

RESISTANCE, SACRIFICATION AND BENEVOLENCE

A Discussion of the Historiography of Khoisan Resistance
from 1972 to 1993

and

Khoisan Resistance from 1652 to 1853

by

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"Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness
for they shall be filled"

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time, but who battled bravely that we might lead a life
worth living;

to the memory of my dear friend August Matsimella;
and in loving remembrance of my aunt Isabella Schimming.

"O, wondrous love, our shield and stay
through all the perils of our way.
Eternal love, in Thee we rest,
forever safe, forever blest."

ABSTRACT

This thesis studies the modern historiography of Khoisan resistance through a discussion of five selected authors. It outlines the main theses of these authors and offers a conceptual and methodological critique.

The thesis also describes concepts of Khoisan oral tradition, which are used as a basis for the conceptual critique of the historiography.

In the light of the critique, an attempt is made to develop new hypotheses and generalizations about Khoisan resistance.

Finally, the conclusion draws out the relevance of this work for both history and society in South Africa.

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INTRODUCTION: TELLING AN AFRICAN STORY

" ... the fate of the San at the hands of alien peoples has been paralleled by the disregard which historians have by and large shown them." ¹

This thesis began as an introduction to a case study on nineteenth century Khoisan resistance. Fairly early on in my research I realized that the historiography was never going to serve as a springboard from which to launch my case study. Instead it formed a net of unfounded assumptions, methodologically unsound analyses and incorrect conclusions; all of which bound me conceptually and analytically. Try as I might, I could not sneak under it or work my way around it. In the end I found that before I could get to the case study I was going to have to unravel the historiography down to each individual strand. Thus the work at hand aims quite deliberately at leaving a mass of loose ends.

Those who had written the histories came from the culture of the colonizers, while I was working from the standpoint of the colonized. This dichotomy proved to be the crucial problem. Time and time again I found myself thinking: "This just does not make sense!" Pondering this, I realized that my referent was a quite specific version of history handed down to me through oral tradition which differed from the written historiography on several crucial points. The problem lay not just in different interpretations of the same events, but, more fundamentally, in the way crucial concepts were defined. One could call it a language problem. I found that even such basics as the word 'Khoisan' had a very different meaning for those who were descended from these people and for those who were not. The words 'resistance' and 'collaboration' meant different things to those who were colonized and those who were not. Then there were concepts which were meaningful to the latter, such as 'pre-colonial' and 'pre-history', which to the former were almost meaningless. In moments of despair I even began to suspect that the word 'history' had at least two mutually incompatible meanings.

Thus I could not even begin to deal with the historiography until I had set up some kind of dictionary, translating between the culture within which I think and the culture within which I am writing. My second purpose became to redefine analytical concepts from the standpoint of oral history. Now, what is offered here is not oral history in the conventional sense. There will be no interviews or transcripts

¹ J. Wright, : " San History and Non-San Historians" Collected Seminar Papers on the Societies of Southern Africa 1977, Institute of Commonwealth Studies, London, pp. 1.

presented, no systematic exposition of traditions. Perhaps a better name would be oral culture, since my purpose is to explain what particular concepts mean, not what is being said with these concepts. In fact, in the retelling of a story a discussion like the one I am attempting here would never happen since the very act of storytelling builds on a set of shared cultural meanings which are so obvious, they are never in question and therefore never explained. Either you are within the culture and do not have to ask, or you are outside, in which case you should not be told. In a sense, then, the oral history in this thesis can be seen as coming entirely from inside my head. It may be viewed in the same spirit as I am using it, as a conceptual basis for a critique of the historiography and as an alternative way into the sources.

This alternative worked much better than I had dared hope. Almost imperceptibly, my translation of cultural concepts merged into my third purpose, namely to begin an alternative interpretation of the sources based on the concepts of oral tradition. To return to my metaphor, I began to replait, very loosely, some of the loose ends I had unravelled. I say 'began' and 'loosely' advisedly. It would go far beyond the boundaries of this work to rewrite Khoisan resistance history. Still, it would not be right to tear down the historiography without offering a way to rebuild it. Therefore, each chapter in this thesis is divided into an analytical section which discusses the historiography, and a conceptual one which translates concepts and offers new hypotheses. Within the scope of this thesis, it is not necessary that these hypotheses be correct. They need merely be sufficiently plausible to invite further research. My hope is that I can demonstrate that a historiography which begins from the way we understand our past can offer a more fruitful understanding of the past actions of Africans. At the very least, it should offer a solution to my present problem, namely that of how to read resistance historiography. If that problem is solved here, I will be able to return to my case study with a clear mind.

In surveying the modern historiography of Khoisan resistance we are confronted with a peculiar paradox: a body of historians quite deliberately set out to refute colonial myths about the Khoisan. Yet in the process they ended up restating, and reinforcing, many of the colonial stereotypes which they set out to disprove. Strange though this may seem, it is not an unprecedented event in South African history. At the height of the Black Consciousness movement of the late seventies, Steve Biko warned us against sympathizing white political activists by arguing with brutal frankness that 'first they kick you, then they want to tell you how to respond to that kick'. To rephrase the argument, we were kicked around for centuries. Now modern resistance historiography wants to tell us how we responded to that kick.

In a more academic context, Ducille has described how this is done:

"...othered groups... remain objects of the white heterosexual gaze throughout the text, denied the authority of cultural voice, marginalized and objectified even in those discussions in which they are the putative subjects.... It is from such a skewed perspective that the tone of the discourse is established, and we see the consequences of a methodology that **adds** the othered as an object of discourse without **authorizing** it as a subject."²

This is exactly what happened in the historiography of the Khoisan. Despite their purpose of rejecting colonial stereotypes, the writers concerned could not grant the Khoisan an authority of cultural voice. That the intention was to treat the Khoisan sympathetically is not in dispute. I will, however, show that the Khoisan resisters were objectified within the historiography and that in adding the Khoisan as an object of analysis without granting them their subjective understanding of their own history, the writers failed to liberate their historiography from its colonial antecedents. Instead they produced a textual neocolonialism, one which purported to liberate at the same time as it bound and fettered the Khoisan to the colonial image of who they were.

There are several reasons why this problem should be glaringly obvious within the field of Khoisan historiography. The most fundamental reason is that it is an extremely small field. Despite the fact that the Khoisan have had the longest history of all groups in southern Africa, their historiography is probably the least extensive. The study of resistance is an even smaller subfield. Compared to, for instance, the constitutional history of the Cape or the economic history of the Transvaal, Khoisan resistance historiography is extremely sparse. For this study I have chosen five authors who between them represent some of the best work in the field and who therefore will best illuminate the concepts and analyses with

² A. Ducille, " 'Othered' Matters: Reconceptualizing Dominance and Difference in the History of Sexuality in America", Journal of the History of Sexuality, 1:1, 1990, pp. 105-106.

which I will take issue.³ Apart from these five, I can list the work done in the field in two paragraphs.

We have Penn's two essays on the eighteenth century frontier.⁴ There is Malherbe's study of leading figures of the 1799 war in the eastern Cape⁵, and Kirk's work on the 1853 Kat River rebellion.⁶ For the latter half of the century, there is Ross' article on the !Kora wars of 1878 and his account of the Griqua rebellion in the same year, as well as Beinart's two pieces on the 'war scares' of the 1890's in east Griqualand.⁷ The most detailed narrative of the 1878

³ S. Marks, "Khoisan Resistance to the Dutch in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries" Journal Of African History, 13:2, pp. 55-78; R. Elphick, Kraal and Castle: The Khoikhoi and the Founding of White South Africa, Yale University Press, New Haven, 1977; M. Legassick, "The Northern Frontier to 1820" in R. Elphick and H. Giliomee (eds.) The Shaping of South African Society, Longman, Cape Town, 1979; S. Newton-King, "The Rebellion of the Khoi in Graaf-Reinet: 1799-1803" in The Khoikhoi Rebellion in the Eastern Cape (1799-1803) Centre For African Studies, University of Cape Town, 1981; C. Crais, White Supremacy and Black Resistance in Pre-Industrial South Africa: The Making of the Colonial Order in the Eastern Cape Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1993.

⁴N. Penn, "The Frontier in the Western Cape, 1700-1740" in J. Parkington and M. Hall (eds.) Papers in the Prehistory of the Western Cape, South Africa B.A.R, Oxford, 1987; "Labour, Land and Livestock in the Western Cape During the Eighteenth Century" in W. James and M. Simons, (eds.) Class, Caste and Colour: A Social and Economic History of the South African Western Cape Transaction Publishers, New Haven, 1992.

⁵ V.C. Malherbe, "The Khoi Captains in the Third Frontier War" in The Khoikhoi Rebellion in the Eastern Cape (1799-1802) Centre For African Studies, University of Cape Town, 1981.

⁶ T. Kirk, "The Cape Economy and the Expropriation of the Kat River Settlement" in S. Marks and A. Atmore (eds.) Economy and Society in Pre-Industrial South Africa Longman, New York, 1980.

⁷ R. Ross, "The !Kora Wars on the Orange River, 1839-1880", Journal of African History, 16:5, 1975 pp.530-568 ; R. Ross, Adam Kok's Griqua's: A Study in the Development of Stratification in South Africa , Cambridge University Press, 1976; W. Beinart, "Settler Accumulation in East Griqualand" in W. Beinart, P.Delius and S. Trapido (eds.) Putting a Plough to

uprisings is Strauss' published Honour's thesis, which deals solely with events on the eastern part of the Orange River.⁸ Finally, we have Nasson's account of the black side of the South African War at the turn of the century.⁹

I have left Namibian historiography out of my account because it has, by and large, been written as if events in Namibia were completely separate from events south of the border. I will name only two exceptions to this conclusion, both by historians resident in South Africa. The Bondelswarts Rebellion of 1922 and the Rehoboth Rebellion of 1925 have given rise to two published papers by Emmett and Pearson.¹⁰ This completes the survey of the historiography of Khoisan resistance.

The size of the field is an important factor in explaining its limitations. The collective research effort is small. A factual error by one author may not be noticed for years simply because there is no one else who is acquainted with the sources. If this is so when it comes to a simple matter of a date or a place, one may imagine how much larger the problem of size looms in matters of interpretation. It is still possible to be the only expert on a particular period or region. The historian may benefit from generalizations from other periods, but there is no one to enrich the analysis or check the work by examples and arguments specific to that period. The phenomenon of a single expert is so common in Khoisan historiography that it is easiest to name the subfield in which there is more than one author, to wit, the hundred years' war in the eastern Cape. Not surprisingly, this is the subfield which presents the richest evidentiary and methodological sophistication.

The Ground: Accumulation and Dispossession in Rural South Africa, 1850 - 1930, Ravan Press, Johannesburg, 1986; W. Beinart, "The Anatomy of a Rural Scare" in W. Beinart and C. Bundy (eds.) Hidden Struggles in Rural South Africa: Politics and Popular Movements in Transkei and the Eastern Cape, University of California Press, Berkeley 1987.

⁸ T. Strauss, War Along the Orange, Centre For African Studies, University of Cape Town, 1979.

⁹ W. Nasson, Abraham Esau's War: A Black South African War in the Cape, 1899-1902, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1989.

¹⁰ T. Emmett, "Popular Resistance in Namibia", 1920 -1925 in T. Lodge (ed.) Resistance and Ideology in Settler Societies, Southern African Studies, Vol. 4, Ravan Press, Johannesburg, 1986; P. Pearson, "The Rehoboth Rebellion" in P. Bonner (ed.) Working Papers in Southern African History, Ravan Press, Johannesburg, 1981.

The second major factor in determining the contours of the historiography was simply that there was no competition. Compared to the historiography emerging from white Afrikaans-language universities, English historiography was both abundant and remarkably radical. Thus generations of schoolchildren in the apartheid system learnt of three centuries of Khoisan history in one paragraph. It goes, if memory serves me correctly, as follows: 'Commander Jan van Riebeeck came to the Cape in 1652, and there he met the Strandlopers. They were scavengers who lived by eating roots and berries, and Herry was their leader.' After that paragraph the Khoisan disappear from the official history, nevermore to appear again. Compared to this, anything would look good!

In South African historiography generally, the seventies and early eighties were tremendously exciting times. Radical scholarship mounted a challenge to liberals which, regardless of its theoretical merits and demerits, served to revolutionize the field. In the often acrimonious debates, no quarter was asked or given. The result was that scholars were forced to re-examine assumptions, rework concepts and be sure that their use of evidence would stand up to critical scrutiny. In the quiet backwaters of Khoisan historiography, however, none of this took place. Instead, the field was marked by a rare, and at times stupefying, degree of unanimity. Introductory surveys of the historiography, where they existed, would inevitably lambast colonial historians and make no mention at all of contemporary ones. The latter would be found rather in the references, since author after author would cite the work of a previous historian without a prior critical evaluation. In short, it was all very cosy. The result has been that radical scholarship does not differ from liberal in the way it has reproduced colonial stereotypes. The concerns of the analysis may be different, but the objectification is the same.

The third factor which has bedeviled Khoisan historiography is that, in marked contrast to the conceptual unanimity, the debate over terminology was never-ending. Until 1991 scholars could not even agree which word to use to denote these people, nor can they yet agree on how to characterize the labour system through which the Khoisan were integrated into the colonial economy. South African historiography is notorious for its terminological minefields. Yet, within it there is no field in which the issue of terminology has been so contentious as Khoisan historiography. No one, for instance, would argue that the word 'Xhosa' or 'Zulu' is inappropriate to designate the historical emergence of these groups, yet no work on the Khoisan can begin without a prior discussion, and justification, of the terminology used. It is this curious combination of conceptual agreement and terminological disagreement which has made the historiography so difficult to challenge - how can one begin to question an

author when there is no agreement even on how to define the unit of study?

This thesis can be seen as an effort to provide the critical scrutiny which has marked the field by its absence. I will argue that we need to agree on terminology and get down to the real work of conceptual and methodological revision. My argument will hinge on two major propositions. The first is the conceptual one that the labour system through which the Khoisan were incorporated into the colonial economy is crucial to an understanding of the nature of their resistance. It follows that the way we conceptualize this system is central to our analysis. I will trace varying conceptualizations in the historiography, ranging from Marks, who did not have one at all, to Crais, who characterized it as 'near slavery'.¹¹ In chapter six I will explain how the descendants of the Khoisan have viewed the system, and the implications of this for resistance. Here I only wish to state my point of departure, namely that I use the term *inboek* to designate the system throughout the thesis and that I see the system as originating in the needs of the colonists, not just to acquire labour, but to crush the determined resistance of the Khoisan in the eighteenth century.

My second proposition is a methodological one, namely that what I regard as an improper use of sources has been far too prevalent in the field. Thus a description of these sources is in order. I do not know if a comparison in this context is meaningful, but if there is a candidate for the dubious honour of being the people most despised and reviled by colonialists, it would be the Khoisan. To illustrate the depth of this prejudice, I can only mention that, as late as 1758, the Khoisan were not even admitted to the dignity of being part of the human species.¹² Hardly had they been admitted to the privilege of belonging to the same species as the Europeans before scientific racism again demoted their ontological status to that of the lowest of the low. It follows that the biases in the sources against any authorization of the Khoisan as subjects are extreme. Furthermore, South African historians would probably be surprised to hear that the descendants of the Khoisan even have a tradition of oral history. There is not for Khoisan historiography the equivalent of Soga's writings, that is there are no printed collections of oral traditions compiled by an insider to the culture.¹³

¹¹ Cf. Crais *White Supremacy* pp. 42.

¹² Cf. C. Linneaus, *Systema Naturae*, Facsimile copy of tenth edition, British Museum, London, 1758 (1956), pp. 22.

¹³ J.H. Soga, *The South Eastern Bantu*, Johannesburg, 1930.

These problems, however, are a matter of degree, not of quality. All historians have problems of source bias. All historians of historically marginalized groups have to confront the problem of silence in the sources and have had to develop techniques of 'reading against the grain', of looking between the lines and in the margins of the narrative to find out what their subjects may have thought and done. Thus it is not the sources themselves which constitute the major problem in Khoisan historiography, but the way they have been used. In fact, my attempts to offer an alternative view of Khoisan history are based on precisely the same sources that have been available to historians for years. Insofar as I succeed in granting the Khoisan a 'cultural voice', it must in itself constitute an argument for the fact that it is possible to do this even from biased sources. Here, I will only underline the point that it is not only possible, but necessary:

"... I find there is something so horrifying, ultimately, in our failure to understand how long this Black struggle has gone on.... unless we start with the self-activity and self-creativity of the ordinary - therefore extraordinary - human beings who were faced with the most severe exploitation, we will make very little progress in understanding human ... history."¹⁴

I began this introduction by discussing the enormous problems posed by language. It is perhaps fitting to conclude it by giving a brief glossary of how I have used key terms. The first are those which are heuristic devices designed both to analyze and describe a phenomenon: concepts like 'class' and 'trope'. I tend to use them in a descriptive sense rather than in an analytical one. Then there are terms which can refer both to observable physical features and the social construction thereof, such as 'race' and 'gender'. When used, I mean these terms to refer to both aspects. There is a third group which have been used in relation to Africa mainly as somewhat clumsy Western approximations of the way African people construct the concepts, words like 'tribe' and 'ethnicity'. I have tended to steer clear of such words, using where necessary words like 'people'. On occasion I have used the word 'ethnic' to denote both ties of blood, and the social constructs that determine which ties of blood matter. In the section on 'Khoisan' an operational definition of a group of people has been constructed which hopefully is neither static nor ahistorical, but which may be essentialist. I have in

¹⁴G. Rawick, "Slave Resistance in the Diaspora and the Shaping of African History" in B. Wood (ed.) Namibia 1884-1994: Readings on Namibia's History and Society United Nations Institute for Namibia, Lusaka, 1988, pp 39-40.

principle no objection to this charge. I am convinced that there is a balance to be found between the essence and the social construct. My problem is how to achieve this balance.

My reservations about the term 'nation' stem from the historical experience of my continent. When colonial borders were first established by the Berlin Conference of 1885 and later ratified by the Organization of African Unity in 1963, they bore no resemblance to any canons of modern nationalism with respect to African realities. As a result many Africans, including myself, have no idea what this term is supposed to mean in the post-colonial context. Where I have used 'nationalist' it is as a short-hand for the aims and methods of the anti-colonial independence movements which won such successes in the sixties and seventies and occasionally as a description for the historians of resistance who became caught up in those movements.

Finally, the word 'afrikaner' is often used to denote the non-British European settlers in South Africa. To me, this usage reflects a process of cultural colonialism which I do not wish to condone. In Khoisan historiography in particular the usage is also confusing since Afrikaner is the name of a Khoisan clan which played a major role in nineteenth century resistance. Instead I have used the same term for the settlers which the descendants of the Khoisan use in daily life: 'boer'.

CHAPTER ONE: BEGINNING WITH BASICS

This chapter sets certain basic parameters. It defines whom we are talking about, or at least clarifies what I mean when I use the word 'Khoisan'. The chapter goes on to examine concerns and preoccupations at the inception of the modern historiography of Khoisan resistance.

DEFINING THE UNIT OF STUDY

" What we need are not new labels, but accurate descriptions of what and whom we are talking about."¹⁵

One of the advantages of being an academic is that it gives me licence to ask questions to which the answers are so obvious they would seem strange coming from any normal person, but people say to each other: 'It's her work, you know', and bear with me most patiently. Thus when I have walked the streets of Bonteheuwel or Mitchells Plain and asked people: 'Who are you?', the answer has always been: 'We are the descendants of the Khoi.' The point being that we know who we are. To us it is not an issue. To the outside world, however, it has been a source of unceasing wonder and debate. Few peoples have been so consistently misunderstood and mystified as the Khoisan. In part, this was due to the prejudices of the people who wrote about them. Marks puts it with some restraint: "[t]he Khoisan peoples... have on the whole had a bad press from historians, as indeed they had from most of their seventeenth and eighteenth century contemporaries."¹⁶ Prejudice was accompanied by an almost total lack of insight into the internal workings of Khoisan society. Until the early nineteenth century, few Europeans could even speak the language. Beyond the linguistic divide, the cultural gap was hard to bridge. In discussing their much more acculturated descendants, February remarked that "[w]hite attempts to define and come to grips with 'coloured' political aspirations may founder precisely because they think they understand the 'coloured' language whereas in essence, they

¹⁵ A. Barnard, Hunters and Herders of Southern Africa: A Comparative Ethnography of the Khoisan Peoples Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1992, pp. 18.

¹⁶ S. Marks, "Khoisan Resistance to the Dutch in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries" Journal of African History 13:2, 1972, pp. 55.

miscomprehend the 'coloured' idiom"¹⁷, and if that is a problem today, one may imagine how it was two or three centuries ago.

Khoisan resistance in itself did much to muddy the waters. Autjoema (Herry) for instance, or for that matter Aramap (Jonker Afrikaner), would tell the white people what was strategically necessary at the time, and there was often a sharp distinction between what they were told and what was actually happening. van Riebeeck had his own reasons for obscuring the truth, as did his successors.¹⁸ Finally, after a survey of seventeenth and eighteenth century sources, Gordon argued that the usage of 'Bushman' during this period is best seen as a label meaning 'highwayman' or 'bandit' rather than an ethnographic description.¹⁹ This conclusion not only lays bare the type of bias exhibited towards the Khoisan in the primary sources, but also explains the extreme caution needed in using them.

As for the secondary sources, Wilmsen has pointed to the overriding reasons nineteenth century ethnographers had to create an imaginary 'Bushman', only distantly related to actually existing people. While the original reasons may have disappeared, contemporary anthropology is still trying to live down its colonial origins.²⁰ Understandably, the complexities facing the historian who must work from written sources and anthropological evidence are enormous. Nevertheless, some respect for the subject's cultural voice might have helped. For instance, Elphick sounded a note of common sense in the confused and (five hundred years later) still ongoing debate of who we are by saying that "...[the] Khoikhoi themselves have made no such clear and systematic distinction between

¹⁷ V. February, Mind Your Colour: The 'Coloured' Stereotype in South African Literature, Regan Paul, London, 1981, pp. 173.

¹⁸ Cf. e.g. J. Naidoo, Tracking Down Historical Myths: Eight South African Cases, A D Donker, Johannesburg, 1989, pp. 33-34.

¹⁹ R. Gordon, "Bushman Banditry in Twentieth Century Namibia" in D. Crummey (ed.) Banditry, Rebellion and Social Protest in Africa, James Currey, London, 1986, pp. 174-175.

²⁰ Cf. E. Wilmsen, Land Filled With Flies: A Political Economy of the Kalahari, University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1989, pp. vii-xv; T. Ranger and C. Murray, "Introduction", Journal of Southern African Studies 8:1 1981 pp. 1-15; J. Comaroff and J. Comaroff, Of Revelation and Revolution: Christianity, Colonialism and Consciousness in South Africa, University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1993, pp. xiii.

peoples, their term 'San' having a wide reference to both hunter and small scale pastoral groups."²¹ There were no doubt good historiographical reasons why Elphick despite this knowledge continued to make a clear and systematic distinction between peoples. Still, it does underscore the difficulties of the historian foolhardy enough to write about Khoisan resistance when the definition of the subject matter itself is the focus of so much controversy.

There are, however, some signs that a meeting of minds is beginning to occur between our sense of who we are, and that of those who study us. Thus Barnard's survey of the anthropological literature defines us as follows: "The Khoisan are a cluster of Southern African peoples which include the San, the Khoekhoe and the Damara...the Khoisan peoples share features of territorial organization, gender relations, ritual and cosmology."²²

This is strikingly similar to the way the people of Bonteheuwel or Mitchell's Plain define the Khoisan, with the only difference that where Barnard sees several peoples, they see only one. From the standpoint of collective memory, the Khoisan are a group of people who share cultural similarities and certain common features of social organization. When in doubt, however, the simplest way to define (like Barnard) is to make a list. People can be quite definite about who is and who is not descended from the Khoisan, if they are but requested to do so.

Second, the trend of the answers I get when I ask people who they are is that they are Khoisan because of ties of blood. In other words, they share a common ancestor which other African peoples do not have. I have not yet ascertained at what historic point this divergence occurred, since the answer I get is that 'we have always been here. Everybody else came from somewhere else, but we were born here.' It should be pointed out that this 'always' is not used in the sense it often is in oral tradition of 'a very long time'. It means literally 'since the beginning of Creation'.

This brings us to the third point of identity, namely the sense of being autochthonous inhabitants. To use a Canadian analogy, the Khoisan are the native southern Africans. Being one of those things that are so obvious they are never spoken of, it is hard to find this consciousness in the sources. Nevertheless I hope to show that this consciousness is integral to any study of Khoisan resistance, and one of the factors which make it unique. At this point it is only

²¹ R. Elphick, Kraal and Castle: The Khoikhoi and the Founding of White South Africa, Yale University Press, New Haven, 1977, pp. 41; cf. also Wilmsen, Land Filled With Flies pp. 26-28.

²² Barnard, Hunters and Herders frontispiece.

necessary to define the unit of study: that the Khoisan are a group of people who see themselves as interrelated. They recognize common features of cultural and social organization as distinct from both the Europeans and other African peoples. Finally, and most crucial for our purposes here, they share a common history. Of course, by far the largest part of it consists of, in Comaroff's quaint term, "prehistoric" history.²³ Even so, any definition of Khoisan needs to take into account the effect of recent traumatic events on the Khoisan sense of identity. Even if the Khoisan had had no sense of white community prior to colonialism, five centuries of it would have been enough to create one. The confrontation with colonizers would have sharpened their sense of who they were by the forcible comparison to who they were not. The experience of dispossession would have sharpened the collective memory of what they once had.

Even though 'Khoisan' is, as Barnard rightly points out, a foreign linguistic construction, 'Khoi' and 'San' are both indigenous words.²⁴ An indigenous construction would be 'sankhoi' and would mean 'people who reap the bounties of nature' rather than any particular group. The reason for this is clear. Like any autochthonous group, the Khoisan had little need to define themselves until forced to do so in the crucible of colonization. Thus the entity now designated 'Khoisan' may have had a long existence, but the term itself must be seen as historically specific to the colonial period. Its content would change as the lives of the people to whom the term referred, changed.

It remains only to clarify the relation of myself to the historical Khoisan. In the oral tradition, a major dysjuncture in our culture and modes of social organization is held to have taken place. The dysjuncture is normally seen as having occurred earlier and been more thorough the further south one goes, but can broadly be dated to the decades between 1890-1910. At about the same time the colonial regime also began to replace the old swearwords 'bushman' and 'hottentot' with the word 'coloured', which gradually acquired a legal content from the 1920's to the 1960's.²⁵ The pejorative uses of 'coloured' are hardly less offensive than the old words, and this has naturally given rise to divided opinions about it. Some ignore it, others reject it vehemently, and yet others use it in the

²³ J. Comaroff Body of Power, Spirit of Resistance; The Culture and History of a South African People, University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1985, pp 13.

²⁴ Barnard Hunters and Herders, pp 25.

²⁵ Certainly the most amusing history of the legal definitions of 'coloured' is February Mind Your Colour pp. 3-7 and Appendix III pp. 190-193.

same spirit as the Khoisan of old used to use 'hottentot' - as a concession to a people who will never want to understand who we are anyway, and who will just invent something even more offensive if we reject this word. I have tended to refer to the last four or five generations as the 'descendants of the Khoisan', which is technically correct, if clumsy. It does mark our sense of a change and acknowledges the differences between us and the historical Khoisan.²⁶ We are of them but are not them. We feel both continuity and dysjuncture. It is this which accounts for my conflicting usages of the word 'we', which at times means both ancestors and descendants and at times means only descendants. I have striven to make it clear from the context which is meant.

Definitions are only useful in an initial delimitation of the subject. In the final analysis, the only way to fully explain the term is in fact to write the recent history of the Khoisan. In that pursuit, the history of Khoisan resistance is particularly useful. The stark contrasts enable us to throw into sharp relief both who they were, and who they were not. Conversely, as we shall see, Khoisan historiography cannot rise above the way the term is conceptualized. If a definition of Khoisan which originates from the world view of their descendants is to prove useful, it can only be because it enables us to write better history.

²⁶ For a similar usage see H. C. Bredekamp, "The Khoisan and Nomenclature since The Oxford History of South Africa: A Historiographical Dilemma", South African Historical Journal 25, 1991, pp. 76.

FROM RUFFIANS TO WARRIORS

"A border scuffle with a band of half starved 'Kora rebels had begun in October 1878, and to Merriman's disgust was still dragging on, after nine months, when Parliament met in June, 1879."²⁷

One of the things which make history such an ideologically loaded pursuit is the sheer power of words. Thus the single most powerful achievement of Marks' seminal article lay in its title: Khoisan Resistance.²⁸ Lewsen's description, above, of Merriman's reactions may serve as a fairly typical indication of how the various Khoisan wars and uprisings had been regarded in government circles and underlines the official antecedents of colonial historiography.²⁹ Marks's rephrasing created Khoisan resistance as a legitimate field of study. She showed that not only did the Khoisan resist, but that they did so over a long period of time and were more successful than historians had given them credit for.

We should not underestimate the difficulties of writing the article. First, Khoisan historiography was sparse, and often written by non-historians.³⁰ Like this work, Marks found it necessary to spend five pages redefining the unit of study. Her approach, that the sources themselves gave no reliable indication as to who was Khoi and who was San, was innovative and proved to be a much more modern and usable approach than the contemporary interpretation of Wilson.³¹ Second, the poverty of secondary literature meant that Marks had to rely heavily on primary sources for the most simple facts. Despite the occasional error, the sheer amount of

²⁷ P. Lewsen, John X Merriman: Paradoxical South African Statesman, Yale University Press, New Haven, 1982 pp. 84.

²⁸ Marks Khoisan Resistance pp. 55.

²⁹ Cf. Marks' thorough review of the colonial historiography, *ibid.* pp. 55-57.

³⁰ Cf. e.g. I.D. MacCrone, Race Attitudes in South Africa: Historical, Experimental and Psychological Studies, Witwatersrand University Press, Johannesburg, 1957 (a psychologist); or M. Wilson, "Hunters and Herders" in L. Thompson and M. Wilson (eds.) The Oxford History of South Africa, Vol. I, 1969, (an anthropologist).

³¹ Marks Khoisan Resistance pp. 57-61; cf. also Wilson Hunters and Herders, pp. 66.

research done by Marks deserves respect.³² Her account of eighteenth century resistance has stood the test of time and, sadly, is still unparalleled in scope.

Marks was the first to show an interest in the social organization and motivation behind Khoisan resistance. She was able to demonstrate a continuity in aims and intentions. Thus in 1660:

" [t]hey complained that the Dutch were 'taking every day ... land which had belonged to them from all ages and on which they which they were accustomed to depasture their cattle. They also asked whether if they were to come to Holland they would be permitted to act in the same manner.'"³³

Some eighty years later the aim of resistance remained "... to chase the Dutch out of their land as long as they live in their land"³⁴ As regards their social organization, Marks concluded that the Khoisan displayed a considerable degree of social homogeneity. They did not seem to have chiefs, or if they did they certainly did not hold them in respect.³⁵ Moreover, they did not develop a group which could in later centuries have provided the foundation of a nationalist petit bourgeoisie, since "[t]hroughout the period of Company rule there was no creation of an educated and articulate Christian elite within the Khoisan community."³⁶ In this conclusion, Marks showed herself to be prescient. She laid the basis for an explanation why the descendants of the Khoisan were to be, by and large, remarkably uninterested in the strivings of nationalist movements such as the African National Congress. She did not draw any such inference herself. She had produced some interesting evidence on Khoisan culture and society which should have shed some light on the political behaviour of their descendants, but did not draw any generalizations from it.

³² For instance, Marks states that the murder of a Dutch herdbooy occurred in 1657 when it actually took place in 1653, a fact which forces us to reconsider the idea of an initial period of peace between Autjoema and van Riebeeck. Cf. Naidoo, Tracking Down Historical Myths pp. 153, footnote 18; Marks Khoisan Resistance pp. 62-63.

³³ Cited in Marks Khoisan Resistance, pp. 64.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 71.

³⁵ Cf. *ibid.*, pp. 76.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 79.

Instead, she went on to the task of explaining the "...failure..." of Khoisan resistance.³⁷ There are indications that she was overwhelmed by the magnitude of her task. Referring to the resistance of the last quarter of the eighteenth century she noted that: "[i]t would be tedious to relate the details of their incursions..."³⁸ This is surely a strange judgement when one considers that the previous year Marks had said of the same struggle: "...the entire northern frontier erupted in a bitter struggle which held up further white expansion for thirty years."³⁹ Stranger still, Marks had elsewhere found it perfectly reasonable to spend 404 pages relating the details of two years of resistance amongst the twentieth century Zulu.⁴⁰ It would have been far more honest, and definitely more tactful, to admit that she had run out of either sources, space or time.

What is more, the problem of 'failure' lay at least in part in Marks's definition of the concept: "[n]ot only did the Khoisan fail to dislodge the white man; they undoubtedly also lost their ethnic identity."⁴¹ In using the term 'white man' Marks changed the terms of reference since, we remember, the article was entitled 'Khoisan Resistance to the Dutch'. We have seen that in Marks' own opinion the Khoisan were at least successful in stemming the tide of Dutch advance. Whether they would ever have succeeded in reversing it we shall never know because, for reasons which will be discussed in depth in chapter four, it was in fact the arrival of British military might, and British diplomacy, which ensured the future of the 'white man' in southern Africa. Thus the reason for Khoisan 'failure' could be as simple as the fact that they found themselves fighting not one but two enemies, both of whom vastly outnumbered them.

Marks' own explanation of the 'failure' went on to blame the victims. She argued that far too many Khoisan collaborated and that:

"In accounting for the ultimate disappearance of the Khoisan as an ethnic entity, their propensity for acculturation must be taken into account.... They literally acculturated themselves out of existence. The significance of this is not simply

³⁷ Ibid., pp. 75.

³⁸ Ibid., pp. 73.

³⁹ S. Marks and A. Atmore, "Firearms in Southern Africa", Journal of African History, 12:4, 1971, pp. 519.

⁴⁰ S. Marks, Reluctant Rebellion: The Zulu Disturbances in Natal, 1906-1908, Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1970.

⁴¹ Marks, Khoisan Resistance pp. 75-76.

that it gave rise to the Cape Coloured community, but that many of the acculturated half-Khoi identified with whites and passed into their ranks, so that their own group was deprived of manpower and potential leadership. In many cases those who 'passed for white' must have been the most successful and dynamic individuals, in the eighteenth as well as the nineteenth and twentieth centuries."⁴²

This formulation begs so many questions it requires an in-depth analysis. In the first place, the 'extermination by acculturation' process is largely a semantic sleight of hand. Needless to say, Marks did not base these conclusions on specific evidence. Rather she rested on contemporary anthropological (and for that matter historiographical) formulations of the Khoisan as a static ahistorical entity, defined by certain economic activities: hunting, gathering and herding.⁴³ As soon as Khoisan changed their way of life then they could no longer be Khoisan - by definition.

Second, what Marks failed to discuss is the spread and institutionalization of the inboek system in the late eighteenth century. When one considers the elements of coercion and violence embedded in the inboek system, it becomes clear that her reasoning was misplaced in a discussion of Khoisan resistance. In any system of slavery cultural independence, not to mention open resistance, is seldom a viable option.⁴⁴ Slavery may be underpinned by coercive ideologies, but we do not need oral tradition to tell us that the power of ideology was backed up by the whip, the chain and the gun. Thus even if we argue that the Khoisan lost their ethnic identity - a point which is by no means settled - the idea that they willingly gave it up is preposterous. We have no indication as to what would have become of Khoisan culture and social cohesion in the absence of the inboek system. It did exist, and it posed a serious threat to the social and cultural cohesion of the Khoisan. What is necessary is to discuss the origins of the inboek system in the context of the determined resistance of the last thirty years of the

⁴² Ibid., pp. 77.

⁴³ In all fairness, I should point out that I am making exactly the same argument here about the Khoisan as a group, that Marks made against previous historians' treatment of the San; cf. *ibid.*, pp. 58.

⁴⁴ Cf. e.g. R. Shell "The Family and Slavery in the Cape, 1660-1800" in W. James and M. Simons (eds.) Class, Caste and Colour: A Social and Economic History the South African Western Cape, Transaction Publishers, 1989, pp. 20-22.

eighteenth century - that is, to tell the very story which Marks found too tedious to relate.

Third, what we are confronted with here will become a perennial problem in the historiography, namely that conceptual analysis is replaced by an appeal to colonial stereotypes of the Khoisan and their descendants which were, and are, commonly accepted in South Africa. Still, Marks' explanation would define **inboekselinge** as non-ethnic beings, forever excluded from the white community, while Bastards and others, for some reason regarded as invariably the best and brightest of the community, become play-whites. There is no need to waste time refuting these stereotypes. It is only necessary to point out that Marks' conclusion is both offensive and incorrect. Marks' exposure to the descendants of the Khoisan was perhaps limited, so she may not have known that the accusation 'are you keeping yourself white?' is the most offensive of insults within that community. Marks' own evidence showed that during one hundred and fifty years of Company rule the Khoisan did not produce a Christian elite. This alone should speak volumes about their 'propensity for acculturation'.

It is of some concern that Marks ignored her own findings in order to reproduce a stereotype. The result is that what should have been a discussion of the genocidal implications of the **inboek** system becomes enmeshed in the inflexibility of a static concept of 'Khoisan'. Moreover, we should be seriously concerned about the fact that not only does Marks' interpretation reproduced colonial stereotypes, but that it became widely accepted by historians.

Blaming the victims does not just objectify them, it is also unjust. It needs to be pointed out that the article covered one hundred and fifty years of resistance. To mount one and a half centuries of open and armed resistance is an achievement no other people in South Africa has equalled. After such a survey, to phrase the question: 'why did they lose?' rather than to ask: 'how could they keep it up for so long?' seems ungenerous. As Marks' article shows, it is also an obstacle to developing a convincing explanation. The crucial gap in the article, an analysis of the **inboek** system, was to remain a source of mystification in the historiography for twenty years. In the introduction the point was raised that historians can still not agree even what to call it. It follows that discussions of the nature of the system were a source of deep confusion. We shall see that the shortcomings of Marks' analysis were as seminal as its strengths. Both were to influence future historians deeply - it remains to be seen which influence predominated.

CHAPTER TWO: LAYING SOLID FOUNDATIONS

This chapter concerns itself with two linked questions: were the Khoisan one or two peoples?, and was warfare and conflict widespread among them long before the white colonizers ever hit the shores of the Cape? These questions are linked in what I have called 'the myth of the 'Bushman', so it is necessary to define this myth: it is the idea that there were groups in southern Africa who were 'pure' hunter-gatherers, who had remained at this technological level since the evolution of the species, and whose economic system necessarily pitted them in fundamental opposition to pastoralists.

'TAKE ME TO YOUR LEADERS'

"Much of what has been written ... has been vitiated by this inability to achieve even the most elementary imaginative understanding of what goes on in the mind of the other party, so that the words and actions of the other are always made to appear malign, senseless, or hypocritical. History cannot be written unless the historian can achieve some kind of contact with the mind of those about whom he is writing."⁴⁵

The work of Elphick can justifiably be considered the modern classic of Khoisan historiography. Earlier historians in this field had concerned themselves with the Khoisan only insofar as they constituted the ancestors of the present-day Coloureds, and this concern underpinned their almost complete lack of interest in the inner workings of Khoisan society.⁴⁶ Elphick departed from the preconceptions of colonial historians in that his analysis of the Khoisan attempted to see them less as objects than as subjects possessing a history and culture of their own. He replaced colonial conceptions of Africa as a *tabula rasa* which only acquired a historical interest with the arrival of the Europeans with a thorough investigation into the early history of the Khoisan.

⁴⁵ E.H. Carr, What is History? Macmillan, London, 1961, pp. 24.

⁴⁶ Cf. W. Macmillan, The Cape Colour Question: A Historical Survey, Faber and Gwyer, London, 1927; J.S. Marais, The Cape Coloured People Witwatersrand University Press, Johannesburg, 1957 (1939).

Elphick's work came to constitute the first book-length history dealing solely with the Khoisan. In fact it may also be considered the last, unless one counts Elphick's own revision of the second edition a decade later.⁴⁷ This benign neglect is striking when one compares it to the interest in the Khoisan shown by anthropologists in the same period. To give just one example, a single group of Khoisan living in the northeastern Kalahari have been "... the subject of intensive and sustained research by over a dozen investigators since 1951."⁴⁸ It is in this context of historical neglect and anthropological enthusiasm that one has to weigh Elphick's achievement. It may not be unique, but it must surely be unusual, that whenever historians needed information on the Khoisan they were compelled to turn to either the primary sources or to another field of study altogether. In Namibian historiography, for instance, the greatest expert on the modern history of the San is an anthropologist.⁴⁹ Elphick's work changed all that for South African historiography.

It follows that his work is central to a survey of Khoisan resistance. The term 'resistance' is perhaps somewhat of a misnomer since Elphick's central purpose is as follows:

" Within sixty years of 1652 the traditional Khoikhoi economy, social structure and political order had almost entirely collapsed. My main goal here is to understand this collapse. It cannot be explained purely in military terms Neither can it be seen merely as a result of the smallpox epidemic of 1713, even though this swept away the bulk of the Western Cape Khoikhoi population. Khoikhoi decline was far advanced and probably irreversible well before this final catastrophe."⁵⁰

'Resistance' surely implies a far more active role than this story of collapse, decline and catastrophe. 'Pacification' would perhaps be a better word. Elphick himself uses the term

⁴⁷ R. Elphick Kraal and Castle: Khoikhoi and the Founding of White South Africa Yale University Press, New Haven 1977, 1985. All references to Elphick are to the 1977 edition.

⁴⁸ R.B. Lee and M. Guenther, " Problems in Kalahari Historical Ethnography and the Tolerance of Error", History in Africa: A Journal of Method, Vol 20, 1993, pp. 188.

⁴⁹ Cf. R. Gordon, The Bushman Myth: The Making of a Namibian Underclass Westview Press, Boulder, 1992.

⁵⁰ Elphick, pp. xvii.

'resistance' only once, in referring to the First Khoi-Dutch War.⁵¹

Elphick could talk of 'collapse' only by very carefully limiting his terms of reference - it is the 'Western Cape Khoikhoi' only who are under discussion. We know that the Khoisan as a whole continued to resist colonialism for well over two centuries after 1713 and that the struggle in the Western Cape most certainly did not end by that date. We should not hold an author responsible for the misuse of his work. Yet, it is not too soon to point out that Elphick's theories have been generalized, as will be seen in subsequent chapters, to apply to Khoisan everywhere in southern Africa.

Elphick did not follow Mark's usage in viewing the Khoisan as a single, if heterogenous, group. The distinction between Khoi and San tended to be taken as a given, although Elphick eschewed the latter term, preferring to refer to them as hunter-gatherers.⁵² However, Mark's insight that the boundaries between the two groups were fluid and shifting was taken much further. Elphick not only provided evidence that many hunter groups could and did keep cattle, but showed conclusively that many pastoralists reacted to dispossession by turning to hunting and gathering.⁵³ He took issue with the anthropological "...belief that hunters of recent times are necessarily practitioners of an aboriginal culture and hence direct cultural descendants of peoples who lived in particular regions of Southern Africa before the Khoikhoi."⁵⁴ Thus Elphick challenged the static view of a fundamental dichotomy between the two societies and attempted to develop a much more dynamic concept.⁵⁵ In this alone he fundamentally revised conceptions of the early history of the Khoisan and provided conclusive proof (if one was ever needed) for the fact that history is best left in the hands of historians.

Elphick's reconstruction argued that the Khoikhoi originally lived in what is today southern Botswana where they acquired cattle at least by the fourteenth century, after which began a migratory drift south.⁵⁶ Elphick saw this drift as a moving frontier characterized by both cooperation and conflict. As the Khoikhoi moved into new areas they came into

⁵¹ Ibid., pp. 114.

⁵² Ibid., pp. xxii.

⁵³ Ibid., pp. 25 and pp. 29.

⁵⁴ Ibid., pp 29.

⁵⁵ Ibid., pp. 30.

⁵⁶ Ibid., pp. 11-12.

conflict with the hunters over pastures and waterholes.⁵⁷ However, the Khoikhoi also recruited hunters into their societies as soldiers, messengers and herders, and thus through cultural transference and intermarriage, pastoralism spread far beyond the original clans.⁵⁸ Whether co-operation or conflict dominated at any given moment would depend on ecological constraints. If the ecology was stable, the incorporation of hunters into pastoralist societies would generate increased wealth for all:

" The transformation of the hunter's hostility into cooperation permitted the peaceful growth of Khoikhoi herds and flocks, as did the acquisition of reliable herdsmen. Increased herds meant a secure food supply and human population consequently grew."⁵⁹

The occurrence of drought, disease or "... a massive attack by robber-hunters...", however, would precipitate a wave of cattle raiding and retribution as one Khoikhoi clan would rob another to restore its wealth.⁶⁰ Weak and impoverished clans could even have been forced to revert to hunting and gathering as a way of life.

This theory raises a host of problems. First, there is the same conceptual limitation found with Marks, namely that a static anthropological formulation was replaced by a static historical formulation. The concept of an ecological cycle allowed for change, but the change was strictly circular and could in principle go on forever. Second, Elphick's usage of the term Khoikhoi did not succeed in removing us from a static conception of these people. In view of his argument against the anthropologists, it may with equal justice be objected that he could not show that the Khoisan he was writing about were necessarily descendants of the first pastoralists he sited in south-eastern Botswana. Given the processes of incorporation Elphick described, it would always be impossible to tell who was who and the broader term Khoisan would have been more apt.

The third problem is that of using inappropriate sources. Elphick based his theory of pastoralist migration on archeological evidence. He then argued for a theory of conflict by deduction - pastoralism as an economic system must necessarily conflict with hunting and gathering. However, the archaeological evidence showed a technological diffusion, not an ethnic one. Cattle bones or remnants of iron tools could

⁵⁷ Ibid., pp. 15.

⁵⁸ Ibid., pp. 15 and pp. 34.

⁵⁹ Ibid., pp. 35.

⁶⁰ Ibid., pp. 38.

not tell us who moved southwards, or even whether people moved southwards at all. There was nothing intrinsic in the nature of the evidence to show that cattle-keeping did not spread by gift and sharing, for example, rather than by migration, conquest and clientage. In addition, even the evidence for technological diffusion is not clear cut. There is a site at Middledrift on the Keiskamma which dates from the eleventh century. At the site bones of domestic cattle and as well as pottery fragments and stone tools were found.⁶¹ Middledrift lies far to the east of Elphick's proposed dispersal route and predates it by some three centuries. In other words, we could not be sure of even the timing and direction of the diffusion of pastoralist technologies. It is possible that Elphick was not aware of the Middledrift site when he wrote his book. Still, he should have known - a report was published as early as 1973.⁶² No doubt had he been working on, for example, mining history, he would speedily have been informed of evidence which flatly contradicted his theories.

Finally, there is the problem of pure speculation. Elphick postulated an increase in population together with ecological constraints as a reason for both migration and conflict.⁶³ There is, however, simply no evidence for a population increase. In fact, there are no accurate figures for the Khoisan population at all until more than a century later - estimates vary by a factor of ten.⁶⁴ If the population cannot even be ascertained, there is certainly no hope of establishing trends of population change. The same objection applies to the idea that a system of clientage existed between hunters and herders prior to colonialism. The only source Elphick could draw on to substantiate this conclusion was written in 1705, at a time when he himself argued that Khoikhoi society was in a state of irreversible collapse.⁶⁵ The idea that pastoralists first stole the hunters' land and then magnanimously offered the dispossessed the chance to work for them was of course a reflection of

⁶¹ L. Ncongco and J. Vansina, "Southern Africa: its Peoples and Social Structures" in D.T. Niane, (ed.) A General History of Africa: IV: Africa From the Twelfth to the Sixteenth Century, Unesco and Heinemann, California, 1984, pp. 503.

⁶² Derricourt, R M "Archeological Survey of the Transkei and Ciskei : Interim Report for 1977" Fort Hare Papers, 5:4, 1973, pp. 449-455, cited in Ncongco et al pp 503.

⁶³ Elphick , pp. 14.

⁶⁴ Between 10 000 to 100 000. Cf. *ibid.*, pp. 23, note 1.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 34, footnote 40, and pp. 114.

what, according to Elphick, subsequently happened under colonialism. Still, there is simply no evidence for the occurrence of clientage prior to that time.

In all fairness, Elphick himself was aware that his theories were difficult to substantiate. Thus he ended his account of early Khoisan history with the comment that: "[t]he foregoing reconstruction is of course speculative, and some parts of it are more probable than others."⁶⁶ It has been necessary to demonstrate just how improbable most of it was, because Elphick's analysis of early Khoisan history was crucial to his explanation of the collapse. He argued that the chieftainships which emerged were weak and this, together with the frequency of inter-Khoikhoi wars, played a large part in making the clans unable to unite against the common enemy.⁶⁷ In fact, European trade, European cattle raiding and European seizure of land could be viewed as a set of additional ecological factors in precipitating a downward cycle of raid and counter-raid. These factors became crucial during the 1680's and 1690's when the Dutch East India Company and the freemen began stepping up the pace of land seizure.⁶⁸ In Elphick's description of the collapse, European aggression may have been a proximate cause, but only in setting off the operation of a traditional institution which was the ultimate cause of the Khoikhoi downfall. "The downward swing was a snowballing process which could be started or given further momentum by factors outside the fragile Khoikhoi economy. The Dutch presence created many such factors, of which the official trade was only one."⁶⁹ What the Khoikhoi did not realize that this particular downward swing was irreversible. The dispossession of the last decades of the seventeenth century was followed by the 1713 smallpox epidemic which rang down the final curtain: "[n]ot only did it kill the majority of the population but it also eliminated those vestiges of traditional Khoikhoi social structure..." which remained by the turn of the century.⁷⁰

If Elphick's explanation of the collapse sounds curiously like a restatement of the 'propensity for acculturation' theory, that is because it is. It is a formidably well-researched restatement. The breadth and wealth of sources used by Elphick was never to be equalled, much less surpassed, until a decade and a half later. Yet the breadth of research

⁶⁶ Ibid., pp. 22.

⁶⁷ Ibid., pp. 222.

⁶⁸ Ibid., pp. 227.

⁶⁹ Ibid., pp. 170; cf. also pp. 237.

⁷⁰ Ibid., pp. 233.

could not enable the theory to rise above the conceptual limitations of the 'blame the victims' syndrome. These were discussed in the previous chapter and need not be restated here. Instead, discussion will focus on two key concepts in Elphick's argument, namely the existence of inter-Khoikhoi conflict and the existence of unequal relations of authority. It has been argued above that Elphick could not establish the existence of these prior to the coming of the colonizers. Here, it will be argued that it was only through a misuse of sources that he could establish it for the colonial period.

First, there was again the problem of using inappropriate sources. The bulk of Elphick's account of Khoisan social structures suffers from the anthropological fallacy that what was true for the !Xam of the 1870's, or the !Kung of the 1950's, is automatically true of their ancestors. Much of Elphick's key evidence on the social organization of the clan, the institution of chieftainship and relationships of seniority between clans, was an extrapolation to the seventeenth century Khoikhoi based on Hoernle's two studies of the Namaqua in 1913 and 1922.⁷¹ It is perhaps captious to point out that this proceeding in itself contradicts the 'propensity for acculturation' theory. However, it should be noted that Hoernle, like many anthropologists, allowed herself considerable latitude in selecting whom to study.⁷² Therefore Hoernle's work was not representative even of all twentieth century Nama. That it is nevertheless an invaluable source for the student of Khoisan modern history goes without saying, but its relationship to the seventeenth century history of the southernmost clans must be considerably more indirect than Elphick allowed for. The same argument applies to Elphick's use of Bleek's studies of nineteenth century northern Cape groups, or the reliance on Schapera's ethnographical surveys. His use of these sources underlines the point, again, that Elphick's conception of the Khoisan was a curiously static one.

Second, there is the problem of source bias and silence. Elphick turned to ethnographic studies because of the nature of contemporary travel writings. As he pointed out, these were not only Eurocentric in their conception of mores and customs, but were often completely oblivious to the inner workings of Khoisan society. Thus, ethnographic studies were to provide a counterfoil to contemporary documents.⁷³ The problem with this proceeding is that it assumed that the ethnographic

⁷¹ Cf. *ibid.*, pp. 43-47 and pp. 49.

⁷² Cf. P. Carstens, G. Klinghardt and M. West (eds.) Trails in the Thirstland: The Anthropological Field Diaries of Winifred Hoernle CAS, University of Cape Town, 1987, pp. 38.

⁷³ Cf. Elphick, pp. 43.

surveys themselves were unbiased. This assumption allowed the author to conflate two types of bias, in other words to assume that two wrongs do make a right. For instance, Elphick claimed that

"[n]amaqua clans consisted of people who claimed to be related to each other patrilineally: similar relations between clans were also asserted but could not be traced genealogically....Our seventeenth century observers did not perceive this clan structure amongst the Cape Khoikhoi, but it is likely that the 'kraal' which they described as the unit of government consisted roughly of a clan, (with the addition of affines, hunter-clients and other hangers-on.)"⁷⁴

It is much more likely that neither source could shed any light on seventeenth century clan organization. The problem that the contemporary sources were deeply flawed in the matter of Khoisan society is not going to go away by use of a source even more deeply flawed with regard to seventeenth century history.

Third, there is the problem of a cultural bias towards conflict. There is Kolbe's seventeenth century travelogue, for instance, which Elphick cited in the context of inter-Khoikhoi warfare.⁷⁵ Yet, Kolbe's book also contained an 'eyewitness' description of young boys' testicles being removed and replaced with balls of sheep's fat.⁷⁶ Why did Elphick use some descriptions and not others? In our modern age we may dismiss Kolbe's description of initiation ceremonies as being fantastic. This immediately raises the question: when will we become so modern that we find his stories of savagery equally unreasonable? The idea that a people could live without fighting each other was and is impossible for historians to accept. Yet the only evidence for this conflict came from travelogues which were biased towards seeing African people as inherently conflict-ridden.

The written sources were much more informative about European perceptions of the Khoisan than about Khoisan history itself. Thus Kolbe described the episode to refute contemporary European theories that Khoisan men were born with only one testicle. Yet, despite a fanciful imagination, Kolbe was arguably one of the last travel writers until the present century who granted the Khoisan status as "...cultural;

⁷⁴ Ibid., pp. 44.

⁷⁵ Ibid., pp. 54.

⁷⁶ Cf. M. Pratt Travelwriting and Transculturation Routledge and Kegan, New York, 1992 pp. 52.

political, religious and social beings."⁷⁷ As European colonization increased in scope, travel writings increasingly reflected perceptions about the Khoisan which regarded them as objects hardly better than beasts. As a consequence, travel writings abounded with instances of supposed savagery, but what exactly this indicated beyond the fact of a desire on the part of the travel writer to titillate the readership or to rationalize dispossession is a moot point. Unfortunately, Elphick all too often used these instances as evidence of inter-Khoikhoi warfare.

It may be objected that his use of sources was a case of bad judgement, rather than bias. It is the latter which will be argued here, with particular reference to an episode in 1661 where for the first time we have a white eyewitness account of 'war' amongst the Khoisan. Elphick's description was as follows:

"At the end of the war the Cochoqua had the Peninsulars at their mercy. In November 1661, the combined forces of Oedasoia and Gonnema... moved into the region immediately to the east of Table Bay. They gradually surrounded the Peninsulars and without once resorting to force, pushed them back onto the Cape Peninsula. They then stationed themselves at crucial locations so as to cut their victims off from the Dutch...; for a period of two weeks the Cochoqua insisted on doing all the odd jobs in the colony which had formerly been done by the Peninsulars."⁷⁸

This was a peculiar 'war' since it was conducted without force on either side. Elphick's interpretation was rendered more peculiar by the fact that there was no internal evidence for the belief that it was the aim of the Cochoquas to cut their 'victims' off from the Dutch and not vice versa. It was at least equally likely that from the viewpoint of the local clans the Cochoqua were a rescuing force and not an attacking one. This conclusion is strengthened by the fact that an official proclamation, written three days after the siege began, complained that a major outbreak of disease amongst the local clans and their cattle was getting worse.⁷⁹ No harm could be seen to be done to the local clans and the lasting

⁷⁷ Pratt, pp. 48. My argument is based on her comparison of the writings of Kolbe with those of Sparrman, Paterson and Barrow; cf. Pratt pp. 38-67.

⁷⁸ Elphick, pp. 123.

⁷⁹ D. Moodie The Record: Or a Series of Official Papers Relative to the Condition and Treatment of the Native Tribes of South Africa, A.A. Balkema, Cape Town, 1959 (1838-1841), vol. 1, pp. 241, entry for 24/11/1661.

effect of Cochoqua intervention was to give them a two week respite, even to the extent of releasing them from duty in the Fort.

Admittedly, the source is itself open to a variety of interpretations. Thus the writer complained that "[i]t seems as if they are set upon hemming us in behind a crescent-shaped front . . . , by pressing in upon us all their vast herds and flocks . . .", which would indicate that Oedaso's actions were hostile to the Fort.⁸⁰ Yet a week later the writer noted that "[o]n the other hand, Herry claimed that the Saldanhar was intending to appropriate this pasturage for himself and to bring Herry's people into complete subjection."⁸¹ We need not establish where the truth lies at the moment. What is being argued here is that, regardless of what actually happened, when it came to a choice between an explanation which posited Khoisan rationality (to unite against the Dutch and sow confusion amongst them) and one which posited an inability to gauge long term consequences (to leave the Dutch in peace and fight amongst themselves), Elphick invariably chose the latter. He did so because he could not see the significance of contradictory evidence in the source.

Where Elphick did point out that the evidence was inconsistent, he nevertheless felt free to use it with the help of a subsidiary (and unproven) assumption:

"Several seventeenth century writers described Khoikhoi methods of warfare at some length, but they presumably obtained their information second hand from farmers who had witnessed battles in the interior. These descriptions are markedly at variance with those found in the diaries of officials who actually fought against Khoikhoi. It is likely that the Khoikhoi had two distinct forms of warfare, and that the Dutch themselves experienced the brunt of the second type only."⁸²

In the light of this type of reasoning, it should not be necessary to give a detailed examination of each example of inter-Khoikhoi warfare. Suffice it to say that there was a bias towards conflict both in the sources and on the part of the historian, and that the cumulative effect of these biases should be enough to cause us to take the conflict theory with a good pinch of salt.

Finally, both the sources and the historian reflect a deep ontological bias. This will be argued with reference to Elphick's discussion of the institution of chieftainship.

⁸⁰ Thom (ed) Journal of Jan van Riebeeck A.A. Balkema Cape Town, Vol. 3, pp 438-439, entry for 24/11/1661.

⁸¹ Ibid., pp 440.

⁸² Elphick, pp. 55.

Elphick used this concept with many reservations. He noted that the "...Khoikhoi failed to develop a form of hereditary chieftainship that could hold society together even during relatively short periods of hardship," He also argued that "...the effective power of chiefs varied as much as the trappings of their office..."⁸³ In view of these reservations it is tempting to wonder whether the Khoisan could be said to have had chiefs at all. Elphick did not give a reason why, despite his reservations, he nevertheless used the concept. Even if the concept of chieftainship were to be accepted, there is a serious problem involved in trying to deduce who was what from the documents. The Europeans who came to the Cape had what may be called a cultural bias towards hierarchy. The classic line of aliens arriving on earth sums it up this bias: 'I come in peace. Take me to your leaders'. It does not allow for the fact that 'leaders' are a profoundly alien concept. The issue of who were regarded as authority figures within Khoisan society must be separated from the fact that the Europeans preferred to deal with individuals rather than collectives and would designate a particular group after that individual: 'Herry's people', 'Gonnema's people' and so forth. The inconsistencies of European designations stem from this bias rather than from variations in relations of authority within the clans.⁸⁴

Moreover, as early as 1676 the colonists were attempting to render the Khoisan subject to Company jurisdiction, and from 1679 onwards began to try and exercise this jurisdiction through Company-appointed chiefs.⁸⁵ From that time on, the emergence of chieftainship was perhaps better regarded as a terrain of struggle than as a traditional (whatever that may mean) institution. But without a concept of chieftainship as a traditional institution, a crucial part of Elphick's explanation of societal collapse has no validity:

"The only real hope of recovery lay in the fourth possibility; namely that strong leaders would forge wealthy communities through successful wars with other Khoikhoi. Only such consolidated tribal units could ... assert Khoikhoi independence of the Dutch. But Khoikhoi society produced no great men in its hour of peril. Rather than becoming stronger as the century progressed, Khoikhoi chiefs became weaker."⁸⁶

⁸³ Elphick, pp. 39, pp. 48.

⁸⁴ cf. Elphick pp. 46 on these inconsistencies.

⁸⁵ Cf. *ibid.*, pp. 190-191.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 218.

If Khoisan society had no history of having leaders at all, it is readily explicable why it did not develop any strong ones. This reasoning would allow us posit Khoisan rationality without expecting them to do something they had no idea how to do. The problem is that a discussion of this issue cannot even take place within the context of Elphick's book because he could not conceive that the 'chiefs' existed in the minds of the the writers of the sources rather than in Khoisan society. This is not surprising since Western society is hardly less hierarchical today than it was three centuries ago. The effect is to introduce yet another double bias which must first be accounted for before we can even begin to address the question of relations of authority in Khoisan history.

It was noted in the introduction that the problem of how to deal with multiple biases is by no means unique to Khoisan historiography. These are methodological problems which no doubt will be solved in the years to come, as historians begin to actively search for solutions. However, before concluding this section it is necessary to discuss the fundamental flaw in Elphick's work, namely its deep conceptual affinity with the most offensive of colonial mythology. For example, in the context of clientage, he argued that the Khoisan worked for whites, less because they were forced to than because they found it attractive. When "...individual Khoikhoi found themselves unable to keep their livestock, they were presented with an attractive alternative: an opportunity to work on an European farm in return for food, tobacco, lodging, and security."⁸⁷ In other words, they wanted it. This conception ignored the fact that colonial clientage was an institution grounded in conquest and dispossession. The appearance of acquiescence was belied by the highly unequal relations of power which underlay it. If we were to characterize clientage as 'co-operation', we could as well call rape a sexual act.

Elphick's explanation was only a slight rephrasing of the information given by colonial boers to Colonel Collins when he in 1809 accused them of provoking the local population:

" [t]he supposition that the enmity of the Bosjesmen was originally occasioned by their resentment at being forced by the colonists to quit the territory of their ancestors, seems unfounded, ... the colonists began to settle in this part of the country about sixty years ago, when they found it inhabited by Hottentots, who readily entered their service." ⁸⁸

⁸⁷ Ibid., pp. 238.

⁸⁸ Moodie The Record, vol. 5, pp. 34, "Journal of Colonel Collins of a Tour of the North Eastern Boundary "

Of the two, Elphick's comment is perhaps the more dangerous, since we have long ago written off the colonial boers as embodiments of truth, while Elphick's book is still regarded as academically respectable. The intellectual heritage is clear, however. Thus we note Elphick's explanation of the 'collapse' of Khoisan society: "...when a Khoikhoi sold ... his labour to a colonist he was exploiting the colonial situation for his own ends, but, though, he did not know it, his immediate interests were incompatible with the continuing autonomy of his traditional society."⁸⁹ This differs in only one respect from the colonial stereotype of the Khoisan as both greedy and stupid. While the colonial masters had no hesitation in expressing their ideas in plain English, Elphick's conclusions were wrapped in the niceties of academic discourse.

There is no difficulty in deciphering these niceties. We remember that, with the exception of radicals like Kolbe, it took a century or two to disabuse Europeans of the notion that the Khoisan were not actually human beings. It seems as if the job is not yet done. With regard to the 1713 plague Elphick commented: "[t]hose Khoikhoi who fled found little welcome in the interior, where their relatives refused to mingle with the pathetic refugees and often killed them. Either through death or flight the white farmers lost the majority of their Khoikhoi labourers: for the first time in many years whites appeared in the fields scything their own grain."⁹⁰ To Elphick, the Khoisan obviously lacked even the most elementary of human emotions - compassion.

The point must be made that it was precisely this type of studied offensiveness, wrapped in a cloak of patronizing sympathy, which led Biko to warn us many years ago against sharing any kind of organizational activity with white people. One would have hoped, for the sake of the future of Khoisan historiography, that there was an immediate academic outcry against Elphick's conclusions and comments. Unfortunately, it must be remembered that this chapter began with the premise that Elphick's work is the classic in the field. This is borne out by the fact that every single historian discussed hereafter cited his findings and made use of his theories. Elphick's research offered Khoisan historiography a conceptual basis for a vision of the African past which reflected the old colonial "... 'rivers of blood and mountains of skulls' school of thought...."⁹¹

⁸⁹ Elphick, pp. 237.

⁹⁰ Ibid., pp. 232.

⁹¹ L. Gann and P. Duignan Africa and the world: An Introduction to the History of Sub-Saharan Africa from Antiquity to 1840, Chandler Publishing, San Francisco, 1972

WILL THE REAL 'BUSHMEN' PLEASE STAND UP ?

" It is important to live with one's past. It is important to understand how people have done that, to understand that what often seems to be false consciousness or a false start doesn't look like that.. when one can see its rationality in a historical context." ⁹²

One thing I find very curious about oral tradition is that people tend to be adamant that a situation where some have while others have not, and where brother is turned against brother, is a result and not a cause of the recent traumatic events under colonialism. It is this conception of the past as a time of peace and sharing which underpins the way their descendants see the Khoisan - as one people. A more precise way of putting it is that no meaningful distinction existed between the level of the clan and level of the autochthons as a people. The rise of intermediate levels of social organization is seen as a particular historical process which, as far as I can ascertain, dates from the nineteenth century. Oral tradition today prefers to talk of a particular clan, or the Khoisan as a people, and any matter which is larger than the clan is understood to affect everybody. This conception allows no room for a division of Khoisan into two systematically differentiated groups.

As will often occur in this work, there is no possibility of compromise on this question. In the historiography, the differentiation has been assumed to be a natural state and in fact constitutes a major explanatory mechanism for the failure of Khoisan resistance. Lamar and Thompson's remark is representative of this school of thought; "...despite their meagre resources, whites were able to gain control of vast areas because the indigenous Khoisan hunting and herding peoples were too few, too weak, and too divided among themselves to prevent it." ⁹³ Thus there is no way for a discussion of resistance to duck the issue. Moreover, it is pertinent to consider it at this stage because the publication

pp. 109.

⁹² T. Ranger, "Trends in African Historiography and the Task Facing Scholars of Namibia" in E. Wood (ed) Namibia, 1884-1984: Readings on Namibia's History and Society, United Nations Institute for Namibia, Lusaka, 1988, pp. 44.

⁹³H. Thompson and L.M. Lamar "The North American and Southern African Frontiers", in L.M. Lamar and H. Thompson (eds.) The Frontier In History, Yale University Press, 1981, pp 23; cf. also Elphick 1977 pp. xvii.

of Elphick's work marked the last time the question was even raised, much less discussed with any degree of seriousness. To me, it divides up into two questions, one, whether pure hunter-gatherers ever existed prior to the dispossession of colonialism, and two, whether Khoisan clans, whatever their economic structure, fought each other.

Both present-day hunter-gatherers and Stow's respondents in the 1870's meant the same thing by the word 'sa', or 'san', namely to collect plants and capture animals.⁹⁴ In other words, they described particular activities and not an ethnic group. This usage is borne out by the missionary Hahn's remark in 1881 that in the transGariep; "[t]he Khoi-khoi often speak of !Uri-San (white Bushmen) and mean the low white vagabonds and runaway sailors who visit their country."⁹⁵ I suspect that the meaning of !Uri-San was less 'white Bushmen' than '*#@! who steal the bounties of nature'. Be that as it may, Khoisan language clearly does not use the term to correlate ethnicity and economic systems.

Some historians have argued that the Khoi and the San do constitute an single ethnic group.⁹⁶ Unless archaeologists develop a reliable method to read off ethnic affiliations from fossil remains this is in fact the only tenable theory. What, then, of the idea that this group was systematically divided internally by differences in economic structure? Both authors hitherto discussed simply accepted the colonial myth of the 'Bushman' as an objectively existing pre-colonial reality. It still await a shred of evidence to substantiate this myth. Archeology cannot settle the dispute. The research has shown that in the western Cape "... it is quite certain that the Late Stone Age groups had acquired sheep..., at least by the first century of our era and almost certainly earlier.... this pastoral phase can hardly have begun before about 300 years before our era" ⁹⁷ The fact that people kept domestic sheep cannot, of course, prove that there were no clans who were solely hunter-gatherers, but it does show that pastoralists lived in the Cape for at least two millennia,

⁹⁴ Cf. H. Angula, "Tracing the History of the San: Namibia's First Inhabitants" in Woods (ed.) Namibia, 1884-1984, pp. 103.

⁹⁵ Cited in E. Wilmsen, Land Filled With Flies: A Political Economy of the Kalahari, University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1989, pp. 85.

⁹⁶ For the single ethnic group theory cf. Elphick pp. 12, Angula "Tracing the History", pp. 104-105.

⁹⁷ J.D. Clark, "The Prehistory of Southern Africa" in Ki-Zerbo (ed.) General History of Africa: I: Methodology and Prehistory, UNESCO and Heinemann, California, 1981, pp. 528.

that the technologies for this mode of life were well established, and that transition to cattle keeping was less of a technological revolution than an adaptation of very ancient techniques of breeding, milking and herding. We need to set these conclusions against the evidence provided that class distinctions were a postcolonial development.⁹⁸ In the absence of any proof to the contrary, this is the theory which best fits what little evidence there is on the early economic organization of the Khoisan.

When it comes to the myth of Khoisan fighting Khoisan, I have discussed its ideological functions in depth above. Here, I wish to place its historical origin. The first mention of the Soaqua, or Vischmen, who were later to be identified with the 'Bushmen', occurs in a particular strategic context, namely when Autjoema is trying to discover van Riebeeck's true intentions. We must remember that the crew of the ship *Haarlem* were stranded in Table Bay in 1649 for five months before they could get passage out of there, giving rise to the expectation amongst the Khoisan that van Riebeeck and his men would do the same. When after six months they had still not left, Autjoema told the following story:

"...that this Table Valley was annually visited by three tribes of people, similar in dress and manner...the third sort was called by them *Vischman*, who... comes here with cows only, and without sheep..., these Watermans and Saldanhamans, according to Herry's account are at constant war, and endeavour to injure them as much as possible; if we would try by means of decoying and alluring them, as if for the purpose of bartering copper for cattle - as is their annual custom - to get this *Vischman* with wife and children into our hands, to destroy them, and take their cattle to ourselves, in which all the Waterman and Saldanhaman would be disposed to assist with all their power, upon which we would not as yet allow our favourable inclination to be seen...."⁹⁹

⁹⁸ On evidence for this post-colonial transition cf. S. Marks "Khoisan Resistance To the Dutch in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries" *Journal of African History*, 13:2, 1972, pp. 59; Elphick *Kraal and Castle* pp. 222; and also Wilmsen *Land Filled With Flies* pp. 83-85, on what he calls the 'bushmanizing' process

⁹⁹D. Moodie *The Record: Or a Series of Official Papers Relative to the Condition and Treatment of the Native Tribes of South Africa*, A.A. Balkema, Cape Town, 1959 (1838-1841), vol. I, pp. 24, entry for 13/11 1652.

The Soaqua, then, both owned cattle and were accustomed to trade annually - hardly typical hunter-gatherers. The story of hereditary enmity does not ring true. I fail to see why the Soaqua would come to Table Bay to be robbed in the first place, nor why the other clans should wish to steal what they could acquire by trade, since the former tactic had little chance of long term success. It will be seen below that no war between the Soaqua and the Goringhaiqua ever occurred, and it is more probable that Autjoema was telling this story in an effort to find out what van Riebeeck's intentions were. When he repeated his request a month later, van Riebeeck again refused, writing that it "...would still be too soon, and it ought previously to be inquired what profit could be had from them for the Company."¹⁰⁰ Autjoema's suspicions that van Riebeeck meant no good, then, were not without foundation. During the next two years, these Soaquas took on an increasingly mythical character. They never showed up in person, but Van Riebeeck was constantly warned of their vicious and wicked characters. They tended to be an excuse why the Khoisan cannot barter cattle (the Soaqua stole them), or, as a closer watch became necessary, as a reason why people needed to camp right up against the walls of the fort. Finally, the Soaqua were a good alibi - cattle raids on the fort were blamed on them.¹⁰¹ However, like the other stories of enmity, Soaqua aggression was heard of but never seen. Thus there is reason to suspect that the Soaqua were largely an invention induced by strategic necessity, and a handy one too.

The first white sighting of them occurred when two Company servants return from an expedition, and mention having seen some Soaqua. It is however clear from the context that they never actually spoke to these people.¹⁰² From this time on, the Soaqua were never mentioned without the qualifier that they had no cattle, or without an epithet such as bandits. These people were so elusive, however, that these conclusions were never reached on the basis of actual conversations.¹⁰³ The conclusion is irresistible that white observers simply applied the name to people they saw who were well armed and had no cattle.

In the meantime, Autjoema had finally received his answer:

¹⁰⁰Ibid., pp. 24, 15/12 1652.

¹⁰¹Cf. eg. *ibid.*, pp. 28, 9/1 1653; pp. 46, 6/3 1654; pp. 63, 30/5 1655 ; pp. 69, 21/8 1655; pp. 88, 14/7 1656; pp. 125, 6/5 1658.

¹⁰²Ibid., pp. 59, 2-3/4 1655.

¹⁰³Cf. *ibid.*, pp. 233, 20/2 1659; pp. 158, 7/3 1659.

" Herry.. seeing us looking on, and hearing us talk of building houses here and there.. asked us, if we built houses .. which they observed to be our intention, where should they live ?.. we replied that they might live under our protection .. upon which they expressed themselves satisfied, but it might be easily seen that it was not quite to their mind."¹⁰⁴

As hostilities escalated into the first Khoi-Dutch war, it is not surprising that large numbers of well armed men left their families behind and congregated in the southwestern Cape. The historian cannot conclude on the basis of such sightings that the famed 'Bushmen' ever existed. After the war, of course, we are well into the colonial period. Many were forced to arm themselves, and to subsist solely on hunting and gathering.

Where does this leave the myth of internal dissension? I have shown that the Khoisan themselves were at pains to cultivate this impression and that the exigencies of resistance itself was what determined its deployment. My cursory reading of events during the first four years of colonialism cannot prove that Khoisan never fought one another, but it can show that we need to distinguish between a story which was carefully constructed to create a particular impression in the mind of the white observer and what was actually happening. Further, it shows that a crucial way to make this distinction is by considering the strategies and aims of the Khoisan - that is, by reading the sources in context.

This discussion raises crucial questions. If there were no ethnic groupings who lived solely by hunting and gathering prior to European colonialism then we are forced to re-evaluate all our conceptions of Khoisan history. If systematic internal divisions did not aid and abet the genocide of the Khoisan, what did? The travel writings of the eighteenth and nineteenth century offer abundant evidence of destitute clans who lived by 'San'. This would indicate that historians have grossly underestimated the degree of dispossession which occurred during the Dutch period, and have grossly overestimated the economic stability which underpinned Khoisan ability to resist. It is clear that if Khoisan historiography can but rid itself of the myth of the 'Bushman', there are many more exciting, and more pertinent, issues to be investigated.

¹⁰⁴Ibid., pp. 93, 20/2 1657.

CHAPTER THREE: BUILDING ON THE SOLID ROCK

This chapter discusses the concept of collaboration. It searches for the historical origin of collaboration amongst the Khoisan, explains how the term is used amongst their descendants, and how it relates to a system of morals. It goes on to examine the use of the concept in the work of one historian.

COMPREHENDING COLLABORATION

"Moreover, the very notion of collaboration defines political behaviour 'from above' - that is, it views the phenomenon almost entirely from the vantage point of the colonial state, remaining incurious as to the components and priorities of that political position"¹⁰⁵

If resistance historiography has from its inception in the late sixties played a profoundly ideological role, the same must apply to the historiography of collaboration - except, of course, that there is no such thing. Even the most racist historians have not attempted a systematic study of collaboration. Instead, the method of colonial historians was to work by assumption, by insinuation and in fact by anything rather than discussing the issue on its merits.¹⁰⁶ Modern resistance historiography did develop a more sophisticated concept of collaboration. Nevertheless, as the comment by Beinart and Bundy above indicates, it was only by the late eighties that resistance historians began to divest their use of the concept from its colonial antecedents.

I would argue that this issue has particular resonance in an account of Khoisan history, since it is striking how often collaboration and resistance are united in the same person. To write of these people as if they were one and not the other is

¹⁰⁵ W. Beinart, and C. Bundy, "Introduction: 'Away in the Locations'" in W. Beinart and C. Bundy (eds.) Hidden Struggles in Rural South Africa: Politics and Popular Movements in Transkei and the Eastern Cape, 1890-1930, University of California Press, Berkeley, 1987, pp. 28.

¹⁰⁶ My personal favourite is Vedder, the grandfather of Namibian historiography of whom Lau writes: "[he] found it apparently very easy ... to pay allegiance to Adolf Hitler when the latter came to power." B. Lau, "Thank God the Germans Came": Vedder and Namibian Historiography " Collected Papers, Centre For African Studies, University of Cape Town, Vol. 2, 1981, pp. 26.

to give a highly skewed picture of history. Moreover, we cannot understand their lives, their motives or their actions. In Khoisan history, the part of the collaborator was no less dangerous, and often less rewarding, than that of the guerilla. Autjoema, for instance, has often been called the first collaborator, yet he was also the first political prisoner on Robben Island, where he died in 1663.¹⁰⁷ How then, do we understand his life? Only if we remember that counter-intelligence is one of the crucial weapons of war can we acquire perspective. Thus Autjoema said to van Riebeeck that while all the other clans had migrated, he alone: "...resides with us, with his wife and children, to serve the company, as far as he can, as interpreter...".¹⁰⁸ This departure from the custom of wandering annually is only explicable if we take the motivations of the Khoisan into account.¹⁰⁹ It is likely that Autjoema was detailed to stay as close to the fort as possible, to report on, and if possible to frustrate, the actions of the colonists.

Those who went as guides, as well, were far from cooperative people. On the first expedition to find the Namaquas, the whites were far too sick from dysentery and other assorted diseases to need much encouragement to turn back.¹¹⁰ Long before the second expedition, Doman and others made sure to tell scary stories of the clan's warlike, vicious tendencies, much akin to previous stories of the Soaqua.¹¹¹ When the second expedition insisted on setting out, the guides (of whom one was in all likelihood Doman) did their best to induce them to turn back. Thus the expedition met with:

".. 8 Soaquas..[who] tried to persuade us that the Namaquas would kill us - I asked these Hottentoots to accompany us and show us the Namaquas, that I would give them tobacco and beads, but they would not and left us; our Hottentoots began to lose heart

¹⁰⁷ D. Moodie The Record: Or a Series of Official Papers Relative to the Condition and Treatment of the Native Tribes of South Africa, A.A. Balkema, Cape Town, 1959 (1838-1841), vol. 1, pp. 278, entry for 15/4 1664.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid., pp. 26, Vol. 1, entry for 11/11 1652.

¹⁰⁹ For an explanation of the origins of Khoisan seasonal migration, cf. J.D. Clark, "The Prehistory of Southern Africa" in J. Ki-Zerbo (ed.) General History of Africa: I : Methodology and Prehistory, UNESCO and Heinemann, California, 1981, pp. 523.

¹¹⁰ Moodie The Record pp. 122, vol. 1, entry for 21/3 1658.

¹¹¹ Cf. eg. *ibid.*, pp. 228, vol. 1, entry for 20/1 1661.

and said, like the others, that they would kill us."¹¹²

The guerillas returned, each time with the same story, until even the white people became suspicious. Perhaps this exaggerated concern for white safety may have seemed strange. Thus after eight days of dissuasion the perceptive expedition leader observed that "[f]rom all we can make out, it seems they do not wish us to reach the Namaquas."¹¹³ The two guides perforce stayed with the expedition, but did their utmost to prevent communication with the 'Namaqua' and when the expedition finally met one of the northerly clans, the guides made sure to have a lengthy council with them first.¹¹⁴ What was planned there we can only guess at, but it is certain that after two days the expedition was literally burned out of the area - forest fires forced them to retreat.¹¹⁵

It seems as if the white people in the fort were suffering from a shortage of meat, which is why they were constantly in search of northern clans more generous, or less wise, than those which took up camp around the fort. The hopes were not fulfilled, however, since the second expedition had netted only one ox, and the third, which set out a month later, was not much more successful. The third expedition showed exactly the same pattern of discouragement.¹¹⁶ When they met a northern clan, a second lengthy council was held, of which the expedition leader commented: "[o]ur interpreter asked them fully 10 times what they were debating about, and they answered, about nothing. We could form no other opinion but that our Hottentoots [sic!] told the Soaqua many falsehoods."¹¹⁷

The expedition leader may have communicated his unease to others at the fort. At any rate, it was to take another twenty months before whites ventured beyond the Piquetberg again. On the fourth expedition, the link between collaboration and resistance became clear even to the whites. The guides made them cross the Oliphants River at the same ford three times and, I suppose, could have gone on 'getting lost'

¹¹² Ibid., pp. 230, entry for 7/2 1661

¹¹³ Ibid., vol. 1, pp. 231, entry for 15/2 1661.

¹¹⁴ Cf. *ibid.*, vol. 1, pp. 233, entries for the 18-19/2 1661.

¹¹⁵ Ibid., vol. 1, pp. 234, entry for 22/2 1661 and for entry for 24/2 1661.

¹¹⁶ Cf. *ibid.*, vol. 1, pp. 236, entries for 26/3 and 1/4 1661.

¹¹⁷ Ibid., vol. 1, pp. 236, entry for 5/4 1661.

indefinitely, had the expedition leader not sought other guides. The new guides: "...3 Soaqua...also tried to mislead him, and ran away the next night."¹¹⁸ The next day the expedition was told to turn back by armed men, and when this did not work, they were attacked the same night. Much disillusioned, the writer observed: "[n]ext day some Namaquas came to our people with cattle for sale, but our men thought that they rather came to ascertain whether any of our men had been killed, than with any other object"¹¹⁹ The cattle were bought nonetheless, but violence succeeded where trickery did not - the expedition finally turned back to the fort.¹²⁰

When Khoisan motives are brought into the picture, even the most cursory consideration of collaboration reveals it to be much more than an easy option, but one of a range of tactics deployed in the broader struggle to understand and resist colonialism. This is not surprising if we assume that the Khoisan were unwilling (and in later centuries often unable) to turn to violence except as a last resort.

How then do we distinguish analytically between the one tactic and the other? Things have not changed that much: as a member of a colonized people, I know the difference between resistance and collaboration. The latter is what you do survive. Still, beyond the necessities of daily life there are islands where you can just be yourself, without question. Resistance is what you do to protect those islands, while war is what you wage to enlarge them. Then of course there is 'selling out', an act which is contrasurvival, both as an individual and as a people. Putting a gut feeling into words may sound confusing, but, as with definitions of Khoisan, it is perfectly straightforward to categorize actual people. Service in the police, army or in Parliament is not considered acceptable, while service in the navy may be acceptable if finances are desperate. To do something in order to get by is not immoral - to get rich by it, is. Thus, in negotiating the contradictions created by colonialism, one learns that collaboration and resistance are both two sides of the same coin. Survival, physical and spiritual, is the coin.

¹¹⁸ Ibid., pp. 263, entry for 1/2 1663.

¹¹⁹ Ibid.

¹²⁰ As an aside, the evidence provided here serves to cast considerable doubt on the story of hereditary enmity between the 'Soaqua' and the Khoisan of the southern Cape (cf. chapter two, pp. 59) No doubt we could make a subsidiary assumption to bolster the story, such as the idea that a peace had been concluded in the meantime. But why should we?

THE RISE AND FALL OF DEPENDENCY

" I do not say that I am against Communism. But Communism, like Christianity, has been singularly unfortunate in its choice of representatives."

Mangaliso Robert Sobukwe

To include the work of Martin Legassick in a study of Khoisan resistance may seem strange, since he barely touches on the topic of resistance. However, he does address the issue of Khoisan collaboration and his work on the northern frontier in particular has not only been enormously influential, but has remained largely unchallenged.¹²¹

Legassick's work set out to show that racism in South Africa, far from being dysfunctional to capitalism, in fact was central to its development.¹²² This conclusion has become generally accepted, but, coming from a generation to whom both 'functionalism' and 'structuralism' are four-letter words, one could argue that it is possible to express this idea in a far less deterministic manner. The problem with determinism of any kind is that the primacy of theory makes it all too easy to bend the rules of good scholarship. When this is combined with the exigencies of political activism, the author is automatically provided with a fine-sounding excuse to bend the rules. Legassick is a case in point. To refer constantly to an unpublished Ph.D thesis for discussions of interpretation may be allowable, but to do so to substantiate facts cannot be regarded as fair play. Further, his work abounded with instances when sources were incorrectly used or slightly twisted to fit the theory.

The issue of collaboration is a good example. Legassick wished to demonstrate that class, and not race was the decisive factor determining attitudes on the frontier. In arguing this he commented "... white burgers were wont to send their ... Khoi servants on commando duty in their

¹²¹ Cf. eg. R. Ross Adam Kok's Griquas: A Study in the Development of Stratification in South Africa, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1976; R. Elphick and H. Giliomee (eds.) "Introduction" in The Shaping of South African Society, Longman, Cape Town, 1979; L.M. Lamar and H. Thompson (eds.) "Introduction" in The Frontier in History, Yale University Press, New Haven, 1981; J. Comaroff and J. Comaroff Of Revelation and Revolution: Christianity, Colonialism and Consciousness in South Africa, University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1993, chapter four.

¹²² Cf. M. Legassick The Frontier Tradition in South African Historiography in S. Marks and A. Atmore (eds) 1980 pp 67-68.

place..."¹²³ Decontextualized in this way, it seemed as if the Khoi went on commando of their own free will, in effect collaborating in extending the white frontier northwards. This is in fact exactly what he argued elsewhere; "... it was the commando system which created the possibilities for the replacement of an indigenous system of usufruct of common land by a system of landholding."¹²⁴ While no one would deny the truth of this, Legassick went on to implicate the victims:

"The commando-like bands of the Northern Frontier zone consisted of both whites and non-whites. But at first it was colonial citizens who could distribute the crucial resources of arms and powder. As they moved out to tap new trade routes...they would have found Khoikhoi eager to accept arms and powder in return for serving as guides."¹²⁵

In using the word 'eager', Legassick carried the accusation one step further, from collaboration to selling out. It is not difficult to show that this is far from the truth. While *inboekselinge* were often sent on commando, their wives and children were kept on the farm as hostages. Thus in 1802 Klaas Stuurman asked that the British order the boers to "... give back the women, children and cattle which they had extorted, stolen or kept back by force from his men, whilst in their service."¹²⁶ The frequency of such complaints implies that the keeping of women and children hostages was an integral part of the commando system, and explains the behaviour of many

¹²³ Ibid., pp 62

¹²⁴ M. Legassick The Northern Frontier to 1820 in Elphick and Giliomee (eds.), pp. 250.

¹²⁵ *ibid*, pp 255

¹²⁶ S. Newton-King, "The Rebellion of the Khoi in Graaf-Reinet: 1799-1803" in The Khoikhoi Rebellion in the Eastern Cape (1799-1803) Centre For African Studies, University of Cape Town, 1981, pp. 48.

'collaborators'.¹²⁷ To give just one example, one Willem Haasbek was regarded as one of the most trusted guides in the war of 1793 in the eastern Cape, yet in 1794 he complained of the continued detention of his wife and children by Coenraad de Buys, who had ignored repeated requests to set them free.¹²⁸ This circumstance sheds abundant light on Haasbek's fidelity. Not surprisingly, Haasbek switched sides at the earliest opportunity and in 1801 died in prison, where he was held on charges of desertion and conspiracy.¹²⁹ The presence of Khoisan on commandos was far from being an example of non-racial unity. On the contrary, the institution was embedded in a system of coercion and violence which was racist to the core.

There is evidence of a similar pattern of coercion on the transfrontier. Thus the Swede Andersson on his trip to Ovamboland in 1861 succeeded in capturing an entire kraal. Not content with holding hostages and:

"...dreading the consequences of allowing the man his liberty, I hit upon the following expedient to prevent his absconding. I fastened his right hand to the wrist of one of my attendants....The Bushman was then ordered to proceed, and, in order to prevent all chance of escape, I followed close on his heels."¹³⁰

Wilmsen considers this proceeding to be not uncommon in nineteenth century traders and explorers, while Pratt mentions the custom of travellers to 'borrow' guides from the last farmer on the road, who was paid for these services in guns and ammunition - the boers, that is, not the guides.¹³¹ Once again we have Legassick turning facts on their head in order to prove a theory.

¹²⁷ Cf. Newton-King, pp. 15 and pp. 32; V.C. Malherbe, "The Khoi Captains in the Third Frontier War" in The Khoikhoi Rebellion in the Eastern Cape (1799-1802) Centre For African Studies, University of Cape Town, 1981, pp. 75.

¹²⁸ Cf. Newton-King, pp 21 and pp 59, note 39. For other instances, see Malherbe, pp 76 and S. Newton-King, "Background to the Khoikhoi Rebellion of 1799-1803" Collected Seminar Papers on the Societies of Southern Africa, Institute of Commonwealth Studies, University of London, 1981, pp. 8.

¹²⁹ Malherbe, pp. 79.

¹³⁰ Cf. E. Wilmsen, Land Filled With Flies: A Political Economy of the Kalahari, University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1989, pp 111.

¹³¹ Cf. Wilmsen, pp. 112, M. Pratt Travelwriting and Transculturation, Routledge and Kegan, New York, 1992, pp. 53.

My final example refers to Legassick's use of a source which could have known nothing about the matter at hand:

"From about 1810 ... the illegal trade in arms ... flourished with such people as intermediaries, and led to cattle raiding and the seizure of hunter-gatherer apprentices. Such Bastards, wrote Governor Somerset in 1817, were 'expert in the use of firearms.... to procure firearms they must revisit the Colony and bring with them something which will induce the itinerant traders to supply them The consequence is that they plunder the distant tribes and traffic with the booty.'"¹³²

The accusation of slave trading is serious. Even so, it should be obvious that Governor Somerset himself could have no knowledge whatsoever of who raided the slaves who passed through many hands before reaching Cape Town. That Somerset considered the Baster and Oorlam communities plunderers cannot be used as evidence, since these epithets at the time were applied with particular vehemence to people who were obstreperous with the colonial government. Calling people names should indicate resistance rather than collaboration. It is baffling why Legassick should cite Somerset in this context unless, perhaps, he had no more convincing evidence at hand. After all, it does not require much reflection to realize that Somerset could have only acquired this information third or fourth hand. It may safely be classified as yet another indication of the close and cosy relationship between the ideas of colonial officials and some modern historians. We may go on to consider whether there is any better evidence for Khoisan being slave-traders. The only other source Legassick referred to was his thesis which of course is unavailable.¹³³ However, Ross repeated the accusation, and it seems that the evidence used to substantiate this occurred in the context of land disputes between trekboers and Griqua.¹³⁴ These accusations were made in a particular context, when both the Griqua and the boers were seeking British recognition of conflicting land claims. Not surprisingly, the accusations resurfaced in the 1840's when the Griqua title to west Griqualand was in dispute.¹³⁵ It is funny, of course, that it

¹³²Legassick, The Northern Frontier pp. 257, cf also pp. 262. The quote is from a letter from Somerset to Bathurst, 23/1/1817.

¹³³ Cf. *ibid.*, pp. 282, note 67.

¹³⁴ R. Ross, Adam Kok's Griqua's: A Study in the Development of Stratification in South Africa , Cambridge University Press, 1976, pp. 24.

¹³⁵ Cf. *ibid.*, pp. 54 and pp. 61

is the boers' accusations which have stuck, and not the Griquas'. Still, for the historian it is indefensible to use such evidence without placing it in its proper context. It is even more improper to repeat loose rumours spread by people who could have no way of knowing the facts of the matter. The result is a narrative trope of the Khoisan which reflected nothing more than the prejudices of colonial officials and the slander of the settlers. The trope helps to 'demonstrate' class differences amongst the indigenous inhabitants and backs up Legassick's theory. Accusations of collaboration and selling out should not lightly be thrown around, especially when the people concerned are dead, and cannot defend themselves. It is particularly ironic when the accusations come from theorists who purport, through class analysis, to want to liberate the very people they are maligning. For our purposes here it is crucial to point out that these accusations prevent Legassick from making any sense of Khoisan motivations. In Legassick's narrative Khoisan willingness to sell-out remained an assumption, made to seem a fact. This is of course only possible because their actions were relegated to the margins of the story - a 'fact' used to 'prove' something else. The consequence is that our understanding of African motivations and experience is as limited in Legassick's text, as it was in the most apologetic historians of colonialism.

In viewing the frontier as the site of both conflict and collaboration, Legassick showed himself to be the intellectual heir not of Marx, but of Elphick. It has been argued in the previous chapter that this concept denies the experience of the Khoisan and there is no reason to repeat these arguments here. It is only necessary to note that, while no one could accuse Elphick of failing to reference correctly, he and Legassick were at one in viewing inter-Khoisan relationships as just "...one damn crime after another."¹⁶

There is one more way in which the two authors were alike, and that was in the ability to wrap offensive implications in the most delicate academic language. The closest Legassick came to an explanation of Khoisan motivations was in such statements as "[t]he commando frontier was interested in the appropriation of resources, and resources in various forms were available."¹⁷ It takes some effort to deconstruct such statements since there are no subjects, only systems, but if it is borne in mind that Legassick considered the Khoisan as 'eager' to participate in commandos, and that 'appropriation of resources' in this context meant theft, it becomes clear that Legassick was arguing that they did it for the money. In short, we are back

¹⁶ Lau, pp. 38.

¹⁷ Legassick The Northern Frontier, pp 252.

at the old, tired story of the greedy savage. The fact that Legassick considered the boers to be just as greedy does not lessen the offensive implications of this remark. After all, the colonizers were perfectly happy to admit that they did rob, steal, rape and murder. In fact, long books were written about it and called 'history'. It is highly unlikely that the boers would be offended by Legassick's remarks, but in the context of Willem Haasbek's family in bondage and Haasbek himself dying in prison for his pains, it should be clear that Legassick's theoretical constructs add insult to injury. The Khoisan were recolonized in his text just as surely as they were colonized by the double coercion of the commando and inboek systems.

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CHAPTER FOUR: SHIFTING SAND

This chapter considers the concept of resistance. It begins with a discussion of what the act and the memory of resistance means in the culture of the colonized. It goes on to consider how a fundamental miscomprehension of what resistance meant to the Khoisan operated in the work of one historian.

THE MEANING OF RESISTANCE

"...after the family crisis... my curiosity about the 1896 rebellion became very much stronger.... What the events did was to make it painfully obvious that our society found itself in hostile circumstances, and so I developed a hankering to discover what had brought it about.... ever since I have had the privilege of education I have longed to recreate in writing the life of the VaShawasha tribe...to tell how they viewed their past and reacted to the humiliation of defeat and the savage destruction of their culture that followed."¹³⁸

In his book about the 1896 Chimurenga in Zimbabwe, Lawrence Vambe begins his tale by discussing the way in which memories of the uprising functioned as a touchstone in the village of his birth:

"As time went on during my tribal upbringing, I was to learn that this was easily the most popular topic of discussion at informal tribal gatherings. It cropped up on all sorts of occasions and for all kinds of reasons.... Listening to these reminiscences... I formed a clear impression that the VaShawasha looked at white people and their ways as a perpetual pestilence. As in this instance, the starting point for damning the white race in Southern Rhodesia, its system of government and its civilization was invariably the rebellion."¹³⁹

Vambe goes on to tell how his loss of innocence completely changed his view of the uprising. His grandfather's arrest for non-payment of dog taxes brought home to him forcibly the conquered status of his people, and the powerlessness of the relatives he had been taught to look up to. In learning all he could about the uprising and in understanding and retelling the story, Vambe regained the respect which had been taken from him.

¹³⁸ L. Vambe An Ill-fated People; Zimbabwe Before and After Rhodes, University of Pittsburgh Press, Pittsburgh, 1972, pp. 22-23.

¹³⁹ *Ibid.*

I remember as a child feeling weary and angry at the circumstances of my life, and saying to my mother 'Why did my ancestors allow this? Why didn't they kill the white people so that I wouldn't have to live like this?'. Like any African child I was given, along with a stern reproof and a reminder not to be disrespectful towards my elders, the answer 'But they did.' The story of why they did and how they did became interwoven with the fabric of my life. Tales of incredible suffering, attempted genocide; of love, courage and a determination to survive that I might be born, always ended with the admonition: 'You have to be strong, proud of who you are, and strive to be worthy of them.' Thus I learned not to complain about my life, but to change it.

One summer's day, while walking along Jonker Afrikaner Weg in Windhoek, houses and cars disappeared before my eyes as I was shown a beautiful valley which since ancient times had been the confluence of the roads from north to south, and from east to west. Entranced I heard how Afrikaner, a wise man and a fierce warrior, had created a haven of peace for his people in the valley. 'He was so strong,' said my mother, 'that even the white people had to respect him, and so they named this road after him.' My hot and dusty present was transformed into an unforgettable experience.

As an adult, I was constantly disturbed by the written histories of my people. Questions that were important to them were irrelevant to me, non-problems, while the important questions were left out. In the historiography of resistance the crucial questions have been: why did people resist?; and what did resistance achieve? But for Vambe, and for me, these questions were answered before we thought to ask them. Acts of resistance were a part of my past and the reason for my existence. The memory of resistance was my future, part of who I wanted to be. To ask why would have been redundant - I was alive. The continuing relevance was equally obvious - because of resistance, our loss of innocence became a renewed sense of wonder. Amongst ourselves, questions of strategy and method, such as guerilla struggle versus pitched battles, decentralized organization versus central leadership and so on, were always a popular topic amongst the descendants of the Khoisan. The mechanics of resistance mattered, issues such as where they received supplies of arms, food and medicine. Ultimately, the crucial question was always: what worked and what did not work?

The question of failure bothered us less. I had learned to equate it with my childish recriminations. This did not diminish in any way my interest in what people thought and did. But this interest was quite separate from the non-question of 'why did they fail?'. After all, the whole of Africa was subject to the same oppression - to look for the reason for failure inside their societies would be tantamount to blaming everybody's ancestors. What was more, between me

and the first Khoisan standing on the beach watching the strange ships come in, lies some five centuries during which, as Vambe pointed out, we suffered the humiliation of defeat and the destruction of our culture. The fact that my generation has received 'the privilege of an education' means that we understand white society and white culture in a way the Khoisan of old never could. That expertise has made of us translators - we explain white ways to our people, and the ways of our people to white society. My generation paid a price for that understanding; as the old people would say: 'to think like the enemy is to become the enemy'. But we do understand, in our heads if not in our hearts we know and understand a culture whose logical conclusion was a Hiroshima. 'It is easier to destroy than to build up.' 'It takes a hundred years to grow a tree and only a day to cut it down.' In the proverbs which are so simple, and so common, that no one ever remembers who said it first, lies the answer to the non-question. Once I understood that I never thought about it again - until, of course, I came into contact with Khoisan historiography.

In my work as a historian I will always argue that Khoisan resistance did change the course of southern African history in certain crucial ways. As a child of Africa, all I wish to do is to retell the stories, so that others may listen, learn, and be transformed. Both my tasks mean that I must try and see the history of the Khoisan with their eyes, understand the context of their lives as they lived it, and to make judgements as they would have judged. In the process I have had to develop the oral traditions of my childhood into a broader understanding of Khoisan history and culture. In reaching across the span of history to see with my ancestors' eyes, I have been forced to reculturate (to coin a term) my own. In trying to explain this history, I have been forced to bridge the fundamental dichotomy which has ruled my life.

I have stood with one foot in both camps and have come to realize that the meaning of resistance is to love, to grow, to flower and bear fruit. It is about being human. My ancestors were confronted with a culture which could burn a village to the ground and strew salt on the earth so that nothing would ever grow again. I suspect the very idea was so shocking that they would never even have wanted to understand it. I do understand it. I also understand that my ancestors lived, and died, to protect a world in which living and loving had meaning. If winning was synonymous with becoming what they hated, I suspect they would have preferred to lose. Their achievement cannot be measured in the fortunes of war, but in their ability to preserve the memory of their world. It would be a sad fate if their descendants were to win the war only at the price of becoming more vicious than the enemy.

One cold evening at Queens I had the privilege of hearing the Native author Lee Maracle speak of her work. 'We have to show them how it dehumanises them', she said. I

remember talking about this with my family. We spoke of the youngsters at home, the ones that do not even have education, or jobs, or food, or a life. We remembered the magnitude of the task awaiting us and we came to the conclusion that the Native Americans must be a much gentler people than we are. We certainly could not conceive of ever having the time, or the patience, to show them anything. Thinking of resistance made me realize that perhaps Lee Maracle had a point. My task at the moment is to write of Khoisan history and historiography, of how their wars and their writings dehumanized us. I could write volumes and still have failed at my task if I could not explain what our resistance was about, if I could not offer a glimpse of the world the strangers could have shared, had they but genuinely come in peace.

FROM INBOEKSELINGE TO CAPTAINS

"The renewed outbreak of violence along the frontier... had a profound influence in shaping labour relations further to the west. Indeed it is almost impossible to separate frontier violence from the violence which, increasingly, permeated labour relations throughout the colony."¹⁴⁰

In Newton King's work on the Khoisan war of 1799-1803, we see the same qualities of thorough research and fluent narrative which characterized Marks' article.¹⁴¹ Surprisingly, Newton King did not take advantage of Mark's definition of Khoisan. Instead she followed Elphick's usage of the term Khoikhoi throughout her paper. Of her description of early Khoisan history it is perhaps not necessary to say much more than that it followed Elphick at every point, without, however, bringing any new evidence to back up his case.¹⁴² She did not give any reasons why she thus generalized conclusions about the western Cape Khoikhoi to the people of the eastern Cape almost a century later.

In considering the development of clientage between Elphick's period and her own, Newton King came up against the

¹⁴⁰N. Penn, "Labour, Land and Livestock in the Western Cape During the Eighteenth Century" in W. James and M. Simons, (eds.) Class, Caste and Colour: A Social and Economic History of the South African Western Cape Transaction Publishers, New Haven, 1992, pp. 13.

¹⁴¹ S. Newton-King, "The Rebellion of the Khoi in Graaf-Reinet: 1799-1803" in The Khoikhoi Rebellion in the Eastern Cape (1799-1803) Centre For African Studies, University of Cape Town, 1981.

¹⁴² Ibid., pp 2.

problem of finding evidence for it. This may have been difficult because it is hard to substantiate a theory which is so flawed in the first place. Her solution was to conclude that:

" During the early years of the settler presence in the east and northeast, Boer and Khoikhoi sometimes entered into amicable agreements - patron/client relations as some historians have termed them - by which Khoi retained stock and grazing rights but rendered labour services in return for the protection afforded by Boer guns..."¹⁴³

Not surprisingly, this conclusion begged some important questions. From whom were the Khoi supposed to need protection, more than the boers? This formulation only made sense if one assumed constant inter-Khoisan wars were the norm - the myth of the 'Bushmen' transposed to the colonial period. Newton-King, like Elphick, relied heavily on contemporary travel writers to prove this myth.¹⁴⁴ That this proceeding ignores problems of source bias has been discussed in depth in chapter two and need not be repeated here.

It does raise a conceptual problem. In positing an 'early period' of 'amicable arrangements' in the development of the clientage system, Newton-King conflated two concepts. The fact that the boers could not immediately institute coercive labour relations is obvious. Until they could subdue the indigenous population, there was bound to be a period of fluidity, in which some Khoisan could retain their flocks, graze them on land which was (in terms of white law) a legal loan farm and therefore in theory the boer's land. The extent to which this would occur on each individual farm would depend on the relations of power in each locality; in other words, on the strength of Khoisan resistance versus boer arms and ammunition.

These facts cannot shed light on people's motivation. Even if the exact configuration of land and labour relations on each farm could be ascertained, this would still say nothing about whether these relations emerged through conflict or co-operation. We would be extremely well informed about the relationships of power in the eastern Cape. We might even find a multitude of cases where Khoisan labourers were not physically in chains. But we would not be in a position to speculate as to whether these Khoisan were not in chains because they wanted to work for the boers (amicable arrangements), because the colonizing settlers were magnanimously offering them protection, or simply because their land and cattle had already been stolen from them by

¹⁴³ Ibid., pp. 6.

¹⁴⁴ Ibid., pp. 4-5.

armed robbery and they found themselves with no other option. We cannot conflate motive and behaviour.

Newton-King did not try to generalize about clientage without evidence. Thus she argued that: "... the records also provide evidence of more harmonious relations between Boer masters and Khoi servants: some Khoi, perhaps many, came to accept their servile position."¹⁴⁵ The evidence cited, however, relates to two instances of Khoi desertion, hardly good examples of acquiescence! This reflected a problem endemic in Khoisan historiography at the time. Muddled theories and conceptual conflation led to the phenomenon of good minds wasting time trying to substantiate theories which the field would have done much better without. The waste was the more deplorable because some, like Newton-King, seemed sincerely concerned with trying to reflect, and understand, the motivations of the Khoisan.

In that endeavour, Newton-King provided plenty of evidence to show that violence was the foundation on which labour relations were built.¹⁴⁶ As we have seen, she coped with the contradiction this posed to the patron-client theory by positing the existence of clientage immediately before her own period. Within her period, she argued that the coercive elements of the *inboek* system were a major contributory factor in the outbreak of the rebellion.

She went on to consider why the rebellion failed. In view of the criticisms made earlier in this thesis of the dangers inherent in such a question, it should come as a relief to see that this can be done, as Newton-King did it, without blaming the victims. Boer viciousness was perhaps rather taken for granted in the narrative, but that is a fault the contemporary Khoisan would no doubt have had little quibble with. Newton-King pinned part of the blame squarely on the perfidious British government, who were more concerned with placating the rebellious boers than in the well-being of the empire's newest subjects. Thus, when by 1802 the strength of Khoisan resistance had succeeded in forcing the government to the negotiating table, Newton-King concluded :

"But the promise of land had been exposed for what it was, - not a guarantee of independence, but a mere chimera; something to be gained only after they had surrendered what they already held, and delivered themselves once more to the power of the colonists."¹⁴⁷

Ultimately, the British officials were not prepared to accept the Khoisan in any position other than servile labourers - a

¹⁴⁵Ibid., pp 8.

¹⁴⁶ Ibid.

¹⁴⁷ Ibid., pp. 50-51.

policy in marked contrast to official policy on the Xhosa.¹⁴⁸ In the implementation of this policy the British were not dependent on their military superiority alone. They could also count on the good offices of the missionary Van der Kemp of whom Newton-King wrote:

"... in retrospect it remains true that, while he did much to alleviate suffering in the short-term, his actions were harmful to the long-term interests of the indigenous people, for by virtue of his personal integrity and his genuine desire to see their lot improved, he lent credence to schemes which offered no hope of permanent independence,... but were rather designed to meet the short-term pacification needs of the government pacification strategy."¹⁴⁹

When it became clear that the promises made would not be kept, the Khoisan went back to war, and in 1803 forced even the boer commando leaders to sue for peace.¹⁵⁰ The Batavian government, however, proved to be as perfidious as the British, and the promises which were made to get the Khoisan to lay down their arms were never kept.¹⁵¹

This explanation is an excellent demonstration of the point made in chapter one that blaming the victims is not only unjust, but unhelpful. Newton-King's narrative makes clear that the problem was not that the Khoisan were too weak, or too divided amongst themselves, but that they expected the British to keep their promises. Their opponents were not militarily superior, but morally inferior. They won not by the power of the gun, but through lies and trickery. After almost a decade, Khoisan historiography finally produced an explanation of Khoisan 'failure' which was internally consistent, and squared with the evidence. The point made in the introduction must be repeated here, namely that the war in the eastern Cape was the only field in which there was more than one scholar. The credit must go not only to Newton-King, but to the other historians who were simultaneously researching problems in eastern Cape resistance.

The only drawback, as Newton-King herself admitted, was that this theory could not explain why the war ever came to an end. Why did the Khoisan not take up arms again in 1804, as they had after the collapse of negotiations with the British? Newton-King cannot answer: "...what is surprising, or at least in need of explanation, is their failure to resist the

¹⁴⁸ Ibid., pp. 51.

¹⁴⁹ Ibid., pp. 39.

¹⁵⁰ Ibid., pp. 55.

¹⁵¹ Ibid., pp. 56.

resettlement of the Boers in those lands from which they had withdrawn the previous year. ... Except for small groups of resisters ..., the Khoi now found themselves in a position where they had to submit to servitude in order to survive."¹⁵² This was in fact the problem that dogged Newton-King throughout the paper. Despite many excellent insights, she could not understand the motivations of the Khoisan. She could not explain why the intensity of resistance varied between regions or why some rebel leaders chose to negotiate while others never did.¹⁵³ She could explain the causes of resistance, but not why it ended. It was a characteristic of the paper that Newton-King consistently would present evidence but refuse to generalize. This is a pity because some of answers she needed were right there in the paper.

For one, Newton-King's explanation of the cause of the rebellion also placed due emphasis on the Khoisan vision of a better past. Apart from the violence of labour relations, it is the loss of land which she saw as the ultimate cause of the war:

"... many were irreconcilable ... they fought not so much for the amelioration of their conditions of service as for the recovery of their... independence. Indeed, it should perhaps more rightly be called a war of independence rather than a rebellion..."¹⁵⁴

In her careful analysis of the causes of the rebellion, Newton-King came closer than previous historians to seeing the Khoisan side of the story. She cited as evidence Stuurman's request:

"Restore... the country of which our fathers were despoiled by the Dutch and we have nothing more to ask... We have lived very contentedly... before these Dutch plunderers molested us, and why should we not do so again if left to ourselves?"¹⁵⁵

All this is tremendously exciting. There emerges the possibility of establishing a continuity of aims and objectives. We recall the statements provided by Marks in chapter one and note the striking similarity a century and half a continent away. It would be possible to begin to generalize about the aims of early Khoisan resistance - it was patriotic but not nationalist in the modern sense. It was eminently conservative, striving not so much to create a new

¹⁵² Ibid., pp. 57.

¹⁵³ Cf. *ibid.*, pp. 23 and pp. 48.

¹⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 10.

¹⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 16.

nation state as to restore the times gone by. The land emerged as the basis for both economic independence and patriotism. Elsewhere, Marks had coined a term for this type of movement: "...the 'masses'... were 'restorationist' rather than 'revolutionary'; they desired to 'recapture the past' rather than capture the future."¹⁵⁶ This in itself should say volumes about how the Khoisan perceived white colonialism, and for that matter, about how seriously they took the 'amicable arrangements' under which they were forced to live. It also, incidentally, sheds abundant light on the 'rivers of blood' theory - had the Khoisan past been as vicious and their colonial present been as amicable as Elphick would have had us believe, it is impossible to understand why they would be fighting so hard to recapture their past. Instead, there is Stuurman's testimony that 'we lived very contentedly' and oral tradition would certainly interpret this as a reminder of the time of peace and sharing to which Stuurman hoped to return.

This vision of the past posed some very hard choices for the Khoisan. They could have continued the uprising and we know that some of them in fact did. But it is one thing to take up arms for some years. It is a totally different thing to realize that the colonists were never going to keep their promises; and that retaking the land was going to involve a complete reorganization of Khoisan culture and society to one that was capable of waging war for as long as it took to retake the land by armed force. In such a situation some Khoisan may well have preferred to let the land go, regroup, and try to think of a better way. If resistance was about being human, victory at the price of becoming inhuman may well have seemed meaningless.

The conclusion that the Khoisan were not 'acculturated' to killing as a way of life is borne out by Newton-King's innovative account of Khoisan methods of struggle. They waged what we would call nowadays guerilla warfare, which proved enormously effective against the British troops.¹⁵⁷ Although the Khoisan occasionally made combined attacks, normally leadership was decentralized, with group of guerillas making decisions on their own. Most of the raids concentrated on undercutting the economic basis of the colonists by driving away their livestock. Colonists were killed, it seems, only when a specific grudge was held against them, or when they were on commando.¹⁵⁸ Newton-King concluded that "...murder was not the first goal of the rebellion..." and cites one

¹⁵⁶ S. Marks "Class, Ideology and the Bambatha Rebellion" in D. Crummey (ed.), Banditry, rebellion and Social Protest in Africa, James Currey, London, 1986, pp. 357.

¹⁵⁷ Newton-King, The Rebellion of the Xhosi, pp. 26.

¹⁵⁸ Ibid., pp. 46, pp. 51-52.

incident where a woman was spared, though her husband was killed and his gun taken: "[t]he widow Hoffman... declares to know Klaas Stuurman alone, who, having been formerly at her father's house, has on this occasion saved her life by forbidding the others to do her any harm, saying that she had done him much good."¹⁵⁹ The Khoisan could be seen to steer a complicated path between the exigencies of resistance, the necessity to return to a time when 'we lived very contentedly' and the desire to retain an element of human compassion. White re-occupation was not resisted in 1804 because some Khoisan were refusing to do what Elphick has suggested they had to do - to become a society of warriors.

It is not suggested that this is the only explanation for the end of this particular uprising, or even that it is the right explanation. The point is that because Newton-King had accepted Elphick's version of the Khoisan past, she could not see the indication in her evidence that Stuurman, at least, saw it very differently. As a result, her analysis of their resistance remained incomplete. She could not understand how the Khoisan perceived both their resistance and their collaboration. Thus she could not make use of the evidence at her disposal which would have furnished her with at least the beginnings of an explanation, an explanation moreover which would have consistent with her own analysis of the causes and course of the uprising.

It is perhaps unfair to expect too much from what after all began as a conference paper. Nor would it be necessary to point out all that could have been done with it if it were not that Newton-King's problems were symptomatic of much of Khoisan historiography at the time. She was part of the concerted effort to uncover and explain the motivations and actions of the Khoisan, to make these an integral part of the explanation. Yet historian after historian was coming up against the fact that, without granting the Khoisan an authority of cultural voice, these explanations could not hold up. Honest historians admitted it. The only way out of the conundrum would have been to finally liberate Khoisan historiography from its colonial heritage. Instead, the historiography was to languish. The volume in which Newton-King's paper was published marked the beginning of the doldrums in Khoisan resistance historiography - no other major work was published until the end of the decade.

¹⁵⁹ Ibid., pp. 26, and pp. 64, note 160.

CHAPTER FIVE: ALTERATIONS, ALTERATIONS

This chapter begins by deconstructing the term 'pre-colonial'. It goes on to examine the way the concept operates on the most recent work on Khoisan resistance.

SOME 'PREHISTORIC' HISTORY

"The mere word 'pre-colonial' suggests that there is an entirely undifferentiated mass of events and processes about which only one thing is known: its point of termination."¹⁶⁰

The oral tradition that the Khoisan are autochthonous reflects an awareness that they have a very long history. Oral tradition provides several key distinctions: the time of Creation, the time of the Flood, the time of Troubles and the time during which we learnt to kill. Each of these distinctions carry with them implications about key changes in the Khoisan way of life. The time of Troubles, that is the last five hundred years, is only one of many changes. It is never mentioned without the rider that it will surely be followed by a restoration of peace.

How long is the history of the Khoisan? In the literature it has been argued that the presence of Homo Sapiens in what is today the Kalahari region dates back to 100 000 years ago.¹⁶¹ If cultural continuity is any clue to history, it may be mentioned that the oldest rock paintings found in southern Africa are 28 000 years old.¹⁶² To me, the precise dates are not important. They merely serve to underline the point that the history of the Khoisan in southern Africa reaches back so far that to attempt to describe it by the term 'pre-colonial' is so imprecise as to be almost silly.

¹⁶⁰ B. Lau, " 'Pre-colonial' Namibian Historiography: What is to be Done ?" in B. Wood (ed.) Namibia, 1884-1984: Readings on Namibia's History and Society , United Nations Institute for Namibia, Lusaka, 1988, pp. 90.

¹⁶¹ Z.A. Konczacki, "Socioeconomic Formations of the Southern African Iron Age: an Overview" in J.A. Konczacki, J.L. Parpart and T.M. Shaw (eds.), An Economic History of Southern Africa, Frank Cass, London, 1990, pp. 1.

¹⁶² Cf. J.D. Clark, "Prehistory in Southern Africa" in General History of Africa: 1 : Methodology and African Prehistory, UNESCO and Heinemann, California, 1981, pp. 527.

The term invites one to retort - prior to which colonialism? Prior to the Roman occupation of Egypt at the time of Christ, or the Ottoman colonization of the Maghreb at the end of the first millennium A.D.? Prior to the Arab slave raiding on the east coast in the Middle Ages, or the Portuguese slave raiding on the west? After all, by the thirteenth century, these processes of what Marx has politely termed 'primitive accumulation' had set in motion waves of state formation and north to south migrations of people which were to prove crucial in the history of southern Africa.¹⁶³ State formation was important in that it implied processes of economic and social differentiation which would make it easier to set one African against another. The people who migrated southwards from the Great Lakes were to have a far-ranging influence on southern Africa's history, and would crucially affect Khoisan ability to resist European colonialism.

I am not arguing that the coming of white colonialism was not a crucial event in the history of Africa, or that it did not bring about a qualitative change in the lives of its peoples. In this sense, the term 'pre-colonial' may retain a limited utility. Nevertheless, white colonialism was not the first, nor will it be the last, qualitative change in Africa. It is a pity that we cannot do better by the long history of the Khoisan than to periodize it into only two parts - before and after the white man. The most racist of colonial myths is surely the one which believes that the history of Africa began when the white man came. The odd token chapter on 'pre-colonial' history does not refute this myth. It merely glosses over it, in the same way that neo-colonial political settlements gloss over the fact that the colonizers still own most of the country.

To repeat a point which has been made over and over again in this thesis, restating colonial myths does not help us write history. The imprecision of the term 'pre-colonial' can only add conceptual confusion to a field which does not need it. In addition to the two millennia sketched out in the paragraph above, 'pre-colonial' with regard to the western Cape also means 'before 1652'; it means 'before 1780' with regard to the eastern Cape and 'before 1885' with regard to Namibia. It includes the period of what may be called 'merchant colonialism' as well, that is, the period 1496-1652 in the western Cape and the period 1795-1885 in Namibia. It should be unnecessary to make the point that some differentiation must be made between the events of all these periods before we can begin to generalize about continuities and changes in Khoisan resistance.

¹⁶³ This paragraph is based on A. Atmore and R.A. Oliver The African Middle Ages: 1400-1800, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1981, pps. 5, 13, 22 and 29.

OF CABBAGES AND KINGS

"... Are we finally sliding down the slithery slope... towards a world in which all life, all history, all society, is really (whatever that may mean) a text? In which all representation is arbitrary? Some time ago, Thompson expressed the fear that the social scientist was condemned to wait forever outside the philosophy department. Our current nightmare has us waiting still. But now we sit, the philosopher at our side, begging an audience with the literary critic."¹⁶⁴

Crais' study of resistance in the eastern Cape was a regional study. Khoisan resistance was not the primary concern. Crais' purpose was much broader, namely to explain the development of racial capitalism in the eastern Cape. His aim was to describe how the forms of labour repression and territorial segregation evolved, which were to become a characteristic of much larger areas of southern Africa.¹⁶⁵ This broad focus was innovative, as was Crais's method. The study marked the emergence of postmodernist analysis in the field of Khoisan resistance. Thus Crais stated his intentions as follows:

"By moving away from identifying discrete epochs of economic change... and towards the analysis of 'the mutual relations between systems of truth and modalities of power', this book suggests that the first half of the nineteenth century witnessed not only the creation of classes and 'races' but also the creation of a 'structure of thought.'" ¹⁶⁶

From this the reader is led to expect a certain amount of ahistoricism and a considerable degree of reification. 'Systems of truth and modalities of power' may be useful in focusing our attention on the importance of ideology as a terrain of struggle. In view of a central concern in this

¹⁶⁴ J. Comaroff and J. Comaroff Of Revelation and Revolution: Christianity, Colonialism and Consciousness in Southern Africa, University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1993, pp. 14. The reference is to E. P. Thompson The Poverty of Theory and Other Essays (1978. pp. 220)

¹⁶⁵ C. Crais, White Supremacy and Black Resistance in Pre-Industrial South Africa: The Making of the Colonial Order in the Eastern Cape Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1993, pp. 217.

¹⁶⁶ Crais, pp. 3, citing D. Hoy (ed.) Foucault: A Critical Reader (Oxford, 1986) pp. 229, and M. Foucault The Archeology of Knowledge, and the Discourse on Language (New York, 1982) pp. 191.

thesis, namely the need to grant the Khoisan an authority of cultural voice, this method would be a much more promising angle from which to approach the sources. The only problem, as with Legassick's theories, is that what we need to deal with is not 'systems' and 'modalities', but people. The higher the degree of abstraction, the greater the risk of analyzing away the people and this risk is correspondingly greater when our concern is with the people who did not write the sources and had almost no public means of expressing their side of things. Luckily, Crais did not live up to his intentions. The book was innovative, and avoided many of the problems which beset earlier historiography.

On the question of labour relations Crais, like Newton-King, considered that there "...might..." have been a stage of clientage, with a subsequent development from free to unfree.¹⁶⁷ However, the bulk of his account carefully avoided making any generalizations about Khoisan motivations and viewed this development, perfectly correctly, as an expression of changing relations of power. In referring to the end of the eighteenth century, Crais had no hesitation in calling the system "...near slavery...", or a "...form of coerced labour... a colonial serfdom in which Africans became increasingly 'tied' to the farm."¹⁶⁸ He argued that the difference between imported slaves and captured Khoikhoi may have been more apparent than real:

"... in the Eastern Cape and through the Cape Midlands, slaves were seldom wrenched from their families... though the threat of sale may have been a very real one.... Africans captured in raids may have been elided, illegally, into the category of slaves. There was certainly a market in captives during the late 1700's and, during the first two decades of the following century, this illicit practice probably increased along the frontier."¹⁶⁹

This is crucial. As Crais pointed out, by the turn of the century the Khoisan **perceived** themselves as slaves, and this conclusion is central to his analysis of early nineteenth century resistance.¹⁷⁰ He argued that the experience of common oppression not only laid the basis for a common culture, as well as common resistance, between Khoisan and slave, it also meant that during the resistance of the early

¹⁶⁷Crais, pp. 46.

¹⁶⁸ Ibid., pp. 42 and pp. 40.

¹⁶⁹Ibid., pp. 66-67, cf. also pp. 52.

¹⁷⁰ Ibid. pp. 69.

1830's, and again during the uprising of 1851, Khoisan perceived themselves as resisting a return to slavery.¹⁷¹

Crais opened up the possibility of making further generalizations. That is, we could begin to examine Khoisan resistance in the context of various white settler efforts to reimpose vagrancy acts and masters and servants laws. We might even begin to periodize this resistance - after all, if mid-century resistance in the eastern Cape was against slavery, it would seem a more defensive type of war than Stuurman's efforts to roll back the Dutch tide at the turn of the century. Of course, Crais did not wish to do any of these things. His focus was less Khoisan resistance than the role of Khoisan resistance in influencing systems of truth and modalities of power, but his conclusions were tremendously important in opening up fruitful lines of analysis.

Second, Crais acknowledged the importance of disease in breaking the backbone of Khoisan resistance.¹⁷² Now, this is a very old idea, dating back to the efforts of Theal and other colonial historians to diminish the importance of boer violence in the founding of South Africa. It was large part in reaction to these monocausal explanations that Elphick developed his theories.¹⁷³ Nevertheless, it cannot be denied that disease did play an important role in undermining Khoisan resistance. Certainly Crais made a convincing case that smallpox and other diseases resulted in a demographic catastrophe amongst Africans by the late eighteenth century.¹⁷⁴ The details of his figures may be questioned in the years to come, since as he himself admitted, complete accuracy is well-nigh impossible.¹⁷⁵ This will no doubt be sorted out in the near future. It is one of the inestimable advantages of eastern Cape historiography that research will be checked and counterchecked by other scholars.

Crais' insight owed much to his method. If the concept of resistance was to be broadened to include an ideological struggle, then there is in principle no objection to broadening the concept of colonial aggression as well. This is of course what Crais did. To him the British attempt to introduce a rule of law, the ambitions of British settlers to become 'lord of the manor' and mission christianity were all

¹⁷¹ Ibid., pp. 84, pp. 147, pp. 182-185.

¹⁷² Ibid., pp. 41.

¹⁷³ R. Elphick Kraal and Castle: Khoikhoi and the Founding of White South Africa Yale University Press, New Haven 1977, pp. 235-236.

¹⁷⁴ Crais, pp 42.

¹⁷⁵ Ibid.

tools of conquest (if ambiguous ones) as much as the British army.¹⁷⁶ Thus it would not be far-fetched to argue that a simple matter of hygiene could well have determined the outcome of the battles. In fact, if between fifty and sixty percent of the indigenous population died during the last years of the eighteenth century, and if the Khoisan population only began to recover by the 1820's, it would be strange if this did not weaken Khoisan ability to resist.¹⁷⁷ It might also explain, as Newton-King could not, why resistance slackened off in 1803. Again, while he himself did not take it very far, Crais' work could well prove the foundation stone of future analysis.

Third, Crais gave full recognition to the importance of the Khoisan view of their past. Time and again he insisted on: "...the power of memory in the construction of a colonial order... it was the collective consciousness of the prospects of further expropriation and the descent into debt peonage ... that accounted for the great extent of resistance among otherwise disparate groups. In many cases the combatants hoped to regain a world that was already lost, a world that many would remember as a time of plenty...."¹⁷⁸

This insistence was one of the strongest features of the book. It was little less than revolutionary in that it went beyond the possibility of accepting people's resistance on their own terms to an understanding of what their history meant to them. In short, of granting them a cultural voice. Previous chapters have given evidence of Khoisan motivations uttered in the unstable present and in the heat of battle. Crais' insistence on the power of memory restored their past to the Khoisan in the text, and restored both to the historian. He understood that the memory of the 1783 wars was a factor in the 1799-1803 uprisings, which in turn may have informed the resistance of the 1830's, and so on. This raised the Khoisan from the colonial idea of them as savages living in a timeless past to the status of historical beings. Crais also provided the best rationale possible for going back to the basics - we need to re-evaluate early Khoisan resistance because without it we will never understand later Khoisan resistance.

In many ways, Crais's analysis rested solidly on much of the analysis and research of the past two decades. The search for cultural authenticity may have led him to what can be regarded as a unique act amongst writers on Khoisan

¹⁷⁶ Cf. *ibid*, pp. 59, pp. 90-91, pp. 102-103.

¹⁷⁷ Cf. *ibid.*, pp. 42 and pp. 68.

¹⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 52 and cf. also pp. 83.

resistance, namely to ask the descendants what their ancestors thought and did.¹⁷⁹ It is not surprising that these insights would have come in the context of resistance in the eastern Cape. Crais freely acknowledged that without, for instance, the research of Newton-King on the eastern Cape economy, or the research by Shell on slave demography, he would not have had a solid base of evidence which helped guide his own research.¹⁸⁰ Crais's work can also be seen as a vindication of the classic liberal concerns of culture, law and ideology. Certainly one strength of the book, namely the evenhandedness with which both European and African thoughts and actions were examined, owed much to the pendulum swings of the past twenty years. As the example of slavery shows, doing full justice to indigenous perceptions and culture could well prove to offer path-breaking insights.

Even so, the weight of past historiography can be a handicap. Considering the revolutionary implications of Crais' method, it is baffling that his understanding of early Khoisan history was so limited. His understanding of the role of memory in guiding Khoisan actions and behaviour goes no further than the 1780's, that is, the date the boers began to settle in the eastern Cape. The major flaw of the book lay in the chapter on pre-colonial history, although it is to Crais' credit that he managed to write the entire chapter without using the word. However, the attitude of mind remained the same. We are warned from the outset to expect "...a history that almost stands still...", and are told that:

" What follows is an exploration concerned with isolating 'bundles of relationships' and suggesting how, as people began sharing common practices, some of these bundles may have become 'named'. The creation of structure - and the emergence of identity - centred around the ways in which people came to be bound together through shared practices and perceptions of the wider world."¹⁸¹

It is not surprising that the description which followed was both static and ahistorical. For instance, Crais devoted a paragraph to discussing economic relations amongst the hunter-gatherers, but the source used to substantiate this was the diaries of Sparrman, written more than a hundred years after

¹⁷⁹ Cf. *ibid.*, pp 232 footnote 1. The outstanding exception to this conclusion is W. Nasson, Abraham Esau's War: A Black South African War in the Cape, 1899-1902, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1991.

¹⁸⁰ Cf. *ibid.*, pp. 228, notes 1 and 10.

¹⁸¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 9, and pp. 11.

the inception of colonialism!¹⁸² Despite acknowledging that "[o]ne of the main difficulties in understanding hunter-herder relations stems from the observation that there was, in many instances, no clear-cut dichotomy between the two groups", Crais went on to make much of supposed important and systematic differences between the two groups.¹⁸³ He consistently used the term Khoikhoi. One is left to infer that there were simply no San in the eastern Cape, since they seemed to have unaccountably disappeared from the narrative somewhere between the seventeenth century and the nineteenth. It also seemed as if almost the only significant event that happened during the last millennium or so prior to the coming of the Europeans was that people began to keep cattle: "[t]he herding economy .. [and] the construction of descent facilitated the emergence and elaboration of a new ordering of relationships...", one of which was the emergence of a system of clientage between cattleless Khoisan and those who had cattle.¹⁸⁴

In sum, Crais' ideas of the Khoisan past were a restatement of Elphick's theories with a postmodernist gloss: 'the construction of descent' replaced the old fashioned 'intermarriage'. There is no need to repeat the multitude of objections which have been made to Elphick's theories. Their reappearance in Crais's work is tremendously disappointing. One would have expected a postmodernist to be somewhat more critical of his sources, instead of which modalities of power and systems of truth seemed to be at issue everywhere in the book except in the source material.

It is incomprehensible that Crais was not able to see this. In the book we are confronted with a world in which everything was potentially symbolic, from the vagaries of colonial architecture to the spatial organization of villages, from the ambiguities of trade fairs to the preferred shape of beads.¹⁸⁵ It renders Crais' attitude to the Khoisan early history all the more baffling. After all, when everything is liable to be read as texts, it is a pity he did not read the specific texts concerned a little more carefully. Perhaps if Crais had devoted his introduction to a review of the historiography rather than to a programmatic statement of postmodernism, fascinating though it may be, the book could have been even more revolutionary in its implications.

This limited understanding of the Khoisan past tended to limit Crais' understanding of them in his period. One issue in

¹⁸² Ibid., pp. 13 and pp. 234 note 8.

¹⁸³ Ibid., pp. 15.

¹⁸⁴ Ibid., pp. 16.

¹⁸⁵ Ibid., pp. 210 and pp. 237.

particular shows the limits of his analysis. In his analysis of Basters, he seemed to have forgotten to ask his oral informants how they perceived this term. Thus a passage like the following read more like Legassick than Said:

" Of the free, 'Bastaards' were the most well-off and sometimes possessed relatively large herds of livestock, but their position in colonial society was ambiguous and contradictory. Adopting the culture of their masters and joining them in commando raids and hunter-gatherers 'Bastaards' were nevertheless consistently excluded from the status of burghers. Indeed... 'Bastaards' increasingly built linkages less with the world of their masters than with the lives of other serfs and peons."¹⁸⁶

The reference which followed this passage cited two secondary works on slavery in the Americas which could not possibly deal with the issue of Basters on commando.¹⁸⁷ In my community, the word 'Bastaard' is taken to mean exactly what it means in English. It is not a word used amongst Black Afrikaans-speakers except as an insult and the people who are descended from these groups call themselves Basters. That this minor detail seemed to have escaped previous historians is understandable since they never had oral informants. That it escaped Crais seems to indicate, either that his time spent on interviews was minimal, or that the interview situation itself was highly structured. Further, Crais seemed to have missed the one important contribution made by Legassick to Khoisan historiography, namely the insight that the word itself in the sources was an indication, not of miscegenation, but of a social group. Thus Ross, citing Legassick, argued that the term 'Bastaard' in the eighteenth century denoted a social, rather than a genetic status.¹⁸⁸ It would refer to Khoisan who lived in colonial society without being inboekselinge, such as transport riders or small landholders. It indicated as little about the ethnic status of the person mentioned as did 'Bushman'. Thus while a statement like the one which introduced the paragraph quoted above: "[m]iscegenation further contributed to perceptions of patriarchy and inserted considerable ambiguity in the social relations of the

¹⁸⁶ Ibid., pp 45.

¹⁸⁷ Cf. *ibid.*, pp. 230, note 47.

¹⁸⁸ R. Ross, Adam Kok's Griqua's: A Study in the Development of Stratification in South Africa, Cambridge University Press, 1976, pp. 13; cf. also M. Legassick "The Northern Frontier to 1820" in R. Elphick and H. Giliomee (eds.) The Shaping of South African Society, Longman, Cape Town, 1979, pp. 256.

farm...." was undoubtedly true, this had nothing to do with Basters, since Baster women were some of the few Khoisan women who had a fighting chance to protect themselves from the perils of miscegenation.¹⁸⁹ That their status as free Khoisan amongst a sea of *inboekselinge* was undoubtedly ambiguous was again true, but had to do with their social status and not with any desire to adopt the culture of their 'masters'.

In fact, the idea that Baster linkages with *inboekselinge* were in any way new rested on the assumption that they at any time had something in common with the boers and not in the evidence Crais presented.¹⁹⁰ Rather, the origins of these linkages are more likely to be buried in the 'pre-colonial' past which Crais cannot see. More than two decades after Marks first gave this stereotype academic respectability, we still await evidence either that the Basters were more acculturated or that they wished to be more acculturated than any other group of Khoisan. Crais' treatment of the Basters did not show any of this. It merely served to underline the truism that old colonial myths never die, they merely take on new guises.

¹⁸⁹ Crais, pp. 45.

¹⁹⁰ Cf. *ibid.* pp. 70 and pp. 80-81.

CHAPTER SIX: RECONSTRUCTION

The work discussed hitherto is widely available in university libraries and in fact is still prescribed literature for university courses on early South African history. This chapter attempts to offer a glimpse of what the Khoisan historiography of the next few years may look like as the ideas contained in journal articles and unpublished theses make their way into published and prescribed works. The chapter goes on to sum up three ideas which have formed the conceptual basis for this work.

EPILOGUE

"The first thing that one has to do before one can write a useful history... is to clear away this whole clutter of false, hegemonic assumptions. But then, there does necessarily arise ... a second stage of reflection about the stage you have got to when you have intellectually destroyed the colonial propositions... repudiation of the propositions of the enemy ... in a curious way ties one to the assumptions behind the propositions." ¹⁹¹

Marks never wrote on Khoisan resistance again. As a teacher, editor and administrator she has remained enormously influential, and may take much of the credit for the fact that the Institute of Commonwealth Studies has over the years consistently paid systematic attention to problems within Khoisan historiography.

Elphick finally came round to using the term Khoisan. It is possible that he may have seen the validity of Marks' point that the sources could not give an indication of who was who. In the collection Elphick edited in 1979, the praxis was that "[t]hose peoples whom modern scholars usually call 'San' are denoted in this book as '(Khoisan) hunter-gatherers or '(Khoisan) hunters'." ¹⁹² It is clear that the change in terminology in no way signified a move away from the myth of the 'Bushman'. This position was fraught with inconsistencies and this became clear in later years, when Elphick tried to reintroduce the term 'Bushman'. As Bredekamp pointed out:

"[h]e (Elphick), however, remains wary of accepting the term 'San' because in his opinion it was

¹⁹¹ T. Ranger, "Trends in African Historiography and the Task Facing Scholars of Namibia" in B. Woods (ed.) Namibia, 1884-1984: Readings on Namibia's History and Society, United Nations Institute for Namibia, Lusaka, 1988. pp. 43.

¹⁹² R. Elphick and H. Giliomee (eds.) The Shaping of South African Society, 1652-1820 Longman, Cape Town, 1979, pp. xii.

'originally a pejorative word used by Khoikhoi'. This viewpoint... contradicts his use of the combination 'Khoi-san' where the suffix 'san' appears anyway. In the same way, Elphick's and Malherbe's motivation for the reimportation of the term 'Bushmen' in place of the more acceptable term 'San' does not hold water. For them 'Bushmen' is more apt, apparently because Europeans created it in the colonial era, while the term 'San' had its autochthonous origins in the precolonial period. In this debate, it should rather be born in mind that the hurtful term 'Bushman' is totally unacceptable to the critically thinking descendants of the Cape Khoisan who prefer the appellation 'San' in that they have never experienced 'San' as insulting."¹⁹³

It is to be hoped that this polemic finally closed the debate on what to call the historical Khoisan. That alone would open the way for the field to begin the long and weary conceptual work of discovering who they were.

Legassick seems to have abandoned his earlier dogmatism. Thus one notes that he nowadays refers to nineteenth century eastern Cape as a crucible " ...for the simultaneous construction of a racist discourse and a racial system of class domination."¹⁹⁴ In view of the criticisms made with regard to his failure to understand the *inboek* system, his more mature understanding of it comes as a pleasant surprise:

" [t]he difficulty in characterizing these social relations arises from two factors. In the first place, unlike slavery itself, they had no legal reflection. 'Indenture of apprentices' within which they were conducted, was in practice inflated into life-time and even hereditary servitude: brown and black became tied to the farm. It also appears that Khoisan were formally enslaved by giving them the identities of dead slaves.

In the second place, this was an attempt to impose slavery without... importation from a distant land and disculturation. The enservitude of the

¹⁹³ H.C. Bredekamp, "The Khoisan and Nomenclature Since the Oxford History of South Africa: A Historiographical Dilemma" South African Historical Journal, 25, 1991, pp. 69. Translated from the Afrikaans. The citation is from R. Elphick and V.C. Malherbe "The Khoisan to 1828" in R. Elphick and H. Giliomee (eds.) The Shaping Of South African Society (second ed.), Longman, Cape Town, 1989, pp. 3.

¹⁹⁴ M. Legassick, "The State, Racism and the Rise of Capitalism in the Nineteenth Century Cape Colony" South African Historical Journal, 28, 1993, pp. 330.

Khoisan... was conducted on their native land among people preserving a 'kinship with the still existent (albeit damaged) community of the conquered'. They were an 'enemy within', the full restoration of whose culture and economy remained a valuable aspect of resistance."¹⁹⁵

In view of the helpless victims implicated in Legassick's text discussed in chapter three, it comes as a relief to see that he even admits the possibility of the restitution of their reputation. Thus he notes that "[t]he earlier role of the Griquas in slave-raiding in the north, posited by Cobbing, also needs re-investigation, though in some respects, in my view, he has taken these allegations too far [sic!]."¹⁹⁶ It must be borne in mind that Legassick is still capable of making statements like "[h]owever the Griqua statelets also attempted in the fashion of colonists to secure domination over the Sotho-Tswana peoples."¹⁹⁷ No matter. The ability to be prepared to change their minds in the light of new evidence or new interpretations is alone what distinguishes historians from propagandists.

Newton-King eventually completed her Ph.D thesis in 1992 and it is hoped that it may be published in the near future and reinvigorate the field. She came to accept the term 'Khoisan' although, it seems, only under strong protest:

"... I do not postulate an 'uninterrupted continuity' between the prehistoric San ... and the hunter-foragers who resisted colonial advance in the eighteenth century. Indeed, I have tried to document the far-reaching changes in subsistence strategies and social organizations which emerged in response to the disruptive presence of the colonists immediately to the south. Nevertheless it seems to me that in committing oneself to a choice of category ... one is offering the reader a more substantial notion of identity than that held out by the compromise term Khoisan. Khoisan is a fence-sitting term, which denotes nothing more than our inability... to identify the people of who we write. Sometimes we have little choice but to use it. ...But let us not pretend that it has inherent

¹⁹⁵ Legassick pp. 340-341. The citations are from S. Newton-King "The Enemy Within: The Struggle for Ascendancy on the Cape Eastern Frontier, 1760-1799" , Ph. D Thesis, University of London, 1992

¹⁹⁶ Legassick, footnote 38, pp 344. The reference is to J. Cobbing " The Mfekane as Alibi: Thoughts on Dithakong and Mbolombo" Journal of African History 29:3, 1988 pps. 487-519

¹⁹⁷ *ibid.*

meaning. Let us rather assume the courage of Humpty Dumpty and assign it a meaning..."¹⁹⁸
 It should not be necessary to debate whether any word has ever had an 'inherent meaning'.

It will have been noted that Crais (pp. 101, above) used four separate terms to refer to the *inboek* system. He was by no means unusual in this. It is ironic that, despite the fact that historians are in increasing agreement on how to conceptualize the system, the confusion over terminology remains as deep as ever. Malherbe has captured both the conceptual agreement and the inability to define a term:

"It has often been observed that where Khoisan 'apprentices' were concerned, the imparting of skills was seldom taken seriously and the real purpose of the system was to enhance the labour supply. Some were indeed orphans, that is, child captives (...prisoners of war) whose families had been killed or dispersed by the colonial commandos and themselves bound to the farmers; others were farm-born members of intact family units at the time when they were bound. Was the Khoisan child then an indentured servant - or a slave? Historians have been, perhaps, too inclined to perpetuate the use of convenient but misleading terms when discussing the legally sanctioned bondage of the ... Khoisan. Where 'indenture', 'apprenticeship', or 'slavery' has been applied to the same example of unfree labour, researchers may wish to ... clarify the terminology used."¹⁹⁹

Her frustration is understandable. It is to be hoped that Khoisan historiography speedily rectifies this problem not only for the good of the field, but as an act of simple charity to the teachers who, no doubt, are confronted with a reflection of the same phenomenon emerging in countless undergraduate essays.

In sum, it may be seen that the intensity of debate is increasing in the field, a fact which allows for optimism regarding its future. The discussion above shows that the field is capable of surprising strengths. It has, quite independently, come to an understanding of the *inboek* system which lies very close to oral tradition, both with regard to its nature and its importance. Crais' understanding of the importance of Khoisan collective memory and Newton-King's

¹⁹⁸ S. Newton-King, "Commentary on 'The Khoisan and Nomenclature'" South African Historical Journal 25 1991 pp 74-76, quote from pp 76.

¹⁹⁹ V.C. Malherbe "Indentured and Unfree Labour in South Africa: Towards an Understanding" South African Historical Journal 24, 1991 pp. 7.

attempt to 'document far-reaching changes in subsistence strategies' both imply a recognition of the Khoisan as a people who had, and knew they had, a history. This recognition alone bodes well for the ability of the Khoisan historiography of the future to grant the Khoisan the status of authoritative subjects.

THE INBOEK SYSTEM, PACIFICATION AND CONSCIOUSNESS

"Ons bruin mense, seuns van slawe,
wil ons eie land terug,
wat gesteel is van ons vaders
toe hul in die vrede leef.
Gee dit t'rug nou!
Gee dit t'rug nou!
Weg met alle slawerny !
Strijdom sal ons nie vashou nie,
Afrika sal vryheid kry !"

Cape Folksong²⁰⁰

Conceptualizations of the **inboek** system has been one of the central problems in this thesis. I have argued that we need to understand it before we can comprehend the resistance of the people whose lives were ruled by its constraints. I have argued that it should be regarded as a system of slavery. Crais has made the point that the people who lived under it saw it as such, while he, Legassick and Malherbe have seen that the boundaries between **inboekseling** and slave were both fluid and permeable. It remains only for me to make the point that I am descended, like many others of the southern Cape, from both imported slave and **inboekseling**. For us, resistance and collaboration in our ancestor's lives were determined by the twin realities of chain and **sjambok**. The attempt to make a distinction between one kind of chain and another will remain meaningless to their descendants. I understand that historians nevertheless may wish, for conceptual clarity, to make a distinction between the two systems and for that purpose have given the **inboek** system a separate name. This in no way diminishes my insistence that we will never understand it unless we see it as slavery, albeit a system of slavery with unique characteristics.

Its most unique characteristic was that it functioned as a means of pacification. The colonial settlers did not conquer

²⁰⁰ "We, brown people, sons of slaves, want our own land back again, which was stolen from our fathers , while they were living in peace . Give it back now ! Give it back now ! Away with all slavery! Strijdom shall not keep us bound now, Africa shall soon be free ! "

South Africa by means of commando alone. Their other weapon was the *inboek* system. The boers obtained *inboekselinge* through the commando and conversely, the *inboek* system functioned as a means to keep prisoners of war in bondage and prevent them from ever being free to resist again. This conclusion does not just apply to settler farmers. The colonial state played its part as an owner of *inboekselinge*.

Some correspondence between a local fieldcornet and the government of Cape Town in the late eighteenth century sheds abundant light on this process. A cattle raid in 1772 in which two boers were killed had led to the calling up of a commando, sanctioned by the landdrost of Stellenbosch. The commando succeeded, not just in capturing the active combatants, but the entire civilian population of the kraal. The surviving old people, women and children were sent with the combatants to Cape Town. In effect they were all prisoners of war.²⁰¹ The government in Cape Town, however, had little use for more labourers and sent a reprimand back to Stellenbosch. The landdrost excused himself to the government in the following manner:

"In compliance with the respected order conveyed by your Excellency's letter of yesterday, I have to state that the ironed Hottentots should all be detained in prison, as I have been unable to procure any minute information in how far the residue, who may not indeed be guilty of the murder, are guilty of aiding and abetting; as to the women, no charge has been made against them. I therefore conceive that they merely followed their husbands, without having implicated themselves in the guilt of the murder: had I, therefore, been aware that it would not have pleased your Excellency to employ them, *ad opus publicum*, I should have, in the first instance...placed them, for their food, with one or the other of the inhabitants. Now, however, that I am fully informed of your Excellency's pleasure ... I have divided them amongst the inhabitants"²⁰²

Let us reconstruct events here. One raid, one commando. The colonial government punished not only those actively resisting, but their families, who were specifically recognized by the landdrost as non-combatants. For the combatants prison, and no doubt the death sentence, awaited.

²⁰¹ D. Moodie The Record: Or a Series of official Papers Relative to the Condition and Treatment of the native Tribes of South Africa, A.A. Balkema, Cape Town, 1960 (1839-1841), Vol. 3, pp. 13, "Copy of a Letter From the Landdrost of Stellenbosch to the Cape Government" 26/6/1772.

²⁰² *Ibid.*, pp 14, 29/6/1772.

But for their families a lifetime in bondage was the sentence for something they did not do. This circumstance sheds abundant light on the courage of those who resisted knowing full well that they would not be the only ones to pay the price if anything went wrong. It should serve as a complete explanation of an argument I have been making throughout this thesis: we should not ask 'why did resistance fail?'. In the light of the potential risks involved, we should appreciate the achievement that any resistance at all took place. It is easy to immolate yourself for the sake of the survival of your people. It is quite another thing to knowingly put your family at risk.

The tone of the correspondence cited makes clear that enslaving civilian prisoners of war was by no means an unusual event. Even the most cursory reading of correspondence in this period will reveal many such incidents. The only unusual feature of this event is the **faux pas** made by the landdrost. The government of the Cape was a guilty party to the use of forced labour as much as the settlers. Perhaps the fact that it had more than enough labour at the time is testimony enough to the amount of non-combatant prisoners of war at this time.

The landdrost sent for the prisoners and distributed them amongst the inhabitants - end of problem, in more ways than one. The enslaved families had no guarantees that mother would stay with child or grandmother with grandchildren - the fathers, we remember, were either in jail or dead. In addition, we must remember the point raised by Malherbe that many of the **inboekselinge** were orphaned children. The women who survived had to look after not only their own children but orphans as well, all traumatized by the ravages of war. How were the Khoisan to pass on traditions of language, culture and the memory of resistance? For that matter, how were they to stay sane?

Only with great difficulty, and great endurance. It is this fact that makes it so offensive when the Khoisan are accused of a 'propensity for acculturation'. No one but their descendants can ever fully appreciate the efforts of these women in keeping alive the memory of a past when we were still human beings; or understand how they struggled to keep alive the hope of a future in which we may become fully human again. But the very least that can be done is to show them some respect.

CONCLUSION: THE MORAL OF THE STORY

"... a number of references are made to the absence of such historians, and the hope is expressed that this will soon change as more and more blacks study history at an advanced level. One does indeed hope that these black historians will prove as able to challenge the orthodoxies of the day as the radical historians who in the past two decades have done ... much to enrich our historical writing.... A quite new form of radicalism may emerge to reinvigorate our historiography, providing, of course that academic historians can mount a successful defence of their craft against people such as those who have dismissed the new research presented in Peires's The Dead Will Arise as a mere accumulation of detail which has muddied the usable past the Xhosa already have."²⁰³

Saunders' comment aptly captures the problem with which I began this thesis. I was confronted with a body of work which muddied the usable past I already had. Worse, it flatly denied my usable past in favour of a conglomeration of stereotypes. Many months and many pages later, I have no regrets about having undertaken the task of deconstructing this body of work. I do have a lively sympathy for those Black academics of the future who will take one look at what is being written in this field and leave it in preference for the more abstract haunts of higher mathematics, or the more profitable pursuits of economists. I myself would not have done what I have done if I did not have a belief in the value of academic history. Still, before I present my answer to Peires's informants I must clarify the position of Black academics, past and present.

Black academics know that they owe their place in the hallowed precincts of white academe to the unceasing struggles of the Black community. We understand that the apartheid forces which kept us away may be down, but are not yet out; and thus we know that it is only due to these struggles that we will remain here. It is our only equivalent to the 'old

²⁰³ C. Saunders, "Radical History - the Wits Workshop Version - Reviewed" South African Historical Journal 24, 1991, pp. 165. The reference is to J. B. Peires "Suicide or Genocide? : Xhosa Perceptions of the Nongqawuse Catastrophe" Radical History Review 46/7, Winter 1990, pps. 55-56.

boy's network'. Therefore we serve the Black community not only because it is our duty and not only because we know no other way, we serve it because to turn our backs on it would be tantamount to professional suicide. This community has been the unseen audience to this work. It has not been a silent one. Fully half this work has been devoted to letting it speak inside my head. In years to come, it will be found that it is also a very critical audience. For the Black historian 'to serve' means to meet some exacting standards.

I have argued throughout this work that the historiography of Khoisan resistance reproduces offensive stereotypes. I have also argued that it is those very stereotypes which has made the historiography produce bad history. I am hard put to decide which is the most heinous sin. Any historical explanation must be internally consistent, based on sufficient evidence and make as few unfounded assumptions as possible. This thesis has pointed out logical inconsistencies and discussed problems of evidence at great length. It remains only to make the point that a stereotype is by its nature an unfounded assumption. The abundance of these in the literature is sufficient testimony to the failure of Khoisan historiography to produce a vision of the past which is usable even for historians. This places the Black historian in a doubly invidious position. Bredekamp has summed up this problem:

"Professional historians run the risk of creating so many abstract reconstructions of the past and thinking up new meanings for terms, that a racially conscious South Africa reads past them: for the majority it remains just old concepts onto which new labels have been placed.

This places the historical Khoisan, the Khoisan historian and especially the Black Afrikaans-speaker in an intellectual identity crisis over how to meaningfully reconstruct the Khoisan past in the transition from the twentieth to the twenty first century.... What is my identification with the past which I am studying in the light of my present existence? If the relationship goes deeper than a mere intellectual-academic interaction with the past, then the historian faces a challenge to not only meaningfully reconstruct the connection between the present and the past, but also to bridge the gap between intellectuals and the uninitiated."²⁰⁴

²⁰⁴ H.C. Bredekamp "The Khoisan and Nomenclature Since the Oxford History of South Africa: A Historiographical Dilemma" South African Historical Journal, 26, 1991, pp. 11. Translated from the Afrikaans.

For me, as for Bredekamp, there is no point in writing a history which does not bridge the gap between academe and the community at large. We can bridge it. But the issue of which history we will carry with us over the bridge is of critical importance.

In the new South Africa, the infamous paragraph about Herry and the Strandlopers cited in the introduction will no doubt be removed. But with what are we to replace it? With Marks' play-whites, Elphick's rivers of blood, Legassick's sell-outs, Newton-King's incomprehension or Crais' myopia? If that is all that academic history has to offer the Black community we may rest assured that the children of the Khoisan will do the same thing they did with apartheid historiography - they will learn it by heart, write it in the exam, go home to vent their irritation and promptly forget all about it. The tragedy of this is less theirs than that of professional historians. After all, when the children of the Khoisan need a usable past, they will turn to the same sources I turned to as a child. Academic history will be left wondering why, now that the removal of apartheid has opened the way, so few Black academics ever enter the field.

We have seen in chapter six that the field of Khoisan historiography is fully capable of confronting old problems and moving in new directions. All I wish to do here is to underscore why it is so important. The children of the Khoisan have suffered enough. I fail to see why they should be confronted with an unusable past even in their history books. They should in school, as they do at home, learn to be proud of themselves, who they are and where they have come from.

In the Black community the profession of teacher is one which commands the highest respect, and with reason, for it is the teachers who are daily in the forefront of the struggle to reconstruct a meaningful relationship between the past and the children who are our future. It is up to us, the academics, to provide these teachers with a usable material from which to work; that is, to bridge the gap which loomed between Peires and his informants. If we fail, the teachers will come to do exactly what they eventually did under apartheid - they will flatly refuse to teach or examine Khoisan history at all, at least inside the classroom. We dare not fail. The truth about Autjoema must be told. He lived only that we might be here to remember him. If we do not remember him right his resistance, and the resistance of all who followed him, will be rendered meaningless.

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