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**The paradox of “indigenous modernity”:
A case study of the construction of identity among the
ǀKhomani San**

By

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THMNOR001

A minor dissertation submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the
award of Master of Arts in African Studies.

Faculty of Humanities

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Declaration

I, Nora Thoma hereby declare, that this work has not been previously submitted in whole, or in part, for the award of any degree. It is my own work. Each significant contribution to, and quotation in, this dissertation from the work, or works, of other people has been attributed, and has been cited and referenced.

Date 25-05-2009

Signature

Signed by candidate

Abstract

This minor dissertation examines the complex question of the issues relating to the identity of the ǀKhomani San of the Southern Kalahari in South Africa. Through qualitative fieldwork and secondary research, the dissertation illustrates that the ǀKhomani San have an identity, even though it is partially constructed, multifaceted and heterogeneous. This can be understood better through the paradox of “indigenous modernity” which combines traditions and modernity in one. The ǀKhomani San thus set an example of bridging the gap of dichotomies. In building this argument, the thesis first positions the ǀKhomani San as indigenous people in a global, African and South African context. This discussion highlights that one aspect of ǀKhomani San identity is based on their status as indigenous people. Secondly, the history of the ǀKhomani San is delineated, detailing the influence of colonialism and apartheid on ǀKhomani San resources, culture and identity. Here, the important connection between land and ǀKhomani San identity is emphasised. Thirdly, the dissertation explores the contemporary situation of the ǀKhomani San through the narratives of interviewed individuals. These ǀKhomani San voices speak to the ways in which recent developments concerning their land, traditional knowledge and livelihood have influenced the construction of their identity. Within these recent developments, the impact of external forces such as NGOs and government on the ǀKhomani San are also described. Through these interview narratives, binaried representations of the ǀKhomani San identity as either traditionalist or modernist are challenged. Rather, the ǀKhomani San identity is (re)interpreted as a hybrid of both ‘traditional’ and ‘modern’ values, which creates them into ‘indigenous modernities’.

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Abbreviations

ACHPR = African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights

CPA = Communal Property Association; a legal trust required for collective land ownership by land claimants in South Africa

ILO = International Labour Organisation

IWGIA = International Work Group for Indigenous Affairs

KFO = Kuru Family of Organisations

NGO = Non Governmental Organisation

OCADEC = Organização Cristã de Apoio ao Desenvolvimento Comunitário

SAN Parks = South African National Parks

SASI = South African San Institute

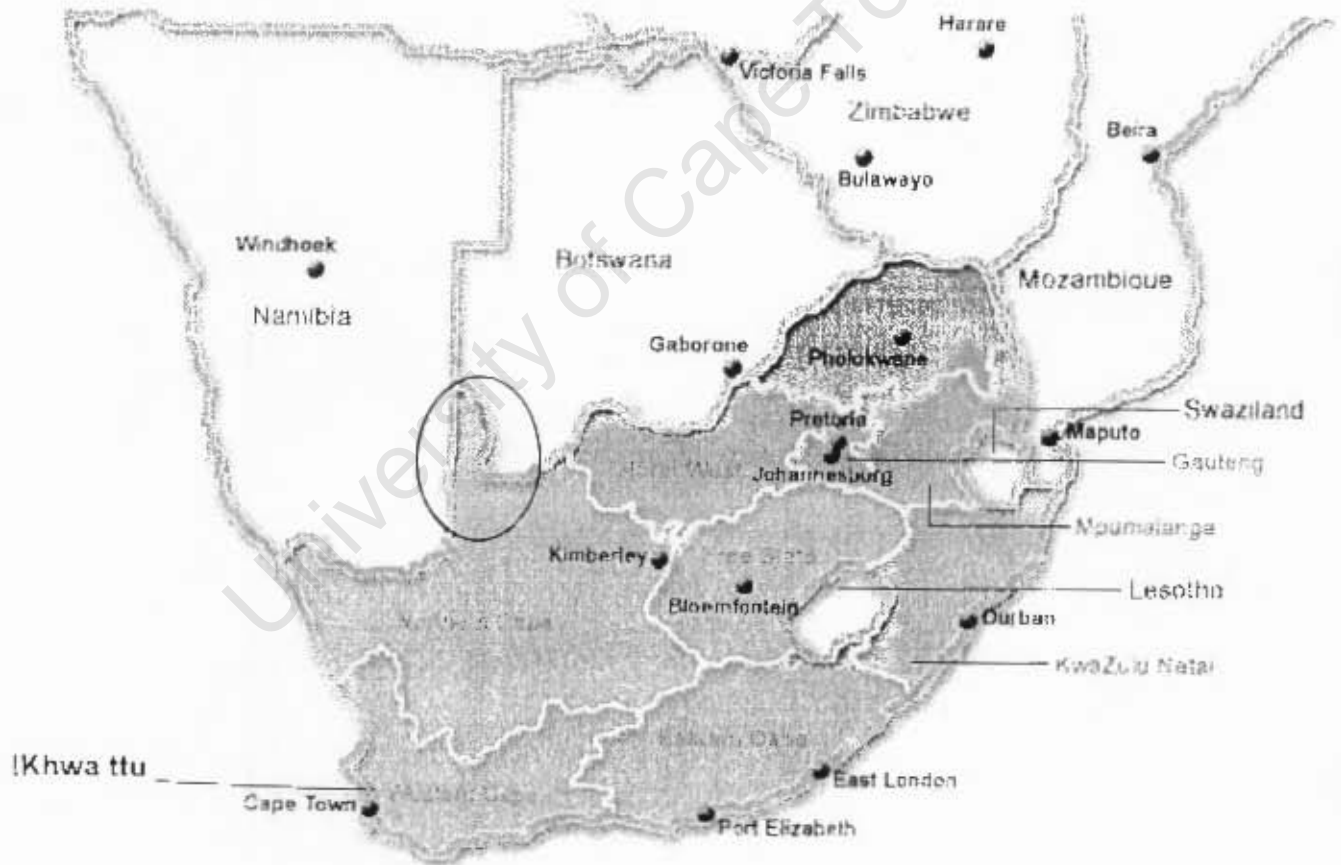
SASC = South African San Council

UNESCO = United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation

UN = United Nations

WIMSA = Working Group of Indigenous Minorities in Southern Africa

Map 1:



Map 2:



- City
- Major town
- Secondary town
- Freeway
- National Road
- Main Road
- Secondary Road
- Unimproved Road
- Mountain Passes
- Route Markers
- Full Route and Toll Plaza
- Distances in Kilometres
- International Boundary
- Political Boundary
- Major Airport
- Airstrip
- Accommodation
- River Control
- National Parks and/or Nature Reserves
- Water Features
- Mountain Range

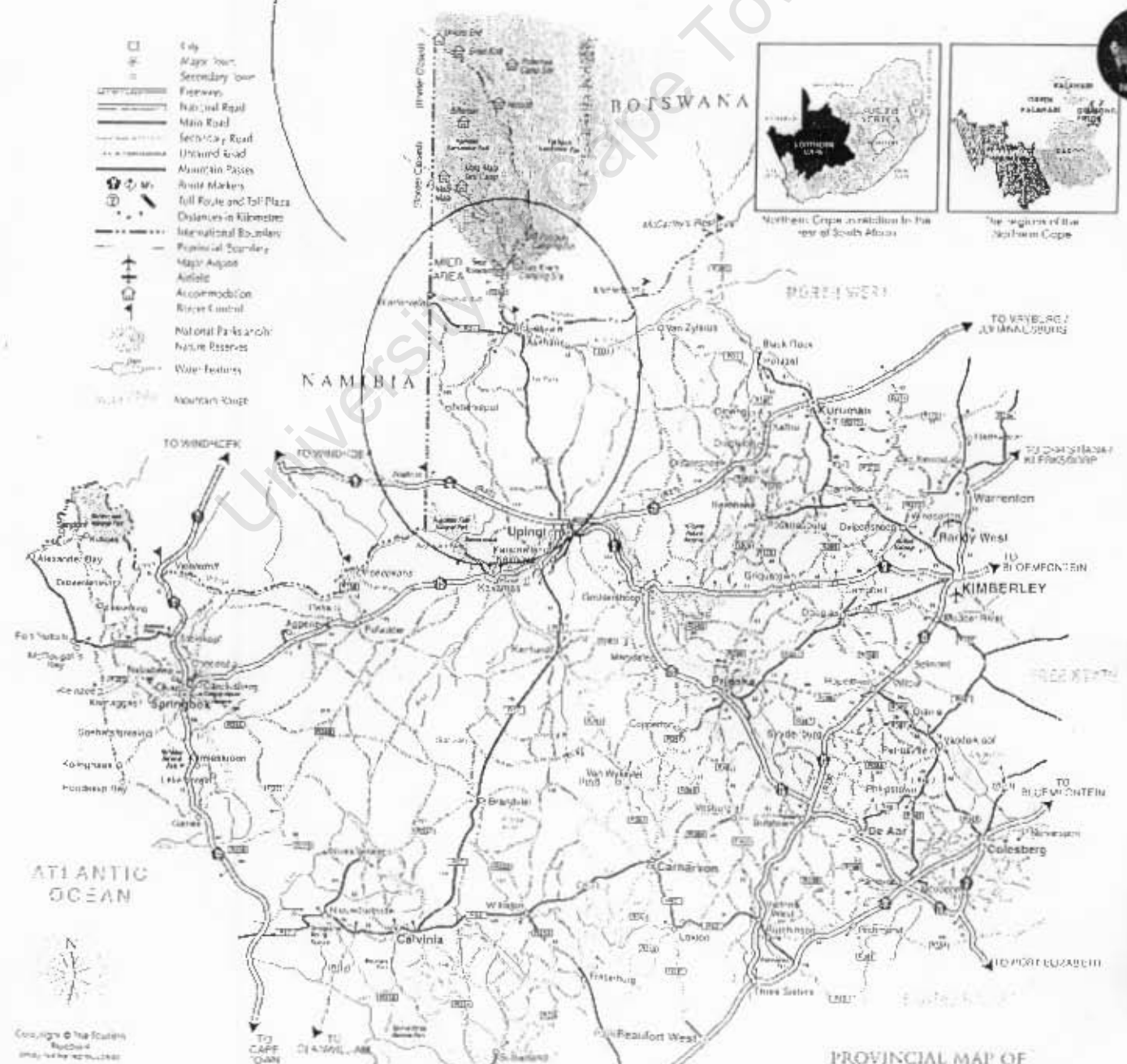


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Chapter 1

Introduction

“Sarcastically, one could argue that ‘we’ were first obsessed in discovering the ‘pristine’ people able to live in harmony with nature, then we became occupied in disclosing the injustices they had to suffer in history and their current marginalisation in postcolonial states, before ‘we’ are now able to look at their own actions, reactions and aspirations. Maybe, the time has come that ‘we’ discover ‘them’ to be part of ‘us’, in that they do not present all the characteristics ‘we’ deem ‘good’. Ironically, ‘they’ discover now that it has advantages to be considered as ‘other’.” (Dieckmann, 2007:15)

San¹ people have been part of my life since I moved with my parents to Namibia when I was ten years old. Since then, I grew up surrounded by development practitioners who had been working with various San communities for decades. However, it was only through academia that I was able to place my experiences in a broader context. Ute Dieckmann's statement above resonates with the observations I have made over time of the views many people have of the San. As a child I had not given much thought to the way in which ‘the San’ were perceived as different from the rest of us, but as I grew up, I was astounded at the reactions I received when mentioning that my parents worked with the San. The questions posed to me were always around similar issues: were they not extinct; did they still exercise a traditional lifestyle; in what way could one help to preserve their way of life and prevent any harmful contact with modernity; did they really

¹ As there is a difference of opinion in the usage of the terms, Bushmen and San, I adhere to the decision by the San made in 1993, at a regional San conference, to use the term San, which to my knowledge received consensus. The San, however, have voiced their preference to be addressed by their distinct names such as †Khomani, Khwe, !Xun, etc. Where possible I will abide by their wishes.

leave the old for dead when they moved on, etc. I struggled to reply to such questions, however, tried my best to outline the information, as I knew it.

Many years later, I have the opportunity in this thesis to be a mediator of sorts by illustrating how the San view themselves. From the numerous San groups of Southern Africa, I have focused on the ꞤKhomani San for this project. The complex identity of the ꞤKhomani San captured my attention from the moment I read Steven Robins' (2001) article "'Bushmen' and Double Vision: The ꞤKhomani San Land Claim and the Cultural Politics of 'Community' and 'Development' in the Kalahari" for a sociology class. In this, the term, "indigenous modernities", which Robins (2001:835) applies to the experience of the ꞤKhomani San, captivated me². His argument resonated with my partial understanding of the San's identity from my own experiences.

Identity has always fascinated me - its attributes of fluidity and change, its constructed nature, and my own identity. Self-identity, as well as group identity, is a universal human property that includes the individual and collective experiences in various contexts. In the case of the ꞤKhomani San, the literature suggests that their group identity was rebuilt around their land claim in the 1990s. However, after analysis, this claim seems to encompass various contradictions. The ꞤKhomani San group identity has multiple attributes just as any other collective group and the contestations which developed will be discussed in detail throughout this thesis. One must also be cautious about making sweeping judgements about other's identities based on one's own preconceptions: it is impossible to comprehend someone else's identity as accurately as they determine their own.

² Robins did not create the term "indigenous modernities" however he was, to my knowledge, the one who connected the term directly to the ꞤKhomani San.

Chapter outline

The six chapters of this dissertation move from a 'wide angle' exploration of the relevant concepts and contexts to a more focused 'zooming in' on specific issues around ꞤKhomani San identity.

This introductory chapter provides insight into my choice of research topic, presents a brief outline of the concerns of the dissertation and gives background information on the San. Connecting to this, the subsequent chapter offers insight into the empirical research and understanding of important concepts used.

Chapter Three situates the ꞤKhomani San as indigenous people in a global context. Here, the term 'indigenous' is conceptualised and discussed in relation to a legal, political and rights-based framework. Linked to this is a discussion of developments in the international indigenous movement, whose history is also outlined. The broader goal of the chapter is to point out the differences and similarities of indigenous peoples' political and social struggles in the global, African and South African context.

Chapter Four examines the South African context against the background of the ꞤKhomani San's history. It describes the process of how the ꞤKhomani San as the group known today was formed, and which adversities they were faced with and influenced by from the 1930s until the apartheid era and the beginning of their land claim. In this chapter, the (re)-formation of their identity through their unique past can be seen to extend into their present.

The more recent history of the ꞤKhomani San, with their current circumstances, experiences and insights, is the focus of Chapter Five. Here, the voices of my research

participants take centre stage, and their broad, complex identity is unpacked. They explain their experiences, perspectives, emotions, expectations and aspirations in relation to their identity, which partly reveals their “indigenous modernity”.

The ǀKhomani San’s hopes for the future lead us into the final Chapter Six, where I discuss my conclusions. Here, the various facets of the ǀKhomani San identity are summarised.

Background information

In order to gain relevant information of the San in Southern Africa a condensed overview of the more general facts of San history, as well as specific events concerning the ǀKhomani San are provided here.

Anthropologists and archaeologists have proven that the San are the indigenous, aboriginal or First People of the southern African region. Archaeological evidence, specifically rock art suggests, that “the San, who indeed made most of southern Africa’s rock art” (Lewis-Williams & Blundel, 1998:5) were living in this area since ancient times. Lewis-Williams and Blundel (1998:5) provide the following evidence of this: “The earliest date we have was determined by the radio-carbon technique in southern Namibia. Five flat pieces of stone...were found in a stratum of the deep archaeological deposit in the Apollo 11 cave and dated to as much as 27 000 years before the present (BP).” Scholars estimate that in early times, the San population consisted of 300 000 when they lived as hunter-gatherers and stretched all the way up into Central Africa (Hitchcock *et al*, 2006:3). With the arrival of Bantu and then European settlers, the San faced competition over land and natural resources while also being forcibly removed and intimidated. “Squeezed between Bantu migrants from the north and east, and white

colonisers from the south, they [the San] were variously assimilated, decimated or subjugated by these new arrivals.” (Suzman, 2001:2). Testimony to these events was given by members of the now extinct !Xam who lived in the south-western areas of South Africa. The oral accounts of their life experiences, as well as their ancient tales, were compiled by the two philologists Wilhelm Bleek and Lucy Lloyd during the 19th century (Skotnes, 1999:40).

Today about 6000 San, of a total of approximately 100 000, live in South Africa. San communities also reside in Botswana, Namibia, Angola, Zambia and Zimbabwe. Their numbers vary from a few hundred in the latter two countries to about 6000 in Angola, 38 000 in Namibia and 49 000 in Botswana (WIMSA, 1998:1). Linguists also differentiate between 11 distinct San languages, which are still spoken today (Pakleppa & Kwononoka, 2003:5). N!u, the language of the ꞤKhomani San, is almost extinct and is closely related to the extinct !Xam language (Barnard, 2007:140).

The two largest groups of San communities in South Africa are, namely the approximately 3000 !Xun and 1000 Khwe, which reside at Platfontein near Kimberley (Robins *et al*, 2001:13). They originate from Angola and Namibia respectively where they fought for the South African Defence Force. Shortly before Namibia attained its independence in 1990, !Xun and Khwe soldiers, as well as their dependents, were relocated to South Africa by the South African Defence Force (Robins *et al*, 2001:13). A small group of Berg San live in KwaZulu-Natal and about 1000 members of the San communities who call themselves ꞤKhomani reside in the Southern Kalahari, some 200 kilometres north of Upington (Chennells & du Toit, 2004:98; WIMSA, 2002:33). Through a land claim in 1995 the ꞤKhomani San obtained the land they now reside on.

The process of forming this group called 'ǀKhomani San' is an important piece of history. However, it must be noted that no exact time frame exists regarding the formation of the ǀKhomani San as an entity. Therefore, the term 'ǀKhomani' will be used from the outset even though it only became an official name of the San group in 1995 with the start of their land claim. Hence an awareness of a complex identity of the ǀKhomani San was born early and the process of their changing identity is a remarkable story which I will attempt to convey here, through the existing literature, my fieldwork and interpretations.

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Chapter 2

Concepts and methodology

Methodology

As I am aware that as a researcher and outsider I am unable to fully understand another person's identity, my thesis is primarily based on aspects shared with me by †Khomani San informants which they deemed important to the formation of their identity. In addition, I have also taken into consideration perceptions on the †Khomani San identity shared with me by NGO³ development practitioners. On an academic level, my thesis is not situated in one specific discipline but rather combines applicable literature from different fields. The interviews conducted with a small representative group of †Khomani San constitute the crux of the thesis. I utilise only what is specifically relevant to the †Khomani San from the reading material I have gathered and from the interviews conducted.

In my literature search on the †Khomani San, I soon realised that although some San communities are "among the most studied, and best studied of any ethnic group in the world" (Barnard, 1992:40), this did not apply to the †Khomani San. Through further readings, it became clear that this was due to a general perception that the †Khomani San were not 'pure' San. It was only after the land claim process began in 1995 that the †Khomani San gained wider attention.

Initially, I conducted methodical desktop research on the San in general, with a particular focus on academic literature about the †Khomani San. In the academic literature, I found

³ NGO stands for non-governmental organisation

that social anthropology and sociology, with specific relevance to development, were the disciplines that yielded the most useful works for my thesis. These disciplines provided some texts on the ꞤKhomani San and on the concepts I was investigating, such as 'identity'. I have particularly drawn on Steven Robins' (2001, 2003) wide ranging contributions and analyses of the ꞤKhomani San; as well as his usage and clarification of the term "indigenous modernities" (Robins, 2001:835). Other influential texts have included John and Jean Comaroff's (2008) appealing idea of 'Ethnicity Inc.', and Ronald Niezen's (2003) work on indigenous peoples across the globe.

Various 'grey' literature from outside academia - annual reports, assessments, conference papers and research publications - from relevant NGOs working with the ꞤKhomani San have also been useful. I was particularly fortunate to access the land claim documentation used by the claimants for submission to the South African government.

Equipped with this background information, I set out to conduct some field research of my own. This mainly involved interviews with a number of members of the ꞤKhomani San community. In choosing research participants that were as representative as possible of the different strata of the community, I stratified my sample by gender, age, traditional and formal education, as well as employment. Thus, the group of interviewees consisted of young professionals, who could provide me with the perspective of the youth; middle-aged people, who had played roles in development and in international fora; and elders, who could shed light on important historical events and traditional knowledge. The interviews were all recorded, the relevant statements transcribed and all

participants signed consent forms⁴. Only one person requested me to refrain from using their name but agreed that I would be able to use the statements made in the interview.

I conducted some of the interviews at the !Kwa ttu San Culture and Education Centre⁵ on the West Coast, 70 kilometres away from Cape Town, South Africa⁶, where a few ǀKhomani San are currently being trained and others are working as operational managers, tour guides, etc. More interviews were carried out in the Southern Kalahari of the Northern Cape, where I travelled between Askahm (about 200 kilometres north of Upington), Andriesvale and Twee Rivieren in the Kgalagadi Transfrontier Park⁷. In the Southern Kalahari I met with an array of ǀKhomani San individuals from different generations and backgrounds, who generously allowed me to observe their everyday life, and gain insight into the ǀKhomani San community.

I also interviewed NGO practitioners for different perspectives and technical input. A major contact was Roger Chennells, a human rights lawyer, based in Stellenbosch, who has been working with the ǀKhomani San since the start of their land claim. He is regarded as one of the most knowledgeable people on the different aspects of ǀKhomani San identity, and provided me with information and advice. In the Kalahari, I had the opportunity to speak to other development field workers who shared valuable viewpoints with me about the ǀKhomani San community and their circumstances.

⁴ Please see Appendix 1 for details.

⁵ The !Kwa ttu San Culture and Education Centre provides training to San community members from Southern Africa and aims at educating the public about the San's history, culture and present affairs.

⁶ Please refer to map on p. vi.

⁷ Please refer to maps on p.vii.

Concepts

“Indigenous modernity”

Even though hybridisation in different spheres has been occurring in our globalised world, emphasis is still placed on keeping the traditional apart from the modern. As I have indicated in my introduction, the San are still perceived as a primordial ethnic group whose ‘primitiveness must be preserved’. The reality however is that the San in general, and the ꞤKhomani San specifically, have combined their traditional way of life, inherited by their ancestors, with modern developments.

The term, “indigenous modernity” has not been used extensively, but has occurred in connection with disciplines, such as, architecture, anthropology and sociology⁸. As already indicated, Robins seems to have located the pivotal connection between the ꞤKhomani San and the term. I utilise the term “indigenous modernity” to emphasise the complex and multifaceted identity of the ꞤKhomani San. The paradox, which is implied through placing the terms, indigenous and modernity together, stems from the view that indigenous is synonymous with a non-modern way of life and vested strongly in traditional practices. However, the San, as an indigenous people, have clearly shown that this dichotomous thinking can be defied and a hybrid between modernity and indigenism can be created. The ꞤKhomani San are a case in point of developing into an “indigenous modernity” as their identity is vested in both the modern and the traditional. In the thesis some examples of this amalgamation are illustrated through the case of the Hoodia and a tracking project.

⁸ Other authors, I am aware of, which have used the term are: A. Gupta; A. Povinelli; M. Sahlins.

The perceived paradox of “indigenous modernity” can also be related to the paradox which occurs when looking at the constructed identity of the ꞤKhomani San. Even if an identity is constructed, it does not indicate that the identity is false but has rather become a ‘reality’ for the people it encompasses.

Identity

In simplified terms, identity at an individual level consists of many different facets that make up the entirety. A multiplicity of individual identities that share either common interests or certain features can make up a group identity. As I am discussing the ꞤKhomani San as a grouping their identity is referred to in the singular. This decision is based on the aspect that if one would consider the ꞤKhomani San identity in the plural, complications would occur as it would imply that more than one group of ꞤKhomani San exists. As my thesis will show the ꞤKhomani San identity is multifaceted and complex but applies to the entire grouping.

Sökefeld (1999:417) pinpoints the key factors that contribute to identity formation and summarises the psychological and anthropological aspects of identity as follows:

“The concept ‘identity’ has undergone a paradigmatic shift in recent decades. Originally, its meaning was ‘sameness,’ and in psychology this sameness meant ‘selfsameness.’...In social anthropology, the concept ‘identity’ was used mostly in the context of ‘ethnic identity.’ Here it pointed not simply to selfsameness but to the sameness of the self with others, that is, to a consciousness of sharing certain characteristics (a language, a culture, etc.) within a group. This consciousness made up a group’s identity. These understandings were complementary rather than contradictory and fitted well together, as the group to which a person

belonged constituted an important part of the social environment in which and through which personal identity was formed.”

A group identity is formed when different individual identities find common ground based on an awareness of sharing particularities and experience. This process can be influenced by internal and/or external incidents. Today, individual and group identities are recognised as ever changing and in flux. Stuart Hall (1996:4) elaborates:

“... Identities are never unified and in late modern times, increasingly fragmented and fractured; never singular but multiply constructed across different, often intersecting and antagonistic, discourses, practices and positions. They are subjects to a radical historicization, and are constantly in the process of change and transformation.”

The broad term, ‘group identity’, covers a range of possibilities - from the identity of a sports group to that of an activist group - so it is necessary to narrow the concept to fit the scope of this thesis. A suitable approach to ꞤKhomani San identity as a group is the category of ethnic group identity. Ethnicity plays a major role in numerous studies of specific groupings as it encompasses what Sökefeld (1999:417) has called the “consciousness of sharing certain characteristics within a group”. In the case of the ꞤKhomani San the ‘shared consciousness’ has developed over a long period of time and has been influenced strongly by their history and the involvement of external forces.

Throughout the thesis the concepts will be applied to the ꞤKhomani San circumstances and thereby gain significance in their context.

Chapter 3

Indigenous peoples: International – Africa – South Africa

Overview

“I want other people to hear my story, you can learn from other people’s stories. Because there are people around the world that do not even have a clue about the ꞤKhomani San. Therefore, for me, it is always good to share my story with people and then other people can hear.” (Bok, interviewed 12 August 2008)

The international indigenous movement, in which the ꞤKhomani San and other San groups are represented, has only recently become a well-known lobbying network in global politics. After World War II, when the League of Nations was replaced by the United Nations (UN), the changing global political climate saw increasing emphasis on a human rights-based approach to issues of peace and justice. The strengthening of the United Nations and the non-governmental sector brought vigour to indigenous peoples’ struggles which, inter alia, resulted in the UN First and Second Decade of the World’s Indigenous People (Niezen, 2003:30). The Decades⁹, and their manifold conferences, meetings and workshops, have provided the San with the possibility to network and learn from indigenous peoples around the world.

Annetta Bok, quoted at the beginning of this chapter, is one of the ꞤKhomani San representatives who has travelled to numerous international fora where she has

⁹ The first and second UN Decade of the World’s Indigenous People aimed at promoting international cooperation to assist indigenous people in solving problems in areas such as human rights, culture, education, health, development and the environment.

discussed the plight of the ǀKhomani San and interacted with other indigenous groups. She and other ǀKhomani San delegates have experienced both positive and negative implications of being indigenous on an international level. On the positive side, they have been able to gain insight into the dimensions of the global indigenous peoples' movement and have been exposed to the possibility of lobbying the South African government for more rights through international law. On a more socially complex level, they have realised that without unity among themselves, they are unable to accomplish such achievements internationally. Furthermore, the international discussions and decisions are sometimes difficult to convey and implement at grassroots level.

However, at both an international and local level, the definition of 'indigenous' has been a problematic one. Firstly, one has to conceptualise the term 'indigenous' in a way that captures the complexity of indigenous peoples experiences and realities. And secondly, one has to be aware that there are two significantly different uses of the term indigenous. On the one hand, the use of indigenous evokes questions on a philosophical base and on the other on a more practical and procedural level. As social anthropologist Sidsel Saugestad (2001a:310) explains: "The point is simply that we need to make a distinction between *appropriate* use of the term, implying a debate on epistemology, and the *strategic* use of a term, which is a question of policy."

As the term 'indigenous' increases in use and importance, numerous definitions have developed, often adjusted to the different circumstances of various groups. As Saugestad (2001a:305) argues:

"The conceptual debate we are addressing concerns the attempt to clarify an ambiguous relationship between a modern phenomena – the sovereign state – and a special type of traditional community, that does not in itself constitute a political

entity. Both indigenous organizations and the UN system argue strongly against a very strict definition of who is indigenous. The diversity of peoples and situations is such that a universal definition would inevitably exclude some peoples.”

Interlinking the concepts of the ‘modern’ state and that of indigenous people groups is challenging, and an important task of international organisations. While a rigid definition of indigenous peoples is not in anyone’s interests, a broad definition is still needed. Consequently, a number of countries agreed on a binding definition when they ratified the Indigenous and Tribal Peoples’ Convention (Convention No. 169)¹⁰ adopted by the International Labour Organisation (ILO) in 1989 (IWGIA, 2005:559). The convention’s definition of indigenous peoples in Part One of the General Policy declares:

“Article 1:

1. This Convention applies to: (a) Tribal peoples in independent countries whose social, cultural and economic conditions distinguish them from other sections of the national community, and whose status is regulated wholly or partially by their own customs or traditions or by special laws or regulations; (b) Peoples in independent countries who are regarded as indigenous on account of their descent from the populations which inhabited the country, or a geographical region to which the country belongs, at the time of conquest or colonisation or the establishment of present State boundaries and who, irrespective of their legal status, retain some or all of their own social, economic, cultural and political institutions.

¹⁰ Regrettably, according to the ILO, only twenty countries, most of them Latin American ones, had ratified the convention by 2006. Notably, no African states, also not South Africa, have ratified the Convention (ILO, 2006).

structures of the state. The meaning thus depends on context, and is perhaps best seen as a polythetic¹¹ classification.”

The catch-all quality of the term ‘indigenous peoples’ also suggests a connectedness between all indigenous groups. The question is, can one locate sufficient commonalities between the various groups to justify such a generic term? The literature reviewed (e.g.: Niezen, 2003; Saugestad 2001; Barnard, A. & Kenrick 2001) seems to indicate that one can identify a number of criteria, for instance, a shared history of marginalisation, landlessness, exploitation and the certainty of being the first on the land that can substantiate the use of this generalising term.

Indeed, the realisation that the indigenous peoples of the world have achieved a sense of self in the world is a triumph. Therefore, it is so vital that the term indigenous has become widely accepted today and has brought about some positive implications for the indigenous peoples of the world. However, it has to be reiterated that no single definition is applicable to all the indigenous peoples of the world, who each live in their specific contexts.

In my personal communication with the ꞤKhomani San, they predominantly used the term ‘indigenous peoples’ in an attempt to differentiate themselves from the Khoe people. In this context, they referred to themselves as ‘the First People of Southern Africa’ who later on shared their traditional knowledge with the Khoe. The ꞤKhomani

¹¹ Polythetic meaning: Of a class of things, having many, but not all properties in common. (Wiktionary, 2009)

San's association of indigeneity with land and traditions is in line with Niezen's (2003:2-3) argument that:

"[t]he interesting thing about the relative newness of this concept [indigenous] is that it refers to primordial identity, to people with primary attachments to land and culture, 'traditional' people with lasting connections to ways of life that have survived 'from time immemorial'. That this innovation should be so widely accepted is a startling achievement."

The rise of the international movement of indigenous peoples, discussed in detail below, has influenced both the space in which these types of discussions have taken place as well as the international political climate towards indigenous groups.

Indigenous peoples: International context

"'Indigenous peoples' has come to have connotations and meanings that are much wider than the question of 'who came first'. It is today a term and a global movement fighting for rights and justice for those particular groups who have been left on the margins of development and who are perceived negatively by dominating mainstream development paradigms, whose cultures and ways of life are subject to discrimination and contempt and whose very existence is under threat of extinction." (ACHPR & IWGIA, 2005:87).

The injustices that indigenous peoples have faced worldwide and historically have come to the attention of international circles in recent years. The number of organisations that either consist of, or represent indigenous peoples and advocate their rights has risen exponentially. The reasons for this increase can be broadly linked to the changes in

international politics towards a strong human rights approach and to the forces of globalisation. As mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, the formation of indigenous organisations started initially in the 'West' after World War II changed international politics to a more human rights-based system. Since then, two phases of indigenous rights organising can be seen.

The first phase, in the 1960s and 1970s, was rooted in identity politics, the goal of uplifting indigenous peoples around the world, and the mobilising of organisations. It was during this phase that the World Council of Indigenous Peoples was formed. The second phase, in the 1980s and 1990s, was predominantly centred on legal struggles, such as land and intellectual property claims. For good reasons, which will be touched on below, Africa and Asia's indigenous peoples were only mobilised, and mobilised themselves, after the second phase had already commenced. This has meant that there has not always been ample time to form strong and structured organisations (Saugestad, 2001a:312-313).

The †Khomani San seem to have also fallen into this crack of historically young, and weak organisations. This late start has been further exacerbated, in their case, by the lack of both formal education and means of communication. Today, their organisational structures are still not strong enough to engage continuously on an international level. Neither do they often have the financial resources to implement recommendations, let alone report back to their communities at grassroots level. However, with the financial and organisational assistance of NGOs, a few †Khomani San have represented their communities at international conferences.

Even though the various international fora provide a useful platform for the indigenous peoples of the world, Annetta Bok voiced concern that other indigenous delegates might not fully understand the dynamics in her community:

“You know sometimes, I have attended a few international meetings, but for me it’s just...I need to go to the ground. It’s fine to attend, sometimes you go and talk and represent your people, but people don’t actually see what’s going down on the ground. They listen to you, but they don’t have the feeling that you have, that actually stays on the ground.” (Bok, interviewed 12 August 2008).

This statement clearly exemplifies how the large global scale of indigenous issues does not always reach the specific small-scale rural indigenous communities. The emergence of indigenous issues on the world agenda brought in some leading players from the international arena. The United Nations, for instance, launched an Indigenous Year in 1993, with a subsequent First and Second International Decade of the World’s Indigenous Peoples which lasted from 1994 to 2004 and from 2005 to 2015 respectively (IWGIA, 2005:11). As Niezen (2003:4) highlights, “[t]he United Nations has thus become a new focal point of ‘indigenism,’ a term I use to describe the international movement that aspires to promote and protect the rights of the world’s ‘first peoples’.” The UN has also set up noteworthy sub-organisations, such as the UN Working Group on Indigenous Populations in 1982; and the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues in 2001. Baba Festus, a young ǀKhomani San woman who has attended several Permanent Forums, was so impressed by the opportunities this forum provides that she “...would like to work in New York for one year. I would like to work for the UN and in the human rights section. It must be relevant to my current work. I want to go back to !Khwatla. I need to learn a lot more. There is so much what I don’t know.” (Festus, interviewed 18 June 2008).

Of course, not only organisations have an influence on the issues concerning indigenous peoples - the nation state plays an equally important role. Unfortunately, most states have been the major culprits in marginalising their indigenous population/s. From the states' perspective, it is difficult to acknowledge any wrongdoings towards indigenous populations, and even more so to try to rectify these injustices without offending other more dominant ethnic groupings. As Saugestad (2001a:301) comments: "The need to find a *balance* between the general *ideals of equal rights* and equal treatment, and the *special needs* of the minority for protection, is a challenge for all democratic states with indigenous minorities within their borders. It can be seen as part of a broader liberal dilemma about how to handle differences."

Nonetheless, the use of the term 'indigenous peoples' has become common practice by states, albeit with their own interpretations and not necessarily in congruence with the self-definition of indigenous peoples. Despite these debates, an indigenous identity has emerged, due to the growing awareness of indigenous peoples, the advocacy work of international organisations and the involvement of states at times. Niezen (2003:9) remarks on these developments:

"Indigenous identity has grown largely out of the institutions of successful nationalism themselves; the international legislative bodies of states – the United Nations and its satellite agencies – have provided the conceptual origins and practical focus of indigenous identity. With little public awareness, and with the obvious terminology ('indigenism') little used up to this point, an international movement has led to the creation of an important new 'ism'."

This 'ism' has formed organically over time in indigenous peoples themselves. The process of becoming major role players on the international stage and the interaction

between indigenous groupings has strengthened the concept. Indigenous people now identify with being indigenous, and are creating a space for themselves in the world that they can use to their advantage. Even though the concept 'indigenous' was an external construct, they have adopted and adapted its many facets. Just as the Inuit, the San have come to internalise their indigenous status as part of their identity.

Indigenous peoples: African context

As noted in the discussion above, the initial appearance of 'indigenous peoples' on a global front was initiated by the 'West, with Africa trailing behind. The reason for this was that Africa's history was still dominated in the 1960s and '70s by the 'West', under colonial rule. As such, the African indigenous movements did not have the privilege of those decades, to slowly establish themselves into strong organisations. Instead, the status of Africa's indigenous peoples was built on the remnants of colonialism, which still define many of the challenges contemporary Africa faces. While the Saami in Norway were fighting for parliamentary seats (Saugestad, 2001a:301), African indigenous peoples were involved in their respective liberation struggles. After having acquired independence from colonial rule, and from apartheid in South Africa, the definitions that were applied to indigenous peoples globally were reformulated to encompass all of Africa's 'black' population.

"Africa is more difficult to analyse, but is also more challenging, because the dominant position of white colonial forces left *all* black Africa in a subordinate position that in many respects was similar to the position of indigenous peoples elsewhere. In relation to the colonial powers *all* native Africans were (a) first inhabitants, (b) non-dominant, and (c) different in culture from the white intruders." (Saugestad, 2001b:52).

The majority of states in Africa did not see the need to make any special arrangements for indigenous populations since it was believed that all groups who lived in the country before colonisation were indigenous. In this context, the strengthening of the international indigenous movement has been particularly significant. The lobbying and advocacy work by indigenous organisations and support organisations on an international scale have eventually brought about some changes in the attitude of African governments. For instance in Botswana, which has a negative track record when it comes to its indigenous peoples, saw indigenous San win a court case in 2006 against the government regarding their ancestral land. This may have marked a shift in government attitude:

“Botswana, together with other African countries, voted to support the recently adopted United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples on 13 September 2007. Earlier this year, following objections from the Africa bloc of countries, the initial draft declaration was modified to address the concerns of the Africans. While this declaration is non-binding on member states of the United Nations, including Botswana, it is nevertheless significant. It provides a commonly agreed upon set of principles which can be used as the basis for improving the lives of indigenous peoples around the world, including in Botswana.” (Ditshwanelo¹², 2007).

However, despite some progress in realising the rights of indigenous peoples world wide, many African governments remain either complacent about, or in denial about the correlation between marginalisation and indigeneity. As Saugestad (2001a:309) highlights: “The most acute dilemma in many African countries is not how an indigenous group is defined, but the fact that most national governments ignore, reject or are

¹² Ditshwanelo is the Botswana Centre for Human Rights, established in 1993.

with the country's constitution. Ironically, this policy creates a predicament for the indigenous population of South Africa as the current government will not single out one grouping because it would be too reminiscent of the past. This means that the indigenous peoples of South Africa face difficulties in defining themselves as indigenous, being recognised by the state as such, and finally in convincing government to attend to their problems. Kuper (2003:394) notes these ironies:

“...at the time of the political transition the ANC was unsympathetic to any movement of ethnic assertion within the country...The government was evidently caught by surprise when the indigenous-peoples movement was taken up by the UN agencies and NGOs in South Africa began to champion the cause of the country's own indigenous peoples.”

Kuper (2003) points out that the definition of indigenous is contested in South Africa just as it is in the rest of the world. Two definitions have largely been used in South Africa: firstly, indigenous as referring to any South Africans of African descent; and secondly, the UN definition of aboriginal descent. In terms of the second definition, groups that are indigenous to South Africa would be the San, Nama and Griqua (Chennells & du Toit, 2004:98). These ongoing contestations mean that these indigenous groupings have had to struggle to have their views heard, and are still strongly stigmatised and discriminated against in the new South Africa. Despite the coming of democracy, they continue to retain their “status as a rural underclass and constitute some of the poorest of the poor.” (Chennells & du Toit, 2004:100).

The UN Special Rapporteur, Rodolfo Stavenhagen, has also voiced concerns about the South African government's inability to recognise the countries' six self-identified indigenous groups (Goodman, 2006:6). At the same time however, the South African

government seems to be trying to ease the plight of some of the indigenous population - the successful ꞛKhomani San land claim of 1999 being one positive example. Robins (2003) however is critical of whether this indicated a real change in the South African government or just a bid to get more Northern Cape votes in the 1999 election. Whatever the case might be, one has to commend the South African government on having made some public reference to their indigenous population/s on various occasions. The Constitution, for one, makes specific reference to San, Nama and Khoi in connection to language rights in South Africa. Furthermore, the South African coat of arms and motto, 'diverse people unite', is written in the ꞛXam words '!Ke e: ꞛarra ꞛ ꞛ ke'.¹³ Interestingly, this has provided the ꞛKhomani San with more bargaining power as the government has used their heritage for symbolic value (Barnard, 2007: 91,116).

Another important reference in a speech by former President Thabo Mbeki, on 25th June 1999 at the opening of Parliament, provides hope that the indigenous peoples of South Africa will one day achieve their goals:

"The promotion and protection of the cultural, linguistic and religious rights of all our people must occupy a central place in the work of the Government. It should not happen that anyone of us should feel a sense of alienation...Nor should we allow that those who were denied their identity, including the Khoi and the San, continue to exist in the shadows, a passing historic relic and an object of an obscene tourist curiosity. We consider the work of restoring the pride and identity of all our people of vital importance to the task of advancing the human dignity of all our citizens and ensuring the success of our efforts towards national

¹³ This language is now extinct, with the ꞛKhomani San's language, Nꞛu, as the closest living language to ꞛXam.

reconciliation and nation building.” (Mbeki quoted in ACHPR & IWGIA, 2005: 44-45).

This specific reference by Thabo Mbeki to the indigenous people of South Africa and their plight emphasises the importance of discussing the history of South Africa's indigenous people. In the case of the ꞤKhomani San, their history has shaped them and their identity as indigenous people. The ꞤKhomani San's history connects them clearly with the marginalisation and landlessness that numerous other indigenous people have endured. The next chapter will explore this history of the ꞤKhomani San, followed by a discussion of the influence of indigeneity on their identity in Chapter Five.

Chapter 4

Construction of the †Khomani San

Overview

“Bushmen of the southern Kalahari were perceived by many in anthropology as too few in number and too ‘acculturated’ to be bothered with, at least as exemplars of traditional culture.” (Barnard, 2007:140)

The histories of people allows us to glimpse into their essence - it reveals the hardships and successes they have endured, and it contributes to all that is still to come in life. By exploring the history of the †Khomani San, I hope to locate the key elements of their identity, the way their past has shaped their present and their aspirations for the future. As Barnard (2007) highlights, the †Khomani San do not seem to have sparked the interest of anthropologists in the past as vigorously as other groups. The stock of historical documents referring to the †Khomani San is thus rather limited as anthropologists and ethnographers only recently started to regard other San groups, like the †Khomani, as ‘pure’ San. As Suzman (1999:3) has argued, “for ethnographers, the purity of the sign ‘Bushmen’ in Western thought necessitated that an equally ‘pure’ Bushman was studied in the field.”

Although the †Khomani San have been perceived by scholars and others as ‘too acculturated’ and records on their history are limited, they still share historical similarities with numerous other San groups of the Southern African region. The †Khomani San history, as that of many other San groups, has been marked by discrimination, marginalisation, forced removals and landlessness. The question as to which events and

circumstances made the ǀKhomani San history different, and thus distinctive from the history of other groups, is the project of this chapter.

The ǀKhomani San historically lived in an area now known as the Southern Kalahari, which is a largely semi-desert environment. The seasonal availability of water and game long determined the routes taken by the San within their territories. This adjustment to their natural environment enabled them to sustain their hunting and gathering lifestyle. During the early years of colonisation, fences did not exist, which allowed many groups to roam large territories freely. With the erection of fences by the colonial power, the San were suddenly faced with boundaries, which limited the use of their traditional skills (Oupa Malgas, interviewed 17 October 2008). From the 1860s on, other groups, such as the 'Baster' and 'Coloured' settlers, moved into the territory of the ǀKhomani San. The internal colonisation of this area increased in 1904 and 1908 when a large group of Nama people, fleeing German rule in the then South West Africa (now Namibia), arrived. "It displaced all surviving San peoples in the area and tossed different ethnic groups together." (Jacobs *et al*, 2004:19). These pressures and domination by other African groups were also experienced by the ǀKhomani San. To note, this was also the time when the South African colonial authorities began allocating land to European farmers. The ǀKhomani San's access to their land base was even further decreased and a crisis of land alienation for the wider Southern Kalahari San developed in the 1920s (du Plessis, 2004:15-16).

The role of researchers and others

One of the first recorded reports of San living in the Southern Kalahari was given by the Assistant Resident Magistrate of Rietfontein Area, Herbst, in 1908. Although Herbst was

not a researcher, his documentation of the 'Bushmen' is significant in understanding the ǀKhomani San history and the territory they occupied. "About its [Southern Kalahari] inhabitants it is said: 'It is not so long ago that this country was extensively the habitat of the game, wild beasts and the attendant Bushmen.'" (Herbst quoted in Steyn, 1995:1). One interpretation of this statement might underscore that representatives of the colonial powers often placed 'Bushmen' in the same category as wildlife. The San, whom the Assistant Resident Magistrate referred to, were most probably members of any of the three main San groups believed to have lived in this area, namely the ǀKhomani, the ǁ'Auni and the Nǀamani. However, with intermarriages between them and interrelations with other non-San groups, distinctions are less clear-cut (The Land Claim Committee, Southern Kalahari Bushmen, c/o Chennells, 1995:1)¹⁴.

Alongside the colonial officials, researchers arrived who were keen to identify curiosities about the people they 'discovered' in the bush. Since the 1930s, researchers were intrigued by the San of the Southern Kalahari in South Africa. The main research reports of that time were published in the journal 'Bantu Studies', vol. X no: 4, 1936; and vol. XI no: 3, 1937. Later that year, all findings and additional information were published by Witwatersrand University Press in a collection entitled *Bushmen of the Southern Kalahari* edited by J. D. R. Jones and C. M. Doke. The book contains information about the Southern Kalahari San's musical practices, physical characteristics, genealogy, health and diseases. The authors had also begun to encounter problems when trying to define distinct groupings of San:

¹⁴ This reference is in one of the sections of the three-part ǀKhomani San Land Claim titled 'Northern Cape Province: Land Claim and Submission to the Minister of Land Affairs'. Part One is written by The Land Claim Committee, Southern Kalahari Bushmen and R. Chennells; Part Two and Three are written by anthropologists L. J. Botha and H. P. Steyn respectively.

“Four linguistic groups are therefore involved and apparently still more intermarrying of exogamic groups. We could not determine absolutely whether there were several different exogamic groups in both the |'auni and the †khomani ‘tribes’ or whether a still further unknown ‘tribe’ or ‘tribes’ constitute the other exogamic units.” (Dart, 1937:108).

As one pages through the book, one is appalled at its contents. Particularly unethical is the way the San were probed, examined and viewed in order to fulfil the need and curiosity of the researchers. Most of the recorded material was born out of the working relationship between researchers from the Witwatersrand University and Donald Bain. Bain was a prominent game hunter and explorer, who had made it his quest to ‘save’ the San of South Africa and convince the government to set up a reserve for them before they ‘died out’. Prior to the Empire Exhibition of 1936 in Johannesburg, Donald Bain and the University of Witwatersrand Expedition set up a base camp at “Tweerivieren” in the Southern Kalahari. Bain’s aim was to find a group of Bushmen that he could take to the Empire Exhibition to display as a ‘camp of live Bushmen’. In order to find the ‘authentic’ Bushmen, the “laboratory in the desert” consisted of linguists, physical anthropologists, a photographer, and all necessary equipment (Rassool & Hayes, 2002:132). The expedition had two motives: on the one hand, Bain wanted to use the Bushmen to further his dream of obtaining a reserve for them, while on the other hand, the scientists cherished the opportunity to conduct such ‘close up’ research. The method of research clearly illustrates the way in which the San were regarded as objects of an experiment and not as human beings. The very idea of exhibiting people, as you would display artefacts or animals, speak to this mindset described below:

“...although the image of the bushmen subsequently ‘improved’ (begging the question for value for a moment), their comparison to animals never again ceased...both bushmen and animals were shot, and both were exhibited, and continue to be so today. But the quality of the shooting changed, moving from the mortal to the representational.” (Landau, 1996:132).

Once an ‘authentic’ group of seventy people was found, they were taken to Johannesburg to participate in the Empire Exhibition and to be studied further (Gordon, 1999:269). Through research done by Steyn and Botha in the 1960s, this group is believed to have been of the present day ǀKhomani community (The Land Claim Committee, Southern Kalahari Bushmen, c/o Chennells, 1995:3).

Although Bain did not overtly compare the San to animals, as numerous other government officials and researchers did, he condescendingly labelled them ‘children’, as seen in the following quote:

“He [Donald Bain] told spectators: ‘The purpose I had in mind when I brought these people out of the Kalahari was to make propaganda and to educate the public to realize what an unremitting struggle these children of nature are fighting and losing against nature, man and animal. Apart from what they might be, no matter how primitive or rascally (skelm), these individuals are still living beings, and if reserves can be created for wild animals, why can we not stand together and create a reserve for these unfortunates and thus save them from assured extinction... (Meyer hd, Dart Papers, Wits, my translation).’” (Gordon, 1995:29).

This quote reflects a certain disposition of the time: people considered the San to be primitive, childlike, and as something one must preserve in order to realise one’s own

difference and superiority. Sadly, one is unable to gather much information on the mindset of the †Khomani San themselves at this time, as they were always spoken for or gazed at through the lens of the Other. Ironically though, these research products of the 1930s were valuable in the much later land claim, which I will begin to discuss at the end of this chapter, as well as in their introduction of the term '†Khomani'.

As the term '†Khomani' became more frequently used, so questions arose as to its origins. Various investigations have yielded diverse opinions between anthropologists and linguists about where it originated and whether it is the accurate name to use for the Southern Kalahari San. Socio-linguist Nigel Crawhall (2004:147-8) is of the opinion that "It was only after 1936 when Maingard, Dart and Doke felt a need to apply it [the term †Khomani] to them [Southern Kalahari San] that the term started to have some currency. It was the association of this ethnonym and the land claim that pushed the term into popular usage at the end of the 20th century." As far as the research shows, the term †Khomani was never uttered by any of the San in an interview in the 1930s, and seems to have been constructed by the researchers of the time. However, since the term †Khomani surfaced, none of the San ever disputed it, even though they were unable to explain its meaning completely. Interestingly, the research carried out by Doke and Maingard's had a significant impact, as post 1996, the San descendants appear to see themselves as †Khomani San. (Crawhall, 2004:216).

The history of the term †Khomani was utilised particularly during the land claim process, and Roger Chennells, legal advisor to the †Khomani San, underlines Crawhall's (2004) statement by saying: "It is a construct of the best research available at the time, which the San accepted. It was a very handy political short cut but it is not very valid. †Khomani seemed to be the most favoured of the three [groups of N|amani, |'Auni and

ǀKhomani]. There was no objection to it; they really wanted only one name.” (Chennells, interviewed 3 July 2008). The adoption of the term ǀKhomani by the Southern Kalahari San and its influence on their identity will be elaborated on further in Chapter Five.

Furthermore, the research of the 1930s by Maingard, Dart and Doke, and some work by D. F. Bleek of 1910, is not only relevant to the term ǀKhomani, but has also contributed a substantial part to the land claim. Their research, coupled with Donald Bain’s involvement, has been used to prove the ǀKhomani’s right to their ancestral land. Land claims in post-apartheid South Africa rest on proof that the claimant community had been living on the land prior to 1913¹⁵, as “South Africa does not recognise land claims based upon aboriginal rights.” (Ellis, 2001:255). Land as one of the main contributions to the ǀKhomani San identity will be discussed later in more detail. What is important to note, is the fact that even though most of the research on the ǀKhomani San conducted before 1994 was tainted by Othering, racism and Eurocentric preconceptions, facets of it were valuable to them in recent history. It provided them with the needed written proof to convince the South African government that they belonged on their ancestral land.

The impact of both the apartheid era and Kagga Kamma

Despite Bain’s efforts, the ǀKhomani San never received their own land in the 1930s. With the changing political climate in South Africa and the onset of apartheid in 1948, the ǀKhomani San were driven further and further from their land. The apartheid era slowly eroded most of their identity, as the following section will explore. Fundamentally, the loss of land influenced the ǀKhomani San gravely. They became increasingly dispersed

¹⁵ As Chapter two of the constitution of South Africa, the Bill of Rights indicates in Section 25, (7): “A person or community dispossessed of property after 19 June 1913 as a result of past racially discriminatory laws or practices is entitled, to the extent provided by an Act of Parliament, either to restitution of that property or to equitable redress.” (South Africa 1994)

across the countryside, forced into casual labour on farms and in nearby towns to eke out a living. As a result, their culture as hunter-gatherers weakened, and their language, N|u, almost vanished (Chennells, 2006:1). The racial classifications implemented by the new National Party government had a dramatic impact on the San, who were categorised as 'Coloureds' and no longer permitted to speak their mother-tongue N|u.

As Delaria Baba Festus, describes:

"At that stage it was still the apartheid regime so you were not allowed to say you are San because the government had classified us as 'Coloureds'. During apartheid years you were not allowed to speak your language and as a result of us moving to the urban areas, at such a young stage, I totally lost out on it. There are only a few, few words that I can pick up. I can not speak [N|u] at all." (Festus, interviewed 18 June 2008).

Although this classification enabled the Northern Cape San to take advantage of the slightly more beneficial legislation for 'Coloureds' (that was not available to them as San), their identity was further undermined (Barnard, 2007:140). Festus emphasised this contradiction:

"You were not allowed to say you are San because the government classified us all as 'Coloureds'. This allowed us the use of the public services of the government and enabled us to go to school. As Bushmen the government thought we don't need these services, health services, transport services; things like that and education. They said: 'they are Bush people; they need to stay behind the dunes'." (interviewed 18 June 2008)

The categorisation as 'Coloureds' and the ban on speaking their mother tongue and practising their traditions has been confirmed by the ꞤKhomani San in numerous

statements and by various scholars (Tomaselli, 2007; Crawhall, 2001/2004; Barnard, 2007). These factors have had grave implications on their identity, as the following statement by Leandra Eiman attests to: "My forefathers were San people and they spoke the language but because of the apartheid time they could not speak their own language. So we grew up with Afrikaans." (Eiman, interviewed 18 June 2008). Through her statement, Leandra Eiman clearly illustrates that the ꞤKhomani San were coerced into assimilating with the nearby population during the apartheid years. "The violence and dislocation wrought by colonialism and apartheid resulted in the Bushmen of the Northern Cape Province being widely dispersed and their language and cultural practices consequently dissipated." (Tomaselli, 2007: viii).

For a long time, the South African public generally assumed that the San were extinct and no longer living in the Southern Kalahari. This was not the case, as some ꞤKhomani San lived in the Kalahari Gemsbok National Park until 1970. Under a new Park administration, however, the last San were evicted in the 1970s (White, 1995:32) from this last piece of their ancestral land. Following this eviction, most of the ꞤKhomani San moved to Mier¹⁶ and assimilated with the surrounding communities. The ꞤKhomani San survived either through labour in the 'Coloured' community, or lived on handouts (du Plessis, 2004:4).

One particular clan of the Southern Kalahari ꞤKhomani San, stands out in this account [and is also very relevant to the land claim discussed later]. !Gam !Gaub Regopstaan Kruiper and his family lived in the Kalahari Gemsbok National Park and like others, moved to Mier in the 1970s. His son, Dawid Kruiper, describes his experience there as

¹⁶ The area surrounding Rietfontein was named Mier in 1865 and proclaimed a 'Coloured' settlement area in 1930 (White, 1995:29-30)

follows: "Then I began to work under the Basters – herding sheep and doing piece-work for little money ...We suffered there in [Mier]. But what could I do? I had no land any more. I still had to feed the children." (Kruiper quoted in White, 1995:33).

Between 1987 and 1989, this 'family' group of ǀKhomani San became the centrepiece in some commercial promotions. Their earned money was administrated by a tour operator who, in the end, only left them with R800 for their collective work (White, 1995:33). The group dispersed again until 1991, when they started working at Kagga Kamma near Ceres, a tourist resort where they were employed to do 'Bushmen work' (White, 1995:34; Crawhall, 2001:8). 'Bushmen work' entailed being showcased as relics, thereby once again portraying them as the Other. Kagga Kamma's marketing brochure had the following to say:

"Kagga Kamma ... Place of the Bushmen. An evocative name, a magical situation. Imagine yourself ...in the company of...unbelievably, several families of stone-age Bushmen ... A unique experience for visitors is the privilege to step into the world of the authentic Bushmen. Here they let you share their age old skills of hunting and fire lighting, and in the beauty of their handicrafts, dancing and story-telling."
(Quoted in White, 1995:11).

The owners of Kagga Kamma also convinced tourists that they had saved the ǀKhomani San from extinction and were now free to live their traditional life. The reality, however, was that the area, which could have been San ancestral land due to the existence of San rock art, now belonged to a private farmer. The farmer became not only the owner of the land, but also treated the ǀKhomani San working for him as his property.

The conflicting options for the ꞛKhomani San about how and where to live at the time were described by Dawid Kruiper:

“The tourists don’t know people who wear skins, and it’s a miracle for them. The day we put clothes on they will stop coming ... If I arrive at Mier I have to put clothes on to work and I get a little money. There’s a great difference between a Bushman and a Baster, but for others the difference isn’t so great: if you wear clothes you become a Baster. It’s terrible that one can have been a Bushman but now has to be a Baster.” (Quoted in White, 1995:35).

This statement clearly indicates the difficulty that Dawid Kruiper was experiencing in defining himself and how others defined him; just a change of clothes could alter the way his identity was perceived.

In 1995, the ꞛKhomani San at Kagga Kamma were introduced to human rights lawyer Roger Chennells. He explained to them, that through the political changes in South Africa, the new land laws provided the San with the opportunity to reclaim their ancestral land. The Kruiper family realised that they would have the chance to return to their land and shed the feeling of being ‘owned’ and ‘exhibited’ by the Kagga Kamma management.

The effect of the land claim process

“After 1994 we have this new democratic system...then you could actually say, you were free to say, ‘I am San’. In 2002, I found this interest to learn more about my culture, heritage and so forth. That was when I saw myself as a ꞛKhomani San.” (Festus, interviewed 18 June 2008).

certain stereotypes about themselves, the San in their claim, reiterated the opinions of the South African government. This strategic move indicates that the ǀKhomani San were well aware of using preconceived ideas about them to their advantage.

During the initial phase of the land claim, the Kruiper family, as well as the greater ǀKhomani San claimant group, felt a change in their identity. The conducive political climate began to restore the confidence of the adult ǀKhomani San in realising their 'San-ness'. According to Leandra Eiman, this awareness of 'San-ness' was also experienced by the youth, naturally for the first time:

"I went to school in Upington; I was not in the Kalahari then, during the time the Land Claim went through. But I feel from that time that I am a San. Before that time I saw myself as a 'Coloured'. After the research people came and did work on the families, our grandparents told us where we come from. From that time I understand that I am from the San community." (Eiman, interviewed 18 June 2008).

In January 1997, the first formal negotiation meeting was held with all parties present, namely the ǀKhomani San, the South African National Parks (SAN Parks), the Mier farmers and the Department of Land Affairs. The ǀKhomani San had elected a representative committee which worked with the NGOs and held meetings with the growing numbers of claimants who had become aware of the claim. By the end of 1998, the negotiations were nearing completion. The San claimed land use rights to the Kalahari Gemsbok National Park (now known as the Kgalagadi Transfrontier Park), and various farms, including part of the Mier Reserve. However, when the Mier community formally lodged its own land claim in December 1998, which overlapped with and contested the claim of the ǀKhomani San, it brought a new challenge. The ǀKhomani

San regarded themselves as part of the Mier community, and thus decided not to oppose the Mier claim. Within three months, the parties finally reached an agreement and the first phase of the land claim was celebrated at Molopo Lodge on 21st March 1999 (also attended by the then Vice President Thabo Mbeki). The second phase of the claim process commenced in 2000, and after two years of further negotiations, the complex !Ae !Hai Kalahari Heritage Park Agreement¹⁷ was reached (Chennells, 2006:2-3).

At the most basic level, the ꞤKhomani San won the land claim, which provided them with 36 000 hectares of farming land and 25 000 hectares in the now Kalahari Transfrontier Park¹⁸. The impact of this on their identity was substantial. The land claim process itself formed a group and partially constructed their identity. At the beginning of the process, the initial claimants numbered about 290 but as the process took its course, the numbers increased to an estimated 1000 people (Robins *et al*, 2001:2). Researchers have not yet reached an agreement on the figures, and at the time of writing, no confirmation could be obtained. Whatever the number, the steady increase in members has created complications as to who is a ꞤKhomani San and who is included in the land claim. One potential solution to this is that only residents of the land claim area can become members, and therefore gain from the recently won land. How this affects the ꞤKhomani San's identity as a group will be discussed in detail in the next chapter.

¹⁷ See Appendix 3 with summary of the Agreement.

¹⁸ See Appendix 2 indicating the precise figures.

Chapter 5

The complexity of the ꞤKhomani San identity

Overview

"She [Tina] grew up in Upington with her mother, while her grandmother is a diviner and all of them they were down in Kagga Kamma. And when the land claim came through, she saw Dawid [Kruiper] and them on TV. Her friends said to her: 'Oh your family are those people. Uhhhh, look at them, they are still in their 'velletjies' (traditional clothes)'. And she [Tina] said they [her 'friends'] used to go to the library and take books out and say: 'Look here is your family.' And she was mortified; she did not want to be identified with them. And then when they moved onto the land, she got to know her grandmother better, and so forth. She was one of the guides that stood up and said: 'I belong to one of the oldest groups on this planet. My grandmother was a diviner.' And she went and asked her grandmother about stories. So that was magic. She got her identity back which was not there before." (Flemming, interviewed 8 August 2008).

Tina's remarkable life journey, from denial to acknowledgement of her connectedness to the ꞤKhomani San, illustrates the complex process of identity formation which the majority of the ꞤKhomani San have come through. Tina's initially cautious approach to her identity as a ꞤKhomani San seems characteristic of many of the younger ꞤKhomani San. This is testament to the way in which the history of South Africa and the stereotyping of the San has instilled in many a fear of being the Other. At the same time, it also demonstrates the way in which some ꞤKhomani San have renounced this fear and embraced their identity. Tina not only accepted her ꞤKhomani San heritage, but

even developed a sense of pride in belonging to the indigenous people of Southern Africa.

Thinking about Tina's identity story, one is confronted with the question: what defines the identity of a group of people? Is it shaped by their culture, traditions, language, a shared history, economic position and experiences? To what extent do external forces play a role? These questions sparked my interest in researching the identity of the ꞤKhomani San. As Chapter Two has pointed out the conceptualisation of identity is difficult and broad.

The identity of the ꞤKhomani San is no exception when addressing the above-mentioned questions. A significant external identity construct can be identified when examining their name. As Chapter Three explained, ꞤKhomani as a term was initially used by European researchers, such that the San themselves were, and still are, unable to associate a meaning to their name. What made the exonym¹⁹ ꞤKhomani so interesting is the fact that the term grew into a name with meaning, and in the end was used as the overall name of the Southern Kalahari San, even though they are comprised of many groupings. This clearly shows that part of an external construct of group identity can, over time and circumstances, become the conviction of a group identity. Chapter Four also noted that the majority of ꞤKhomani San experienced substantial identity transformations due to historical circumstances. For example, being categorised as 'Coloured' during the apartheid era had a major impact on both their individual and group identity. It was during the land claim process that they began reiterating their ꞤKhomani San identity.

¹⁹ Exonym: ethnic name given by an outside group, not used by the people themselves.

The process in itself made available the preconditions to feel a connectedness and confidence of being a ꞤKhomani San through providing a common purpose.

Defining any identity is complex and difficult, however, it seems to be even more challenging in the case of the ꞤKhomani San identity. There are significant factors that make the ꞤKhomani San identity problematic to clearly define. As mentioned in the previous chapters, the ꞤKhomani San have experienced severe discrimination, stereotyping and forced transformation throughout history. Today the ethnic group of ꞤKhomani San constitutes a different group to that of the past, as it was constructed specifically for their land claim. As an ethnic group, the ꞤKhomani San also identify themselves as members of the broader San community of Southern Africa and, in a wider sense, as part of the indigenous people of the world. Belonging to these communities brings new facets to their identity, as discussed in Chapter Three. This particular set of circumstances have brought about the necessity to apply a broad set of contexts to disclose the identity of the ꞤKhomani San as a group as fully as possible.

My main aim in this chapter is to illustrate the view of the ꞤKhomani on their own identity mediated through me. Therefore the focal aspects I have chosen to examine in relation to ꞤKhomani San identity have all been derived from what the ꞤKhomani San themselves have emphasised in their interviews with me and elsewhere in the literature. These facets address, firstly, the relation of land, with all it encompasses, to the ꞤKhomani San identity; secondly, the importance of language and traditional knowledge in connection to the concept of "indigenous modernity"; and lastly, the 'split' in the community between 'traditionalists' and 'modernists'. The deliberations on the 'split' have consciously been placed in the last section of this chapter because it is pivotal to examine the other issues first as they influence the 'divide'. These three main factors

and their sub-issues will be discussed in the context of how the ꞛKhomani San have dealt with them. Due to the sometimes parallel and complex occurrence of events that influenced the identity formation of the ꞛKhomani San, the structure of my writing might be intertwined at times. Furthermore, it is imperative to bear in mind that identity is fluid and varying and therefore the thesis can only provide a glimpse into the current ꞛKhomani San identity.

The ꞛKhomani San identity in relation to land

The ꞛKhomani San's historical experiences still resonate with their complex present and, combined with their recent social experiences, have forged a multifaceted identity. As mentioned in Chapter Three, the land claim process was the defining experience which brought the ꞛKhomani people together as the group we know today. Although land played a significant role for many South Africans after the first democratic elections in 1994, for the ꞛKhomani, as San, land means more than a way to sustain a livelihood. Land is associated with healing for instance and employed to teach the uses of traditional knowledge.

"...Much of the rhetoric surrounding land rights invokes the ontological premise that what distinguishes indigenous peoples from the masses of the world's impoverished marginalized minorities is a unique (often spiritual) relationship with the land. For example, in a speech celebrating the ꞛKhomani victory, the South African Minister of Agriculture and Land Affairs (Hon. Derek Hanekom) stated: 'We are here celebrating more than just the settlement of a land claim: we are here celebrating the rebirth of the ꞛKhomani nation' (cited in Brörmann, 1999: 43)....However, if the formerly landless ꞛKhomani nation is being 'reborn', if their cultural identity is being 'given back', then to whom were land rights given, if not the cultural community of the ꞛKhomani San?" (Sylvain, 2003:113).

On the one hand, this statement made by social anthropologist Renée Sylvain (2003) raises an important question about how the †Khomani San are often placed in certain categories regarding their perceived 'natural' and/or 'spiritual' connectedness to their ancestral land. On the other hand, one has to realise that some labels repeatedly attached to the San correspond in fact with actuality.

Both the analysis of my interviews with the †Khomani San and the review of literature has clearly underscored the viewpoint that land is one of the most important factors in an individual †Khomani San's life and plays a significant role for the group as a whole. Even though Sylvain (2003) is correct to point out the inconsistencies in this rhetoric, the †Khomani, as the collective that exists at present, could have not been called a 'cultural community' before the land claim. As the historical events in some individual †Khomani San's lives have shown, they only became aware of their 'San-ness' and '†Khomani-ness' after coming through the process that led to successfully claiming the land. The fact that the initial claimants only numbered about 300 people, while today the community has grown to about 1000 members, clearly demonstrates that the land stirred up expectations and hopes.

Roger Chennells, who advised the †Khomani San throughout the land claim's negotiations, emphasised the challenges of this complex learning process as follows:

"What made this [the land claim] process uniquely challenging was the fact that the community had dispersed to the point that no central coherence remained, and the elected representatives had to lead this re-constituted and 'virtual' community without the benefit of past policies or practices. Many of the normal lessons of democracy had to be learned, and in the absence of a functioning 'tribal council' or other authoritative body, legislation required the San leaders to operate in

accordance with received western notions of 'representative democracy.'" (Chennells, 2002:2).

In order to understand the identity formation process of the †Khomani San, from that of a scattered, dispersed people to a place of identifying themselves as a group, one has to comprehend the land claim process and its consequences on the †Khomani San. While most †Khomani San expressed a deep appreciation for obtaining the land, in almost the same breath they pointed out that their expectations of using the land in a way that demonstrated their connectedness to it had not been fulfilled. Numerous interviewees were quite outspoken about the causes for their shattered dreams and further marginalisation as a group from wider society. Baba Festus, for example, stated:

"It is a very big achievement for us to be able to get our land back, which we have been living on and which we were chased away from, by white or 'Coloured' farmers, whatever the case might have been. They just chased us away! So it was a big achievement for us to be able to gain our land back but I think there is still a lot of responsibility for the government to be able to make it fruitful because they just give us these big hectares of land. They [government] need to do a lot of infrastructure and development-orientated things so that we can make use of it. Because there is no more game, even to hunt. Because we are hunter-gatherers, you know, there is not really any bush food to gather. So we have this land but it's actually an empty land!" (Festus, interviewed 18 June 2008).

One establishes from the above statement of this young professional, that land is a significant asset for the †Khomani San, not only in and of itself, but particularly when linked to the possibility of a hunter-gatherer lifestyle. This is clearly not possible since the land does not have any game and bush food.

After the land had been returned to the †Khomani San, the conditions of the agreement became reality. The details will not be listed here in full, but the most important ones were emphasised by the †Khomani interviewees. One mentioned condition was that the land had to be divided into fifty percent traditionally used land and fifty percent for other usage. Another important clause was that a Communal Property Association (CPA) had to be established to take control of the finances, and to decide on who could register as a †Khomani San and would be entitled to use the land. These clauses are important to the identity formation of the †Khomani San because they have a major effect on their livelihoods. Most interviewees made statements about the mismanagement of the clauses and the consequent suffering this has caused. Instead of the expected advantages land ownership presented, the majority of †Khomani San experienced further economic hardships, which have contributed to their continued marginalisation in society. Contrary to Baba Festus' reasoning, Andries Steenkamp, a †Khomani San elder²⁰ living in the Kalahari, believes that the traditional way of using the land will not lead to economic benefits: "Later on [after the land claim was finalised] I check [the rules] and you do tracking, you hunt and you can go for medicine on three farms, for what. [*Voice volume increased*] That is not good. You cannot make money there." (Steenkamp, interviewed 11 August 2008).

Nannette Flemming, a development practitioner, who has been working in the Kalahari for several years, added another concern: "2002...the CPA gets put under administration of Land Affairs. Land Affairs don't do their job. They let two more CPAs go past, one more corrupt than the other. This farm here, Erin, had 275 000 Rands worth of game on, it's got nothing [now]. There was no vision. No business plan for each of the farms ever

²⁰ The term 'elder', in the †Khomani San community, does not necessarily refer to the age of a person but rather to their extensive knowledge and ability to provide advice.

written.” (Flemming, interviewed 8 August 2008). These obstacles have had severe impacts on all members of the †Khomani San claimant group, as Baba Festus noted: “There are various problems. There is the case of corruption, the case of selfishness, there is the case of bribery, there is a case of alcoholism; these are all the problems that we face.” (Festus, interviewed 18 June 2008). André Vaalbooi, an engaged community member, echoed Baba Festus’ sentiments:

“It’s very, very hard to live there [in the Kalahari]. They drink a lot because of it. And every time you ask them: ‘Why do you drink so much?’ they say: ‘There is no job, so what am I to do?’ So I think the community is back[wards]. The government give you land, but there are no options. Okay, there is some money, but I think that money can’t do all the things. You know if you give me the land without tools, what can I do?” (Vaalbooi, interviewed 16 November 2008).

From these statements, one can clearly see that there was a definite lack of foresight by all parties involved on the issues that could arise post-settlement. The †Khomani San believed that the newly acquired land would help them develop economically, no matter what kind of land use was practiced. Overall, they all felt the land would be able to ease their economic and social hardships. However, as this has not occurred, the †Khomani San feel that more should have been done from all sides, government and NGOs particularly.

Problems also arose in connection to the regained land in the Kgalagadi Transfrontier Park. Since the San had been forcibly removed from the then National Gemsbok Park as a direct result of racist legislation during the apartheid era, the land allocated to them in 1999 was of immense significance. It is hailed as their ancestral land and was the initial starting point for the land claim. As a Transfrontier Park, it encompasses land in two

countries, namely Botswana and South Africa, shares a border gate with Namibia, and thus has strict rules in connection to border crossings and handling of the land. Concerns have been voiced that the ǀKhomani San need to understand the conservancy responsibility that accompanies owning fractions of land that are part of a wider entity which is managed by Park officials. "The ǀKhomani San need to be capacitated to realise their full responsibility. It is not just about them using the land or getting their land back; they are now part of something big." (Kgalagadi Transfrontier Park employee, interviewed 11 August 2008).

For the ǀKhomani San, the ownership of even a fraction of the Park has great significance, as a quote by Ouma |Una (in Chennells, 2003:278) illustrates: "Our history is a trail of blood, which has been hidden deeply under the Kalahari red sand. If we open up the sand, as we are doing now, we will see that this trail leads right back into the middle of the Park, where our parents and their parents were born and died." Ouma |Una, an 82 year old woman and N|u speaker, interprets the regaining of the ancestral land as a crucial opportunity for tracing tragic historical events. It seems that she regards the "open[ing] up [of] the sand" in the Park as a positive way of dealing with, and familiarising the younger generations with, the ǀKhomani San's recent history.

The younger generation has also already attached value to the land in the Park. Vinkie van der Westhuizen, a young woman working for a local NGO, shared these sentiments with me: "I think it's good they got the land in the Park because the elders can go back. And we can go to the Park and they [elders] can be a 'voorbeeld' (role model). Then they can take us to the Park and give an example on how they lived in the earlier days. So we can know how to live when we go to the Park." (van der Westhuizen, interviewed 9 August 2008). In Vinkie van der Westhuizen's view, the Park provides opportunities for

the younger generation to be educated about traditional practices by the elders. The Park is obviously associated with traditional knowledge which is appreciated by this young professional ꞤKhomani San woman.

As the Park is regarded as having both symbolic and practical value in the ꞤKhomani San's culture and heritage, it plays – from their own perspective and that of outsiders - an integral part in their identity formation. Of the various San groups in Southern Africa, the ꞤKhomani San are the first to have obtained land in a national park. In view of the fact that the Park was particularly important to them and that this gained outside recognition, they also obtained rights to the wider Park. For example, the ꞤKhomani San are permitted to access the Park through their own gate, sleep in the Park if they choose, and can hunt and gather. In the combined zone, they are also permitted to establish tourist ventures.²¹ "... They [the rights] are basically ꞤKhomani San sustainable use resource protocols. Because the Mier [community] did not get any, they have no rights to resource use. Because it's part of the ꞤKhomani San culture they were given those rights. So it's a joint venture between SAN Parks²² and the ꞤKhomani San." (Kgalagadi Transfrontier Park employee, interviewed 11 August 2008). Even though the attainment of land in the Park is considered a huge step forward by all parties, Park officials are cautious about how these new rights will be exercised. As a Park employee stated:

"We are fine with what we have to do: getting their rights to the point where they can actually be implemented within the Park. We would obviously just be concerned that it would have to be sustainable, the resource use would be sustainable and that it would not have a negative effect on other tourists, who have

²¹ For further details on the rights entailed in the Agreement please see the summary in Appendix 3.

²² SAN Parks stands for South African National Parks

always seen the Park as a wilderness area. But that's what we work on, that is why we work so closely together." (Kgalagadi Transfrontier Park employee, interviewed 11 August 2008).

Throughout the interviews with the ǀKhomani San, it became apparent that the land claim process has been the cornerstone of the ǀKhomani San's identity formation. It has provided them with a rallying point around which their community and, to a point, their identity, has been formed. However, the process of this formation was not an effortless one. Intriguingly, the land claim process also brought about a controversial "double bind" (Chennells, 2008). On the one hand, the ǀKhomani San desired to regain their land in order to redevelop their culture as a group; but on the other hand, the concept of land ownership was almost an alien one. The ǀKhomani San do not speak of ownership of the land – rather, they feel that they can use it but will never 'own' it. Roger Chennells explained this "double bind" when discussing the influence of 'modernity' on the community:

"You need to even look at modernity in this way. They would have never had ownership of the land, because their culture would have been that they belonged to the land. So they had to use a modern terminology to actually say: 'We belong to the land therefore the land belongs to us.' So they almost had to turn it around legally. Your culture dies if you don't have your land but if you are given ownership of the land you now become a 'westerner' to manage it. So there is an interesting double bind there." (Chennells, interviewed 3 July 2008).

The "double bind's" main irony is that without the land, the ǀKhomani San cannot build up their traditional way of life, but in order to do this, they have to relinquish their traditional understanding of the land. They can no longer view land as just something to

be used and respected, but never owned because today they live in a system where usage of land always encompasses ownership. Therefore, in order to be able to live a life with traditional practices, they need to embrace the 'modern' legal system.

Andries Steenkamp, reiterated this notion when interviewed:

"He [the ǀKhomani San]²³ has never managed the land; he has used it only. That was the claim to the government; not as owners but as users. I use the land I do not own it. I don't manage it. So that is a new thing for me and in the people there are none that can manage it now, the only man who could do it, he is bright and wise, but he can not read and write. That was Vetpiet²⁴, but he is dead. There is no other one that can do it. So the people are still waiting." (Steenkamp, interviewed 11 August 2008).

At a later stage of the interview, he returned to this point, explaining that:

"In the old days, the San use the land where he stay; live off the land. Use, not own and manage the land. See the San has seen the land where he stay as his own, but he cannot manage it, because when you manage the land you must do many, many things. You must know what you must do. I know what I can do. I can hunt and I can make a life in the bush. But I can not manage like these six farms." (Steenkamp, interviewed 11 August 2008).

Overall, this discussion has shown that land is a significant part of the ǀKhomani San identity. For one, it has been an important facet in their wider cultural identity as San, as

²³ Throughout the interview Andries Steenkamp referred to both the ǀKhomani San and the government as 'he'.

²⁴ Late Vetpiet Kleinman was considered a master tracker and was mentioned positively numerous times in the interviews.

the above-mentioned testimonies around land as a basis for traditional practices illustrate. Secondly, the land claim process itself signalled to the ꞤKhomani San new opportunities for land use. The paradox which the land claim process laid bare appeared repeatedly while trying to understand the identity formation of the ꞤKhomani San. They have been confronted with the dilemma of having to adopt so-called 'modern' ways to reinstate their 'traditional' practices. The ꞤKhomani San are trying to adapt to new circumstances while still maintaining some of their own traditions which creates them "indigenous modernities". Some scholars (Comaroffs, 2008; Robins, 2001/2003; Sahlins 1999) also refer to this as the "hybridisation of identity".

Identity formation through traditional knowledge and language

The dichotomy of modern versus traditional has long been undermined, and a more hybrid understanding of reality has emerged. This involves consciously commodifying San culture by reproducing what the general public believes to be authentically 'San'. As Robins (2001:343) puts it: "Despite the efforts of outsiders, and the San themselves, to create the myth of the 'pure bushman', there is no escape from the hybrid condition that characterises the everyday social realities of the San."

An example of this conscious 'self-commodification' is some ꞤKhomani San's adoption of traditional loincloths to attract the attention of tourists who pass by and might buy their crafts. The ꞤKhomani San are acutely aware that without dressing in their traditional attire, the tourists would not even stop, as the loincloth is perceived as one of the attributes that defines them as San for the general public. André Vaalbooi, a ꞤKhomani San who has been newly appointed as a trainee guide at !Kwa ttu, explained this further:

"It's life for them, because they stand there the whole day by the road with these clothes to try and sell something, jewellery. [*He agrees that tourists are initially attracted by the traditional clothes and then often buy crafts*]. Because when they come here [to !Khwa ttu] they ask us: 'Why are you not wearing these clothes?' Then I must explain why we do not do that anymore, because they see that in the Kalahari and in books." (Vaalbooi, interviewed 16 November 2008).

This quote recalls the experiences of the ǀKhomani San when they worked at the tourist resort, Kagga Kamma. As pointed out in Chapter Four, Dawid Kruiper felt similarly to André Vaalbooi when analysing the situation in the southern Kalahari - that traditional clothes define 'San-ness', for the tourist. Later in the interview, Vaalbooi recalled a discussion he had with his son:

"My little boy, I like him much, and I tell him all the time: 'You must start learning these things [traditional knowledge]. You must not look and laugh at that. No, it's your culture, it's your tradition.' The children laugh; they say 'my parents don't wear these clothes'. When they see other people with these clothes, they call those people: 'Hey Bushmen!' And I ask my son, when he does that: 'Why do you call them Bushmen, you are also a Bushman!'" (Vaalbooi, interviewed 16 November 2008).

Vaalbooi's son has clearly internalised the 'tourist' notion that a 'Bushmen' is someone in traditional clothes and that he does not identify with being a 'Bushmen'. This comment also illustrates the various positions different San generations have towards their traditions. That the young child sees the traditional clothes in a negative light, and does not identify himself with them, demonstrates his detachment from the 'old ways'. It also reiterates the stereotypical tourist view that without traditional clothes, one cannot be a

'real' San. However, the father's response shows that his generation has been able to realise that clothing does not make one a San and one should be proud of being a San rather than ridiculing it.

At the same time, as loincloths have become a symbolism of 'San-ness', so has the traditional knowledge of the San been 'modernised'. Within their 'indigenous modernit[y]', the ǀKhomani San have 'sold' some of their knowledge to the international economic community to earn an income. One case in point is the commercialisation of San 'Hoodia' knowledge. The ǀKhomani San, in collaboration with other San groups, NGOs and their legal advisor, launched negotiations with the South African Council for Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR) in 2001. This was in response to the CSIR patenting a component of the Hoodia succulent, which acts as an appetite suppressant, and 'down-licens[ing]' the rights 'to commercially exploit the patent' to international companies (WIMSA, 2004:54). The San had used the Hoodia plant as an appetite suppressant and energizer for centuries, but according to the CSIR, the San were 'extinct' and therefore could not be included in the agreements (Evans, 2003:14). The newly formed South African San Council (SASC), in which the ǀKhomani San were an equal partner, led the extensive and complicated negotiations with the CSIR. In 2003, these led to a benefit-sharing agreement, which stated that: The CSIR will pay the San 8% of all the milestone payments it receives from its licensee, UK-based Phytopharm; the CSIR will pay the San 6% of all royalties that CSIR itself receives once the drug is commercially available; and the income will be paid into the Hoodia Benefit-Sharing Trust, which was established jointly by the CSIR and the SASC. (WIMSA, 2004:54).

The ꞤKhomani San, along with other San groups, had high hopes of deriving monetary benefits from their traditional knowledge and utilising these for development in their communities. Regrettably, in November 2008, Unilever (a giant multinational company and a sub-license) cancelled the agreement, which means that the San will not gain income from the Hoodia plant in the near future (Hirschler, 2008). For the San of Southern Africa, this is a crushing development. However, the negotiation process raised awareness among the ꞤKhomani San of the value of their traditional knowledge.²⁵ Some scholars have argued that not only was the financial potential of Hoodia important to the San, and especially the ꞤKhomani San, but that the entire 'Hoodia process', together with the land claim, marked the beginnings of an amalgamated entity. John and Jean Comaroff (2008: 84) elaborate on this:

“Having been violently cast out of the social ecology which has long framed their shared existence, ‘they’ did not evince much of a coherent collective identity;... But the assertion of intellectual property – coupled significantly with the land claim that occurred in tandem with it – had the effect of sedimenting a San ‘identity’.”

The commodification of traditional knowledge has been labelled “Ethnicity Inc” by the Comaroffs (2008), affirming this notion of the “double bind” and “indigenous modernities” in relation to the ꞤKhomani San. The San used their traditional knowledge through a modern means of negotiation to pursue an important step in their development. Nonetheless, the outcome of the negotiation also highlights the prevailing dominance of ‘western’ discourse. San knowledge about the Hoodia could only bring them financial gain after it was translated into scientific language. The battle was fought by means of

²⁵ This became evident in the speech of the chairperson of the WIMSA board Kxao Moses ꞤOma at the benefit-sharing agreement celebrations between CSIR and SASC. The speech was titled “Celebrating the fruits of San traditional knowledge” and pointed out “the need to protect and control San intellectual property.” (WIMSA 2003: 41)

'lawfare'— a process alien to the ꞤKhomani culture, just like land ownership. This "...demonstrate[s] that Ethnicity, Inc. rests on the dialectic between the incorporation of identity, of its commodification by taking visible capital value, and the commodification of culture." (Comaroff & Comaroff, 2008:88).

In contrast to this commodification of their traditional knowledge, the ꞤKhomani are also very interested in sharing their knowledge amongst themselves. In December 2001, Nigel Crawhall conducted a Cultural Audit on the ꞤKhomani San for SASI²⁶ in cooperation with UNESCO²⁷ in the Southern Kalahari with the ꞤKhomani San. The audit came out of a process known as 'Cultural Resource Audit and Management', which had been used by other indigenous groups around the world to accumulate cultural knowledge (Crawhall, 2001:10). When the process began, it became clear that unlike other indigenous groups, the ꞤKhomani San were not a stable community. Therefore, the audit was adjusted to suit the specificities of the ꞤKhomani San. One of the audit's results was to bring the community together.

"Any notion that such a fractured 'community' can create collective management systems to handle their intangible heritage is hopelessly at odds with reality. In case of the ꞤKhomani San, the land claim provided a strategically important focal point for collective action; otherwise there was only a weak sense of identity and community holding the descendants together." (Crawhall, 2001:10).

Given that the ꞤKhomani San were such a fractured group the audit had an immense purpose. The main focus of the audit was to ensure that valuable cultural knowledge was not lost and could be transmitted to the youth. It was carried out by interviewing the

²⁶ SASI stands for South African San Institute, which is a support organisation for the San communities in South Africa.

²⁷ UNESCO stands for United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation.

elders of the ǀKhomani San to gather information on their knowledge relating to land, culture, history and language. The elders were asked to recount their life stories in order to be able to assess clan or family relationships. Consequently, through the process, families were reunited and a shared connectedness emerged (Chennells, 2003:277). The audit did not only record essential data but also created an awareness amongst the ǀKhomani San that they shared characteristics such as similar life stories, knowledge about medicinal and edible plants, as well as traditional stories and tracking skills. These common aspects of their identity as ǀKhomani San were not constructed or invented by external forces, but were inherited from the elders of their own people.

As Oupa Abraham, a ǀKhomani San elder visiting !Khwa ttu for three months, explained:

“We came to visit our grandchild and later on we got the job to help out at the village [replica traditional village]. To explain how we lived in the old days and [now] we earn money. It is very nice to share our life [knowledge] with the other people [!Khwa ttu staff members and visitors] like what we used to eat, the tsamma melon. Tsamma was used in many types of food for the San people. We take the sweet ones and threw the bitter ones away. We cook and cook them and later on it changes and you also can make coffee and beer. We also looked for the small ones and we took the seed out and we used it in the maize meal.” (Ouma Magriet and Oupa Abraham Malgas, interviewed 17 October 2008).

Just as Oupa Abraham enjoyed recalling the several uses of the tsamma melon, so do other elders in the ǀKhomani San community share their knowledge with the younger generation. The elders play a principal role in transmitting cultural and traditional knowledge and some of the younger ǀKhomani San generation have realised the immense value attached to receiving such knowledge. The interviewees, seven years

after the completion of the Cultural Audit, reiterated that the knowledge of the elders needs to be recorded and learned by the youth:

“I see the future for us young people that we can learn things from our elders, because they are not going to live longer, they are dying and the history and everything, the knowledge will die with them. So, we must learn their things and then we can give it to our generation so that the history and knowledge does not get lost. The young people must stand together and do these things because our people were the first people.” (van der Westhuizen. interviewed 9 August 2008).

Annetta Bok, another young ǀKhomani San woman, added to this: “You know, if I do things I don’t exclude the elders, because they are the ones that have all this knowledge. And I’m really learning a lot from them.” (Bok, interviewed 7 August 2008). These young professionals’ insights and concerns clearly demonstrate the significance they attach to both the role of the elders in the ǀKhomani San group, and traditional knowledge as part of their culture. The obligation ‘that the history and knowledge does not get lost’ seems to bind some members of the formally educated younger generation with the traditionally educated elders.

One project that utilises the knowledge of the elders and teaches the ǀKhomani San youth in the southern Kalahari is the ǀUruke tracker training. This community project, where elders train San youth in tracking and conservation, was set up in 2004 in collaboration with SASI, Comic Relief and Open Channels²⁸. Sadly, since then, the initiator and master tracker Karel ‘Vetpiet’ Kleinman passed away. He was hailed as the most experienced tracker among the ǀKhomani San, having grown up in the Park and learned from elders such as Regopstaan and Makaib Kruiper. When choosing the name

²⁸ Comic Relief and Open Channels are donor agencies based in the United Kingdom.

||Uruke, meaning 'a path used by both animals and trackers or the narrow path of the hunter', Vetpiet was acutely aware of its significance. As the pamphlet advertising the ||Uruke project reads:

"There are two types of pathways across the Kalahari: the obvious footpath made by people, and the subtle, sometimes invisible tracks of the wild animals – ||Uruke. The hunter must always be alert for signs in the sand; he or she chooses the difficult path, the path of learning, the path of ancestors, the path less travelled." (SASI, 2004).

In 2007, the ||Uruke project organised numerous activities, which included weekly bushwalks with children; a tracking competition on youth day; a biodiversity training workshop for guides, trackers and elders; and a week-long heritage workshop in the Kgalagadi Transfrontier Park. At the workshop, contemporary maps were employed by the guides to obtain additional information from the elders. "This was an emotional time for the elders and the guides were moved by the wealth of knowledge elders could still convey regarding their traditional life, from before the Park was proclaimed." (KFO, 2007:75). The project's aim - to bring together young and old through an exchange of valuable knowledge - has certainly been achieved. More importantly, however, the ||Uruke tracking project has also instilled a sense of a common identity among the ‡Khomani San. As the elders have been requested to transmit their traditional knowledge, they have become the custodians of their culture. By consciously receiving this knowledge, the youth have realised the significance of belonging to the ‡Khomani San people.

Just as transmission of traditional knowledge to the younger generation is regarded as vital by both ‡Khomani San and outsiders, so is the transmission of the ‡Khomani San

language, N|u. Language is one of the most profound aspects of group identities as it binds individuals to each other through sharing common idioms when expressing emotions, concepts and thoughts. Particularly in the South African context, with its eleven official languages, the †Khomani San would like to have their own form of linguistic recognition. Certain traditional †Khomani San stories only illustrate their full meaning when told in N|u. Traditional knowledge is also often conveyed through the means of stories, and thus better understood when shared in N|u. Therefore, it is extremely distressing that only a handful of †Khomani San people can still speak N|u. This is another obstacle to the group identity as the language can not act as a unifying attribute.

As Chapter Four outlined, the N|u language was almost completely lost. The apartheid regime not only categorised the †Khomani San as 'Coloured', but also forbade them from speaking their own language. As André remembers, "My mom can speak that language [N|u] but that time they were on a farm and the white men don't want that language. It was only Afrikaans, that's it." (Vaalbooi, interviewed 16 November 2008). The language aspect, once again, demonstrates that the process of identity formation has to be contextualised historically in order to be properly understood. The apartheid era severely reduced the number of people that could speak N|u. "Owing to dispossession and diaspora, almost all the San ceased to use their ancestral language and switched to Afrikaans and Nama, the *lingua franca* of the southern Kalahari." (Crawhall, 2001:8). Economic, social and cultural change often influences the usage of a language or can even make it redundant. In the case of the †Khomani San, their history is filled with these changes. As the †Khomani San were evicted from their land, their livelihoods changed drastically - they either became farm workers or moved to urban settlements. In these altered circumstances, new geographical settings and further

scattering, the necessity, relevance and freedom to speak their language decreased (Crawhall, 2004:71).

Today, in a democratic South Africa, the N|u language is regaining some significance. The ꞛKhomani San, various NGOs and the government of South Africa have placed emphasis on documenting and teaching the language (KFO, 2006:82). The Cultural Audit, discussed earlier, identified the revival of this language as one of the most pressing issues for the ꞛKhomani San. The audit identified that the

“death of the N|u language cuts people off from: Their ancestral land; their own history (original rights, place names, occupation, history); their ancestral epistemology and taxonomies (including classificatory systems for the natural world); technologies (e.g. medicinal plant uses) and information (e.g. natural resource management).” (Crawhall, 2001:14).

Some of the elders of the ꞛKhomani San community reiterated these findings and took them even further by connecting the past with the future: “Our biggest and most important need is education. We want to learn our mother tongue, to give power to our children and to let our grandchildren still remember our language and identify with our traditions. Petrus Vaalbooi, Rietfontein, South Africa [ꞛKhomani]” (quoted in Le Roux & White, 2004:52).

One of the ways in which the N|u language has been revived was through the efforts of Ouma |Una. She worked as a teacher of the N|u language for school and crèche children. The crèche children are still taught by Ouma |Una, but the pupils at the school are once again only learning English and Afrikaans. “Like Ouma |Una, she is involved in the crèche and they teach the children the language. But I think there is a problem with

the department of education, who was sponsoring the program and now it is lost. She even did it at school. Ouma is doing a favour now for them but only for the crèche. She does not go to schools anymore.” (Vaalbooi, interviewed 16 November 2008). In the years after the land claim the Department of Culture in the Northern Cape made funding available for tasks such as fieldwork to assist the linguistic work (Le Roux, 1999:28). Today, however, financial support has ceased. According to Levi Namaseb, one of the linguists involved in the recording of the N|u language, sufficient entries for a dictionary have been compiled and the options for publication are currently being explored (Namaseb, personal communication 11 November 2008).

Viewing ꞤKhomani San identity in the context of “indigenous modernities”, also applies with regard to the N|u language. The language is undoubtedly of traditional importance to the ꞤKhomani San and has been kept alive purely by oral tradition. However, the ꞤKhomani San have realised the need to develop an orthography for their language so that it can also be written down and published in a dictionary. As Dawid Kruiper clearly voices:

“Ja, the school is the thing that takes our culture away from us. But these children of ours, they have to go. They have to go through that so they can come back and write down this culture, before it’s all lost. That’s all we can do. Dawid Kruiper, Welkom, southern Kalahari. [ꞤKhomani]” (quoted in Le Roux & White, 2004:66).

Once again the ꞤKhomani San, with the assistance of trained linguists, are applying modern means to keep their original language alive. Although the efforts have already begun to bear fruit, one should keep in mind the reasons why a language disappears in the first place. According to socio- linguist Nigel Crawhall (2004:70), “small numbers, low density, extreme prejudice from the dominant group, erosion of self-respect are all likely

factors that put certain languages at risk.” If one relates this statement to the situation of the ǀKhomani San, these factors are evident in both their past and present.

The issue of the “erosion of self-respect” (Crawhall, 2004:70) does not merely apply to the loss of language, but also to the ǀKhomani San’s wider identity. In my conversations with members of the ǀKhomani San, almost all interviewees mentioned such an “erosion of self-respect” in the community. The young professionals particularly felt that there is a general sense of apathy and low self-esteem in the community. In the interviewees’ opinions, the lack of positive role models and job opportunities have had a direct impact on the ǀKhomani San youth specifically. An experienced and vocal community member asserted that:

“[i]n every community there is a role model and the youth look to this guy or woman. They take from this role model what they would like to do. But in this community the leadership is very poor, so the youth must be very poor. The leadership must stand up and do things right, then the youth will show. Because, the youth is going down because, for nine years the leadership can not bring any development to the community. That is not good.” (Steenkamp, interviewed 11 August 2008).

Here, Andries Steenkamp unmistakably voices his concern that the majority of the ǀKhomani San youth need the encouragement of a stronger leadership. Analysing the interviews, a variety of attitudes to the ǀKhomani San identity can be tracked across different age groups. Noticeably, the younger generation – teenagers and children – have a very different understanding of their identity to that of the middle-aged people and the elders. Throughout the interviews, a common thread within these groups was evident. The elders regarded themselves, and were seen by other generations, as the

custodians of traditional knowledge. This position provides them with confidence in their identity. The middle-aged group had begun perceiving themselves as †Khomani San after their experiences during apartheid. The more they became familiar with their culture, the closer they felt to their †Khomani San identity. The young generation were confronted with conflicting inputs, as they identify with the 'modern' world and have not grasped the importance of their †Khomani 'San-ness' which their parents and others would like to instil in them. On the contrary, some children had attempted to ridicule the elders. These contrasting perceptions of their identity confirms the complexity of the †Khomani San identity as a group. The reasons for these different generational attitudes can be explained through both different experiences of history as well as people's different perceptions of more recent and contemporary events.

The often mentioned lack of initiative to better their livelihoods and take responsibility reveals that the †Khomani San community still has many obstacles to overcome. A Park employee, who has been in close contact with the community analysed this situation poignantly:

"I mean, obviously all the damage done during the apartheid process has brought about either a conscious or an unconscious state of: 'I'm not responsible for anything, I'm not even responsible for my own life.' You know that kind of attitude. And I think it's going to [*makes the sound of a small bomb exploding*]. It needs to be addressed from a professional point of view as well I think. You know we get so many researchers in here and I keep asking the question: 'Why don't we ever get psychologists? Why don't we get people who work on the social aspects?' Because that is where I think we really, really need help and the communities need help. They need to be de-traumatised or whatever, to get rid of all of that baggage and know: 'I'm a person, in my own right, and I'm responsible for myself, I'm

responsible for my family, I'm responsible for my children and it depends on me to go forward. And I am a South African citizen and I have every right that anybody else has'." (Kgalagadi Transfrontier Park employee, interviewed 11 August 2008).

This engaged Park employee has recognised that even though the ǀKhomani San have regained their ancestral land, the underlying issues of their past need to be addressed in order to strengthen their identities as individuals, community members and as citizens. Through my research and interviews in the Kalahari, I gained insight into one of the real complexities related to ǀKhomani San identity – that of the so-called 'split' in the community.

Identity formation through the 'split' in the ǀKhomani San community

A central theme running through the narratives of the ǀKhomani San informants is the discussion of a 'split' in the community. The reasons cited are manifold, and vary depending on whose perspective is influencing the narrative. The ǀKhomani San themselves present conflicting views on the causes of, and solutions for, the 'split'. Scholars have also been captivated by the significance of this divide and examined it from various angles. My reasons for discussing this critical factor of the ǀKhomani San identity only at the end of this chapter are motivated by my wish to examine all the involved issues first. Various interpretations of the 'split' in the ǀKhomani San community between 'traditionalists' and 'westerners or modernists'²⁹ exist. Some literature even attributes it to the perceived tension between Petrus Vaalbooi (the first elected leader of the first CPA) and Dawid Kruiper (the traditional leader of the ǀKhomani San). Both the Kruiper and Vaalbooi families belong to the original claimant group. In my interview with

²⁹ The literature and the San themselves use both, 'modernists', and 'westerners' when discussing the 'split'. I have opted to use 'modernists'.

Andries Steenkamp, he refuted the tension between the families: “[Petrus Vaalbooi] is my family. That is now Vaalbooi against Kruiper. [*I point out that this is what the literature speaks of*] But that is not true. The father of Petrus is a cousin of Dawid so I don’t understand why they say that. It was not so, people are saying that and last week they were in Upington together, there is no problem.” (Steenkamp, interviewed 11 August 2008).

The categorisation of the ǀKhomani San into ‘traditionalists’ and ‘modernists’ is based firstly on the different approaches to land use the community has towards their regained land. The ‘traditionalists’ believe the farm land should be utilised only for hunting-gathering and tourist ventures, whereas the ‘modernists’ plan to cultivate the land and introduce livestock (Chennells, 2006:19). Even though the land claim agreement clearly states that the six farms should be divided on a 50/ 50 scale according to different land usages, the dilapidated state of the farms has ignited quarrels as to which of the two groups should manage which farm.

The ‘split’ is not restricted only to land usage, but also to representation and power over resources (Chennells, 2002:2). Robins (2003:278) elaborates: “This ‘war on representation’ draws on genealogies, livelihood strategies (hunting-gathering versus stock farming), possession of ‘indigenous bush knowledge’, the ability to speak a San language, as well as essentialist conceptions of a San bodily vernacular – the need to look like a ‘proper bushman’.” These imposed criteria have been internalised to a degree by the ǀKhomani San, and have fuelled the ‘split’ even further. Here the construct of their identity is visible. For example, one of the generalised characteristics attached to the ‘traditionalist’ is that they are less formally educated than the ‘modernists’. This has

meant that the 'modernists' are usually invited to attend official meetings, to the perceived exclusion of the 'traditionalists' (Chennells, 2002:2).

These labels, 'traditionalist' and 'modernist', do not fare well with the San themselves - they are more interested in exploring the causes of, and the solutions for, the divide. As Annetta Bok recalls:

"There are problems, yes. The other thing is, you see, that when the land claim was started, Oom Dawid and his actually small family, they asked Roger Chennells and Kate Andrews³⁰ to help them with the land claim. But then the government said 'we can't just give land to a family. We need to give land to a community'. And what happened is that SASI did research on the people because they said 'well let's do research and then try to get the community together.' So now, Oom Dawid and his family feel that all these people that came, it was fine when we got the land claim in 1999, because everyone was happy that the community got land from the government, but now other outsiders come. And then they tell Oom Dawid to throw out these other people. That's why there is conflict still in the community. Because some people do not come with a good heart, they come with a bad heart. People are thinking of themselves, not other people." (Bok, interviewed 7 August 2008).

All the interviewees repeated this fact that the land claim could not have been won if the Kruiper family had been the only claimant. Therefore, other \ddot{a} Khomani San were identified until a group of approximately 290 claimants was brought together. These original claimants would have fitted into either or both of the categories 'traditionalist' and 'modernist' - no obvious 'split' had occurred yet. After the land claim was finalised, the claimant group grew until it reached about 1000 members. What Annetta Bok pointed

³⁰ A musician that had met the Kruiper family at the Kagga Kamma tourist resort.

out earlier was that some of these new members were opportunist and therefore did not help in making the community stable. The CPA was responsible for registering the new claimants by assessing their genealogy. At the start of this process, no immediate 'split' occurred but when irregularities appeared, and the CPA was accused of corruption, the community fell into disarray. It was at this point that the conflict began. It became apparent that the 'traditionalists' felt that their interests were not sufficiently protected (Chennells, 2002:2).

There is also widespread agreement in the ǀKhomani San community, as well as in the academic literature that the 'split' was fostered primarily by the involvement of NGOs and the South African government. This sentiment is shared by the San whom I interviewed, as André Vaalbooi and Andries Steenkamp express below:

"The government also do [*sic.*] it like this. When there are meetings, they do it like this, the one in the morning with the traditional people, and one in the afternoon with the western people. And there is very, very much trouble about it. Have you heard of the technical people³¹? I think it's them, the traditional technical people, they do it and I think this is where this problem started." (Vaalbooi, interviewed 16 November 2008).

"I said to them [two NGO workers]: 'I don't understand what you are doing. If you say you are working with the community you work with all of us. As you say you work with Dawid Kruijer then I understand. And if you work with Dawid then you must know he is a ǀKhomani San. He is from this community. You can not come

³¹ Technical people, in this instance refers to, the technical advisers which the involved NGOs had hired to help with specific problems in the community, such as land use. Certain technical people preferred to only work with the 'traditional' ǀKhomani San.

and split it up.' That is not good. I try to unite the people." (Steenkamp, interviewed 11 August 2008).

As both interviewees have stated, the government as well as NGOs have widened the divide between the 'traditionalists' and the 'modernists'. The question arises as to what set the 'split' in motion: the community or external forces? To a degree, the answer lies with the externals as the writings, academic or not, seems to foster a divide, which becomes internalised. The discourse surrounding the San has always emphasised the artificial divide between 'modern' and 'traditional' (Robins, 2003:266). It seems that this kind of binaried thinking persists even in the complicated globalised world of today. However, this dichotomy is not clear-cut in relation to the ꞤKhomani San community. For instance, André Vaalbooi mentioned to me that while he is regarded as a 'modernist', he is eager to learn about traditional practices. Similarly, Andries Steenkamp pointed out that he knows how to survive in the 'bush' and at the same time, he successfully led the technical Hoodia negotiations for his community. These examples illustrate that the ꞤKhomani San identity has been hybridised, to include a form of "indigenous modernity". Even though the ꞤKhomani San as a group are divided into 'traditionalists' and 'modernists', but as it is not clear cut, in totality, they constitute an "indigenous modernity". The hybridisation of ethnic groups is a natural process and should not be perceived with alarm.

The ꞤKhomani San identity developed into this hybrid through circumstances and choice. As such, it remains difficult to clarify if the ꞤKhomani San chose to 'split' into 'traditionalists' and 'modernists', or if strong external influences were responsible for this fractioning. Robins (2001:843) reiterates the complexity of the theoretical and practical outcomes of this:

“Despite considerable evidence of the hybrid character of both NGOs discourses and the everyday practices and identities of the San themselves, advocates of modernisation *and* traditionalism seem to share a common discomfort with the idea of ‘the hybrid’. In other words, modernisers and traditionalists alike seem to believe in the necessity for pure categories and identities. However, the attempts to constitute a purified San tradition in the Kalahari created problems for ‘traditionalists’ who found themselves unable to fit completely their own criteria and conceptions of authentic and pure San tradition.”

Indeed, “[d]espite the efforts of outsiders, and the San themselves, to create the myth of the ‘pure bushman’, there is no escape from the hybrid condition that characterizes the everyday social realities of the San.” (Robins, 2003:279).

One such “social realit[y]” includes the perception of many ǀKhomani San that NGO workers and government representatives give preferential treatment to the ‘traditionalists’. This attitude might be ascribed to the assumption that a stereotypical image of the San is likely to attract more donor funding for the projects of the ‘traditionalist’ rather than contributions for a management plan for livestock farming. This has, of course, fuelled the divide more (Kuper, 2003:394). That the ‘traditional’ group seems to have a stronger sense of identity can be attributed to the fact that they try to deny ‘modern’ invasions. However, it is evident that they cannot, and do not always want to, block out all of these ‘modern’ developments: they, like the ‘modernists’, appreciate their children attending school for example.

The ‘modernists’, on the other hand, do not entirely desire a ‘modern’ life - they have also expressed their wish to learn more about their heritage, culture and traditional

knowledge. André Vaalbooi, for instance, was unhappy that he could not be trained in traditional skills in the Kalahari as the 'traditionalists' had been given preference. Now that he works as a trainee guide at !Khwa ttu he has the opportunity he wished for.

"For me, it's a good thing to come [to !Khwa ttu] and learn more about the traditional things and so on. Because here, I learn things that I did not learn in the Kalahari. There are some things that I know, but here I see a future which I never see in the Kalahari. If you want to do that there, then there is someone telling you: 'No, I am the traditional people I will do this.' So I come here." (Vaalbooi, interviewed 16 November 2008).

As Roger Chennells, who has been involved with the ꞤKhomani San community for more than a decade, observes:

"I think for them [the traditional group] their identity is actually clearer, because Prof. Steyn and Prof. Botha did that thing [genealogical research]. Then the other group, they need to find a way of supporting each other but not fighting each other so much. The biggest theme of this community has been: 'us versus them'; 'traditional versus western'. It is like a theme running through the story." (Chennells, interview 3 July 2008).

This theme running through the ꞤKhomani San community does not mean, however, that solutions have not been discussed. Parallel to the discourse around 'modern' versus 'traditional', another parallel narrative around solutions for overcoming the 'split' is gaining ground, particularly amongst the youth. Not all ꞤKhomani San community members feel a need to choose sides. In my research, I realised that many young professionals, and the youth in general, would like to find a way to bridge the divide and

unify the community. There is a common understanding throughout the community that only through unity will the ǀKhomani San be able to tackle their needs:

“I want the community in one; because when the community is one then we can get a lot of things, in only one minute. But if there are two, there is a problem. For example, if you are married and you are like this two [*showing his hands apart*], she is going to this place and he does not like this way, that is not good. You must get one. That is all we can do to survive.” (Vaalbooi, interviewed 16 November 2008).

Andries Steenkamp was less optimistic:

“There are many, many problems in the community. I know that there will never come development, there might come projects but the people are not ready to manage it, because they are in conflict with each other.” (Steenkamp, interviewed 11 August 2008).

One of the solutions suggested to me was that the original claimant group of 290 be put in charge, and that they would have to come up with a solution. As this original claimant group includes both ‘traditionalists’ and ‘modernists’, they are perceived as being well placed to make fair decisions. Perhaps this solution would also contribute to the strengthening of the ǀKhomani San identity, with both the ‘traditional’ and ‘modern’ attributes gaining importance for the next generation. If unity can be realised, the ǀKhomani San might no longer be subject to enforced stereotypes, making their own identity choices, which, in turn, could play a part in further breaking down the wider dichotomy between the ‘modern’ and the ‘traditional’.

Chapter 6

Conclusions

The historical and contemporary discussions of the ꞤKhomani San identity in this minor dissertation have shown that ꞤKhomani San identity has been constructed by both the ꞤKhomani San themselves and by external forces. Almost all ꞤKhomani San interviewees, and those mentioned in the reviewed literature, regard themselves either as San of Southern Africa, as First People of South Africa or as ꞤKhomani of the southern Kalahari, depending on the context they relate to. Embedded in this broad framing are more specific aspects the various groups within the ꞤKhomani San community attach to their identity. These aspects of ꞤKhomani San identity and the processes through which they were forged form the heart of my thesis and conclusions.

At an international level, the international indigenous movement has brought about much needed awareness and change to the global arena. These developments on an international scale are also of relevance to the ꞤKhomani San. As the ꞤKhomani San have consciously embraced their 'San-ness', they have made this aspect part of their identity as a group. Through this - their indigeneity as San - they are acutely aware of their status as the First People of Southern Africa, another facet of their identity. The ꞤKhomani San have benefited from the indigenous movement by attending conferences and workshops where they have made their voices heard, but also through the movement's lobbying for the rights of indigenous peoples. The South African government, for one, has become more aware of its indigenous populations due to the increasing strength of the international indigenous front. In turn, South African indigenous populations, such as the ꞤKhomani San, have an increased understanding of

their rights and can approach the government wielding these. The ꞤKhomani San who have had the opportunity to interact with other indigenous groups have found comfort in the fact that they share some similar burdens, specifically problems of discrimination and marginalisation. However, these international fora have also made the ꞤKhomani San acutely aware that they will have to find solutions to their disunity if they would like to become a strong member of the international indigenous community. Although the lack of resources has prevented them from taking part and contributing to this world community whenever possible, a strong sense of pride in being included as one of the indigenous peoples of the world has already become apparent.

Being part of the world's indigenous population was not always unambiguous for the ꞤKhomani San. Their history illustrates how dispersed and unidentifiable they were as the group known as the ꞤKhomani San today. As early research shows, the ꞤKhomani San were not regarded as 'pure' San and thus further research was conducted sparsely. Available early research about the ꞤKhomani San is typically written *about* them, and does not provide any insight into ꞤKhomani San perspectives. However, some of this 20th Century research was, in the end, useful in the process of reclaiming ꞤKhomani San land in 1995. The claim was initiated by the ꞤKhomani San since they had been evicted from their ancestral land completely by the 1970s, after which they either moved to the urban areas or began to work as labourers on farms. These drastic changes fragmented and dispersed the San of the Southern Kalahari. With the categorisation as 'Coloureds' under apartheid, this fragmentation was compounded as the ꞤKhomani San lost vital parts of their identity, particularly through the near extinction of their language Nǀu.

In the early 1990s, one specific family clan found a different way to eke out a living. The Kruiper clan was employed by the management of the tourist resort Kagga Kamma, and

told to exhibit their 'San-ness'. This commodification of 'self' is a common phenomenon among some of the San, even today, as it continues to fulfil what the general public expect from 'real' San. As the questionable commodification of the San at Kagga Kamma became known, and the political climate changed with the coming of democracy to South Africa, human rights lawyer Roger Chennells was able to assist the Kruiper clan and others in preparing a land claim for the ꞤKhomani San.

The land claim is regarded as one of the central markers in ꞤKhomani San history and identity. Firstly, the process integrated the ꞤKhomani San as the group they are today. In the past, they were a dispersed people from different San groupings, usually called the 'Southern Kalahari San'. During the land claim, however, the claimants needed to adopt an umbrella name. Even though the term 'ꞤKhomani' can not be traced as a San construct and is a name given by 'Western' researchers, it was chosen to define the claimant group. Today, the majority of the ꞤKhomani San identify themselves with this name. Even elders of the Kruiper clan, who are originally members of the ꞤHanaseb San, have completely associated themselves with the ꞤKhomani ethnic identity (Crawhall, 2001:9).

Not only the name ꞤKhomani was an important emergence from the land claim process. The fusion of people under the name ꞤKhomani San, from across the Northern Cape and in defiance of their historic status as 'Coloured', was also highly symbolic. However, different age groups reacted in a diverse manner to this 'new' ꞤKhomani San identity. The younger generation, which had been born and grown up at the height of apartheid policy, had not even realised that they belonged to the San groups. The older generation, on the other hand, welcomed the opportunity to express openly that they were San. The democratic freedoms that 1994 brought to South Africans provided the

ǀKhomani San with the opportunity to proclaim their San identity. The land claim furthered this yearning and offered the prospect of regaining the land they had once lived on. After lengthy negotiations, the original claimant group of about 290 people were granted six farms and a portion of land in the Kgalagadi Transfrontier Park. Through this, the contemporary version of the ǀKhomani San community was born. However, the claimant group grew to approximately 1000 people, who also became community members “and thus registered co-owners of this land.” (Chennells, 2003:271). Of course, the pooling together of people from various age groups, backgrounds, histories and convictions does not build a homogenous community. Therefore the identity of the ǀKhomani San within the community today are both shared and diverse.

In terms of the former – shared characteristics - community members agree strongly on the fact that they are all indigenous and belong to the overall group of the San; that the land they regained has ancestral roots, particularly the land in the Kgalagadi Transfrontier Park; and that the land plays a significant part in their livelihoods. Furthermore, there is a shared sense that the rejuvenation of their language Nǀu is important; a recognition of the urgent need to ensure that their traditional knowledge is transmitted to the youth and people generally also want their children to obtain both formal and traditional education. Overall, there is an acknowledgement that although each family may emanate from different groups of the Southern Kalahari San, now they identify with being ǀKhomani San.

The issues that strain this confidence in being ǀKhomani San are largely related to the hardships the community is currently enduring. The Northern Cape Province is one of the poorest in South Africa and the ǀKhomani San continue to experience some harsh discrimination, in addition to a lack of resources. These are not the only factors creating

tension in the community: the 'split' between 'modernists' and 'traditionalists' seems to have had the gravest impact on ꞤKhomani San identity. Ironically, the 'split' seems to have been set in motion during the land claim process. Both NGOs and the government, as external forces, are perceived by the San and others to have energised this divide in the community, which mainly stems from questions around appropriate land use. The 'split' is real, but not very rigid, as the 'modernists', especially the younger generation, would like to learn more about traditional knowledge and skills; while the 'traditionalists' understand the need for formal education of their children and have no objections to technological advances in the community. Therefore, I argue, in line with Robins (2001/2003) and Sahlins (1999) amongst others, that the ꞤKhomani San identity is a "hybrid", an "indigenous modernity". Some of the ꞤKhomani San community members might not agree but they can not deny utilising both sides of the coin, the traditional and the modern, while still being only one coin.

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Appendix 1

10-12-2008

Declaration of consent:

I, Nora Thoma, Student No: THMNOR001 hereby verify that I have obtained written consent from all the people I have interviewed. Except for one person, everyone has provided me with permission to use their name and their statements in my masters thesis on the identity of the †Khomani San. Only one person has asked me to refrain from using their name but has given me permission to use their statements.

Nora Thoma:

University of Cape Town
Faculty of Humanities

Consent Form

Title of research project: Analyses of the ǀKhomani San identity

Name of principal researcher: Nora Thoma

Department address: Centre for African Studies, University of Cape Town; Private bag:
Rondebosch 7701; South Africa; Fax: (021) 686 1505

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Email: norathoma@yahoo.co.uk

Names of participants:

Annetta Bok; Roger Chennells; ██████████; Leandra Finnan; Dolaria (Baba)
Festus; Nanette Fleming; Ouma Matiel and Oupa Abraham Madgas; Andries
Steenkamp; André Vaalboot; Vinkie van der Westhuizen

Nature of the research:

- I agree to participate in this research project.
- I have read this consent form and the information it contains and had the opportunity to ask questions about them.
- I agree that my name can be used in the text.
- I agree that my responses can be used for research on condition that my privacy is respected.
- I understand that I am under no obligation to take part in this project.

Name and Signature of Participant:

Roger Chennells:

Signature and name of principal researcher: Nora Thoma :

University of Cape Town
Faculty of Humanities

Consent Form

Title of research project: Analyses of the $\frac{1}{2}$ Khomani San identity
Name of principal researcher: Nora Thoma
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Rondebosch 7701, South Africa; Fax: (021) 686 1505
Telephone: 0827564499
Email: norathoma@yahoo.co.uk

Names of participants:
Annetta Bok; Roger Chennells; [REDACTED]; Leandra Einman; Dolaria (Baba)
Festus; Nanette Flemming; Ouma Magriet and Oupa Abraham Malgas; Andries
Steenkamp; André Vaalbooi; Vinkie van der Westhuizen

- Nature of the research:**
- I agree to participate in this research project.
 - I have read this consent form and the information it contains and had the opportunity to ask questions about them.
 - I agree that my name can be used in the text.
 - I agree that my responses can be used for research on condition that my privacy is respected.
 - I understand that I am under no obligation to take part in this project.

Name and Signature of Participants:

Nanette Flemming

Vinkie van der Westhuizen

Signature and name of principal researcher:
Nora Thoma

University of Cape Town
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Consent Form

Title of research project: Analyses of the †Khomani San identity

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Names of participants:

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Festus; Nanette Flemming; Guntja Magriet and Oupa Abraham Malgas; Andries
Steenkamp; André Vaalbooi; Vinkie van der Westhuizen

Nature of the research:

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- I agree that my name can be used in the text.
- I agree that my responses can be used for research on condition that my privacy is respected.
- I understand that I am under no obligation to take part in this project.

Name and Signature of Participant:

Annetta Bok;

Signature and name of principal researcher:

Nora Thoma :

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Nature of the research:

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- I have read this consent form and the information it contains and had the opportunity to ask questions about them.
- I agree that my name can be used in the text.
- I agree that my responses can be used for research on condition that my privacy is respected.
- I understand that I am under no obligation to take part in this project.

Name and Signature of Participants:

Andries Steenkamp

Signature and name of principal researcher:

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Nature of the research:

- I agree to participate in this research project
- I have read this consent form and the information it contains and had the opportunity to ask questions about them.
- I agree that my name can be used in the text.
- I agree that my responses can be used for research on condition that my privacy is respected.
- I understand that I am under no obligation to take part in this project.

Name and Signature of Participant:

Leandra Einman:

Signature and name of principal researcher:

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Consent Form

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Names of participants:

Annetta Bok; Roger Chennells; [REDACTED]; Leandra Einman; Dŕlaria (Baba) Festus; Naniette Flemming; Ouma Magriet and Oupa Abraham Matgas; Andries Steenkamp; Andrŕ Vaalbooi; Vinkie van der Westhuizen

Nature of the research:

- I agree to participate in this research project.
- I have read this consent form and the information it contains and had the opportunity to ask questions about them.
- I agree that my name can be used in the text.
- I agree that my responses can be used for research on condition that my privacy is respected.
- I understand that I am under no obligation to take part in this project.


Name and Signature of Participants:

Dŕlaria (Baba) Festus:

Ouma Magriet and Oupa Abraham Matgas: 

Andrŕ Vaalbooi:

Signature and name of principal researcher:

Nora Thoma: 

Parks. The San could utilize this land in any manner subject to the management plan, a draft of which was annexed to the agreement.

- 2 Preferential commercial rights: The San received preferential commercial rights to the area between the contract parks and the Auob river.
- 3 Symbolic and Cultural Use Rights: The San were awarded cultural and heritage rights over the entire area of their original land claim, outside the contract park area. In this area they were to be entitled to visit and to carry out various medicinal, gathering, cultural, educational and related activities, also subject to the management plan.
- 4 The Klein Skrij Lodge: Both the San and the Mier were awarded 50% shares in a joint lodge (samewerkingslodge) situated in the contract park area in order to commemorate the manner in which they had cooperated during the negotiations. The lodge was to be funded by the Government, and the concession fee shared three ways between the partners and SANParks as manager of the contract park.
- 5 Community Park incentive: SANParks offered to the San a matching amount of up to R 500 000 for the specific establishment of a community game park outside the Reserve.
- 6 Community Gates: Each community had the right to build and manage at least one gate into the park, subject to the Park's strict regulations regarding entry and security.

All of the above were to be managed by a Joint Management Board comprised of the Mier, the San and SANParks, in accordance with carefully laid down terms

(Chennells, 2006: 3-4)

Appendix 3

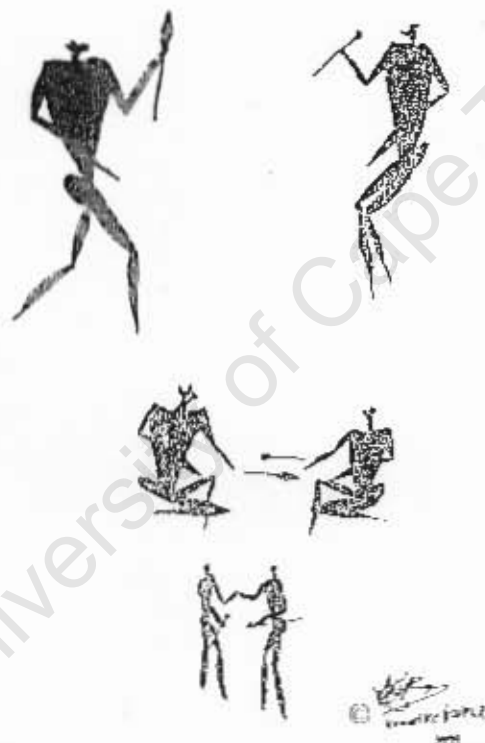
University of Cape Town



Executive summary

!Ae Kalahari Heritage Park- Agreement

whereby the land claims of the †Khomani San Community
and the Mier Community are finalised



Background to agreement

An initial settlement agreement regarding the land claims was signed by all the parties in March 1999. That agreement anticipated further detailed negotiations regarding some elements of settlement. These were mostly related to the transfer of land presently falling within the Khalagadi Transfrontier Park to the two communities, and the establishment of contraction parks over these areas.

This agreement is the result of intensive further negotiations conducted from April 2001 onwards.

Summary of the !Ae!Hai Kalahari Heritage Park Agreement

This is a summary of the 2002 Agreement, called the !Ae!Hai Kalahari Heritage Park Agreement.

Parties

The parties to the Agreement are the †Khomani San Community, the Mier Community, SANParks, the Ministers responsible for Land Affairs, Environmental Affairs and Tourism, and Public Works, as well as the Commission on Restitution of Land Rights (also called the Land Claims Commission). SANParks is the old National Parks Board, which manages the South African side of Kgalagadi Transfrontier Park. The Park was formerly known as the Kalahari Gemsbok National Park and is referred to as 'the Park'.

The †Khomani San Community is represented in the Agreement by their Communal Property Association. They are referred to as 'the San Community'. The Mier Community is represented by the Mier Municipality. They are referred to as 'the Mier Community'. The San Community and the Mier Community are collectively referred to as 'the community parties'.

Transfer of the land and the land use restrictions

This Agreement follows on the initial agreement signed between the parties in 1999. The land claims of the community parties are finally settled in terms of this Agreement. No additional claims can therefore be made regarding this land.

In terms of the Agreement SANParks and the Minister for Agriculture and Land Affairs will transfer approximately 28 000 ha of land in the Park to the San Community. This land is adjacent to the southern boundary of the Park near Twee Rivieren. It is referred to as 'the San Heritage Land'. The San Community will be the owner of this land.

SANParks and the Minister for Agriculture and Land Affairs will transfer approximately 30 000 ha of land in the Park to the Mier Community. This land is adjacent to the southern boundary of the Park adjacent to the Mier game farms Twee Dabas en Loreto. It is referred to as 'the Mier Heritage Land'. The Mier Community will be the owner of this land.

The San Heritage Land and the Mier Heritage Land are jointly referred to as 'the Heritage Lands'.

Because the San Community had been dispossessed of much more land than the Mier Community, the 1999 Agreement guaranteed additional and special rights to the San Community in the remainder of the Park. This is explained below.

The community parties undertook to use the lands in the Park for conservation, eco-tourism and cultural activities in perpetuity. Mining, housing or agriculture is not allowed.

Two Contract Parks established with SANParks

The San Heritage Land and the Mier Heritage Land will be subject to separate contract park agreements with SANParks. The key elements of this Agreement are set out below.

SANParks will conserve the animals, plants and natural environment on the Heritage Lands.

The community parties may, by means of the entity that represents them, use the land in terms of the Agreement as landowners. Although the land forms part of the Park, the

community parties have retained the commercial benefits and rights. The two communities may also use the land for symbolic and cultural purposes.

SANParks and the community parties will form a Joint Management Board (JMB). They are therefore referred to as 'the main parties'. Matters of communal concern will be discussed in the JMC. They will discuss matter affecting them as neighbours and consult one another on how they will be able to use their land to obtain the maximum benefit. The JMB is not a separate legal entity. Each party will therefore act in its own name. Each party will appoint duly elected members to represent its interests on the Board.

The parties are free to launch and manage projects on their own, with each other or with an external party. For example, the Agreement does not compel the Mier Community to run any projects jointly with SANParks or the San Community.

This mean a community can decide on its own on the utilisation of its lands and do tourist developments. It however, needs to adhere to the management plan as accepted by the JMC. The first management plan would be attached to the Agreement.

If a party initiates a project on its own or with one of the other parties, they have to obtain the agreement of the remaining main parties only in as far as the interests of such parties are affected materially. A community party can on a project-to project basis decide whether to run a project on its own or jointly with another main party.

The Agreement, however, requires that parties' projects and use of the land adhere to the management plan. The first management plan forms part of the Agreement.

SANParks will make an amount available annually to cover the costs of the JMB.

Each contract park will operate for 99 years. However, the Mier Community can terminate the Agreement regarding the Mier Heritage Land after 30 years, as can the San Community regarding the San Heritage Land. SANParks may terminate any of these contract parks after such period. A party wanting to terminate a contract park must give 3 years notice.

Although parties are free to undertake projects on their own, the main parties committed themselves, as a first major project, to establish a joint lodge. The lodge will be situated on one or both of the Heritage Lands. SANParks has secured provisional funding for the erection of the lodge. The parties may put the management of the lodge out to tender. The main parties will divide the income derived from the lodge equally.

Further Rights of the San Community

For time immemorial and beyond 1913 the San forefathers have used a large portion of the Park and the Mier area for hunting and the gathering of veld foods. Their land claim therefore extended over land in the Park and the Mier area

To settle the land claim the parties agreed to the following principles:

- SANParks agreed that the San Community also have land rights outside the San Heritage Land over the remainder of the claimed area Park.
- The Mier Community agreed to transfer 7 000 ha of land in the Mier Area to the San Community as a gesture of good neighbourliness and in exchange for the latter's abandonment of its claim over the Mier Area. This land still needs to be identified. The Agreement encourages the Mier Community to finalise the matter speedily: if land acceptable to the San Community is not identified and transferred to the San by 27 May 2004, Mier's obligation to the San increases to 8000 ha

The San Community's further rights in the Park include the following:

- Among others, a preferential right to a partnership with SANParks regarding eco-tourism development, and to propose such development to SANParks, in the area between the Heritage Lands and the Auob-river;
- Regarding the other land it claimed in the Park, symbolic and cultural rights.

Possible Community Park

The San Community hopes to, with the possible assistance of the Mier Community, acquire additional land for a community park. The San Community will provide funding for such purposes and SANParks will hopefully assist with this. The community parties will negotiate the share of each of the communities at a later stage, depending on their contributions to the establishment of the community park.

When will the Agreement take effect?

This Agreement took effect on 28 May 2002. Thereafter the Agreement as a whole can be terminated only by agreement by the parties.

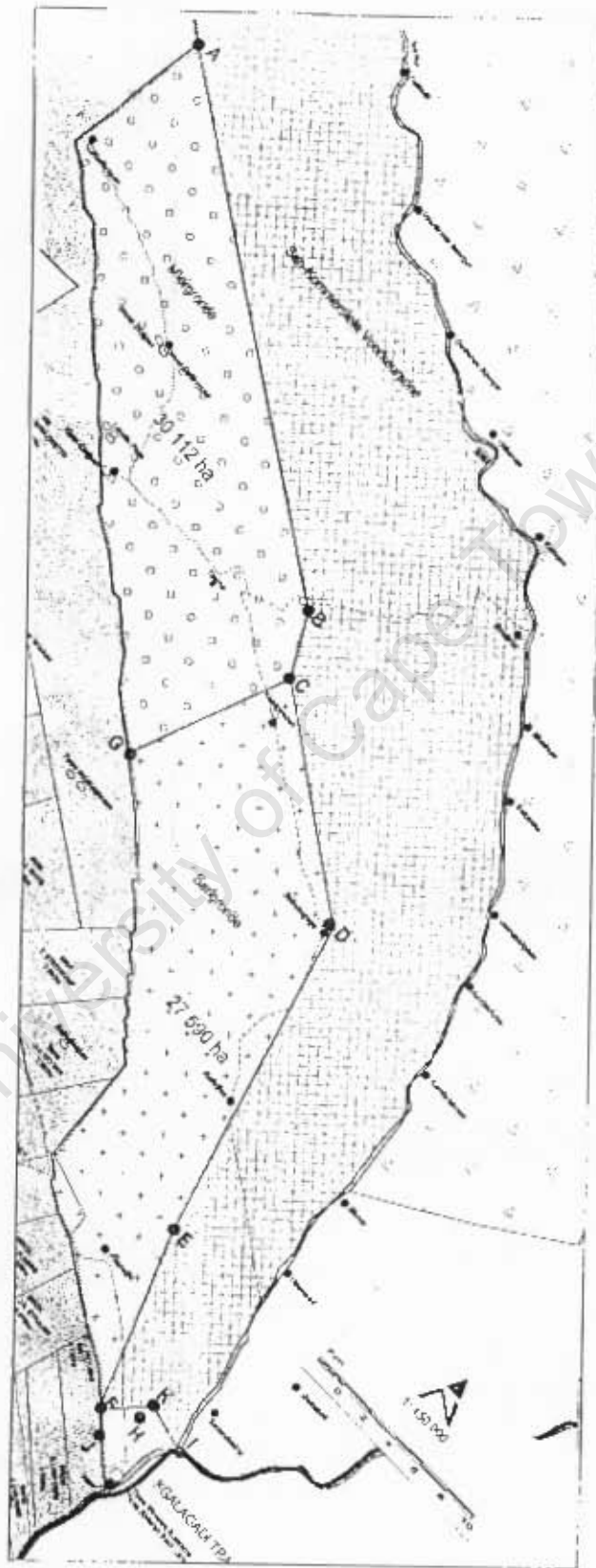
Parliament will be requested to approve the change in the status of the land from a part of an ordinary national park to a contract national park. If Parliament does not grant this approval by November 2003 the provisions and the spirit of the Agreement will be implemented, in as far as it is legally possible to do so.

What if a dispute arises between the parties?

If a dispute arises between the parties, it can be resolved in terms of the Agreement. Such dispute may relate to the interpretation of the Agreement, or in instances where two or more of the parties have competing rights. Disputes can then be resolved as follows:

- If the dispute relates to one of the contract parks the matter is first referred to the chief executive officer of the parties involved. The chief executive officer of the San Community is the chairperson of the management committee of their Communal Property Association; of the Mier Community the Mier Municipality's Mayor; and for SANParks the Chief Executive.
- If not resolved a party may request that a mediator be appointed.
- If not resolved one of the parties may request arbitration. An external, suitable person must then decide the matter.

Annexure 1: Diagram of the San and Mier Heritage Lands



The San Heritage Lands are in the area falling within the boundaries CDEFGC.

The Mier Heritage Lands are in the area falling within the boundaries ABCGA.