

## ABSTRACT

Entitled “Land, Water, Truth, and Love – Visions of Identity and Land Access: From Bain’s Bushmen to †Khomani San” this thesis situates the current †Khomani claims to land in their historical context. Examining the nexus between land, economic choices, power, and identity, I analyze the construction of the “Bushman myth” in South Africa as it relates to the †Khomani San of the Northern Cape. The myth refers to stereotypical depictions of “Bushman” based on invented traditions. These traditions are depicted as atavistic manifestations of a historically immutable Bushman ethnicity. Stressing their timelessness and isolation, the Bushman myth thus disregards the San’s internal dialectics and fluid social worlds as well as their historical and local relationships to non-San; nevertheless it has come to define the life of the so-called Bain’s Bushmen and their descendents during the last 80 years. By tracing the development, application, and appropriation of the Bushman myth and its power to define traditions, I hope to contribute towards a much-needed discussion in the present about multiple identities and †Khomani ethnicity.

Motivated by a desire to understand the difficulties the †Khomani community is facing today, I set out to trace the development of San identity and its relationship to land and the political economy through the past 150 years. My thesis is based on ethnographic fieldwork carried out in the Northern Cape in South Africa from Cape Town to Upington and on the †Khomani land in January and summer 2008. I conducted 42 unstructured and semi-structured interviews with community members and others ranging from lawyers, government officials, to NGO consultants, and engaged in participant observation. The archival work is based on government records, newspaper articles, correspondence, and ethnographic studies collected in six South African archives.

**MOUNT HOLYOKE COLLEGE**

**LAND, WATER, TRUTH, AND LOVE  
VISIONS OF IDENTITY AND LAND ACCESS:  
FROM BAIN'S BUSHMEN TO ꞤKHOMANI SAN**

**AN UNDERGRADUATE THESIS  
SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT FOR THE DEGREE OF  
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**BY**

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With gratitude to my parents who encouraged me to dream,  
and with hope for the dreams of the ‡Khomani.

“...As regards myself, I am waiting that the moon may turn back for me; that I may set my feet forward in the path...I...listen, watching for a story, which I want to hear...that it may float into my ear...I feel that my name floats along the road...along to my place...I feel that a story is in the wind.”<sup>1</sup>

||Kábbo

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<sup>1</sup> Jeanette Deacon and Craig Foster, *My Heart Stands in the Hill*, (Cape Town: Cornelius Struik House: 2005), 179.

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## TIMELINE

2000 years ago	Arrival of Bantu groups in South Africa
1652	Jan van Riebeeck, representing the Dutch East India Company, founded the Cape Colony
18 <sup>th</sup> century	Commandos killing “Bushmen”
1815	Reverend Campbell’s travels through Bushmanland
1860s	Louis Anthing advocated for land access for “Bushmen”
1865	Baster Chief Dirk Vilander settled north of the Gariep
1866	Bleek and Lloyd started interviewing San-speakers
1870s	Near-extinction of “Cape Bushmen”
1883	Korannaland became Gordonia
1885	South-West Africa’s and Bechuanaland’s borders drawn
1910	Formation of the Union of South Africa
1913	Native Land Act preventing Africans, except those living in Cape Province, from buying land outside reserves
1919	South West Africa under South African administration
1920s	Racial division of Gordonia
1929	Minister of Land Grobler: San-speakers to be protected along with the gemsbok
31 July 1931	Proclamation of the Kalahari Gemsbok National Park
1 April 1936	Establishment of Bain’s “Bushmen Camp”
23 June 1936	“Kalahari Bushmen” expedition of the University of the Witwatersrand left Johannesburg
Sept. 1936 –Jan. 1937	South African Empire Exhibition, Johannesburg
9 May 1937	Bushmen Protest March to Cape Town
17 May 1937	General Smuts’ speech on “Bushmen” in Parliament
August 1937	“Bain’s Bushmen” returned to Gordonia
1939-1940	Conraad MacDonald’s “Bushmen” exhibits
14 March 1940	Colonel Reitz Cabinet Memorandum on Bushman Reserve
26 April 1940	Ethnologist van Warmelo’s report suggesting Struis Zyn Dam as Bushman Reserve
1948-1994	Apartheid: “Bushmen” integrate into Coloured communities; Kruipers maintained links to patrons
1980s	Lokkie Henning’s “Bushmen” tourism ventures
1991-1999	Kruipers resided at Kagga Kamma as last South African hunter-gatherers
1995	The Kruipers and Roger Chennells lodged the land rights claim
21 March 1999	Signing ceremony for ‡Khomani restitution agreement
31 August 2002	Celebration of ‡Khomani rights in the KGNP



Map 0:1<sup>2</sup> South Africa

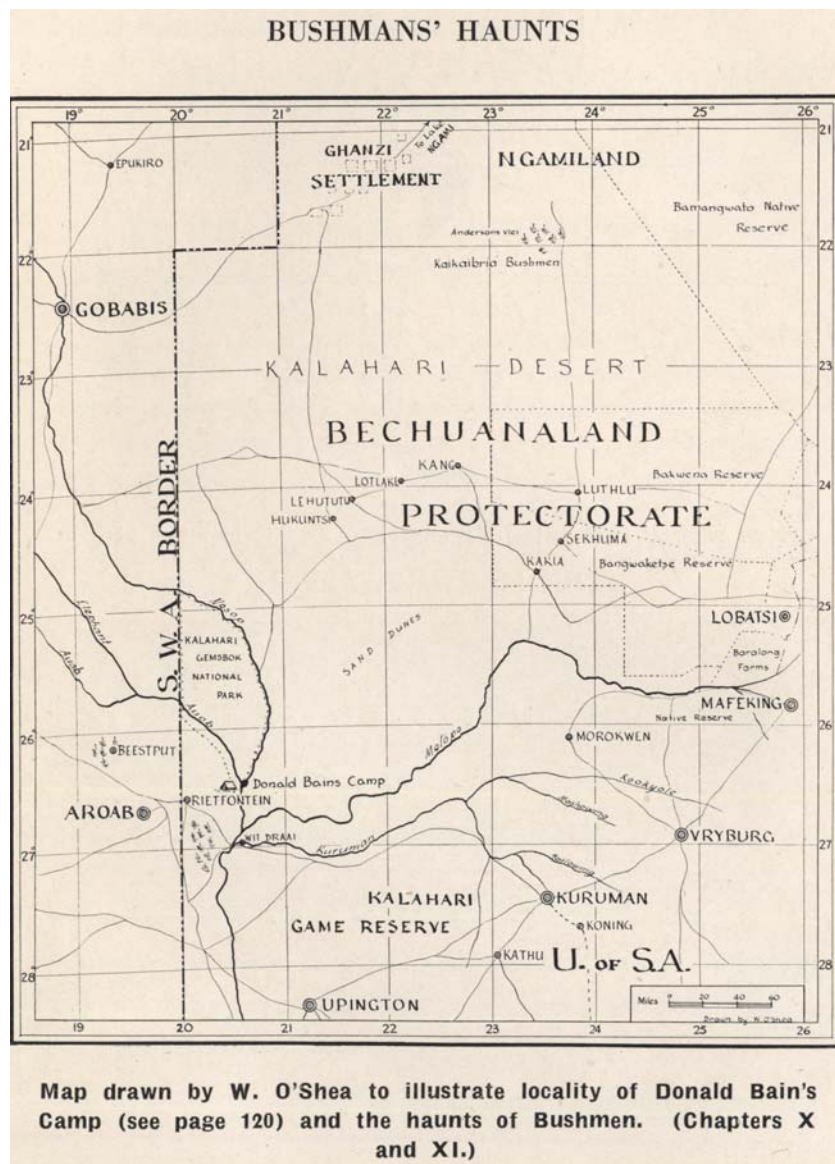
<sup>2</sup> The University of Texas, Maps South Africa, [http://www.lib.utexas.edu/maps/africa/south\\_africa\\_reliefmap.jpg](http://www.lib.utexas.edu/maps/africa/south_africa_reliefmap.jpg).



Map 0:2<sup>3</sup> Area of Khomani Landclaims

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<sup>3</sup> South African SAN Institute (SASI), *The ǀKhomani-San: From Footnotes to Footprints. The story of the landclaim of the ǀKhomani San*, (Trans Oranje, n.d), n.p.



Map 0:3<sup>4</sup> Location of Donald Bain's Bushmen Camp

<sup>4</sup> Thomas Boydell, *My Luck's Still In*, (Cape Town: Stewart, 1948), facing 97. The caption reads: "Map drawn by W. O'Shea to illustrate locality of Donald Bain's Camp...and the haunts of Bushmen."



## PROLEGOMENON: THE (RE)BIRTH OF THE ‡KHOMANI SAN

“This land claim will, I am sure, stand out among all land claims. It stands out because this land claim is about the rebirth of a people. When we say: ‘Here is your land, have it’, we say too that you must reclaim a proud history and rebuild a rich culture. This land is a space to rebuild a community.”<sup>5</sup>

Deputy President Thabo Mbeki

When the traditional leader Dawid Kruiper, the Community Property Association leader Petrus Vaalbooi, the Deputy President Thabo Mbeki, and Minister of Land Affairs Derek Hanekom signed the land restitution agreement on March 21, 1999 – Human Rights Day – the hopes and various dreams of the ‡Khomani San community rested on the transfer of ownership of the land into their hands.<sup>6</sup>

The old patriarch of the Kruiper clan, the family which initiated the land rights claim, Regopstaan Kruiper, whose name translates into “Stand-up-straight Crawl,” dreamed of a return to the Kalahari for his people and bequeathed the following prophecy: “[w]hen the strangers come, then will come the big rains. And the Little People will dance. And when the Little People in the Kalahari dance, then the Little People around the world shall dance too.”<sup>7</sup> When it started

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\* The title of this thesis is inspired by the priorities for survival voiced by a group of elders: “land, water and truth:” *!’âu, !ha n / a kx’am*. To this, Ouma |Una Rooi added the concept of “mutual love and respect” or literally “love you:” *// â a*. See Nigel Crawhall, *Written in the Sand: Auditing and Managing Cultural Resources with Displaced Indigenous Peoples: A South African Case Study* (South African San Institute in co-operation with UNESCO, 2001), 14.

<sup>5</sup> Roger Friedman and Benny Gool, “Only the scent of land, and nothing more,” *Cape Times*, September 16, 1999, 8.

<sup>6</sup> See appendix Fig. 1:1 photograph of the key players at the signing ceremony.

<sup>7</sup> Rupert Isaacson, *The Healing Land: The Bushmen and the Kalahari Desert* (New York: Grove Press, 2001), 58. For a more figurative reading of this prophecy in terms of spiritual self-renewal of the Bushmen see Elana Bregin and Belinda Kruiper, *Kalahari Rain Song* (Scottsville: University of KwaZulu-Natal Press, 2004), 3. Also see Lifeonline, “Regopstaan’s Dream,” <http://www.tve.org/lifeonline/index.cfm?aid=1237U>.

raining later that day, and the Nossob River carried water for the first time in decades, people danced and believed that Regopstaan's prophecy had come true.

The transfer of land to the ‡Khomani as part of the South African land reform process, signified more than the restitution of land taken from the San under apartheid – it was intended to rectify past colonial injustices. As settlers had advanced the colony's Northern frontier in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, the Khoisan retreated into an ever-shrinking periphery. With the advent of Western notions of property law and claims to ownership of natural resources, hunting and gathering was forced into the realm of illegality. Succumbing to the combined powers of the gun, gin, and hunting regulations, San gave up their hunter-gatherer lifestyle to form a productive part of colonial industry. They incorporated into colonial society as local farm labor and adopted western clothing, Afrikaans as language and Christianity as religion.

A second alternative opened up in 1936, when a South African big-game hunter, farmer, and philanthropist, Donald Bain, collected a group of "Southern Kalahari Bushmen," and (re)introduced them to the traditional loincloth (the *!xai*), forbade the use of any language other than "Bushman," and encouraged "Bushman-like" behavior. A group of scientists from the University of the Witwatersrand, fascinated with the potential of the Bushmen as the "missing link" between ape and man in a Darwinist teleology of society, followed Bain's invitation to examine the group which was to become known as "Bain's Bushmen." A selected Bushmen group travelled to the Empire Exhibition in Johannesburg that same year to capitalize on the public's fascination with the image of the Bushman. Through the exhibition, Donald Bain hoped to win public support to advance his idea of a Bushmen reserve; only through isolation could

the Bushmen be saved from extinction. Subsequently, a reserve debate ensued between Bain, academics, politicians, farmers, and the national parks board, but it ultimately failed to yield the desired results. Some of Bain's Bushmen reintegrated into the local farming sector, while others took up employment in the Kalahari Gemsbok National Park (KGNP) as trekkers and guides. During apartheid, most had adopted a Coloured identity and gave birth to a new generation, oblivious of their Bushmen heritage. Not so the Kruiper clan. They chose to duplicate the paternalistic relationship experienced with Bain in order to capitalize on the market value of their Bushmanness. Appropriating many stereotypes from below, the Kruipers defended their only asset in a capitalist environment against allegedly fake Bushmen resulting in xenophobic tendencies and inbreeding. By the end of apartheid, two groups had formed: those who chose to capitalize on their Bushmen heritage and those who sought to deny it. Under the umbrella of the ‡Khomani identity, the land rights claim brought these distinct groups together. Not surprisingly, competing claims to authenticity contribute to the current difficulties regarding development on the ‡Khomani land. Intra-community land-use conflicts and claims to various geographical areas mirror the contesting perceptions of Bushmen life in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. The result is a topography based on exclusionary interpretations of ‡Khomani identity and their transcriptions into economic choices: commercial farming or Bushmen marketing. Despite the absence of a collective dream, people continue to dream individually about their vision of "land," "water," "truth," and "love" in the Kalahari.

## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

Motivated by a desire to understand the difficulties the community is facing today, I set out to trace the development of the ǀKhomani identity and its relationship to land and the political-economy through the past 150 years. This thesis examines the nexus between land, economic choices, power, and identity regarding the ǀKhomani San. Further, it analyzes the construction of the *Bushman myth*<sup>8</sup> in the context of Bushmen land access and utilization and examines how and why this simplified image is institutionalized, perpetuated, transformed, adopted, and resisted. Focusing on the interplay of imagery, policy, and history, my argument seeks to present historiography recognizing the mosaic of opinions which break down the colonial monolith into discernible voices and contradicting interests. Adding the motives of the Bushmen underscores the internal complexity of colonial worlds, destroying simplistic dualism and highlighting the simultaneous processes and relationships leading to the myriad of changes that characterize Bushmen history.

My work is based on ethnographic fieldwork carried out in South Africa from Cape Town to Upington and on the ǀKhomani land in January and summer 2008. I conducted 42 unstructured and semi-structured interviews with community members and others ranging from lawyers, government officials, to NGO consultants, and engaged in participant observation. The archival work is

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<sup>8</sup> I am borrowing the concept of the *Bushman myth* from Robert Gordon and Stuart Sholto Douglas, who have dedicated an entire book to its description, *The Bushman Myth: The Making of a Namibian Underclass*, 2d ed. (Boulder, Colorado: Westview, 2000), chap. 1 & 4.



based on government records, newspaper articles, correspondence, and ethnographic studies collected in six South African archives.

This thesis looks beyond the official version of the ‡Khomani land rights claim. By situating current identity, economic, and geographical claims in their historical context, it reveals a more complex storyline.

This chapter serves to build a framework in which to situate the creation of the Bushman myth. Firstly, I contextualize this work in the broader framework of hunter-gatherer studies. Secondly, I establish the local historical context for an analysis of the broader socio-economic trends through which South African San experienced the impact of colonialism altering their autochthonous relationship to land, resources, trading networks, and labor.

### **Bushmen, San, San-speakers, or ‡Khomani?**

Before discussing the history of the Southern Kalahari hunter-gatherers, I will briefly lay out the conceptual dispute within anthropology and history about their nomenclature.<sup>9</sup> Interestingly, this discussion has not emerged in linguistics.<sup>10</sup> Most authors discard the term “Bushman” as an exonym. They do so on account of its obvious colonial connotations, its racism, and sexism. In the 1970s, the use of the Khoe term “San” became popular in academic circles. However, it is questionable if that choice is less derogatory as it refers to

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<sup>9</sup> For a more in depth discussion see: Alan Barnard, *Anthropology and the Bushman* (New York: Berg, 2007), 1-10; Robert J. Gordon and Stuart Sholto Douglas, *The Bushman Myth*, 4-8; Andy Smith, Candy Malherbe, Mat Guenther, and Penny Berens, *The Bushmen of Southern Africa* (Cape Town: David Philip Publishers, 2000), 2; Alan Mountain, *The First People of the Cape* (Claremont: David Phillip Publishers, 2003), 23-24.

<sup>10</sup> Nigel Crawhall, *!Ui-Taa language shift in Gordonia and Postmasburg Districts, South Africa* (PhD Thesis Linguistics, Faculty of Humanities University of Cape Town, 2004), 110.

“robber,” “vagabond,” and “rascal.”<sup>11</sup> The Khoekhoe did not strictly apply the name “San” to hunter-gatherers but used it with a general connotation of low status in terms of genealogy and wealth.<sup>12</sup> In this context, “San” did not refer to a distinct ethnic group as much as to an undesirable social class. However, the San delegates at the *Common Access to Development Conference* held in Botswana in 1993 chose to refer to themselves as *San* on grounds that this term was “the most neutral.”<sup>13</sup> Robert J. Gordon and Stuart Shulto Douglas underscore that the entire concept of the “Bushman” is a settler concept.<sup>14</sup> The artificial creation of “Bushman” as social construct parallels that of the notion of “Africa” and just as “Africa” has come to be appropriated by Africans, “Bushman” is increasingly ennobled from below.<sup>15</sup> As social relationships acquire meaning only in relation to others, the “Bushman image” acquires meaning through the interaction between those using the label and those labeled. Historically, the exonym is an expression of power imbalance and prejudices; it reveals the perception the name-giver holds of the named-group more than it is descriptive of the characteristics of the group itself. Wright challenges the discussion by questioning the existence of “a clearly identifiable ‘them’” and encourages us to examine the “‘we’ who have done the identifying and naming.”<sup>16</sup> There is no uncontroversial epithet of a group of people lacking an ethnonym based on their historical perception of each other

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<sup>11</sup> Alan Barnard, *Hunters and Herders of Southern Africa: A Comparative Ethnography of the Khoisan Peoples* (Cambridge, New York: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 8.

<sup>12</sup> Richard Elphick, *Khoikhoi and the founding of White South Africa* (Braamfontein: Raven Press, 1985), 27-28.

<sup>13</sup> James Suzman, *An Introduction to the Regional Assessment of the Status of the San in Southern Africa* (Windhoek, Legal Assistance Center, 2001), 4.

<sup>14</sup> Gordon and Douglas, *The Bushman Myth*, 4-8.

<sup>15</sup> John Parker and Richard Rathbone, *African History: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 7.

<sup>16</sup> John Wright, “Sonqua, Bosjemans, Bushmen, and abaThwa: comments and queries in pre-modern identification,” *South African Historical Journal*, vol. 35. (1996): 17.

as distinct ethnic groups.<sup>17</sup> To Sandy Gall, it is thus a discourtesy to label all San groups uniformly.<sup>18</sup> Some authors like Edward Wilmsen prefer to use the autonym employed by the various groups themselves, such as Zu/’hoāsi. Alternatively Wilmsen suggests “San-speaking” although acknowledging that not all of those referred to as “Bushmen” speak San-languages.<sup>19</sup>

In relation to the ‡Khomani, no approach is unproblematic as the term itself is an exonym, and Afrikaans is the mother tongue of most community members. ‡Khomani self-identify as “Boesman,” Afrikaans for “Bushman.” They use the term to identify their ethnicity as well as a glossonym for any San-language; few ‡Khomani know the term “San,” and some of those who do vehemently oppose its use.<sup>20</sup> N|u speaking elders in the community have consistently used the term N||n≠e, meaning “Home People,” to distinguish hunting and gathering “Boesmans” from non-hunting peoples such as Khoe, Bantu, Coloured, and European.<sup>21</sup> To me, some elders have self-identified as “Sasi,” a N|u word simply referring to any Bushmen.<sup>22</sup>

I am herein adopting “San” to refer to the South African hunter-gatherers in contemporary sources identified as Bushmen.<sup>23</sup> I refer to ‡Khomani San by their group name ‡Khomani and reserve the use of the term “Bushmen” to refer to

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<sup>17</sup> Gordon and Douglas, *The Bushman Myth*, 4.

<sup>18</sup> Sandy Gall, *The Bushmen of Southern Africa: Slaughter of the Innocent* (London: Chatto & Windus, 2001), xxix.

<sup>19</sup> Edwin N. Wilmsen, *Land Filled with Flies: A Political Economy of the Kalahari* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989), xv & 1.

<sup>20</sup> Petrus Vaalbooi, community leader, interview by author, January 21, 2008, Scotty’s fort.

<sup>21</sup> Crawhall, *!Ui-Taa language shift*, 114; idem, *Written in the Sand*, 8.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid., 30; Katrina Rooi, elder, interview by author, January 18, 2008, Brosdoring; Hanna Koper, elder, interview by author, August 4, 2008, Upington; Anna Kassie, elder, interview by author, August 4, 2008, Upington.

<sup>23</sup> This decision is facilitated by the official decision to use the term San by San representatives referred to on p.6. Further, all organizations representing the San of Southern Africa have adopted this terminology.

“Bain’s Bushmen” during the 1930s, underscoring the conscious utilization of the Bushman myth.<sup>24</sup>

### **Situating San in Academia**

Whether the Sans immediate hunter-gatherer lifestyle is the organic result of continuing traditions from the Stone Age, or whether it is a recent creation in response to the oppression of “Bushmen” through more powerful invaders, is subject to what is referred to as the Kalahari debate in archeology, anthropology, and historiography. Kalahari traditionalists claim that the San’s lifestyle is unique and an accurate reflection of the past maintained through isolation. Kalahari revisionists, on the other hand, argue that San have been part of a wider political economy of trade and their current state is to be seen as a product of their marginalization and dispossession through politically, economically, and militarily more powerful people.<sup>25</sup>

This debate arguably is traceable to two German professors who travelled to Southern Africa and engaged in ethnographical Bushmen studies in the second half of the nineteenth century: Professor Gustav Fritsch (traditionalist)<sup>26</sup> and Professor Siegfried Passarge (revisionist).<sup>27</sup> What Alan Barnard refers to as “Kalahari debate proper” focuses on work since the 1960s. Whereas traditionalists mostly focused on their ethnographic time period, revisionists tended to combine ethnographic, archival, and archaeological work in interdisciplinary compositions. Taken to its extreme, the first position asserts that the harmless people live in

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<sup>24</sup> Unless essential, I will dispense with quotation marks for the term “Bushmen.”

<sup>25</sup> For an excellent overview of the Kalahari debates see Barnard, *Anthropology and the Bushman*, chap. 8.

<sup>26</sup> Gustav Fritsch, “Die afrikanischen Buschmänner als Urrasse,” *Zeitschrift für Ethnologie*, 12 (1880): 289-300.

<sup>27</sup> Siegfried Passarge, *Die Buschmänner der Kalahari* (Berlin: Dietrich Reimer, 1907.)

harmony with nature in an egalitarian framework, serving as models for the reconstruction of human evolution.<sup>28</sup> The latter position maintains that “Bushmen” ethnicity is a product of unequal class relations.<sup>29</sup>

Another historical debate has centered on the question whether “Hottentots,” (i.e. Khoekhoe) and “San” are distinct peoples or whether these categories have permeable membranes. If San are hunter-gatherers whereas Khoekhoe are pastoralists, does an impoverished Khoekhoe become a San? Richard Elphick argues in the affirmative; the difference lies in material conditions rather than ethnicity. He speaks of an “ecological cycle” of hunters becoming herders by obtaining cattle (upward phase) and herders becoming hunters by losing cattle (downward phase).<sup>30</sup> However, subsequently scholars have argued against Elphick’s theory based on archeology.

This thesis is concerned with the concrete example of the creation, perpetuation and appropriation of the Bushman myth in the case of South African Southern Kalahari San. Illuminating the interplay of colonial agents and self-identified Bushmen, as well as San and today’s Khomani, the emergent mosaic of voices and opinions breaks down the colonial monolith into discernible voices and contradicting interests.

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<sup>28</sup> Work by R.B. Lee and the Marshall family is often cited for this position. Laurens van der Post perpetuated a romanticized image through his prolific writing on Bushmen.

<sup>29</sup> Edwin N. Wilmsen, Robert J Gordon, and Carmel Schrire are writers whose work is revisionist.

<sup>30</sup> Elphick, *Khoikhoi and the Founding*, chap. 2.

### The Colonial Presence: Encounters in the Northern Cape

In these deplorable wars the Bushmen are doubtless, in general, the aggressors, by their propensity to depredation. Yet, on the other hand, have they not some cause to regard both Boors and Griquas as intruders upon their ancient territories, - [sic] as tyrannical usurpers, who, by seizing their finest foundations, and destroying the wild game on which they were wont to subsist, have scarcely left them even the desolate wilderness for an habitation?<sup>31</sup>

George Thompson, 1827

The wind does thus when we die: our own wind blows for we, who are human beings, we possess wind, we make clouds, when we die. Therefore, the wind does thus when we die: the wind makes dust...taking away our footprints with which we had walked about while we still had nothing the matter with us, and our footprints, which the wind intends to blow away, would otherwise still lie plainly visible. Therefore, the wind intends to blow, taking away our footprints.<sup>32</sup>

Dia!kwain, 1876

During the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century, the San's autochthonous relationship to land and their survival strategies changed in response to the penetration of farmers into South Africa's Northern periphery. Wage labor, the concepts of productivity, private property of natural resources, and other central tenets of capitalism which these farmers brought to the area, had profound impacts on hunter-gatherer life ways. Baster farmers (farmers of biracial heritage), themselves choosing the relative freedom at the colonial periphery just North of the Gariep (the Khoe name for the Orange River), were the first to penetrate the Southern Kalahari and compete with Khoesan for land and resources.<sup>33</sup> Historical evidence suggests that pastoralists and hunter-gatherers using different ecological niches coexisted and engaged in economic exchange of products and labor power, albeit marked by power imbalance. However, with the

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<sup>31</sup> George Thompson, ESQ, *Travels and Adventures in Southern Africa*, vol 1., 2d ed., (London: Henry Colburn: 1827), 155.

<sup>32</sup> Deacon and Foster, *My Heart Stands in the Hill*, 28.

<sup>33</sup> See Map 1:1 South Africa in 1885.

advent of white settlers and notions inherent to Western state organization, San's relationship to their environment was dramatically altered: ownership of territory turned some forms of legal land use into the crime of trespassing. Private property of natural resources barred people from accessing their water holes or gathering areas. Hunting laws declared the other half of the hunter-gatherer economy illegal. The San responded to these political-socio-economic changes in their environment by incorporating themselves into settler agriculture as wage workers and by commercializing a romanticized version of their earlier subsistence strategy.

### **The Past Revisited: Settler Colonialism and South African “Bushmen”**

South Africa's history of land deprivation is central to understanding the pattern of institutionalized inequality which characterized this country in the past 350 years. Similar to other colonies, the interconnectedness of land, labor, and power shaped South Africa's modern history. From 1652 until 1994, colonial powers ensured their supremacy vis-à-vis the indigenous population in three ways: firstly, they created positions of privilege through political and economic structures of power; secondly, they deprived indigenous peoples of land, water, and other resources; and thirdly, they created exploitative labor conditions including slavery.<sup>34</sup>

A general history of the San in Southern Africa is beyond the scope of this work and can be found elsewhere.<sup>35</sup> Suffice it to say that San have been driven

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<sup>34</sup> Sampie Terreblanche, *History of Inequality in South Africa 1652-2002* (Sandton: University of Natal Press; KMM Review Publishing Company Pty Ltd, 2003), 6.

<sup>35</sup>For an overview see: Gall 2000; Gordon & Douglas 1992; Hahn 1870; Le Roux 2004; Mountain 2003; Passarge 1907; Schapera, 1930, Sknotnes 1996, 2007; Smith et al, 2004; Wilmsen 1989.

from their land first by migrating Bantu tribes about 2000 years ago and for the past 350 years by European and Coloured settlers expanding the frontier. This process resulted in cultural and economic exchange and adaptation of living standards and relationships to negotiate new resource access strategies.<sup>36</sup>

Confronted with a maelstrom of changes, San faced the choice whether to integrate or resist. Nigel Penn states: “if we seek to explain why the San perished, the answer lies not only in their supposed lack of adaptability, but in the murderous and unchanging ideas of their [European] foes.”<sup>37</sup>

Confronted with land loss and invasions, the San retreated but also fought back and soon became infamous for their cattle raids. Thus, the government sent out commandos to exterminate the thieves – more than 32 deadly commandos set out to “clean the land” between the 1770s and 1820s.<sup>38</sup> Private hunting parties shot “Bushmen,” known as vermin, as trophies along with other wild animals. The result of this genocide, which Gall, Gordon, and Penn document in detail, was the annihilation of San as hunter-gatherers in most parts of South Africa and the incorporation of the survivors, mostly San children, as servants into the colony.<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>36</sup> Wilmsen, *Land Filled with Flies*; Pieter Jolly, “Strangers to Brothers: Interaction Between South-Eastern San and Southern Nguni/Sotho Communities,” (Masters of Arts dissertation, University of Cape Town, 1994). Pieter Jolly, “Between the Lines: Some Remarks on ‘Bushman’ Ethnicity,” in *Miscast: Negotiating the Presence of the Bushmen*, Pippa Skotnes, ed. (Cape Town: University of Cape Town Press, 1996), 197-210.

<sup>37</sup> Nigel Penn, “‘Fated to Perish’: The Destruction of the Cape San,” in *Miscast: Negotiating the Presence of the Bushmen*, Pippa Skotnes, ed. (Cape Town: University of Cape Town Press, 1996), 91.

<sup>38</sup> Thompson, *Travels and Adventures in Southern Africa*, 395.

<sup>39</sup> This process accelerated with the introduction of the Caledon Code, better known as Hottentot Proclamation of 1809, which legalized the compulsory “apprenticeship” of Khoekhoe children and presumably incorporated Bushmen children. Wayne Dooling, “The Origins and Aftermath of the Cape Colony’s ‘Hottentot Code’ of 1809,” *Kronos, Journal of Cape History* 31 (2005): 50-61.



The San early travelers encountered did not conform to their expectations. The Rev. John Campbell's travel account contains an interview with a young San he met in Bushmanland at the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and who accompanied him for a while "to get education."<sup>40</sup> Campbell's questions reveal that this San at the beginning of the nineteenth century was not the isolated forager one might expect: "*Q*: If he [the San] could get anything he wished, what would he desire to have? *Ans*. I would have plenty of beads, knives, tinder-boxes, cattle, and sheep....*Q*: What kind of food he would like best to have every day? *Ans*. Bread and sheep's flesh."<sup>41</sup> We know too little about his origin and the circumstances under which these questions were asked to draw any definite conclusions, but the notion of the "wild Bushman" is questionable.

The British authorities tried to halt the bloodshed by adopting a range of measures to "civilize" the "Bushmen" and to transform them into pastoralists. They proclaimed Bushmanland a "Bushman reserve", initiated livestock gift-giving from colonists to their enemies, and encouraged missions. Although each component of these government initiatives failed, San proved to be more susceptible to the ambiguous peace than to the outright hostility, and "the subtle infiltration of missionaries, merchants, and government officials" succeeded.<sup>42</sup> The San were finally defeated by the presence of settlers. In 1863, Louis Anthing, a government representative sent to Bushmanland, drew the government's attention to the "system of extermination" practiced by European farmers, Korannas, Bantu, and Coloureds against the "aborigines," i.e. San. He called for the establishment of a magistracy in Bushmanland to make the law accessible for

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<sup>40</sup> John Campbell, *Travels in South Africa; Undertaken at the Request of the Missionary Society*, 2d ed. (London: Black, Parry, & Co., 1815), 143.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, 144. This interview precedes the Bleek and Lloyd Collection about 60 years.

<sup>42</sup> Penn, *Fated to Perish*, 82.

the people and for the “forming of locations for the remnant of the Bushman race, and the sale of some of the land for the purpose of providing these people, who had been deprived of their means of substance, with some stocks.”<sup>43</sup> These progressive protective measures were never realized and the killing continued. Whoever was not killed starved to death or was forced to live off killing livestock and if caught was sent to labor on the Breakwaters in Cape Town. By the 1870s, the last remnants of the Cape San fought for their survival.

### **Northern Cape 1850 -1930: Claims to Land and Labor**

The world of the Northern Cape frontier was the meeting ground of indigenous populations and colonizers, of “aborigines” and “foreigners,” “natives” and “settlers,” or in the words of the /Xam, of “people” and “people who are different,” encounters that destroyed and transformed and in the process shaped a new society.

The transformation of subsistence of the Southern Kalahari San began with the arrival of Dirk Vilander and his followers North of the Orange River in 1865.<sup>44</sup> It might not be a coincidence that the only “Bushmen” of South African origin who today still/again identify as such, come from a region integrated into colonial history less than 150 years ago.

The history of the Northern Cape in the 19<sup>th</sup> century is a conundrum of overlapping claims to territory and resources. At least four wars by Koras,

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<sup>43</sup> Louis Anthing to Colonial Secretary Cape Town, 21 April, 1863, printed in *Miscast: Negotiating the Presence of the Bushmen*, Pippa Skotnes, ed. (Cape Town: University of Cape Town Press, 1996), 162-178.

<sup>44</sup> Nigel Penn, UCT, and Martin Legassick, UWC, have documented the history of the area most thoroughly. See Nigel Penn, *The Northern Cape Frontier Zone 1700-c1815* (PhD Dissertation. University of Cape Town, 1995); Martin Legassick, “From prisoners to exhibits: representations of ‘Bushmen’ of the northern Cape, 1880-1900,” in *Rethinking settler colonialism*, Annie E. Coombes, ed. (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2006): 63-84.

Afrikaners, Hottentots, Namas, and Hereros influenced the population distribution and claims to ownership of territory in the region. Korannaland, which became Gordonland in 1883, is an area bordering on South-West Africa and British Bechuanaland.<sup>45</sup> Borders, drawn arbitrarily in 1885, especially South-West Africa's straight line along the 20<sup>th</sup> degree of East Longitude, possessed at first almost no significance. They began to assume meaning as a political instrument, through being crossed strategically for protection during local uprisings, as well as through redistribution of territory as the terrain of the Baster in the area was cut in half.<sup>46</sup>

Baster settlers, themselves responding to an advancing Cape Colony, were the first frontiersmen to expand into the territory inhabited by Bushmen. As late as 1879, a government report acknowledged vast areas to the North of the Orange River as "[n]omansland...although claimed as hunting ground equally by Bechuanas, Herero, and Namaqua...uninhabited except by a few Bushmen."<sup>47</sup> The Baster chief Dirk Vilander occupied the land to the North of the Gariep in the area of Mier or Rietfontein where they effectively settled in 1865, content with the plentiful game and land well suited to stock farming. He might not have been recognized by the British colony, but his legacy as "Bushman Chief" is alive in the memory of †Khomani elders.<sup>48</sup> Upon Dirk Vilander's death on August 25, 1888 his son David subdivided the communal land into farms. Every male Baster

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<sup>45</sup> Martin Legassick, "The peopling of Riemvasmaak and the Morengo Rebellion," unpublished manuscript, n.p.

<sup>46</sup> J.F. Herbst, *Report on Rietfontein Area*. Cape Parliamentary Papers, G.53.

<sup>47</sup> Cape of Good Hope, *Ministerial Department of Native Affairs Blue Book on Native Affairs* (Cape Town: Government Printer, 1879), 133.

<sup>48</sup> See Scott quoted in Legassick, "The peopling of Riemvasmaak," n.p.; Ouma |Una Rooi at the Peace Park's workshop, Molopo Lodge, July 26, 2008. Dirk Vilander's descendents are part of what is today known as the Mier community. This community lodged a land claim which was settled simultaneously with that of the †Khomani.

received a farm, but a strip of land without water and livestock or the supportive structure of communal rights was more of a nuisance than a benefit. Despite Dirk Vilander's maxim not to sell to white farmers, strict hunting laws, brandy, and a "childlike faith in the integrity of the white man" took its toll, and many Basters chose to sell their farms for "the most ridiculous prices. Rarely was any money paid."<sup>49</sup> On May 5, 1891 British Bechuanaland formally annexed the territory. In 1893 the court in Upington granted all 64 titles to land, 11 in favor of Europeans. In 1908, only 6 farms were still in Baster hands.<sup>50</sup>

Another significant event for the Khoesan inhabiting Gordonia was the Nama-German War of 1904-1908. Elsie Vaalbooi and Keis Brow, ‡Khomani elders interviewed by Nigel Crawhall, "remembered these invasions [of the German Imperial Army], hiding in the sand dunes, the fear of annihilation and the sense that the desert was no longer theirs."<sup>51</sup> This war had two outcomes. Firstly, it displaced many surviving Khoesan and thus merged various ethnic groups.<sup>52</sup> Secondly, the taming of the frontier became more important to the government who encouraged Europeans to settle along the Northern periphery. Especially after World War I, the Union government accelerated its program of settling white farmers in the southern Kalahari. By the time the Kalahari Gemsbok National Park was proclaimed in 1931, all remaining lands were in settler hands.<sup>53</sup>

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<sup>49</sup> Herbst, *Report on Rietfontein Area*, 9.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*, 9-10.

<sup>51</sup> Crawhall, *!Ui-Taa language shift in Gordonia*, 237.

<sup>52</sup> Stories from this period have remained vivid cultural memory. Peace Park Workshop, July 26, 2008, Molopo Lodge. Martha van der Westhuizen, interview by the author, July 29, 2008, Molopo Lodge.

<sup>53</sup> For a detailed history of the area prior and post park proclamation see Jane Carruthers, "Past & Future Landscape Ideology: The Kalahari Gemsbok National Park," in *Social History and*

Within a space of about twenty years, the racial make-up of the region had changed completely and San “went from being the owners of millions of hectares of hunting and gathering lands to being landless.”<sup>54</sup> “Bushmen” constituted the bottom of the class system in the Kalahari. They were arrested as trespassers inhabiting land that had been allocated to farmers. Prohibited from hunting and gathering along traditional routes, San were increasingly pushed into the labor economy.

In 1908, the assistant resident magistrate of Rietfontein J.F. Herbst described scattered groups of remaining San who still lived by hunting and gathering.<sup>55</sup> He mentioned “two tribes of Bushmen, the one a diminutive yellow race called ‘Gommanes’<sup>56</sup> – probably fugitives from the Cape Colony – the other a darker and taller race living on the Nosop River, amongst the Bechuanas.”<sup>57</sup> However, “[t]he yellow race is almost extinct, but a mixture is still found in the Kalahari. Round-faced, not at all unpleasing, they are very delicately featured, having hands and feet so small that they would not disgrace a stage beauty.”<sup>58</sup> According to Herbst, these San lived in small family groups under “a sort of headman whose authority is confined to directing hunting operations and the treks connected therewith.”<sup>59</sup>

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*African Environments*, William Beinart and JoAnn McGregor, eds. (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2003): 255-266.

<sup>54</sup> Crawhall, *!Ui-Taa language shift*, 237-8.

<sup>55</sup> See appendix Fig.1:2 depicts hunting Bushmen in 1919.

<sup>56</sup> According to Steyn this might refer to ≠Omani, H. P Steyn, *Report on the Kagga Kamma / Southern Kalahari Bushmen* (Northern Cape Province Land Claim and Submission to Minister of Land Affairs: [1995]), 1; according to Botha to ≠Khomani, L.J. Botha, *On the origin and identity of the Twee Rivieren Bushman community* (Northern Cape Province Land Claim and Submission to Minister of Land Affairs: [1995]), 5.

<sup>57</sup> Herbst, *Report on Rietfontein Area*, 5.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid., 5-6.

The same confusion regarding hunting laws seemed to prevail at the time of the first interaction between farmers and San, when San had to learn that cattle were not for hunting. Herbst stated: “[t]hey profess to be unable to understand by what right the Government protects the game and invariably ask to be shown the Government brand on the animals.”<sup>60</sup> In the 1930s, San were faced with £ 25 fines or six months hard labor for poaching and because “most of them have never seen money” they went to jail where they died “as wild animals do when placed in captivity.”<sup>61</sup>

In addition to hunting laws, a new set of land laws infringed upon the freedom of the San. On 31 July 1931, the Kalahari Gemsbok National Park (KGNP) was proclaimed leaving the Bushmen uninformed and unconsulted.<sup>62</sup> Piet de Villiers, Inspector of Lands in Upington, better known as “King of the Kalahari” and the local farmer Willie Rossouw invited the Minister of Land Piet Grobler on an hunting trip to persuade him of the necessity of establishing a protected area.<sup>63</sup> The Great Depression had made its impact felt, and white and Coloured farmers resorted to hunting. By that time, most of the settlers in Mier were full-time hunters for the market in biltong and hides.<sup>64</sup> Piet Grobler’s involvement in the founding of the Kruger National Park and in establishing the National Parks Act of 1926 showed his commitment to nature conservation.

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<sup>60</sup> Ibid., 7.

<sup>61</sup> Leslie M. Steyn, “All The World Is Interested In Our Bushmen: Why steps are now being taken to establish a definite reserve for them,” *Outspan*, June 26, 1937, 45f.

<sup>62</sup> SAB URU 1523 1751 (1935 addition) SAB URU 1215 1873 (1931 proclamation.) The present-day boundaries came into being in 1935. In 1938 a 40km wide strip along the Nossop in Bechuanaland was declared a game reserve and placed under the jurisdiction of the South African National Parks Board.

<sup>63</sup> P. Van Wyk and E.A.N. Le Riche. “The Kalahari Gemsbok National Park: 1931-1981,” Supplement to *Koedeo* (1984): 22.

<sup>64</sup> Wilf Nussey, *The Crowded Desert: The Kalahari Gemsbok National Park* (Cape Town: William Waterman Publications, 1993), 18.

Known as the “father and mentor of the KGNP [he] gave a specific order that all Bushmen found in the park must be given special care and attention and allowed to stay because they needed shelter as a dwindling people.”<sup>65</sup>

In 1936, the park warden Joep le Riche, the “man who cared,”<sup>66</sup> and his Coloured constable Gert Mouton came upon a group of 20 “Bushman” comprised of several families near Sewe Panne in the center of the KGNP. Following Grobler’s orders, Le Riche persuaded the group with tobacco and food to move to the headquarters at Gemsbokplein in the Auob valley. Another group from Union’s End inside the park soon joined. They formed a small settlement in the south of the park, but when it grew too big the Bushmen were driven away.<sup>67</sup> These were neither the pristine “Lords of the Desert” about which the South African poet Thomas Pringle wrote, nor “simple, harmless and uneducated people,”<sup>68</sup> but people who “had been corrupted by professional poachers who had bribed or coerced them into killing for the illegal market” and who traded for tobacco, trinkets, and liquor.<sup>69</sup> Once settled with Le Riche, their right to hunt was withdrawn, but they were provided with accommodation and rations.

The struggle for labor power which dominated the majority of the Colony also determined power relations in the Northern Cape. Martin Legassick asserts that San were imprisoned “for breaches of colonial law, essentially because the ‘Bushman’ refused to become a part of the cheap labor force required by the

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<sup>65</sup> Ibid., 169.

<sup>66</sup> Brian Barrow, *Song of a Dry River* (Cape Town, Johannesburg, London: Purnell. 1975), 123.

<sup>67</sup> Alain Degré, Sylvie Robert, Michael Knight and Lance Cherry, *Kalahari Rivers of Sand* (Johannesburg: Southern Book Publishers, 1989), 75.

<sup>68</sup> James van Buskirk, “Living on the Tsama: The Strange Case of the Kalahari Bushmen, a Little-known People Who Lead a Solitary Nomadic Existence, and the Story of How They Were Brought to the Johannesburg Exhibition,” *Speaker*, March 13, 1937.

<sup>69</sup> Nussey, *The Crowded Desert*, 169.

colony.”<sup>70</sup> In the early 1880s, San-speaking shepherds made about 10s per month or received a goat ewe and used clothes together with a meat ration, coffee, and bread. Some earned a gun which provided the owner with independence.<sup>71</sup>

However, as these employment rewards would often not suffice to feed a man’s family, women and children worked at the farmer’s homestead. John Scott, appointed special magistrate on the Northern Border of the Cape Colony 1880-1887, where he invested much of his time attempting to put a halt on the farmers’ practice of shooting “Bushmen,” asserted that San had “an invincible repugnance to settled work, alleging that the farmers ill-treat them and cheat them out of their wages.”<sup>72</sup> This might explain the San-speaker’s reputation as lazy and unsuited to European farm work. But Scott also wrote: “[i]t is exasperating almost beyond endurance for a farmer to see all these people enjoying themselves in utter idleness, while he can often not get a servant of any sort to help him in his work, and knows that it is his stock which enables these squatters to live in idleness.”<sup>73</sup> Scott failed to acknowledge the work entailed in providing for subsistence. Later he admitted that low employment might be due to little incentive, since taking up employment did not mean a betterment of living conditions but certainly an increase in workload.

The solutions to the problem of San’s refusal to work entailed what Legassick describes as “social engineering.” Even at this early date two distinctive strategies for incorporating San began to emerge. The removal of San from the Northern Cape was designed to induce them to become a productive part of society under strict supervision. If San were taken from the Northern Cape,

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<sup>70</sup> Legassick, “From prisoners to exhibits,” 63.

<sup>71</sup> Scott quoted in *ibid.*, 68-70.

<sup>72</sup> Scott quoted in *ibid.*, 68.

<sup>73</sup> Scott quoted in *ibid.*, 70.



where they could live off foraging as an alternative to farm labor, and were brought to the Western Cape this option would be eliminated and San could thus be employed. In addition, Scott maintained, it would be moral to send Bushmen to safety from extermination.<sup>74</sup> The government replied that forced removal was not feasible but “a regime of strict repression...might induce them to come southward.”<sup>75</sup> This reasoning is remarkably akin to that of the separate development pursued by the apartheid government in response to the 1913 land acts. Bantu and “Bushman” alike were to be induced to become labor migrants to the cities to engage in productive work and through their absence facilitate governing their home districts.

As the number of stock-thefts declined and San were perceived as integrating into the farming economy, the state’s attitude towards “Bushman” turned to a more benevolent paternalism. Scott’s successor, C. Bam, noted in his 1896 report that the “location, viz. the Kalahari desert” consisted of 300 to 400 Bushmen battling against starvation for lack of game. Feeling that it would be “almost a pity to let them die out like this,” he had fed Bushmen women at government expense and proposed to assist them until the rains made it possible for them to survive on foraging. Bam proposed a permanent solution: “I would suggest that someone be appointed to merely supervise them. They might be registered, and ...roam at will; only in scarce times might they go to the Inspector, who will supply them with food at Government expenses.”<sup>76</sup> This shows the different solutions of the two individuals, Scott and Bam, to the Bushmen problem, but it also reflects a change in the government’s attitude based on the

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<sup>74</sup> This argument is diametrically opposed to that of the Bushmen Reserve in the 1930 discussed in chap.4.

<sup>75</sup> Scott quoted in *ibid.*, 73.

<sup>76</sup> C. Bam quoted in *ibid.*, 78-9.

Bushmen's decreasing stock-theft rates and increasing utility as objects for exhibition and scientific inquiry.

In the 1880s, the commercialization of Bushmen in the Northern Cape intensified as San were selected for display in Europe. These popular shows following the 18th century tradition of freak show entertainment expected to display "wild Bushmen."<sup>77</sup> Scott recounts an instance of conscious fabrication of the Bushman myth: the Bushmen he selected were "dressed in European rags. Their proper full dress is a sort of collar and pair of (spriers?) [sic] business and I am afraid would shock the British Nation. However, I have asked Colonel Eustace [magistrate of Namaqualand] to provide them with skins."<sup>78</sup> From 1906, the profitable trade in "Bushman" remains blossomed in Gordonia bringing in local and international grave-robbers, adding another dimension to "forced removals."<sup>79</sup>

In the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, many San entered the labor force as farm workers, at least temporarily. They tended to seek employment when it became difficult to live on the tsamma, a seasonal watermelon found in the Kalahari and a staple food for Bushmen.<sup>80</sup> Herbst also reported: "[t]hey live as far removed as possible from the white man, in whose presence they are very timid and reserved, until satisfied of his disposition."<sup>81</sup> San incorporated commodities such as European clothing into their lives. They entered into working relationships with whites as guides to hunting expeditions where they "perform no menial work,

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<sup>77</sup> Ibid., 74f.

<sup>78</sup> Scott quoted in *ibid.*, 76.

<sup>79</sup> Ibid., 80.

<sup>80</sup> Interestingly, European farmers got supplies of Tsamma meal from Bushmen: I.D. Maccrone, "A Note on the Tsamma and its uses among the Bushmen," in *Bushmen of the Southern Kalahari*, J.D. Rheinallt Jones and C.M. Doke, eds. (Johannesburg: Witwatersrand University Press, 1937), 194.

<sup>81</sup> Herbst, *Report on Rietfontein Area*, 5-6.

except to assist in the skinning” and “vanish[ed] like ghosts” at the end. Herbst, impressed with the San’s skills as hunters, described the importance of trekking: “[a]s we look to our morning paper for a record of the events of the previous day so the Bushmen will interpret the doings of the animal world during the previous night...by the imprints left on the sand.”<sup>82</sup>

The San were not only valued for their tracking skills by hunting parties. They were also well known for their trained dogs and ability to hunt the South African fox. The local Baster taught them the use of a gun and they in return provided the Baster with pelts for a few pinches of tobacco each in addition to the meat.<sup>83</sup> The use of the firearm did not serve to empower the San but to underscore their interdependence with the Baster. Because most San did not have access to a weapon of their own, they entered into agreements in which they were recompensed in naturals while the Basters earned a profit. According to Herbst, “[t]he rifle, therefore, played an important part in the taming of the Bushmen.”<sup>84</sup>

The less integrated hunter-gatherers still roamed the Northern Cape. A government surveyor mentioned that “nomadic Bushmen” were the only natives in the Mier region. Instead of their expulsion, he advocated to reserve a borehole and about four farms (60,000 morgen) for the San along with the right to “hunt for food but not calves or cows in calf.”<sup>85</sup> In essence, he was asking for the establishment of a reserve. Not surprisingly, the settlers started promoting the

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<sup>82</sup> Ibid.

<sup>83</sup> James van Buskirk, “Living on the Tsama,” *Speaker*, March 13, 1937

<sup>84</sup> Herbst, *Report on Rietfontein Area*, 5-6.

<sup>85</sup> Legassick, “From prisoners to exhibits,” 80.

myth that the Bushmen were extinct in Southern Africa at the same time.<sup>86</sup> The racial division of Gordonia in the 1920s did not account for San.<sup>87</sup>

The Southern Kalahari San, some of which were to join Donald Bain in the 1930s, lived outside the colony's borders during the peak of the genocide in the 18<sup>th</sup> and early 19<sup>th</sup> century; their record of more regular interaction with settlers only dates back about 150 years.<sup>88</sup> Nevertheless, San experienced the socio-economic changes here no less forcefully than in other areas of the colony. However, the effects of their socio-economic integration were mitigated by the relatively short timeframe.

### **The Bushmen Response**

For the San of the Southern Kalahari, socio-economic changes brought about by colonialism were not the result of intermarriage and acculturation as experienced by other hunter-gatherers and Bantu groups, but the result of an abrupt end to a mostly self-determined life through imposed Eurocentric laws. It is difficult, but not impossible, to discover how contemporary San responded to the loss of self-determination. On the surface, recorded history appears to be the legacy of dominant cultures, leaving the oppressed without a history of their own. There are ample sources depicting San through the eyes of the colonizers through court cases and newspaper articles; they feature primarily as victims, distorted through the conceptual socio-cultural framework of the time. As Jan Vansina states, the main concern of the historian is the relationship between history,

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<sup>86</sup> Crawhall, *!Ui-Taa language shift in Gordonia*, 240.

<sup>87</sup> See Martin Legassick, "The racial division of Gordonia, 1921-30," *Kronos*, 25 (1998). When the Basters petitioned the government for a restitution of their farms, Gordonia was divided along racial lines and the Mier Settlement, effectively a Colored Reserve, was set up.

<sup>88</sup> Herbst, *Report on Rietfontein Area*, 7.

memory, and myth.<sup>89</sup> To avoid distorting history, the historian is obliged to “make the silence talk,” but as Penn notes, inevitably much is lost and it is the historical process itself which renders it unrecoverable.<sup>90</sup> In this context, the Bleek and Lloyd Archive, a collection of /Xam legends and myths, superstitions, customs, personal histories, poetry, paintings, and drawings, is of crucial importance; Barnard notes “the idea of the ‘Bushman’ that has come down to us is a product of Bleek’s work.”<sup>91</sup> Wilhelm Bleek and Lucy Lloyd began interviewing San in 1866, wanting to learn about their language and folklore. While Bleek is often portrayed uncritically as a liberal universalist, Legassick refers to his “Janus face of nineteenth-century Cape liberalism,”<sup>92</sup> while the legacy of his work portrays the San as creative, amiable, and real individuals, he nevertheless subscribed to biological racist thought as an expression of evolution.

Almost all the San Bleek interviewed were prisoners. Magistrate Scott stated in 1881: “[t]he only suitable place for them [San] is Robben Island...feeling they could not get over the sea they would settle down contentedly and I think would earn their keep and wages. They would also be available for Bushmen lore researchers.”<sup>93</sup> Thus, imprisonment and subjugation to colonial law instead of extermination was a new form of social control linked to research. Dia!kwain cited in the epigraph and ||Kábbo, who will serve as a

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<sup>89</sup> Jan Vansina, “Memory and Oral Tradition,” in *The African Past Speaks: Essays on Oral Tradition and History*, Joseph C. Miller, ed. (Kent: Dawsons, Hamden, CT: Archon 1980), 262-277.

<sup>90</sup> Nigel Penn, *The Forgotten Frontier: Colonist and Khoisan on the Cape’s Northern Frontier in the 18<sup>th</sup> Century* (Athens: Ohio University Press; Cape Town: Double Story Books, 2005), 3.

<sup>91</sup> Barnard, *Anthropology and the Bushman*, 25.

<sup>92</sup> Legassick, “From prisoners to exhibits,” 66.

<sup>93</sup> *Ibid.*, 63; see epigraph.

representative voice below, came to live with Bleek from the Breakwater prison in Cape Town where they served sentences for stock-theft and murder.

With careful analyzing the /Xam as Cape Bushmen can provide a framework for understanding how other San might have felt. Comparison leads to contradiction, especially in anthropological work translating the idiom of one culture to another. Barnard suggests that we need to “conceive a culture not as much as ‘speech’ or as ‘text’ but as *grammar*. ” He further asserts that a “cultural system ...[is] a metaphorical ‘language’ whose ‘dialects’ are often both mutually intelligible and best understood as products of ....common ‘vocabulary’ of related customs and institutions. Khoisan culture is such a language, and the various Khoisan cultures are its ‘dialects.’”<sup>94</sup> If Barnard maintains that Khoisan groups understand each other, certainly we can substitute the voice of the /Xam for those San, even said to be descendents of the /Xam, who stayed with Bain. In the 1930s, it was repeatedly stated that the San in the region of the Nossob and Auob were the most true to type, resembling the “Cape Bushmen” in physiognomy and language. Moreover, D.F. Bleek introduced her categorization according to San language in 1927.<sup>95</sup> According to this classification, the group assembled by Bain falls into the category of “Southern Bushmen,” and so do the /Xam. In reference to the latter, Schapera wrote: “[t]hey ... have ... been almost completely exterminated, and at the present time only a few individuals still survive in the north-western districts of the Province, where they are mostly employed as farm

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<sup>94</sup> Alan, Barnard, *Hunter and Herders of Southern Africa: A Comparative Ethnography of the Khoisan Peoples* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 301-2.

<sup>95</sup> This classification is upheld by Schapera in his standard work I[saac] Schapera, *The Khoisan Peoples of South Africa: Bushmen and Hottentots* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1930), 419f.

hands by Europeans.”<sup>96</sup> Thus, the link between /Xam and “Bain’s Bushmen” is sufficiently strong.

The life of Bleek’s informant ||Kábbo demonstrates the influence of the capitalist economy, white South African class consciousness, and the /Xam way of utilizing the ideas beneficial to them, while discarding and disobeying what they disapproved. ||Kábbo remained with the Bleek and Lloyd family for two years after the expiration of his prison sentence in 1871 for economic reasons: persuaded by the promise of a gun, he agreed to perform “women’s household work.”<sup>97</sup> He felt out of place among “work’s people” since he was a “Flat Bushman.” “Flat Bushmen” are “smoking’s people” who “go to each other’s huts; that they may smoking sit in front of them...they obtain stories at them.”<sup>98</sup> Ultimately, ||Kábbo was drawn to his home in the North not only by the promise of stories and independence but by a deep attachment to his place: “[f]or, he came to live at a different place; his place it is not....people were those who brought him to the people’s place, that he should first come to work for a little while at it. He is the one who thinks of (his) place, that he must be the one to return.”<sup>99</sup>

||Kábbo was a transitional figure. While he associated with sorcerers and held customs and knowledge in high regard, he came to appreciate the benefits of colonial commodities: “[f]or I have sat waiting for the boots, that I must put on to walk in; which are strong for the road. ( ) For, the sun will go along, burning

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<sup>96</sup> Schapera, *The Khoisan Peoples of South Africa*, 32.

<sup>97</sup> “||Kábbo’s intended return home,” in W.H.I. Bleek and L.C. Lloyd (collectors), *Specimens of Bushmen Folklore* (London: George Allen, 1911; repr., Einsiedeln: Daimon, 2001), 301 (2877). In a colonial household women’s work becomes a burden to ||Kábbo, whereas in the veld the men helped gather veldfood if they could not hunt.

<sup>98</sup> Ibid. 301-2 (2880-1).

<sup>99</sup> Ibid. 305 (2891).

strongly.”<sup>100</sup> Bleek had promised him the delivery of a gun once he reached his home: “[f]or a gun is that which takes care of an old man; it is that which will kill the springbok which go through the cold (wind) we got to eat, in the cold (wind). We do, satisfied with food, lie down (in our huts) in the cold (wind). It (the gun) is strong against the wind. It satisfies a man with food in the very middle of the cold.”<sup>101</sup> The gun for ||Kábbo embodied the promise of an independent life with food in abundance: “[f]or starvation was that on account of which I was bound ... Therefore I lived with him [the Master, literally Chief], that I might get a gun from him, that I might possess it. That I might shoot myself, feeding myself, while I do not eat my companions’ food. ... I eat my (own) game.”<sup>102</sup> ||Kábbo does not mention food distribution networks or obligations to share. Although /Xam commonly referred to people who acted ungenerously concerning food distribution as “decayed arm,”<sup>103</sup> the power associated with the gun might have strengthened that arm again. Arguably the possession of a gun contributed to the loss of communal identity already strained through marginalization.

The hunter-gatherers living north of the Gariep were confronting profound social change in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century. The major structural shifts converging simultaneously for San in the Northern Cape included relatively sudden and total land loss resulting in a collapse of the hunting and gathering economy; the imposition of a legal system upon the San retroactively declaring

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<sup>100</sup> Ibid., 315 (2921).

<sup>101</sup> Ibid., 317 (2926). ||Kábbo stressed the cold because hunting was facilitated when animals could be chased until they died from heat stroke, thus it was harder to hunt successfully in the cold (311-12).

<sup>102</sup> Ibid. ||Kábbo’s motivation of personal gain can be read as an example for the strategic thinking that, fifty years later, influenced Bain’s Bushmen to cooperate with Bain for the promise of land and the immediate return of food and shelter.

<sup>103</sup> “The Hyena’s Revenge” in W.H.I. Bleek and L.C. Lloyd (collectors), *Specimens of Bushmen Folklore* (London: George Allen, 1911; repr., Einsiedeln: Daimon, 2001), 125 (Footnote \*).



the hunter-gatherer lifestyle illegal; and entry into highly unequal agro-pastoral relations of production on farms and loss of cultural confidence and spiritual belief system. The early twentieth century was dominated by a reevaluation of “Bushmen” lives. They discarded some of the old ways, and embraced new ideas and commodities in a process of conscious and unconscious selection. It was in this period of social change that Donald Bain established his camp in the Kalahari.<sup>104</sup> Joining Bain might have proven to be not only a viable but also an attractive alternative to life at the margins of society. In the camp, “Bushmen” were catapulted from the periphery to the center of attention.

Chapter 2 discusses how Donald Bain’s Bushmen exhibitions in 1936-1937 created and perpetuated the Bushman myth through the instrumentalization of the “Other.” The display of genuine Bushmen and their culture was to convince the spectator of the Bushmen’s inherent value to South Africa, and thus their worthiness of protection in a reserve. During this time period, many South African scientists discovered Bain’s Bushmen as fascinating research objects and contributed through their findings to situate Bain’s Bushmen firmly in the context of the Bushman myth. The Bushmen themselves contributed through selective presentation of their lives to the establishment of the myth in the public realm; they also learned about the value and cost attached to the myth by being markedly different in a South Africa of the 1930s.

Chapter 3 argues that the Bushman myth failed to deliver land access for Bain’s Bushmen, and on the contrary, finally led to the complete eradication of the hunter-gatherer lifestyle in South Africa. It analyzes the Bushmen reserve debate spanning a period between 1937 and 1941. Mapping out the importance of

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<sup>104</sup> See Map 0:3.

the debate to create room for the Bushmen on the background of white South Africa's identification with wilderness, it traces how various actors ranging from farmers, to the national parks board, academics, the media, and politicians mediated the politics of land use through the politics of (re)presentation of Bushmen.

The final chapter draws parallels and examines continuities and changes regarding the appropriation and utilization of the Bushman myth in the context of the ‡Khomani land rights claim. The claim failed to deliver on its promises. Competing claims to identity and authenticity hinder the development of the ‡Khomani community; these claims are reflected on two levels: first on the economic level reflecting development and income strategies ranging from stock farming to dancing for tourists; secondly, these claims are mirrored on the land. The mental map of ‡Khomani land is hence dominated by power, economic, and land usage conflicts rooted in the structure of a fabricated community with various exclusionary claims to the perpetuation of the Bushman myth.

Originally, the social construction of "Bushman" referred to a "lumpen category" which encompassed the non-owning, non-conformist periphery.<sup>105</sup> Not until the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century did the term acquire ethnographic meaning. The "Bushman" as product of the South African colonial discourse featured predominantly as stock-thieves. In the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, San gained scientific significance as their image focused on the quintessential primitive, our Paleolithic ancestor. Only in the 20<sup>th</sup> century did the connotation of savagery gradually become ennobled and transformed to the image of the "harmless people" upon

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<sup>105</sup> Gordon and Douglas, *The Bushman Myth*, 6.

which the public looks with nostalgia.<sup>106</sup> The stark contrast between the derogatory image of aggressive thieves and murderers and the romanticized image of the noble savage mirrors the change of relationships between San and colonizers but even more underscores which parts of colonial society had the power to shape public discourse. While farmers dominated in frontier-focused settler society, academics and the media as vehicles for social imperialism were enticed to “other” the periphery of an increasingly urbanized industrial nation. In the 21<sup>st</sup> century, romantization still plays a part in public discourse. However, San themselves have become active promoters of the Bushman myth as a strategy for economic empowerment, while seeking to overcome marginalization.

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<sup>106</sup> This image was famously propagated by Laurens van der Post and the Marshalls. For more on the historical changes of the Bushmen image see Gall 2002, Barnard 2007, Wilmsen 1989, Skotnes 1996.

## CHAPTER 2

### “BAIN’S BUSHMEN” AND THE BIRTH OF THE “BUSHMAN MYTH”

#### 1936-1937

[A]s we view these children of the desert playing their primitive games and dancing their primitive dances before curious spectators in the Bushmen Camp at the Empire Exhibition, let us not feel that they are being unduly revealed to the public gaze for the purpose of private gain. Let us rather feel as they feel, that they are working for a home, a land, and for the perpetuation of their race.

Empire Exhibition Brochure<sup>107</sup>

The development of the “Bushman myth”<sup>108</sup> in the South African context is traceable to Donald Bain, a South African farmer and big game hunter who assembled a group of San and other self-identified “Bushmen,” and recreated and utilized the Bushman myth of the pristine and timeless hunter-gatherer in order to guarantee the survival of his “Bushmen.”<sup>109</sup> Under Bain, San experienced the value and cost of being markedly different in the South Africa of the late 1930s. This lesson provided them with an alternative survival strategy in the presence of the capitalist system with its pervasive property rights and regulations regarding natural resources, forcing hunter-gatherers to give up their immediate-return economy. It is a lesson that has stayed with them until today.

This chapter lays out the framework of Bushmen (re)presentation in three specific instances: the 1936 Bushmen Camp, the Empire Exhibition in

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<sup>107</sup> Robert J Gordon, "Scene(s) at the Exhibition: Bain's 'Bushmen' at the Empire Exhibition, 1936," in *Africans in Show Business*, Bernth Lindfors, ed. (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1999), 270.

<sup>108</sup> As mentioned in chap. 1, this concept is appropriated from Robert Gordon, *The Bushman Myth*.

<sup>109</sup> I will dispose of the quotation marks when referring to “Bain’s Bushmen” as this group was fabricated as Bushmen not as a negative stereotype but with a claim to the mystic romantization of the Bushman myth.

Johannesburg, and Bain's protest march to Cape Town in May 1937. I explore the different agendas of the actors involved: the Bushmen's strategic decision to join Bain for their own advantage; Bain's motivation to exhibit Bushmen to further his agenda of a Bushmen reserve; scientists' perpetuation of the Bushman myth testifying to the Bushmen's uniqueness and worthiness of protection; and the media's attention to the "Other." All of these actors contributed towards the actualization of the group known as "Bain's Bushmen,"<sup>110</sup> in the process contributing to the diffusion of the Bushman myth.

### **Bain and Bushmen<sup>111</sup>**

The men of his time eulogized Donald Bain, better known as "Kalahari Bain," as a "well-known South African explorer and big game hunter,"<sup>112</sup> and the Bushmen's very God, benefactor and most trusted friend, while Alan Barnard soberly refers to him as "a local farmer."<sup>113</sup> Bain's experience with Bushmen and the Bushman myth included extended expeditions, among them the 1925 Denver expedition to discover Bushmen as the "missing link" between apes and human beings.<sup>114</sup> He himself dated his involvement with the Bushmen back to 1926 when he realized that "unless some effort was made to segregate and preserve the

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<sup>110</sup> This process of creating the myth of a coherent community has been repeated in the 1990s by the lawyer's decision to call a diverse group of people of various degrees of San heritage ‡Khomani San, see chap. 4.

<sup>111</sup> See appendix figure 2:1.

<sup>112</sup> Maingard, L.F. introduction to *Bushmen of the Southern Kalahari*, Rheinallt Jones, J.D. and C.M. Doke, eds. (Johannesburg: Witwatersrand University Press, 1937), vi.

<sup>113</sup> H.J. van Buskirk, "Bushmen to go to Secret Camp on Farm Near Johannesburg: Six Day's Journey by Motor Lorry Ends To-Day: Terrified as Train Raced Past Them in the Night," *Rand Daily Mail*, August 15, 1936; Barnard, *Anthropology and the Bushmen*, 51.

<sup>114</sup> Robert J Gordon, *Picturing Bushmen: The Denver African Expedition of 1925* (Ohio U. Pr, 1997), 17.

Bushmen they were inevitably doomed.”<sup>115</sup> The 1936 Johannesburg Empire Exhibition was Bain’s chance to champion the Bushmen cause and advocate for a Bushmen reserve. To collect Bushmen for display, he embarked on a 2,500 mile journey through the Kalahari, stopping at Gobabis, Ghanzi, Ngamiland, and Lehutitu. He finally settled for Gordonia, seeing that “of all the Bushmen I had encountered ...the people found here most closely resemble, in language and physical characteristics the old Cape Bushmen.”<sup>116</sup> On April 1, 1936, Donald Bain established camp in the Union near the junction of the Auob and Nossob Rivers about 100 miles north of Upington with the declared goal of congregating Bushmen.<sup>117</sup>

Bain was originally motivated by a mystic image of the primitive, not by the plight of a particular group of people. Thus, his involvement with the Union Bushmen resulted from a childlike fascination with the Bushmen myth; the issues facing the community during Bain’s times, such as the struggle against being pushed into the realm of illegality within an imposed state system, or the increasing dependence on integration into the local labor economy gained importance to Bain only through the prism of advancing the Bushmen myth. Prior to establishing camp, Dorothea Bleek, a world expert on Bushmen, advised Bain that the “purest Bushmen yet living as a tribe [are to be found] in the Lower Nossop. Those in the Cape Colony were better but they have died out, and those in Griqualand West are scarce.”<sup>118</sup> Bain then weighed his options: “[t]he great point in favour of the Nasob Bushmen is the comparative purity of the race but on

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<sup>115</sup> TLS Donald Bain to General Smuts, September 9, 1937, 1. SAB NTS 9586 382/400 (1).

<sup>116</sup> Ibid., 1-2.

<sup>117</sup> See Fig. 0:3 for the location of Bain’s Bushmen camp.

<sup>118</sup> TLS D.F. Bleek to D. Bain, February 20, 1936. SAB NTS 9586 382/400 Volume 2 Bushman Reserve.

the other hand those further north are the more primitive.”<sup>119</sup> If, at this early point, Bain was at all concerned with the preservation and not just with the exhibition of Bushmen, his was a general goal focused on saving Bushmen as Bushmen regardless of nationality or region in order to exploit their utility to science and South Africa, not to help them escape dependencies at the risk of integration.

### **Complicit Creation: Bain’s Bushmen**

Catapulting Bain and his Bushmen into the limelight, the Bushmen camp provided the Bushmen with food, shelter, and an alternative to farm labor. It furthered the careers of the professors engaged in research, as well as the prestige of the University of the Witwatersrand, and served to coordinate Bushmen for the Empire Exhibition. “Bain’s Camp,” as the strange gathering became known, was a hub of intercultural encounters between colonized and colonizers, mediating the multilayered processes of colonialism. The exhibition and examination of Bushmen cannot be understood based on a simplistic dualism between the exploitative oppressors and exploited victims: the recreation of the Bushman myth was a shared endeavor.

Under Bain, Bushmen experienced the value and the price of being markedly different in the South Africa of the 1930s. Their experiences with Bain familiarized them with a racial-cultural marketing strategy intended to capitalize on their representation of themselves as “the other.” Many Bushmen had embraced western clothing and the comfort of warm blankets when Bain validated their Bushmanness by forcing them to wear skins which provided far less protection for the wearer; what was once the standard dress now amounted to

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<sup>119</sup> TLS D. Bain to Magistrate in Upington, February 2<sup>nd</sup>, 1936. SAB NTS 9586 382/400.

costumes for most. This taught the people assembled by Bain a valuable lesson about the instrumentalization of their bodies, culture, and languages in the agendas of outsiders. Van Burskirk recounts an anecdote which clearly shows the Bushmen's understanding of the value of their physical features. One of the purposes of the expedition was to choose suitable examples of "typical" Bushmen for the Empire Exhibition. When the Bushmen had been examined, they had overheard the scientists talk about steatopygia. They assumed that would be the main criteria in the selection process as to who would be allowed to go to Johannesburg for the Empire Exhibition:

[a]s soon as this got around among them, it caused a considerable amount of jealousy in the hearts of the less fortunate sisters of the community. And then...they would steal off from their own camp after the activity of the day was over, and knock timidly on the door of Mr. Bain's hut, asking permission to show him personally their particular development, and attempting to find out from him if it was big enough to allow them to come to the Exhibition. They would anxiously explain to him that they would eat all they possibly could, and that by the time he was ready to go away they would be fat and beautiful.<sup>120</sup>

Aside from the obvious implications this anecdote has for gender-power relations, it underscores that Bushmen aspired to go to Johannesburg and understood that their bodies would become their vehicles to realizing this aspiration. Whereas they were mostly employed as trackers or herders for their knowledge of nature, with Bain they learned that their truly unique capital was not primarily their skills but their visible and audible otherness. The search for comparative advantage is inherent in a market economy; as the Bushmen were unfamiliar with navigating the market, they cooperated with intermediaries, the first of which was Bain.

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<sup>120</sup> H. J. van Buskirk, "Bushmen keen to be shown at Empire Exhibition: all eat hard to grow fat and beautiful: exclusive message from Rand expedition," *Rand Daily Mail*, July 15, 1936.



The Bushmen, much like ||Kábbo, based their decision on an economic cost-benefit analysis. Whereas ||Kábbo worked for the attainment of a gun, many Bushmen joined Bain to ensure regular availability of food:<sup>121</sup> “[t]he Bushmen love meat and this taste for freshly killed game was to prove his [Bain’s] greatest ally and the most effective means of securing their favour.”<sup>122</sup> This claim is plausible considering the increased difficulty of surviving from hunting and gathering described in the introduction in times of hunting prohibitions and irregular integration into the cash economy.

Although we are reduced to speculating how what van Buskirk refers to as “utopia of the great thirstland?”<sup>123</sup> a “Bushman Heaven,” truly the “happy hunting ground of their dreams” appeared to the Bushmen, Bain’s ideas must have appeared strange, and so unlike those of a stereotypical white or Coloured farmer.<sup>124</sup> Instead of demanding physical labor or herding sheep, Bain demanded leisure, game, and song; instead of forbidding them to use their language, he forced them to do so; instead of giving them clothes, he encouraged them to wear skins; instead of spreading them to the four winds, he encouraged them to move together to a place of his liking; instead of working towards assimilating them, he took every opportunity to entice them to live out his Bushmen dream; he fed them and rewarded them for appearing traditional and Bushman-like.<sup>125</sup> Today, it is impossible to gauge with certainty how the /Xam thought about the colonials’

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<sup>121</sup> Steyn, “The World Is Interested in Our Bushmen,” *Outspan*, June 26, 1937, 45f.

<sup>122</sup> H. J. van Buskirk, “With S.A. Scientists into Kalahari: Plaster Casts Made of Bushmen; Patriarch Acts as Organiser; Laboratory in the Desert,” *Rand Daily Mail*, July 8, 1936.

<sup>123</sup> James van Buskirk, “Living on the Tsama,” *Speaker*, March 13, 1937.

<sup>124</sup> van Buskirk, “With S.A. Scientists into Kalahari,” *Rand Daily Mail*, July 8, 1936.

<sup>125</sup> People like Colonel de Villiers, the Commissioner of Police, informed the government that Bain’s Bushmen were in fact all “bastard Hottentots and Korannas” employed as farm labor, see chap. 3, p. 83. See TD Re: Bushmen in Union, Pretoria August 26, 1937. 9586 382/400 Volume 1 Bushman Reserve.

influence in reshaping their world but their perception of colonialism might have well differed from ours today. They referred to Europeans and pastoralists simply as “people that were different” whereas the names for Koranas included: “bloody-handed” or “ticks that live on the back of sheep.” While this shows an awareness of the parasitic nature of some relationships, it is uncritical of the Europeans, not surprising when taking the interview circumstances into account.

The /Xam’s belief in the fluidity and interrelationship of beings and happenings might have increased their acceptance of change. Unsurprisingly for a people that lived in close proximity with nature, depended on it for their survival through an immediate return economy, the /Xam’s myths and legends, customs and pictures all testify to an intimate knowledge and understanding of nature, based on observation, experience, and knowledge handed down through stories but their worldview was inherently anthropocentric. Humans were not only the first beings on earth, they also “worked”<sup>126</sup> to shape the world as it was: in *The Sun and the Children*, the “men of the early race,” the first Bushmen threw up the Sun’s armpit into the sky while the person Sun was sleeping, so it might shine for everybody warming the people and making the Bushmen rice grow. After the early people died out, the Flat Bushmen inhabited the land; they taught their children the stories of the first Bushmen. Highlighting fluidity and transient, interchangeable identities beings could cross the line between humans, animals and natural phenomena: transformations from human into animal,<sup>127</sup> from god ([kaggen]) into animal,<sup>128</sup> from wind into bird,<sup>129</sup> from man to sun and moon,<sup>130</sup>

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<sup>126</sup> This is one of the few times the verb “work” is used outside of the colonial context of what work means in the capitalist context. San never spoke of their daily chores as “work.”

<sup>127</sup> “The Girl’s story; the Frog’s Story,” *Specimens of Bushmen Folklore*, Bleek and Lloyd 198.

<sup>128</sup> “The Mantis assumes the form of a Hartebeest,” in *ibid.*, 2.

from person to rain bull were common.<sup>131</sup> Many natural phenomena appeared as animals, thus the abstract acquired qualities that could be understood and commanded; everything was interrelated; like the butterfly effect of chaos theory, any action influenced something else and triggered a response action.<sup>132</sup> If this mindset still prevailed at Bain's Camp, it might have well increased the Bushmen's tolerance for Bain and the scientists and responsiveness to their experiments.

Aside from foraging, trade and labor power constituted the Bushmen's assets until Bain introduced a third viable alternative: marketing their "Otherness."<sup>133</sup> Their economic value to the agricultural industry of the Northern Cape was based on the price of their labor productivity in an environment of scarce labor supply: However, the marginal productivity of labor never translated into the real wage some of the Bushmen received and in addition integration into the settler society came at the cost of denying their Bushmen language, culture, and customs. Among these choices, exhibitions and with it the choice to capitalize on the value of the perpetuation of the Bushman myth, might have appealed to some.

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<sup>129</sup> "The Son of the Wind," in *ibid.*, 100f.

<sup>130</sup> "The Children are sent to throw the Sleeping Sun into the Sky," in *ibid.*, 14.

<sup>131</sup> "A Woman of the Early Race and the Rain Bull," in *ibid.*, 192.

<sup>132</sup> "The Thunderstorm," in *ibid.*, 320f.

<sup>133</sup> See Fig. 2:2 for a stereotypical depiction of Bushmen highlighting their small physical size.

### Scientists, Media, and the Perpetuation of the Bushman Myth

Bain set out to bring the researchers to the Bushmen before he brought the Bushmen to the public. As Bain framed his campaign in terms of “saving the last Bushmen,”<sup>134</sup> the data collected at the camp was to perpetuate the Bushman myth and, by extension, to advance the ultimate goal of guaranteeing Bushmen land access. The multidisciplinary research team of the University of the Witwatersrand became Bain’s close allies in the fight for Bushmen survival, collecting facts supporting the Bushmen’s historical, anthropological, linguistic, and musicological value to the Union.

Scientists valued the Otherness of the Bushmen marketed by Bain for its scientific potential: ignoring the reality of contemporary Bushmen life in favor of a stylized version of the past, they objectified the Bushmen and firmly situated them within the framework of the Bushman myth.<sup>135</sup> In a teleological Darwinist society which interpreted evolution from savage to civilized, learning about “them” became imperative to gaining knowledge about “us.” Two expeditions followed Bain’s invitation in June 1936: one expedition from Cape Town University and one from the University of the Witwatersrand.<sup>136</sup> The University of the Witwatersrand Kalahari Bushmen Expedition was scheduled to leave Johannesburg on the June 23, 1936. The homogenous white male research team consisted of R.A. Dart, Professor of Anatomy and Dean of the Faculty of Medicine; Professor L.P. Maingard, Professor of French and Romance languages

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<sup>134</sup> Robert J Gordon, “Saving the last South African bushman: A spectacular failure?,” *Critical Arts: A South-North Journal of Cultural and Media Studies* 9, no. 2 (1995): 30.

<sup>135</sup> See Fig. 2:3 for a depiction of Professor Maingard with his research subjects.

<sup>136</sup> The Cape Town University expedition made up of University members and representatives of the South African museum visited the camp only briefly on their way to Lake Ngami whereas the camp was the final destination for the University of the Witwatersrand expedition. “Expedition to Kalahari – on to ‘Bushman’s Rendezvous,’” *Star*, June 29, 1936; “Expedition to the Kalahari: Students of Capetown University,” *Star*, June 26, 1936.

and a member of the National Monuments Commission who studied Bushmen and Hottentot languages; Professor C.M. Doke, head of the Department of Bantu Studies; Dr. Pienaar, Lecturer in Phonetics in the Department of Bantu Studies; Professor P.R. Kirby, Professor of Music, who wrote extensively on Bushmen music; Mr. E.A. Williams, chief technical assistant to Professor Dart; and Mr. Hall, a medical assistant.<sup>137</sup> The team planned to stay for a period of two to four weeks during which they would collect preliminary research to be followed up with more detailed work once the Bushmen came to Johannesburg.<sup>138</sup> The scientists' perpetuation of the Bushman myth may, in addition to the ideological paradigm itself, also have served as a marketing paradigm since the researchers needed to raise funds for the expedition. They were also aware of Bain's need for resources to establish a Bushmen reserve.

In the eyes of the scientists, the big attraction of Bain's camp was the opportunity to study Bushmen in their "natural" environment.<sup>139</sup> As such they defined the artificially created camp of Bushmen from various places in the Southern Kalahari where the research subjects received meal rations in exchange for a cultural show;<sup>140</sup> fieldwork thus took the form of a common meeting ground, artificial for both the researcher and the research subject. In 1918, the Report of the Game Reserves Commission stated that reserves were to serve as training grounds for zoologists as they would be able to observe unaltered behavior in

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<sup>137</sup> "The Bushmen at Bain's Camp," *Star*, June 19, 1936.

<sup>138</sup> The results appeared in Bantu Studies Vol. X, No.4, 1936 and Vol. XI No.3, 1937. As comprehensive publication: *Bushmen of the Southern Kalahari*, Rheinallt Jones, J.D. and C.M. Doke, eds. Johannesburg: Witwatersrand University Press, 1937.

<sup>139</sup> "The Bushmen at Bain's Camp," *Star*, June 19, 1936; see Fig. 2:4 depicting Professor Maingard studying Bushmen in their "natural" environment.

<sup>140</sup> Van Buskirk, "With S.A. Scientists into Kalahari," *Rand Daily Mail*, July 8, 1936.

field laboratories.<sup>141</sup> Eighteen years later, Bain's camp served a similar purpose as the scientists set up their "laboratory in the desert" to study the Bushmen as thoroughly as possible.<sup>142</sup>

It was decided to bring into the desert complete laboratory equipment in order that a careful study might be made of the last surviving members of the ancient race of the Kalahari Bushmen. Their habits, music, paintings and engravings, anthropological measurements, stone crafts and in fact all their activities were to be carefully tabulated and catalogued to form a comprehensive and authoritative encyclopedia of Bushmen lore to be used as a basis of study for students the world over and for all time to come.<sup>143</sup>

The absence of the human story and the Bushmen worldview led to the objectification of Bushmen. The scientists' research foci, research methods, and fascination with details of people's bodily habitus or external genitalia,<sup>144</sup> with their phonetics, tones, and stresses<sup>145</sup> and with the debate over whether Bushmen use drums or not,<sup>146</sup> while neglecting to ask questions about social organization, economic, or political spheres, seems absurd and degrading to the reader of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. This absence was partly acknowledged; in the forward to "Bushman of the Southern Kalahari" which contained the research results, Maingard regretted the absence of information on social organization and the legal system.<sup>147</sup> This unawareness also led to erroneous conclusions. Stating that food was provided and shelters were built so that Bushmen had all the time for plays and games, Doke wrote: "[t]his, the lighter side of life, seems to play a large part

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<sup>141</sup> William Beinart and Peter Coates, *Environment and History: The Taming of Nature in the USA and South Africa* (London and New York: Routledge, 2002), 75.

<sup>142</sup> Van Buskirk, "With S.A. Scientists into Kalahari," *Rand Daily Mail*, July 8. 1936.

<sup>143</sup> Ibid.

<sup>144</sup> Dart, Raymond A. "The Physical Characteristics of the /?auni - #khomani Bushmen," in *Bushman of the Southern Kalahari*, 143, 164.

<sup>145</sup> C.M. Doke, "An Outline of #Khomani Bushman Phonetics," *Bantu Studies*, vol. X, (1936): 432-460.

<sup>146</sup> Percival R Kirby, "The Musical Practices of the /?Auni and #Khomani Bushmen," *Bantu Studies*, vol. X, (1936): 375.

<sup>147</sup> Maingard, introduction to *Bushman of the Southern Kalahari*.

with the Bushmen, and the casual observer would conclude that they had not a single care in this world!”<sup>148</sup> This underlined that the scientists closed their eyes to reality as they worked to unearth the “natural” lifestyle of the Bushmen, the “uncontaminated traditions and customs.”<sup>149</sup> The research testified to the limits that an ideological predisposition imposed upon academic work. Professor Maingard may serve here as an example for this ideological framework: “[t]he ‡Khomani speaker remains true to his subjective standpoint which is again that of the primitive mind.”<sup>150</sup> And further, “[h]is is the language of the primitive man in action, not of the dreamer or the philosopher.”<sup>151</sup>

The objectification of Bushmen became even more apparent in a separate system of identification: “cardboard dog-tags”<sup>152</sup> inscribed with all the information necessary for scientific research were tied around the Bushmen’s neck upon taking their individual measurements.<sup>153</sup> The parallels to branding animals or camp inmates are obvious; there is no information on whether or not the system was accepted by the Bushmen. This system of Bushmen identification seems to have preceded the first official registration of these Bushmen as citizens of the Union - for now, the “ID-ology” was focused on their Bushmanness.<sup>154</sup>

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<sup>148</sup> C.M. Doke “Games, Plays and Dances of the ‡Khomani Bushmen,” in *Bushmen of the Southern Kalahari*, 89.

<sup>149</sup> When a boy showed Professor Kirby his instrument made up of a bow, a string, and a petrol tin, he discarded these “more or less modern means of syncopated noise making” because it “didn’t ... date back into antiquity.” H. James van Buskirk “Professor Psycho-Analyses Bushmen in Remote Kalahari Desert: Dwarf Singers have Voices Recorded; Seven Ancient Instruments of Music Discovered: Language Tongue-Twisters or Rand Scientists,” *Rand Daily Mail*, July 14, 1936.

<sup>150</sup> L.F. Maingard, “The ‡Khomani dialect of Bushman: its morphology and other characteristics,” in *Bushmen of the Southern Kalahari*, 253.

<sup>151</sup> *Ibid.*, 260.

<sup>152</sup> Van Buskirk, “Psycho-Analyses of Bushmen,” *Rand Daily Mail*, July 14, 1936

<sup>153</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>154</sup> John L. Comaroff and Jean Comaroff, “Ethnicity Inc.” *University of Chicago American Bar Foundation, University of Cape Town*, (2005), 17. The apartheid state would later register San as Coloureds. In today’s South Africa many San find themselves without state ID

Generally, the attitude of the 1930s scientists reflects what we perceive today as lack of concern for the Bushmen's right to ownership of their body, culture, and history; in exchange for food, they traded these rights.<sup>155</sup> An anecdote about the creation of Ou Abraham's face mask may serve as an example.<sup>156</sup> Bushmen undergoing this procedure had to lie down on a table while reeds were inserted into their nostrils allowing them to breathe while their entire face was covered with plaster of Paris. Van Buskirk judged Abraham as a "marvelous subject" who "seemed to take it all with an amused tolerance which seemed to demonstrate that, to his way of thinking, it was a lot of white man's foolishness, but as long as he was being fed regularly he didn't mind a bit." But Abraham's actions disproved this assertion immediately. When Abraham saw his mask he "took the reproduction in his hands, turning it over and over...he turned to Professor Maingard and stated in his most humble manner that he was deeply grateful for all the trouble we had taken – and then proceeded to walk off with the mask!" He could not be persuaded by any means to give it up, reasoning that "it was his face and who was more entitled to carry it around than himself?"<sup>157</sup> Acknowledging the truth of the statement, but more likely because another mask could be made from the mold, the scientists left Abraham the mask. Generally, the scientists felt entitled to any research methods they deemed necessary in the absence of a standardized procedure to obtain the research subject's consent.

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altogether. The "dog-tags" of membership in Bain's camp have been transformed into an entry into a black book, in which ‡Khomani registered friends and relatives.

<sup>155</sup> Today, intellectual property rights govern economic relationships. In the case of the ‡Khomani, Roger Chennells won a successful claim entitling the community to a share of the profits derived from the sale of Hoodia products. The knowledge of the medical attributes of the Hoodia plant is attributed to the ancestors of the ‡Khomani community.

<sup>156</sup> See appendix Fig. 2:5 for a photograph of Ou Abraham with his face mask.

<sup>157</sup> Van Buskirk, "With S.A. Scientists into Kalahari," *Rand Daily Mail*, July 8. 1936.



The expedition's own reporter and photographer, H. James van Buskirk, joined the scientists in perpetuating the Bushman myth. The language van Buskirk employed emphasized the remoteness of the camp. The space between the world van Buskirk claimed to enter and the one his readers inhabited was not simply a geographical and physical space, it was also a temporal lapse from contemporary modern life into the Stone Age and the leitmotiv of an imaginary gulf between "us," the civilized humans, and the animal-like "Other."

The camp was a success for Bain who gathered more individuals than he needed for the exhibition. The scientists were satisfied with their results, and the Bushmen had escaped hunger or farm labor for the time being and had become, in van Buskirk's words, "the most celebrated band of aboriginals ever gathered together on the African continent."<sup>158</sup> However, critics accused the scientists of being "coldblooded" and abusing the Bushmen.<sup>159</sup> Apart from that, Nigel Crawhall points to the social significance he attributes to the "collapse of the San social system" brought about by Bain's decision to exhibit some of his Bushmen at the Empire Exhibition in Johannesburg because this induced families to move apart as some members joined Bain and others stayed behind in an attempt to diversify their risk.<sup>160</sup> In my view, the Nama-German War and the speedy penetration of farmers into the area mentioned in Chapter One had a greater impact on the "collapse" of the system. The very rush to join Bain's camp shows that the camp offered a place of relative security for the Bushmen. However, not all families were reunited in the end since many remaining members had taken up

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<sup>158</sup> Van Buskirk, "Living on the Tsama," *Speaker*, March 13, 1937.

<sup>159</sup> TLS, Confidential, R.S. Inerford (?) to D.L. Smit, Secretary of Native Affairs, March 24, 1936. SAB NTS 9586 382/400 (1).

<sup>160</sup> Crawhall, *!Ui-Taa language shift in Gordinia*, 238.

work in disparate localities. The camp furthered the process of acculturation through relocation.<sup>161</sup>

### **Bushmen at the Empire Exhibition: Exposing to Preserve**

Bain's public Bushmen exhibitions served to solidify the Bushman myth in the public eye. The historical and geographical perspective of the colonial encounter is crucial to understanding its impact, especially so when exhibiting a group of Bushmen not just in the context of any exhibition but in South Africa's Empire Exhibition from September 1936 to January 1937 in Johannesburg. It would be easy to contrast the interaction of colonizers and colonized, the powerful and the disempowered and conclude, quite literally black and white, that the oppressed were objectified by the oppressors. A closer look at the interaction between spectators and Bushmen reveals that the roles of observers and observed, visitors and visited, objects of inquiry and inquirers, are actually fluid.

The familiar construction of the Bushman myth again dominated the display. Visitors of all races were drawn to the Bushmen pavilion by their physical distinctiveness, their role in the evolutionary chain, their anthropological reputation, and the predicted extinction of the race.<sup>162</sup> Moreover, the discourse of authenticity and authority of ethnography and anthropology framed the exhibition of the Bushmen.<sup>163</sup> Contrary to the scientific research in the camp, the contemporary experience of the group was not entirely excluded from the exhibition, although the role of colonial authorities and white farmers did not feature prominently. According to Jennifer Robinson, Bain did reveal the diverse

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<sup>161</sup> See appendix Map 2:1 for a visualization of the territorial expansion of family groups.

<sup>162</sup> See appendix Fig. 2:6 for a stereotypical depiction of the "Nomads of the Kalahari."

<sup>163</sup> Gordon, "Bain's Bushmen," 285.

origins of the group and their alienation from tradition regarding clothing and language.<sup>164</sup>

The pavilion, featuring a live open-air exhibition of Bushmen, was a success, with more than half a million visitors watching the spectacle.<sup>165</sup> More than 70 Bushmen came to Johannesburg with Bain. They were housed at the University of the Witwatersrand's farm Frankenwald and about 30 Bushmen were taken to the exhibition at a time in order to retain their "exuberant spirits."<sup>166</sup> At the exhibition they showcased their lives, and performed for politicians and other high-profile visitors.<sup>167</sup>

The exhibition itself was designed to depict a modernizing South Africa as well as a progressive Empire.<sup>168</sup> Colonial exhibitions were closely connected to the idea of imperialism and nationalism.<sup>169</sup> Colonial natives were displayed for educational as well as entertainment purposes; through the contrast of the savage, the civilized was elevated. The juxtaposition of the "old and the new; the traditional, even savage past, and the civilised present" and, in the South African context, the "'native' traditions and 'European' progress,'" marked the ideological framework.<sup>170</sup> Both the visiting citizens and the natives on display, became players in the colonial drama of modernization, the first as drivers of the

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<sup>164</sup> *Sunday Express* 18 October 1936, WURD, Bain to Dart 26 May 1936 in Jennifer Robinson, "Johannesburg's 1936 Empire Exhibition: Interaction, Segregation and Modernity in a South African City," *Journal of Southern African Studies*, Vol. 29 No. 3 (2003): 774/5.

<sup>165</sup> Gordon, "Bain's Bushmen," 267.

<sup>166</sup> "A New Game; Miming the Professors," AU8 DAR, Dart Papers 10, Newspaper Clippings, 3, Kalahari Expedition.

<sup>167</sup> "Jubilee Day at Exhibition; Crowd Easily Recorded; Mr. Grobler visits Bushman Camp;" AU8 DAR, Dart Papers 10, Newspaper Clippings, 3, Kalahari Expedition.

<sup>168</sup> Robinson, "Johannesburg Empire Exhibition," 769.

<sup>169</sup> Raymond Corbey, "Ethnographic Showcases, 1870-1930," *Cultural Anthropology*, Vol. 8, No. 3, (1993): 339.

<sup>170</sup> Robinson, "Johannesburg Empire Exhibition," 763-4.

imagination, the latter as objectified reminiscences of the past.<sup>171</sup> Further, while the spectators came as spenders, the exhibited were the source of capital accumulation. The implied notion of progress is linear, commencing and ending with a lack of civilization resulting in a civilized state “achieved heroically by the white, Caucasian race under its own power, and by the other races with the help of the Caucasian one, insofar at least as their constitutions allowed them to progress.”<sup>172</sup> Robinson judges “there is no doubt that Bain’s endeavour was demeaning and exploitative, and the group was studied and examined in a range of objectifying ways in the interests of science and art.”<sup>173</sup> In addition, the media contributed to objectification and degradation. The news about a “garden-party” between a Swazi Chief and Ou Abraham as Bushmen Chief focused entirely on costume rather than content. It was not their message or individuality that was newsworthy but their “Otherness” depicted through clothing. The reporter admired the “court regalia of leopard skin, feathers, beads and horns” of the Swazi Chief and contrasted that with Abraham’s “simple moocha, but happy in his nudist colony.”<sup>174</sup>

The observed were not only passive objectifications of the gaze of the spectators. Instead, they were subjects of mediated encounters.<sup>175</sup> Bushmen had internalized the concept of the commercialization of their identity and bargained with the audience, demanding cigarettes in return for posing for a photograph.<sup>176</sup>

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<sup>171</sup> See appendix Fig. 2:7 for a picture which, perhaps unintentionally, plays with the juxtaposition of “past” and a shadow of “contemporariness.”

<sup>172</sup> Corbey, “Ethnographic Showcases,” 359.

<sup>173</sup> Robinson, “Johannesburg Empire Exhibition,” 775.

<sup>174</sup> “A Swazi Chief Calls on the Bushmen: Brief ‘Garden Party’ In Exhibition Grounds,” *Eastern Province Herald*, September 17, 1946.

<sup>175</sup> See appendix Fig. 2:8 for a visual account of a mediated encounter.

<sup>176</sup> *Springs and Brakpan Advertiser* 18 September 1936 quoted in Robinson, “Johannesburg Empire Exhibition,” 774.

They also returned the gaze with quite similar impressions as some may have held of them. The 1952 Jan van Riebeeck exhibition may serve as an example in the absence of Bushmen quotations from the Empire Exhibition: the Bushmen group on display looked back at the observer and is documented as commenting that the “white people staring at them seemed like curious wild animals, or baboons.”<sup>177</sup> This reverse-gazing underlines the complexity of the interactions as well as the reflection of negative Bushmen stereotypes back at their origin: “[i]n their few contacts with white men these people have been taught to see themselves as a species of baboons rather than human beings. This has caused them much anguish, and Mr. Bain had great difficulty in convincing them that no one will try to hunt them.”<sup>178</sup> Another more common feature was the Bushmen’s return of the gaze back at the scientists, mimicking them in their games, as they would mimic animal behavior, thereby incorporating their new reality, and visualizing cultural transition.<sup>179</sup>

In addition to being objects of the gaze, Bushmen were also spectators observing Johannesburg. The media covered the story of the Bushmen who came to “see for themselves the wonders of the white man’s civilization” in great detail as to underscore their isolation and purity, as of yet uncontaminated by civilization.<sup>180</sup> The newspapers featured descriptions of Bushmen, strangers to money, who shied away from touching it;<sup>181</sup> of their incredulous wonder about

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<sup>177</sup> Ciraj Rassool and Leslie Witz, “The 1952 Jan van Riebeeck Tercentenary Festival: constructing and contesting public national history in South Africa,” *Journal of Southern African History* 34 (1993): 465.

<sup>178</sup> Van Buskirk, “Bushman to go to Secret Camp on Farm Near Johannesburg,” *Rand Daily Mail*, August 15, 1936.

<sup>179</sup> See appendix Fig. 2:9 for a photograph depicting Ou Abraham mimicking the scientists.

<sup>180</sup> “Bushman in City: Wonder at White Man’s Magic: Train Thought to be Snake: Camp as Base at Frankenwald,” *Star*, August 15, 1936.

<sup>181</sup> Ibid.

their first snow;<sup>182</sup> of their disbelief of hot and cold water coming from a tap and fright of heights in a multi-story building.<sup>183</sup> Bain took Abraham on an airplane ride and on many trips in the expedition's automobile.<sup>184</sup>

Contrary to later exhibitions, the Empire Exhibition attracted limited criticism from African writers since it took place prior to the formation of a coherent black political voice or the formation of a popular Afrikaner national movement. In this environment, the exhibition celebrated a cosmopolitan South African identity.<sup>185</sup> Some critics doubted however, that the objectification and display of Bushmen could be to their benefit and excluded them from said identity. Mrs. M. Bickston's Letter to the Editor entitled "OLD ABRAHAM FLIES" may serve as an example. Mrs. Bickston complained about the exhibition of

primate people...dragged from the only home their race has ever known to the unreal surroundings of a peep show...subjected to the gaze of ignorant sightseers.... The very lack of civilization of these unfortunate "exhibits" is to be held up for the "amusement" of the crowds....We are invited to gape at old Abraham and his tribe and flatter the sense of our own superiority.

With that she captured the perceived dichotomy between uncivilized and civilized man. For emphasis she urged her contemporaries to imagine themselves snatched up by a group of Martians and exhibited for Martian amusement. The

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<sup>182</sup> "Novelty of Snow for Bushmen," *Cape Argus*, September 12, 1936.

<sup>183</sup> "Bushmen in a Flat," *Cape Argus*, August 27, 1936.

<sup>184</sup> "Abraham the Bushman takes to Motoring," *Rand Daily Mail*, August 19<sup>th</sup>, 1936; Van Buskirk, "Bushmen to go to Secret Camp on Farm Near Johannesburg," *Rand Daily Mail*, August 15, 1936.

<sup>185</sup> Robinson, "Johannesburg Empire Exhibition," 762.

Bushmen will go back “and spend the rest of their lives wondering at the ways of the white man” she warns.<sup>186</sup>

Mrs. Bickston’s angry letter stands out because, basing her argument on two false assumptions, she appealed to the same notion of isolated pristine foragers on which the Bushman myth was founded. Contrary to Bain, she concluded it was a crime to instrumentalize the Bushmen because they came from an intact world in which they were isolated from outside influences believing that they had been induced to come to Johannesburg against their will. Both assumptions were wrong. In addition, Mrs. Bickston failed to understand the potential benefits of the arrangement to the Bushmen. They gained access to Johannesburg, a city which they would otherwise never have seen. They were under constant medical supervision, had a balanced diet, time off from the exhibitions, and were able to explore the city through outings with Bain. In the name of science, they were even treated to a piano concert performed exclusively for them by Harold Samuel.<sup>187</sup> Thus, they learned a lot more than many of their neighbors, white, coloured, and black, in the Kalahari would ever have seen in their lifetimes. Moreover, through their exhibition, Bushmen were exposed to government officials, academics, and journalists; while it might not have been the Bushmen’s primary motivation to join, they would have heard at the exhibition that they were working to advance the cause for a permanent home.<sup>188</sup>

Bushmen were also not as powerless as their exploitation and exhibition as artifacts might suggest. Racial tensions and an “inherent fear of the white man,” a

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<sup>186</sup> Mrs. M. Bickston, “Old Abraham Flies,” Letter to the Editor, *Cape Argus*, August 25, 1936, 18.

<sup>187</sup> Kirby, “The Musical Practices of the /?Auni and ≠Khomani Bushmen,” 421.

<sup>188</sup> Gordon, “Saving the Last South African Bushman,” 29.

legacy of the Bushmen's brutal history, proved to be a challenge: "A local police sergeant who visited the group of Bushmen in their overnight camp on their way to Johannesburg stated: "Goodness, what a bunch of baboons!" Far from being the powerless victims of defamations, through responding by collective retreat, the Bushmen gained the prerogative to privacy and subsequently whites were no longer allowed to randomly approach the Bushmen on their journey.

The Native Affairs Department, as a paternal colonial agency, was concerned about the well-being of the Bushmen during the exhibition and labeled it a "heartless experiment to bring these wild men from the desert in their scanty clothing to the Witwatersrand at a time of the year when pneumonia is rife."<sup>189</sup> After Bain inquired about the effect of travels to the Witwatersrand on the Bushmen, he came to the conclusion, that if regularly medically examined, fed, provided with blankets and shelter, there should be no risk involved.<sup>190</sup> Nevertheless, the government doubted Bain's integrity and advised that the Bushmen should not be placed with an untrustworthy individual.<sup>191</sup> Their mistrust was based on the private nature of the project and Bain's intentions regarding the Bushmen. They thus refused him the permission that he had sought to display non-Union Nationals. Ultimately, the Department of Native Affairs did not want to assume any responsibility for the exhibition; the exhibition committee and Bain were to assume full responsibility for the Bushmen.<sup>192</sup> Bain assured the Department that he moved the Bushmen "out of their own free will" and that they

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<sup>189</sup> TLS D.L.S (Smit?) to the Minister: Empire Exhibition, Johannesburg. Cape Town, February 21, 1936. SAB NTS 9586 382/400 (1,2).

<sup>190</sup> TL D. Bain to the Director of Native Affairs, Johannesburg, April 15th, 1936. SAB NTS 9586 382/400 (1,2).

<sup>191</sup> 21.2.36 D.L.S (Smith?) To The Minister. SAB NTS 9586 382/400 (1,2).

<sup>192</sup> TL Statement by Mr. Donald Bain in regard to a Troupe of Bushmen he is Exhibiting in Durban July, 26, 1937. SAB NTS 9586 382/400 (1).



would be adequately sheltered and cared for.<sup>193</sup> However, the Director of Native Affairs expressed “great misgivings as to the propriety of allowing facilities to a private individual to bring a party of forty to fifty Bushmen to the Witwatersrand to form a so-called camp at the Empire Exhibition during the period September 1936 to January, 1937.”<sup>194</sup> His objections were based on the grounds that it would be unnatural for the Bushmen to be uprooted.

Professor Dart refuted his point by reminding his readers that the “denizens of desert” had not earned their title by choice. His argument echoed what the revisionists would come to argue fifty years later:

The Bushman is not naturally a desert dweller, he is there today only because he has been driven thither for refuge during the last 500 years ... These few scattered remnants of that historic heroic stock are not in the desert for the sake of their health. They are there because they have been driven from their middens on the coast, ousted from every corner or rock-shelter they had occupied and beautified along the entire coast... hounded from every fountain and vlei.... and finally thrust into the desert where today there is not a single stretch of water nor a single borehole that they can call their own. Today not even the desert is safe for them because it is invaded by boreholes and stock farms and the Bushman, like the Son of Man, has no longer a place where he can lay his head.”<sup>195</sup>

In addition to Dart’s passionate argument, it is important to take the Bushmen’s history as farm laborers into account. It is doubtful whether they can be equated with the wild Bushmen that form the basis for the argument of the Director of Native Affairs.

The director’s apprehension emanated from the internalization of the imagery construct of the Bushman myth, namely that Bushmen divorced from their nomadic life and subjected to restriction have fallen easy prey to diseases.

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<sup>193</sup> TLS Bain to Native Affairs dept. January 5, 1936. SAB NTS 9586 382/400 (1,2).

<sup>194</sup> TL Secretary of Native Affairs, January 14, 1936. SAB NTS 9586 382/400 (1,2).

<sup>195</sup> Raymond A Dart, “What is a Bushman?” University of Witwatersrand Archives, Dart Papers, (31), 4-5.

Moreover, “the material life of the Bushman is usually a long struggle for food in an environment to which he as been acclimatized, and to bring a party to, and keep them for a substantial period at a place where...food will be provided plentiful, exertion nil, environment totally different and then return to their homes will...be a somewhat heartless experiment.” If all of the premises held true, it would have been indeed heartless to uproot unwilling Bushmen to expose them to the gaze of the world. However, the circumstances mentioned previously contest this opinion.

### **The March on Cape Town: Bushmen as Political Subjects**

Through the continued instrumentalization of the Bushman myth embodied through their physical presence, Bain expanded the Bushmen’s field of influence from the public realm to a specifically politicized context. Bain’s Bushmen expanded their possibilities from subjects of research and public exhibitions to the explicit role of activists in the form of silent but present political subjects. While working on his long-term goals, Bain was confronted with the Bushmen’s short-term preservation challenges. In order “to keep this [Bushman] collection together,” Bain needed to raise money for the maintenance of his Bushmen camp, while working towards securing “a portion of their natural habitat.”<sup>196</sup> Following in the footsteps of many Khoesan, the most famous of which was Saartje Baartman,<sup>197</sup> Bain intended to take a group of Bushmen to

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<sup>196</sup> Thomas Boydell, *My Luck’s Still In* (Cape Town: Stewart, 1948), 99.

<sup>197</sup> Rachel Holmes, *African Queen: The Real Life of the Hottentot Venus* (New York: Random House, 2007); “The Life and Times of Sara Bartman: The Hottentot Venus,” DVD, directed by Zola Maseko, 1999.

England in April 1937 to increase his fund-raising efforts.<sup>198</sup> He stated that “accompanied by some of Dart’s ‘living fossils,’ I would be able to attract a great deal more attention than I as a perfect stranger could hope for.”<sup>199</sup> Bain subsequently applied for passports for the Bushmen, but his permission was withdrawn by Smuts, the Secretary of Native Affairs, and Bain had to cancel the trip.<sup>200</sup> Upon their return to the Kalahari, the Bushmen were again prohibited to hunt and Bain decided to take a delegation of 55 Bushmen on a protest march to Cape Town to address this vital obstacle to the hunter-gatherer lifestyle.<sup>201</sup>

By physically entering the geographic boundaries of political decision-making in Cape Town, the Bushmen established the right of being seen.<sup>202</sup> Their presence transcended the theoretical fascination with the Bushman myth and established a concrete and physical connection.<sup>203</sup> The *Daily Telegraph* reported the arrival of the “strangest of all King George’s subjects...Never before within living memory seen in Cape Town” from the Kalahari on May 9, 1937. After a five-day trek starting north of the Orange River, “these pygmies” arrived in Cape Town “to appeal to the Government for the right to shoot the protected

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<sup>198</sup> Boydell, *My Luck’s Still In*, 99. Bain saw his task as fundraiser for a Bushmen Reserve; a committee was established consisting of: Mr. Maldwyn Edmund, M.P., Professor Maingards, Dart, Kriby, Doke, van Riet, Lowe, Phillips, Messrs. Reinhardt Jones, D.F. Paver, Mc Krone and Crocker. For the Cape: Dr. Gill and Mr.C.J.Sibbett. General Hertzog supported Bain’s fundraising campaign in the name of the Cabinet. See “Desert Reserve for Bushmen; Primitive Tribes Worth Saving; Campaign to Raise Funds,” *Cape Argus*, March 6, 1937.

<sup>199</sup> TL D. Bain to Maingard, addressed to the Secretary of Native Affairs April, 16, 1937. SAB NTS 9586 82/400 (1).

<sup>200</sup> Ibid.

<sup>201</sup> Bain personal statement in Durban. SAB NTS 9586 382/400 (1); Desert Reserve for Bushmen; L from Native Commissioner Durban to Chief Native Commissioner, Natal July, 26 1937, p.1. SAB NTS 9586 382/400 (1).

<sup>202</sup> See appendix, Fig. 2:10 for a depiction of Donald Bain and his Bushmen delegation.

<sup>203</sup> This system of direct presentation was last employed by Dawid Kruiper, who went to Cape Town to speak with Mbeki about representation of the House of Makai in the House of Chiefs in 2004. Johannes De Villiers, “Afvaardiging: Sionis kla oor skrapse kleredrag: Oom Dawid moet hek deel’ Vererg hom vir voorstel dat hy saak by vergaderin in N-Kaap stel,” *Die Burger*, August 21, 2004, Naweek Beeld, 6.

gemsbok.”<sup>204</sup> They met with Mr. P.G.W. Grobler, Minister of Native Affairs, who assured them once again that they would be allowed to hunt the gemsbok for food.<sup>205</sup> Mr. Grobler had repeatedly assured the Bushmen of this right in the past to no avail. The power of political decisions made by the central government was limited when faced with profound disapproval and lack of understanding by the agents charged with execution in the Northern Cape. However, Senator Thomas Boydell, Member of Parliament, became a close ally. He described the moment when he first met Bushmen:

[o]ne Saturday morning as I walked through the grounds of Parliament House I saw a strange sight. About two dozen Bushmen with womenfolk and children – their build and features being almost of the pigmy type – were following a huge figure of a man....As Bain was six feet four, and heavily built in proportion, he looked a veritable giant among the Lilliputs.  
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The important factor was not Bain’s political voice seeking to speak for the Bushmen but the Bushmen’s visibility, authenticating their claim to otherness. It was the visual image of the Bushmen that fascinated Boydell and convinced him that their survival was tied to the political obligation to alter the law to create space for the “Other” within the colonial legal system.

Without the establishment of a reserve, the Bushmen found themselves exposed to the same economic push and pull factors they sought to escape through Bain. Three months after Bain and the Bushmen left the Kalahari for Cape Town, Bain went bankrupt while exhibiting the Bushmen in Durban. Lack of public interest in the Bushmen exhibition and heightened maintenance cost

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<sup>204</sup> *Daily Telegraph*, May 10, 1937.

<sup>205</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>206</sup> Boydell, *My Luck’s Still In*, 99.

seems to have been the main reason.<sup>207</sup> Bain applied for government assistance for a train ride back to Upington for all 55 Bushmen<sup>208</sup> and underscored the importance of the maintenance of group cohesion: “Bushmen must be segregated and assisted or they will be forced on to farms and further bastardization is inevitable.”<sup>209</sup> General Smuts replied to Bain’s question whether the Bushmen would be allowed to return to the Gemsbok Park upon their arrival in Upington in the negative.<sup>210</sup> Thus, the magistrate of Upington had ordered a lorry to transport the Bushmen from Upington to the local police station at Witdraai (the police station the ‡Khomani continue to use today) and to provide them with food rations for £18.<sup>211</sup> Ouma |Una remembers that they were prevented from reentering the park as their village had allegedly burned down.<sup>212</sup> Some Bushmen settled at the junction of the Nossob and Molopo Rivers under the care of the local farmer Jooste. They were scheduled to receive pauper rations for one month, a grace period intended to induce them to seek employment in the local Coloured Settlement Mier before they would have to fend for themselves as unskilled rural proletariat. The Magistrate of Upington complained, “a number of these people have been thoroughly spoilt and are disinclined to look for work...Most of them ...expect Mr. Bain to visit them again and hope to be allowed to camp in the Game Reserve.”<sup>213</sup>

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<sup>207</sup> L from Natal from Native Commissioner Durban to Chief Native Commissioner, July 26, 1937, p. 2. SAB NTS 9586 382/400 (1).

<sup>208</sup> Telegram Bain to Smuts n.d. SAB NTS 9586 382/400 (1).

<sup>209</sup> Ibid.

<sup>210</sup> Telegraph Bain to Smuts August 3, 1937. SAB NTS 9586 382/400 (1).

<sup>211</sup> TL the magistrate of Upington, August 5, 1937. SAB NTS 9586 382/400 (1).

<sup>212</sup> Katrina Rooi (Ouma |Una) elder, interview by author, January 18, 2008, Brosdoring. TLS Upington Magistrate (L. Duhan?) to Secretary of Native Affairs, August 19, 1937. SAB NTS 9586 382/400 (1).

The “spoiled” Bushmen had depended on Bain for an alternative to arduous farm labor; thus they had placed their trust in him. Bain returned to Cape Town on August 14<sup>th</sup> and ended his direct interventions, but he continued to lobby for the Bushmen. They placed their confidence in their white patron more than in the state, although they learned “that the promises were made by the ‘Big Bosses’ of the Government.”<sup>214</sup> I have found no record of the Bushmen pressing the government on the delivery of its promises. Instead they chose to repeat the pattern they learned from Bain and sought relief in apolitical patronage relationships which were motivated primarily by economic considerations.<sup>215</sup> This might be less a matter of choice than an expression of the Bushmen’s political marginalization and *lack of* choice. Despite Bain’s intention to preserve the Bushmen through isolation, an attachment to patronizing relationships marketing their Bushmanness ensured the Bushmen’s survival and the perpetuation of the Bushman myth.

Bain’s multifaceted involvement with the Union Bushmen had one stated goal, the preservation of the last surviving Bushmen. Underlying this intent was the static notion of Bushmen ethnicity, tradition, and custom to which the early traditionalist literature on San ascribes. Through the fixation of assigned markers of real Bushmanness, Bain, the scientists, and Bain’s Bushmen recovered and/or invented “Bushmen traditions,” and along with these an artificially fixed, unchanging Bushmen ethnicity. The traditions declared to be authentically Bushmen, served to demarcate Bain’s Bushmen clearly from other South Africans.

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<sup>214</sup> TLS D. Bain to General Smuts, September, 27, 1937. SAB NTS 9586 382/400 (1).

<sup>215</sup> See discussion on patronage relationships in chap.4.

Bain's reasoning mirrored that of the majority of whites in Africa with regard to Africans, when he assumed that the traditions of the Bushmen had been obstructed by colonialism and now had to be recovered. He thus sought to return the Bushman to his natural state. This line of thinking was especially common during the 1920s and 1930s as whites began to equate the "traditional" African with the "real" African.<sup>216</sup> They presumed Africans to be "living within an ideology based on the absence of change" and thus thought of African custom, tradition, and identity as fixed and inflexible.<sup>217</sup> However, as Terence Ranger affirms, whites had come to misunderstand the realities of pre-colonial Africa where "custom helped to maintain a sense of identity but it also allowed for an adaptation so spontaneous and natural that it was often unperceived...far from there being a single 'tribal' identity, most Africans moved in and out of multiple identities...overlapping networks of association and exchange extended over wide areas."<sup>218</sup> As revisionists and historians have shown, Bushmen life was, despite the claims that it remained unaltered since the Stone Age, far from static. Just as the newly invented traditions for Africans, perceived by Europeans as legitimized, did not only enforce greater rigidity and immobilization but also served European interests, one could argue that the perception of Bushmen as living fossils and key to the human past served not only the need of the researchers but also that of a nation confronted with drastic social change.<sup>219</sup> The clear demarcation of proper Bushmanness served to manifest existing power structures and the invented

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<sup>216</sup> Terence Ranger, "The Invention of Tradition in Colonial Africa," in *The Invention of Tradition*, Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger, eds. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986; twelfth reprint, 2004), 247.

<sup>217</sup> Ibid., 247.

<sup>218</sup> Ibid., 247-248. See also Leroy Vail, ed., *The Creation of Tribalism in Southern Africa*, (Berkeley and Los Angeles, CA, University of California Press, 1991), 1-18.

<sup>219</sup> Terence Ranger, "The Invention of Tradition in Colonial Africa," 248-249.

traditions encouraged and justified the perpetuation of the objectification of the Other; Bushmen as objects of science, as objects of the public gaze, as objects of political paternalism of the nation state. Paradoxically, the white benefactors envisioned these invented, or in their eyes recovered, traditions, as tools for the liberation of the Bushmen from the yoke of inhumane farm labor. What seems obvious today, namely the substitution of one dependency structure with another, albeit benevolent still paternalist one, was understood by contemporary bushmen benefactors as empowerment.

The myth of the Union's last surviving real Bushmen, created and perpetuated as discussed in detail in this chapter, was to be the center of the emerging Bushmen reserve debate.<sup>220</sup> Bain's conscious decision to perpetuate a stereotypical depiction of the Bushmen was intended to facilitate secure land access, thereby ideally enabling Bushmen to engage in a hunting-gathering subsistence strategy, a dream which proved to be untenable in the context of a capitalist private property land use regime as discussed in the following chapter. Bushmen research thus was conducted as scientific inquiry in the name of knowledge inquiry but also to strengthen the case for the safeguarding of the Union's Bushmen. As the topos of Bushmen preservation linked to land access emerged, Dart was quoted in an interview with the *Rand Daily Mail* as saying:

If the net result of this expedition [the Empire Exhibition], quite apart from its scientific value, should amount to nothing more than the preservation of this small group of people, every effort put into it will be well worthwhile....I fail to understand...why South Africa as a whole should be vitally interested in the preservation of wild game and not as yet interested in the preservation of a group of human beings who, by virtue of

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<sup>220</sup> Chap. 3 will be devoted to the exegesis of the Bushmen Reserve debate.



their physical structure, primitive culture and curious customs represent one of the greatest monuments any country could possibly possess.<sup>221</sup>

Dart foreshadowed the debate in which Bain, the scientists, politicians, farmers, and the national park board engaged in for more than a decade. Bain's Bushmen camp, the Empire Exhibition, as well as the protest march on the Parliament, constituted a lobby to help advance the Bushmen agenda within South Africa through advocating their worthiness to be saved from extinction in a state as close as possible to the image portrayed by the Bushman myth.

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<sup>221</sup> "Bushmen Should Be Saved, Says Professor Dart: Useful Scientific Work in the Kalahari," *Rand Daily Mail*, July 21, 1936.

### CHAPTER 3

#### USING THE BUSHMAN MYTH: THE BUSHMEN RESERVE DEBATE

#### 1936-1941

It lies with the people of South Africa whether the Bushmen will continue to an exigent life on the borderland of poverty, hunger and disease or whether they will be allowed to work out their own destiny in peace and happiness under the protection of a benign and sympathetic authority properly constituted by the Government in a manner similar to that, which has been so splendidly and valuably adopted by our generation and for posterity on perpetuity with respect to South Africa's wild game at Kruger National Park...

By the sheer will to exist and win through they have wrested a livelihood from the most arid portion of the sub-continent, where Europeans have been able to penetrate only by mechanical assistance of science. Surely by invasion, by inheritance, by occupation, by every criterion accepted by intelligent mankind they have earned the right to own at least a portion of South Africa for as long as they persist.

Reserves have been set aside for game, they have been set aside for the Red Indians in America, for the Bantu in the Union and Rhodesia, and for the Aborigines in Australia, but the world knows no reserve for Bushmen. When such a reserve or reserves have been declared and established there will be no need to fear concerning the future of any of the Bushmen and least of all for the future of those who will be seen at the Exhibition.<sup>222</sup>

Professor R.A. Dart

Intending to convince the public and opponents of the need for a Bushmen reserve, the academics and Bain employed the Bushman myth, blending it with a claim to land based on the Bushmen's brutal history of dispossession. In an increasingly segregated South Africa, an argument based on entitlements and social justice did not convince local farmers and the National Parks Board. The Bushman myth had the power to extract Bushmen from their specific localized and temporalized context, thereby evoking a romanticized notion of the noble savage intended to induce the paternalistic state to protect its living national

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<sup>222</sup>Dart, "What is a Bushman," 7-8.

heritage. However, the argument over whether Bushmen were already fully integrated into the dominant economic system and had thus lost their claim to being Bushmen, or whether they should be protected from imminent integration in order to save their Bushmanness, in the end proved to be obsolete. Paradoxically, the application of the Bushman myth served to integrate the Bushmen into the capitalist economy.

This chapter explores the role of the Bushman myth in advancing claims to Bushman land and Bushmanness in South Africa's political economy. The two survival strategies available to the descendents of hunter-gatherers, namely agricultural labor as Coloureds or financially supported primitivism, came into conflict in the debates over a Bushmen reserve. Proponents of the reserve, among them Bain, the scientists, Senator Boydell, and the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Native Affairs, Colonel Reitz, advocated allocating Bushmen their own land to create a safe space, an environment in which they would be sufficiently shielded from the cash economy, labor reserve pools, and police, and could recreate their traditional life as pristine hunter-gatherers in isolation. The reserve was thus to be a reified, romanticized solution ensuring the survival of the children of nature.<sup>223</sup> Opponents of the idea, mainly Gordonia's farmers and the NPB attacked the Bushman myth by arguing that Bain's Bushmen were Coloured impostors escaping farm labor and poaching wildlife. To them, a discussion about Bushmen protection was obsolete because they had allegedly died out completely.<sup>224</sup> The conversation shifted from the public realm, in which Bain had

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<sup>223</sup> Gordon, "Scene(s) at the Exhibition," 268; Gordon and Douglas, *The Bushman Myth*, 149.

<sup>224</sup> "Bushmen for the Exhibition," *Cape Times*, July 2, 1936.

sought to advance his agenda to institutionalized dialogue, and both the proponents and opponents sought to lobby the government.

### **How to Save the Bushmen: Proposals from Bain and the Academics**

In the eyes of Bain and the scientists, a reserve was primarily intended to enable the Bushmen to live their lives as hunter-gatherers independent of outside influences which might induce an alteration in lifestyle. Retroactively it becomes apparent that the reserve was to reintroduce life in accordance with the Bushman myth. The members of the Witwatersrand Kalahari expedition used their academic findings to advocate for the preservation of the Bushmen through reserves. Dart declared that the scientists were “imbued with the desire to bring about the establishment of one or more Bushmen reserves in Southern Africa, where the remnants of this fascinating human group of Bush peoples might be preserved for generations to come. It was felt that under such happy circumstances every scrap of information gathered ... would be of ultimate value.”<sup>225</sup> While the continued existence of Bushmen for scientific research was partly in the scientists’ self-interest, genuine concern and compassion also guided their actions.

The research of the academics supported their claim to Bushman authenticity. Academics and farmers alike contested the Bushman myth via the notion of what constituted a genuine Bushmen. In addition to a focus on Bushman lifestyle they debated racial purity. Professor R.A. Dart laid out his position on Bushman authenticity in “What is a Bushmen?,” acknowledging that a “pure race

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<sup>225</sup> Raymond A Dart, “The Hut Distribution Genealogy and Homogeneity of the /? Auni – #khomani Bushmen,” in *Bushmen of the Southern Kalahari*, Rheinallt Jones, J.D. and C.M. Doke eds. (Johannesburg: Witwatersrand University Press, 1937), 109.

of people” is unknown to science; as Bushmen in the Kalahari differed from each other “nobody knows today which is the ‘purest’ of all these dozen or so Bushman groups.”<sup>226</sup> Schapera maintained that the term Bushman was defined by three categories: a) physical, b) linguistic, and c) cultural. He acknowledged however that “the ‘typical Bushman’ combining all these characteristics is virtually extinct” today.<sup>227</sup> Despite this scientific acknowledgment an emphasis on genotype and genealogy continued to influence the Bushman debate. Bain stated that about “fifty per cent [of the 100 Bushmen in his Camp in June 1936] were not true to type, or would measure up to Museum standards.”<sup>228</sup> When he found the number of Bushmen in his camp increased to 200, he “kept the new excellent specimens ...and dispersed the balance immediately.”<sup>229</sup>

In South Africa, inter-racial relationships were seen as contamination of the race, not only for the white race, but also for the Bushman race in South Africa who “by intercourse with Hottentots and other tribes, have compromised their racial purity, and are to-day referred to as half-breeds and bastards.”<sup>230</sup> According to Professor Kirby the Bushmen themselves desired isolation in order to ensure racial purity: “Bushman had no desire to mix with other races. Where they had done so, it was through necessity.”<sup>231</sup> The Bushmen Preservation

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<sup>226</sup> Dart, “What is a Bushman,” 1.

<sup>227</sup> I[saac] Schapera, *Memorandum to the Standing Committee in Connection with the proposed Bushman Enquiry*, 1-39, annexure to SAB NTS 382/400, Bushman Reserve, 2.

<sup>228</sup> TLS Donald Bain to General Smuts, August 1, 1937, p. 2. SAB NTS 9586 382/400 (1).

<sup>229</sup> *Ibid.*, 4.

<sup>230</sup> “Protection the Bushmen: Plea for Special Reserve; More important than Gemsbok,” *Natal Witness*, Pietermaritzburg, May 19, 1937.

<sup>231</sup> “Preservation of Bushmen; Scientists Urge Steps be Taken,” *Star*, October 9, 1936. This is an interesting parallel to Hylton White’s ethnographic work on the ‡Khomani in Kagga Kamma discussed in chap.4, who, as he maintains, were preoccupied with racial purity and inbreeding.

Committee Cape Town<sup>232</sup> and Bain compiled reports from seven learned scholars to refute accusations of inauthenticity regarding Bain's Bushmen.<sup>233</sup> Based on their evidence, the Committee asked "that the purest and best of these little people, the mere handful of remaining survivors of the most primitive members of the whole human race," be preserved.<sup>234</sup> The term "preservation" assumed a static approach to notions of "timeless 'traditions' and 'customs'" as predominant in contemporary anthropology and the Bushman myth.<sup>235</sup>

The colonial academics advanced two Bushmen reserve proposals. Firstly, the idea with "immediate possibility" was for the Union authorities to proclaim a Bushmen reserve in the area in which this group of Bushmen lived in the 1930s, comprised of parts of the Gemsbok Game Reserve and of the Mier Coloured Settlement.<sup>236</sup> Secondly, the more ambitious project envisioned multinational cooperation between the administrations of the South West Mandated Territory and the Bechuanaland Protectorate to reserve "a strip of territory ...running along the 22<sup>nd</sup> degree of longitude, from the Union territory right up to the neighbourhood of Ghanzi, and possibly including it and stretching as far as

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<sup>232</sup> Senator Boydell, "with nothing but 'Bushmen on the brain,'" had formed a Bushmen's Preservation Committee with Senator F.S. Malan, Chairman of the National Monument's Committee, as Chairman and Mr. J.S. Dunn, General Manager of Reuter's News Agency and later Chairman of the South African Press Association as Secretary. The body was made up of Dr. Steenkamp, M.P., Dr. Karl Bremer, M.P., Professor Drennan, Professor of Anatomy, Cape Town University, Dr. Gill, Curator of the South African Museum, and Mr. C.J. Sibbett. See Boydell, *My Luck's Still In*, 106.

<sup>233</sup> TLS Bushmen Preservation Committee, Cape Town, August 17, 1937. SAB NTS 9586 382/400 (1); TLS D. Bain to D.L. Smit, November 4, 1937. SAB NTS 9586 382/400 (1).

<sup>234</sup> L T. Boydell to Smuts, August 17, 1937, cited in Boydell, *My Luck's Still In*, 115.

<sup>235</sup> Leroy Vail and Landeg White, *Power and the Praise Poem: Southern African Voices in History* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1991), Preface, xi.

<sup>236</sup> *University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg: Notes on a Proposed Bushmen Reserve*, University of the Witwatersrand Historical Papers AD 543 B93.13. Unfortunately, the individual authors of this report remain unclear but it is highly likely that Dart and some of the other scientists would have contributed to it.

Angola on the West and Southern Rhodesia on the East.”<sup>237</sup> The second proposal envisioned a pan-Bushmen safe-space open to all Kalahari Bushmen regardless of nationality.<sup>238</sup> The Union Bushmen to be saved in any event were identified as the 70 individuals of ‡Khomani and /Auni heritage who accompanied Bain to the Empire Exhibition and an additional 70-150 scattered Bushmen, totaling 200-250 individuals. These people are of “highest importance to scientific investigators, from the linguistic, ethnological and anthropological standpoints...as they represent a stage in the history of man’s development which has long disappeared.” Admittedly, their “[o]riginal culture has...been modified by contact with other races but the important fragments that still remain should be preserved for future generations.”<sup>239</sup>

Bain’s position on the reserve question was similar to the second proposal. He suggested assembling all Bushmen he judged worth preserving, the Koko-Naron, Masarwa, and the Tjani (as he referred to the Southern Kalahari Bushmen) at Ghanzi in the Bechuanaland Protectorate.<sup>240</sup> Surrounded by European and Baster stock farmers and confined to their land without game or sufficient veldfood, Bain feared that the Bushmen would have to rely on rations and “with no occupation ... would become thoroughly demoralized in a very short space of time.” Thus, Bain ruled out Bushmen farms as akin to “a Zoo, and I have an instinctive prejudice against Zoos of any description.”<sup>241</sup> The location of the

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<sup>237</sup> Ibid.

<sup>238</sup> Occasionally, Bushmen reserve debates would be connected to calls for reserves for other “tribes” facing similar challenges in the area, such as Hottentots, Korannas, Masarwa etc. See e.g. Clark August 2, 1937. SAB/NTS 9586 382/400.

<sup>239</sup> *Notes on a Proposed Bushmen Reserve*, AD 543 B93.13.

<sup>240</sup> L D. Bain to General Smuts, August 1, 1937. SAB NTS 9586 382/400 (1).

<sup>241</sup> Ibid.

farms would not facilitate strict isolation, a requirement essential to Bain for Bushmen protection. Although the second proposal was debated between the Ministry of Native Affairs (various Ministers and Secretary D.L. Smit), the British High Commissioner in South Africa for British Bechuanaland (Sir William Clark), the Secretary of the Dominions (Mr. Malcolm MacDonald), and the Secretary for South-West-Africa and Native Commissioner in the mandated territory (F.P. Courtney-Clarke), the other territories were unwilling to set aside their own land for Union Nationals. It should be noted that in the face of protecting national sovereignty, the Bushmen who were assumed to be worthy of preservation for all of humanity, assumed national identities. Confronted with the political decision of land allocation, the Bushman myth gave way to the political realities. Ultimately, all interregional plans were discarded and the debate focused on the possibility of establishing a reserve on Union territory for Union Bushmen.

Establishing a reserve in the Union proved to be challenging since the South African land reform of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century did not provide for Bushmen reserves. The 1913 Native Land Act set aside only 7% of South Africa's total land mass for Native Reserves, a paradigm of the systematic deprivation of land by the colonizers with the goal of enlarging the pool of willing black labor by increasing the blacks' dependence on outside income through impoverishment in the homelands.<sup>242</sup> This legislation of separation manifested white hegemony by firmly establishing whites as the landowning class and legitimized black landlessness. The relatively limited number of people considered to be Bushmen

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<sup>242</sup>Scott Resnik, "The Agrarian Land Question: Issues and Options for a Postapartheid South Africa," in *Beyond a Political Solution to Apartheid*, Evan S. Lieberman, ed. (Center of International Studies Monograph Series no. 4, Princeton University, 1993), 28; Tom Lodge, *Politics in South Africa: From Mandela to Mbeki* (Cape Town: David Philip, 2002), 70.



as well as the fear of a chain reaction of other land being claimed for Coloured reserves, might contribute towards understanding the failure to grant Bushmen land. The most important reason, however, appears to be the difference in reserve purpose. Contrary to native reserves, which through a policy of separate development, served to denationalize natives while forcing them to participate in the migrant economy, a reserve for Bushmen would have been their ultimate destination. Instead of inducing Bushmen to leave the reserve to work in white South Africa, white South Africa would have to travel to their reserve to utilize their scientific potential. Further, instead of denationalizing Bushmen, establishing a reserve in Gordonia would have meant precisely the opposite: the acknowledgement of Bushmen as Union nationals.

The academics and Bain intended the Bushman myth to serve as vehicle for compassion in a country divided along racial lines in which the history of brutality against the Bushmen had proven inadequate. Situating the Bushmen in their historical context, academics repeatedly made the claim that Bushmen were entitled to land based on their history of inequality. In *Notes on a Proposed Bushmen Reserve*, the authors, presumably academics at the University of the Witwatersrand, observed: “[o]nce the undisputed possessors of vast territories...they are now the truly disinherited among our native population. They have nobody to appeal to. The case of these helpless little people should therefore, make a strong appeal to our sense of social justice.”<sup>243</sup> However, the 1913 land reform had created two South Africas with a ruling class unwilling to subscribe to a unifying ideology and legitimized notions of white privilege, manifested on the ground. The opposition in Gordonia was deeply entrenched, drawing on concepts

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<sup>243</sup> *Notes on a Proposed Bushmen Reserve*, AD543 B93.13.

of race and nature conservation to justify white hegemony over the land. Thus, the debate shifted away from Bushmen rights towards the Bushmen's utility for the Union (government), for the local farming sector (farmers), and the Bushmen's destructiveness regarding nature conservation (NPB) as outlined below. Instead of evoking a comparison between the Bushmen and Bantu reserve question, the debate drew parallels between Bushmen and animal preservation; "the Government has spent considerable sums on the preservation of game...and if game can be protected why not Bushmen"?<sup>244</sup>

### **Combining Cultural Topographies: Landscape Ideology and the Bushman**

#### **Myth: From Gemsbok - to Gemsbok and/or Bushmen Reserve?**

During the reserve debate, Bain, the academics, and some passionate politicians used the Bushman myth's power of persuasion to carve out a legitimate presence for the "Other" in the landscape of white South African identity. Ultimately, they did not succeed because Bushmen were not guaranteed secure land access.

The perception of landscape was as crucial in the formation of settler identities as it was in the invention of Bushman identity. At the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the emerging imagined white South African community referred to an imaginary geography, feeding on a collective subjectivity towards the *veld* and a discourse which placed them firmly in South African territory.<sup>245</sup> While the social construct of "wilderness" created unity among the white settlers, it also introduced new divisions, eradicating the non-white majority from the

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<sup>244</sup> L D.Bain to General Smuts August 1, 1937. SAB NTS 9586 382/400 (1).

<sup>245</sup> William Beinart and JoAnn McGregor, introduction to *Social History and African Environments*, idem, eds. (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2003): 5.

landscape and, therefore, from the white settlers' consciousness.<sup>246</sup> The land, empty of aboriginal presence, acquired a pristine, reified connotation.<sup>247</sup>

The predominant landscape ideology was not only tied to the identity of South Africa's white population, but also in a less imaginary and more real way to that of the Bushmen. The survival of the Bushmen depended on land access but landscape dedicated to wilderness was to be emptied of African presence.<sup>248</sup> To the proponents of Bushmen preservation, the Bushmen's state of pristine wilderness, perceived as much purer and more innocent than the contaminated state of western civilization, could only be preserved through isolation and reintegration into the wilderness. To this end, Bushmen had to be integrated into the imaginary landscape serving to facilitate the formation of a white South African identity and feeding the myth of wild Africa. Contrary to other Africans who had to be cleared from the land to reach the state of pristine wilderness, the application of the Bushmen myth justified the exemption of the "living fossils." Emphasizing the Bushmen's uniqueness and intrinsic ties to the land, nature, and the natural through referring to their special status as First Peoples, as direct link to the Stone Age, as half-apes, or as fauna, they were able to integrate into the imaginary landscape through essentially becoming part of wilderness, no longer inhabiting the space for human beings but becoming an integral part of nature, the primitive, the pristine. Their exaggerated depiction as "natural" and "uncontaminated" is mirrored in the romanticized writings of Laurens van der Post, or more recently the blockbuster *The Gods Must Be Crazy*. The Bushmen's

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<sup>246</sup> Beinart and Coates, *Environment and History*, 75.

<sup>247</sup> Jeremy Foster, "Land of Contrasts' Or 'Home we have always Known': The SAR&H and the Imaginary Geography of White South African Nationhood, 1910-1930," *Journal of Southern African Studies* 29, no. 3 (2003): 676.

<sup>248</sup> Hermann Giliomee, *The Afrikaners, Biography of a People* (Charlottesville, VA: University of Virginia Press; Cape Town, SA, Tafelberg Publishers, 2003), 306.

disneyfication through Bain's exhibits thus was intended to prepare the white public consciousness for the Bushmen's special status different from other Coloureds in South Africa.

Bushmen assumed indeed a special status among South Africa's indigenous peoples, exempting them from government programs aiming at integrating non-whites into the labor market through taxation and curtailed land access. Bushmen, the "noble savage" and ultimate "Other" embodying what civilized men are lacking, serve as a template, much like the construct of wilderness, against which white South Africa could consolidate its collective identity.

Conservation in South Africa had traditionally been a white endeavor based on the myth of the pristine wilderness symbolizing the eternity of nature.<sup>249</sup> It is a truism that national parks were created to save wildlife<sup>250</sup> but Ellis underscores that conservation was not only the technical or zoological exercise as which it has been portrayed; conservation also had a highly political undertone in that it essentially determined control over land, people, and animals.<sup>251</sup> Including Bushmen as people into the Gemsbok Park would have thus meant partially ceding control over the natural resources. However, stressing the Bushmen's primitivism the prospect seemed less threatening.

Although the Bushmen's historical entitlement to land was introduced into the debate, politicians focused primarily on the Bushmen's utility to the Union as

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<sup>249</sup> Stephen Ellis, "Of Elephants and Men: Politics and Nature Conservation in South Africa," *Journal of Southern African Studies*, Vol. 20, No. 1. (Mar., 1994): 54.

<sup>250</sup> See Jane Carruthers, "Contesting cultural landscapes in South Africa and Australia: Comparing the significance of the Kalahari Gemsbok and Uluru – Kata Tjuta national parks," in *Disputed Territories: Land, Culture and Identity in Settler Societies*, David Trigger and Gareth Griffiths, eds. (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2003), 237.

<sup>251</sup> Ellis, "Of Elephants and Men," 54.

underscored by the Bushman myth. Senator Boydell, who took an interest in the Bushmen after seeing them in Cape Town with Bain in May 1937, was the first to bring the reserve question before Parliament. He proposed a bill to amend the name “Kalahari Gemsbok Reserve” to “Gemsbok and Bushmen Reserve” to avoid future misunderstandings regarding the entitlements of the reserves’ inhabitants.<sup>252</sup> Establishing a clear causality between Bushmen and rightful land access, Boydell ruled out the option of denying Bushmen access to land: “[i]f any people are entitled to a place in the Union it is these descendants of the earliest inhabitants of the African continent, declared by scientists to be the cradle of the human race.”<sup>253</sup> He used the scientists’ argument of the value of the scientific and tourist potential of Bushmen to the Union. For Boydell, as for Bain, there was no question that the agency lay with the state: “South Africa would stand condemned in the eyes of the world unless adequate steps are taken for the preservation of these people”<sup>254</sup> and it would harm South Africa’s interests to willingly destroy scientific and tourist potential.

On May 17, 1937, the South African government decided to protect the Bushmen. Their entitlement to land was established not only by virtue of the Bushman myth but also by an acknowledged historical claim to the country. When Senator Boydell raised the Bushmen reserve question with the Senate, the Acting Prime Minister General Smuts replied that the “attitude of the Government towards the plight of the Bushman was sympathetic.”<sup>255</sup> Fascinated with the Bushmen’s anthropological value, General Smuts concluded: “[t]he Bushman is a

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<sup>252</sup> “Bushman to be Protected,” *Cape Argus*, May 18, 1937.

<sup>253</sup> “Protecting the Bushmen; Plea for Special Reserve More Important than Gemsbok,” *Natal Witness*, Pietermaritzburg, May 19, 1937.

<sup>254</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>255</sup> General Smuts cited in Boydell, *My Luck’s still In*, 102.

living fossil.”<sup>256</sup> Despite the General’s affectionate speech in Parliament, in which he promised to protect the Bushmen and allow them to stay in the Kalahari Gemsbok Park, the government ultimately had no jurisdiction inside the park. The park was under the administration of the National Parks Board (NPB) who forbade Bushmen access to the park.<sup>257</sup> However, Smuts’ initiated additional steps to ameliorate the situation of “primitive Bushmen using bow and arrow;”<sup>258</sup> he instructed the Department of Justice, magistrates, and police not to interfere with Bushmen who “live in their own way,”<sup>259</sup> a statement which was intended to shield them from being prosecuted under the strict anti-poaching game laws. To Smuts, this exemption was justified through the assumption that Bushmen hunted for food not for profit.

Preserving land for the Bushmen in Gordonia proved to be challenging because it interfered with the concept of wilderness. The government’s position advocated by Smuts was not revolutionary but had become more controversial since 1929, when the then-Minister of Land Piet Grobler stated before the proclamation of the reserve, “I am convinced that Bushmen should be protected in the same way as we protect game.” Grobler envisioned a reserve in which both the Bushmen and the gemsbok could live “a life free from interference.”<sup>260</sup> Because wilderness in South Africa was a cultural construct rather than natural

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<sup>256</sup> “End of Parliamentary Session: Bushmen not to be disturbed, Senate Hustle Eight Bills Through,” *Cape Times*, May 18, 1937.

<sup>257</sup> “Protecting the Bushmen,” *Natal Witness*, Pietermaritzburg, May 19, 1937.

<sup>258</sup> L.C.H. Blaine, Secretary for Justice, to Attorney General, Cape Town, April 29, 1937. SAB NTS 9586 382/400 (1).

<sup>259</sup> “Bushmen to be Protected,” *Cape Argus*, May 18, 1937.

<sup>260</sup> “Bushmen Dying Out: Plan to Postpone Race Extinction: Kalahari Game Reserve: Intention of Minister of Lands.” *Cape Times*, December 7, 1929. When Grobler made his statement neither reserve had been established yet; this early suggested mutual symbiosis of Bushmen and nature was to become a contested issue over time, see below.

geographic space, wild reserves were intensely managed places, contrary to what the word may imply.<sup>261</sup> Established as islands of protection for species evaluated to be worth saving, reserves relied on a hierarchy of value regarding the privilege of animals. Confined to protection areas, “relic animals” were “[n]o longer a threat to civilization, [so that] these survivors could be spared as an expression of the generous ethics of a higher civilization.”<sup>262</sup> This argument parallels that employed by Bain and the scientists to save the Bushmen from extinction in important ways. They endeavored to create room for the Bushmen in the South African imaginary geography by framing them as non-threatening, quasi-natural, integral parts of landscape. Referred to as “living fossils” and “last survivors,” the onlooker was free to interpret them as “relic animals,” representatives of the Paleolithic.

A debate emerged around competing notions of “relics” worth saving: Bushmen or gemsbok were framed as mutually exclusive by default. Only through this wider context of the imaginary landscape in which humans and animals had their circumscribed places, can the exclusivity of the debate be understood. In the context of dwindling game in a landscape deeply connected to white South Africa’s identity, nature conservation not only became a biological necessity, but preservation of the country’s heritage was a matter of preserving white identity and power. The academics, Bain, and the political proponents who argued for the Bushmen as pristine hunter-gatherers asked South Africans to see them as living remnants of the Stone Age, and to allow the Bushmen to hunt with bows and arrows. General Smuts’ decision did not necessitate a value judgment of

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<sup>261</sup> Beinart and Coates, *Environment and History*, 75.

<sup>262</sup> *Ibid.*, 30.

the Bushmen over the gemsbok or vice versa as he tied the Bushmen presence in the park to the condition that they were only allowed to hunt “traditionally.”<sup>263</sup>

The NPB opposed the government’s plans, choosing gemsbok preservation over Bushmen. They viewed Bushmen not through the lens of the myth but in terms of the other option of farm labor. Senator Bredner representing the NPB stated: “Smuts is talking a lot of damned nonsense if he thinks we are going to allow the Bushmen to live in the Gemsbok Reserve. That reserve is for gemsbok and other game and any Bushmen found there will be arrested.”<sup>264</sup> Bredner refused to attach a special status to Bushmen and was convinced that they should go and work.<sup>265</sup> Justice de Wet, Chairman of the NPB, resisted the powerful arguments of the Bushman myth on the grounds that “the Bushmen are so mixed-up with the half-breeds that ...a settlement in the Gemsbok Reserve will mean the early extermination of the gemsbok.”<sup>266</sup> Contrary to assuming that the Bushmen as isolated hunters could co-exist with the gemsbok as the Bushman myth postulated, de Wet knew Bushmen used dogs to hunt or even guns and like other inhabitants of all races in the region did not limit their hunt to food consumption but hunted for sale. From this perspective, having Bushmen in the park was not only counter to the Park Act but also a hindrance to taming the game for visitors.<sup>267</sup>

On March 14, 1940, the government again decided to save the Bushmen. Colonel Reitz, Minister of Land, (later Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of

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<sup>263</sup> “Bushmen to be Protected,” *Cape Argus*, May 18, 1937. The difference between hunting and poaching lies in the legality of the act. The former is legal while the latter is illegal; the general assumption held that Bushmen meat consumption was limited to subsistence, hence not disturbing the balance of the ecosystem.

<sup>264</sup> Boydell, *My Luck’s Still In*, 103.

<sup>265</sup> Ibid.

<sup>266</sup> Ibid., 104.

<sup>267</sup> Ibid., 105.



Native Affairs) took up the Bushmen reserve question in Parliament calling it a “biological crime” to let Bushmen die out:<sup>268</sup>

It seems to me that if we are justified in spending the taxpayer’s money on preserving rare types of our fauna we are still more justified in trying to prevent the extermination of the Bushmen. It is a standing reproach that South Africans allowed the Qagga to vanish and we shall deserve even greater contumely should we allow the Bushmen to join him in oblivion. I suggest, therefore, that, in spite of the war, the time has come to establish a Bushman Reserve.<sup>269</sup>

The Cabinet Memorandum submitted by Colonel Reitz was approved unanimously. As a member of the NBP and Minister of Land, Colonel Reitz could successfully mediate between both institutions. Reitz persuaded opponents like de Wet, the chairman of the NPB, that the “honorable Bushmen,” whom he had met in the park, should be allowed to stay.<sup>270</sup>

Nine years after Minister of Land P. Grobler stated his intention to settle the Bushmen and gemsbok side by side, Colonel Reitz caught the attention of the media, especially the Afrikaner press, by proclaiming, “[t]he Bushmen can be seen as part of our fauna and can be preserved in the park as part of wildlife.”<sup>271</sup> This statement was met with ironical comments: “Are they British subjects?” asked a Fanie Bekker. The journalist suggested that the Bushmen could sue the Minister for defamation. According to Alan Morris, white colonizers regarded Africans, the “‘primitives’ in the colony ... [as] members of the animal kingdom to be classified and listed amongst the weird and wonderful fauna of distant

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<sup>268</sup> Colonel Reitz in Parliament, April, 3, 1941, cited in Boydell, *My Luck’s Still In*, 117.

<sup>269</sup> Cabinet Memorandum Bushmen in South Africa, March 14, 1941. SAB NTS 9586 382/400 (3).

<sup>270</sup> “Col. Reitz is worried about the well-being of his Bushmen-‘Fauna,’” *Die Burger*, April 4, 1941.

<sup>271</sup> Ibid.

lands.”<sup>272</sup> The archives, however, reveal a different picture of Colonel Reitz. Addressing Parliament, he clearly distinguished Bushmen as humans from fauna referring to them as “these human derelicts who after all are of considerably greater scientific interest than the fauna I have mentioned above.”<sup>273</sup> Reitz seems to have employed the fauna trope to pacify the opponents; fauna could be integrated into the concept of “wilderness” excluding humans. Thus, to recognize the Bushmen’s right within the parameters of South African racial legislation as Coloured permitted to choose a place and a mode of living, they were ironically denied their humanity, at least in nominal terms. Bushmen as Coloureds formed an integral part of the capitalist economy while “animals” or “fauna” naturally fell outside of this framework.

### **Struis Zyn Dam: A Farm-Turned-Reserve?**

By 1940, the Bushman myth had lost much of its power and the purpose of a Bushmen reserve had shifted from a focus on preserving the Bushmen race through isolation to a humanitarian development effort. Colonel Reitz sent the distinguished anthropologist and government ethnologist N.J. van Warmelo to Gordonia to assess a possible area for a Bushmen reserve. Dr. van Warmelo was assisted by the Government Inspector of Lands resident in Upington, Piet “Moff” de Villiers, mentioned in Chapter One for his role in establishing the KGNP. In 1940, van Warmelo and de Villiers encountered 129 self-identified Bushmen in Gordonia (45 men, 34 women, 50 children), none in the region known at the time

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<sup>272</sup> Alan G. Morris, “Trophy Skulls, Museums and the San,” in *Miscast: Negotiating the Presence of the Bushmen*, Pippa Skotnes, ed. (Cape Town: University of Cape Town Press, 1996), 67.

<sup>273</sup> Cabinet Memorandum, SAB NTS 9587 382/400 (3).

as Bushmanland or Namaqualand.<sup>274</sup> Therefore, van Warmelo concluded that the “preservation in a reserve is a matter of national importance.”<sup>275</sup> Contrary to earlier discourse, van Warmelo firmly placed the Bushmen in the human context; he also expanded the debate hitherto focused on racial purity to include “Bushman’s historic socio-political claims.” The primary purpose of the reserve was to function as a safe-haven for the rural dispossessed who had lost their livelihoods.<sup>276</sup>

The purpose of the reserve should be to afford sanctuary to a primitive people suffering hardships through being dispossessed and unable to continue their traditional way of life, and so to preserve their language and culture for further study. The purpose of the reserve can not be primarily to ensure the breeding and perpetuation of a pure Bushman strain, though it will of course very much favour the survival of the Bushman type. The breeding of purer type Bushmen could obviously only be affected by strictest isolation and the ruthless culling methods of a pedigree stud farm. As it is, all we can do is to preserve what is left of physical type, culture and language as far as is compatible with treating these people as human beings and not as animals in a Zoo.<sup>277</sup>

Whereas for Bain, the purpose of a reserve had been to save the Bushmen from extinction through preserving racial purity and the hunter-gatherer lifestyle, for van Warmelo both could be compromised if it was to ensure the amelioration of the living conditions of the marginalized. However, the actual policies of the reserve resembled those of Bain: only those “who have expressly been granted the privilege” should be allowed to reside in the reserve. The selection process would be overseen by “someone competent to judge;” further specifications were not

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<sup>274</sup> See appendix Fig. 3:1 for a depiction of a group of Bushmen eligible for settlement on the reserve.

<sup>275</sup> N.J Warmelo, “Ethnological Section Report on Investigations regarding a proposed Bushman Reserve in Gordonia,” attached to Memo Native Affairs Department, April 26, 1940. SAB NTS 9587 382/400 (3), 1.

<sup>276</sup> L M.R. Drennan to Reitz, April 4, 1940. SAB NTS 9586 382/400 (3).

<sup>277</sup> Warmelo, “Ethnological Report,” 3.

given as the very subject of what constituted a Bushmen remained disputed.<sup>278</sup> To be admitted to the reserve, Bushmen had to fulfill the three criteria set forth by Schapera: a) racial type, b) language, c) culture or way of life.<sup>279</sup> Bushmen should “be registered with full details of signalement [sic], and finger prints, and allotted a number and a holed brass identification disc to be worn from the neck.”<sup>280</sup> The reserve’s visitors’ policy was to be equally strict. Visits “of Hottentots, Coloureds and European alike should be kept down to a minimum and be subject to the written permission of the superintendent. No strangers should be permitted to spend the night in the reserve.”<sup>281</sup> With regard to tourists and research workers, van Warmelo stated that the main concern should remain the Bushmen’s safety and only small parties of up to four researchers should gain admittance at a time. Regarding tourists, he was even less inclined to unduly subject the Bushmen to their gaze: “[t]ourists should be restrained and should have no claim at all to see the Bushmen if these have no desire to be seen. They should feel, not that they are in a circus, but at home.”<sup>282</sup>

Despite the strict policy on admitting only “Bushmen,” they were no longer expected to follow a hunter-gatherer lifestyle. Due to the limited size of the reserve of about 30,000 morgen, “they should be encouraged to maintain their present small herds of goats and I would recommend that some more goat ewes be purchased for them. These will give them an interest in life and tend to keep them more stable.”<sup>283</sup> Van Warmelo might have feared that boredom would entice the Bushmen to succumb to alcohol. The ethnologist is thus proposing to introduce a

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<sup>278</sup> Ibid., 20; see also Dart, “What is a Bushmen;” Schapera, “Memorandum.”

<sup>279</sup> Schapera, “Memorandum.”

<sup>280</sup> Warmelo, “Ethnological Report,” 21.

<sup>281</sup> Ibid., 20

<sup>282</sup> Ibid., 21.

<sup>283</sup> Ibid., 20.

government program whereby Bushmen's celebrated economic survival strategy was to be converted to pastoralism, a lifestyle better suited to socio-economic conditions in the area.

This reserve thus seemed pragmatically feasible, and yet it was not to become reality. Based on water availability and space Struis Zyn Dam (14,000 morgen) and Groot Awas (15, 420 morgen) were chosen as reserve sites.<sup>284</sup> The proximity to the road leading to the KGNP was considered convenient for the tourists, while Groot Awas, situated inland, ensured privacy for the Bushmen should they desire to retreat.<sup>285</sup> Both farms were situated in the Mier Coloured Settlement. According to van Warmelo, the farms were not used by the Mier community, so nobody would be disadvantaged by the choice. Van Warmelo estimated that an initial outlay of £550 and an annual expenditure £520 would cover the total cost of establishing and maintaining the reserve, including hiring a European superintendant. The proposed cost was miniscule compared to the £30,000 the government had invested to save the elephant in the Addo reserve or the £20,000 that had been allocated for bontebok preservation.<sup>286</sup>

Against the backdrop of the Bushmen's place in landscape ideology, their intended placement on Struis Zyn Dam would have broken the alliance of farmers and the NPB. While the allocation of Bushmen on a farm would have come as a relief to the NPB, it was certain to antagonize the farmers. Predictably, the debate about Struis Zyn Dam was met by strong opposition from farmers, including a farmer's association with the telling name "Saamstaan" (stand together).<sup>287</sup> In

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<sup>284</sup> Ibid., 15-18.

<sup>285</sup> See appendix, map 3:1 showing the location of Struis Zyn Dam and Groot Awas.

<sup>286</sup> Reitz, Cabinet Memorandum.

<sup>287</sup> L Saamstan Farmer's Association, September 4, 1940. SAB ACT 315/11642, Gordonia Struis Zyn Dam, 70, 71.

addition to the familiar litany that racial purity had not yet been scientifically established, new race-based arguments emerged. The current lessee of the farm, Mr. H.J. Blaauw, and the owner of the neighboring Welkom farm were very vocal about the negative effects the establishment of a Bushmen reserve in the proposed location would have.<sup>288</sup> Motivated by status and land value deliberations, farmers maintained with true racial bigotry that it was not right to establish a reserve “among whites.”<sup>289</sup> The government pointed out that these concerns were unfounded as the area was situated between the Mier Coloured Settlement, designated for Coloured people, and the Bechuanaland Protectorate to the East. In a letter to Mr. J.M. Conradie, the M.P. for Gordonia, Mr. Blaauw referred to “the so-called wild Bushmen that are as wild as I am” and voiced his anger about being threatened to leave everything for which he had worked, sweated, and made sacrifices.<sup>290</sup>

The press celebrated the successful installation of a reserve at Struis Zyn Dam in November 1940 with headlines such as “Bushmen come ‘home’ at last after centuries of wandering in South Africa.”<sup>291</sup> The Bushmen for the reserve were to be collected on farms from Upington to the Union’s northern borders, an initiative bound to anger farmers. The purpose of the reserve, namely to create a place where the Bushmen could as far as possible follow the “natural, traditional lifestyle of their ancestors,” was celebrated to have been fulfilled, ignoring the introduction of pastoralism to the hunter-gatherers.

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<sup>288</sup> The Welkom farm refers to the same area on which the Kruipers and other Bushmen squatted during apartheid; it became a Coloured settlement; for more correspondence regarding farmer’s dissatisfaction see SAB ACT 315/11642 Gordonia Struis Zyn Dam: 124-126; 167-170.

<sup>289</sup> “Bushmen Reserve in Gordonia: About 100 on a Farm,” *Die Burger*, March 24, 1941.

<sup>290</sup> TL H.J. Blaauw to J.H. Conradie (73). SAB ACT 315 11642.

<sup>291</sup> “Bushman Come Home at Last,” *Cape Argus*, November 13, 1940; “Boesmans Kry Plaas Waar Hulle Wild Kan Bly,” *Die Burger*, November 14, 1940; “Vaste Thuiset vir Boesmans, Reservat Naby Upington,” newspaper clipping November 18, 1940. SAB ACT 315 11642.

Ultimately, due to a bureaucratic misunderstanding, Struis Zyn Dam was abandoned in favor of integrating the Bushmen into the KGNP.<sup>292</sup> After a meeting between Colonel Reitz and the NPB late in 1940, Colonel Reitz was under the impression that the NPB had agreed to allow the Bushmen to stay with the game warden, Joep Le Riche, in the park.<sup>293</sup> A yearly allowance was sent to the park to pay a resident warden and meat, mealies, and tobacco for the Bushmen, some of whom came to live in the park.<sup>294</sup> The Minister of Native Affairs informed the Department of Land that Struis Zyn Dam would no longer be needed but should stay at the government's disposal for future Bushmen use.<sup>295</sup> Meanwhile, Struis Zyn Dam waited for the first Bushmen to arrive; ironically now there was land but no Bushmen!<sup>296</sup> There is no record, but it is possible that the Bushmen voted with their feet, choosing their patronage relationship with Joep le Riche and access to the park. It might, however, also be possible that the Bushmen never knew about Struis Zyn Dam. As it was, many of Bain's Bushmen remained in the park where they took up employment as trekkers or, with the park's consent, entertained tourists by marketing their ethnicity; the others reintegrated into the local farming sector.

The creation of the farm reserve never occupied by the Bushmen underscores that the main actors were not the Bushmen themselves, but a patronizing colonial government and other private and public benefactors. Struis

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<sup>292</sup> TL Rudd to H. Rogers, Esq. Department of Native Affairs December 5, 1940. SAB ACT 315/11642, (96).

<sup>293</sup> TL D.L. Smit Secretary for Native Affairs to Secretary December National Parks Board of Trustees, December 14 1940. SAB NTS 9586 382/400 (3).

<sup>294</sup> TL J.D. Le Riche to the Secretary of National Parks, March 18, 1941. SAB ACT 315/11642, (96).

<sup>295</sup> TLS Howard Rogers, Native Affairs to V. Rudd, Secretary for Land, November 28, 1940. SAB ACT 315/11642, (96).

<sup>296</sup> TLS H.S. van Graan, Secretary, National Parks Board of Trustees to Secretary, Department of Native Affairs, February 4, 1941. SAB NTS 9586 382/400 (3).

Zyn Dam would have submitted the Bushmen to complete state control; fashioning them as ethnic subjects with the emphasis not on the creation of individuated, documented citizens and workers, but on the collectivized perpetuation of a state-sanctioned static Bushmen image.

### **Bushmen as Shepherds and Maids: Death of a Myth?**

Both farmers and the NPB disliked the idea of a Bushmen reserve and defied the Bushman myth. The farmers' interest in doing so was economic. Farming in the Kalahari was a difficult and frustrating task; on their large properties, the farmers were at the mercy of the Kalahari desert. Living in humble corrugated iron houses, following their livestock, and turning to poaching and gathering in times of need, what distinguished Baster farmers in the Mier Reserve from the Bushmen was primarily land ownership and the Bushman myth. The Basters as poor landowners had established secure resource access, whereas Bushmen were impoverished, landless, and deprived of rightful access to resources. Thus, the Bushmen entered into economic relationships with the Baster, dependent upon their labor power. Schapera acknowledged with regard to the Southern Kalahari Bushmen that "some of them still lead the traditional Bushmen life, but the majority are in the service of inter-dwelling Bantu, Hottentots and Bastards or of European farmers."<sup>297</sup> He explained the difference between "tame" and "wild" Bushmen. Tame were those that herded cattle and worked for European or Native Masters, whereas wild Bushmen mainly lived off hunting and gathering. Elphick's ecological cycle introduced in Chapter Two, corresponds to Schapera's assertion that this subsistence mode was not

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<sup>297</sup> Schapera, "Memorandum."



characteristic of the Bushmen only. Many of the Bergdamara and Tjimba Herero in South-West Africa or the MaKaglagadi in Bechuanaland had also been forced through loss of livestock to adopt a similar lifestyle – the lifestyle of the rural proletariat, the dispossessed. Dart described the Bushmen's

dependence upon European and Coloured (Bastard) farmers for access to water-holes and bore-holes. In the absence of game they are equally dependent on these stock-farmers for a goat or a sheep or a few handfuls of bore-meal to eke out the family larder in return for the jackals, wild-cats and other vermin which they hunt and also are reduced to eating.<sup>298</sup>

The conclusion that Mr. Warmelo as government-employed ethnologist reached on the subject was that “these people, who were until recently persecuted by Hottentot, Baster and European alike, are being exploited by all these three today.”<sup>299</sup>

Since farmers were dependent on the Bushmen labor, they simply denied the Bushman myth. Not accepting the realities of fluid ethnicity and multiple identities they maintained that authentic Bushmen were extinct and modern Bushmen “bastards” were not worth preserving. The demand for Bushmen labor was increased when the economy of the Northern Cape experienced a boom with the arrival of karakul sheep in 1934.<sup>300</sup> Although Professor Maingard believed that “the Bushman is at the best of times incapable of steady work, it is not in his nature,”<sup>301</sup> the farmers did not always have the luxury of choice because of the scarce labor supply in Gordonia. The *Cape Times* reported already in 1929 that the availability of Bushmen farm labor seemed to decrease<sup>302</sup> which to Bain was

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<sup>298</sup> Dart, “What is a Bushman,” 5.

<sup>299</sup> Warmelo, “Ethnological Report,” 13.

<sup>300</sup> Degré et al, *Kalahari Rivers of Sand*, 50.

<sup>301</sup> Schapera, “Memorandum.”

<sup>302</sup> “Bushmen Dying Out: Plan to Postpone Race Extinction: Kalahari Game Reserve: Intention of Minister of Lands.” *Cape Times*, December 7, 1929.

not surprising: “[f]rom the purely humanitarian point of view I am exceedingly loath to see these people forced by extreme necessity into the services of the farmers.... the treatment meted out to the Bushmen servant by the Kalahari farmer is nothing short of criminal and a disgrace to the country of which I am proud to belong.”<sup>303</sup> He continued: “I am fully aware that the labour problem in Gordonias is acute, but I am also aware that as long as the farmers continue to treat their servants in the way they do the problem will remain acute.”<sup>304</sup> Bain’s bias was clear: “I submit that it is of greater importance to South Africa to preserve these pure bred specimens than to convert them into shepherds and kitchen maids for the benefit of the retrogressive and in some cases degenerate farmers who inhabit the fringe of the Kalahari.”<sup>305</sup>

It was not only labor exploitation that Bain feared but also the contamination of the Bushmen race. He maintained that promiscuity could be inevitable as farmers would cohabit with Bushmen women “[i]f and when the question of a suitable locality for a Bushmen reserve has been decided upon every woman and girl will be found to be carrying a Baastard child, which will make poor foundation stock and the undertaking will be doomed at the outset.”<sup>306</sup> To Bain, the reserve question was thus a pressing and time sensitive issue. Local farming communities, on the other hand, feared that runaways from neighboring farms who were “half-breeds and Namaqua bastards” would be likely to be “posing as Bushmen” to escape the hard life of farm workers.<sup>307</sup> Colonel de Villiers, Commissioner of Police stated clearly that Bain’s Bushmen are not

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<sup>303</sup> TLS D. Bain to General J.C. Smuts, September 27, 1937. SAB NTS 9586 382/400 (1).

<sup>304</sup> TLS D. Bain to General Smuts August 1, 1937, 5.

<sup>305</sup> Ibid., 6.

<sup>306</sup> Ibid.

<sup>307</sup> “Bushmen to be Protected,” *Cape Argus*, May 18, 1937.

genuine because they could neither speak their language nor hunt with bow and arrow; most of the Bushmen were employed by farmers in the area prior to Bain's interference, and Villiers claimed that "[t]he band of persons who accompanied Bain to the Exhibition are all bastard Hottentots or Korannas...Bain bought some bows and arrows from Ngamiland and taught these people for two or three months how to use them for the Rand Exhibition." He concluded: "there are no Bushmen in the Union."<sup>308</sup>

The link between land and identity built the backbone of South Africa's legislative framework of segregation. By mediating land access, the government held a certain power over the identity of the indigenous people; in the case of the Bushmen, their lifestyle was intrinsically tied to the environment. As discussed in previous chapters, it was the lack of available land that necessitated a lifestyle change, transforming a hunter-gatherer mode of production into participation in the local labor force with an accompanying process of assimilation.

Had land access been successfully guaranteed to the Bushmen, their ethnicity might have become uniformly fixed in the 1940s. Assuming that all of Bain's Bushmen would have accepted life in the reserve despite its strict regulations, history might have played out very differently. During apartheid, far from proclaiming Bushmen as extinct, they might have come to inhabit a "homeland" of sorts which would have completely reversed the dynamics. Instead of a denial of Bushman identity and a subsuming of many individuals of hunter-gatherer heritage under the amalgamated Coloured identity, a state-designed Bushmen ethnicity would have been likely to have been imposed upon all inhabitants of the reserve. Over the long run, Bushmen would have served as a

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<sup>308</sup> TD Re: Bushmen in Union, Pretoria August 26, 1937. SAP NTS 9586 382/400 (1).

paradigm for ethnic differences in the nation, a welcome pattern in apartheid South Africa. Moreover, had a reserve been created in the mid 20<sup>th</sup> century, the land rights claim in 1998 might not have been possible as the government could have argued that land was already granted to the Bushmen in the 1930s. Of course, since the cut-off date for land claims under the current legislation refers to 1913, some San would have still been able to claim certain areas for which they could prove eviction outside a potential reserve. However, the political impact of a San land rights claim would have been much diminished by an already existing reserve.

Finally, the failure of the reserve debate prevented a uniform cementation of Bushmen ethnicity on a Bushmen homeland. Instead, the denial of a Bushmen reserve resulted in the creation of two different groups with a diametrically opposed survival strategy in apartheid South Africa: while some denied their San identity, others subscribed to a static, colonial exegesis of “Bushman” ethnicity. These groups evolved separately over the next 50 years until the ‡Khomani land rights claim reunited them.

## CHAPTER 4

### THE (RE)BIRTH OF THE ‡KHOMANI: HUNTING FOR TOURISTS AND GATHERING SHEEP

We shall mend the broken strings of the distant past so that our dreams can take root. For the stories of the Khoe and the San have told us that this dream is too big for one person to hold. It is a dream that must be dreamed collectively, by all the people.

It is by that acting together, by that dreaming together – by mending the broken strings that tore us apart in the past – that we shall all of us produce a better life for you who have been the worst victims of oppression.

It is now my place to say: Here is your land. Take it, look after it and thrive.<sup>309</sup>  
Deputy President Thabo Mbeki

The application of the Bushman myth in the present has contributed to the transformation of a restitution land rights claim into an ethnic land rights claim.

This shift in paradigm has led to the creation of an artificial, hybridized community consisting of two major groups of people with competing claims to a ‡Khomani identity. These competing claims are fuelled by the Bushman myth, its perpetuation from outside, and its reappropriation from inside of the community.

In an environment with few economic alternatives, the marketing of the construct of ‡Khomani San culture with an emphasis on its Bushmanness is prevalent.

Against this backdrop, claims to authenticity are fueled by resource access considerations. While the translation of the *Bushman myth* into a *Bushman brand* may benefit the community as marketing strategy guaranteeing income

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<sup>309</sup> Roger Friedman and Benny Gool, “Land grant marks rebirth of Bushmen,” *Cape Times*, March 22, 1999, 10. Thabo Mbeki’s comments are reminiscent of the same patronizing school of thought prevalent during colonialism. Just as Donald Bain, Raymond Dart and the other scientists strove to create the best possible world for the Bushmen in the 1930s and 1940s, so does Mbeki claim that “we shall all of us produce a better life for you.”

\*Due to the relatively short period of fieldwork and the time constraints of an undergraduate thesis, the following chapter should be seen, rather than as precise assessments, as deliberation based on observations and interviews as well as reports and legal documents emanating from the faculties concerned with ‡Khomani development, legal, NGO, state supported and independent consultants.

generation, the accompanying immobility of an “authentic” ‡Khomani identity, a legacy of the static definition of Bushman ethnicity developed by Bain, continues to contribute to the division of the community and thus hinders the realization of the potential for material sovereignty and development the ownership of land has brought about.

### **Apartheid and Beyond: Bushman Death and Bushman Myth Revival**

Although the ‡Khomani land rights claim has demonstrated the challenges resulting from a divided community along competing claims to “Bushman” identity, the division of the community is not a product of the claim. The historical depth of the division among the ‡Khomani can be traced to the evolution of the two alternative lifestyle choices emergent since the late 19<sup>th</sup> century and prevalent since Bain’s intervention in 1936: integration into the farming economy or capitalizing on the Bushman myth. The contrast between these two lifestyle choices was sharpened under apartheid when Bushmen were officially reclassified as Coloureds. Forced resettlement not only undermined kinship ties as the Bushmen spread across the Southern Kalahari into Botswana, Namibia, and the Northern Cape, but it created a landless, right-less rural proletariat suffering from stigmatization. The response of people with Bushman heritage included the adoption of two survival strategies: integration through adaptation and denial of origins and integration through conscious use of “othering.” These strategies were employed alternately by the same people.

The group referred to today as “modern,” “western,” or “urban” San, and more recently as “newcomers,” shares the experience of having lived in disconnected diaspora communities. These people have lost touch with their San

heritage and adapted to the dominant Coloured identity in a socio-political environment conducive to denying one's "Bushman" identity. By 1950, all South Africans had to identify with an official racial identity under the Population Registration Act.<sup>310</sup> As indigenous identities, e.g. Nama, Griqua, Khoe, Baster, were not recognized as groups onto their own, San became subsumed under the motley category "Coloured" and as such were subjected to apartheid laws regarding access to resources. As upward mobility now meant accessing relationships encoded in the Coloured identity, most San adopted this identity together with Afrikaans as mother tongue. Within the Coloured Afrikaans community the obsession with race under apartheid translated into sub-hierarchical categorization: according to Nigel Crawhall, "Bushman-like" features were associated with being of the lowest class and most "backward." Thus, most ‡Khomani elders under apartheid "deliberately marr[ied] out of their language / ethnic group to escape the stigma of their former hunter-gatherer identities and to connect to resource networks of the more dominant group."<sup>311</sup> The next generation grew up oblivious of their heritage and San-languages until they rediscovered their identity and history in connection with the land rights claim. Today, this is portrayed as loss of cultural confidence exemplifying the psychological and social cost of the economic and environmental changes experienced by the Southern Kalahari San.<sup>312</sup> Previously, the shedding of their San identity represented a successful economic strategy until the land rights claim opened up new possibilities of capitalizing on a San identity.

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<sup>310</sup> Crawhall, *!Ui-Taa language shift in Gordinia*, 241.

<sup>311</sup> Ibid., 74.

<sup>312</sup> Ibid., 257.

Instead of neglecting their “Bushman” heritage, the other group, today known as “traditional” San or “original claimants,” asserted and displayed their Bushmanness to capitalize on the public’s fascination with the Bushman myth; however they were not able to do so autonomously and depended on an attachment to (an exploitative) patronage relationship. There were several of these relationships subsequent to Bain. Conraad Macdonald took a small group of Bushmen on commercial exhibitions in 1939 and 1940 but got into trouble with the law for not having a permit to display Bushmen, eventually delivering his group of people to the KGNP.<sup>313</sup> Lokie Henning, a Kuruman tour operator, marketed the Bushmen’s value as relics of southern Africa’s aboriginal people in the 1980s.<sup>314</sup> P. de Waal, the owner of Kagga Kamma, a tourist resort in the Cedarberg, Western Cape, employed about 30 members of the Kruiper family as tourist attraction from 1991 until they moved to the Kalahari in connection with the restitution of land in 1998.<sup>315</sup> Most of the family had been living as squatters in Welkom just outside the KGNP or had been employed as farm laborers prior to representing the lifestyle of traditional foragers, interacting with tourists in an “anachronistic exotic meeting of cultures and times.”<sup>316</sup> At Kagga Kamma, the Bushmen interacted with tourists in controlled encounters designed to educate the visitor about the life of San in South Africa – an education based on the propagation of the Bushman myth. The Kruipers’ representation as San saw them

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<sup>313</sup> “Bushman-Baboon Show Ban: Owner in Court,” Press cuttings, June 23, 1939. TLS Conraad Frederick MacDonald to D.L. Smit, July 1, 1939. SAB NTS 9586 382/400 (1).

<sup>314</sup> Roger Chennells, “*The ≠Khomani San Constitutional Crisis Issues Around the Traditional Leader*,” unpublished notes, n.d., n.p.; Roger Chennells, Human Rights Lawyer Chennells Albertyn, interview by author, August 26, 2008, Stellenbosch.

<sup>315</sup> Roger Chennells, “The Rights of the ≠Khomani San,” *South African Human Rights Commission*: Sept. 2007, 2; Chennells, *Khomani San Constitutional Crisis*.

<sup>316</sup> Hylton White, *In the Tradition of the Forefathers: Bushman Traditionality at Kagga Kamma*, (Rondebosch: University of Cape Town Press, 1995), 11.



draped outside in a primordial arrangement of San against the Cedarberg's magnificent scenery, dressed in *!xais* and engaged in "typical" activities such as working with bow and arrow, skins, and ostrich egg beats, while a guide lectured on the San's history in Southern Africa. Tourists, who were encouraged to engage in an encounter through the lens of the camera, were also able to buy crafts produced by the Kruipers. Thus, it appears as if the colonial stereotype of the pure and pristine Bushman has been exploited from below at Kagga Kamma, evident in the commodification of Bushman heritage.

San representation seems to resemble a cornucopia. While many perceive the exhibition of peoples as exploitative, the Kruipers, far from stressing unequal dependency, welcomed the opportunity to share their culture and traditions.<sup>317</sup> Dawid Kruiper, later to be the traditional leader of the ‡Khomani, justified their exhibition as a way to contribute to the survival of their culture: "I am an animal of nature. I want people to see me and know who I am. The only way our tradition and way of life can survive is to live in the memory of the people who see us."<sup>318</sup> Hylton White acknowledges in his excellent ethnography, a crudely instrumentalist analysis does not do justice to the Kruipers' relationship to the marketing of their culture. Although Dawid Kruiper was adopting the same analysis of proper Bushman behavior that the colonial academics at Bain's camp developed, it would be wrong to reduce Kruiper's statements to a functionalist application of the Bushman myth in order to gain a living. The invented traditions of Bain's time have since become part of the collective identity of the Kruipers.

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<sup>317</sup> Ryland Fisher, "Eco-tourism's Bushman lie," *Cape Times*, July 2, 1999, 19.

<sup>318</sup> White, *In the Tradition of the Forefathers*, 15-17.

Whereas according to White, their sense of selfhood depended on “being the heirs to Bushman tradition” and “being people of nature,”<sup>319</sup> this identity was fictive in that the *!xai* was only worn “at work” for tourists and media productions, and instead of a San-language the group spoke the *lingua franca* of the Northern Cape, a mixture of Afrikaans and Nama. The group adopted some of the conservationist rhetoric, a remnant from Bain’s times, which was contemporaneously reinforced by the Kagga Kamma management, and presented themselves as the last survivors of South Africa’s Bushmen in danger of assimilation, but they were, in White’s view, “not isolated from the industrial world. Producers of curio commodities and performers of services for tourists’ consumption, they are instead integrated participants in a global cash economy.”<sup>320</sup>

A Kagga Kamma Bushman was integrated and yet still remained, in Barbara Buntman’s eyes, “a colonial subject, often abstracted ... represented as a generalized whole and as collective entity.”<sup>321</sup> The continued objectification of the Bushmen in Kagga Kamma was emphasized in July 1999 when the *Cape Times* revealed that after the Kruipers had left Kagga Kamma for the Kalahari, the management employed local Coloureds as Bushmen, “passing [them] off....as the ‘genuine article.’”<sup>322</sup> This scrupulous substitution of the Kruipers, treated as commodity necessary for the smooth operation of the private game reserve,

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<sup>319</sup> Ibid., 18.

<sup>320</sup> Ibid., 25.

<sup>321</sup> Barbara Buntman, “Bushman Images in South African Tourist Advertising: The case of Kagga Kamma,” in *Miscast: Negotiating the Presence of the Bushmen*, Pippa Skotnes, ed. (Cape Town: University of Cape Town Press, 1996), 279.

<sup>322</sup> Roger Friedman and Benny Gool, “The great bushman tourist scam,” *Cape Times*, July 1, 1999, 10.

stresses that the business venture was primarily interested not in the education of visitors, but in the economic profits derived from the Bushman myth.

Just as with Bain, land emerged as a central topic in connection with the Bushmen's way of life. Unlike Bain, who envisioned a return of the inhabitants of his reserve to a hunter-gatherer lifestyle, the Kruipers at Kagga Kamma dreamed about their return to land on a very practical level; landownership held the promise of independence and self-representation. They saw gaining land as a strategy to secure their control over their cultural commodification and enable them to reap the benefits.<sup>323</sup> With this the Kruipers mirrored strategies employed all over the world by indigenous peoples to avoid dispossession and secure socio-economic resource access.

Ten years after the signing ceremony of the restitution agreement on March 21, 1999, the ‡Khomani land rights claim failed to deliver on many of its promises. The transfer of 38,000 hectares farm land and 50,000 hectares in the KGNP to the ‡Khomani, as part of the wider South African approach to land reform, was intended to rectify past injustices.<sup>324</sup> As evident in the epigraph of this chapter, Deputy President Thabo Mbeki neither foresaw the absence of a collective ‡Khomani dream concerning post-land rights plans, nor did anybody anticipate the extent to which the structure of the community would cause land management to be a challenge. Today, in the absence of a functioning community government, coherent development plan, and established law, individual land

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<sup>323</sup> Buntman, "Bushman Images in South African Tourist Advertising," 52.

<sup>324</sup> Map: 0:2; Roger Chennells, "The ‡Khomani San Land Claim," *Indigenous Rights in the Commonwealth Project Africa Regional Expert Meeting, Indigenous Peoples of Africa Coordinating Committee (IPACC)*, (South Africa, Cape Town, Oct. 2002.)

access is ironically as insecure as before the land claim,<sup>325</sup> uncoordinated development efforts have failed to deliver basic health, educational, or housing services, and post-claim support fell short of addressing the specific needs of the community; as a result alcoholism, substance abuse, and violence are prevalent.

In 1992, the Kruipers met with the dedicated human rights lawyer Roger Chennells, originally to discuss their treatment at Kagga Kamma and the prospects of a business joint-venture with the owner P. de Waal. However, it soon became evident, that a return to the Kalahari was the utmost priority for the San. In a changed political climate favoring restitution of land to those who had been wronged under the 1913 land laws, the Kruipers lodged a land rights claim in 1995 with the Northern Cape Land Regional Claims Commissioner under the provisional name of “Southern Kalahari San Land Claim Committee.” The interim constitution and more specifically the 1994 Restitution of Land Act made this claim legally feasible, while, since ethnicity had replaced class as the defining variable in political discourse post-1994, state opposition was not to be expected.<sup>326</sup>

In March 1999, the first phase of the land claim was settled when six farms situated close to the confluence of the Molopo and Nossob rivers, about 50km south of the Kgalagadi Transfrontier Park (KTP,) where returned to the San, namely Scottysfort, Andriesvale, Uitkoms, Miersshoopan, Witdraai, and

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<sup>325</sup> Roger Chennells, *Report on the Land Rights of the =Khomani San Community*, (December 2006), 12-16.

<sup>326</sup> Roger Chennells, *The =Khomani San Constitutional Crisis Issue Around the Traditional Leader*; Steven Robins, “NGOs, ‘Bushmen’ and Double Vision: The ‡Khomani San Land Claim and the Cultural Politics of ‘Community’ and ‘Development’ in the Kalahari,” *Journal of Southern African Studies* 27, no. 4 (2001): 837.

Erin.<sup>327</sup> In an attempt to ensure the rights of the first claimants, 50% of this land had come to be constitutionally reserved for “traditional use,” not further defined. At this point, the San, now referred to as ‡Khomani, had come to encompass about 1500 individuals with vastly diverging dreams concerning the land.

The second phase of the land rights claim concerning the KTP, formerly the Kalahari Gemsbok National Park, took place in 2002. The ‡Khomani received ownership of 25,000 hectares on the Southern boundary of the Kgalagadi Transfrontier Park, including within the limits of the contract park agreement, the potential to engage in cultural practices and eco-tourism, and further symbolic and cultural user rights over half of the South African section of the park.<sup>328</sup>

The map from the park agreement entitled “A Land Reform Success Story” alludes to the fact that on paper the ‡Khomani San land rights claim has been a historic settlement much celebrated by the government, not least because of its ethnic dimension as a claim of the First Peoples of Southern Africa.<sup>329</sup> Mbeki stated: “What we are doing here in the Northern Cape is an example to many people around the world. We are fulfilling our pact with the United Nations during this decade of Indigenous Peoples.”<sup>330</sup> In reality, however, a post-claim dilemma evolved. Due to the fact that land was transferred without a planning process regarding the allocation and use thereof, self-help became the order of the day, resulting in numerous problems: families are squatting on the land and occupying houses without paying rent, farms are overgrazed with no system of

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<sup>327</sup> Chennells, “*Report on the Land Rights of the K=Khomani San Community*,” 3; see appendix Map 4:1.

<sup>328</sup> Chennells, “The =Khomani San Land Claim”

<sup>329</sup> See appendix Map 4:1 for a detailed overview of the restituted land within the KTP and of the farms.

<sup>330</sup> Roger Chennells and Aymone du Toit “The Rights of Indigenous Peoples in South Africa,” in *Indigenous People’s Rights in Southern Africa*, ed. Robert Hitchcock and Diana Vinding (Copenhagen: IWGIA, 2004.), 100.

payment for grazing rights in place, infrastructure is decaying, game of R 1.5 million has been poached or lost, and allegations of nepotism and corruption amass.<sup>331</sup> The ‡Khomani political organization within the framework of the prescribed Community Property Association has failed to function effectively and as a result initiatives to manage the lands broke down, causing gross inequality with regard to asset distribution.<sup>332</sup>

Social identities are complex and fluid and difficult to map into legal rules. In the case of the ‡Khomani especially so, since the community was created for the land rights claim. Just one year post land claim settlement, the original claimants voiced a desire to separate from the rest of the community.<sup>333</sup> However, external legal frameworks discouraged a split. The Commission for the Restitution of Land is hesitant because the ‡Khomani could set a negative precedent for other communal claims. Even the Human Rights Commission's report in 2006 recommended to put the formal request for a division of the community on hold, because of resulting "considerable complications" and suggest instead buying the Kruipers additional land which would create separate

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<sup>331</sup> Chennells, "Report on the Land Rights of the K=Khomani San Community," 12-16.

<sup>332</sup> The current Communal Property Association (CPA) system of the restitution process has been criticized because communities often lack capacity and expertise required to manage the restituted lands. According to this system, the land is held collectively by the community and managed by the CPA management committee (CPAMC). In the case of the ‡Khomani, mismanagement through the CPAMC has resulted in allegations of corruption and even the near foreclosure of the Erin farm in September 2002. The Department of Land Affairs in response launched an application at the High Court to place the CPA's administration under that of the Secretary General. From 2002 onwards, the signatures of any CPAMC members hence carry no weight (Chennells, "The Rights of the =Khomani San," 4-5).

<sup>333</sup> As early as 2000, claimants voiced the desire to split. South African Human Rights Commission, *Report on the Inquiry into Human Rights Violations in the Khomani San Community*, Andriesvale Askham area, Kalahari (November 2004,) 17, 25-26. Subsequently, proposals to found a Makaai-house to be represented in the House of Traditional Leaders have failed (Nanette Flemming, SASI field office project manager, interviewed by author, July 31, 2008, Andriesvale.)

geographies for the factions of the community.<sup>334</sup> The outsider's reluctance to accept a formalized separation of the community contributes to the artificial perpetuation of the ǀKhomani San's sustained struggle to form a collective identity.

The claim did not start out as an ethnic land rights claim. While the Kruipers and Roger Chennells depended on genealogical research conducted by Dart in 1936 and subsequent work of Stellenbosch professors H.P. Steyn, and L.J. Botha, to support the claim, the initial focus was not on the Bushman myth. The claim was instituted on behalf of a community, a discrete group of families of 250 individuals of which 85 had been located, with historical ties to the land in question in accordance with the Land Restitution Act.<sup>335</sup> However, the out-of-court settlement of the claim in 1998 entailed the expansion of the original claimants base to include not only the "Southern Kalahari San" claimants but all "San" of the Northern Cape. The Bushman myth became central to the claim with the expansion requested by the Department of Land Affairs (DLA).<sup>336</sup> Despite the fact, that the land restitution act did not necessitate a land claim to have an ethnic component, it was in the government's interest to incorporate as many San into this existing claim as possible as to reduce the number of further claims.

The emphasis on ethnicity transformed "being Bushman" from a negative stereotype into a desirable asset. Yet, retrospectively, Roger Chennells is convinced that the decision to expand the claimants' base was the fundamental error responsible for the formation of at least two competing interest groups,

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<sup>334</sup> *Ibdi.*, 31.

<sup>335</sup> Roger Chennells, "ǀKhomani San membership report: SASI's brief response," unpublished, June 9, 2008: 1; Ruth Hall, "Transforming rural South Africa? Taking stock of land reform," in *The Land Question in South Africa*, Lungisile Ntsebeza and Ruth Hall, eds. (Cape Town: Human Science Research Council, 2007), 92-94.

<sup>336</sup> Chennells, "ǀKhomani San membership report," 2;

undermining the process of community formation and thus the possibility of sustainable political leadership and economic development.<sup>337</sup> Defining who should be included or excluded as beneficiaries of land reform proves to be highly problematic throughout South Africa as the boundaries of local communities are usually ambiguous. The fundamental problem, in Susanne Berzborn's words, is that "a legal entity has to be grafted upon a social identity."<sup>338</sup> In this case, a legal entity created a social identity. Not only has the community been created for the land rights claim, but its interactions continue to be guided by constitutions written to regulate important aspects ranging from membership to land use, serving to an extent to perpetuate the Bushman myth.<sup>339</sup>

### **(Re)creating ‡Khomani Community in the Context of the Bushman Myth**

The Bushman myth has been a continuous influence on San communities in South Africa, shaping their identities in the context of the political economy of the Northern Cape. The focus on "Bushman" authenticity is no less pronounced in the democratic and neo-liberal 21<sup>st</sup> century than during Bain's times. This focus translates into the adoption of income strategies either connected to the Bushman

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<sup>337</sup> Roger Chennells, Human Rights Lawyer Chennells Albertyn, interview by author, December 20, 2007, Stellenbosch.

<sup>338</sup> Susanne Berzborn, "Identity politics in the Richtersveld Land Claim, South Africa," in *Aridity, Change and Conflict in Africa. Proceedings of an International ACACIA Conference held at Königswinter, Germany October 1–3, 2003* ed. Bollig et al., Tagungsband, (2007): 296.

<sup>339</sup> As the process of land acquisition shifted from parliament in the 1930s and 1940s, to the courts at the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century law has continuously gained in importance in the lives of the ‡Khomani: ranging from the land rights claim, to intellectual property claims, the communities constitutions, and the regulation of the political in the realm of the legal. The idea of ‡Khomani as "*homo juralis*" (Comaroff and Comaroff, "Ethnicity Inc.," 2005, 20), especially concerning the interplay of law and ethnicity, is well worth further study. Firstly, the Khomani as indigenous peoples are embedded within an international legal framework. Secondly, nationally, their rights are derived from the country's new constitution. Thirdly, their communal existence on their land is governed by their own constitution(s).



myth (i.e. tourism ventures) or opposing the myth (commercial farming) within the community.<sup>340</sup> These strategies are exclusionary regarding land use, resulting in intra-community conflicts; “grondeiser” [landrights-claimer] has become a swear word. Appropriated socio-political claims to ‡Khomani identity and authenticity based on the Bushman myth continue to shape the fabric of the present community. The fascination with the Bushman myth facilitated the settlement of the claim and resulted in the creation of a hybridized, fabricated ‡Khomani community. In the absence of an honest discourse about the sustained power of the Bushman myth and its (un)conscious perpetuation by outsiders as well as community members, exclusionary claims to ‡Khomani ethnicity will continue to exist and hinder collective development initiatives.

The two economic strategies which San and their descendents have developed in response to the invasion of capitalism and the colonial state into their territory continue to guide the ‡Khomani’s response to the neo-liberal market and the post-colonial state. Commercial interests, whether catering to a niche market through the commercialization of a Bushman brand, or whether integrated into the local stock and game farming economy, determine the ‡Khomani’s survival as a community.

First, survival through capitalizing on their “Otherness.” In this context, marketing ‡Khomani ethnicity should take on an empowering role for those ‡Khomani who, despite being collective owners of the land, individually are dispossessed and do not have power over alternative income strategies. Comaroff and Comaroff maintain that the market value of culture has replaced the market

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<sup>340</sup> See appendix Fig. 4:1 to 4:6 for photographs displaying commercial ventures connected to the Bushman myth as well as life connected to farming in the ‡Khomani community.

value of labor power in many parts of South Africa.<sup>341</sup> The historical context of this thesis shows that the promotion of Bushman culture has been employed as a direct substitute for labor power for the past eighty years. As ethno-businesses open up, they are hunting for the brand, the unique aspect about a culture. In the case of the ‡Khomani it is not the search for the unique in their culture which determines their relationship to ethno-business, it is rather the survival of remnants of a culture as a result of what has been marketable over the past eighty years; it seems as if the process of branding has shaped the community's understanding of their culture over time. After nearly a century on the ethnic-market, are ‡Khomani still selling a product inspired by their culture or has the product become their culture?<sup>342</sup>

Secondly, survival through integration into the local farming sector. There is no available data as to how many commercial farmers currently exist in the community, but the carrying capacity of the land on the four farms designated for farming would normally support less than a handful of commercial stock farmers. These restrictions on land availability in a community of about 1500 members, make stock farming an elite strategy, not open to the whole community. The emerging discussion about capitalizing on San ethnicity or engaging in commercial agriculture remains about choices of the marginalized. Many alternatives remain unattainable due to a lack of formal education.

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<sup>341</sup> Comaroff and Comaroff, "Ethnicity Inc.," 6.

<sup>342</sup> In addition to the economic value of their "Sanness," their "Otherness" is encouraged and perpetuated through legislation set forth in the ‡Khomani constitution, such as the 50% "traditional" land rule, and through the *Hoodia* plant intellectual property rights claim. Overall, the ‡Khomani are an excellent example of what Comaroff and Comaroff refer to as "Ethnicity, Inc.:" "Project the legal subject onto the terrain of cultural identity, add the reduction of culture to property, mix it with the displacement of the politics of difference into the domain of jurisprudence, and what is the result? ... *Ethnicity, Incorporated*." Comaroff and Comaroff, *Ethnicity Inc*, 23.

As intra-community conflict is rife, the question of authenticity is reintroduced to the debate: Nana Sana, self-identified as “traditional” presents the ‡Khomani in the following terms: “We are the ‘‡Khomani San Bushmen’, half of us are livestock farmers, the other half grew up traditional... Bushmen were never farmers. We live from nature, close to nature.”<sup>343</sup> And the traditional leader Dawid Kruiper maintains: “If you want to live traditionally you won’t have sheep and goats, you will live at Witdraai and take your bows and arrow and you have to know how to handle a lion and the antelopes in the park.”<sup>344</sup> Whereas Ouma Geelmeid, resident in Upington, states: “Bushmen and farming are one... today Bushmen can farm. A Bushman is the best farmer, a Bushman is a farmer who farms.”<sup>345</sup> These three quotes lay out the positions through community members’ voices highlighting the extent of the appropriation of the Bushman myth from below.

However, their stated opinions differ from their actions, Ouma Geelmeid does not live on the ‡Khomani land but stays in a township in Upington where she teaches children N|u. Dawid Kruiper has himself introduced cattle to Erin, a farm per constitution reserved for “traditional use,” because, as he explained, he also wanted to profit. Further, he is equating traditional life with life in the park. While logical from today’s point of view, the historical irony of attaching the very value of freedom to hunt and gather to a place which originally took this liberty from their ancestors, is telling. Finally, Nana Sana maps out a relationship of dependence: “The live stock farmers have their food, we are not allowed to eat

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<sup>343</sup> Susanna Witbooi, (Nana Sana), community health worker, interview by author, July 25, 2008, Witdraai.

<sup>344</sup> David Kruiper, traditional leader, interview by author, January 21, 2008, Witdraai.

<sup>345</sup> Geelmeid Katrina Esau, elder, interview by author, August 4, 2008, Upington.

our food because we are not allowed to hunt. We die from the hunger. We cannot eat game. I've got to buy meat from them." Thus, what crystallizes here is not primarily a conflict of authenticity of ‡Khomani identity but the perpetual conflict between the pastoralists and the rural dispossessed. In this context, the Bushman myth serves, yet again, to mask poverty by romanticizing "traditional" life. Elphick's ecological cycle discussed in Chapter One is one that individual community members go through routinely; it is the co-dependency of the community which fuels conflicts between those who have and those who have not. Instead of being expressed explicitly as land use conflicts, they are voiced through allegations of authenticity and inauthenticity.

In a changed political post-1994 world, accessing resources, once again, depends on the strategic utilization of the Bushman myth. Thus, the land rights claim has become a catalyst of ethnic formation. In the case of the ‡Khomani, Roger Chennells admits to the cognizant fabrication of the concept of ‡Khomani identity: "the most major challenge is trying to make the myth that we've created in order to win the land claim now become reality."<sup>346</sup> The land rights claim merged two groups with different economic survival strategies and identities under the ‡Khomani umbrella. Just as Bain's Bushmen were an amalgamation of interregional migrants from various economic backgrounds, the ‡Khomani are no less a potpourri of people of various degrees of San-heritage or affiliation, drawing members from those that integrated as Coloureds and those who explicitly cultivated their "Otherness." The ‡Khomani constitution alone lists ten

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<sup>346</sup> Steven Robins, "Whose Culture, Whose Survival: The Khomani San Land Claim and the Cultural Politics of 'Community' and 'Development' in the Kalahari," in *Africa's Indigenous Peoples: 'First Peoples' or 'Marginalized Minorities'?*, Alan Barnard and Justin Kenrick, eds. (Centre of African Studies, University of Edinburgh, 2001): 246.

different identified ethnic groups, based on the knowledge of elders of the community and archival research.<sup>347</sup>

The artificiality of the constructed ‡Khomani community manifests itself in the name-giving process. The name “‡Khomani,” and with it the legend of a coherent community, has been created by lawyers for the Land Rights Claim in 1999.<sup>348</sup> It is derived from a San-speaking linguistic group, but the elders of the community clearly acknowledge the name as a label employed by outsiders just as “San” or “Bushman.”<sup>349</sup> Nigel Crawhall identifies “‡Khomani” as misnomer or exonym wrongly applied to speakers of Western N|u by the Witwatersrand University, especially Professors Doke and Maingard, in 1936.<sup>350</sup> Today, the name is unquestioningly accepted by those who did not previously identify as “Boesmans” or are young enough to have adopted a ‡Khomani identity, whereas those elders that identified as “Boesmans” in their childhood, acknowledge the artificiality of the term and continue to self-identify as “Boesman” or “Sasi.”<sup>351</sup>

With the landrights claim, the claim to San heritage became a survival tactic guarantying collective landownership and access to a support structures.<sup>352</sup> For those San who did not seek the protection of a patronage relationship, the label “Bushman” was for decades a shameful experience, denying its carrier access to land and resources as well as to dignity and respect. On the other hand,

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<sup>347</sup> Constitution of the ‡Khomani-San Communal Property Association as adopted during the Annual General Meeting of the Association, 4 May 2002: 6.2.4 a)-g).

<sup>348</sup> Chennells, August 26, 2008.

<sup>349</sup> Rooi, January 18, 2008; Kassie, August 4, 2008.

<sup>350</sup> Crawhall, *!Ui-Taa language shift in Gordonia*, 215-216.

<sup>351</sup> See chap.1 for an explanation of the terminology. Katrina Rooi, Hanna Koper, Geelmeid Esau, and Anna Kassie speak for the older generation whereas Johannes, Johann, and Patrick Vaalbooi, Martha van der Westhuizen, Leadra Eiman, Fonnies Brou, and Magdalena Kassie speak for the farmer and young generation.

<sup>352</sup> Networks offering training, and seeking to empower the San politically and legally are as follows: regional (SASI), inter-regional (SANC, WIMSA, KFO, !Kwa ttu), and supra-regional (UNWGIP).

those who kept the Bushman myth alive, like the Kruipers in Kagga Kamma, proudly labeled themselves “Boesman.” Many young people who grew up oblivious of their San heritage and previously identified as Coloured are persuaded by the utility of adopting a ‡Khomani identity. Martha van der Westhuizen, twenty-three, tour guide, interpreter, SASI administrative assistant and mother, has not only learned trekking and story telling, but is also proud to have mastered English and to have opened her own email account. However, she remarks: “I don’t think I could get this kind of job anywhere else with my little schooling.”<sup>353</sup> Likewise, Leandra Eiman, twenty-five, currently the craft shop manager at the San Education and Cultural Center !Khwa ttu to the North of Cape Town, has participated in international indigenous peoples workshops and acknowledges “without being ‡Khomani, I would be just like all the others and nobody would give me all these opportunities.”

However, a purely functional analysis does not do justice to the multitude of coexisting claims to ‡Khomani identity. Katrina Rooi, also known as Ouma |Una, who grew up in the KGNP and went on tour with Donald Bain as a child states:

I drank Boesman milk because my mother is a Boesman girl, my father is a Boesman, my grandfather is a Boesman and my grandmother is a Boesman... I just felt like a Boesman. My feeling was that of a Boesman... I am not a Nama, not Black, not White, not from another nation. When I was born I did not feel Nama and my blood is Boesman. At this point I still feel Boesman.<sup>354</sup>

While this comment clearly shows the influence of the land rights claim in Ouma |Una’s emphasis on genealogy, it would be too crude an analysis to suggest that

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<sup>353</sup> Leandra Eiman, craft shop manager, interview by author, January 12, 2008, !Khwa ttu.

<sup>354</sup> Katrina Rooi, January 18, 2008.

she only participated in the claim for the benefits she now derives from the association with the Bushman myth. She is a “Bushman Rock Star” and much sought after by researchers and media alike. Epitomizing the wise †Khomani elder and N|u speaker, she has occupied one of the communal farm houses with her family and generates income as professional research subject through her participation in interviews, workshops, movies etc.<sup>355</sup> Although she has appropriated the romanticized tale of the Bushman myth, one cannot disregard her genuine identification with the “Bushman” identity.

While living in a beautiful farmhouse in contrast to most of the community members living in shacks, Ouma |Una maintains, if only she could live in a grass hut, she would be content with the land rights claim because “these western things mean nothing to me.” While she calls for traditional housing, she rejects traditional dress on the grounds that it would look improper on an old woman like her.<sup>356</sup> Her comments underscore the divided consciousness prevalent in the community, a verbal romantization of the pure and pristine life of the Bushmen in close connection to nature, while, perhaps unintentionally, having adopted Western perception regarding every day life, revealed in tangible life choices. Many of the †Khomani today have adopted the early ethnographers’ notion of the unchanging Bushman culture, a direct heritage from the Stone Age. A return to a static “pure” hunter-gatherer lifestyle is impossible in today’s South African and the resulting guilt of wanting possessions, typically a house and a car, and of not living up to the Bushman myth, result in harsh moral judgments about the perceived value of the “traditional” versus the “modern.” The emanating xenophobic tendencies, inbreeding, and accusations of inauthenticity of the

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<sup>355</sup> See Fig. 4:7 Ouma |Una at work.

<sup>356</sup> Katrina Rooi, January 18, 2008.

‡Khomani parallel the legacy of the colonial creation of fixed “tribal identities,” which having been appropriated from below, continue to lead to ethnic conflicts in Africa.<sup>357</sup>

The inherent contradiction of the negation of modernity on the one hand, while choosing to live it on the other, is a defining feature of those who seek to live or promote the Bushman myth; the creation of a comfortable “indigenous modernity” is hindered by the tendency to stress primordial notions associated with the Bushman myth.<sup>358</sup> Steven Robins underscores “[t]he reclaiming of San identity and history ... was much more than mere instrumental political maneuvering in order to gain access to social and material resources. It also constituted an act aimed at the recovery of San cultural memory and identity at a moment when the entire South African nation was struggling to ‘work through’ the bitter and traumatic past of colonialism and apartheid. It is a timely and empowering act of cultural reclamation and recovery.”<sup>359</sup> Yet, eight years after Robins visited the ‡Khomani the celebratory spirit is no longer obvious and an atmosphere of hopelessness prevails as competing claims to ethnicity based on claims on authenticity undermine intra-communal trust.

The creation of the ‡Khomani myth, a second generation to Bain’s Bushman myth, was targeted at the international and South African donor

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<sup>357</sup> Terence Ranger, “The Invention of Tradition in Colonial Africa,” 248-249.

<sup>358</sup> Steven Robins, “NGOs, ‘Bushmen’ and Double Vision: The ‡Khomani San Land Claim and the Cultural Politics of ‘Community’ and ‘Development’ in the Kalahari,” *Journal of Southern African Studies* 27, no. 4 (2001): 843; for an excellent discussion of African modernities refer to Probst, Deutsch, and Schmidt, “Introduction: Cherished Visions & Entangled Meanings,” in *African Modernities*, idem, eds. (Portsmouth, NH, Heinemann, 2002) 1-14.

<sup>359</sup> Steven Robins, “Land Struggles and the Politics and Ethics of Representing ‘Bushman’ History and Identity,” *Kronos, Journal of Cape History*, No.26, (2000): 75.



community, the government, the public, and the ǀKhomani themselves.<sup>360</sup> During the claim, the narratives of San cultural continuity and identity were powerful and strategic tools, but subsequently this focus has proven counterproductive to creating community cohesion among the claimants. Obsession with authenticity plays itself out inside the ǀKhomani community as well as externally. Internally, even figureheads like the traditional leader Dawid Kruiper, who for decades have kept the Bushman myth alive, are not free of accusations of inauthenticity: members accuse him of being “Nama” instead of “Boesman” because he speaks Khoekhoewab but none of the San-languages.<sup>361</sup> Externally actors refer to his traditional *!xai* as metonym for cultural authenticity.<sup>362</sup> Further, while the traditional healer of the SASI-initiated health project, Jan van der Westerhuizen, the protagonist in the documentary “Bushman’s secret,” is portrayed as carrier of ancient San knowledge externally, he was faced with jealousy, voiced through accusations of inauthenticity, internally:

But from the very beginning I felt I was a Bushman and other people treated me like I was a Bushman, with other words my mind wanted to be a Bushman...I was hurt because some of the other Bushmen pushed me away and said I was not part of the Bushman nation. I was feeling so bad that I went to National Geographic ...to take the test [DNA test] to show them I am really a Bushman and can live traditionally.<sup>363</sup>

Many of the intra-community conflicts are thus fuelled by the obsession with “authenticity,” and stereotypical depictions of “traditionality,” perpetuated by the continued (financial) importance of the Bushman myth. People in positions

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<sup>360</sup> For a thorough discussion of the ǀKhomani in the context of NGOs and the government, see Robins, “NGOs, ‘Bushman’ and Double Vision,” 844 -852.

<sup>361</sup> Anna Kassie, August 4, 2008.

<sup>362</sup> Phillippa Holden, independent consultant, interview by author, August 7, 2008, Johannesburg.

<sup>363</sup> *Bushman’s Secret*, Documentary. Directed by Rehad Desai, Uhuru Productions: 2006; Jan van der Westhuizen, traditional healer, interview by author, January 18, 2008, Brosdoring.

of power (Dawid Kruiper) or in the position to capitalize on the Bushman myth (Jan van der Westhuizen) are targeted by the community as inauthentic. However, this is not only a response to undermine those more privileged than others; for example, women who braid their hair are accused of compromising the Bushmen “purity.”<sup>364</sup> The problem is thus emblematic of a community seeking to define themselves in relation to a myth, in a world which continues to discourage multiple identities.

Markers of authenticity in the community include: genealogies, language, traditional dress, the recreation of hunter and gatherer lifestyles, and traditional knowledge of the *veld*. This checklist meant to define “authentic Bushman,” has been partly influenced by the ‡Khomani constitution’s requirements regarding membership criteria (genealogy) and partly by the commercialization of “Bushmanness,” reminiscent of Schapera’s markers of San “authenticity” introduced in Chapter Three: physical appearance, language, and knowledge of culture. Xenophobic tendencies and an overvaluation of ethnic markers are the response of a community in which membership ensures access to resources, and the most stable income, aside from farming, is derived from marketing Bushmanness.

The stark emphasis on a categorical, immobile ‡Khomani ethnicity arisen from the legacy of the 1930s, is detrimental and counterproductive since it does not constitute an appropriate response to contemporary challenges, which call for the creation of a comfortable indigenous modernity. However, a debate of multiple identities is completely absent. The heterogeneity of the group has led to

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<sup>364</sup> Van Wyk, Elsie and Ouma Mita, craft saleswomen, interview by author, January 20, 2008, Andriesvale.

what external actors like to refer to as a cleavage, dividing the community into two factions: those who are pursuing income generation through marketing a traditional lifestyle and those who seek to attain the same goal through commercial farming and other wage employment. As previously stated, this is a continuation of the same two strategies followed by San in the 1930s. Ignoring historical context, the misnomer “Traditionalists” and “Westerners” dominated the discourse;<sup>365</sup> The terminology employed by William Ellis is certainly not only a controversial choice of words but also irrelevant in its implied chronology since both groups’ survival strategies are a response to the challenges of an increasingly globalized world. Life in the Kalahari for both groups is hybridized, incorporating local knowledge and practices as well as access to exogenous technologies such as cellular phones, radios, and televisions. The current terminology employed by key players reflects a shift away from a simplified dichotomy of “traditional” versus “modern,” introducing descriptive nomenclature such as “original claimants” and “urban San” or “newcomers.”<sup>366</sup>

In contrast to the exclusionary nature of the †Khomani land rights claim, Susanne Berzborn, who worked on the Richtersveld land rights claim, describes a conscious decision on the part of the claimants to advance the claim founded on a comprehensive identity. She notes: “People can not only live different identities at the same time, but can even refer to the interlocking of identities strategically.”<sup>367</sup> This does not seem to apply to the †Khomani. What is needed is a *situational approach*, that is an emphasis on “identity ... open to changing collective definitions and fluctuating emotional intensities,” rather than the *ascriptive*

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<sup>365</sup> William Ellis, “The ≠Khomani San land claim against the Kalahari Gemsbok National Park: Requiring and acquiring authenticity,” unpublished, PLAAS, 10.

<sup>366</sup> Chennells, †Khomani San Membership Report, 3.

<sup>367</sup> Berzborn, “Identity politics in the Richtersveld,” 307.

*approach* that defines San according to “objectively verifiable cultural attributes and genealogical kinship charts.”<sup>368</sup> San are yet often portrayed as homogenized target group, a view supported by international donors and NGOs. Steven Robins thus suggests seeing the San as “moving target” to undermine the static perceptions and stereotypes of outsiders.<sup>369</sup>

### **The Bushman Myth as Answer to ‡Khomani Development?**

The fascination with the Bushman myth has a longstanding tradition but has been revived through the land rights claim. Academic fascination with San dates back to the European Industrial Revolution, a period during which they were equated with the “pre- or proto-historic forbears of contemporary Western society.”<sup>370</sup> Discovered as a scientifically valuable window into the human past in the 1930s, they have been continuously romanticized despite the effort of many academics to debunk the myth of the isolated hunter-gatherer. The worldwide success of the blockbuster, the *Gods must be Crazy*, which focused on the supposed state of primitive affluence of “Bushmen,” is an example of the continued fascination of the West with pristine primitivism.<sup>371</sup> In present day South Africa, tourist shops offer t-shirts adorned with Bushman paintings, plastic ostrich-egg drinking bottles, and photographic coffee-table books featuring the Bushman myth; advertisements continue to capitalize on the Bushman myth.<sup>372</sup> Robert J. Gordon appropriately describes the continued fascination with, and

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<sup>368</sup> Enloe, 1980 cited in Gordon and Douglas, *The Bushman Myth*, 261.

<sup>369</sup> Steven Robins, “NGOs, ‘Bushmen’ and Double Vision,” 846.

<sup>370</sup> Robert J Gordon, “Introduction: Making a Case for Farmer-Foragers,” in James Suzman *Things from the Bush: A Contemporary History of the Omaheke Bushmen*, Basel Namibia Studies Series 5, (Basel: P. Schlettwein, 2000), x.

<sup>371</sup> Gordon and Douglas, *The Bushman Myth*, 1.

<sup>372</sup> For example: Alf Wannenberg, Peter Johnson and Anthony Bannister, *The Bushmen*. 2 2d ed. (Cape Town: Struik, 1999); see Fig. 4:8 for a topical example of “Bushmanophilia.”

appropriation of, Bushman images and artifacts with the term “Bushmanophilia.”<sup>373</sup>

Another interesting expression of “Bushmanophilia” is the symbolism of San in the new South Africa. As First Peoples, San serve as common ancestors to the rainbow nation and as symbol for identification across cultural and racial lines. South Africa’s state emblem features a San Coat of Arms with the /Xam motto “!Ke e:/xarra//ke,” which is officially translated into “Diverse people unite.”<sup>374</sup> Further, the province of the Northern Cape, and the Mier Municipality feature mottos depicting rock art people along with a claim to unity.<sup>375</sup> Choosing /Xam as official language does not disadvantage any of the peoples living within South Africa today, whereas the focus on the San as First Peoples suggests “antiquity without the stigma of the primeval, and of autochthony without the practical problem of large-scale land restitution.”<sup>376</sup> Further, this gesture was intended to restore dignity to Khoisan peoples. President Mbeki himself evoked the ability of the new coat of arms to transgress past, living present and future, stressing a “collective and interdependent humanity.”<sup>377</sup> In this context it is an economically rational decision to continue to emphasize the Bushman myth on the road to development, but it is not a sustainable approach in a community as diverse as the ‡Khomani.

Comparing the Bushman myth in the past and present in the context of the South African San, the continuities regarding paternalism and the prescription of “authentic San” culture remain. What has changed with the land rights claim is

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<sup>373</sup> Gordon, “Saving the last Bushman,” 28.

<sup>374</sup> Barnard, *Anthropology and the Bushman*, 5; appendix Fig.4:9

<sup>375</sup> See appendix Fig. 4:10 and 4:11.

<sup>376</sup> Barnard, *Anthropology and the Bushman*, 19

<sup>377</sup> Address by President Thabo Mbeki at the Unveiling of the Coat of Arms, Kwaggafontein, 27 April 2000.’ [www.gov.za/speeches](http://www.gov.za/speeches), cited *ibid.*, 6.

not so much the appropriation of the Bushman myth from below, already existent in Bain's times but most certainly in Kagga Kamma, neither is it the absence of paternalism since paternalistic relationships with NGOs, lawyers, and the state continue to exist, it is the potential to achieve material sovereignty based on property ownership.

As the victims of modernization are transformed into recipients of modernity's benevolent aid, underdevelopment replaces dispossession and colonization as the primary problem. Thabo Mbeki claimed, not unlike the Bushman-benefactors in the 1930s who strove to create a Bushmen reserve which they perceived as the best possible alternative, that "we shall all of us produce a better life for you."<sup>378</sup> The liberal claim to develop the "Other" is central to both time periods. In Elizabeth Garland words:

liberalism requires the figure of a presocial human subject on which civil society may act, the Ju/'hoansi have been fashioned repeatedly by the West as authentic socio-cultural Others: first as decentralized, kinship-based, hunter-gatherers, and more recently, as victims of colonialism and underdevelopment. At the same time, though, liberalism bases its moral authority on the promise that its civilized sociality will one day embrace all humanity.<sup>379</sup>

What Garland describes is the inherent contradiction of the mainstream notion of linear development when applied to the Bushman myth. As James Ferguson argues, the transformation of the narrative of social and economic development from a "spacialized global hierarchy into a temporalized (putative) historical sequence" enabled the very idea of progress towards modernity defined as a state

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<sup>378</sup> Roger Friedman and Benny Gool, "Land grant marks rebirth of Bushmen," *Cape Times*, March 22, 1999, 10.

<sup>379</sup> Elizabeth Garland, "Developing Bushmen: Building Civil(ized) Society in the Kalahari and Beyond," in *Civil Society and the Political Imagination in Africa: Critical Perspectives*, John L. Comaroff and Jean Comaroff, eds. (Chicago and London, the University of Chicago Press, 1999), 94.

of equality, and “civilization.”<sup>380</sup> Bushmen did not form part of this vision. With regard to the Bushman myth, Bain and his contemporaries circumvented the paradox of “developing” a group valued for their “non-development,” by striving to extract them from the framework of the developed nation through the installation of a reserve. The patronizing dialogue assumes a ceding of the Bushman’s evolutionary process in the Stone Age. Consequently for San the condition of the “traditional” hunter-gatherer was regarded as the ideal state of being as opposed to becoming an integral and equal part of capitalist society. Edwin N. Wilmsen frames this worldview poignantly: “not only living peoples conceived to be the fit models for the remote past, but that remote past itself is said to establish the parameters of life of these living peoples.”<sup>381</sup> Only a discourse that allows San to claim their many identities while integrating into contemporary South African society, economy, and politics will empower San to lift themselves from poverty and hyper-marginalization.

The Bushman myth continues to dominate the framing of the †Khomani community as legal, political, and economic subjects as well as of subjects of development. The true hurdles to †Khomani development emerged after reaching the unifying goal of land ownership. When the †Khomani community had to define and actualize their dreams, intra-community conflict, rooted in competing claims to “Bushman” ethnicity, emerged and separated the community, thereby halting development efforts. Despite the transfer of landownership, the community’s hopes for sufficient “water” (i.e. resources), “truth” (i.e. fair and

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<sup>380</sup> James Ferguson, “Decomposing Modernity: History and Hierarchy after Development,” in *Global Shadows; Africa in the Neoliberal World Order* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2006), 178.

<sup>381</sup> Wilmsen, *Land Filled with Flies*, 1989, 6.

transparent community government and historical truth), and “love” (i.e. a unified community and a decline in substance abuse and violence as expressions of deep psychological trauma) remain unfulfilled. The last nine years have seen many well-meaning but uncoordinated development efforts to redress prevailing inequalities. Currently, the Kalahari seems to be in hiatus – waiting for the lawyers to coordinate a new approach to membership before any political reorganization of the, in that regard, dysfunctional community can take place; waiting for the DLA to hire a full-time farm manager to help build capacity and a coherent development plan; waiting for the community to take decision into their hands and either unite or separate.

What lies at the bottom of the standstill, undiscussed, is the inability of the “community” to debate the role of the Bushman myth in the Kalahari. While the translation of the “Bushman myth” into a “Bushman brand” may serve as marketing strategy guaranteeing income generation in a community with little alternatives, the accompanying immobility of an “authentic” ‡Khomani identity is no basis for sustainable development.



## CHAPTER 5

### CONCLUSION

This thesis has focused on the creation of the Bushman myth in connection with Bain's Bushmen exhibitions and has traced the application and appropriation of the myth from the Bushmen reserve debate to its problematic consequences in the present. The Bushman myth refers to stereotypical depictions of "Bushman," based on a façade of traditions. These traditions are depicted as remnants and atavistic manifestations of a historically immovable Bushman ethnicity. Stressing their timelessness and isolation, the Bushman myth thus disregards the San's internal dialectics and fluid social worlds as well as their placement within the context of historical and local relationships to non-San. Hence, the creation of the Bushman myth has ultimately resulted in the construction of a fixed ethnic identity, which has come to define the life of Bain's Bushmen and their descendents during the last 80 years.

With the advent of colonists North of the Gariep in the 1860s, the life of local hunter-gatherers underwent radical transformation. In the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century the daily life of Bain's Bushmen and their ancestors thus lost any resemblance to the idealized version of the Bushman myth. In response to the determining impact of colonialism as a process in political economy and culture, hunter-gatherers altered their autochthonous relationship to land, resources, and trading networks. As the settlers penetrated the northern periphery of the Union of South Africa, they introduced capitalist notions of property rights over land and resources as well as a need for farm labor. Consequently, the hunter-gatherers, faced with landlessness and without resource access, traded their immediate

return economy for wage employment or patronage relationships with local Baster and white farmers. Non-Western societies are never as “closed,” “traditional,” and “static” as their myths might suggest, and the San are no exception. Indeed, arguably, identity was linked more to the choice of a resource access strategy than to an ethnic identity of Sanness in this time period.

The mythopoeia evolved along with the fixation and invention of tradition at Bain’s camp and beyond. Bain himself, as well as the scientists at his camp were instrumental in providing cultural symbols which in turn lead to the fixation of a cultural identity. In 1936, Donald Bain, a group of South African scientists, and an assemblage of individuals from various San and non-San backgrounds jointly created traditions delineating Bushman as an ethnic group. They applied a general idea of an authentic Bushman onto this group of Union nationals, portraying them as the ultimate “Other,” thereby upholding iconographic stereotypes of “pure,” “wild,” “timeless,” and “isolated” “Bushman.”

Eric Hobsbawm defines invented tradition as “a set of practices, normally governed by overtly or tacitly accepted rules and of a ritual or symbolic nature, which seek to inculcate certain values and norms of behavior by repetition, which automatically implies continuity with the past.”<sup>382</sup> The invention of tradition regarding Bain’s Bushmen was marked by Bain’s insistence that the Bushmen wear the *!xai*, speak only languages of San origin, and perform their dances, songs and stories in the name of historic continuity. Through exposing the Bushmen to the public eye, these traditions formed an image of an authentic Bushman in South Africa. The perception of Bushmen as a distinct static ethnic group

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<sup>382</sup> Eric Hobsbawm, “Introduction: Inventing Traditions,” in *The Invention of Tradition*, Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger, eds. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986; twelfth reprint, 2004), 1.

underscored their scientific and economic value to the Union. Their assets consisted of their physiological stature, their language, and selected traditions. This combination proved to be marketable, attracting the public to the exhibitions and much media attention. More importantly, it sustained the scientists' fascination with the Bushman as "missing link" between ape and men in a teleological Darwinist society.

The Bushmen were not only objects but active participants in the production of the Bushman myth, strategizing, dressing and undressing, and returning the gaze. The collaboration in retaining the Bushman myth epitomized the softening of the dualism between "the colonizer" and "the colonized," recognizing that both groups consisted of discernible voices, agendas and interests, the intersection of which resulted in the creation and perpetuation of the Bushman myth and its public advertisement through press, scientific work, and the multiple public exhibitions of Bain's Bushmen.

After Bain and his academic contemporaries succeeded in the creation of traditions, leading to an emerging consciousness of ethnicity, they applied the Bushman myth in the political sphere. This process reinforced the claim to a Bushman ethnicity. Bushmen reserve proponents utilized the Bushman myth to guarantee Bain's Bushman land access, which in a racialized South Africa, could not be guaranteed based on their humanity alone. Reserve opponents tried to debunk the myth in vain by alleging the "Bushmen" to be inauthentic and a threat to nature conservation. A reserve was planned to remove the Bushmen from the capitalist economy and settler influence, holding the promise of a "traditional" lifestyle and thereby saving the Bushmen from extinction. However, the Bushman myth failed to bring about the desired result; no secure land access was officially

established for the Bushmen up to the successful restitution of land to the then ‡Khomani San in 1998.

Bain's relationship to the Bushmen can only be characterized as paternal. While claiming to save them from exploitation through farm labor, he initiated to develop, examine, and record what he saw to be primordial Bushman custom. Yet, it would be wrong to be cynical. Bain's effort to create a Bushmen reserve was as honest and constructive as the land rights claim that was to come sixty years later. Both were attempts to create a space in which Bushmen could live well in the modern world, while cultivating their customs and traditions. Bain was unable to see beyond the restraints of patronage and dependencies. Providing Bushmen with a piece of land on which they would have had the power to decide in which survival strategy to engage, which customs and traditions to follow, which language to speak, and which identities to maintain or adopt, might have truly empowered them. Contrary to Warmelo, who envisioned a European overseer to structure the life of the Bushmen at Struis Zyn Dam according both to the demands of necessity (animal husbandry) and the demands of tradition (including discouraging intermingling of Bushmen with other ethnic groups), to Bain, the notion that Bushmen should be allowed to alter their primordial lifestyle was absurd. Only a less stringent ethnic message, allowing for a combination of customs and formal education to circumvent hyper-marginalization and allow for self-determination would have empowered the Bushmen. Needless to say, even if Bain and the scientists had accepted multiple identities, overlapping networks of association and exchange, and had truly wanted to empower the *people* behind the "Bushman" bodies, South African politics until 1994 would have prevented equality. However, the early creation of an indigenous modernity through

providing San with the education and land ownership to successfully participate in society, while encouraging them to integrate cultural difference, would have eluded many of the problems the ‡Khomani community is facing today.

The Bushman myth has been a continuous influence on San communities in South Africa, shaping their identity in the context of the political economy of the Northern Cape. The focus on San authenticity is no less pronounced in the democratic and neo-liberal 21<sup>st</sup> century than during Bain's times. This focus translates into the adoption of income strategies by the community either connected to the Bushman myth (tourism ventures) or opposing the myth (commercial farming).<sup>383</sup> Hence, appropriated socio-political claims to ‡Khomani identity and authenticity based on the Bushman myth continue to shape the fabric of the present community. The fascination with the Bushman myth facilitated the settlement of the claim but resulted in the creation of a hybridized, fabricated ‡Khomani community. In the absence of an honest discourse about the sustained power of the Bushman myth and its (un)conscious perpetuation by outsiders as well as community members, exclusionary claims to ‡Khomani ethnicity will continue to promote intra-community conflict.

The history of "Bain's Bushman" contributes to breaking the iron-grid of the post-colonial stereotype of an unchanging bifurcated exploitative relationship between monolithic and static groups. William Beinart refers to a "struggle to free historiography and social studies from narratives of dependence, victimhood and romanticism."<sup>384</sup> The very essence of the term "Bushman" has become synonymous with the "Other," and has come to signify isolation and wildness as

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<sup>383</sup> See appendix Fig. 4:1 to 4:6 for photographs displaying commercial ventures connected to the Bushman myth as well as life connected to farming in the ‡Khomani community.

<sup>384</sup> William Beinart, "African History and Environmental History," *African Affairs*, Vol.99, No. 395, Centenary Issue: A Hundred Years of Africa (Apr., 2000): 302.

much as dependence and victimization. The “Bushman image” has been romanticized and debunked from above (academia, media) only to be (re)appropriated from below (‡Khomani San).

Bushmen are not featured prominently in the history of southern Africa; if mentioned they have mainly been, in Alan Barnard’s words, “seen as part of the landscape, ‘nature’ rather than ‘culture,’ victims rather than actors, part of the world that once was, rather than the world being made by ‘history’ or indeed by ‘contemporary politics.’”<sup>385</sup> In South African history, San ran the danger of being doubly isolated. As Sarah Nutall and Cheryl Ann Michael remind us, “South African culture has frequently and understandably been analyzed in relation to the ideology of segregation...according to figurations of apartness, isolation and separation.”<sup>386</sup> In addition to the conventional timeless and contextless ethnographic depiction of San, they were silenced due to racial and cultural segregation.

This case study underscores what Terence Ranger calls the need of historians to “free themselves from the illusion that the African custom recorded by officials or by many anthropologists is any sort of guide to the African past.”<sup>387</sup> This awareness is not meant to devalue the continued importance of invented traditions and ethnicity to the history of Africa up to the present. Loss of historical memory, as a result of inequitable recording of the history of non-colonial voices, continues to contribute to shaping perceptions about “Bushman” and San in the post-colonial presence. Recovering some of this lost memory is imperative to empowering the descendents of Bain’s Bushmen through

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<sup>385</sup> Barnard, *Anthropology and the Bushman*, 2.

<sup>386</sup> Sarah Nuttall and Cheryl Ann Michael, “Re-imagining South African Cultural Studies,” *African Sociological Review*, Vol. 3 No.2 (1999): 58.

<sup>387</sup> Ranger, “The Invention of Tradition in Colonial Africa,” 262.

historically contextualizing current claims to authenticity and the marketing of a Bushman brand. Knowing about the tradition of fabricating the Bushman myth and the failed attempts to utilize this myth might provide the ‡Khomani with a sounder basis for decision-making concerning the creation of sustainable development efforts as well as the commercialization of the “Bushman image” from below. By tracing the development, application, and appropriation of the Bushman myth and its power to define traditions, I hope to contribute towards a much-needed discussion in the present about multiple identities and ‡Khomani ethnicity.

## APPENDIX

### FIGURES



Figure 1:1<sup>388</sup>

Left to right: Minister of Land Affairs Derek Hanekom, the traditional leader David Kruiper, Deputy President Thabo Mbeki, and Community Property Association leader Petus Vaalbooi at the land claim signing ceremony in March 1999.



Figure 1:2<sup>389</sup>

“Bushmen taken at the Beers Conviet Starterin (?), 1919”

<sup>388</sup> Magdalena Kassie, Gertruida Sauls, Yasmine Jacobs (eds.) / *E A Q!Uruke Enter the Light*. (Kimberly:South African San Institute, 2004), 26.

<sup>389</sup> AU8 DAR, unnumbered.





Figure 2:1<sup>390</sup>

This picture depicts Donald Bain holding a Bushmen baby.



Figure 2:2<sup>391</sup>

The caption to this picture reads: “A member of the Witwatersrand University Expedition to the Kalahari poses with two of the Bushmen that are being studied.” It emphasizes the Bushmen’s “Otherness” in size.

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<sup>390</sup> Extract from photograph in Boydell, *My Luck's Still In*, n.p.

<sup>391</sup> Van Buskirk, James H. “Professor Psycho-Analyses Bushmen in Remote Kalahari Desert: Dwarf Singers have Voices Recorded; Seven Ancient Instruments of Music Discovered: LANGUAGE TONGUE-TWISTERS FOR RAND SCIENTISTS.” *Rand Daily Mail*, July 14, 1936.



Figure 2:3<sup>392</sup>

Professor Maingard with a group of Bain's Bushmen. Their registration "dog-tags" are clearly visible. The back of the photograph reads: "Professor Maingard with a group of his primitive scholars."



Figure 2:4<sup>393</sup>

Professor Maingard with a Bushmen research subject.

<sup>392</sup> AU8 DAR, H. James Van Burskirk, unsorted.

<sup>393</sup> AU8 DAR, H. James Van Burskirk, unsorted.



Figure 2:5<sup>394</sup>  
Ou Abraham with his face mask.



Figure 2:6<sup>395</sup>  
This pamphlet was produced by the expedition's photographer James van Buskirk and depicts the life of Bushmen, propagating the Bushman myth.

<sup>394</sup> AU8 DAR, H. James Van Burskirk, unsorted.

<sup>395</sup> AU8 DAR Dart papers 9, Newspaper Clippings: H. James Van Buskirk, "LIVING ON THE TSAMA: The Strange Case of the Kalahari Bushmen, a Little-known People Who Lead a Solitary Nomadic Existence, and the Story of How They Were Brought to the Johannesburg Exhibition." *The Speaker*, March 13, 1937.



Figure 2:7<sup>396</sup>

While this picture focuses on the young girl as object of attention, the shadow of the photographer reminds the onlooker of the interplay between the cultures, resulting in the creation of images like this, highlighting the primordial.



Figure 2:8<sup>397</sup>

“CABINET MINISTER VISITS BUSHMEN AT EXHIBITION. Mr. P.W. Grobler, Minister of Native Affairs (right) ...paid an informal visit to the Bushmen and was given a royal welcome by the little people from the Kalahari. Professor Dart and Professor Maingard, who visited the Bushmen in their camp in the Kalahari recently, were recognized at once and likewise welcomed with enthusiasm.”

<sup>396</sup> AU8 DAR, unsorted.

<sup>397</sup> “JUBILEE DAY AT EXHIBITION; CROWD EASILY RECORDED; MR. GROBLER VISITS BUSHMAN CAMP.” “A NEW GAME; MIMING THE PROFESSORS,” AU8 DAR, Dart Papers 10, Newspaper Clippings, 3. Kalahari Expedition, July 1936 Press Cuttings.





Figure 2:9<sup>398</sup>

Ou Abraham and his daughter. “The professor’s “star” pupil: Old Abraham mimics Professor Maingard and attempts to explain a passage from ‘The Philosophy of a Primitive People’ to his young daughter, the Klein Janake.”



Figure 2:10<sup>399</sup>

Bain and his Bushmen delegation on their protest march in Cape Town: “Bushmen and women led by Donald Bain at Parliament House, Cape Town.”

<sup>398</sup> “BUSHMEN SHOULD BE SAVED, SAYS PROFESSOR DART: Useful Scientific Work in the Kalahari.” *Rand Daily Mail*, July 21, 1936.

<sup>399</sup> In Boydell, *My Luck’s Still In*, n.p.



Figure 3:1<sup>400</sup>

A group of Bushmen. No further information is given regarding this group of people, but since I located the picture between the pages of van Warmelo's report it seems likely that these are some of the Bushmen for whom Struis Zyn Dam was intended.



Figure 4:1<sup>401</sup>

This photograph depicts a group of !Khomani dancing for tourists and a film team of the National Geographic at the Molopo Lodge on August 2, 2008.

<sup>400</sup> SAB NTS 9587 382/400 (3).

<sup>401</sup> Photograph by the author, August 2, 2008, Molopo Lodge.



Figure 4:2<sup>402</sup>

A group of ǀKhomani women are producing ostrich bead necklaces using drills. These beads will be worked into necklaces and bracelets.



Figure 4:3<sup>403</sup>

This is a portrait of Silikat van Wyk dressed to attract tourists.



Figure 4:4<sup>404</sup>

One of the many informal craft shops by the side of the road with a ǀKhomani in work clothes.

<sup>402</sup> Photograph by the author, July 25, Andriesvale.

<sup>403</sup> Photograph by the author, August 1, Andrievalle.

<sup>404</sup> Photograph by the author, August 2, Andrievalle.





Figure 4:5<sup>405</sup>

View of the Uitkoms farmhouse. This farm is farmed by the Vaalbooi family.



Figure 4:6<sup>406</sup>

A ǀKhomani farmer with his donkey cart.



Figure 4:7<sup>407</sup>

Ouma /Una teaches ǀKhomani children N|u for a National Geographic project.

<sup>405</sup> Photograph by Andre Vaalbooi, young ǀKhomani farmer.

<sup>406</sup> Photograph by Antje van der Westhuizen, ǀKhomani teenager.

<sup>407</sup> Photograph by the author, August 2, 2008, Brosdoring.





Figure 4:8<sup>408</sup>

The text reads: “An ancient remedy for modern ailments. Since time began, the ancient indigenous San Peoples have understood the remarkable healing powers of rooibos and honeybush tee.” This advertisement plays with the stereotypical notion of primitive affluence and indigenous knowledge, utilizing the curio-factor of Bushmen displays. Thus, Wesgro, the official Investment and Trade Promotion Agency for the Western Cape, seeks to attract the attention of “foreign importers, local exporters and investors wishing to take advantage of the unlimited business potential in Cape Town and the Western Cape”(http://www.wesgro.co.za).



Figure 4:9<sup>409</sup>

The South African Coat of Arms.

<sup>408</sup> Photograph by the author. June 14<sup>th</sup>, 2008, Cape Town airport.

<sup>409</sup> Figure taken from: [http://www.republic.org.nz/images/480px-Coat\\_of\\_arms\\_of\\_South\\_Africa.svg.png](http://www.republic.org.nz/images/480px-Coat_of_arms_of_South_Africa.svg.png)



Figure 4:10<sup>410</sup>

“Through contrast towards Unity,” the motto of the Mier Municipality in Rietfontein, Siyanda district, Northern Cape. This slogan gains in significance when read in historical context: for decades the Mier community of Coloured farmers and the ancestors of the ‡Khomani competed for land access. These rivalries were partly appeased by the settlement of both community land claims in 1999. Today, the Mier and the ‡Khomani cooperate regarding the community conservation approach of the KTP.



Figure 4:11<sup>411</sup>

“The people govern;” the picture displays the welcome signs to the Northern Province, an advertisement campaign of the official Northern Cape Tourism Authority. It depicts, next to two genderless people in rock art style, the Kalahari Desert, the Orange River, and an aloe plant. Again, the Bushmen images serve to unite diverse people while attracting tourists through their popularity and “Otherness.”

<sup>410</sup> Photograph by the author, Rietfontein, July 2008.

<sup>411</sup> Photograph by the author, Upington, January 2008.

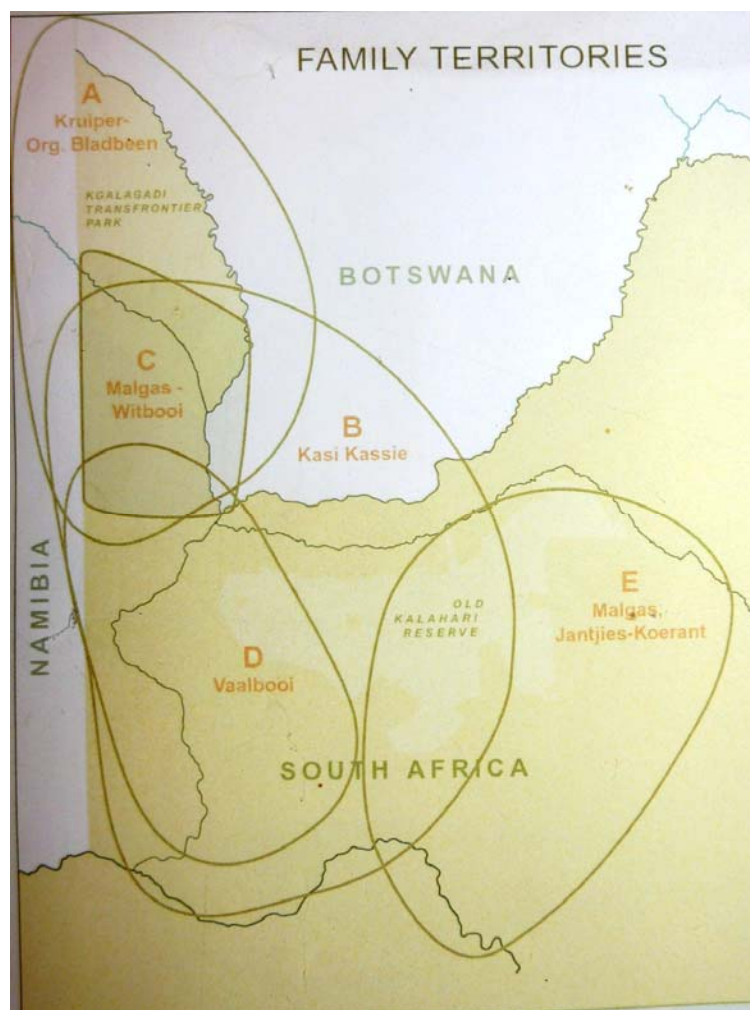
## APPENDIX

## MAPS

Map 1:1.<sup>412</sup>

This map shows the territory of South Africa in 1885.

<sup>412</sup> University of Texas, Maps South Africa, [http://www.lib.utexas.edu/maps/historical/south\\_africa\\_1885.jpg](http://www.lib.utexas.edu/maps/historical/south_africa_1885.jpg).

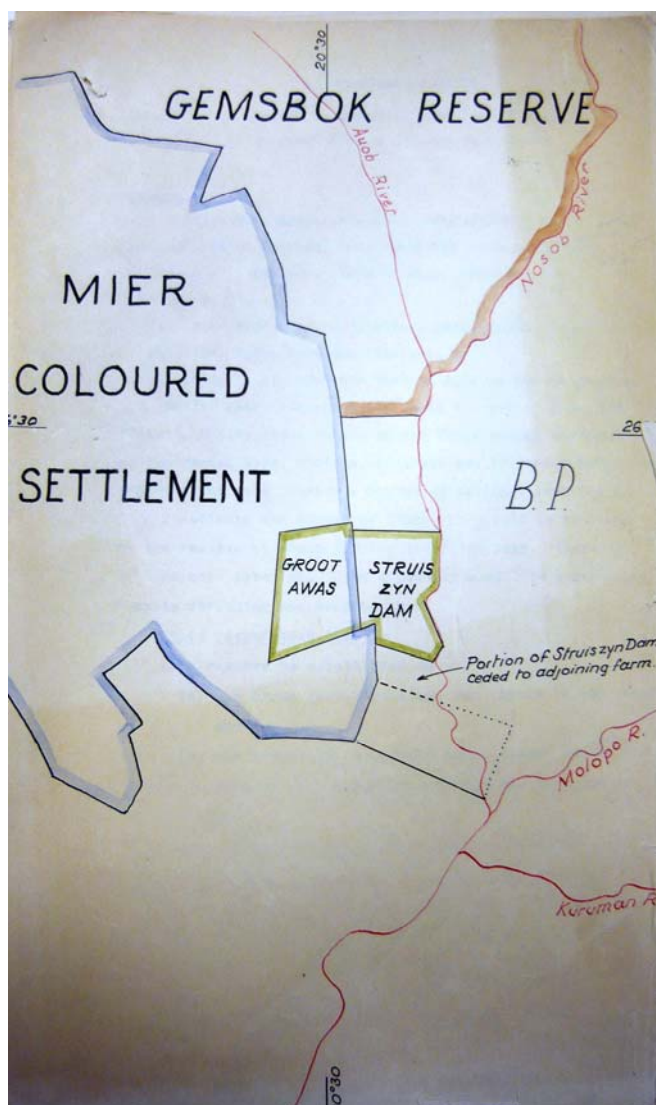


Map 2:1<sup>413</sup>

‡Khomani family groups and their historical territories.

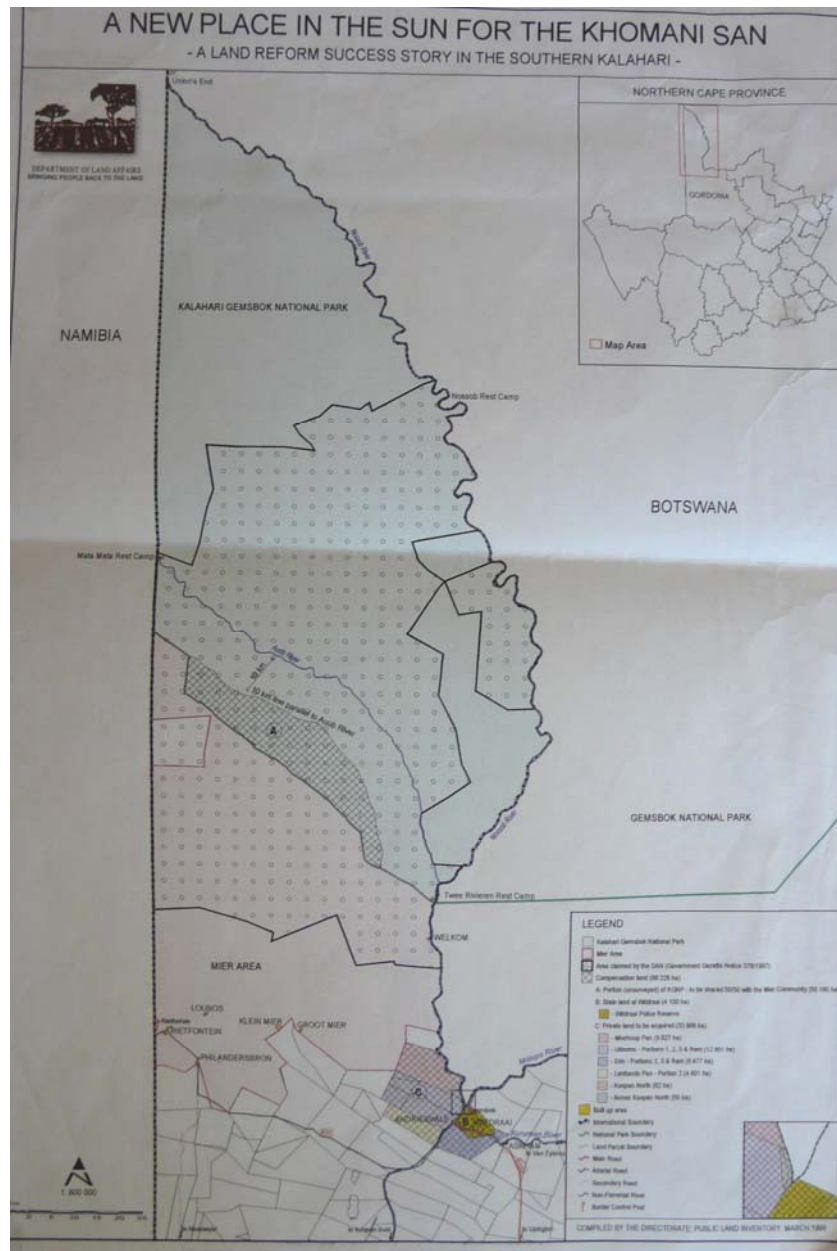
<sup>413</sup> Excerpt from "Family Genealogy and Territory," South African San Institute.





Map 3:1<sup>414</sup>  
Location of Struis Zyn Dam and Groot Awas.

<sup>414</sup> N.J Warmelo, "Ethnological Section Report on Investigations regarding a proposed Bushman Reserve in Gordonia," attached to Memo Native Affairs Department, April 26, 1940. SAB NTS 9587 382/400 (3).



Map 4:1<sup>415</sup>

Map of the territory restituted to the †Khomani in the park and the farms.

<sup>415</sup> *The !Ae!Hai Kalahari Heritage Park Bundle: Including the Agreement whereby the Land Claims of the †Khomani San Community and the Mier Community are finalized and associated documents.* Compiled by Dawie Bosch and Elna Hirschfeld. Pretoria: Commission on Restitution of Land Rights, 2002.

## GLOSSARY

<i>Baster</i>	colonial expression for people of mixed birth; in this context usually offspring of Dutch white farmers and Khoe and slave women.
<i>Boesman</i>	Bushmen (Afrikaans); autonym employed by the community.
<i>Coloured</i>	South African racial sundry category which encompassed all non-whites that did not clearly belong to either of the other categories.
<i>European</i>	colonial expression for White South Africans.
<i>Gariep</i>	the Khoe name for the Orange River.
‡ <i>Khomani</i>	name of the community of South African San brought together by the land rights claim in 1999.
<i>Native</i>	colonial expression for Black South Africans.
<i>Nation</i>	Afrikaans: Nasie. Term employed within the community to describe ethnic group.
<i>N/ /n!ui</i>	(pl.N   n‡e) “Home People” refers to hunter-gatherers in N u.
<i>N/u</i>	San-language spoken by about 12 ‡ Khomani elders.
<i>Ou</i>	old (Afrikaans).
<i>Ouma</i>	Grandmother (Afrikaans); a term of respect for elderly women.
<i>Oupa</i>	Grandfather (Afrikaans); a term of respect for elderly men.
<i>Sasi</i>	a N u word generically referring to Bushmen in general. (The NGO SASI was named before the word Sasi was “discovered.”)
<i>Veldfood</i>	refers to food found in the <i>veld</i> , in this case the wide open rural spaces of the Northern Cape, Green Kalahari.
<i>Tsamma</i>	a seasonal watermelon found in the Kalahari and a staple food for Bushmen.
<i>!xai</i>	traditional loin cloth

## ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

CPA	Communal Property Association
CPAMC	Communal Property Association Management Committee
DG	Director-General of the Department of Land Affairs
DLA	Department of Land Affairs
KFO	Kuru Family of Organizations
KGNP	Kalahari Gemsbok National Park (now KTP)
KTP	Kgalagadi Transfrontier Park (previously KGNP)
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
NPB	National Park Boards
SANC	South African San Council
SANP	South African National Parks
SASI	South African San Institute
UNWGIP	United Nations Working Group on Indigenous Populations
WIMSA	Working Group on Indigenous Minorities in Southern Africa

## SAMPLE TRANSCRIPTION

**Susanna Witbooi, aka Nana Sana**  
*Health Project*

Language: Afrikaans  
Translator: Mitti  
Duration: 1:06:06  
Location: Health Center, Witdraai.  
Date: 25. July 2008

*Marcia: Since I don't know you, could you please tell me who you are?*

Nana Sana: "I am Susanna Witbooi and was born as Swartz. I was born in the park and grew up in the park."

*Where in the park?*

"In the park. I can show you were. Today there are bathrooms for the tourists. That is where I grew up."

*At Twee Rivieren?*

"Twee Rivieren. Yes, gorgeous child. This is where all the traditional people grew up."

*When you grew up, did you speak Afrikaans with your parents?*

"I learned Afrikaans at school in 1963. I spoke Nama at home."

*How long did you go to school?*

"I went to school from 1963 to 1972."

*Did you attend school in Welkom?*

"No, in Groet Mier."

*How did you feel about speaking Afrikaans in school?*

"Uh, my heart is sore. This was a very difficult time. We were beaten every day because we couldn't speak Afrikaans. They are all dead today, the teachers...today I am grateful to my teachers because I can now speak Afrikaans and talk to you."

*When I came up here, I went through Upington. I met a couple of people there who are also Bushmen but who did not want to be called "Boesman." They were adamant to be called "Coloured." What do you think about that? (5:18)*



“Ach my child, that is so sad. We are people of such softness. We have been killed and oppressed by so many nations. I hurt very much when I think about the people who do not want to be Bushmen.... I was raised in a traditional home. Others did not grow up in a traditional home that is why they believe they are Coloureds. Every child learns from their parents and grandparents and they could not.”

*So, Nana Sana, can you explain to me, what is a Bushman? (9.30)*

“That is a great word. My beautiful child, I was born in the park and I grew up in the park. I was five years when I started to think about the world. My grandmother and grandfather lived in the park and I was their grandchild and we lived. And I started to understand. My children, I got four, two daughters and two sons, and I lived in Upington. I grew up traditionally and I went to school and then I went to work for the Boers. My children I raised western in Upington... I was six when I left the park and my parents looked after the farm animals at Groet Mier where I went to school. I never learned English, I learned for myself, it is difficult...

*Why did you raise your children western?*

“My dear child, look you are white and your mother and your grandmother are white. And they have raised you in their tradition. You would not exchange your traditions for a whole bag of gold. My heart is bleeding like a flower. Day and night it is bleeding for my people! Very beautiful thing, very beautiful thing in my heart, in my heart. I gave birth to my children, they received these things from me and they grew up with these things. My children now know about my traditions. When they grew up they learned from me.

A Bushman is a very difficult person. I worked day and night, I worked day and night for a lot of money....My great-grandmother, my grandmother, my mother, they all thought these things to me. You white people you also have your own traditions. [Grandmother as an entity, not so much as a person “oumagod.”] I learned from my mother, all the elders know about it.”

*Then you raised your children in Upington?*

“Then my children went to school; two have matric, the deaf one went to grade 9. The oldest daughter who is now dead has matric and my eldest son...

My daughter was doing some traditional work where it was very cold and my daughter got TB. She was under treatment but it came back and then she died here. She was 25.”

...

*Back to the questions: You lived in Upington until you came here. How did you first hear about this land?*

[To Mitti, “I don’t need translations, I understand (from here onwards we relied less on the interpreter since Nana Sana seems to understand me reasonably well in English and I her in Afrikaans.)] I heard about the land rights claim through my family.”

*When you lived in Upington, did you know many other Bushmen?*

“I lived in Upington, but the Bushman was in my heart!” (in English)

*Did you know other Bushmen?*

“No, I did not know any others, I was alone.”

*So when you were alone, how did you hear about the land?*

“The claim came through in 1999, so I left my job as soon as that and I am still here.”

*How did you first hear about the land?*

“I was driving to my family at Kagga Kamma and we were ecstatic about the news, I was on top of things.”

*So your family was in Kagga Kamma.*

“Yes. And I had stayed in contact with them.”

*When you first heard about the claim how did you feel? (24.00)*

“Uh, ma I almost went mad from joy! My beautiful child, there is your mother sitting over there. Do you know what it is like when your mother is offering you a beautiful diamond? This land is a beautiful diamond. My beautiful girl, do you know what it feels like when you grew up on a farm and your father sold that farm, do you know how heartbreaking that is? Your mother is going to cry, your father is going to turn around and walk away. A man is not a woman. A mother is always crying, her tears are lying on the ground. A father is a man that is looking up into the sky. And they said you can compare men to Jesus, but I am saying they are too ugly to be compared to Jesus. Some say men are beautiful but some men only sleep around. A mother brings the joy and happiness into her house. A man stands there with his hands in his pockets; he is idle in the home. He is only responsible to bring in the money.”

*And today I ask you, whose land is all of this?*

“Bushmen were never farmers. We live from nature, close to nature. We have four farmers on the land.”

*So today, all of this belongs to Bushmen?*

“We are the ‘ǀKhomani San Bushmen’, half of us are livestock farmers, the other half grew up traditional.”

*So just to help me understand the difference between the farmers and the traditional people. What do they do that makes them different?*

“We do not point fingers at each other. We all know who grew up in which house [in the sense of the two houses “traditional” versus “modern”.] We grew up differently. I grew up traditionally. They did not grow up traditionally. That is

what is different. The livestock farmers have their food, we are not allowed to eat our food because we are not allowed to hunt. We die from the hunger. We cannot eat game. I've got to buy meat from them. We Bushmen are traditional, we eat wild animals. We do not farm. But we cannot eat wild, we have to buy our meat in the shop."

*I have seen some Bushmen that have sheep and cows...*

"No, Bushmen have no animals. We need to buy our food."

*So then as a Bushmen you need money to buy your food? (30.19)*

"Ja, we have to dance, we make crafts, we track, and guide to make money."

*How do you think about that, to have your culture and to make money from it?*

"I am proud, I am very proud to say that I am not stealing from anybody. I have my culture and I can work with my hands."

...

*We were talking about the money, and making a living. So now that I go about the farms and I see people living in the farmhouses, I ask myself is there a true gemeenskap (community)?*

"Yes, we work together. There is a crafts workshop this week and I can go next week when oom Jan is back to do the medicine work."

*Is there a feeling of unity among the people who use the land differently? (36.40)*

"We have accepted the way that we are. We have accepted that we don't have the leadership capabilities of the sheep farmers. We know who we are. Not truly, not really, not really though. For example I am living here, but I want to be there but I have no water there. "

*So you live that side now (referring to Andriesvale). But if you prefer to be that side (Erin) why don't you move there?*

"I can, I have the right to, but there is no water. I lived at Erin for two years. But it is far to walk to work and I have a bad knee."

*So you said that your family lived at Kagga Kamma. Did you know Regopstaan?*

"Yes, I knew him. He died here."

*People say that Regopstaan was a leader.*

"Yes, he was and now it is his son Dawid."

*Is he a leader for all the people, the farmers and the Bushmen?*

"Yes, for everybody."

*Are there any problems with that?*

"We are accepting the insult."

*You know that South Africa has a president, Thabo Mbeki*

...”who gave us our land”

*...exactly, and do you think if the community today had a leader like Thabo Mbeki, things would change faster and you would have water and houses and all that? (42.02)*

“No, we wouldn’t have been better off because Thabo Mbeki has appointed people to do certain jobs. The government people are just looking after themselves. A man from the land board, Peter Makomele has done a very bad job [literally “has done shit.”] There is no one to check up his work [literally “there is nobody who stands behind his ass to see what is coming out is the right thing.”] He does not do his work right but he is working for Thabo. Now everything is going wrong.”

*Can you give me an example of his work?*

“There should have been no hunt this year. He told Wilhelm, who takes care of the wild animals, but he did not inform the community about it. So then there was a lot of hunting and the people were paid like this [under the counter.] They were here to investigate it. This whole illegal hunting was put in black and white [written down] and nature conservation knows. Peter Makomele phoned Wilhelm to tell him to take care of the people who hunt. I don’t know if we are going to be getting any meat from the hunt because these people were paying R200 for a Springbok. [Normally the absolute minimum pay is R320 for a young animal, R600 for a grown ram in this area.] We were allowed to hunt when we paid for what we were shooting. Now, we are not allowed to hunt.

There are many issues with the land. He is a young man. He does not know the ways of life. He is nice but he likes to go after the women. We went to the Premiers office in the Northern Cape to complain about him. He can’t do the work, he is like a child. He is in his 20s or 30s.”

...

*Do you like the idea of a farm manager? The idea of somebody here from the outside who can share with you and teach his knowledge?*

“Yes, very much. Our leader Dawid, is being lied to by a lot of other communities and he follows these lies of the other people. We are busy to see whether we can appoint somebody else because he is now old and smells [meaning corrupt.] He allows himself to mislead and be mislead!”

*How do you look for somebody else?*

“We know that there must be somebody on this land, and then we need to have a meeting to elect a new leader.”

*But how do you go about the process?*

“At the last meeting of the community we were informed that there will be an election of a new leader. That will be an opportunity to have a new leader. He will be higher than Oum Dawid, but he will still be a leader.”

*And these meetings, how often are they?*

“Once a month.”

*And what do you discuss in these meetings?*

“We talk about how the land should be used, about water, the farmers and all these things.”

*How many people come round about?*

“Many people from all the farms. The ‡Khomani are there and farmers.”

*Are you satisfied with the process of deciding how land will be used?*

“In the beginning we fought much. But Erin and Witdraai are traditional land. And now people begin to accept this. They now want to remove the animals from there.”

*What does it mean when you tell me it is “traditional?”*

“There are wild animals, and the Bushcamp. If the tourist come and sleep, they don’t want to listen to a sheep, maeh, they want to hear the noises of the wild animals.”

...

*Thank you very much for your time and patience. Would you like to ask me questions?*

“My child, I can’t ask you questions. The only thing I would like to know is what are you doing with your youth?”

*I am getting older...(laughter)*

“I can see what you are doing today but what do you normally do?”

*I am a student and I study history. (59)*

“That is great. You see, I am history. Your mother is history.... My mother died in my arms in peace, last year in November. You should never let your mother die in a hospital.

My mother was 138. She was the wisest Bushman woman. She raised 14 children. She was a small Bushman woman. You really cannot let your ma die in hospital. She is the most precious thing you have in life.”

...

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