frame of thinking and philosophies were replaced by African frame of thinking.
11. Schapera, I. (1930) The Khoisan people p. 384

12. Ibid. p. 357
13. Theal, G.M. History of S.A. before 1505 p. 107
14. Elphick, R. (1982) Die Khoisan tot c 1770, in 'n Samelewing in wording, 1652-1820 eds. Giliomee, H. and Elphick, R. Cape Town Blackshaws Ltd. p. 33
15. Theal, G.M. p.107
16. Rieldans, a dance which goes in circles, with the clapping of hands and stamping of feet to music.
17. Das Tagebuch und die Briefe von George Schmidt ed. translators: Bredekamp, Hatting, Krüger and Plüddeman. Weskaaplandse Instituut vir historiese navorsing Bellville 1981 p. 56.
18. Hahn, Theophilus (1881) Tsui Goam: The Supreme Being of the Khoikhoi, London, Trübner and Co.
19. Schapera, I. (1930) p.358
20. Ibid. pp 357-399
21. Parrinder, E.G. (1962) African Traditional Religion p. 16
22. Kolbe, P. The present state of the Cape of Good Hope Account of several nations of the Hottentot, trans. Medley, G. London, p. 91
23. Ibid. p. 91
24. Ibid. p.94
25. Schapera, I, (1930) The Khoisan People p.379
26. Kolbe, P. The present state of the Cape of Good Hope p. 95
27. Witbooi B. (1983) Decline of the Khoikhoi p. 89
28. Schapera, I. (1930) p. 376
29. Kolbe, P. The present state of the Cape of Good Hope p. 96
30. Ibid. p. 96
31. Grèvenbroek, J. The early Cape Hottentots in ed. Schapera Cape Town Van Riebeeck Society (1693) p. 207
32. Schmidt, G. Das Tagebuch und die Briefe (1737)
33. Taylor, J. (1901) Moravian Mission p. 46
34. Schmidt, G. (1737) p. 54

12. Ibid. p. 357
13. Theal, G.M. History of S.A. before 1505 p. 107
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32. Schmidt, G. Das Tagebuch und die Briefe (1737)
33. Taylor, J. (1901) Moravian Mission p. 46
34. Schmidt, G. (1737) p. 54

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1. Wilson, M. and Thompson, L. (1986) History of S.A. Peoples Cape Town, David Philip p. 73
2. Thom, H.B. (ed) (1954) Vol. III Jan van Riebeeck's Diary May 1659 3; 36-50 , Cape Town AA. Balleria
3. Bredekamp and Newton King (1984) The subjugation of the Khoikhoi Paper no. I Unversity of Western Cape Bellville Oct. 8-10 Conference on Economic Development and Racial Domination.
4. Nau Khoikhoi transitional rite. It marks the transition from one phase to another.
5. Ngugi Wa Thiongo (1986) Decolonising the mind, London J.C. Heineman p. 66
6. Malherbe, C. (1984) Men of men (herders) Centre for African Studies, U.C.T. Cape Town Shuter and Shooter.
7. The Khoikhoi resisted the expansionism of free citizens and destroyed their fishing nets and repossessed their cattle from the Dutch. (V.R. Journal 1 p. 561) De Broey S. Zuid-Africa... p. 37
8. Elphick, R. (1985) From Kraal to Castle, Johannesburg Ravan Press p. 175
9. Journal of Van Riebeeck Vol. III Ed. H.B. Thom Cape Town, A.A. Balleria (1954) 3. 36-50 May 4 1659
10. Schapera, I. (1933) eds. The Early Cape Hottentots described in the writings of Olaf Dapper (1668) Willem Ton Rhyn (1686) and Johannesburg G. De Grevenbach (1695) Cape Town p. 15
11. Van Riebeeck's Diary Vol. III p. 17
12. Marais, J. S. (1968) The Cape Coloured People 1652-1937. Johannesburg, Witwatersrand University Press p. 6
13. Schapera, I (1930) Khoisan People p. 260
14. Smith, A.B. (1983) Description of Khoi Society, Cape Town, 23 February Centre for African Studies p. 17
15. Wilson, M and Thompson, L. (1986) History of S.A. Peoples Cape Town, David Philip p. 73
16. Bredekamp, H and Newton King, S. (1984) p. 9 - 10.

17. Smith, A.B. (1983) Disruption of Khoikhoi society
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18. Ibid. p. 7
19. Marks, S. (1972) Khoisan resistance to the Dutch
in the 17th and 18th centuries. Journal of
African History 1311 pp 55-80
20. Smith, A.B. (1983) Disruption of Khoikhoi Society
p. 12
21. Ibid, p. 12
22. Ibid, p. 17
23. Journal of Van Riebeeck Vol. I P. 70 (1653)
24. Armstrong, J. Die Slawe 1652 - 1795: n Samelewing
in wording. eds. H. Giliomee and R. Elphick (1982)
p. 88
25. Ibid, p. 78
26. Saunders, C. Africans in Cape Town in the nineteenth
century: Studies in the history of Cape Town,
Centre for African Studies U.C.T. (1984) p. 16
27. The Master Servant Act of 1841, ensured that there
were no non-white people who were not in the employ
of whites, with the result, that slave and Khoikhoi
and bastard were one group from which labour could
be drawn. The Pass law of 1809 termed unemployed
Khoikhoi as vagrants and demanded that they carry
a pass.
28. Sonnabend, H. (1968) South Africa's Stepchildren
p. 15
29. Kolbo, P. (1727) n Noukourigo beskrywing van die
Kaap. p. 387
30. Ross, R. The occupation of the slaves in Cape
Town: Studies in the history of Cape Town
Centre for African Studies U.C.T. (1984) p. 125
31. Sonnabend, H. (1968) South Africa's Stepchildren
p. 17
32. Mentzel, O. (1787) A complete and authentic
geographical and topical description of the
Cape of Good Hope Cape Town (1921) p. 125
33. Ross, R. (1980) p. 125
34. MacCrone, I.D. (1957) Race attitudes in S.A.
Johannesburg University of Witwatersrand p. 9

35. Elphick, R and Shell, R. (1982) Onderlinge groep verhoudinge. In Samelewing in wording eds. Giliomee and Elphick.
36. Elphick, R. (1985) From Kraal to Castle p. 175
37. Eiselen, W. The Coloured People and the Natives Sixth Annual Congress SABRA 1955.
38. Witbooi, B. Liminality, Christianity and Khoikhoi tribes p. 103.
39. Schmidt, G. (1737) Das Tagebuch und die Briefe, eds. Bredekamp, H.C. and Hatting, J.L.
40. Schapera, I. (1930) Khoisan People p. 256.
41. Witbooi, B. (1983) Decline of the Khoikhoi tribes p. 101.
42. Water is a very holy element in the rituals of the Khoikhoi and a person who observed ritual restrictions was not to touch water. Only on the day of his or her emerging into the community was he or she cleansed with water.
43. Schapera, I. (1930) Khoisan people p. 363.
44. Witbooi, B. (1986) p. 103
45. Hoernlé, W.A. (1918) pp. 65-82.
46. Witbooi, B. (1986) p. 103)
47. It is the same church which in 1857, because of complaints, separated their members from the Holy Communion table and church along racial lines. Blacks were from Ham/Gam and were predestined to be bearers of water and cutters of wood. C. Loff (1981) Dogtor of Verstoteling, Kaapstad. Published by the Prodikante Broederskring p. 20.
48. Steward, J. (1955) Theory of Culture, Illinois University Press, p. 4.
49. Witbooi, B. (1986) p. 107.
50. Witbooi, B. (1986) p. 103.

CHAPTER 4

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2. Wilson, M. and Thompson, L. eds. *An Oxford history of South Africa Vol. I* New York/London, Oxford University Press (1976) p. 73
3. Sonnabend, H. (1968) *South Africa's Stepchildren: A study of miscegenation*, S.A. Affairs pamphlet no. 16 Society of Friends Series Johannesburg p. 10
4. Douglas, M. (1907) *The Cape and its story or the Struggle for South Africa*, London T. Weber and Sons p. 16
5. Ibid. p. 17
6. Strassberger, E. (1969) *The Rhenish Missionary Society 1830-1950*, Cape Town Struik p. 20
7. Sonnabend H. (1968) *South Africa's Stepchildren* p.11.
8. The term came into use in the 19th century, Tromp, F. 1975, S.A. *An Historical Introduction* p. 58
9. Theron, E. (1964) *Die Kleurlingbevolking van S.A.* eds. Theron, E. and Swart, M.J. Stellenbosch University Press p. 20
10. Leeuwenberg, J. (1972) *Leliefontein; Communal Reserve Coloured Citizenship in S.A.* p.20
11. Ibid. p. 20
12. Nisson, A.C. *Beliefs among the Coloureds*, unpublished paper, *Faith and Culture* (1980) Federal Theological Seminary. Pietermaritzburg p. 7
13. Van der Merwe, H. (1964) *Godsdiens. Die Kleurlingbevolking van S.A.* Theron Commission eds. Theron, E. and Swart, M.J. Stellenbosch p. 123
14. Botha, D. (1972) *Ons Derde Stand*, argues that the slaves and Khoikhoi, eagerly took up the Dutch culture.
15. Western, J. (1981) *Outcast: Cape Town*, Cape Town Human and Rousseau p. 13
16. Mac Crone, I.D. (1957) *Race attitudes in South Africa*. Johannesburg, University of Witwatersrand p. 79
17. *Journal of H.A. van Rhee* p. 357, cited in Mac Crone (1957) p. 78

18. Western, J. (1981) p. 12
19. Venter, A.L. (1974) A profile of two million people, Cape Town, Human and Rousseau.
20. Van der Merwe, H. (1964).
21. Marx, K. German Ideology: Selected Works of Karl Marx, ed. Lilelan, D., London, Oxford University Press (1977) p. 176
22. Rev. E. Moos interviewed by Prof. Swanepoel in Unisa News, November (1985)
23. Erikson, E. (1968) Identity, youth and crisis, New York, Norton p.14
24. Nissen, A.C. (1980) Beliefs among the Coloured People, unpublished paper, Faith and Culture Federal Theological Seminary, Pietermaritzburg.
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27. Dickson, K. (1984) Theology in Africa, Maryknoll Orbis Books p. 49
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29. Tutu, D.M. (1979) Black Theology and African Theology p. 60
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32. Senghor, L. (1985) Prose and Poetry, translators, Reed, J. and Walker, C. London, Oxford University Press p. 77
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19. Venter, A.L. (1974) A profile of two million people, Cape Town, Human and Rousseau.
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34. Ibid. p. 35
35. Ibid. p. 35

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