

# **Genealogies and narratives of San authenticities**

The #Khomani San land claim in the southern Kalahari

by

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*Plate 57. Family of Abraham or Igurice*

Source: Bantu Studies 11(3) Jones & Doke 1937

Thesis presented for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy in the Faculty of Arts:  
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15 November 2012

## **Keywords:**

San, Bushmen, #Khomani, authenticity, land claims, Kalahari,  
traditional leadership



# Abstract

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In this thesis, I examine the narratives of authenticity, the limits thereof, the potential interests served by these narratives, and the power relations involved in the promotion of an authentic San identity. I focus on four key areas to achieve this goal: the methodological issues involved in studying authenticity, the framing of the land claim lodged by the San against the Kalahari Gemsbok National Park in South Africa in 1995, the post-land claim settlement activities on the restituted farms, and the various issues around authenticity and traditional leadership. I will also highlight a variety of issues, ranging from livelihoods to governance, community-based natural resource management (CBNRM), identity and ethnicity, and common property debates.

The study begins with a brief introduction to the richly textured and highly contested debates and analytical issues concerning the San. Among other things, this first part of the thesis deals with naming, the alleged disappearance of the San, and the eventual reemergence of this group in the post-apartheid landscape of southern Africa. This is followed by a brief description of some aspects of the natural environment of the southern Kalahari and how the San see themselves situated within this cultural–ecological complex. This exploration of the cultural–ecological landscape is not meant to mirror previous San studies of cultural ecology but rather to offer an account of a possible San ontology. The thesis gives an inventory firstly of the research methods applied by myself, and then probes the research encounter

reflexively. The main descriptive chapters of the thesis begin with an examination of how the #Khomani San emerged onto the political landscape of post-1994 South Africa and how an ethnic entity was constituted through the land restitution process. The post-restitution activities of at least three subgroups of the #Khomani San Common Property Association (CPA) are then examined and shown to be a series of contestations and challenges of authenticity. In the final chapter, I take an experimental look at a particular institution that emerged as central to the debates about authenticity and the management of resources in the #Khomani San CPA

15 November 2012



## Acknowledgements

*This thesis is dedicated to many people, in order of their importance to the work.*

*Firstly, to my wife Zulfa Abrahams, without whom this thesis would literally never, never have happened. Shukran jazakallah'ukhair.*

*My father, James Henry Peter Ellis, who set the bar this high to begin with, and my mother, Henrietta Ferguson Ellis.*

*Salem van Wyk Ellis, whose early life was spent doing the initial work on this thesis.*

*Aminah Solomon, who has also waited for this moment.*

*My late grandfather, James Henry Peter Ellis, who worked as a shoemaker all his life and was for much of my youth a living exhibit at the Drostdy Museum in Swellendam, South Africa.*

*Lastly, I must acknowledge the organizations, PLAAS, NRF, and NUFU, that funded and supported this endeavour throughout.*

## DECLARATION

I declare that “Genealogies and narratives of San authenticities: The ≠Khomani San land claim in the southern Kalahari” is my own work, that it has not been submitted before for any degree or examination in any other university, and that all the sources I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged as complete references.

UNIVERSITY *of the*  
WESTERN CAPE

William Ellis

November 2012

Signed: .....

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# Chapter 1

## 1 Introduction

### 1.1 *Prologue*

The people referred to as the San have the longest history of habitation of the Southern African sub-continent. Research dates their occupation of this region as far back as 20,000 years (Deacon & Deacon 1999; Smith, Malherbe, Geunther & Berens, 2000; Ehret 2000). All evidence suggests that the ancestors of the group that today we call the San were the original occupants of the region, and neither colonized nor displaced any other groups from the areas that they historically occupied. The main body of evidence that supports the thesis of continuous occupation, and is possibly the least contentious ideologically, consists of various genetic studies done on human populations inhabiting the southern African subcontinent (Behar, *et al.* 2008). These studies show that the San are related to a group of humans who were present in southern Africa as far back as 70-100,000 years ago (Behar, *et al.* 2008). The second strand of evidence is archeological, and this body of work also seems to suggest that the first extensive contact between the San and other groups dates back to the earliest waves of the Bantu migrations<sup>1</sup>, about two to four thousand years ago. That the San were the autochthonous population of the region is a widely accepted reality, and they are regarded both by themselves and others as the 'first people' of southern Africa.

Moreover, the history of the San in this region was found to be profoundly shaped by the ways in which the territory itself came to be occupied by a number of populations which arrived later. For example, when various Bantu-speaking groups

first arrived in the subcontinent about 2000 BP, these predominantly farming populations either displaced or assimilated a large number of San foragers into their economies<sup>2</sup> (Prins, 1996, 2009; Jolly, 1996b). With the arrival of Europeans at the Cape from the 17<sup>th</sup> century onward, the San lifestyle appears to have changed even more radically. This was largely as a result of genocide, disease and the destruction of the environment and their means of subsistence. Additionally, a large number of San were assimilated into the colonial economy, largely as labourers on farms or servants in the kitchens of European settlers. Thus the advent of the 20<sup>th</sup> century found “a people” struggling to maintain their language and culture. Recent studies indicate that all but a few pockets of San groups were completely absorbed, first into the agricultural economy of the Bantu-speaking colonizers and later either into the European agricultural settler<sup>3</sup> economy or the Bantu economy (Smith, *et al.* 2000). Furthermore, the formation of the “modern” state in southern Africa, especially the South African and South West African apartheid states, seemed to confine the San to the status either of being extinct or of just clinging to survival. The collapse of the apartheid state apparatus, and the accompanying independence of Namibia, ushered in a new era for the San of the region. The emerging political landscape of the late 20<sup>th</sup> and early 21<sup>st</sup> centuries brought a new set of political and anthropological questions to bear on “the San issue”, some of which, like the traditional leadership and political organization of San people, will be dealt with in this thesis.

In the last two decades, students of San society have increasingly turned their attention to the stereotyping racist iconography of the San people of Africa, their bodies, their way of life, and the impact this iconography has had on their life worlds.

A seminal moment in this regard was the 1996 Miscast exhibition, curated by Pippa Skotnes and accompanied by an eponymous book. The works collected in this book opened a new chapter in the study of San society. Subsequent academic studies would all perforce have to give serious attention to representational issues regarding the San as a people, as a historical fiction, and as a group which in the present was asserting its own identity (see the work of Rasool & Hayes, 2002; Gordon, 1997; Bregin, 1998; Buntman, 1996a & 1996b; Geunther, 2003; 2006).

It is important to note that all San groupings in Southern Africa were radically transformed over the centuries of contact, firstly with Bantu-speaking farmers and later with Europeans. These contacts resulted in the “disappearance” of San people in some parts, although the actual mechanics of the disappearance differed, as did the results. While some authors may have characterized the process as a genocide (Penn, 1996), this was not always an accurate description of the “disappearance”. Unlike the Tasmanians, for instance, the San in southern Africa did not become extinct<sup>4</sup>. Instead they suffered an almost complete linguistic and cultural death, both in South Africa and in other part of southern Africa, with the result that today they live on the politico-economic margins of these larger societies. In South Africa, in particular, a series of political processes led to the San “disappearing”; in some instances through one stroke of the bureaucratic pen, as with implementation of the population registration act in the 1960’s (see Steyn, 1984; Carstens, 1966). The so-called disappearance of the San off the South African landscape was then much more of a “whitewashing”; that is, the San identity and distinction were erased by lumping them with other groups such as “Coloured.” The fuzzy issue of San racial classification was dealt with simply by reclassifying many of the San people as

Coloured (for a more detailed discussion of this issue, see Carstens, 1966; Besten, 2009).

The San population of southern Africa (see Table 1.1) is still only a small proportion of the total population of the region, and estimates place them at about 0.14% of the southern African population (Suzman, 2001). The largest population of San is found in Namibia and Botswana, although Botswana does not recognize their country as ethnically plural. All the people are seen as indigenous and as Botswanan citizens, so the San are not officially seen as different from the rest of the population of the country (Hitchcock & Holm, 1993). The aforementioned theorists, among others, see the refusal to distinguish the San from other groups ethnically, or at least in relation to their subsistence, as further evidence for their marginalization (ibid.). Consequently, in places like Botswana, Namibia and South Africa, the San live in hyper-marginal circumstances, in conditions of poverty, alienation of rights, cultural subjugation and servitude, as well as in situations of dubious land and resource tenure. Much of the research to date shows that they are highly dependent on welfare and that their “communities” are plagued by a range of social problems, including alcoholism (Marshall, 1984; Suzman, 2001; Bradstock, 2005, 2006; Ellis, 2010) and interpersonal violence (Isaacson, 2001; Tomaselli, 2007). In fact, during the course of my fieldwork at least two violent murders and a suicide took place. Coupled with this, some of the San experience harassment by the police, infectious diseases and geographic isolation, as they tend to live in rural areas far from amenities such as health care, police stations, etc. (Hitchcock 2003). In short, the San are not simply marginal; they are hyper-marginal.

If one considers the relatively small population of San people, both in actual numbers and as a percentage of the national and regional populations, and couple this with the factors mentioned above (disease, violence, suicide, alcoholism, and the general lack of opportunities for work), it becomes easy to accept that the impact of such issues on a fairly small community is often harder felt, reinforcing their hyper-marginalization.

Country	San population (Hitchcock 1996)	San population (Regional assessment)	% of total population
Botswana	49 475	47 675	3.3
Namibia	38 275	32 000	1.8
South Africa	4 700	4 350	<0.02
Zimbabwe	1 275	2 500	<0.02
Angola	9 750	1 200	<0.01
Zambia	1 600	300	<0.01
Total	107 071	88 025	± 0.14

**Table 1.1: Southern African San population by country (Source: Suzman 2001)**

Despite the bleak picture above, there is a glimmer of hope for some of southern Africa's San people. In South Africa especially, the changing political environment has offered a range of opportunities for the San people within its boundaries. For example, new political and social attitudes have led to a revival and reassertion of San identity (Robins, 2001). It is no longer stigmatizing to be known as a '*Boesman*'; indeed, this identity has been put to "good use" by the ≠Khomani San of the southern Kalahari. Moreover, other political processes, such as land reform

legislation, policy on languages, investigations into Khoi-San traditional leadership structures and their recognition as an official institution, have offered a platform from which the voices of these previously disadvantaged groups can be heard.

In the thesis, I will focus on one of these political processes, the restitution of land rights, and examine the engagement of one San group in South Africa, the ≠Khomani San, with the land reform process. Additionally, I aim to show how this engagement profoundly reshaped and re-inscribed this group's 'San identity'. After the Act on the Restitution of Land Rights was passed, the ≠Khomani San 'reemerged'<sup>5</sup> onto the South African landscape when they lodged a land claim for nearly half of the Kalahari Gemsbok National Park in the Northern Cape province. This claim led to the reconstitution of a group which had suffered the loss of its land, language, culture and sense of identity in a diaspora<sup>6</sup> that had dragged on for nearly a century (Crawhall, 2003; Chennels, 1998).

As a result of the resolution of the claim, the ≠Khomani San gained close to 68,000 hectares of land as part of their restitution package. But even this positive moment in their history was plagued by what some have called the 'authenticity construct'. This involved a stereotyped, racial-cultural iconography and representations of them, ideas that "standardized" their culture, and a general prescription of this construct as appropriate to proposals for development (Guenther, 1995). In other words, the suggestions that some NGOs and individuals made about prospects for economic welfare within the San community in the southern Kalahari all conformed to some preexisting stereotypic conception of what it means to be San<sup>7</sup>. I will throughout this thesis be probing this notion of an 'acceptable San norm', or, following Guenther (1995), the "authenticity construct", in relation to a series of

case studies. The “authenticity construct” is a jumble of ideas and “materials” which can be indexed, in most cases automatically, to show what a real bushman (lower case intentionally used, see following section) is<sup>8</sup>. These case studies are all related in one way or another to the land claim. While offering insights into the general use of the ‘authenticity construct’ by various stakeholders in the land claim, the discussion also stresses its application and appropriation in a series of unique theme areas, including livelihoods, community-based conservation, rural governance, ethno-tourism and common property debates. Primary among these standardizing and authenticating practices is the act of naming. Although this is not a major part of this thesis, I have to address it since it forms part of a key debate in ‘Bushman studies’.

## 1.2 **Name (s) and naming the San**

*“In desperation to endow the colonized with an essence and enshrine them in a fossil, the colonizer can confine them in a name. The colonized will later appropriate it with all the strength at their command – and will also have appropriated all its deadly effects. Thanks to this name given by the settler, the native will become a fragment of the real, an objective thing, matter. The world of names and worlds of things will then be a single reality, and the settler able to make a representation of the colonized.” (Mbembe, 2001:187)*

If one is to follow the logic suggested above by Mbembe, one might say that the San have been variously “confined to a name”, a process that traps them in the representations that “others” have made of them. Furthermore, this “confinement” indexes, or pins down, a category which can from then on be filled with various other

materials and references. For instance, the ethnic moniker or category 'San' or even 'Boesman' is populated with various racial and ethnological referents, signs and/or even materials. Hence the word bushman immediately recalls all manner of signs, such as the bow and poison arrows, loincloth, and ostrich eggshell beads. Even when San people are moved from being "Natives" to being "Coloureds", the indexical materials and signs are not lost. All that was bushman is simply emptied into Coloured, and the people who were bushmen now carry the "taint of half breed" or miscegenation. Thus the "Authenticity construct" begins with and continually returns to this name; it is the index to which entries are attached. Below I will briefly lay out the evolution of the terms and names used to refer to the San here and in the rest of the thesis.



Several names or terms have been applied to the San of southern Africa. Some are xenonyms, appellations used for "strange" or "foreign" groups. Others are ethnonyms, the names of the people or cultural grouping, or glottonyms, the terms that refer to the language spoken by the people in question, while a number involve academic conventions or politically correct terms. *Boesman* (Afrikaans), Bushmen, San, *Abathwa* (Nguni), *Basarwa* (Tswana) are all used in different contexts and by different groups - sometimes positively, sometimes negatively. These names can also denote the position of the San within the hierarchy of the wider society in which they live. Some are generic, homogenizing, while others are specific self-referents or the result of academic conventions in naming people. Such terms are "ideologically versatile" and, like many politically correct terminologies, appeal to those on both sides of the political spectrum (see Douglas, 1995).

### 1.3 **Common names and their meanings**

Probably the most common term used to refer to the people in question is the xenonym *Bushmen*. This is derived from the Dutch *Bosjesman* and refers to the perception of them as elusive people, of whom earlier settlers usually only caught a glimpse, before they disappeared into the bushes again (Humphreys, 1985). Nienaber (1952) argues that the diminutive form of the Dutch word for *bush* ('*bossies*') is used because it refers to the indigenous vegetation in which the San lived and into which they "disappeared". In the 1980s, the term fell out of academic favour because many revisionists thought it was loaded with negative connotations, arguing that the word *Bushman* was racist and sexist (Lee, 1976; Gordon & Sholto-Douglas, 2000; Geunther, 1986). Especially in academic circles, the name was replaced with the term *San*, but even this retained a number of negative connotations. For example, in 1991 Hitchcock and Biesele (nd.) found that, while some San people were aware of the term *San*, they nonetheless "knew it has a pejorative connotation in Nama", and none of the people themselves advocated its use. Geunther (1986:38) similarly reported that the word *San* was not without its own negative connotations and that many Namibian San saw it as an insult to be addressed as such. Some key changes and shifts in self-representation have taken place since then, and "San" now seems to be more widely used, especially in San civic and political organizations.

*San*, its origin and meanings, cannot be divorced from the collective term *Khoi-San*. The word *San* was not used by the people to refer to themselves, but was an ascribed name or xenonym (Gordon & Sholto-Douglas, 2000; Wilmsen, 1989). The groups that are today still called the *Khoi-Khoi* were referred to as *Hottentots* by

colonists. *Hottentot* quite literally is an allusion to the manner of speech and the clicks in the Khoekhoegowab language. To the Europeans who first encountered the indigenous South Africans, theirs was a faltering speech, one that sounded like stuttering or stammering, or quite literally a stop and start (“*hot en tot*”). It was the Khoi-Khoi who labeled the hunter-gatherers of southern Africa as ‘San.’ The word Khoi means men/people in the Khoe language. The common self-referent used by the pastoralists encountered by colonists at the Cape in the 17<sup>th</sup> century was Khoi-Khoi, meaning ‘people of people’ (i.e. real people). The reduplication of the term *Khoi* (already plural) has the effect of implying genuine or real (Nienaber, 1990), and the term *Khoi* was juxtaposed with San to derive the xenonym Khoi-San, meaning ‘people who are not real people’. Wilmsen (1989) notes that the second part of the term is derived from the Khoekhoen word *sa*, meaning to gather. He sees this as an obvious reference to the subsistence strategies used by the San, regarded as inferior to the pastoral way of life of the Khoi-Khoi. Despite its negative connotations, the word San nevertheless became the academically acceptable term.

Another set of xenonyms, although they will not feature prominently in this thesis, are worthy of discussion. These are the Bantu terms *Abathwa* and *Basarwa*. The designation *Abathwa* is commonly used throughout the Bantu-speaking regions of Africa to refer to forager groups such as the Hadzabe and *pygmies*. The term occurs from Cameroon to Tanzania, right down into southern Africa, and refers to groups that are linguistically and culturally distinct from the pastoral or mixed farming groups of the region (Woodburn, 1997; Wilmsen, 1989). To the Xhosa speakers of South Africa, the *Abathwa* are people who are especially adept at performing healing and rainmaking magic (Prins 1996; Francis, 2007). Generally speaking, however, the

term has hierarchical and negative connotations, denoting groups of people with marginal positions in the wider society. Thus, *Abathwa* does not offer students of San society a recuperating terminology or one completely devoid of a connotation of subjective rank or position in society<sup>9</sup>.

Contrastingly, the position of the *Abathwa* (San) within a Nguni worldview is complex and not just hierarchical. In fact, Prins and Lewis (1992) suggested that the San are viewed as mediators between nature and culture and were found to fulfil this function in Nguni society<sup>10</sup>. The Nguni viewed San people as holding a particular place in their cosmology, with privileged access to the natural world and all the “powers” and “forces” that were thought to reside in nature. Elsewhere there is evidence that many San were revered and respected as chiefs or persons of note (Gordon, 2001; Prins & Lewis, 1992). However, it seems that it is not possible to isolate one pattern regarding the treatment of the San in Nguni society, since the San were at times revered, sometimes treated as equals, and at other times feared.

The term *Basarwa* is only used to refer to the San of Botswana and indicates those of lower socio-economic position, servants or cattle-less serfs (*sic*) (Hitchcock & Holm, 1993; Motzafi-Haller, 1994). In the light of this particular referent, revisionists claim that the San and their society are better understood as being a rural and pre-capitalist underclass, rather than as isolated relics of the “Stone age” or as representatives of some Edenic people (for more on this, see Wilmsen, 1996, Humphreys, 1985). Moreover, the word does not exclusively refer to foragers (hunter-gatherers) and has been shown to derive from the Bantu root *-thwa* (Wilmsen, 1989; Woodburn, 1997). Like the other terms above, and given the

negative connotations attached to it, the term is not favoured in some academic discussions.

#### 1.4 ***Conventions in naming the San***

The key problem with all the aforementioned terms is that, besides the often negative connotations, each of these designations masks the great cultural and linguistic variation that is found among the people called San, Bushmen, *Abathwa* or *Basarwa*. Those known as the San are actually a collective of southern African foragers, or former foragers, who comprise at least two dozen language groups and who historically were spread over seven southern African countries. In order to avoid the homogenizing effect of these names, some have suggested that self-referents, or in some cases ethnonyms, be used when speaking about a specific San group (Wilmsen, 1989). The use of ethnonyms would enable the researcher to highlight the local, regional, culturo-linguistic, ecological and political particularity of the San groups being studied or represented. Others have suggested that there may be merit in maintaining some of the negative terms. Gordon and Sholto Douglas (2000), for example, chose to retain the term Bushmen in order to make social banditry respectable again, since in their view those labeled “Bushmen” had the longest, most valiant, if costly, record of resistance to colonialism. As this example shows, the convention in naming is often dependent on the ideological purpose of the authors concerned. But Wilmsen cautions against even this manner of using the term, arguing that:

This historicity of nomenclature cannot be erased, neither by academic or vernacular valorization of iconic images, no matter whether baptized with either positive or negative locutions (Wilmsen, 1996:188).

Each term has to be considered and used with a clear understanding of its origin, history and political contexts. My aim here is not to suggest a new term or to add anything to the debate on the naming of these people, but rather to clarify the convention to be used in this thesis.

In my research, a large number of terms will be used; these include San, Bushmen, southern Kalahari San and ≠Khomani San, *Boesman*, and also on occasion the term to indicate the people who were the participants in the study. ‘*San*’ will be used to denote those former foragers and persons claiming “first nation” status in southern Africa. The expression ‘*Bushman*’, and its Afrikaans equivalent *Boesman*, will only be used in the thesis when it is self-referent, or when it has been employed by sources, texts or authors to describe the group under study. While this may be the convention employed in the thesis, it should be remembered that the two terms, *San* and *Bushman*, are so intricately woven together that, as many have argued, they are impossible to separate (Douglas, 1995; Voss, 1990). The regional–geographical referent, southern Kalahari San, will be used when indicating the ethno-linguistic San community of that region (southern Kalahari) of South Africa (see Chapter 5, sub-section 5.5.3) and also when speaking about this specific group historically. The predominant term throughout the thesis will be ≠Khomani San, which, rather than meaning an ethnic unit, refers to a specific collective that was formed during the land claims process. Finally, terms that the reader may encounter throughout the text include several names of organizations, subgroups, and family groups.

One further explanation is necessary in this grasping at nomenclature and it has to do with the use of the term Khoisan. This will be used as a collective term for both foragers and herders when they are spoken of historically, especially where sources are not clear about their exact ethnic identity or their mode of subsistence. When the discussion moves into the present, the term Khoisan will also be used to refer to all those who can trace or claim descent from one or other of the autochthonous groups of the sub-continent (Bredenkamp, 1991:71).

The use of self-referents in the case of the southern Kalahari San is problematic. Many of the people I encountered in the field continue to use terms that others perceive as negative. They sometimes use misnomers and corruptions of the academically and “politically correct” terms. The San people of the southern Kalahari, for example, commonly refer to themselves as *Boesmans*, with little or no regard for (or knowledge of) its negative connotations. The term San has most commonly been used in situations of power, for example in the Southern African San Council meetings, in the parks negotiations, in discussions with government departments or when communicating with outsiders. Some of the members of the ≠Khomani San group in the southern Kalahari often confused the origin and meaning of the term San, saying that they were “*Sand mense*” (Eng. = Sand people; see also Tomaselli, 2007:39). In the mind of the group, this denotes the Kalahari and its sandy geomorphology and their links to it. This last-mentioned point shows how the use of specific terms is often strange, even to those to whom they are ascribed. Moreover, the entire academic debate about which word to use would be lost on the San people, as many of them have internalized and embraced the so-called “negative” terms such as bushman or *Boesman*. They take some pride in saying that

they are “*Boesmans*” and apparently see very little wrong in applying this term to themselves.

The above conclusion demands some probing. Why would a person or a group of people choose a name or term to refer to themselves that has been deemed offensive? Let us look at an event that transpired during the course of my fieldwork. I was roused one morning by Abraham (*Oom Dawid*'s “right-hand man”). He said that *Oom Dawid* wanted to see me about some apparently urgent matter. The late *Dawid Kruiper* was at that time the elected but also popularly recognized traditional leader of the Khomani San. He was also one of the main protagonists in the narrative of the land claim. I accompanied him to the Skilpad, where most of the San from Witdraai gathered during the day. *Oom Dawid* and his sons, as well as his extended family, were all there by the time we arrived, all seated on the dusty ground in a close-knit circle. *Oom Dawid* said that someone (he was not specific, but I think it might have been a journalist) had called him and asked him about an alleged proposal that the San exhibit in the South African Natural History Museum be removed. He proceeded to probe me for the apparent reason why this should happen. I gave him and the others who were there a short lecture about *nature/culture, human/animal* dichotomies which placed black bodies, and here I included theirs, in nature and thus in closer proximity to the animal world, as opposed to “European white” bodies, which were always in culture and thus civilization. *Oom Dawid* and the others seemed unconvinced by my polemic; for them, nature was exactly where they wanted to be placed. They were not concerned about being classed as potential animals; on the contrary, they seemed more concerned that, if they were no longer thought of as being attached to nature,

outsiders would no longer come and see them, since they would now be tainted by civilization.

Thus there seemed to be a lot more at play than simply being politically correct. In fact, these people appeared to desire the exact character that some academic discourse wanted removed. The individuals gathered around that tree on that particular morning wanted to be known as part of nature; furthermore, they were prepared to accept the labels that went with that. The images I conjured up for them rang true; to them, they were authentic. The dichotomies were those that they had internalized and indeed were the ones with which they felt comfortable. Being tied to nature, whether it meant being close to nature, closer to or sharing an affinity with animals, or being named by and through the landscape they occupied, was desirable and even potentially profitable. Above all, these ontological distinctions were the self-same “categorizations” that they were using to drive their livelihoods and the “ones” by which they were raising their children.

This type of concern comes up repeatedly in the course of the interaction between the various subgroups within the #Khomani San. For them, a major factor that ensured their entitlement to resources (the land) hinged on their continued ability to seat themselves within nature. At the same time, those who claimed San identity but had little interaction with nature were seen as suffering from what has been called “cosmological autism” (Kohn, 2007). In this view, a person could easily lose the power to interact with or live within a particular domain and have aspects of that domain completely closed off to them. Thus some #Khomani felt that it was not enough simply to be able to call yourself San or Boesman or the like; rather the

individual must retain a way of being in order to be San. The so-called westernized San (see section 5.2.6) were often categorized in this way by “traditional San”, who saw their westernized “cousins” as outside their own ecology, since they had lost their ability to live in or with nature and the plants and animals found in their world of objects and subjects.

In summary, the terms *Boesman/Bushman* highlighted the characteristics that they thought would enable the creation of the life-world they wanted to promote as part of the economic development proposals for the San of the region. The term *San* was empty to many of the San, and in fact they often only heard this term used in situations of power. For these San, being in nature or of nature was an empowering state that suggested they might achieve whatever it was that they sought.

On the basis of the above, I also concluded that the process of naming and the political or representational impacts it might have were not simply a one-sided affair. Many of the ≠Khomani San are in fact actively engaged in a process of creating an identity for themselves. This suggests the notion that many of these individuals are well aware of the representation that has been made of them (the authenticity construct) and that they regularly engage with it, not only as a way of preserving their heritage but also as a means of making a living. As suggested by Comaroff and Comaroff (2009:11), these San people were “seen, and reciprocally were able to see themselves, as a named people with a traditional way of life.”

Wilmsen (1989) advocates the use of ethnonyms and self-referents when referring to San groups. However, this is problematic when identifying the southern Kalahari San, as the apparent common self-referent, ≠Khomani, is a xenonym which

has become common as the result of certain social and political processes over the last few years (Crawhall, 2003). This, and other difficulties, as well as conventions about naming, will be dealt with extensively in Chapter 5. Lastly, the self-referents are often tied up with the language of specific groups. Only a few people still speak the N/u language - and only they know what the self-referents are (or were). Thus in the case of the ≠Khomani San, this particular self-referent is not in common use, nor is it common knowledge

I want to make a few last remarks on naming and how it fits into the main theoretical point about authenticity. The last few decades have seen a variety of terms being 'batted about', with some that had been discarded before even being salvaged. What has the search for these new, less demeaning, volunteered terms or names been about? At the least, the reshuffling and refinement of terms has been about the accurate description of a people. It has been about finding the names these people call themselves, or those which, at least from our own attempts to be culturally, politically or otherwise sensitive, we think will fit with or sit well with all the parties concerned. Hence the search has been about accuracy in narrative, and finding an authentic name is at the centre of this.

### **1.5 *Locating the San on the southern African landscape***

Until fairly recently, many people believed that the San were completely extinct in South Africa. Isaacson (2000) recounts that, on his journey to find the San, he was told that there were no such people living in South Africa. Popular and academic perceptions were that the last "pure" remnants of the San population, who roamed much of the subcontinent before the arrival of the Bantu-speaking groups (circa 400 AD) and the European colonists (17<sup>th</sup> century); were only to be found in

Botswana and Namibia (see for instance Humphreys, 1985; Tobias 1956, Marshall, 1976). Research, however, shows that, besides South Africa, the descendants of these people lived and continued to live in parts of Malawi, Angola, Zimbabwe, and Zambia, and, until the last person was murdered in 1988, in Swaziland (Suzman, 2001). It was only through extensive academic work that the continued presence of the San groups outside Namibia and Botswana became known.

This begs the question: what of South Africa? Where do the San people who lodged a land claim in the South African Parliament; and the other two groups living inside its boundaries, come from, and how and why did they “re-appear”? A little more than three decades ago there were “officially” no San people in South Africa, yet by the mid-1990s three distinct groups had reemerged onto the political landscape. The first group were the so-called “Bushmen Battalions”- the !Xu, or Khwe - late of Schmidtsdrift in the Northern Cape. The second group was the ≠Khomani San, which was largely reconstituted as a result of the initiation of a land claim lodged in the mid-1990s. Lastly, there was the so-called “Secret San”, a group of individuals who were unwilling to “reveal” their status and to openly identify themselves as San. They involved groups of scattered individuals (Prins, 2009).

The Bushmen “Battalions” are a group of San people living at Schmidtsdrift just outside Kimberley. They are linguistically distinct and have different regional origins. For example, the !Xu are from Namibia, while the Khwe are from the southern parts of Angola. Both these groups served with the South African Defense Force in conflicts with the South West African People’s Organization (SWAPO) and against the *Movimento Popular de Libertação de Angola*<sup>11</sup> (MPLA). Under a blanket

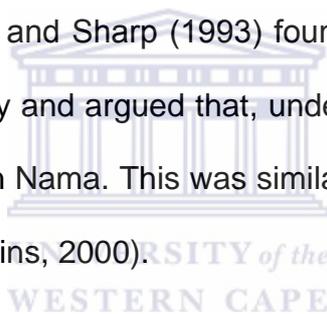
of custodianship, the South African Defense Force (SADF) recruited and trained the San as soldiers, because it was perceived that they had a natural hatred for “Blacks” who hunted them on both sides of the border; and that their exceptional skills in tracking and *veld*-craft made them good soldiers (Erasmus, 1997). When the war ended in 1989 and the SADF withdrew from the region, the San feared retribution<sup>12</sup> from their fellow Namibians and Angolans and were therefore transferred to a resettlement camp near Kimberley and granted South African citizenship (Sharp & Douglas, 1996). After a rocky start, characterized by internal conflicts, uncertainty about continued employment in the army, contest over land claims, and a myriad of social problems, the groups entered discussions with the new South African National Defense Force (SANDF) and Department of Land Affairs (DLA) which made their future seem a bit more certain (Douglas, nd). Many of the !Xu and Khwe still work for the SANDF today and continue to live in the resettlement camp. However, although they have received land under the redistribution programme, they have yet to be relocated to the four farms allocated to them through the programme (SASI, 2002). This in brief is how the !Xu and the Khwe reemerged on the South African landscape.

The story of the reemergence of ≠Khomani appears more complex, as they are from South Africa and are not San groups brought from “elsewhere”. In order to understand their reemergence, I examined the conditions that led to their disappearance. In the 1930’s, the so-called “Wits expedition”, led by Dart and other academics from the University of the Witwatersrand, planned to seek out the “purest” San people. On the advice of Dorothea Bleek, they went into the southern Kalahari, to “the furthest end of the Union” (Maingard, 1937). After their studies were

concluded, some members of the expedition tried to establish a reserve for the San people of the southern Kalahari. The response of both government and the local farmers to this was negative. In opposition to the possible establishment of such a “Bushman reserve”, an official government report (Gordon, 1999) labeled the San of this region as “fakes”. This view was supported by many local farmers. In this particular instance, the argument put forward was that the San group in question was completely “bastardized”, that they had “lost their culture”, and that many spoke Afrikaans and were employed on the farms of Europeans as domestic workers or farmhands (Gordon, 1995). The government and the farmers claimed that these people were “no longer” Bushmen and were therefore not entitled to have land set aside for their sole use, that is, as a native reserve for the preservation<sup>13</sup> of their “traditional” lifestyle. This was the first important instance of the “authenticity” construct or debate concerning the San. Several decades passed and the descendants of this San group continued to live in the Mier and wider Gordonia region. Some were still considered to be “Bushmen” by the local farmers and the authorities in the Kalahari Gemsbok National Park.

The final death knell for the San of South Africa came when, under the terms of the Population Registration Act (Act No. 30 of 1950), most of the San became registered, and thus reinscribed in the South African political landscape and legislation as Coloured (Steyn, 1984). With the implementation of this Act, the San officially ceased to exist in South Africa. Not all who were thus renamed and reclassified as Coloured found it a completely disempowering process. Some even embraced their new nomenclature and classification since it afforded them some advantages.

One of the reasons for this was that the former category “Bushmen” was seen to represent the very lowest point in the hierarchy of “races” in South Africa. In this regard, the San had originally been classified as a “native race<sup>14</sup>” (Carstens, 1966). The reclassification of individuals as Coloureds was actually perceived as a “step up” in the racial hierarchy of South Africa at the time. For example, one participant in this study, Ouma /unnas, proudly told me how they had lived and worked as Coloureds in the Park and on farms in the region, while others lived as *Boesmans*. It was only after 1994, when the political landscape in South Africa changed, with the making of a new Constitution, that many of these people began again to refer to themselves as San or “Bushmen”. Boonzaier and Sharp (1993) found similar processes at work in the revival of the Nama identity and argued that, under apartheid, it was better to be known as Coloured rather than Nama. This was similarly the case for the “Bushmen” (see also Robins, 1997, & Robins, 2000).



So how did San identity and the San people reemerge in South Africa after 1994? Two key developments in the post-'94 era set the stage. These were the new political dispensation and land reform legislation. Robins (2000) comments that “political changes have facilitated the reclaiming of these identities without the stigmas associated with them during apartheid.” Land reform legislation, especially the Act on the Restitution of Land Rights (Act 20 of 1994), allowed the ≠Khomani San to lodge a claim for land rights. The land claims process was a key part in the reconstitution and construction of the group known as the ≠Khomani San in South Africa. In this context, it is apparent that the San never really “disappeared”, but rather had been renamed and stripped of representation and representativeness by

the policies and perceptions of the past. Moreover, once these policies and perspectives had been cleared out of the way; those who considered themselves San<sup>15</sup> reasserted their position and identity. It was in this context that groups such as the “secret’ San also made their reappearance, albeit warily (see Prins, 2009). In other words, it was in the “new South Africa” that many new identities could be asserted, exercised and claimed (see also Comaroff & Comaroff, 1999; Comaroff & Comaroff, 2009).

The perception that the San had “vanished” or were at least “culturally extinct” in South Africa would come back and haunt the #Khomani San after they lodged their land claim. Many of those who encountered the #Khomani San, from tourists, farmers, and former neighbours to researchers and the media, expressed surprise that the San still existed in South Africa, while others, just like the government and farmers in the 1930s, were sceptical about the ‘authenticity’ of these people claiming to be San. Indeed, the local residents of Mier, where I did some research, reacted with astonishment and questioned why their neighbours, friends and colleagues, whom they had known as Coloureds or *Basters*, were suddenly calling themselves San.

Why is this significant? It seems that the fictions upon which apartheid and its policies operated were being undone here. The myth of Coloured-ness and the associated residential patterns were partially based on the myth that the San in South Africa were extinct. That is to say, the original occupants were gone, extinct or bred out of existence, and these acts of erasure or disappearance had emptied out the land for occupation by others. For a group to reemerge, especially one which

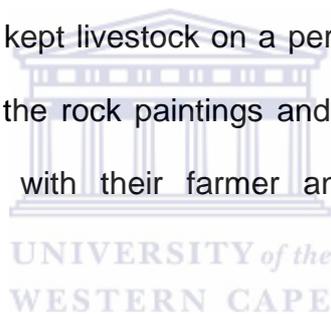
threatened the current mythologies underpinning the patterns of land ownership, unsettled and potentially undermined the existing order. Given this uncertainty, many reacted with an appeal to old mythologies, hence the surprise (for a further analysis of this point, see section 3.3.5.)

Institutions like the National Khoi-San Forum (NKSF) saw the “reappearance” or reconstitution of the San as hopeful. The NKSF had long argued that the Khoi-San people of South Africa were not “extinct”. Rather, in their view, the political situation under apartheid had not given the Khoi-San recognition as a distinct group. This left them victimized under the homogenizing effect of the government’s creation of the ‘Coloured’ category. One of the Forum’s key tasks was to lobby for the recognition of the descendants of all Khoi-San groups in southern Africa, especially those who had been reduced to “Colouredness” by apartheid. For them, “bastardization,” assimilation and language loss were not sufficient grounds for dismissing the reality of the presence of the Khoi-San descendants in South Africa. However, the voices of the members of the NKSF and their attempts at revision of the Khoi-San story did not enjoy a wide audience. Not only did the government not give its full support to such agendas but government departments were often unaware of the nuances of Khoi-San culture. For instance, in a workshop hosted by the Pan South African Language Board, one of the officials present (a linguist by training) expressed her surprise that there was more than one Khoi San language, and not just one as she had supposed until then.

Locating the San, as we have shown above, is problematic, since it involves a range of dynamics that often include political simplifications and glosses. These

glosses allow for a consistent crisis of identity and being. A major reason for the constant doubt about the genuineness of the ≠Khomani San is the question of representation. The manner in which colonialists, historians, academics, governments, travelers and schools have portrayed the San has created what Jolly (1996) called a “Bushman package”, which describes Bushmen or San, for instance, as:

“...small, yellow-skinned people with bent backs and large buttocks, who spoke a language with many clicks, were organized into small acephalous bands, lived in caves and crude grass shelters, gathered wild vegetable foods, never kept livestock on a permanent basis such as herders and farmers, executed the rock paintings and engravings of southern Africa and constantly fought with their farmer and herder neighbours” (Jolly, 1996:198).



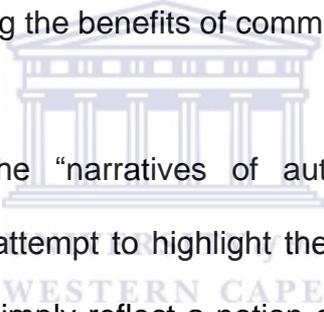
The point is that the southern Kalahari San did not conform to the above image. Thus “the package” could not be neatly applied to any San group, including the ≠Khomani San. Many spoke Afrikaans, dressed in western clothes, did not practice hunting or gathering, and worked as farmhands, shepherds or labourers in the region. Neither their material culture nor their economic activities matched those contained in a “Bushman package”, and as a result they were summarily rejected as “fakes” and/or Coloureds.

## 1.6 *The research problem*

“To see the Zhu and their fellow San-speakers as astute political persons with competing economic goals and social strategies is to see them not as ahistorical residues of ancient foragers but as coproducers, along with their Bantu-speaking cohabitants, of a history they helped form. It is also to see them as real people not as a category” (Wilmsen, 1989, ‘Land filled with flies’).

Wilmsen highlights a particular problem in the study of San society: the tension between popular views of the San and their past and the desire to portray them as active agents in the “modern” world, with the capacity to promote their own agendas and steer their own lives. Various groups, NGOs, politicians, development workers, researchers, and laypersons take a specific view of what comprises San culture. This image consists of stereotypes about the behaviour, physical features, livelihoods, political and economic institutions, and even cultural values of San people (see above, Jolly’s “Bushman package”). The people themselves are given only a minor role to play in the defining and representation of images of authenticity and “traditional Bushman-ness”. The “Bushman package” is often scripted in a hegemonic fashion. Nonetheless, these representations are still used by the San themselves, as well as by outsiders, to prescribe actions in which it is “appropriate” for the San to be involved. Does this make these San people coproducers? This may be so, but by accepting a label, name or package given by outsiders are they not still simply “confined in a name” (Mbembe, 2001)? Are they simply complicit in their own continued subjugation, or does their confinement allow them the agency to script their own futures?

The prescription of a “correct” or “proper”, i.e. “authentic”, way of behaving or making a living based on elements of a “Bushman package” could be seen today as promoting an “acceptable San norm”. Any characteristic that a member may have or a behaviour which does not conform to the “acceptable San norm” is seen by some of the #Khomani San and advocacy groups as less authentically San. Setting limitations, through the use of the “San norm”, leads on occasion to what has been called “enforced primitivism” (Dembner, 2003; Colchester, 2003). In other words, ideas about “genuine San” or “regte *Boesmans*” do on occasion constrain the actions of those actors to whom they are applied. This is especially so when these ideas set a limit on income-earning opportunities, on livelihood strategies or when they exclude individuals from sharing the benefits of communal resource tenure.



Although I examine the “narratives of authenticity” that make up the “acceptable San norm” in an attempt to highlight the limits of this agenda, we can read this in ways that do not simply reflect a notion of cultural purity that is limiting, i.e. enforced primitivism. One of the defining aspects of these resource-use communities is the delineation of the boundaries of the group (Ostrom, 1997). In the case of #Khomani San, it would seem that authenticity, whether as cultural purity, an existential question, a commodity question or even a methodological verification of bushmen-ness, is essential to the demarcation of the resource-use group. These “narratives” therefore function exactly as they should, limiting the access to membership, but they also limit access to resources. The crux of the matter is that membership is not just of a single type. Individuals have gained admission to the group through cultural purity (ethnographic authenticity), claims to common alienation, anomie and alterity (existential authenticity), common livelihoods

(commodity and value) and the verification of their membership through a variety of authentication tools (stories, association, genealogies, photographs, and language among others). Notions of authenticity therefore prescribe a sphere of action within which actors live out their daily struggles.

## 1.7 ***Structure of the thesis***

In this thesis, I examine the narratives of authenticity, the limits thereof, the potential interests served by these narratives, and the power relations involved in the promotion of an authentic San identity. I focus on four key areas to achieve this goal: methodological issues which arise when studying authenticity, the framing of the land claim, the post-settlement activities on the restituted farms, and the various issues around authenticity and traditional leadership. I will also highlight a variety of issues, ranging from livelihoods, governance, community-based natural resource management (CBNRM), identity and ethnicity, to common property debates.

Chapter two describes the environmental context in which the ethnographic research is situated. A brief introduction is given to the southern Kalahari, with attention being paid to the natural setting as it relates to the social life of the people living there today. The chapter deals mostly with the biophysical environment of the southern Kalahari. It focuses on factors such as climate, geomorphology and vegetation. All these are linked to the socio-cultural and economic activities of the residents. In mapping the ecological landscape, the chapter sheds light on some of the ways in which the environment, both in the past and continuing in the present, plays a pivotal role in shaping the local San people's everyday lives. As an anthropological text, the chapter does not deal with these key areas as purely natural

phenomena, so ethnographic data will be included where relevant. Thus the “natural” setting will be discussed in terms of its importance to local people.

The methodological discussion in chapter three simply audits the range of methods employed in the course of the fieldwork. Each method and research tool is examined for its efficacy in gathering data appropriate to the main thesis. Chapter four then discusses a range of issues related to the research. This chapter is a reflexive assessment of the research encounter, looking not only at specific methods or research tools but also at the overall research engagement.

Chapter five examines the progression of the land claim from its initial conceptualization until its conclusion, as well as the period shortly thereafter. The argument here is largely about the use of the notion of authenticity to construct the parameters of the claim. These narratives of authenticity were needed not only to validate the claim but also eventually to validate the rights, activities and identity of the ≠Khomani San. In this chapter, I argue that these narratives have also been partly responsible for some of the problems experienced by the local San people following the settlement of the claim.

In chapter six, I examine the activities of the three groups of CPA members that moved onto the farms shortly after the settlement of the claim. These groups used different resources and expected to benefit from the land claim in a variety of ways. For instance, those who were labeled as “westernized San” were interested in grazing, while others, who referred to themselves as “traditional Bushmen”, wanted to harvest natural resources. The elderly sisters and their extended family members

had an interest in other benefits which may have contributed to their social wellbeing. The latter concerns were diverse and ranged from aspects such as personal safety to financial benefits, housing, and healthcare. These disparate subgroups in the CPA had different reasons for participating in the land claim and different views on the appropriate direction for “San” development. Their experiences, interpretations and demands highlighted the fragility of the group cohesion, that outsiders and the claimant groups had already assumed to exist.

In chapter seven, I examine the traditional leadership of the ≠Khomani San. In order to answer some questions around traditional leadership, the chapter reviews some historical accounts of San leadership, before turning to ethnographies of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and their coverage of the institution among the San of southern Africa. The focus is then narrowed down to the ≠Khomani San. This latter section examines some historical and archival materials in order to bring to light the factors that have gone into the selection of “traditional leadership” among the southern Kalahari San.

## Chapter 2

### 2 Background: Setting and location

#### 2.1 *Introduction*

This chapter sets out to provide an environmental context in which to situate the ethnographic research. This is necessary because the participants in the study claim that the environment had in the past; and continues to play, a pivotal role in shaping their culture. The key areas covered include the geomorphology of the region, its climate, as well as its vegetation. As an anthropological study, the chapter will not deal with these key areas purely as natural phenomena, and ethnographic data will be included where relevant. Thus the “natural” setting will be discussed in terms of its importance to local people. Further, the categories of ‘Bushman’ or ‘San’ cannot be divorced from nature; in what follows I hope to set out some of the intricate and sometimes intimate relationships that are created between the two.

#### 2.2 *Location of the field site*

The region where I conducted my study is situated in the Northern Cape province of South Africa, on the south-western tip of the Kalahari Desert. Although the area is very close to the borders of Botswana and Namibia, no part of the study was done outside South Africa<sup>16</sup>. One of the settlements, Witdraai, where research was conducted; lies about 2 kilometers from Botswana. Rietfontein, a little to the north-west of Witdraai, is less than 5 kilometers from the Namibian border. Seven settlements in the Mier municipal area were important to the research project, namely Philandersbron, Rietfontein, Witdraai, Groot Mier, Klein Mier, Louwbos and

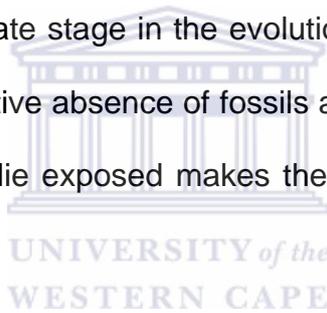
Welkom. Directly to the north of these settlements lies the Kgalikgadi Transfrontier Park (KTFP), hereafter referred to as the “Park”. Since the Park is not populated with people and no residential activities are planned there in future, little fieldwork was done there.

### 2.3 ***Geomorphology of the southern Kalahari / Mier region***

The area known as the Kalahari lies mainly within the boundaries of two Southern African countries, South Africa and Botswana, and also partly in Namibia. A small stretch of the Kalahari Desert reaches into the western edge of Zimbabwe. Theorists have demonstrated that the geological components which form the Kalahari system are more widely distributed than just the three main countries mentioned. Thomas (1984) classified the Kalahari into three large regions. The first is the “Mega Kalahari”, which stretches from the Congo River Basin to the Orange River in the south. The second, known as the “Kalahari thirstlands”, lies between the Okavango and the Orange and a section of the Limpopo River, and is the area most popularly known as the Kalahari. The third region is the Kalahari “dune desert” and is on the southwestern fringe of the Kalahari system – located partly in Botswana, Namibia and South Africa. The main difference between the dune desert and the other two areas is its lower rainfall and the presence of a dune system.

The vegetative cover of these regions also differs significantly because of the underlying soil, strata, and rainfall. The mega Kalahari is characterized by a variety of vegetation regimes, ranging from savannah to tropical moist forest. The “thirstlands” are largely open savannah and woodlands, while the dune desert is an open savannah, with homogenous vegetation cover and scattered tree cover, mostly in the fossil riverbeds.

The single most striking and best-known feature of the Kalahari are the red dunes that flow across the landscape. In places these are interrupted by riverbeds and pans where the sand has been eroded and the “*hardeveld*” (Afrikaans = hard veld), as the locals call it, lies exposed. “*Hardeveld*” is usually the basal sediments composed of sandstones, conglomerates and in places limestone, belonging either to the Kalahari group or to the Karoo series. The sediments are largely of continental origin (Cooke, Warren & Gouldie, 1993), deposited in an inland basin. Estimates suggest that these deposits were laid down about 65 million years ago, during the Cretaceous period (van der Walt & le Riche 1999; Cooke, *et al.* 1993; Haughton, 1969), and represent a fairly late stage in the evolution of the strata of the southern African subcontinent. The relative absence of fossils and the small surface area over which these basal sediments lie exposed makes the exact dating of the sediments difficult (Haughton, 1969).



It is on these earlier sediments that the famous red sand of the Kalahari dunes rests. It was deposited over a fairly large area, from the Orange River in the south to the Congo River in the north. Between two to seven million years ago, during the late Pliocene period, the then prevailing weather systems featured predominantly northern and northeastern winds (Tyson, 1987). These winds were responsible for the deposition of the Kalahari sands. They were of the same direction, but must have been much stronger than the present day winds to cause such dune formation (Cooke, *et al.*, 1993). The characteristic red colour of the sand dunes is due to the presence of iron oxides in the soil. These oxides are known to leach out, so the sands range in shades from red to brown to white (van der Walt &

le Riche, 1999). The dunes vary in height from about fifteen to twenty meters (Steyn, 1984; van der Walt & Le Riche, 1999). The axes of the dunes correspond to the dominant northwesterly wind direction and run parallel to each other.

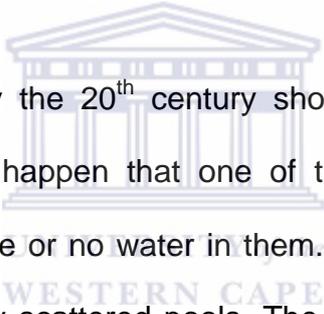
The geological structure of the Kalahari is fairly homogenous. Directly northwest of Rietfontien are the rocks of the Nama sediments, some of the oldest rocks in the region. They belong to the Fish River sequence and are for the most part sandstones, shale, slate, quartzite and conglomerate (Botha, 1995). These sediments were laid down during a period of marine sedimentation on the west coast, about 570 million years ago (Truswell, 1970). Also in the vicinity of Rietfontien, some sediments of the Karoo sequence are uncovered. This is locally referred to also as "*hardeveld*", although technically it differs from the "*hardeveld*" in other areas of Mier, which are the basal rocks of the Kalahari sediments. They are part of the Dwyka formation, the lowest series of sediments in the Karoo sequence. These rocks were deposited by glaciation about 345 million years ago. The series contains tillite, which is characteristic of glacial deposits, as well as conglomerate and limestone. Rocks belonging to the Lower Ecca series (the Ecca is the coal-bearing series of the Karoo sequence) are exposed at the surface around Koppieskraalpan and Middelpospan. They were laid down in the late Permian, about 258 - 248 million years ago. At Koppieskraalpan, a dolerite dyke runs in a semicircular fashion through the Karoo sediments, in the same type of intrusion as is found at Middelpospan. Such intrusions took place between 190 and 150 million years ago, and similar dykes run through the Karoo sediments in the central parts of South Africa. Lastly, during the late cretaceous, about 70 million years ago, kimberlites intruded through the sediment. One of these kimberlite pipes is about half a kilometer north of the

settlement of Rietfontein (Botha, *et al*, 1995). These are said to be non-diamondiferous kimberlites (Dawson, 1980), though some texts cite them as the source of diamonds mined here in the late 1960s and early '70s (Botha, *et al*, 1995; Sunday Times, 1968).

A number of pans of varying sizes are found throughout the southern Kalahari, some of them as large as 75 square kilometers. They usually fill up during the rainy season, but the water quickly evaporates, until only the bare pan is visible. After the evaporation, a salt layer is formed on the bed. These pans are of great ecological and economic value to the locals. They are also a central part of the ecology of the game of the region. Game gathers around the pans, which are vital to their survival in the extreme conditions. They are a good source of salt for the animals, a product that is usually scarce in natural inland biomes. They are also a valuable source of water after the rains, both for the game and livestock, although within a few days the water will be undrinkable due to the high salt content. Around the pans one can find various pits dug by animals or people, and these contain relatively fresh water (Cornell, 1999). Lastly, many pans, depending on the composition of the pan floor (van der Walt & le Riche, 1999), are covered with grass after good rains, and this offers forage both for game and domestic stock.

There is no regular above-ground flow of water through the Kalahari, although there are the remains of several fossil rivers in this southern region. Four episodic rivers together make up the Hygap system (Clement, 1967), which in prehistoric times drained into the Orange River to the south. The main channel of this system is the Molopo River, which forms the southern boundary of Botswana. The Molopo

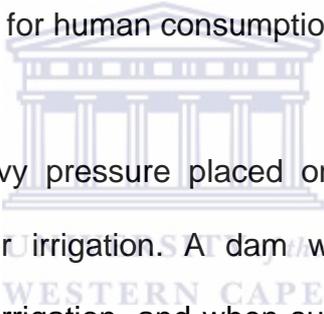
originates from a limestone spring in the southeastern part of Botswana (Clement, 1967) and runs its course westward along the border. The Kuruman, which also originates from a limestone spring situated at the town of Kuruman, joins the Molopo south of Witdraai. To the north are the Nossob and the Auob rivers, both of which have their origin in the Namibian highlands, from where their courses runs east into South Africa at Union's End and through the Kgalikgadi Trans-Frontier Park (KTFP), where they join at Twee Rivieren (Afrikaans: two rivers). From this confluence onwards, the river is known as the Nossob, and joins the Molopo at Witdraai. Before the confluence, the Nossob forms the Western boundary of South Africa with Botswana.



Records from the early the 20<sup>th</sup> century show the flow of these rivers as sparse and irregular. It may happen that one of the river branches flows quite strongly, while others have little or no water in them. In seasons with lower rainfall, the channels may contain only scattered pools. The Auob River is the most active and was in flood during the years 1934, 1966, 1972 and 1976 (v/d Walt & Le Riche, 1999). The other rivers are all less active and only once has it been recorded that all four of the rivers flowed at the same time - this was in 1934 (v/d Walt & Le Riche, 1999). Much of the water available for domestic consumption is obtained from underground sources. With water supplied from boreholes, the inhabitants of the Kalahari do not need to trap rainwater in household tanks.

The Mier area draws most of its water from the Rietfontein aquifer and from various private and production boreholes (Toens, 1993). The remains of the first well, dug by the earliest migrants<sup>17</sup>, can still be found at Rietfontein, and it is claimed

that the San inhabitants of the region previously frequented the site of this well (Farini, 1973). The name of Rietfontien was originally Hâs, which means “womb” in Nama, a reference to the presence of water in the region (Clement 1969; Totemeyer 1936). The name Rietfontein (fountain of reeds) refers to the prolific stand of reeds which covered the marshy spring in earlier times. The boreholes are situated on a fault within the town of Rietfontien and studies show that the aquifer is under tremendous pressure and that recharge is not taking place at a sufficient rate. Worst-case scenarios suggest that, at current rates of use, water resources may be seriously depleted within two to three years (pers. comm. C Philander). Water quality is generally good, although in some places the water has a higher nitrate content than is regarded as acceptable for human consumption (Toens *et al*, 1993).



Given the already heavy pressure placed on the underground resources, ground water is not used for irrigation. A dam was built outside the town of Rietfontien for the purpose of irrigation, and when sufficient rain has fallen, water is let out onto the nearby fields. This allows for the planting of various crops. Moreover, many houses have vegetable gardens and the water used in them usually comes from private wells. Although the practice is tolerated, it does not have the complete approval of the TLC (Transitional Local Council), who fear that these gardens put too much strain on the underground water.

The Park itself is served by a range of boreholes, originally drilled by the British colonial army in the First World War, in the run of the Auob River (v/d Walt & Le Riche, 1999; v/d Merwe, 1941). The boreholes were sunk to provide water for the horses of the troops. Some are still in use today as watering points for the wild

animals of the Park. Given the lack of above-ground water resources, the boreholes are vital to the survival of the animals during droughts. In the old Kalahari Gemsbok National Park, ninety-six wind pumps, spread throughout the park, deliver water. This is of a varying quality, but is generally fit for consumption by animals (Knight, 1989). There is also a series of storage dams in the “Park”, built to supply animals with water.

#### **2.4 *The significance of the geomorphology of the Southern Kalahari for economic and subsistence activities***

Many of the early roads in the Southern Kalahari ran along the riverbeds, and some of the rivers still follow these paths today. The road from Witdraai to the KGTFP, for example, follows the Molopo and then turns into the Nossob until it reaches the Park. The road between Witdraai and Vanzylsrus tracks the channel of the Kuruman River. The roads that run through the KGTFP are situated in the Nossob and Auob river channels. These offer a detour around the various dunes which could otherwise block the path.

The river channels, which were of great importance to early settlers, are still significant to the conservation of fauna in the area. In the rainy season, they fill with water, forming a number of pools. The early settlers<sup>18</sup> were dependent on these pools to provide water for their livestock, and they still supply water for livestock and game.

Game is inevitably drawn to the pools in the rivers and this was important to those who lived by hunting. According to research conducted in the region, the river beds support much higher concentrations of game than do the dunes; and it is known that the San and the Basters were dependent on game as a source of food and hides (Mills & Mills, 1982). Documentary evidence shows that the riverbeds, especially that of the Nossob, were favoured hunting grounds for various groups. Dirk Vielander<sup>19</sup> jealously guarded access to the Nossob in order to protect its rich pickings (Cape Archives Native Administration [CA NA], 166). It seems he feared that, if hunters enjoyed free access, the game would soon be depleted (CA NA, 166). The Korranna also used the Nossob as part of their hunting ground, as evidenced from the letters of the late 1800s to the Northern Cape magistrate (CA Northern Border Magistrate [NBM], 6). In the early 1930s, at the time of the proclamation of the Park, several Baster families were resident in the Nossob and lived off hunting and livestock (C.M. Doke, Undated Article in Clement collection). These families were eventually moved, since it was felt they were a threat to the game (Green, nd).

Underground water in the riverbeds is a potential resource, and the first of a series of boreholes was sunk in 1914. This was done to serve the British forces during their campaign against the Germans. After the war, the government put in place so-called “*boorgatwagters*”<sup>20</sup> to look after the boreholes (v/d Merwe, 1941; v/der Walt & le Riche, 1999). As a result, some Europeans settled along the courses of these rivers. The same phenomenon occurred along the Kuruman River. The first European farmers to settle the area were in charge of the boreholes in the riverbeds (v/d Merwe, 1941). The process of sinking boreholes was also partly responsible for the displacement of the San of the region. The water prospectors depleted the game,

making it almost impossible for the San to survive in this dry region without this source of animal protein (Crawhall, 1998; Pringle, 1982; LND 1/833 L14803).

A new water supply became available after World War I, allowing farmers to ranch with livestock on a large scale. However, in areas without boreholes, and with little surface water, farming in the southern Kalahari remained very limited. In 1903, the government first began strongly to consider declaring the whole area of the southern Kalahari as a game reserve (Cape Parliamentary Papers [CPP], G- 53). This was mostly because of the lack of water resources.

Game, however, could survive in this arid region. Rainwater collected in the pans, and, once it had dried up, grass grew and was available for grazing. Layers of salt were left in pans once the rainwater had evaporated and these attracted game. Salt tends to be scarce in nature, and animals use these places as licks to supplement their nutritional intake. This highlights the use of these places as good hunting spots for the earlier settlers.

Additionally, the quantity of salt in the bigger pans was large enough to support commercial extraction. Nevertheless, only a few cases were reported of the subsistence use of the salt from the pans, either as a pickling or for curing hides. Although a number of people applied for permits to collect salt in the early 1900s, they were refused because they were not dependent on the salt as a source of subsistence (SG 3/2/1/45 MDC 913). At Goereikei Pan, there are the remains of several houses, evidence of an earlier small salt industry at this pan. None of the pans in the Mier communal area is used for commercial extraction of salt.

In the late 1960s, some diamond mining took place at Mier. The mines were located just north of Rietfontein and south of the settlement. The allocation of mining rights to a private interest caused considerable discontent among the Mier residents (Sunday Times, nd. 1968). The diamonds were extracted from two of four pipes<sup>21</sup> in the area (Sunday Times, nd.1968). The project was halted because the diamonds were too small to make the venture economically viable and the mines were so waterlogged that the cost of pumping became too high (pers. comm. C Philander & J v/d Westhuizen).

Early in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, silver was discovered at Klaas Bok's farm, but the ore contained only a small concentration of silver and was not considered suitable for extraction (SG 3/2/1/42, MDC 974). In the late 90's, a local resident obtained permission to start his own exploration at one of the sites on the farm Middelpoos<sup>22</sup>. He used very basic tools (pickaxe and shovel) and was unable to locate any diamonds<sup>23</sup>.

## **2.5 *Factors influencing climate in the Southern Kalahari***

### **2.5.1 Rainfall and fossil drainage**

The aridity of the climate in the Kalahari is linked to regions of high atmospheric pressure over this area of the sub-continent (Tyson & Crimps, 2000; Walton, 1969). High atmospheric pressure generally results in relatively stable weather conditions, with little or no disturbance in terms of rainfall. In the summer months, due to intense heating of the continental surface, the atmospheric pressure changes, giving rise to areas of low pressure. Such areas are unstable and

characterized by convection or upward-flowing air. As the dominance of the high-pressure cells declines during the summer months of December to February, the chances of precipitation increase. The region receives most of its rain during these months, with a prevalence of thunderstorms. Rainfall varies considerably throughout the Kalahari, with the highest percentage in the north and the lowest in the south (Tyson & Crimp, 2000). The southern region receives an annual average rainfall of about 230 mm, while in the north it can reach 800mm per annum. Thus the Kalahari experiences great annual variations in the amount of precipitation it receives. Two factors stand out as affecting this rainfall, the El Nino Southern Oscillation (ENSO) and what is known as the Quasi-Biennial Oscillation (QBO). The result is a cyclical pattern of drought and high rainfall at approximately eighteen to twenty-year intervals for the QBO and between three and four-year oscillations for ENSO. The region therefore experiences several years of above average rainfall and a more or less equal number of years with below-average rainfall.



**Figure 1: The Kuruman is a tributary of the Molopo, flowing into the Molopo at the border fences of one of the San farms. Water in this river does not automatically mean flows in the other tributaries, the Auob and the Nossob. Source: KAB A2599 no. 12 P.J. v/d Merwe collection *photographer unknown*.**

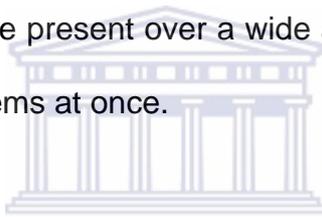
Rainfall in the southern Kalahari fluctuated over the last century. Figures indicate that there were years of extremely low rainfall, followed by one or two seasons of above-average rainfall. Thus it is safe to assume that the flooding of the rivers in the Southern Kalahari is probably as a result of a near-biennial oscillation.

The earliest account of how any of these rivers flowed comes from an 1806 report by David Livingstone. Livingstone was staying with Moffat at Kuruman when the Nossob was in flood (Clement, 1967).<sup>24</sup> No further data is available until 1894, when sources show that heavy rains occurred in the region, leading to floods in the Kuruman River (Green, nd). In 1896, the records of the Lands Department indicated floods in the Molopo as well (LND 1/568 L9841).

In the period 1918-1920, reports and photographic evidence suggest that the Kuruman was in flood (see fig 1). At the same time, an application received at Upington by the resident magistrate - for permission to plant wheat in the bed of the Molopo around Witdraai - recorded floods all the way down to this stretch of the Molopo (1/UPT 6/7). Several sources indicate that in 1934 all the channels of the fossil Hygap came down in flood (Clement, 1967; v/der Walt & le Riche, 2000; v/d Merwe, 1941). Reports for the forties and fifties are lacking, but the record can be picked up in the early sixties, with floods in the beds of the Nossob (Clement, 1967; v/der Walt & le Riche, 2000) and the Auob (Clement, 1967). During the seventies, the Auob River came down in flood, once in 1973 and twice in 1976 (v/der Walt & le Riche, 2000). This roughly corresponds with a season of higher-than-usual rainfall in

the region during 1974 (Steyn, 1984). In 2000, the Nossob had water, but it did not reach the Molopo.

From the figures for 1894, 1918-20, 1934, 1963, 1972-76, and 2000, a simplified picture of cyclical rainfall emerges<sup>25</sup>. There was a cycle of twenty and then fourteen years between floodings. It is of import that the rivers have their sources in various regions and fall under the influence of different weather systems. For instance, the Auob is often affected by the presence of continental low-pressure cells over the Namibian desert. These lows create pockets of intense rainfall which can continue for several weeks. Precipitation may feed the Auob, but have little effect on the Kuruman. Rainfall has to be present over a wide area of the subcontinent before flows take place in all the systems at once.



To conclude, I would draw the reader's attention to the significance of the above discussion for the thesis. Later on in Chapter 5 I speak about an apparent prophecy about the land claim, linked to water in the Hygap fossil drainage. The land claim and the flow in the episodic rivers coincided.

## **2.5.2 Temperature**

The next climatic factor of significance is the temperature in the region. The area is known for summertime temperatures as high as 42 °C, with a mean maximum of around 35.7 °C (v/der Walt & le Riche, 2000). Winter averages are only slightly lower than summer averages. The significance of the winter temperatures lies in the high variation between diurnal and nocturnal temperatures. While winter

temperatures average out at about 22° C (v/der Walt & le Riche, 2000), the daytime and nighttime temperatures show a difference of over 20 degrees (Tyson & Crimps, 2000). In the summer heat, above-ground water quickly disappears. This high rate of evaporation results in a scattering of saltpans.

## 2.6 ***Limits and possibilities due to climate***

The climate is probably the single most limiting factor for economic and/or subsistence activities in the region. The low rainfall was probably partially responsible for the dependency of people on game for a livelihood. Extensive husbandry of animals is carried out today in the region, but little or no planting of crops. Most farmers are dependent on those species of livestock which are adapted to arid conditions, such as the Persian and Dorper sheep. Additionally, most of the small stock-farmers keep goats. These animals are resilient and their feeding habits are well suited to the vegetative and climatic conditions of the region. Some of the commercial farmers keep cattle, especially the Afrikaner, a hardy species bred to withstand these dry conditions. It is reported that in the past, when the karakul market was good, many in the region farmed with karakul, but this market has since crashed (pers. comm. H. Page). A number of the commercial farms have game, though not all of these farm exclusively with game. Lastly, on the communal lands there are a number of feral donkeys. These have little economic value and are viewed as a threat to the communal grazing areas.

In the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, Farini reported that wheat was sown by the locals, and he even took some to the United States (Farini, 1973). Currently little planting is

done, and only during years with good rainfall. A dam was constructed at Rietfontein for the use of those farmers who were sowing crops, but this practice has dwindled (pers. comm. D. Snyders). Residents of the town nonetheless expressed interest in planting crops, especially lucerne, as fodder for livestock farming. Due to the erratic rainfall patterns and the fact that groundwater is reserved for human consumption, it is unlikely that crop production will ever be a sustainable part of a livelihood strategy in this region.

Nonetheless, several households at Rietfontein do have household gardens. The household plots are large enough to allow the families to plant vegetables and other crops and to sell small amounts of produce from their gardens, though this is not a common practice. A further benefit of such gardens is to provide a supplement to the fodder for livestock on the overgrazed commons. One or two households grow alfalfa or lucerne for this purpose, to trade for cash, or in return for cancellation of debts. Weeds are also used as feed for livestock such as donkeys or goats.

Given the restraints of the climate, human activity was somewhat limited in the past, which in turn had a positive outcome for wildlife. In 1908, the magistrate at Rietfontein, Mr Herbst, called for most of the region to be declared a game reserve. He argued that the lack of water resources was so acute that the region held little promise for agriculture and should be placed under conservation (CPP G-53). The Gordonia Game Reserve was proclaimed in 1908, but was short-lived. This was because a large part of the reserve was illegally occupied by white farmers. The reserve was de-proclaimed in 1929, and a new game reserve was established to the

north (Pringle, 1982). This subsequently became the Kalahari Gemsbok National Park (KGNP) and later still part of the Kgalagadi Transfrontier Park (KGTFP).

The environmental conditions made game farming one of the more viable options for large landowners in the region. At present, the local transitional council of Mier has game farming on roughly 37,000 hectares of communal (municipal) land. The Mier municipality generates large revenues from the sale of annual hunting quotas. Revenues earned from game hunting are used to subsidize the municipal services.



## 2.7 ***Vegetation of the southern Kalahari***

The following discussion will examine some of the species in the region, and their consumption and use by the people of the southern Kalahari. I will also offer insights into the perceptions of the participants in the research on the various veld reclamation programmes at present under way. The evidence will show that many of these plants and their uses, as well as perceptions about their value, are part of what constructs the image of an “authentic” San person.

The southern Kalahari has three distinct veld types. The dominant type is called the “western Kalahari Thornveld”, and the most characteristic of its species are *Acacia erioloba* (Kameeldooring) and *Acacia heamatoxylon* (vaalkameeldoring), together with various desert grasses (Acocks, 1988). On rocky soil, the “hardeveld”

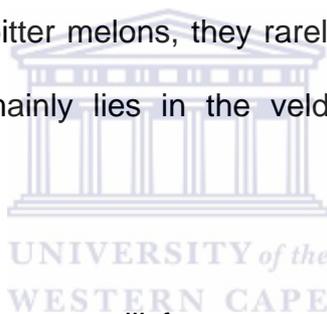
dominant species differ. Shrubs and Karoo bushes, interspersed with desert grasses, tend to dominate the landscape (Botha *et al*, 1995). Lastly, the sand dunes tend to be dominated by perennial grasses and shrubs.

When considering the importance of vegetation for human subsistence and economy in the Kalahari, three uses stand out: as a source of food, for grazing, and for firewood<sup>26</sup> For the first purpose, two species are of special significance, the *tsamma* (*Citrullus lanatus*) and the kameeldoring.

### 2.7.1 The *Tsamma*

The significance of this plant is unsurpassed in the Kalahari. The *tsamma*, a member of the pumpkin family, is a source of water and food for animals and humans alike. Various animals, like ground squirrels and brown hyenas, feed on the flesh and seeds of the plant. For humans to survive in a habitat which has no permanent above-ground water readily available, the *tsamma* offers an alternative source of water. The San, who inhabited the region long before any other people, have several *tsamma* recipes. It can be eaten raw, cooked with meat, or cooked as porridge. The seeds of the *tsamma*, rich in proteins and oil, are also roasted and eaten. The nutritional content of the *tsamma* pulp is low; Le Riche and v/d Walt (1999) reported that the pulp of 22 *tsammas* was the equivalent of one kilogram of red meat. Nonetheless, during droughts and times of serious scarcity, as for example after the water prospectors had hunted out large numbers of game, the seeds of the *tsamma* were the food on which people survived (Crawhall, 1998).

Later arrivals to the southern Kalahari, like Basters and Europeans, also found the *tsamma* indispensable to their survival in this region. Travelers used this bitter melon as a substitute source of water for their stock. Early accounts, such as those of Farini and Anderson, testify to the importance of this fruit when travelling through the dry Kalahari (Anderson, [1887] 1974; Farini, [1886] 1973). Farini reports that cattle ate the wild fruit, albeit after some coaxing (Farini, [1886] 1973). Early settlers likewise depended on the *tsamma* as source of water for livestock when they drove the animals to the markets at Vryburg or Kimberley (v/d Merwe, 1941). These journeys were often planned around the time when the *tsamma* was in season. The dependence on *tsamma* and its importance for daily survival have declined. Although people occasionally pick the bitter melons, they rarely use them on the same scale as before. The plant now mainly lies in the veld and along roadsides, to be consumed by animals at will.



The *tsamma* does, however, still form part of the local residents' narrative around "San-ness" or "Bushman-ness". For many of the local Kalahari residents, knowledge about the *tsamma* apparently symbolizes who they are and where they came from, and ties them to the terrain of the southern Kalahari. In the course of my research, I collected a wide variety of stories about *tsamma*. Many of these narratives included instructions on how to prepare the melon, as well as ways in which it can be used for food in times of crisis and extreme thirst, e.g. when lost in the veld without water. In reading the numerous narratives around the *tsamma*, it became evident that for the local residents (whether San or not) *kennis van die tsamma* (knowledge of the *tsamma*) somehow came to signify the Kalahari and their own sense of "San-ness". However, simply to say that this happens 'somehow' is not

enough; a brief elucidation of the mechanisms by which *tsamma* came to denote San-ness follows.

There are at least four different narratives relating to the *tsamma*. The first I will call “rescued by a bushmen”. In this, a San individual, because of some specialized knowledge or a memory associated with a particular place, leads his family or a group to safety or saves them from thirst by finding *tsamma* in the veld. The second category of story speaks of a “rescued white man”. This is not always told about *tsamma* only, but the general pattern is that a San person, either by accident or design, saves a white person from death by the elements (heat, thirst, scorpions, lions, snakes, poisonous plants, or even the person as a danger to themselves). A variation on this is when a white person is saved because they have some key knowledge that was originally transmitted to them by the San, especially knowledge of plants. The accounts of the *tsamma* often speak about “good years” or “bad years”, seasons when the *tsamma* were plentiful and those when they were relatively scarce. This characterization of the seasons also reflects years of lower or higher rainfall. Lastly, a number of stories about the consumption of *tsamma* or the recipes using them are told so as emphasize how every part of the fruit is utilized, from its skin and juice to its pulp, including the seeds. Each of these types of stories about the *tsamma* stresses a particular aspect of the “San culture” and its connection to the Kalahari.

The first group of stories would almost always be set in the past. The respondents would have as their main protagonists their grandparents, parents, great-uncles or any sundry deceased relative. One elderly informant, Ouma //unnas, also known as Katjie Rooi, repeatedly told the story of their removal from a place

called Witdraai and how her family had to travel on foot to a place that was safe, “*dieper in die Kalahari in*” (deeper in the Kalahari). She noted that the family had to abandon the things they had and only take what could be carried. Although her reasons for telling the story varied, she almost always made a point of emphasizing how her father’s knowledge of the veld and his memories of where the *tsamma* grew saved the family<sup>27</sup>. Other members of the #Khomani San group would tell stories with a similar structure. For example, an older individual (and thus more authentic) with knowledge of the veld and its contents, including *tsamma* and other resources for survival, would prevent the imminent demise of the family.

The second kind of story was those about white people, viewed as the quintessential outsiders to the Kalahari, who, through their disregard of the elements, being unprepared or lacking an understanding of the environment, found themselves in “trouble.” The most common threat here was that of thirst and heat. *Oom Dawid* told a story of a man who annually came to the Kalahari Gemsbok Park to search for the fabled “Lost city of the Kalahari”. In one particular year, the park staff saw him entering the Park, but no one saw him return. According to *Oom Dawid*, when something like this happened, the warden would normally call on one or two of the “Bushmen” living in the Park to help search for the missing person. The search party eventually discovered him in a remote, isolated section of the Park, half-conscious and delirious from thirst. A further category of white person is included in many stories of survival amid the dangers of the Kalahari. These “white” people are those who have either befriended or somehow gathered knowledge about the elements of the Kalahari and this, or at least their association with the San, helps them survive the extremes encountered in this region. Note for instance, in the story about the

rescue, that the warden has to call some of the Bushmen to assist in the operation. This may well just have been about the number of people needed to increase the success of the search. However, as told to me by *Oom Dawid*, it was because of their specialized knowledge that the San were called to assist in these searches. The *tsamma* would also feature in these stories, both as a side character and a conclusion, so to speak. I remember the ending of these stories would often be that, if this person had known about the *tsamma*, they would never have been overcome with thirst or by the elements.

Most of the reports about the *tsamma* were contextualized by the participants as taking place in a “*goeie jaar*” (a good year) or a “*slegte jaar*” (a bad year), reflecting years of higher or lower rainfall. This notion of a *slegte* or *goeie jaar* prefaces many other anecdotes as well, and not exclusively stories about *tsamma*. In a *goeie jaar*, the *tsamma* seems to be of little consequence for survival, and indeed can be so abundant that people speak of playing games with the melons. Most of the stories of rescue and of dangerous occurrences in the veld tend to take place in “*slegte jare*”. The *tsamma*, in its lack or abundance, becomes a way in which the San people of this region tend to read and measure the productivity of their environment in any one particular year.

The final group of stories is those told to focus our gaze on a particular aspect that many of the San feel is indexical of their culture. Many of the recipes and uses of these melons are meant to show that no part of the fruit goes to waste. The respondents gave a great variety of uses, largely culinary and medicinal.

I conclude that for many of the #Khomani San these stories illustrate “true bushmen-ness” (*dat die person ‘n regte Boesman was of is*) or ethnographic and cultural authenticity through a series of key markers, some of which will surface repeatedly in this thesis. In this regard, this bitter melon is a key feature of San or Kalahari stories indicating a claim to “authenticity”. The Kalahari Desert is known as an unforgiving environment and surviving, or at least knowing how to survive, in it requires knowledge of the properties of the *tsamma*. It would seem that one of the reasons I heard so many unsolicited *tsamma* stories was because they were important in establishing authenticity. Below follows a brief discussion of another plant species which is used in a similar way to assert authenticity.

### 2.7.2 The Kameeldoring

The tree most often used for firewood is the *Acacia erioloba* or camel thorn (see Fig 2). It is an extremely dense wood and provides long-burning coals<sup>28</sup>. The camel thorn is a protected species and no one is allowed to cut down green trees. In the veld, often in the dry riverbeds, the fallen-over remains of dead camel thorns are found, and these are chopped up for sale as *braai*<sup>29</sup>-wood and for household use. In some regions, these dead logs have been depleted and few or none remain. In this event, people have to search for alternate sources of wood.

Around towns like Rietfontein, there are almost no trees, and firewood has to be collected from far away. Where large trees are absent in these areas, the people have targeted different species, such as the *Driedoring* (*Rhigozum trichototum*) (pers. comm. Jv/d Westhuizen). This is often collected as green wood and left to dry. On the farmland given to the San as part of the restitution agreement, a number of

concerns are focused around the conservation of firewood species. Conservation of firewood has to some extent even become a marker of a *bona fide* Bushman or San identity. For example, the San who lived on these farms contrasted the relative abundance of firewood species and trees on their farms with the absence of this resource on the communal lands of the Mier municipality. The elected traditional leader of the ≠Khomani San and one of my participants, *Oom Dawid* Kruiper, often argued that, if they abused resources like firewood and allowed it to be depleted, this would be equal to a loss of their authenticity as San.

The argument made is that settlements like Mier have long been involved in a non-conservative use of the natural resources, or as *Oom Dawid* put it, "*Hulle het alreeds die natuur uitgeroei*" (they have already exterminated nature). This process of extermination over time was, for *Oom Dawid*, a sign of the gradual westernization which has as its hallmark a "degraded" environment. For him, the farms should be maintained at a particular level of "conservation", or least kept as free as possible of frivolous and rampant use of the resources. Maintenance of these particular states of naturalness or natural purity were seen as the "*kenmerk van 'n Boesman*" (mark of San-ness). For wood use to reflect true or actual Bushman use, habits or patterns, it needed to be limited to the gathering of "crumbs", never making use of green wood, nor should it ever be about the commercialized sale and harvest of wood.



**Figure 2: The kameeldoring (camel thorn) occurs throughout this region but favours the course of the dry riverbeds. Here you can see what is known as the "Kapteinboom" (the captain tree) in the course of the Kuruman River. It is said to be the tallest *Acacia erioloba* in the southern Kalahari (W. Ellis, 2000).**

One particular conservation practice proposed by *Oom Dawid* may be the answer to the crisis in the household demand for wood. The camel thorn sheds many of its old branches and these can be found under the trees. These small branches or "*krummels*" (Eng = crumbs) are sufficient to boil some coffee or cook a meal. "*Krummels*" burn more easily than the hard stumps that are chopped from the fallen logs. According to *Oom Dawid*, "*rêrige Boesmans*" (Eng = real bushmen) do not need to chop down trees, and for the "*tradiesie Boesman*", "*krummels*" are enough to meet all the basic needs. The implication here is that of a person living in harmony with nature, in a lifestyle, and by implication a culture, that lives and survives through using frugally that which is freely available in the environment.

On the farms owned by the #Khomani San, some of the people cut up the old dead wood in the river beds and in the veld. For some, the sale of this wood was the only source of income. The wood is packed and tied into bundles of about seven kilograms (many of the woodcutters actually weigh the bundles) or into bags containing five bundles. There is no fixed price for its sale. Since the individuals who cut up the wood are not working cooperatively but rather as individuals, they have little control over the pricing and sale of the wood.

Initially the Common Property Association (CPA) attempted to put a system in place to manage the supply of wood on the farms, a system that allowed its use, but with a conservation principle. A resource management decision was taken that teams or individuals cutting wood should only cut every third or second stump that they came across. Another aspect was a type of tax on the use of this communal resource, whereby individuals or teams were to give a certain percentage of the bundles they had made to the CPA. For instance, of every ten bundles of wood, two would go to the CPA. For a variety of reasons, none of the systems functioned successfully. Within a few weeks, the entire wood project was brought to a halt. The CPA issued an official notice asking for a cessation of all wood gathering, but no one paid attention and the harvesting of wood continued.

The people involved in wood chopping were not coordinated and did not cooperate with each other, resulting in a sharp decline in the price of the wood. The initial price for a seven-kilogram bundle was about R6.00, and the local farmers and store owners bought it at this price. On one particular day, a local woodcutting team sold a large number of bundles at the greatly reduced price of R2.50 per bundle.

Afterwards local residents refused to pay more than R2.50 for a bundle. Furthermore, local middlemen in Mier amassed large amounts of wood, which had been sold to them by San woodcutters. In this way, the middlemen could negotiate wood prices.

In an effort to facilitate development, I suggested to some of the members of the CPA that the wood be brought to a central point and then bought by the CPA itself. I also explained that if the wood were to be sold in the cities it would fetch much higher prices (about R12 for a seven-kilogram bundle), matching the prices that the middlemen were getting at that time.



**Figure 3: When the local shopkeeper stopped buying wood from the woodcutters some of them resorted to alternative means. Here one of the woodcutters is trying to sell his wood along the main road en route to Rietfontein. (W.Ellis 2000)**

Some members of the CPA demanded the cessation of woodcutting. Nobody responded and donkey carts full of wood were still conveyed to collection points

where middlemen had the option to purchase it. The local shop owner, who bought much of the wood, stopped doing so, since he had bought wood faster than he could sell it. To my knowledge, no woodcutting currently takes place on the farms in this area, so even this source of income has dried up. In a later chapter, I discuss in more detail the relevance of these woodcutting activities in terms of the local residences' assertion of being "real Bushmen".

### **2.7.3 Grasses vs. shrubs**

Another typical feature of the Kalahari is the wide-ranging stands of grass that cover the landscapes. Le riche and van der Walt (1999) called this the only "true grassland in southern Africa". A wide variety of annual and perennial species of grass grows here, of which the best known are the "boesmangras" *Stipagrostis species* and the "suurgras", *Schmidtia kalahariensis*. In order to highlight how these are part of a contestation about the 'authentic' ecology of the region, I will discuss some of the grass and shrub species of the region.

Perennial grasses are an important source of fodder in the dry season, when the scant supplies of annual grasses and other plants are absent. In the past, there were attempts to make bales of the "suurgras", for use in times of scarcity (McDonald, 1949), but this practice is no longer common. The spectacle of "suurgras" after good rains makes the Kalahari seem less of a desert, as it covers most of the soil.



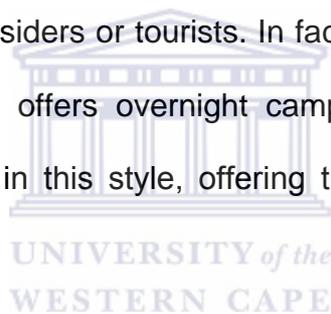
**Figure 4: In the dry season these seemingly lush green areas become no more than sandy stretches. The "green" look of the veld is deceptive because soon the sun and wind will have removed all traces of the lush annual bloom of grasses (W. Ellis, 2000).**

As in most of the arid regions of southern Africa, the contrast between the dry and rainy season is stark. In the dry season, one can only see scattered patches of grasses and shrub. After extremely good rains, as in the 2000 season, the Kalahari takes on a totally different face, with large rolling seas of grass (See Fig 4). Ironically, the lack of rain is not the chief cause of hunger among animals, because even with only a slight rainfall some grasses push through. In fact, Oom Adam, a farmer in the Mier region, says he does not fear drought, because there is always some food in the veld; what he dreads is fire, which consumes every last remnant of grass.

On a limited scale, grass is also used for thatching, though "modern", cheaper, more durable materials have reduced the need for thatch. The type of grass used for

thatching is known locally as *steekriet* (stab grass – *Stipagrostis amabilis*) and is relatively abundant, as it grows along the tops of the dunes. In response to their engagement with tourists, the San at Witdraai and Welkom have revived the craft of thatching huts. A number of the local San have taken to living in these thatched huts during the summer months (see Fig 5). However, the residents of Witdraai do not use thatch exclusively; they also have “shacks” built of corrugated iron sheets and other materials.

An image of authenticity is shown in the planning and layout of the settlement in the photograph below. All the grass huts are located in parts of the settlement that are visible to visitors. Houses built with other materials are positioned out of sight or in areas not frequented by outsiders or tourists. In fact, the nearby rest camp, which is managed by the San and offers overnight camping facilities for tourists, has exclusively been constructed in this style, offering the tourists an “authentic” San experience.



**Figure 5: At Witdraai, a sense of authenticity is provided by these grass huts. The grass also represents a cheap, readily available building material (W. Ellis, 2000).**

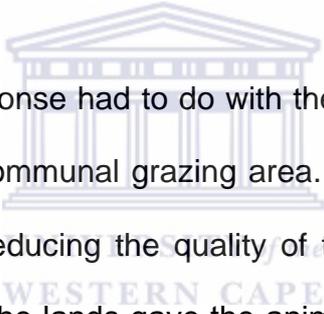
#### **2.7.4 Landcare, bush encroachment and authentic Kalahari veld**

The TLC (Transitional Local Council) in the Mier area of the Northern Cape has been successfully managing four game camps since the 80's. These camps have been instrumental in generating significant income for the TLC, with an average of R250,000 p/a (pers comm.). Money generated from trophy hunting is used to subsidize the services in the Mier area. Residents only pay about R60 per year for the services provided by the local council. The success of the game camps has led to the initiation of a Landcare project in the area. Landcare is a group project with the dual goal of conserving agricultural resources and creating jobs in rural areas. It is based on a model developed in Australia. Research work done in the game camps during the 1980s showed the veld to be in a degraded state. The local Landcare project aims to improve the state of the veld in the camps, but also to undertake similar activities on the surrounding commercial farms and the common land in Mier.

The major activities of the Landcare initiative include the control of invading species, in particular the mechanical and chemical control of the “*drie-doringbos*” (*Rhigozum trichototum*), and of *Prosopis spp.*, an invading species which originated in Namibia and has slowly encroached on the commonage areas and come close to the KGNP (Kalahari Gemsbok National Park). A particular reason for its eradication is that it uses a lot of the already pressured underground water. This part of the scheme is in partnership with the ‘Working for Water’ projects of DWAF. A second component of Landcare is the control of *drie-doring* and the use of the remaining dry plant matter to stabilize the dunes. The areas are to be reclaimed vegetatively by the

planting of indigenous grass seeds supplied by local nurseries. Through these activities the Landcare project is supplying the local residents with work and skills.

The discussion which follows is based on some of the responses I received from my informants in Rietfontein (this is the largest settlement in the Mier coloured reserve) in the Kalahari and they centre on the Landcare proposal to remove the driedoring and replace it with indigenous grasses. Most of the responses indicated a negative reception by residents, as well as uncertainty about the aims of such a project. I have grouped the responses into six overlapping categories; these broadly illustrate the perceptions about the Landcare project under way in the area.



The most common response had to do with the quality of the grazing, both in the game camps and in the communal grazing area. People perceived the removal of the driedoring as directly reducing the quality of the grazing. Another response argued that the driedoring on the lands gave the animals access to “*mixed grazing*”, leading to better animal health. An assumption that the shrub choked out the other grasses was challenged by the reminder that the bushes and the grasses grew together, echoing the reference to “*mixed grazing*”. Reference was also made to the fact that the plant is actually eaten both by the game and domestic stock, raising the question, “Why remove it?” One old lady told a story of the shrub dropping its leaves and the goats digging these out from under the sand in times of scarcity.

One of the motives for cutting out the shrubs is that it is assumed that they only provide food to the animals for two months per annum. This assumption is based on research conducted in the game camp in the 80’s. However, Oom Dries, a

local resident born in the area, challenged the assumption. He began by saying that gemsbok were actually browsers, that is, they fed on bushes. He also pointed out that the plants provided a dual source of nutrition, firstly the leaves and then the flowers and the fruit. For him, the fact that the bush grew throughout the year and that the gemsbok fed on it directly contradicted the “two month assumption”.

The second broad category used to challenge the project was the climatic regime found in the Kalahari. One informant asked the rhetorical question, “Do they want to turn the Kalahari into a grassland?” He then added, “This is not England, where it rains every day!” The second comment was about the times of drought and the use animals made of the plant in these emergency situations.

Some of the challenges were based on the adaptations of the animals and the plants of the area. Questions were raised about the nature of the grass seeds that the project aimed to plant on the dunes. They asked whether these seeds would adapt to the conditions in the Kalahari. They also mentioned the fact that the bushes and the grasses grow in a symbiotic relation to each other, with the grasses benefiting from the shade given by the bushes. Some of the other queries I have mentioned already, like the adaptation of the gemsbok as a browser, and the use of the bush during times of drought. A further point mentioned was that the plants seem to grow where grasses do not, providing feed where no grass is available.

The relationship of exotic and indigenous knowledge was also addressed by some of the respondents. One group questioned the faith in science of the “white man”, while some said that one should look to this exact same science to find the

answers. One individual bluntly stated that the “people are willing to do anything that they see the white man doing”. Another argued that, “We don’t see any of the commercial farmers doing it”, so it followed that the project had little value to the veld. If white commercial farmers were not doing it, was it of any special (scientific) value? Two sides of the same argument were used to challenge the eradication of the driedoring bush. The whole narrative around the driedoringbos is a challenge to the scientific discourse concerning veld degradation and alien species, and at the same time it demonstrates the extent of local knowledge of the environment

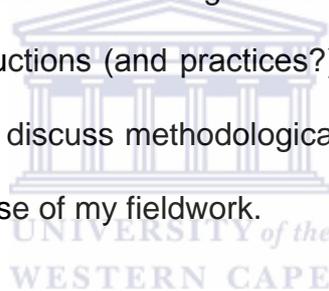
Some of the most emotional challenges to the project were related to the process involved in it. The two aspects are quite unrelated but help illustrate the extent of the resistance to the project. One response hinted at a type of hidden agenda within the project. Some said that it was only sustained because it gave work to those who were involved in the fencing of the monitoring camps. There were also accusations of some mismanagement of funds by those in charge. Two people plainly asked how you could give a man a million rand who had never before even had a hundred rands in the bank. (It is interesting that they both used the exact same example; maybe this had been raised in some public forum?)

The last challenge could be called “nostalgia for the environment”. Although used very often when referring to firewood and the commons, it was not often used in terms of the Landcare project. An older lady made reference to the time when she first moved here. At that time the veld around the settlement was literally covered with the driedoring. She said that the veld became a white sheet when the bush was

in bloom. Her idea was that, if the plant had been here for as long as they could remember, why had it suddenly become a problem?

## 2.8 ***Conclusion***

In looking at the ecological context in which this ethnographic research is situated, this chapter introduced the multiple ways in which environmental factors influence the everyday life and cultural activities of the local San people. In places I aimed to present some of the ways in which the environment profoundly shaped the local San residents' assertions of authenticity. To do so I introduced the local narratives I encountered around water availability, climatic phenomena, and the availability of vegetation. This set out to establish the strong links between the local residents, their environment, and their constructions (and practices?) of authentic "Bushman-ness". The chapter which follows will discuss methodological issues and audit the range of methods employed in the course of my fieldwork.



## Chapter 3

### **3 A discussion of methodological issues in the ethnography of the ≠Khomani San of the southern Kalahari**

#### **3.1 *Introduction***

This chapter reviews the range of methods I used during the course of my fieldwork. Each method and research tool is examined for its effectiveness in gathering data appropriate to the main thesis. Moreover, the benefits and limitations of the chosen techniques are discussed, in order to shed light on some of the benefits and challenges encountered during the research process.

#### **3.2 *Length of stays in the field***

I spent eleven months doing fieldwork in the southern Kalahari in the period between November 1999 and November 2001. However, my time in the field was not spent in one continuous stretch, but rather consisted of several trips taken at intervals. Most of the individual trips were between three and four weeks long and were usually spent at one locality. The settlements are quite far apart and I had no vehicle at my disposal. As a result, each fieldwork session took place in a single locality.

Most of the fieldwork was done during the summer months, which is also the rainy season in the region. I spent one winter season (the dry season, which is also the hunting season) in the region. 1999 and 2001 were both years with above average rainfall<sup>30</sup>. The impact of this on the research findings and the activities of the San community will be discussed later.

My first trip was undertaken in November 1999 and served mostly to familiarize me with the region. This reconnaissance excursion was spent at the major settlement of the Mier region, Rietfontein. This has the largest population of the towns of Mier (about 2000 people), serves as the administrative centre for the region, and houses the offices of the ≠Khomani San Association. Since it is a kind of “administrative” capital, it seemed the ideal place to start gathering baseline information about both Mier and the San.

The next five field trips, March 2000, June 2000, August 2000, November 2000, and March 2001, were spent at the farm Witdraai. By this time, many of the people who had returned to the land in this region were either living on or near to this farm. It was also the home of *Oom Dawid* Kruiper, the traditional leader, and his family. Dawid Kruiper was one of those who took the lead in driving the land claim, and the information he provided about the early phases of the land claim shed light on the origins of the dissatisfaction voiced by many of the claimants after the land had been returned to them.

Between April 2001 and July 2001, I spent two months at the settlement of Welkom, about 10 kilometers outside the Kalahari Gemsbok National Park. This was where some of the San had been relocated after they had been removed from the Park in the late 1970s. It was also where a number of participants, whom I was keen to interview, resided. They included key individuals, whom I had heard a lot about, while others were specifically selected because they either worked in the Park or because of their specific family background. For instance, some of the “leaders” of

the community, such as Petrus Vaalbooi and Dawid Kruiper, were names that featured prominently in many discussions I had had with academics prior to my entry into the field. As I spent more time in the field, my selection of respondents and research participants became increasingly purposive. That is, these individuals were sought out and interviewed because they could offer particular kinds of information (say, about hunting or medicinal plants) or information about particular past events (such as the removals from the Park).

During August 2001, I spent time in the various other settlements in the region, namely Witdraai, Noenieput, Philandersbron, Rietfontein and Groot Mier. My visits to certain of the smaller sites were kept short. Noenieput, for example, only had 10 families living there, and only a few of these belonged to the San CPA. The visits to these places were often confined to meetings and workshops, yet the opportunity to gather data about the towns and their residents was valuable. These visits also included brief discussions before, after and in between workshop conversations with participants. In September and November of 2001, two additional short three-day visits were made to these sites to participate in and conduct some workshops.

### **3.3 *Methods used in the collection of data***

#### **3.3.1 Community profiles**

In order to generate the baseline data needed to familiarize myself with the settlements in the region, I constructed several “community<sup>31</sup> profiles” of the six largest settlements in the Mier Municipal district. Christakopoulou, Dawson and Gari (2001) suggest that a comprehensive community profile should address particular aspects of people’s lives, including the area as a social, economic and political

community, as a spatial unit, as a space experienced by individual members (for instance as a safe, difficult or quiet place) and lastly as part of the broader location.

To draw up my community profiles, I spoke to a range of “key informants” in the community. “Key informant” refers here to residents of the Mier region who could provide “quick data”, and is not used in the classic ethnographic sense. In the first case, I am speaking about a technique that is meant to be part a “rapid assessment repertoire”, while a key informant in the classic ethnographic sense refers to a person with whom the ethnographer has an extensive, prolonged contact which is also intensive in terms of the amount of data obtained, its detail or “depth”. For the purpose of writing up the community profiles, my “key informants” were basically of the first type, that is, those required for rapid assessments. They included local government officials, political party representatives, social workers, priests, clinic staff, CBO representatives, shopkeepers, various individuals from specific interest groups, and any other visible individuals in the community. Enquiries were made about various social development issues, the availability and nature of municipal services, demographic growth and reduction patterns, the general social landscape and any other issues which emerged as important.

While the process of writing up “profiles” largely involved interviewing individuals, it also included some observations on the location, number and availability of local facilities, such as spaza<sup>32</sup> shops, *shebeens*, etc. I also consulted any existing documentation related to the region or to a particular settlement, when constructing these community profiles. The aim was for the final product to give me a general overview both of the “community” and of the ethnographic context.

These community profiles proved to be indispensable. During my time in the field, three of the possible seven settlements and their communities were completely profiled. They included profiles of Rietfontein, Welkom and Witdraai, which became the three places where most of the fieldwork was carried out. In addition to the contextualized overview provided by profiles, it was also necessary to situate the research within a particular historical context.

### **3.3.2 Historical data**

Marshall and Rossman (2006) hold that historical research is particularly useful in qualitative studies to establish a baseline or background prior to observing or interviewing participants. Indeed, they emphasize the oral testimony of eyewitnesses, documents, records and relics as being of primary importance to the process of historical research (Marshall & Rossman, 2006). Thus, in order to contextualize the loss of rights by the ≠Khomani San, I engaged with a range of historical data, which in turn led to the emergence of a variety of questions.

Two major sources of historical information were used to generate a data-rich pool relevant to the study. The primary source of this historical data, which in my view proved invaluable, were the people themselves, since they had information which was often absent from official documents. Secondly, the State archives, as well as texts dealing with the history of the region, offered a wide range of materials which informed my research in multiple ways. This process assisted in mapping the historical landscape in which many of the issues of identity and place experienced by the ≠Khomani were played out. Additionally, it shed light on the reported movements of the ≠Khomani and provided information about the areas they were said to have

originally occupied. In terms of contextualizing the research, the patterns of the land dispossession, the consequent dispersion of the San people across the Northern Cape, and the nature and extent of the rights in land lost by the ≠Khomani, could all be mapped through this historical research<sup>33</sup> .

Moreover, the historical research was essential when answering some very specific questions about the ≠Khomani, those relevant to the central arguments of this thesis. One question of great interest to me sought to gain deeper insight into some of the reasons why hunting and gathering had become less important as the basic means of subsistence for the ≠Khomani San. At what point did the ≠Khomani San become farm labourers, instead of self-sufficient hunters? By finding answers to questions such as these, I aimed to contribute to what I saw as the need for the ≠Khomani San to be viewed as part of a larger regional political economy and not as an isolated separate group with little or no linkages to the “outside”. The historical data was meant to reflect that the San had for the last two centuries (19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries) at least interacted and lived alongside several “other” groups as part of the political dynamic of the region.

### **3.3.3 Archival work**

Six weeks of archival work was completed during the course of this research. The bulk of this work was done at the State archives in Cape Town. I also perused the university archives at the University of the Witwatersrand. During my time in these archives, I looked specifically at the personal collections of A.J. Clement, Raymond Dart and Professor C.M. Doke. I chose to examine the Clement collection

in particular since Clement had been in the Mier area during the sixties. He photographed the people of the Mier region and did additional historical work there. The private papers of Raymond Dart and Professor Doke, who had both been members of the 1936 expedition to the southern Kalahari, offered some interesting correspondence which was not included in the academic texts produced at that time.

After six weeks in the archives, I decided to spend a further three weeks of archival work searching for documents on land tenure and land use in the southern Kalahari over the last 150 years. While the archival collections dealing with the southern Kalahari are extensive, my research resources were limited and I had to scale down my historical account of the land issues at stake.

#### **3.3.4 Transect walks**

As part of my orientation in the field, I went on transect walks with different members of the community. A number of scholars propose such walks as useful tools for mapping out the diversity and availability of resources in a particular locale (Chambers, 1998). I was aware that this tool only takes into account the currently “observable” situation and features; however, it did serve as an entry point for the implementation of more in-depth research methods (Chambers, 1998). As it was my intention to examine the ways in which local groups made use of the natural resources available to them, and as I had very little knowledge of such resources and their value to the locals, it seemed a good starting point. These walks also proved useful in that they afforded an opportunity to gain insight into the social group dynamics in terms, for example, of authority, decision-making power around access to and use of resources, etc.

The transect walks were also helpful in determining the state of much of the resources available. For example, they offered a space in which to pose questions around the condition of grazing, as well the local people's perceptions of the value of the resources.

I did several transect walks on the farm Witdraai. A large number of the San who lived on land given in restitution resided on this farm. Consequently most of the resource harvesting was being done at Witdraai. I took into account that, as an information-gathering exercise, the only prior information required for a transect walk was advice from key informants on identifying the transect line routes and to purposely select local analysts (Barton, 1997). Thus the first of these walks was done in the company of an elderly male resident of the farm. On the advice of my companion, we did not follow a straight line across the farm, but rather followed the established paths which wove through the farm. At the outset of our walk, I posed one or two short questions about the immediate environment and its plant life. My companion responded by showing me the various types of plants he knew, the bird life he was familiar with, and a few signs of animal life that he was able to point out. During this time, I continued to prompt him by showing interest with nods and more questions. This led him to give more depth and breadth to his discussion of the local plant life and its uses, the areas good for grazing, and various landmarks that were useful to note in terms of natural resource management. One of the first things he pointed out to me was reputedly the oldest and tallest camel thorn (*Acacia erioloba*) tree in the southern Kalahari. The significance of this particular tree was discussed earlier in chapter two of this thesis. On this particular walk through the farm, he pointed out where the other residents of the farms were living, adding details about

the availability of services on each of the sites. He also supplied details about the farm residents' access to water and added brief comments on the local politics around access to water.

With my second transect walk, I joined a group of foreign tourists and their San guides, during which I observed the interaction between the tourists and the local guides. I was asked to act as an interpreter for the San guides, who spoke very little English. This particular walk gave me a chance to learn what the tourists were interested in seeing concerning the "Bushman" way of life and what their expectations were. It also allowed me to observe what the San guides viewed as being essential to present to the tourists, in terms of the local "San experience". Interestingly, the guides often neglected to show the tourists things which I thought would have been of interest to them. This moment of disjuncture between the tourists' notion of "San-ness" and the guides' own notion of "San-ness" shed light on the particularly complex and nuanced nature of the business of creating the "authentic".

On this particular day, for example, the San guide, Abraham, whom I knew well, showed up clad only in a loin cloth, attire I had up to this moment never seen him wearing. During the tour through the San farm, he focused on pointing out "natural" things, such as medicinal plants, animal track and signs, nests, food and fuel plants, and soils and rock types apt for residence. Human signs in the veld, such as graves, places once used for housing, residences of westernized San people, the police station, and litter (wine bottles, tobacco packets, cool drink tins, etc.) were ignored. In my view, these two categories of "artefact" told very different stories. The first

placed the San firmly in among nature. Even Abraham, who guided us undressed for the encounter, not only fit into “nature” but also spoke directly to what McCannell (1973) and Cohen (1988) refer to as the touristic demand for authenticity. The second version told the social story of the people who lived in the region. This was more important to me as a social scientist, interrogating these groups as social and cultural beings, rather than as groups confined in nature. However, I did recognize that a focus on the social actually missed out the story the San liked to tell about themselves, that of a people who were comfortable in nature.

A third activity involved a slow drive through two of the farms, Witdraai and Erin, with the local traditional leader, Dawid Kruiper, and four other residents of the farms. Like the transect walks, it gave me the chance to observe the interaction between the participants and their environment (Slocum *et al*, 1997). The aim of the trip was twofold, firstly to give Kruiper and his son, “Pien” (John), a chance to assess the general state of the farm. Secondly, it was an opportunity for a white farmer, who was interested in renting the land, to observe its condition, as well as its infrastructure and resources. This particular transect was meant to judge the general conditions, how well resources were being used, and their state of apparent abuse. This abuse was a common theme in the attempts to unseat CPA members, as well as in the struggle to divide resources. The San guides leading the transect would document what they viewed as aspects of neglect, such as fences that were in disrepair, wind pumps that did not work properly, dams that were not being maintained, and signs showing that stock thieves were active on the farm. Their account of these various signs of neglect, abuse and mismanagement would later be used by the San in their attacks on CPA executive committee members.

Since one of the farms was close to the town of Askham, Kruiper invited one of the locals along. There had been reports about Askham residents poaching animals, chopping wood and grazing their animals on the ≠Khomani San land. The man who joined us was knowledgeable about such practices. This trip allowed me to document the nature and extent of the use of resources by neighbouring communities, giving me valuable insights as well into their use by farm residents.

### **3.3.5 Workshops**

During the course of my fieldwork, I had the opportunity to be part of several participatory rural development programmes. These were largely conducted as workshops, with the community or with the Common Property Association executive and its subcommittees. The first of these workshops included planning sessions for the Park<sup>34</sup> consultation. It was conducted by FARMAfrica. It was in one of the sessions that it was decided that FARMAfrica would go to both the Mier and San communities to gain an understanding of the various proposals the affected communities had for activities in the Park. I learned about the various aspects of the original land claim settlement and also about the extent of the land available to the San groups living in the Park. The forum underlined the fact that many of the expectations of the CPA members were misplaced, in that they harboured expectations around their right to hunt and live in the Park. While this, and subsequent workshops, was useful for gathering information, it also provided a space where I could to cross-check information collected during the course of my work.

Another series of workshops I attended were the “Park consultation workshops”, which took place on 12 March 2001. I hoped to gain a general sense of the community proposals for the land inside the Park. Though my primary aim was to observe the proceedings, I used the opportunity to gather information from local Mier residents. Moreover, these workshops shed light on a number of the tensions that existed between the ≠Khomani San and the Mier communities.

Surprisingly, these tensions were often rooted in the local Mier residents’ perceptions of “San identity”. For example, many members of the Mier community argued that the ≠Khomani San were “the same” as them and were in fact “part of them”. Those who held such opinions suggested that if you truly wanted to understand the San you had to “read” them as part of the Mier community. Some even suggested that they had in the recent past worked hand-in-hand with some of the San (especially Petrus Vaalbooi) in political and legal struggles over land in the Mier region. Further, they argued that it was a misrepresentation, not necessarily of identity but of the embedded rights and overlapping land as resource interest in Mier (see the earlier Section 1.5., in which I argue that this point is also about the unraveling of apartheid mythologies, especially those linking land and race).

What is the point at issue here? Firstly, this interpretation of the San story suggests that if researchers, myself among them, were to “tell the true and real story of the San”, it would not exclude the other residents and people who live in Mier. The “authenticity” of the San, and by inference their land claim victory, is thus only to be found in a “narrative emplotment” (Baugh, 1988) which includes all the people, whether coloureds, Bastards or whites, in the region. These comments suggest that

the “real” place of the people known as the San is among the other people of Mier. So in order to say who the San people really are, we also have to tell the Mier Story. Only then will we find the true San story.

Secondly, this interpretation by many of the non-San residents of Mier had several methodological components. It was a call for a holistic, inclusive and regional perspective on the story of land in the region. Here the research participant was correctly asserting that as ethnographers it is often necessary that we broaden our scope. This point is particularly salient, given the debates among San scholars (see Wilmsen and Lee’s exchanges in anthropology journals during the 1990s) which called for a political economy of the San as a remedial to the insular ethnographies that had been the mainstay of scholarship on the San since the 1950s.

Reflecting back on this statement, I can see how this has pushed my fieldwork into particular directions. The focus on historical data about the Mier region and the land issues of Mier, not just the land questions of San people, is one such avenue, predicated on the ideas of “they are part of us”. Further, I was always more interested in the stories of the non-white people of this region as a rural underclass, and I wanted to see the San as just that: rural poor rather than a cultural relic.

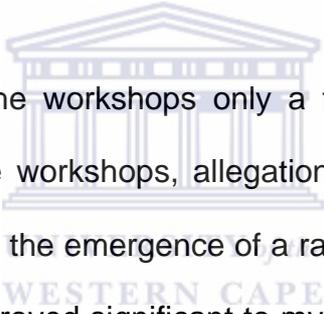
Additionally, participants in research expect such research to add, create or even highlight the potential value of their context, a value from which they could potentially benefit. Thus groups often invite researchers as “experts” or “storytellers” to come and study their communities or activities, hoping that the engagement will bring them some benefits. A number of key residents, such as priests, school

principals, municipal managers, invited me, or suggested that I should come and “look” at, their settlements, projects and people, and that “we” researchers should not simply confine ourselves to the San farms and people. I often felt that the lack of research in the Mier area and the glut of work in the “San areas” was read as a perception that the Mier region was of lesser value.

Later, FARMAfrica invited me to take part in one of their planning workshops for the Landcare project. This meeting offered many insights into the structure and workings of the Landcare projects. I had picked up a rather negative understanding of the Landcare projects from community members, but my participation in the planning workshops gave me a more balanced view. In March 2001, I was also invited by FARMAfrica to join in the CPA constitutional amendments process. This stretched over several months and was concluded at the end of February 2002. The first step involved consultation with the representatives of the Legal Resources Centre, who acted as legal advisors. Other interest groups included the CPA executive, various community members, as well as myself. FARMAfrica representatives felt that, since I had at that stage already spent extensive time in the field, I would have insight into and be able to articulate the problems and issues inherent in the amendment process. The goal of the workshop was to receive community input about the constitution and then to attempt to record and write in the appropriate changes. A short report of the meeting, aided by suggestions from the field, was produced. This, with the notes contributed by the Legal Resource Centre, aided the process of amending the CPA constitution (see Appendix 2). More importantly, the workshop opened up the debate regarding perceptions about the benefits people would gain from their occupancy of the land, versus the “real”

benefits they could expect. For the first time, a discourse on the rights of the community members was opened.

The next phase of the constitutional amendments process was “workshopping” the draft amendments with the CPA executive and all other members of the Khomani San CPA. An attempt was made by the convener to have the same group of CPA members who had been present at the legal consultation, attend this meeting. In these workshops, we (NGO workers and I) spent time covering all the planned changes and additions to the CPA constitution, as proposed by the legal advisors.



During the course of the workshops only a few points of contention were raised. However, following the workshops, allegations about what had supposedly been said in the meeting led to the emergence of a range of tensions around identity and group membership. This proved significant to my own work and led me not only to keep track of what the community members said during meetings but also of what was said in the few days following a workshop.

After the workshops, despite their being intended to clarify the amendments to the CPA constitutions, it became clear that a number of misconceptions persisted about what the amendments implied for the groups living at Witdraai. The convener and I were subsequently accused by residents of both Witdraai and Welkom of implying in these amendments that there were “no more Bushmen in the Kalahari”. Another point of contention was the position and role of the traditional leader, Dawid Kruiper, in the CPA and other decision-making processes. Thus it became apparent

that the issues which arose *after* the workshops were of concern to the community members. These tensions within the ≠Khomani San eventually surfaced during a different and seemingly unrelated series of workshops. The issues were captured under a number of headings.

The first matter was the alleged disregard for the position of the traditional leader by researchers and CPA members alike, and the apparent lack of executive authority vested in the person of the traditional leader through the CPA constitution. A further concern was about who should have the right to decide about land use and resource harvest. Some members believed that the traditional leader should have a commanding say in these matters. Next, the actual membership of the CPA was disputed. Very vocal claims were made that some ≠Khomani San CPA members were not real bushmen and should therefore not have any rights to farmland or natural resources. Witdraai residents were particularly vocal in making claims about membership, access to natural resources, decision making, rights, and how these rights should be linked to being a “*regte Boesman*” (real bushman).

Issues such as being a *regte Boesman* were linked to residential history in the Park. Those who had never lived in the Park were seen as having a lesser claim to any share of benefits which might accrue from management of resources inside the Park. Being born and raised in the Park, as well as experiencing the world of the Park, were seen as essential to an authentic San life.

Another rural development programme in which I took part involved a series of Park negotiation meetings. These eventually resulted in the final draft of a contract

between SANParks, the community of Mier and the ≠Khomani San. Some of the sessions were bilateral negotiations between the ≠Khomani San and the Mier community. The rest (with the exception of one which was a bilateral meeting between SANParks and Mier) were trilateral, involving SANParks and the two communities. I was asked to sit in on these processes as an academic observer, but unfortunately was not able to follow the negotiations to their conclusion.

The process did however provide more clarity about the origin of the tensions between the Mier and San communities. It is important to note that, to the best of my knowledge, the strained relations between the ≠Khomani San and the Mier residents at the time did not stall the negotiation process. Instead, internal tensions within the CPA resulted in an almost complete breakdown in the process. The same issues (see above) that were talked about among the ≠Khomani San after the “proposed amendments workshops”, now threatened to derail the Parks process. The traditional leader, Dawid Kruijer, threatened to walk out of the negotiations and, in his own words, “give the land back to the government”. This threat and his stalling of the Parks process led to a final series of workshops being convened; these became known as the “constitutional crisis meetings”.

The constitutional crisis meetings tackled three issues of utmost importance to the CPA. I assisted in these meetings since I had been part of the original group that had workshopped a number of the key concerns earlier in the year. The first of these concerns was the issue of how membership was to be determined and endorsed. This debate included questions about the types of membership, and the rights and responsibilities which applied to these categories of memberships. The second set of

concerns centred on the position of the traditional leader, Dawid Kruiper. Discussions included debates on the decision-making power such a person should or should not have. It became clear that the democratic nature of the CPA had created a serious point of contention, in that many people felt that their current traditional leader was being marginalized. Lastly, the meetings were plagued by several low-level tensions around issues of land use. Though attempts were made during the meetings to try and resolve some of these land-use problems, the process culminated months later when the CPA members voted on the proposed changes to the constitution.

Lastly, at the invitation of FARMAfrica, I was also involved in a wealth-ranking exercise. This offered some interesting insights into the perceptions held by the group about the relative levels of wealth of CPA members. Very useful to my research was a comparative look at the different views of those who lived on the land and those who lived in the other settlements and towns. This workshop exercise grouped the CPA members into households and ranked them into relative wealth categories, according to factors decided on by the participants themselves. Some of the data generated during this exercise will be discussed in the course of the thesis.

In addition to the workshops mentioned above, I was approached by a group of Upington schoolteachers, to speak to their 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> graders about the San. These classes/workshops allowed me to explore the perceptions of the San held by a group outside my immediate research area. The sessions primarily examined the learners' perceptions of the San, or "San-ness", by posing broad questions about the

physical appearance of the San, their everyday activities, their cultural attributes, their language and their livelihoods.

### **3.3.6 Network mapping**

Singer and Erickson (2011) state that network mapping allows applied anthropologists to describe the participants in a study, their behaviours, kinship and friendship ties, and the consequences of small “bonded groups” in the community. The authors indicate that this process can be accomplished through extensive qualitative interviewing at community level (Singer & Erickson, 2011). In the course of my research, I mapped out sets of associations for selected individuals (index case) in the community. Each network map included the individual’s primary, secondary and tertiary associations, ranging from the family to the church, friendship ties, or even political affiliations the person might have. This data was important because it enriched my insight into ways in which each individual’s network affiliations impacted on their livelihoods. For example, such affiliations were vital to the livelihoods of people living in rural areas and included those, both within and outside their households, with whom they shared resources.

The data needed for the construction of these network maps came from three basic sources. One-on-one interviews were the primary source, and were conducted with selected participants. I then drew on observations made during the course of my fieldwork to supplement the data collected in the interviews. Lastly, I used informal discussions to gather information relating to associations and sharing networks.

This was important since a number of earlier studies of the San people placed great emphasis on the sharing networks developed by them (see Lee, 1976;

Marshall, 1976; Kent, 1989; Biesele, 1993). The reciprocity in these groups was often viewed as a key component of their livelihoods, and absolutely necessary for their survival. Although it was not expected that an exact same system of reciprocity would be found in the ≠Khomani San group, the mapping of such networks was nonetheless important in understanding the people's survival strategies. My assumption was not that these networks existed as some "relic from San culture", but rather that they were essential to the livelihoods of rural people.

I completed network maps for eight local Witdraai residents. They included almost every single person at Witdraai, showing especially the ways in which they were linked to the index case. The maps also revealed the complex sharing of resources within the group at Witdraai. It became possible to read power relations from the network maps; indeed, index cases were often selected because they seemed influential and powerful in the groups.

### **3.3.7 Surveys**

Existing survey data was used to gain relevant information about the group in Mier, and no independent survey was conducted. A survey is defined as a non-experimental, descriptive research method which can be useful when a researcher wishes to collect data on phenomena which cannot be directly observed (Fowler, 2009). None of the existing surveys (they will be listed later) had treated the San as a group separate from the rest of the Mier residents. Though this was problematic, it was not insurmountable, as those San who were residents at Mier lived almost exclusively in Welkom. Though I took the survey data generated at Welkom as a reflection of the conditions under which the San lived, I did not do so uncritically. For example, I remained aware that this survey had encountered a number of problems.

These included the fact that the group which made up the members of the ≠Khomani CPA lived in a wide-ranging area, making it almost impossible to get to all of them. Some lived as far away as Upington, Postmasburg and Olifantshoek, several hundred kilometers from the Mier region.

Four different surveys had been done in the region since 1993, and my research was largely dependent on these data-sets for the major quantitative data about the region. Pretoria Technicon (PT) conducted the first of these, a household survey which collected helpful data about rural livelihoods. The Orange Free State survey, which was rather extensive, included a depth of information lacking in the Pretoria Technicon survey. However, both these surveys were problematic in terms of my research, as neither dealt exclusively with the ≠Khomani San. Both surveys dealt with the residents of Mier, without taking into account divisions among local communities at different sites (farms).

Two surveys did however prove useful, as they dealt specifically with the San. The first, carried out by consultants for STABILIS, was completed in 2001 in conjunction with a development plan, while the second, by the NGO FARMAfrica, was done in early 2002. Both of these were useful to my research, since they targeted the group under discussion and were conducted much later than the earlier two surveys.

### **3.3.8 Interviews**

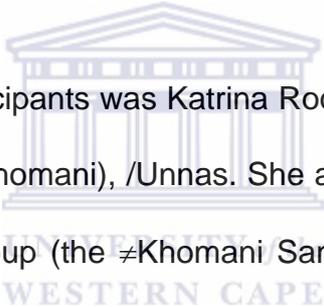
The primary tool<sup>35</sup> of the research project was the informal one-on-one in-depth interview. Wood and Kroger (2000) define a qualitative interview as an attempt to understand the world from the participant's point of view, to unfold the meanings

of people's experiences and to uncover their lived world prior to undertaking scientific explorations. The same authors (Wood & Kroger, 2000) also state that a one-on-one interview is flexible, open-ended in character and offers possibilities for qualitative depth. Virtually all the other research tools I employed made use of the one-on-one interview as the primary information-gathering tool. For example, the community profiles and network maps were both constructed using informal, semi-structured individual interviews.

Further interviews were conducted with heads of households. These offered qualitative in-depth views around topics such as their livelihoods, their movements from place to place, work history, etc. In many instances, I found myself revisiting people who were familiar with the history of the region. I specifically selected certain individuals, such as Oom Abraham, the son of the man who was considered the traditional leader of the ≠Khomani during the 1930s, as invaluable participants in my research.

I interviewed eighty-eight different participants<sup>36</sup>, three of them in Cape Town, before entering the region. In many instances, I returned to specific participants in order to clarify or expand information previously collected. Participants frequently visited me early in the morning for coffee or cigarettes and sometimes stayed half a day to discuss a wide variety of topics. Coffee and cigarettes became a mechanism of exchange: the participants talked and I supplied tobacco and caffeine. This exchange evolved into a regular morning ritual with two of my main informants, Jan v/d Westhuisen and Werner Engelbrecht.

Often I would revisit participants in order to check their responses to specific events, like workshops and important meetings. Occasions like these tended to generate high levels of active gossiping and discussion about a range of issues, and were therefore useful moments for gathering data. One such time was the period following the proposed amendments to the CPA constitution. The initial workshops gave rise to a great deal of discussion among the locals about the nature of the members' rights. This also created tensions and resulted in a crisis meeting. The dynamics during this period shed light on the views of members of the CPA about the role of the CPA. It also highlighted their perceptions about ownership, land use and the "culture of the San".



Another of my key participants was Katrina Rooi, or, as she was better known in N/u (the language of the ≠Khomani), /Unnas. She acted as spokesperson both for her household and for the group (the ≠Khomani San). During our encounters, she frequently referred back to the speech she made in N/u during the handing-over ceremony. /Unnas was the youngest of the three sisters who still spoke the N/u language, and she usually took the lead in interacting with any "outsiders". This was a role that not even her husband would take away from her. He often remained silent while she spoke. /Unnas had a firm understanding of the history of the region and had worked on several of the local farms, as well as in the Park. She had clear recollections and remembered stories about other key moments in the story of the ≠Khomani San. She was often critical about various issues around the management of the CPA resources.

Ouma /Unnas was the head of the household, which included her son, her husband, several of her grandchildren (six of them in all), three great-grandchildren, her sister and two generations of her sister's family. The entire household was financially dependent on the pensions received by five household members. Ouma /Unnas was the "matriarch" and nothing happened unless she agreed. Other key participants included Dawid Kruiper, Abraham Meintjies, one of Dawid Kruiper's companions, Vetpiet Kruiper, a well-known San tracker and Parks employee, Petrus Vaalbooi, a leader of the CPA and lobbyist for San rights, and Ouma Keis Brou, one of the surviving members of the group of San who had travelled around South Africa with Bain in 1936.

#### 3.4 ***Participant observation***

Essential to anthropological research is the method of participant observation. Kawulich (2005) describes such observation as useful to researchers in a variety of ways, in that it gives the research an immediacy and "thereness", i.e. a better understanding and insight into local realities. Furthermore, it offers researchers ways to check for nonverbal expression of feelings, to determine who interacts with whom, grasp how participants communicate with each other, and check how much time is spent on various activities. During the course of my study, I used this method extensively. Observations took place at a variety of locales, as well as in both formal and informal settings. The method allowed me to check information which had been collected and also to gather specific information about aspects of the group and any processes under way. There were three basic sites where most of the observation time was spent, the Sisen craft workshop, the roadside curio stalls, and a place known as the "*Skilpad*" on the farm Witdraai. All of these were "high traffic" areas where many of the residents of the San farms gathered almost daily. They were also

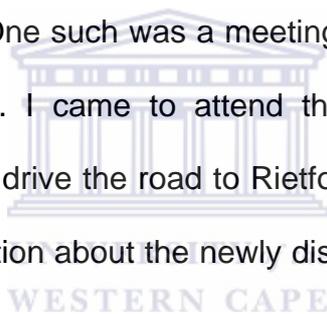
spaces where the local San people interacted with the “outside world”, as well as with other members of their group. Two of the sites were linked to important livelihood activities, including the production of curios that were to be sold to tourists, and the display of “bushman-ness” for tourists.

In the craft workshop, I became involved in performing various tasks for the participants. Because of her poor eyesight, Ouma Keis often had other people, including myself, perform her tasks for her. She would often joke and tell me to do “real work” by helping her to make some of the ostrich shell beads. The craft workshop supplied rich data about what constituted “authentic” San crafts. There was constant debate about the curios and whether these were “genuinely San” or not. Many insisted that “genuinely San” crafts had to be made with natural materials. This is discussed in more detail in later chapters.

For the people of Witdraai, the “*Skilpad*” served as a halfway point between the shop and the crafts project. It was a large reed structure just inside the gate of the farm, with a smaller grass hut close by. The structure was also close to one of the roadside stalls frequently used by the residents of Witdraai. Many of the local San who sold curios gathered here daily, attempting to sell their goods. Many of the people from Witdraai, as well as from the surrounding areas, also collected here informally on a daily basis. On rare occasions, outsiders were allowed onto the farm to spend some time with the local residents. The “*skilpad*” was located on the road to the Kgaligadi Transfronteir Park (KTFP), and many tourists *en route* to the Park passed the stalls where the San people attempted to sell their wares. The San who stood here often wore “traditional” clothes to attract the attention of tourists.

I also regularly spent time in unstructured participant observation. I would join informal gatherings of the residents of Witdraai, usually when one or other important issue was being discussed. For instance, one morning I came upon a meeting that was convened by the “traditional” people on a dune close to their homes. The local shop was another point where informal gatherings and discussions would take place.

As my research progressed, I spent time observing in formal settings as well. This included the Park negotiations, the other Park consultations, as well as the other forums discussed earlier. Attendance at some of the meetings was opportunistic or unexpected. One such was a meeting between the Mier council and their legal advisor from LRC. I came to attend this meeting because the legal representative did not want to drive the road to Rietfontein alone. It turned out to be a useful forum, where information about the newly distributed land in the Mier region was accessed.



## Chapter 4

### 4 Reflexive methodology

#### 4.1 *Introduction*

Underlying qualitative methodologies, especially those of ethnographic work, is the acknowledgement and interrogation of the role and subjectivity of the researcher in the research process (Bannister, Burman, Parker, Taylor & Tindall, 1994). Reflexivity has been characterized as the most distinctive aspect of qualitative research (Tindall, 1994). Bannister *et al* (1994) argue that reflexivity is used as a critique of objectivity, and that the conscious use of a critical subjectivity is a reflexive way of clarifying the conditions under which research is carried out and knowledge is produced. Thus the issue of reflexivity led me as a researcher to explore my own personal and social investment in this study, and to face the reality of my own biases when it came to questions of authenticity. The present chapter discusses a range of issues related to my research and gives an assessment of the research encounter, looking at the overall research engagement, rather than at specific methods or research tools.

#### 4.2 *Reflexive methodology and problems experienced during fieldwork: Can groups benefit from our research?*

Does our work benefit the people whom we (anthropologists and other social scientists) study? Should we entertain vague hopes that some present or future policy-maker or influential person will discover, understand and apply our ideas? The utility of our work has been questioned, and in response we have engaged with

various strategies to interrogate our own practices (Karim, 1996). In this regard, Karim (1996) argued that anthropologists have at best been successful at generating new theories about the usefulness of social knowledge. While there are debates around the role of social scientists, and especially development scientists, in the communities they work with (see Escobar, 1997), I will focus here on the interaction between the “other” and the researcher, exploring the multiple ways in which this interaction can be either a liability or a benefit to the parties involved.

The research encounter is a transactional interaction in which negotiation takes place by both parties. In this study, the encounter yielded benefits for both parties, and in many ways the one-on-one interaction with my participants yielded more tangible benefits than, for example, did the activist and advocacy programs which promised to have an impact on policy for the local San. This exchange was largely an encounter between myself as a researcher and a group, with the focus in many instances on interaction with individuals. However, these individuals also formed part of a wider social circle represented by the group. One could argue that it would be a superficial reading of the negotiations to say that on the one hand the anthropologist (myself as researcher) wished to access as much relevant information as possible, while on the other hand the participants were out to maximize their own returns. A deeper reading of these negotiations would certainly yield rich discussions around the negotiation of power during the research encounter.

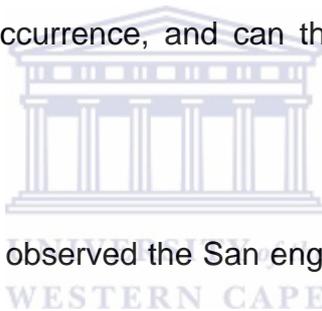
This encounter certainly created a platform on which an often careful negotiation between parties occurred. Though these negotiations in my experience involved transactional costs, ranging from tobacco to money, I was aware that a

subtle negotiation of power was always taking place. Sullivan (2001) claims that power manifests itself in a relational manner, that one cannot meaningfully say that a particular social actor 'has power', without also specifying the other parties in the social relationship. He adds that power almost always operates reciprocally, but usually not equally from both sides. To control others, one must have control over the things that they desire or need, but one can rarely exercise such control without encountering a measure of reverse control - larger, smaller or equal (Sullivan, 2001). Because power operates both relationally and reciprocally, sociologists speak of the balance of power between the parties in a relationship; all parties in all relationships to some degree have power (Turner, 1996). In my view, however, there are always mediating circumstances which shape the nature of the negotiations during the research encounter. In this region of the Kalahari, for example, the primary mediating circumstance for many of the research participants was poverty.

#### 4.3 ***The commoditization of the research encounter***

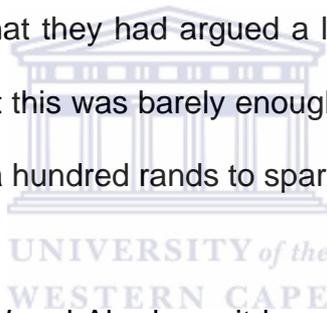
The arguments put forward in this chapter are based on my fieldwork among a portion of the ≠Khomani San community of the southern Kalahari. Researchers who enter this region face a phenomenon which may appear curious to them: the people here want to be paid for being interviewed and photographed. The sums of money asked per interview vary from person to person, but more often than not the price can be negotiated down. Some argue that study participants have a right to expect remuneration for interviews and research-related activities, especially since they might have used the time productively for other activities (pers. comm. R. Chambers). One could contend that the participants' time and words, in both the recorded and written form, constitute a "product" to be paid for. In my own case, several factors prevented me from paying for interviews in cash.

My negotiations in the field were primarily shaped by the limits of my financial resources. The research subjects sometimes wanted as much as R200 per hour for an interview, which would have made my study very expensive. Other researchers I encountered complained that some long-gone researcher had paid people for information, setting a precedent and complicating further attempts to work in these regions (pers. comm. Prof. Premesh Lalu). Additionally, I did not want to promote the idea that money was to be made from the research encounter. It is after all a kind of exchange, and while research interest in the ≠Khomani San may now be at a peak, it may not always be so. In other words, the exchange of cash for information is at best ephemeral and/or a one-off occurrence, and can therefore not be promoted as a sustainable strategy.



On several occasions, I observed the San engaging with information seekers. Here I include a number of different people not normally associated with the practice of information gathering. Among these were tourists, newspaper journalists, film journalists, NGO workers, as well as *bona fide* researchers. These interactions usually involved negotiating payment for being photographed or interviewed. More often than not, the tourists or researchers would not produce the desired payment, leaving the San participant no choice but to reduce the desired price. On many occasions, I witnessed negotiations before interviews in which researchers refused to pay the price that was being asked, instead bringing the price down from a few hundred rands to only twenty rands. On other occasions, participants had to settle for whatever coins the tourists or researcher could find in their pockets.

A further interesting vignette, one which shows how profoundly poverty affects the attempts made by the San to commoditize research encounters, was when *Oom Dawid* and Abraham, two local San elders, were invited to Augrabies to talk to a group of international tourists and to demonstrate some “veldcraft”. Both *Oom Dawid* and Abraham were sure they would not only be paid, but paid well. A few days later, after they had returned to the Kalahari, I encountered them outside the local spaza and asked about their trip to Augrabies. It was clear they were extremely dissatisfied by the manner in which they had been treated. At the close of the sessions, when the matter of payments arose, the person who had made the arrangements told the tourists that the “Bushmen” would be satisfied with a few rands and a packet of cigarettes. *Oom Dawid* said that they had argued a little and managed to get R400 from the tour operator, but that this was barely enough to pay for their transport back to the Kalahari, with just over a hundred rands to spare.



Listening to *Oom Dawid* and Abraham, it became clear that their displeasure was not just centred on the amount of money they had received, but also on the fact that the person who made the arrangements assumed that “the Bushmen would be satisfied with a few rands and a packet of cigarettes”. *Oom Dawid* also lamented the fact that, though he was a “*Groot man*” (grown man), everyone felt it was acceptable to treat him in this way, and none of the tourists felt it was unfair. Here one sees clear evidence of the ways in which perceptions of San-ness have shaped the actions of visitors to the region, in this instance tourists, tour operators and film makers. It is assumed that San people have a particular way of being in the world, in this instance that they can survive or live in a world without money or at least with very little money. While the San may see their ‘ability’ to live in a world where they

need very little and could ideally live in the veld, outsiders see this same ability to get along with very little rather differently. If San people are “beings of nature” who can live without money and western goods, then why provide these things to them? The attempts by some of the San to sell their San-ness are thus a self-defeating strategy. The image of a people whose needs are limited to and by “nature” is seen as a commodity, and it is this which allows outsiders to exploit and underpay the San for their services or performances.

Another reason I refused to pay cash for interviews was because, in my view, the validity of the data can be compromised by the practice of paying respondents. This is illustrated by two practices I observed while in the field. I witnessed participants simply giving what they perceived the researchers wanted, while on other occasions I saw participants blatantly misleading and manipulating researchers, on the understanding that there would be financial benefits. Both these practices have been witnessed or experienced by other researchers in the southern Kalahari (pers. comm. J. Thomas; Tomaselli 2001; McLennanDodd, 2003; Simões, 2001).

For example, Ouma /unnas, who during interviews could talk for hours without being prompted too much, had a well-rehearsed story about some of the encounters she and her family had had with Donald Bain in the 1930s. The evidence, however, showed that at the time these encounters took place, Ouma /unnas could not have been more than one year old. An ethno-botanical researcher, who has also worked with Ouma /unnas as a participant, reported to me that she detected much inconsistency in the information Ouma /unnas supplied. For example, during their

transect walks Ouma /unnas would identify a plant as having a certain medicinal value, but on another occasion passed it by. When asked about the plant, she would reply that it was not useful for any purpose. Thus the indications are that the San are not simply idle or passive in their response to researchers and information gatherers.

Yet another significant factor which affects the issue of payment for information in the southern Kalahari is the misunderstanding around the differentiation between intellectual property and other types of data. The question of intellectual property arises since one can argue that the stories of the San are intellectual property, especially in the case of the ethno-botanical studies and the various films in which the San have been involved. The products generated from these types of studies have a resale value, in that they can be marketed and resold repeatedly. In fact, ethno-botanical studies are familiar with what is sometimes referred to as bio-piracy, the patenting of traditional medicinal products without proper compensation being paid to the “owners” of this knowledge. In film, too, those who own a film can continue to earn royalties from it for extensive periods of time. The local San are often unaware of the potential earnings they could receive from film, and this has led to their being shortchanged by some film makers.

Other data reveals a similar pitfall in the specialized knowledge that some individuals may have, such as that of being an expert tracker. There is a market for skills such as tracking, and the environmental researchers in the Park often use those who are known to be experts at tracking. Aware that less scrupulous researchers could potentially abuse the participants, the Working group for Indigenous Minorities in Southern Africa (WIMSA) issues contracts which protect

them against the misappropriation of such skilled labour. The local San have, however, in some instances interpreted this wrongly, failing for example to differentiate between their tracking skills provided as a service and the data procured on the guided transect walks. All data thus produced is considered under the umbrella of intellectual property. However, during my time in the field, I did not pay for data which in my view had a potential benefit for the group under consideration. This was data which fell within a certain “type” or could perform a certain “function”, for example, demographic or socio-economic data which had the potential to be used to influence or aid an intervention (function).

Even with an awareness of the factors discussed above, it was almost impossible to convince local research participants that anthropologists and others whom they encountered (tourists, tour guides, film makers, farmers, and companies, to name a few) were not seeking to benefit from them, or to misuse the data. Their minds had been made up, and they had already decided that they wanted to be paid for their interactions. The long history of engagement and the realization that some outsiders would pay for any sort of engagement with the San had led to this being part of their livelihood strategy; they now demanded real exchanges for the information, not simply the vague and distant promise of benefits which might never be realized.

For many of my participants, the main questions which arose during the early part of these encounters were primarily centred on deciding on the currency of the exchange. Whether in cash or not, the research encounter remained an exchange of some sort. Though I often found myself having to give food and other gifts in return

for participation, direct exchange did not always take place and I found that some exchanges were more subtle and indirect. Given that limited resources were available to me in field, I often found innovative ways to negotiate access and exchanges. It is these innovations and negotiations that I now review.

## ***Mechanisms of negotiation***

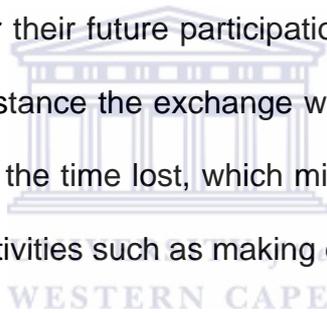
### **4.4 *Photographs and the research transaction***

Among the resources I had when entering the field was a set of photographs of some of the people of the region, taken during the 1930s. I had hoped that a few of the people who were in the photographs would still be alive and could offer some information about the southern Kalahari during that time. At the least, I had hoped that some of the locals might recognize individuals in the photographs and that this could open conversations around some of the history of the people of this region. At Witdraai, I was told that the *Oumas* (grandmothers) who knew about the old days lived about an hour's walk away. In anticipation of initiating an encounter, I moved my tent and camped closer to where the *Oumas* lived. After my initial introduction to them, I spent two days attempting to engage the elderly women in dialogue about the local San and land issues.

It proved in vain, and early on the third day one of the women told me directly, "You won't find much conversation here". I persisted, however, and managed to convince the youngest of the three women to briefly set aside making her crafts and to look at the photographs I had brought along. Flipping through the old prints, she

pointed out one that was of her eldest sister and her grandparents. This moment proved to be a turning-point in my work with the two older ladies, and they would become key participants in most of my future enquiries.

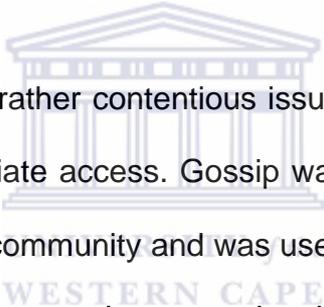
From that point onward, the conversation and information seemed to flow with ease. The photographs had broken the ice and some months later I made a wooden picture frame and gave the picture of the sister and their grandparents as a gift. Handing back the photographs constituted an exchange in the encounter. Memories were rediscovered, images of the self, previously removed, were now returned. A few gifts of coffee, sugar and tobacco to the old women were also granted as exchange and as the basis for their future participation in the research encounter. It should be noted that in this instance the exchange was not asked for or demanded, but rather was a substitute for the time lost, which might otherwise have been spent on economically productive activities such as making crafts.



Photographs also proved to be part of the livelihood strategies of the local San people. The rates they charged to have their pictures taken by tourists included fifty rands per photograph in traditional clothes and twenty-five rands in western clothes. Moreover, they were adamant that there should be only one click of the camera. These photographs were primarily taken by transient tourists who hardly ever returned to the Kalahari, and the local San made frequent mention of tourists not providing copies of the photographs.

In my own case, taking photographs helped me to build a rapport and to gain access to data-rich interviews, and was invaluable to my research. It started when I

was asked by the Oumas (the Swartkop sisters – for biographical details, see chapters five and six) and their children to photograph some of their younger children, because they had no photographs of them. While I was busy taking these pictures of *Ouma //Unnas* and her grandchildren and great-grandchildren, one of *Ouma //Unnas*' daughters, *Sanna*, approached me. She asked that I take some photographs of herself and her daughters and grandchildren as well. From that point on, the whole process became more involved, and many of the people dressed up in their Sunday best to pose for the photographs. By the end of the afternoon, I had shot four rolls of film and managed to secure permission from all that I could keep the negatives of the photographs that I had taken.

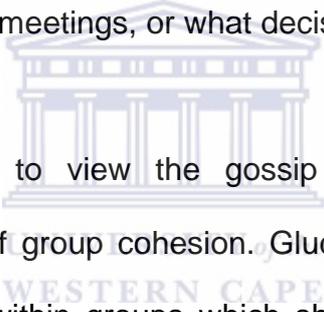


Thus photography, this rather contentious issue among the San, served as a means by which I could negotiate access. Gossip was another social activity which facilitated my rapport with the community and was useful in the exchange of valuable information. This is not to suggest that engaging in or initiating gossip was the primary way I got people to speak or how I gathered information. Rather, my own resolve was strengthened in those signal moments when they saw me as part of their gossip circles or asked me to photograph them for reasons outside of the ethnographic or touristic. Below I briefly examine gossip as one such sign of inclusion.

#### 4.5 ***Gossip as inclusion and exchange***

Witdraai and the immediate surroundings are sparsely populated and the residential pattern was very dispersed at the time. The local San families were scattered, with small groups living at different locations. During my research, I spent most of my time in the field, moving between these sites. As I became more familiar

with everyone, I also became party to gossip, becoming increasingly drawn into circles of rumour and the local grapevine. Each time I visited a place, I would be questioned by locals about what the people at the previous location were doing or saying. It was a very useful way of verifying my data, as sharing some of what was being discussed in other locales often led to stories being corroborated or challenged. I became a useful source of information about various aspects of the day-to-day life of the people in some of these locations, not only because of my movements but also because of my involvement in some of the official processes, such as the Park negotiations and a number of workshops, as discussed in the previous chapter. In this instance, many of the local San sought me out in order to find out what had happened in meetings, or what decisions had been made.



My first impulse was to view the gossip as indicating low levels of interpersonal trust or a lack of group cohesion. Gluckman (1963), however, notes that gossip only takes place within groups which share a common bond and that outsiders are rarely able to break into or be included in gossip circles. In my view, the locals drew me into their gossip circles because I was a ready source of information on what was happening around Witdraai. In addition to my ability to carry this gossip to different locations, I was also able to share information about various other aspects of the day-to-day workings of the CPA.

Many of my encounters with local San residents were initiated by them asking me a question or two about occurrences at CPA meetings. On many occasions, I became engaged in an inverted research encounter, in which I was the participant and not the researcher. These question and answer sessions often gave valuable

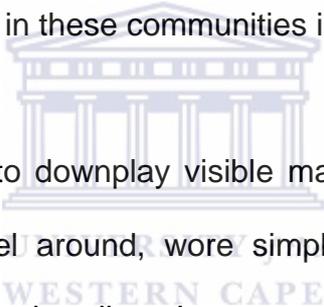
insights into the perceptions held by the San people with whom I engaged. Thus my initial research exercise became transactional, a dual process of both giving and receiving information. In many ways, this minimized the cost of gathering data; I did not have to pay for interviews, since I had been accepted as part of the process whereby information was shared among the members of the group. Gossip in this case functioned as my currency in the research exchange.

### ***Symbols of class***

In 1969, Laura Nader challenged anthropologists to 'study up', but her challenge was often misunderstood. As she pointed out later, she did not mean that anthropologists should only study élites or the powerful, but that researchers should study "up, down and sideways simultaneously" (Nader, 2008). In fact, Nader's (2008) challenge was more practical, reminding us that the researcher sometimes has less power than the researched, particularly in relation to access to the research site and to information. As anthropologists, we should be mindful of the interrelatedness of issues of entry, methodology, attitude and ethics (Nader, 1969:301). Questions of class and socio-economic differences can also be important, especially as researchers often come from higher socio-economic classes than the subjects of their research. In fact, many studies, specifically those in the development field, target the most underprivileged sectors of the population (Kothari, 2005). It is to this notion of studying down that I refer in the discussion which follows.

In my view, the practice of studying down highlights the class differences between the participants and the researcher in a number of ways. It affects the ways in which the participants perceive us as researchers, and profoundly shapes the

ways in which we engage in the research process. When we go into the field as anthropologists, we carry many of our class symbols with us, and through these rather visible symbols we constantly remind participants of the differences between us and them. For example, on many occasions and to my surprise, members of the group would view me as privileged and of a different class because I smoked cigarettes as opposed to loose tobacco. Similarly, when anthropologists arrive in the field with vehicles and a range of equipment such as tape recorders, cameras, and laptops, there is an implicit display (albeit unintentional) of class difference between them and their subjects. This shapes a particular kind of power relation which persists, no matter how many attempts are made to veil it. Additionally, it symbolizes what anthropologists are doing in these communities in the first place.



Generally, I attempted to downplay visible markers of class. For instance, I used public transport to travel around, wore simple non-branded clothing, non-branded boots, and did not wear jewellery. It was apparent to me that these symbols of class had on more than one occasion fostered feelings of mistrust between locals and outsiders. For example, it had led to serious accusations being leveled against individuals in the local community. During my time in the Kalahari, I witnessed accusations being made against an NGO worker. A group of community members claimed that the worker had mismanaged funds, to the extent that his reputation had become tarnished to a point where it seemed he would never work in the region again. I found that mismanagement of money was a common accusation, and later discovered that the previous chairman of the CPA had also been accused of misappropriating funds. Although the accusations in both cases were proved to be

unfounded, overall markers of class such as vehicles and branded clothing sustained such rumours and mistrust among community members.

Another symbol of class, often referred to when attempting to discredit an individual, was owning or having access to a vehicle. For example, a main point of contention for community members who were unhappy with a particular member of the CPA executive was that he had the use of a CPA-owned vehicle. People often commented that executive committee members all too frequently took trips to Upington, and questioned the necessity of these trips. This lack of trust also extended to researchers who owned vehicles. On numerous occasions, research subjects would point out to me that a particular researcher or NGO worker drove a very nice vehicle, implying that this was rather suspicious. These remarks would frequently be followed by the observation, “You know these people make money off the Bushmen”, suggesting that these vehicles would not have been around had it not been for the interest in the San. Tommaselli (2000), during his work in the region, came across similar accusations against NGO workers in Welkom. The people there were concerned that the researchers were somehow making money out of the research encounter and that the people were entitled to similar rewards.

One particular incident I found interesting occurred when I was visiting at *Oom Dawid's* house, and a man arrived wanting some medicine for pain. He was suffering from cancer and seeking alternative treatment. *Oom Dawid* and his daughter went into the veld and came back with some root tuber they had dug up. He showed me the tuber, *gamakoo* (Devil's claw - *Harpagophytum* spp.), and started

to praise the powers of the plant. Afterwards, as if to prove how powerful it was, he claimed that one of the ethno-botanical researchers had sold the plant to (as he put it) the “*buiteland*” (a foreign land) and that with the money she had purchased the new vehicle she was using at that time. I am not suggesting that there were or are any unscrupulous researchers in the Kalahari (at least I did not encounter any); rather, I want simply to highlight the nature of the interpretation of this entanglement.

Interestingly, the perception of vehicles as a marker of wealth was more nuanced, in that some community members regarded vehicles as a communal resource which they felt should be available to them. This has to be seen in the context of how people of the Mier region get around. Most of those who live in the region and do not own their own vehicle or have the financial resources to pay for a minibus taxi are dependent on hitchhiking. The practice is that you offer a nominal fee and driver will usually give you a lift. I regularly made use of this way of getting around.

During my time in the field, I often witnessed local community members asking vehicle owners to take them to clinics, to Upington, to the pension pay-out points, etc. In fact, it appears to have been seen as the duty of any person, researcher, or CPA executive with a vehicle to see to the needs of the people. If you refused, you would find that your relationship with people had soured. Since I did not have a vehicle, opportunities often arose where I would strategize together with community members about how to get around between locations. This assisted in further building rapport with the local community. Furthermore, because such resources had a class connection and the projects were supposed to offer economic

advancement for the communities, the local people felt justified in placing demands on all the resources they saw, no matter to whom they belonged. When *Oom Dawid* saw a researcher with a brand-new vehicle, for example, he would make the assumption that the vehicle was somehow linked to the work among the San. In this way, he could stake his claim to the resources at the disposal of the researcher, while still retaining his victimhood.

### ***Race and class***

In carrying out what I read as studying down, infiltrating spaces, taking the time of those whom I perceived as less powerful than myself, I became aware of my own biases regarding power and powerlessness. This became particularly evident when I was faced with the question of whether or not to include other interest groups whom I regarded as being either in a class vertical or horizontal to mine. For example, I found the white farmers, who formed part of the higher economic class in this region, were not really approachable for a range of reasons, and I did not include many of them in my study. The only two farmers with whom I talked at any length were the person from whom I rented a house at Witdraai and his father. On the day of my arrival in August 2000, the bungalow they were to rent to me was not ready, so they invited me to join them for Sunday lunch. As this was shortly after I had arrived in the Kalahari, the event gave me an opportunity to gauge what they thought of the San land claims case, as well as experiencing the complex relationship between race and class. Even though I was coloured, the farmer was comfortable inviting me to lunch because he viewed me as being of a different class (I came from an urban environment, was educated and middle-class) compared to the local coloured

community. In my later encounters with other white farmers, however, I came to discover that class did not always override race.

For example, I approached one or two other farmers to ask a few questions. One of them had sold his farm to the “Commission” as part of the land claims settlement. I found that, regardless of my class associations, the farmers refused to work with me since I was coloured. Here I was made keenly aware of the ways in which race overrode class and shaped power relationships in this region. As a result, I did not feel comfortable enough to approach any of the other white farmers, especially since I did not expect any cooperation. The best I could do was to note any views mentioned in passing conversations, or second-hand accounts of what people claimed they said.

#### 4.6 ***Relations with NGOs***

During my time in the Kalahari, I found myself having to navigate carefully between the agendas of NGOs working in the region. Often association with specific NGOs made certain community members reluctant to work with a researcher. This was generally a result of perceptions of support for particular NGO agendas. A key point relating to NGOs hinged on the way in which they respected or acknowledged the authority of the CPA. For example, on one particular occasion a workshop I conducted in cooperation with FARMAfrica was disrupted by the chairperson of the CPA executive who announced that the executive committee did not trust the South African San Institute (SASI), another NGO active in the local community. The chairperson explained that this mistrust was partly fueled by the fact that the SASI representatives never approached the CPA executive to shed light on the nature of their research or their advocacy work in the community. The CPA executive made it

clear that they wished to be given the proper recognition and that all NGOs should ask permission to work in the local community. SASI had been working in the local community since before the settlement of the land claim, yet the current CPA executive felt they should at least have been consulted and given the choice to decide with whom they wanted to work.

During this workshop, the chairperson of the CPA executive also alluded to the fact that FARMAfrica had a contract with the CPA executive which set out what they intended doing while working in the local community. Both the CPA executive members and the FARMAfrica representatives felt that this contract held FARMAfrica accountable to the CPA and its membership, binding FARMAfrica to delivering the services outlined in the contract. However, in my view the distrust and unwillingness to work with SASI ran deeper than a simple need for recognition. According to my sources, the CPA executive had in the past expressed their criticism of the fact that SASI only worked with a certain part of the community. In terms of their thinking, the SASI only took care of the needs of the so-called traditional San group<sup>37</sup> (see discussion in chapter five). In contrast, the feeling was expressed that FARMAfrica had been taking care of the needs of the western San, to the detriment of the traditional San Group. In the final analysis, the conflict around the relations with the two different NGOs boiled down to the simple fact that these NGOs had different service and research agendas, which led to them having contact with different sectors of the local community.

However, SASI did at one point provide services to the CPA. SASI undertook a lengthy organizational development (OD) process, but the lessons learnt in this

process were apparently lost when the new executive of the CPA was elected. At this point, FARMAfrica entered the picture and embarked on their own Organizational Development process. Two NGO's were now doing the same job in the group. This resulted in SASI agreeing to adjust their activities and to focus on cultural activities and research in the broader local community. SASI's interest in the group was largely focused on research into aspects of culture, such as ethno-botany and language. SASI was more interested in members of the community who still spoke the old N/u language, meaning that the SASI workers spent the bulk of their time working with these particular members of the community. Similarly, with regard to plant knowledge, time was spent with those who were perceived to have knowledge of the veld and medicine. These were mostly older community members who came mainly from the traditionalist group. It should be noted here that ethno-botanic research has missed an entire group of people, namely livestock farmers, who have extensive knowledge of the veld but are perceived to lack this because they practice a livelihood that is not considered San.

On the other hand, FARMAfrica, which acted more like a service provider, focused on OD issues and agricultural extension work. Thus FARMAfrica representatives spent a large proportion of their time working directly with the CPA executive. This was because their focus had been the provision of organizational skills to the managers in the CPA. They also spent a significant amount of time working with the stock farmers, since they were there in part to provide agricultural extension services to these particular members of the community. Ultimately, the research focus of a particular NGO always determined with whom they spent most of

their time. However, the “people on the ground” still maintained that a certain section of the group was being favoured or was receiving unfair attention.

A clear example of how association with a particular NGO could compromise a researcher’s position in the community was evident with a researcher in Welkom. Belinda Kruiper, a very verbal ex-NGO worker, was resident there and was trying her own strategies for community development among the San in Welkom. Her efforts were independent of any NGO or other organizational support and since I had heard news of her efforts, I decided to approach her for an interview. At the outset of our encounter, she did not appear very enthusiastic, but once she discovered that I did not work for an NGO, she warmed up to my presence. She had had some problems with one of the NGOs working in the area and this had resulted in her decision never to speak to any researchers associated with NGOs. Since I was not associated with any NGO, Belinda cooperated and I was able to conduct an interview and gather data without any difficulty. A similar situation resulted from my association with FARMAfrica. However, here the situation was inverted, in that members of the CPA executive who were sceptical about my motives became more relaxed when they saw me working with the FARMAfrica representatives. This was a useful entry point for me into the organizational aspects of the CPA. The lack of an organizational base was to my benefit, especially in a context where the NGOs were perceived as partial to the needs of one group over those of another. I was able to associate with a range of members because I was not tied to any particular NGO or organization.

## Chapter 5

### 5 The ≠Khomani San land claim against the Kalahari Gemsbok National Park: Requiring and acquiring authenticity

#### 5.1 *Introduction*

To be able to make a claim for land, it was crucial that the group, the ≠Khomani San, be brought together and given a legal identity as “juristic persons”. Under the terms laid out in the South African land claims legislation, a juristic person or entity was needed to ensure that the legal and statutory process could be set in motion. This process of creating a juristic group and ensuring that it coalesced took place prior to the validation of the claim, and in the course of sundry activities leading to the settlement of the claim. During it, a range of conflicting claims about the suspect “bushman-ness” (*Boesman wees* = being bushman) of certain CPA members was raised by various subgroups, specifically by family groups such as the Kruipers and the Vaalboois. At the same time, several episodes occurred where the real bushman-ness of these families and individuals was questioned and challenged, conflicts which could be characterized as dramas of authenticity. In the course of researching and formulating the land claims, the San, NGOs like SASI and FarmAfrica, a range of government departments (which will be identified in the course of the discussions) and an array of other players created the quasi-ethnic entity that is the ≠Khomani. Many of the decisions made by the parties involved about admitting other “San” people into the claimant group would haunt the ≠Khomani San at a later date. Once the initial research work, carried out by the then Department of Land Affairs, had been done in preparation for the submission of the

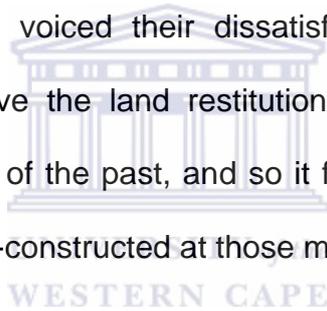
≠Khomani San land claim, resistance was encountered from those whose land tenure was threatened by the claim. The two affected parties, the South African National Parks (hereinafter SANParks) and the Mier Transitional Local Council, against whom the land claim was lodged, did not receive the news of the claim amicably. Nevertheless, both would eventually concede and accept the ≠Khomani San claim.

The restitution package resulted in the return of a total of 68,000 ha of land, with 25,000 ha inside the Kalahari Gemsbok National Park (KGNP) and the remainder outside the Park. In addition to the land they received, the ≠Khomani also negotiated with SANParks for additional rights on land inside the park. The ≠Khomani San were given financial compensation to be used for the purchase of more land, while households were given grants to cover the cost of their relocation to the areas returned in restitution.

In this chapter, I will analyse the activities of three distinct groups resident on the farms given back in the land claim, illustrating how the wealthier and better-resourced members of the CPA (Communal Property Association) were able to exploit and capture the available resources. I will briefly explore the tensions between these two subgroups of the ≠Khomani San CPA, and shed light on how they came to decide what form the usage of the land on the farms would take. The initial interpretation of the land claim appealed to notions of cultural purity<sup>38</sup>, and an attempt was made to exclude those considered less authentically San. In this sense, authenticity as cultural purity was viewed by the ≠Khomani San as a kind of traditional isomorphism or historical verisimilitude (Handler & Saxton, 1988; Bruner,

1994), or as an “ethnographic authenticity” (Field, 2009). Thus some individuals who were claiming or asserting San identity were challenged or de-authenticated because they were thought to exhibit behaviours and cultural attributes that were neither true to the assumed form of a “culture group” nor historically validated as “true”.

In the above view, culture was a phenomena that had been somewhat reduced by a particular set of events and needed to be rebuilt or mended in the present. When the “things” - revival of culture, services, hunting of game, houses, residence in the Park - that members of the CPA expected did not materialize after the land had been returned, they too voiced their dissatisfaction and demanded further compensation, over and above the land restitution. Restitution did not mend or completely repair the damage of the past, and so it followed that many people saw the “culture” that was being co-constructed at those moments as inauthentic.



## **5.2 Background to the ≠Khomani San land claim**

### **5.2.1 Prelude**

According to many ≠Khomani San, Makai, the grandfather of *Oom Dawid* Kruiper, had a dream and subsequently predicted that the southern Kalahari San would return to their ancestral lands. According to Makai’s “prophecy”, strangers would come to the Kalahari and bring prosperity. A few years later, Regopstaan, Makai’s son and *Oom Dawid’s* father, also had a dream. He added to the above prediction that, “When the strangers come, the little people will dance and there will be an end to the drought” (Isaacson, 2001; Gall, 2001; Bregin & Kruiper, 2004; Int-13 03/06/01) or, as others have put it, “All the rivers will flow” (Staehelin, 2001). For

many of the ≠Khomani San, these prophecies of the revival of the land, “end to the drought”, “rivers will flow”; and the revival of their people, became a metaphor for the land claim. In the 1990s, the “strangers” did indeed come, in the form of tourists, NGO workers, researchers, New Age searchers, Native American healers, film makers, barefoot children from wealthy families, who helped the San of the southern Kalahari to lodge a land claim for their ancestral lands. The claim was settled amidst celebrations that included a rain dance by the ≠Khomani San. It climaxed when a bat-eared fox was thrown into the fire<sup>39</sup>. That particular rainy season was marked by more rain falling than in previous years. The prophecies, it seemed, had been fulfilled.



### 5.2.2 Conceptualizing and framing the land claim

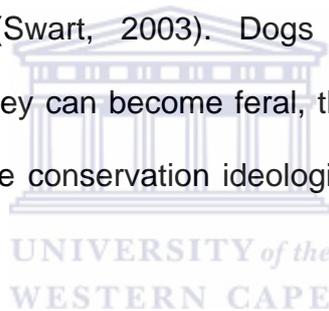
The above narration about a dream and a prophecy is a story commonly told by many of the ≠Khomani San about the land claim. Many also see it as the fulfilment of another kind of “dream”; namely that of Regopstaan Kruiper, to return to his ancestral lands where he would be free to hunt and eat gemsbok meat again. In the late 1990s, the ageing Regopstaan was at Kagga kamma, far away from his “home” in the Kalahari. Regopstaan and some of his family members met Roger Chennels, a lawyer for the South African San Institute (SASI). Chennels came to Kagga kamma, the guest farm on which the Kruiper family was working, to examine labour conditions. Regopstaan and his son, Dawid Kruiper, voiced their desire to return to the Kalahari, where they could hunt and eat gemsbok. Chennels decided he would do something about it.

In 1994, the Restitution of Land Rights Act (Act 22 of 1994) was passed by the South African Parliament. Chennels saw the opportunity to act, and, together with *Oom Dawid*, decided to lodge a claim for land lost in the Kalahari Gemsbok National Park (hereinafter KGNP or the Park). At that time, many of the members of the Kruiper family were still in the Kalahari, while others were scattered across the Northern Cape. Dawid and Regopstaan felt that an effort should be made to inform other San of the region about the land claim and to involve them in the process. The Southern Kalahari Land Claim Committee (SKLCC) was thus formed, with members elected from among former residents of Kagga kamma. Several of the last surviving speakers of the supposedly “extinct” N/u language, as well as their relatives, were included (Chennels, 2001). Shortly after this election process, Regopstaan passed away and his son Dawid was chosen<sup>40</sup> as the new traditional leader of the ≠Khomani San.



South African land claims legislation precludes the possibility of claims by aboriginal / indigenous / original inhabitants. Instead, to qualify for restitution, claimants must prove that they were dispossessed after 1913 as a result of the Natives Land Act of 1913, or of other racially-based legislation or practices (Act 22 of 1995 / Department of Land Affairs, 1997). The San members of SKLCC could therefore not base the land claim on the “original” occupation of the Kalahari by their ancestors. Nor could they make a case for land restitution based on their autochthony, since oral accounts suggest that some of the San, and especially Dawid’s father and grandfather, migrated into the area in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. The key moment of dispossession chosen for the purpose of the land claim was therefore the proclamation of the KGNP in 1931.

With this proclamation, the San of the southern Kalahari had been denied access to most of the areas in which they had lived and hunted. Instead, they were confined to certain regions (such as small camps) in the Park and were not allowed to hunt with guns or dogs (Cleary, 1989). At that time, the Park wardens maintained tight control over the lives of the San who lived there. For example, the wardens would declare that the San had too many dogs for hunting and would shoot the animals<sup>41</sup> (Carruthers, 2003; Schrire, 1995). Many incidents involving dogs were related by the #Khomani and other San living in close proximity to the Park. Nature conservation authorities in many parts of the world do not tolerate domestic animals inside conservation areas (Swart, 2003). Dogs are specifically targeted by conservation authorities, as they can become feral, threaten wildlife, are vectors for diseases, and according to the conservation ideologies do not “belong” in a nature reserve.



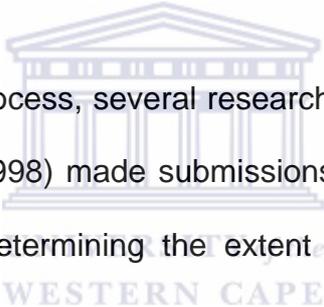
Animals, whether domestic, feral or wild, have been at the centre of many highly politicized debates concerning nature conservancy and especially in areas set aside for the protection of “wild” animals (Carruthers, 2006). In the case of dogs belonging to the San, conservation wardens claimed that the culture of the “real San” precluded the ownership of dogs. In this case, the wardens constructed the local San in a particular way – as pristine hunter-gatherers who did not use or own dogs. Not only did the conservationists draw on a discourse about San authenticity, they deployed it to get rid of the dogs. While the primary concern of the Park wardens was arguably the conservation of the Park’s wildlife, some drew on racist,

discriminatory, derogatory or even “textbook” narratives<sup>42</sup> to make assertions about bushman-ness.

Eventually, the remaining San in the Park lost all their hunting privileges, and a system of meat rationing was put in place (Kloppers, 1970; Carruthers, 2003; Int-15 08/03/00; Int-11 07/06/01). The park warden at that time, Joep le Riche, shot game for the San living in the Park. The restrictions on the San’s livelihoods were not limited to their hunting practices. For example, the proclamation of the Park in 1931 initiated a process of dispossession which would culminate in 1976 with the removal and relocation of the last San residents from within the Park boundaries to the town of Welkom, eight kilometers south of the Park (Wildschut & Steyn, 1990). Not only were the San confined to an ever-diminishing territory but they were also prevented from engaging in foraging<sup>43</sup> practices. Thus the claim lodged by the ≠Khomani San was not solely for “ownership to land”, but was also for its “traditional use”, which included *inter alia* hunting and gathering rights (Chennels, 1998).

The reference to traditional use by the ≠Khomani San was not simply to indicate that they loved meat or that they were the only group which hunted. Several other interest groups in the Mier region, including white farmers, game hunters, and trophy hunters, also engaged in hunting. The question then arises, why should the hunting practices of the San be special or traditional? In fact, what was often referred to in the San’s description of traditional practices was their particular hunting methods and practices and the various ways in which these were radically different. The San believed that they had an affinity with nature that privileged their particular methods and patterns of use. Moreover, they argued that their tools (whether spears

or arrows, traps or snares) and traditional methods were more humane and less harmful to the environment and thus more conducive to conservation. In the final argument, they held that their affinities with nature and the traditional methods they used set their hunting culture apart from that of their neighbours who also participated in hunting. For this reason, the ≠Khomani I spoke to argued that they should enjoy unique access to the resources in the Park. Because they had been historically denied their traditional rights and practices, not only should the land be returned to them but they should be allowed to revive or least continue with these practices.



As part of the claims process, several researchers (see Botha & Steyn, 1995; Chennels, 1995; Hirschfeld, 1998) made submissions concerning the validity of the land claim and assisted in determining the extent of the historical range of the southern Kalahari San. For the ≠Khomani San land claim, the verification process, as prescribed by the Act 22 of 1995, took two forms. The first was to determine the ‘range’ of the land historically occupied by the San through various mapping techniques, in order to delineate the extent of the claim. The second was extensive genealogical research to decide on membership in the claimant group (this is discussed in more detail later in this chapter). The South African San Institute (SASI)<sup>44</sup> collected personal histories and used these to map sites of cultural significance, the locations of which would broadly determine the range of the southern Kalahari San (Crawhall, 2000). This process drew on oral evidence for the birthplaces of individuals, burial sites, hunting grounds and old settlements. The “recollections” of many of the older generation were vital not only to the validity of the

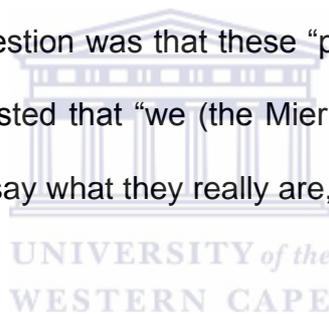
claim but also to the authenticity of the people involved in it. In addition, “reconstructed” subsistence ecologies were drawn up. These helped to quantify the area of land that would have been used in the specific vegetation and climatic regime of people who lived by hunting and gathering. This work was based on fieldwork and literature reviews conducted during the 1960s and early 1980s by Professor Steyn of Stellenbosch University (Steyn, 1984; Steyn, nd)<sup>45</sup>.

The research showed that the historical range (and consequently the size of the area for which the southern Kalahari San claimed *use rights*) was in the order of 500,000 hectares (Steyn, nd; Chennels, 1995). This area, in present-day terms, stretched from the northern sections of Mier northwards to the rest camp Mata Mata on the Namibian border, then northeast towards Nossob camp and from there south to the main rest camp of Twee Rivieren. Though this research was found to be valid and of great significance to the land claim made by the ≠Khomani San, the claim was opposed by SANParks and other residents of the Mier area.

### **5.2.3 Mier opposition to the ≠Khomani San land claim**

As noted above, the submission of the land claim in 1995 brought the ≠Khomani San into conflict with some of the other residents of the Mier rural area, specifically SANParks and the Mier local government officials. SANParks unequivocally maintained their intention to resist any land claim against national parks at that time (Botha, *et al.* 1995; Poonan, 2001). Similarly, the Mier local government defended their interests as the current owners of part of the land under claim. In an attempt to quickly resolve the matter, they engaged in a dialogue with the ≠Khomani San and the Commission for the Restitution of Land Rights (CRLR).

The Mier local government, along with various civic organizations in the region, saw the claim as a threat to the existing uses of the land in Mier, particularly the game camps<sup>46</sup>, which were a major source of revenue for the Mier local government. Many of the Mier community representatives argued that, while their own land-related problems<sup>47</sup> were still unresolved, the ≠Khomani San were receiving “special treatment”. Some questioned the singling out of the ≠Khomani San as a “group”, because some of its members were effectively still residents of Mier. Some inhabitants of Mier also challenged the legitimacy of individuals who claimed to be San; many of the people of Mier declared that those who were claiming to be San were in fact not so. The suggestion was that these “people” were “just Coloureds or Basters”. At times they suggested that “we (the Mier) are not sure if they are really Bushmen but we also cannot say what they really are, maybe they are KhoiSan?”



These challenges to the legitimacy of the claimants often took indirect but specific forms, with subtly-made suggestions about group affiliation. In this regard, the locals frequently used racial (and supposedly ethnic) classifications reminiscent of apartheid legislation. They argued that many of the claimants had been classified as “Baster” or “Coloured” before. Then, in direct contest to the ≠Khomani San land claim, the Mier local government, with the support from the *Bastervolk Organisasie* (BVO) and the Mier Residents Association (MIV), decided to lodge a land claim as well. This was submitted on the eve of the closing of the land claims submission, in December 1998. It overlapped with the ≠Khomani San’s claim, since it concerned the southern section of the Park.

The Mier community's land restitution claim was based on instances of dispossession, two of which were related to land inside the boundaries of the Park. Others points concerned Mier communal lands which had been dispossessed by the state under war measures during World War One [land adjacent to the then German South West African (Namibian) border was claimed by the state for strategic purposes during World War One (DLA, 2002)] and land that had been privatized between 1960 and 1990<sup>48</sup>. Historically, certain individuals in the Mier community had been privileged through access to land, while others had been denied this right (Wildschut & Steyn, 1990). Several programmes initiated by the apartheid government further skewed the distribution of land rights. By the mid-1990s, 105 farmers from Mier, out of a total population of about 4500 residents, were using 330,000 ha of the 400,000 ha in Mier (Erasmus, 1997). The commonage, approximately 34,000 ha situated around the settlements of Rietfontein, Philandersbron and Schepkolk, was overgrazed and crowded (Botha, *et al.* 1995; Erasmus, 1997), while other settlements, such as for example Welkom, did not have commonage.

The Mier residents also wanted restitution for the removal of "*Basters*" from farms in the southern part of the Park after its proclamation in the 1930s (Kloppers, 1970; Green, nd). Additionally, they sought restitution for land in the south of the Park, where rights had been lost in the 1960s when the Park's southern border was fenced, and for land that had previously been used by Mier communal farmers, but which was no longer available to them (Bosch, 2002b). This last instance of dispossession occurred through the implementation of 'economic units laws' in Mier (e.g. Coloured Rural Areas Act no.24 of 1963, Rural Areas Act no.1 of 1979, and the

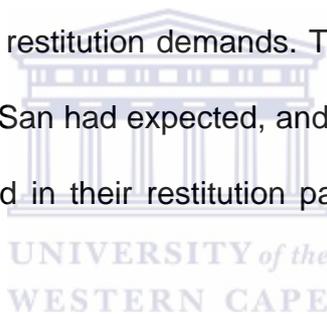
controversial Mier Rural Area Bill of 1990). Under these programmes, land was parceled off and sold or leased to individuals, so that the land available for communal use was reduced. The Mier community argued that many local residents were indirectly dispossessed through this process (Wildschut & Steyn, 1990).

Two key developments helped the two parties involved in the land claim, the ≠Khomani San and the Mier community, to reach a settlement and to develop restitution packages which satisfied both. The first occurred when CRLR, through their interaction with the Mier group, realized that there were several unresolved land disputes and an acute land shortage in the Mier region (Hirschfeld, 1998). The proposed land uses, for both the ≠Khomani San and the Mier community, were of the same type. With the existing shortage of land in Mier, it made little sense to put any further pressure on this resource (Hirschfeld, 1998). Thus, the limited availability of land in Mier, the unresolved conflicts both in the courts and between residents concerning land, and the similarities in use by the two claimant groups led to the search for alternative land outside Mier. The second development occurred when SANParks radically changed its approach to land reform (specifically, restitution) in conservation areas.

Eventually, the Mier community's resistance to the ≠Khomani San land claim died down. Mier residents realized that the ≠Khomani San land claim posed no threat to the already pressured land resources in Mier, and that some of the Mier land issues would be addressed in the process of settling the ≠Khomani San land claim. The overlaps of tenure, use and rights of the ≠Khomani San and Mier claims, as well as

the acute land needs of people in the region (the CRLR and the claimants involved), led to their resolution in a joint settlement. The focus thus shifted away from the Mier lands. The CRLR entered negotiations with several commercial farmers and acquired land for both communities outside the Mier rural reserve.

Once the land had been bought, the CRLR was in a position to structure packages which would cater for the needs of both groups (the Mier claimants and the ≠Khomani San). The former consisted of land inside the boundaries of the Park, commonage and financial compensation. While the Mier claimants accepted the package offered to them, the ≠Khomani San and their legal representatives thought that the offer fell short of their restitution demands. The amount of land offered was much less than the ≠Khomani San had expected, and they continued to negotiate for additional rights to be included in their restitution package (Tri-lat 17/07/01; Int-66 28-30/04/01).

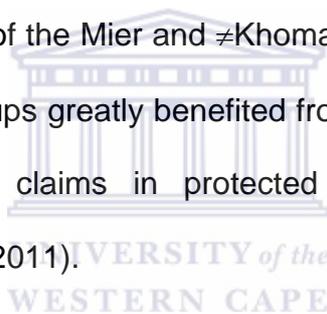


#### **5.2.4 Land claims and national parks**

Up until 1997, SANParks resisted land claims against any national park. Changes in SANParks leadership (Wynberg & Kepe, 1999), combined with organizational restructuring (Poonan, 2002), political pressure (Magome 2001), and global paradigmatic change (Kepe, Wynberg & Ellis, 2005), led to a dramatic turnaround in the approach to land claims. As a result, SANParks became more willing to discuss to the possibility of claims within the boundaries of national parks.

In the mid-1990s, SANParks set up a Land Claims Committee to deal with claims against national parks and subsequent ownership of conservation land by

communities. The result of this committee's deliberations was the development of a land claims policy that set out the framework within which SANParks would cooperate with those groups which were successful in winning back land in conservation areas. The guidelines under which SANParks could cooperate with private landowners and establish contract parks did not constitute a new policy. The model had been developed under apartheid in the late 1970s to deal with "politically powerful private landowners" (Magome, 2001). This, however, proved inadequate, since it did not offer guidelines on how SANParks should deal with communities as owners. One of the first claims to be affected and to provide data for subsequent changes in this policy was that of the Makuleke community against the Kruger National Park. The resolution of the Mier and ≠Khomani claims took place in a "post-Makuleke" era, and these groups greatly benefited from the change in the attitude of the SANParks toward land claims in protected areas (Ramutsindela, 2002; Shackleton & Muchapondwa, 2011).



#### **5.2.5 Group formation and the emergence of the debate about "authenticity". Ascription or self-referents: pinning down the "≠Khomani"**

Formation of the group took place within a specific institutional framework. Prior to the land claim, there was no organized structure representing the southern Kalahari San. The name or referent "≠Khomani" was a term deeply entangled in academic ascription. It appeared for the first time as a supposed "ethnic" referent in the work of Dorothea Bleek in 1911. She divided the San of the region into groups based on language: an eastern group, the N//n, and a western group, the ≠Khomani (Bleek, 1942). Additional linguistic research by Crawhall (nd) suggests that the latter

term may have been used by !Xo speakers (or the N/amani, which is the language of the Kruiper clan<sup>49</sup>) to refer to the speakers of N/u.

The N/u referred to themselves as *Sa* (*Saasi pl.* = people), or “people” in the N/u language (Crawhall, 1998)<sup>50</sup>. In the 1930s, the so-called “Wits expedition” chose to use the term ≠Khomani (Rheinhold-Jones & Doke, 1937). This subsequently emerged as the dominant self-referent in the process of identity formation intricately bound up in the land claim against the Park (Crawhall, nd). Before the claim, the “descendants” of this reconstituted group were dispersed and mainly consisted of scattered family groups. Many of those who participated in the land claim did not initially refer to themselves as San. No geographical “community” existed and no particular grouping calling themselves ≠Khomani San before the claim process was set in motion. There is essentially no single unifying ethnic identity for the southern Kalahari San. Yet such a single unifying identity was suggested by the framing of the land claim as a ≠Khomani *San* claim.

Ethnographers point to the southern Kalahari as the probable former ‘home’ of several ethno-linguistic communities of San people (Duggan & Cronin, 1942; Trail, 1974; Crawhall, 1998). Crawhall (pers. comm.) nevertheless argues that the “racial purity” in this region “was never what Europeans wanted it to be”, and that there was “intermarriage between Bastards, Griquas, Namas, and children of European men” (Dart, 1937). Crawhall and others, as is common in South Africa, often used racial and ethnic identity interchangeably. This phenomenon also complicated the work of earlier ethnographers of the ≠Khomani. It was not a simple process of “selecting” a unifying ethnic identity for these people.

Nonetheless, there were ethno-linguistic San communities living in the region of the Kalahari Gemsbok National Park (KGNP) and the Gemsbok National Park on the Botswana side of the border. Several distinct San groups were identified: the N/amani (!Xo speakers), the /Auni-≠Khomani (N/u speakers) and the Vaalpens (Khattea speakers) (Trail, 1974; Rheinhalt-Jones & Doke, 1937; Lee, 1979). Early on in the claim process, a range of these language-names was applied as ethnic labels to the claimant group. These ethnonymic terms, whether N/amani, /Auni, or ≠Khomani, were linked back to those in the aforementioned academic sources.

The “San group”, consisting mostly of the Kruipers and members of their extended family, did not initially use a single term to identify themselves as a so-called ethnic group. Eventually, for the purposes of the claim, the members of the claimant group settled on the general geographic term, southern Kalahari San, to describe themselves as an “entity”. In order to navigate through the morass of terms and signifiers used to “name” the claimant group, several simplifications were made by those driving the land claim<sup>51</sup>. The group was identified firstly by their regional origin (southern Kalahari) and secondly by their “ethnic” identity (≠Khomani). Certain institutional structures had to be brought into being for restitution purposes; these, in turn, were linked to group formation.

The latter process was kick-started once the Kruipers and their lawyer had gone ahead with their decision to lodge the land claim. The claimants were initially drawn together as the Southern Kalahari Land Claim Committee. Later, as this group

expanded and as the claim was about to be settled, the ≠Khomani San Common Property Association (CPA) was formed.

The formation of the CPA was needed for transfer of ownership of the land to the claimant group. CPAs are entities that make provision for group ownership and democratic governance of the resources gained under the auspices of the land reform programme. Rules and regulations for CPAs are covered in the CPA act (Act 28 of 1996) and the prescriptions in the act deal with the governance of the institution, rights of members and bureaucratic procedures linked to the legal registration of such entities as “juristic persons”. Executive committees, elected periodically, are responsible for decision making in the group. Further rules for membership and additional rights are dealt with in the constitution of the CPA.



Following the chronological evolution of institutions as they related to the land claim is important in understanding the various events and processes before and after the claim was settled. Here I briefly present the genealogy of the key institutions that had an impact on the land claims process.

**Table 5.1: Changes over time to some key institutions related to the ≠Khomani San land claim**

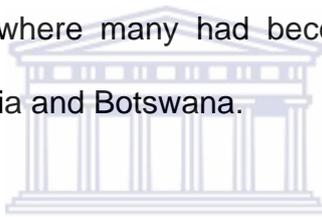
Time	Institution		
	≠Khomani San	Mier	Conservation Authority
Pre-1994	No organized structure – No unifying identity	“Bestuursrade” (management boards)	National Parks Board (NPB)
1994 –1998	Southern Kalahari Land Claims Committee	Mier Transitional Local Council (TLC)	SANParks
1999 onwards	≠Khomani San CPA	Mier Municipality	SANParks

### 5.2.6 Group formation and the emergence of the debate about “authenticity”. Admission phases and determination of authenticity



The so-called “*Oorspronklike eisers*<sup>52</sup>” (original claimants), those who initiated the ≠Khomani San claims process, were composed of two groups who linked their membership of the claimant group to two different historical periods of dispossession. The first was a small group who resided on the game farm Kagga kamma. They included a number of their relatives, who had been contacted and informed of the intention to submit a land claim. This original group was composed almost exclusively of members of the Kruiper “clan”, and all were descendants of *ou Makai*, including their families. They based their claim on their removal from the Park during the 1970s, after which they had been dispersed to various locations in the Northern Cape.

The second group of “*Oorspronklike eisers*” involved three extended families who linked their membership of the claimant group to removals that took place in the 1930s. The first were the so-called “Swartkops sisters” (Katjie “/Unnas” Rooi; Keis Brou; Fytjie “/Abakas” Koper), all of whom still spoke N/u, and their relatives. The second group were descendants of Galagap (/Kalagap). Those who were descended from Abraham Witbooi (the Malgas family – Malxas in Dart’s orthography),<sup>53</sup> made up the third group. Together with the Kruipers, these were the key families represented in the claimant group. Sometimes referred to as “Bain’s Bushmen”, they were well documented in ethnographic work by scholars from the University of the Witwatersrand in 1936-37 (Rheinhalt-Jones & Doke, 1937). They had lived at Twee Rivieren in the 1930s, from where many had become dispersed throughout the Northern Cape and into Namibia and Botswana.



The “authenticity” of the San who joined the claimant group in this phase was “checked” by SASI and researchers linked with the Department of Land Affairs and the Commission. Two sets of genealogical studies were drawn on for this purpose. The first largely covered the Kruipers and the descendants of Makai (*Oom Dawid’s* grandfather). The second dealt with “Bain’s Bushmen”. All applicants were screened using the genealogical research as a reference point. Those not recorded in the genealogical charts could find their membership and claim to San-ness questioned. The genealogical work on the Kruiper family was done by Professors Steyn and Botha, and, coupled with ethnographic data collected over three decades, showed definitive links with the Park (Botha & Steyn, 1995). While Botha (1995) focused solely on the Kruipers and the residents of the Park from 1964 onwards, Steyn (1995) tried to connect the Kruipers to the “Bain’s Bushmen” through marriage

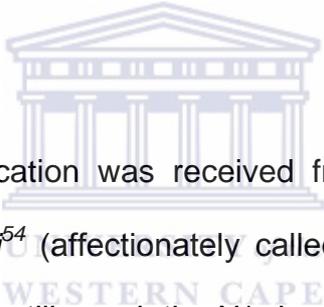
linkages. The size of the claimant group and its “missing” family members could be determined from this research.

Studies on the so-called “Bain’s Bushmen”, their families and descendants, were based on the work of Raymond Dart (Dart, 1937). This group, including the grandson of Ou Abraham, Jacob Malgas, and Lena, the daughter of Regopstaan and his second wife Kxoitamas, lived on the farm Miershooppan. They were even more scattered, and only the three families mentioned above were traced. The system of tracing valid claimants through genealogical studies was thought to reduce the possibility of opportunistic claims to San identity and kinship (Chennels, 1995). Many of the ≠Khomani adopted genealogy as their own key to the “definition” or circumscription of San identity. When asked what made a person a “Bushman”, people typically answered “*Jy moet ’n stamboom het*” (You must have a family tree) (Int-25 04/04/00). In time, however, this criterion for membership became less linked to family and more to the assertion of San-ness.

Although several of the speakers of the N/u language were traced, it was realized that many of them did not necessarily have links to the chosen moment of dispossession, the proclamation of the Park, since they had lived in other parts of the southern Kalahari at this time. Nonetheless, the fact that they spoke N/u linked them, as well as their extended kin, to the “ethno-linguistic complex” of the southern Kalahari San. This “complex” was developed in a range of studies in the 20<sup>th</sup> century (Poch, Traill, Bleek, Doke, Maingard, and Dart), but especially in the ethnographic expeditions of Bleek in the early 1900s and Dart in the 1930s. It was conceded by the stakeholders driving the land claim that to exclude these people simply because

they had never lived or worked in or had any historical links to the Park would mean an incomplete restitution for the San of the southern Kalahari.

During the second phase of “admission”, when membership in the claimant group was broadened to include those who spoke N/u, the SKLCC received requests from individual residents in the Mier region to be included in the claimant group. Many of those who applied claimed descent from San people of the region, yet they had little connection to the Park and therefore no clear legal basis for inclusion in the restitution case. They wanted membership of the claimant group on the basis of their assertion of San identity; this in turn was based on the fact that they had relatives who spoke the N/u language.



Most notably, an application was received from *Petrus Vaalbooi (Vaalie)*, whose mother, *Elsie Vaalbooi*<sup>54</sup> (affectionately called “*Ouma Elsie*”), was the first person “discovered” who could still speak the N/u language. Many of the relatives of *Petrus* later also joined the SKLCC, citing their family connection to *Ouma Elsie*.

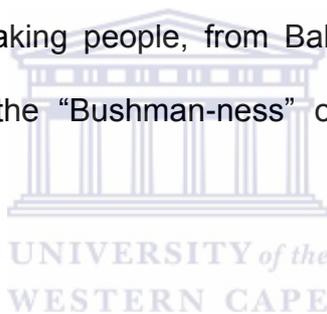
Along with kinship and language, “ethnic identity” (as circumscribed for the purposes of the claim) thus became the key criterion for membership in the claimant group. In time, it was given priority over the legally defined criteria, those of dispossession or being related to persons who had suffered such dispossession. It was argued by the ≠Khomani San’s legal representative and the claimant group (as it stood at that moment in time) that many of the ≠Khomani San of the region had suffered as a result of being pushed off the land by farmers (Baster, coloured or white) and that they should be allowed to benefit (Int-66 28-30/04/01). However, the

moments of dispossession referred to were not distinct moments, such as removal from the Park, but rather vague references to broader, undefined examples of dispossession. Nonetheless, it was an admission by the Mier community that the San of the region had once held rights to the land. The San had gradually lost these rights as other people settled alongside them in the southern Kalahari, including the non-white people of Mier.

In 1998, officials from the Department of Land Affairs (DLA) advised the claimant group that it would strengthen their claim, and ensure that more resources were made available to them, if they included all other San from the Northern Cape (Chennels, 2001). In a group meeting, the claimants decided to open the membership to all San of the Northern Cape (Chennels, 2001). It was never made absolutely clear how this “other San” would be identified. A process was set in motion whereby those individuals in the region (the Gordonia region of the Northern Cape) who claimed to be San could come forward and join the land claims community. Some criteria were set out, however, including for instance being a family relation of those who were already members of the claimant group, linguistic proficiency in the vanishing N/u language, or simply having been “known in life” to be a Bushman. In some of these cases, individuals were “researched”, that is, had their genealogies checked; in other cases, members were simply “vouched” for by existing members. During this period of group formation, the number of members increased significantly, from just under 200 individuals to nearly a thousand. Two factors - the less well-confirmed San-ness of those admitted and the swell in numbers - led groups under the influence of *Oom Dawid* and *Ouma //unnas* to

complain that their own participation and subsequent benefit from the claim were being eclipsed by newer and less authentic members of the CPA.

Thus the process of “opening the floodgates”, as some of those involved referred to this phase (Int-66 28-30/04/01), significantly swelled the membership to include “other San”. A common sentiment shared by many of the ≠Khomani San was that during this second and third phase of soliciting membership, many individuals who were “not really San” joined the claimant group (Int-74a 20/08/00; Int-66 28-30/04/01). The suggestion was that they were “coloureds” or descended from some other “ethnic groups”. Common assumptions were that “certain” members were descended from Tswana-speaking people, from Bakgalikgadi or “Baster” parents. Such allusions implied that the “Bushman-ness” of some individuals had been “diluted” by “other” ancestry.



A fourth phase in the growth of the claimant group was initiated when a number of the CPA members went on a “membership drive” in June / July 2000. Some of the claimants sought out family members whom they wanted to include on the CPA membership lists. The recruitment drive took place just before the second ≠Khomani San CPA general election. It was later alleged that those who undertook the membership drive wanted to ensure their own election as executive committee members by capturing many votes (Const-crisis, 19-20/11/01). In a series of crisis meetings over this and other issues, those who had been “taken on” in this phase were judged by the crisis committee (brought into being to investigate these events) to have been enlisted unconstitutionally (that is, not according to the CPA

constitution). The validity of their membership remained a matter for continued debate (Const-crisis 19-20/11/01; Bosch, 2002c).

Each of the phases, one through four, was marked by different perceptions, held by the original claimants, about the “authenticity” of those who joined the claimant group at each particular juncture. The original claimants saw those who had joined in the first phase (including themselves, of course) as being beyond a doubt “*opregte Boesmans*” (real San). They viewed those who had joined in the second phase as “culturally less pure”. People from the original claimant group, also known as the *traditional San*, readily referred to these “less pure members” as “*westerse Boesmans*” (westernized San) because they spoke no Khoisan languages. According the *traditiesie Boesmans*, these so-called *westerse Boesmans* had also adopted various other “western ways”. The “de-authentication” of certain members was based both on physical factors and on allegations of opportunism. Those who joined in the last phase were excluded on two counts, one a legality contained in the CPA constitution and the other physical appearance. Firstly, they were excluded when the crisis committee found that appropriate procedures had not been followed in their registration as CPA members. Secondly, members from the first and second phase claimant groupings attempted to exclude them because of cultural aspects (such as language, dress and livelihoods) and physical features, claiming that they were not “pure San”, for example because their skin colour was too dark or their hair was not “right for a Bushman”.

### **5.2.7 Interlude**

The ≠Khomani San land claim enjoyed a high media and political profile. Nearly five years after the claim was lodged (in 1995) it was finalized. On the 21<sup>st</sup>

March 1999, at an official ceremony in the Kalahari, Deputy President Thabo Mbeki handed over the land allocated in restitution to the ≠Khomani San and the Mier community.

### 5.3 *The restitution package*

The Restitution of Land Rights Act 22 of 1994 made provision for multiple forms of redress to be offered to successful claimants. This aspect of the act allowed for the design of innovative “packages” to suit the particularities of each case. These could include the return of the land lost, provision of alternative land, financial compensation, or a range of alternative remedies. This section will explore the eventual restitution “package” agreed between the ≠Khomani San and the CRLR. I will also attend to the process leading to the final settlement of the claim.

While the Park was central to the ≠Khomani San claim, the land offered inside the Park did not meet the range of needs of the claimant group. Many of the ≠Khomani San expressed the desire to hunt. Others wanted to farm with game. Some wanted commonage for grazing their livestock. Although full title to land inside the Park was offered to the ≠Khomani San, the area identified by SANParks only included a small portion of the land claimed. It excluded many of the sites which had significance for the ≠Khomani San. No agricultural, mining or residential activities were to be allowed inside the Park. Sites within the boundaries of the conservation area were important to the claimants for an assortment of reasons. Some were historical, others were linked to narratives of loss related to the Park; most involved nostalgic reminiscences about a variety of places linked to the people’s everyday activities in the past.<sup>55</sup>

Mindful of these conditions, and the demands and limitations on land use, the CRLR developed a multifaceted package intended to satisfy the ≠Khomani San's diverse needs. The package offered to them included the following:

- Freehold title to 25 000 hectares of land within the boundaries of the Park;
- Symbolic rights (such as access to grave sites and former residential sites or any other site of cultural significance) and commercial rights (such as income from any commercial venture or other commercial revenues) on land inside the Park;
- 36 000 hectares of farmland outside the Park for grazing and game farming;
- 7 000 hectares of land donated by the Mier community as restitution for land rights that the ≠Khomani San had lost to the Mier community in the past;
- R517 000 for the purchase of commonage around the town of Welkom (Int-66 28-30/04/01);
- The purchase of game animals to stock the farms; and
- The allocation of discretionary grants to all those who moved onto the new farms, to the amount of R3 000 per household.

The total land area over which the ≠Khomani San could exercise rights in the Park was divided into three zones: an ownership zone, a commercial zone and a cultural-symbolic zone. The ownership zone encompassed the 25 000 ha offered by SANParks. Full title was held by the ≠Khomani San, who co-managed it with SANParks as a contract park, separate from the main conservation areas. The commercial zone stretched from the boundary of the ownership zone ten kilometers north to the Auob River. Here the ≠Khomani San reserved the right to participate and

be consulted in any commercial venture that SANParks wanted to undertake. The cultural-symbolic zone included the remainder of the area claimed inside the Park. Here the ≠Khomani San had the right to access areas of cultural and symbolic significance, such as grave sites.

Because it had an “owner” other than the state, the conservation land in the ownership zone was operated as a contractual park. Contractual parks are established when private landowners and the SANParks enter an agreement that land, such as the ownership zone, is declared or held as part of a national park (de Villiers, 1998; Glazewski, 2000). Once such a binding arrangement is made the land is de-proclaimed and its status changed from Schedule I (in which the state is the owner, while SANParks manages of the land and retains the conservation function) to Schedule II (with a private owner and SANParks as joint managers). In the case of the ≠Khomani San, a joint management board (JMB), comprised of two members from each of the parties (Bosch 2002a), and was established to manage the contract park. A similar arrangement held for the Mier contractual section.

At the time of the settlement of the ≠Khomani San claim, the parties involved agreed that the precise terms and conditions under which the ownership zone would be held and managed would be negotiated at a later stage. These negotiations took place during 2001 and 2002 and were concluded in May 2002, when a contract agreement between the ≠Khomani San and SANParks was signed. The land in the ownership zone now became a *de facto* contract park. All that was still needed was an act of Parliament to change its status from a Schedule I to a Schedule II area.

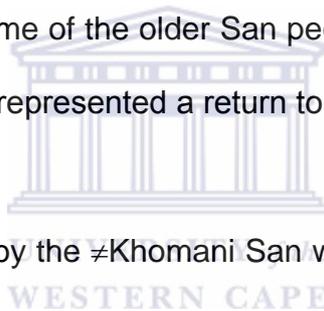
The status of the land as a contract park allowed the ≠Khomani San to negotiate for certain rights and use of the land not usually allowed in a national park. In addition to accommodating tourists, they secured limited rights to harvest plants and certain animal species in the Park (Bosch, 2002a). They could harvest medicinal and food plants and stage an annual gemsbok hunt in the park. All ≠Khomani San had access to the contract park area as long as they acted within the prescriptions of conservation legislation. Although managed and considered separate, the ownership zone was not fenced off from the rest of the park (Tri-lat, 30/05/01). The contract period agreed upon by the three parties was for 99 years. After 30 years, the parties could review the terms of the contract and consider cancellation (Bosch 2002a).

The commercial zone is also known in Afrikaans as a *Voorkeur-Sone* (zone of preference), which more accurately describes the nature of rights in this zone. Here the ≠Khomani San enjoy preference concerning commercial activities above other service providers or bidders. The rights they secured in this zone included shares in a proposed lodge (to be built soon), the opportunity to participate in, or be consulted about, any commercial activity that SANParks might propose or undertake, as well as preferential treatment as regard employment. As long as SANParks were duly informed, the ≠Khomani San were allowed to take tourist groups into this zone. (Bosch 2002a). All activities, however, had to be confined to non-consumptive land uses.

In the cultural-symbolic zone, all rights of access had to be approved in advance by SANParks. Activities here were limited to those having cultural significance, but the ≠Khomani San were allowed to erect temporary non-residential

structures and to take visitors and advisors into the zone with them (Bosch, 2002a). The exact nature of the cultural-symbolic activities could not be decided by SANParks, nor could SANParks refuse access because they deemed a proposed activity not to be cultural-symbolic. Such actions included visiting grave sites, staging rituals, educational trips or research trips. An activity could only be refused if it impacted negatively on the biodiversity of the area (Bosch, 2002a).

The restitution of 36, 000 hectares of farmland addressed several aspects of the claims. It gave access to hunting and catered for the needs of the livestock farmers, while reducing the pressure on the Mier lands. One of the farms, Witdraai, had special significance for some of the older San people who had lived there during the 1930s. For them, Witdraai represented a return to one of their former 'homes'.



The farmland acquired by the ≠Khomani San was located 60 kilometers south of the Park, roughly at the confluence of the Kuruman, Molopo and Nossob rivers. It consisted of six adjoining farms, Witdraai, Andriesvale, Scotty's Fort, Erin, Miershooppan and Kooppan-Noord. These farms were bought from commercial farmers and were mostly former sheep or game farms. The CPA decided that half of the farmland would be used for game farming and the rest for livestock grazing. In practice, the largest percentage of land was kept for livestock, as the CPA members chose to allocate particular farms for specific uses, rather than calculating the exact number of hectares involved. Three farms were earmarked for game, Erin, Miershooppan and Witdraai; together they amounted to less than 50% of the farmland.

Aside from the land provided by the CRLR and SANParks, the Mier community gave the ≠Khomani San 7 000 hectares of land as a gesture of goodwill. The offer was partly an admission that the ≠Khomani San were entitled to some restitution from Mier. It also recognized that, although the ≠Khomani San had claimed land in Mier, the entire claim had been settled without any of the Mier land being returned to them.

As a result of their land claim, the ≠Khomani San obtained ownership of a grand total of 68 000 hectares of land, plus limited rights to a further area of 25 000 hectares. They nevertheless argued that this would not meet all their needs. Other land was needed for grazing, especially around the town of Welkom, where some of the ≠Khomani San had formerly lived. Welkom did not have a communal grazing area, so in the restitution package, R517, 000 was included for the purchase of commonage for the ≠Khomani San in Welkom. The commonage was to be for the sole use of the San people of Welkom. This was done because the ≠Khomani San, their legal representative and NGO partners feared that the San would be unable to gain access if the commonage were available to all residents. The ≠Khomani San also alleged discrimination by previous local authorities. Because Regopstaan Kruiper was buried on the farm Blinkwater, and also because it was located close to where many of the San of Welkom had stayed, this particular farm was targeted (Int-13 03/06/01; Int-66 28-30/04/01). The sale, however, never took place, as the owner passed away and his wife and children decided not to sell the land.

Lastly, the CRLR made a one-off grant of R3,000 available to all member households who chose to relocate to the farms. The grants were to assist the households with the cost of resettlement. This was a point of contention for many

CPA members and for “outsiders” (mainly “*Baster*” and coloured residents of Mier, but also the odd commercial farmer). Many of the CPA members thought that they automatically qualified for the grant by virtue of their membership in the CPA. The grants, however, were only available to those who chose to relocate to the farms. The “outsiders” also argued that many non-San joined the group simply to receive the grant (Int-30 29/11/99; Int-32 28/11/99). This allegation was made so as to de-authenticate the San-ness of many members. Both groups, outsiders and CPA members, misunderstood the aim of the grants. Most households never received the R3 000 and never moved onto the land received as restitution.



## Chapter 6

### 6 Post-settlement dynamics around the land claim

#### 6.1 *Prelude*

The rain sorcerer's complaint

(Narrator: Dia!kwan; translator, W.H. Bleek)

“(...and the sorcerers having killed the rain-bull<sup>56</sup>),  
the people who are at home see the rain clouds gliding along  
they see that the rain comes with lightning,  
and they say to each other, they say to one another:  
‘the sorcerers must indeed have their hands on the rain-bull:  
now the rain is really going to fall’, and then the rain sorcerers return:  
they return and say to the people  
that they have made the rain fall, they have given them rain  
and the people will now do as they always do when rain has fallen:  
they will not take care of one another  
for they will do things that are not right  
and because they will have food because of rain  
they will grow fat and they will fight:  
when people are prosperous they grow fat,  
and they do not remember then  
that they begged the sorcerers for rain  
that is why the sorcerers do not always *make rain fall for them*”.

(Quoted in James, 2001:117: recorded By Lucy Lloyd in the late 1800s<sup>57</sup>)

After a particularly challenging day of workshops with the CPA (Common Property Association), I asked one of the land lawyers<sup>58</sup>; “Why do these people “fight” so much?” He responded that “the battles are so pitched because the stakes are so low.” But why, if the amount of land and the resources available were so valuable, including the rather large cash value of the settlement, would he say that the stakes were so low? Simply put, the resources were always intended to be for communal use, and CPA members were meant to benefit equally from the resources that were now available. Hence the stake in the share of resources for any one particular individual or subgroup was probably intended to be relatively small. Examining the details of some of these conflicts, one could easily assume that a large amount of value would be available for the individual.

Prior to the settlement of the land claim, when there were no resources, the claimants cooperated and got along well. When the claim was finalized and the land (and the accompanying resources) became available, collaboration ended. The cooperative spirit which had characterized the land claim faded, and the #Khomani San CPA split into competing camps which no longer “took care of each other”.

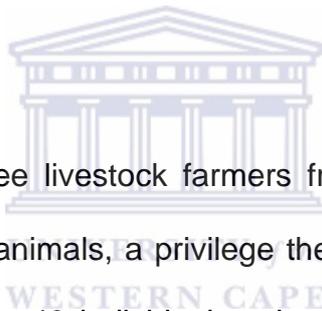
As in the sorcerer’s complaint narrated by Jan Rondehout (Dialkwan), the #Khomani prospered after the successful “rainmaking” of the land claim. They now had “food”, and disagreements began to arise among them. They did “not take care of one another” any more and instead did “things that are not right”. The moral of the killing of the “rain bull”<sup>59</sup> was mirrored by events of the land claim and the post-settlement social dynamics. The #Khomani had asked the “sorcerers” (activists, leaders, spokespersons, government, lawyers, anthropologists) to slay a figurative

rain bull (dispossession, hardship, apartheid land laws, the Park) for them so they could have rain and food (land, resources and game to hunt). When the “rains”, i.e. the settlement, came, the claimants grew “fat” (contented, complacent) and did not take care of each other. Instead, they fought among themselves, forgetting how they had for years begged for this “rain”.

At the same time, and as the “prophecies” of Makai and Regopstaan had foretold, there were also good rains in 2000. Reports that water was once again flowing in the Auob and the Nossob Rivers<sup>60</sup> (see Chapter 2, “Factors influencing climate”, and Chapter 5, “Background to the #Khomani...”) were rife. Yet the ‘good rains’ and the resulting positive environmental conditions for game, livestock, and even people, signaled the beginning of internal conflict and tension. And just as the sorcerers in this /Xam story complained, so the NGO staff, lawyers, civil servants, media, and researchers complained that people were not behaving in a manner reminiscent of the historical San. The latter included many so-called hallmarks of San society, such as lack of conflict (Marshall, 1976; Lee, 1979), cooperation and sharing (Biesele), egalitarianism (Jordaan, 1975), and sound environmental practices (Silberbauer, 1981; Tanaka, 1980). The apparent breach of these principles had been highlighted by various research projects. I use the term ‘breach’, as many of those who complained held these principles to be almost “sacred”, aspects of San culture that were to be defended fervently.

In the following section, the activities of the three groups of CPA members who moved onto the farms shortly after the settlement of the claim are examined. These groups used different resources and expected to benefit from the land claim in

a variety of ways. For instance, those who were labeled as “westernized San” were interested in grazing, while others, who referred to themselves as “traditional Bushmen”, wanted to harvest natural resources. The elderly sisters and their extended family members had an interest in other benefits which might have contributed to their social wellbeing. The latter concerns were diverse and ranged from aspects such as personal safety, to financial benefits, housing, and healthcare. These disparate subgroups within the CPA had different reasons for participating in the land claim and different views on the appropriate direction for “San” development. Their experiences, interpretations and demands highlighted the fragility of the group cohesion, which up until then outsiders and the claimant groups had assumed to be strong.

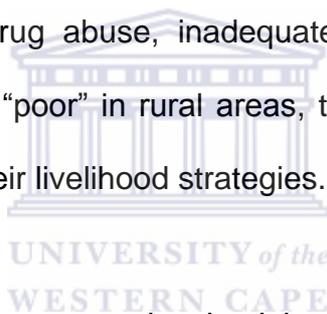


For the first group, three livestock farmers from Mier, the land offered the opportunity to raise domestic animals, a privilege they had never had in Mier. The second group comprised about 40 individuals, whom I will call the Kagga Kamma group. Under the leadership of Dawid Kruiper, they hoped to make a living from harvesting natural resources and performing for tourists. The third group, three elderly sisters and their extended families from Swartkops near Upington, thought that the return of land meant they would be able to access certain socio-economic benefits, like housing, electricity and running water. These varying and sometimes opposing expectations by different segments of the CPA led to several conflicts between the groups, on the farms, and with the CPA executive.

## 6.2 ***Subsistence and resource utilization as typically San***

The San are known for their strategies of subsistence, and are mostly envisioned as hunters and gatherers. The Kagga Kamma group in particular hoped

to recapture such an iconic San identity. They did so by emphasizing particular ideas about how they should make a living and use the resources available to them. The Kagga Kamma group was composed of the members of the Kruiper family, and their numbers were supplemented with relatives drawn from the local farms and settlements in the Mier region. Although no official figures existed documenting the socio-economic problems among the ≠Khomani San, it was apparent that various social problems plagued this group and that, together with the Swartkops<sup>61</sup> sisters, they typified the rural poor in this region. Many were unemployed, dependent on social welfare grants and pensions, had insecure tenure rights, and featured multigenerational female-headed households. They also had low levels of schooling, problems with alcohol and drug abuse, inadequate housing and were prone to domestic violence. Like other “poor” in rural areas, they were highly dependent on natural resources as part of their livelihood strategies.

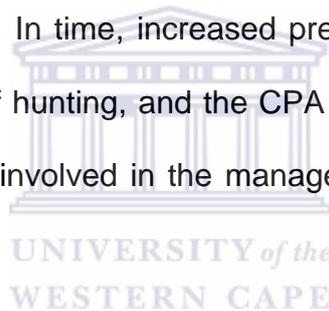


The Kagga Kamma group was involved in some hunting of small game, gathering medicinal plants and other plant material for the manufacture of crafts which they sold to tourists, harvesting grass for thatching and collecting firewood for sale. All these elements were understood and experienced by them as a form of “revival” of their San culture. Of all the claimants, they were the most directly dependent on natural resources and also utilized the widest variety of such resources.

The two main species hunted by the Kagga Kamma group were steenbok and springbok; while other game, like rabbits and smaller carnivores such as bat-eared fox, African wildcat and aardvark, were also used for household consumption. None

of the Kagga Kamma group owned rifles. Most of the hunting was done with dogs, gin traps (Afr. = *slagyster*) or snares. They did not use any of the stereotypical “Bushman” weaponry, such as bows, arrows or spears.

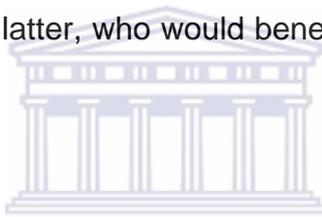
The hunting and consumption of the springbok, not only by the Kagga Kamma group but also by other residents of the farms, was the cause of the first of many quarrels in the community. In late 2000, *Oom Dawid* decided to halt the hunting of springbok by all the residents of Witdraai. The CPA executive claimed that the hunting by the Kagga Kamma group was illegal, both because much of it took place outside the hunting season (generally between May and August) and because they did not have hunting licenses. In time, increased pressure from the CPA executive led to a complete cessation of hunting, and the CPA attempted to use this hiatus in hunting to resolve the issues involved in the management of the game animals on their farms.



*Oom Dawid* later claimed that he and his followers wanted to set up a hunting venture for outsiders and would also leave some animals for the tourists to see. The benefits from this enterprise would be directly available to the residents of Witdraai. According to *Oom Dawid*, the “bushcraft” they learned from their ancestors, combined with their indigenous knowledge and experience, would enable the people of Witdraai to manage the resources. He argued that his proposal was based in the “Bushman way” of using the game, plant and human resources on hand at Witdraai.

Early in 2001, the CPA executive, with the assistance of a local farmer, undertook a series of game captures on Witdraai. A large number of springbok were

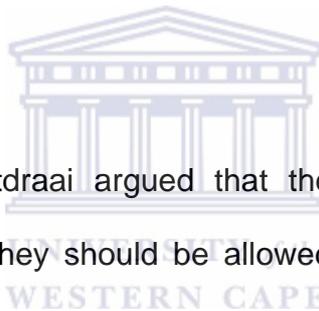
captured and sold to cover the day-to-day running costs of the organization. The CPA had run into some financial difficulties and was allegedly also indebted to a local farmer<sup>62</sup>. The “executive” was in dire need of cash to fund their daily activities and to pay off some of their debt. This included costs such as transportation, salaries for the CPA administration officers, rental of office space and payment for the executive committee members to attend CPA meetings. This sale of game initiated a protracted debate about who had the right to manage and make decisions about game animals and other resources. At the same time, it highlighted the contestations about strategies and uses for the resources available to the CPA. The question was whether the resources were supposed to benefit the organization (CPA) or individual households; in the case of the latter, who would benefit if they were allowed to shoot for household consumption?



Later in the same year, the CPA executive decided to sanction the hunting and distribution of two springbok for every household in the CPA. This decision was taken in reaction to demands by farm residents for game meat, following the sale of large numbers of springbok. At the time, the Kagga Kamma group had apparently abandoned any other plans they had for springbok at Witdraai<sup>63</sup>. Thus many of the residents of the farms, especially the Kagga Kamma group, felt that the game should be made available for household consumption. While this instance of killing of the game by the CPA executive did not give rise to any dissatisfaction among the members, the events described below echoed the previous sentiments about game and the CPA executive’s management of it.

### **6.2.1 Contesting patterns of game use**

In the dry season of 2001, many of the animals (gemsbok and springbok) on the farm Miershooppan were suffering due to the seasonal drought<sup>64</sup>. This was compounded by the fact that the infrastructure for providing water for animals on the farms was in disrepair. The CPA executive did not have the financial resources to fix it and several animals died, while other game jumped the fences in search of water. The remaining animals had to be relocated to camps or farms which had water. For many, this episode reflected the failure of the CPA executive to manage the natural resources and the farms in general. Coupled with the earlier sale of the springbok, this event served for many of the ≠Khomani San as the main evidence that the CPA executive should no longer be responsible for the management of the game on the farms.



The inhabitants of Witdraai argued that the game animals on the farm belonged to them. They felt they should be allowed to make decisions about the utilization or conservation of these animals. Witdraai residents, as well as some others with similar interests, claimed that the CPA executive was selling the animals to cover up their misadministration of funds and to pay off debts. The CPA executive argued that the resource (springbok) belonged to all members of the CPA and that the sale of these animals was for the communal good, a sentiment clearly not shared by all members of the CPA. .

Residents of Witdraai, among them Adam, his wife and *Oom Dawid*, interpreted the CPA's "appropriation" of the game animals as a case of corrupt leadership. They also saw it as an attack on their autonomy and their freedom to decide on the use of resources. The antagonism between the Kagga Kamma group

and the CPA executive concerning game, its management and rights of access to it dragged on. In time, the real issues became clouded by the ongoing rivalry. It came to a head in late 2001, when tensions within the #Khomani San CPA threatened to derail the Park negotiation process<sup>65</sup>. Eventually, many of the #Khomani abandoned their hopes for profit from the farmland and from game and vested new hope in the Park itself.

As outlined above, the use of natural resources by the Kagga Kamma group and their attempts to exclude other residents from using these, led them into conflicts with the CPA executive and other CPA members living on the farms (for example, the livestock farmers), whom they perceived as “Westernized”. This perception proved interesting, especially for Suzman (2000), who in his research focused specifically on “farm Bushmen” in an attempt to unpack some of the reasons why they were generally not thought of as “pure San” any more, but, because of their changed lifestyle, were instead seen as deficient in their San-hood. This applied even to livestock owners who were dependent on grazing but also had other off-farm means of making a living.

The important distinction I wish to draw here lies in the differences in the use of natural resources between groups, as well as in their diverse interpretations of San-ness. The Witdraai residents engaged in a low-tech harvesting of small numbers of animals for subsistence. In contrast, the CPA, with the assistance of some local commercial farmers, commanded resources such as vehicles, shooters and labour to capture and sell off large numbers of springbuck, with high financial returns. Locals reported that CRLR bought approximately thirty-five thousand rands’

worth of springbok to stock the farm in question. Additionally, the calving season, just before the hunt by the CPA, had been a particularly good one, as most of the ewes had calved twice that year (2001). The financial gains in relative ('Kalahari') terms could therefore have been substantial, though the exact numbers are not known<sup>66</sup>.

While the CPA executive needed large amounts of cash, the Kagga Kamma group harvested animals to supplement their other livelihood strategies, such as income from tourism, provision of traditional healthcare, casual work on movies and occasional work with researchers. The distinction between commoditized hunting and what individuals like *Oom Dawid* contended were "traditional" or cultural uses of natural resources was a major issue in the contestations of authenticity. The disparity in methods of using game was replicated in the ways in which different sections of the #Khomani San CPA used other resources. Here I make specific reference to the controversy surrounding the harvesting of firewood, first mentioned in Chapter 2.

In addition to their use of animals on the farms, the Kagga Kamma group also gathered and used a range of plants. For example, the *Acacia erioloba*, also known as *kameeldoring* (Afr.) or camelthorn (Eng.), is an important and sought-after firewood species. Interestingly, the different patterns in the use of firewood by the various groups were seen to reflect the same distinction between authentic traditional use and inauthentic westernized use of resources. Three types of users can be identified; the first harvest wood solely for household consumption, the second are those who harvest large amounts of wood for resale to middlemen, while the third are outsiders (non-CPA members) who illegally harvest wood for resale.

The residents of Witdraai did not perceive those who harvested wood solely for household consumption as posing any threat to the future availability of the resource; thus their activities were tolerated, whether they were CPA members or not (Int-08 07/06/01). This particular method of harvesting firewood fell within what many of the San saw as a “traditional” paradigm of conservation of resources. Moreover, these users were accepted as operating within a culturally appropriate and hence authentically San mode of resource use. However, certain residents of the nearby settlement of Askham (who were not considered bushman at all) also harvested wood for household consumption. The tolerance of harvesting by these outsiders or non-San suggests that the key issue here was not just about cultural identity but rather the particular resource use pattern that mirrored the practices shaped by poverty in the region. Again, I reiterate, the resource consumption patterns on the farm Witdraai had nothing particularly “bushman” about them; rather they reflected the practices of most of the rural poor of the region.

Two additional aspects in relation to household users need mention. The first aspect has to do with the ecology of targeted firewood species, while the second point could be classed as an issue of the mode of use. Household users of firewood often did not pose a significant ecological threat, as they targeted a large number of firewood species, such as *ysterhout* (*Dodonaea thunbergia*), raisinbush (*Grewia flava*), *taaibos* (*Rhus crenata*), and *vaalkameel doring* (*Acacia heamotoxylon*), several of which are shrubs or smaller trees which grow fast, are plentiful and are widely distributed. However, the larger and slower-growing species like *A. erioloba*

were a matter for concern, as they were also targeted both by outsiders and CPA members who harvested wood for resale.

CPA members initially welcomed the harvesting of firewood for sale. The venture was seen as a source of income for unemployed CPA members (Int-15b 09/08/00; Int-03 11/08/00; Int-78 09/08/00). Similar activities by outsiders, usually from the neighbouring settlement of Askham, were however not tolerated by the CPA executive, and the harvested wood, along with their axes, was often confiscated. Woodcutters from the neighbouring settlements who were not CPA members were viewed as poachers and looters, especially by *Oom Dawid* and Adam. Moreover, the large-scale cutting of firewood for sale undermined the “traditional” way espoused by *Oom Dawid* and others at Witdraai, as they argued for proper sustainable conservation-orientated uses of the resources on the farms and in the region in general. “Bushman-ness” for *Oom Dawid* was defined through terms such as *volhoubaarheid* (sustainability) and *bewaringsgesindheid* (conservation-orientated).

*Oom Dawid* also had insight into, and used, concepts from the discursive domains of conservation and even anthropology. For most of his life he had been located as a subject within these epistemic landscapes. His extended family had worked for conservation organizations which enforced the social controls of biodiversity conservation on them as a “people”, as far back as most of them could recall. Moreover, the records showed that some of the #Khomani San had been in contact with anthropologists since the 1930s, and subsequent ethnographers had left quite a trail of research about the people of this region. Hence, it is not farfetched to say that *Oom Dawid’s* strategy for ensuring access to land included a discourse of

authenticity that could draw on very “modern” and “Western” concepts, setting the discursive field in which a new, authentic San identity could be shaped.

A classic case of the tragedy of the commonage unfolded on the farms given in restitution, as “open access” to firewood led to a rapid depletion of the resource. Stakeholders feared the worst, and several started suggesting that the harvesting of wood had become a “free for all”. In time, even the wood harvesters in the CPA were criticized. Other members, and especially those in the Kagga Kamma group, complained that the veld was being stripped of all dry wood. The majority of the CPA membership, however, remained tolerant of household consumption (Int-08 07/06/01). At one point, the CPA executive tried to halt all harvesting of wood on the farms, but their decisions were ignored and the woodcutters continued their activities unabated.



### **6.2.2 Culture as a hidden transaction**

When a resource becomes a commodity, it is often thought of as having lost some of its cultural purity, the perceived wisdom being that “traditional cultures” do not include a commoditized cash economy. This is especially so in situations involving tourists, where those who manage such ventures go to great lengths to mask transactions and exchanges involving cash (Cohen, 1988; Bruner, 1988; Bruner, 2001; Handler & Saxton, 1988; Kasfir, 2007). The undertakings are made to appear pure and authentic through this masking of the occidental economy. For example, in the Kalahari, tourists would pay tour operators and not the San directly, sustaining the notion that the San lived in a cashless subsistence economy.

Commoditization is seen as Western and above all capitalist; in fact, it is seen as epitomizing the basest values of capitalism, such as greed, avarice and exploitation. Hence, in a situation where the participants want to portray a society which holds values contrary to those of Western capitalism, it makes sense to hide transactions that would contradict these values. The process of defining groups, cultures or the “self” by contrasting the West with the rest, that is, the Third World seen as traditional or “primitive”, has been called occidentalism (as opposed to orientalism) (Chanock, 2000). Occidental narratives are raised time and again by both *westerse* and *traditiesie Boesmans* in order to illustrate how a particular portion of the ≠Khomani San is somehow less authentic. One example of this is the constant reference to languages and how these have marked out the differing spaces of western, occidental discourses and traditional non-western discourses. The point here is that the so-called western practices, such as poor environmental management strategies, reliance on and lust after cash, selling resources for cash, farming, “western” clothes, were all mentioned in order to de-authenticate those who adhered to them. Later on in the thesis, we will return to occidental accounts and discuss the linkages between these and authenticity (see the section on livestock farmers)

This distinction between users, such as household users, resale users and outsiders who harvest for resale or household consumption, was to be a recurring theme in the post-settlement situation. Those consumers whose resource use was not for simple subsistence were labeled as less San by the Kagga Kamma group, since San people were supposed to live in “harmony with nature”. Being considered “less San” because of their apparent less than ideal management and harvest of resources,

they were not entitled to the resources which belonged to the ≠Khomani San. The difference between the two modes of natural resource use, that is, of game and wood, for household consumption or for sale was linked increasingly not only to sustainability but also to the identity of the resource users.

The Kagga Kamma group used a particular mode of harvesting natural resources as one of the markers of “authenticity” in defining San-ness. Following the springbok episode and the commotion surrounding the harvest of camelthorn, all those who consumed the resources for reasons other than household use were labeled by those who thought of themselves as traditional San, as less authentically San. The Kagga Kamma group increasingly felt their control of the natural resources at Witdraai was slipping and falling into the hands of the so-called “Western San”. The distinction between groups of San would become a significant characteristic of the ≠Khomani San politics of land.

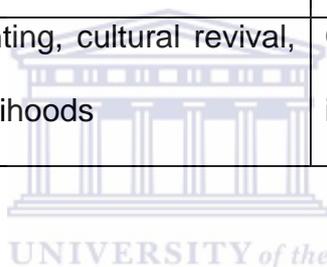
The plans that the Kagga Kamma group had for a revitalization of San culture through the use and control of the natural resources on the farms did not come to fruition. The control that the Kagga Kamma group assumed they held over resources on the farm Witdraai was never realized. All around them, others (CPA executives, woodcutters, neighbours) made decisions about the resources they thought they controlled. The Kagga Kamma group placed their hopes for the management of and access to natural resources such as game, medicinal plants and wild plant foods - and through this a revival of a San lifestyle - in the Park. This was before the Park land had been officially handed over, and their hopes were shattered when they found that the land in the Park had serious limits and would not cater for their

restitution demands. *Oom Dawid* also started talking about splitting the land into two parts - the farms and the Park - adding that *Vaalie* (the CPA chairperson at that time and considered *western*) could have the farms, while he, *Oom Dawid*, would take the Park, which he saw as the “home” or area for the exclusive use of the “traditional San”. Thus the battle lines were drawn and the cracks in the cohesion of the community began to show.

**Table 5.2: Distinctive patterns of resource use among "traditional and western San"**

<b>Grouping</b>	<i>“Traditional San”</i>	<i>“Western San”</i>
<b>Mode of use</b>	Resource use for household and subsistence (non-commoditized use patterns)	Resource use for resale and profit (commoditized use patterns)
<b>Scale of harvests</b>	Small-scale harvests	Large-scale harvests
<b>Area of exclusion</b>	The Park, “traditional farms” (Witdraai, Erin)	Livestock farms (Brosdoring, Koopan Noord, Scotty’s Fort)
<b>Resources targeted</b>	Game, herbs, <i>veldkos</i> (wildfoods), firewood (various species), “craft species”	Livestock-grazing, game, firewood (only camelthorn)
<b>Decision-making</b>	Traditional leadership in	CPA executive

<b>institution</b>	consultation with those loyal to him.	
<b>Markers of authenticity</b>	Language, kinship, practice, livelihoods, physical features, personal identity and affinity, dress, memory, dress, legal claimant	Kinship, historical data, physical features, affinity, memory, sobriety, extra-legal claimants
<b>Type of authenticity</b>	Ethnographic authenticity	Auratic authentic, existential authenticity
<b>Expectations from restitution</b>	Hunting, cultural revival, livelihoods	Grazing, housing, jobs, income, profit, wealth



### 6.3 ***Farmhouse occupations and broader restitution***

The Swartkops sisters, or the “Oumas” (grandmothers) as they were affectionately known, moved from the settlement of Swartkops, outside Upington, to the farm Witdraai. The three sisters, Katjie “/Unnas” Rooi, Fytjie “/Abakas” Koper and Keis Brou, wished to escape from the violence of the “location”<sup>67</sup>, where they were sometimes robbed of their pension money (Int-78 11/03/00). They took the resettlement grant given by DLA and moved to the farm. For them, it symbolized a life without the “dangers” of the “location”, and a new beginning where their dignity would be restored and their culture, especially their language, would be transmitted to the youth. The sisters moved to the farm with their middle-aged daughters and

spouses, grandchildren, great-grandchildren and a cousin (Piet Nagoep) with his family.

This group was largely dependent on the pensions and social grants received by various individuals. In addition, they sold crafts to the occasional visitor. The dependence on pensions and the composition of the group, being mostly the elderly and young people from the townships of the Northern Cape who were not familiar with hunting, made them less reliant on the natural resources on the farm.

The sisters and their kin demanded different things from the restitution process. While the Kagga Kamma group wanted to live from the land, the wildlife, plants and other “bushman resources” (see previous section), the sisters had radically different requirements from the restitution process. They and their families expected it to deliver the same financial resources that others received, but also services like healthcare, decent houses, water, safety and security.

It is relevant here to mention a key aspect of this group and their claims to authentic southern Kalahari bushman-ness. The sisters and their cousin had direct links to the group that had been studied by the Wits expedition in the 1930s. To a great extent, they derived their authenticity from this particular moment in the history of the southern Kalahari. Ouma Keis Brou (the eldest of the three sisters) had actually been part of the group; photographic evidence existed for her participation in the Wits studies. Piet Nagoep’s father had also been documented and studied by the Wits expedition. The two younger sisters, however, had not been part of the group studied. Ouma /unnas had been too young; she was born after the expedition by

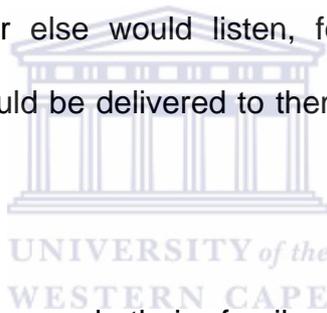
Wits and the tours with Donald Bain. It is unclear why Ouma /abakas had not been part of the group that travelled with Bain. I did not have the opportunity to interview her, since she was almost always indisposed and early in 2000 she passed away. The point is that this particular family claimed their San authenticity through reference to the 1930s ethnographic expedition and the participation in this event by their forebears.

The Swartkops group had concerns and expectations about the restitution process which were different from those of the others. They did not focus only on the natural resources, but maintained that other developmental resources and amenities had been promised to them. They claimed that when they moved to the farms in 1999 - 2000, the leadership of the CPA promised them they would receive houses and other services. Following a particularly cold Kalahari winter spent in grass huts and shacks, one of the sisters passed away. Thereafter, their call for proper housing became louder. On more than one occasion, they confronted the former chairperson of the CPA, *Petrus Vaalbooi*, about the houses and other resources they claimed had been specifically promised by him (Int-01c 16/03/00; Int-02a 16/03/00). Another demand that they frequently made was for transport to pension pay-points and the local health clinic, about 15 km away at Askham. They insisted that they should be taken in the CPA vehicle. They argued that this vehicle frequently made the trip of about 250km to Upington, but would not take them to the neighbouring town on pension days or for clinic visits (Int-01d 07/03/01; Int-02c 07/03/01).

No houses were built and the sisters became restless. They eventually occupied one of the farmhouses, while waiting until the CPA catered to their housing

demands. In mid-2001, the sisters and their relatives, about 20 individuals, took possession of the house on the farm Andriesvale. Inspired by their occupation and the sisters' refusal to move out, other CPA members decided to occupy the houses on the remaining farms nearby. By November 2001, CPA members had occupied every single one of the main farmhouses on the six farms. In the rush for housing, sundry CPA members also took up residence in the houses and cottages of the former farm labourers.

The sisters and their family members persistently voiced a vague general dissatisfaction and decried their poverty. They continued to make demands to the CPA leadership and whoever else would listen, for game meat, transport and healthcare which they felt should be delivered to them as a benefit of the restitution process.



The two grandmothers and their family had their authenticity firmly established. They could speak N/u, while photographic evidence placed at least one of them and their ancestors at the centre of an event that was an essential part of the history of the southern Kalahari. The sisters could show clear evidence of sites that they had occupied in the Park. All this made it very difficult for others to challenge them or in any way to cast doubt on their San-ness.

#### 6.4 ***Antithetical livelihoods: the case of “San farmers”***

Three livestock farmers, *Tieties*, *Vaalbooi* and *Oom Jan*, who were members of the CPA, moved onto the farms given as restitution. This was because the grazing land in Mier was either insufficient, under dispute or because they had never held rights to the land or grazing in the first place. Here I will elaborate briefly on the

circumstances of these farmers, not only to highlight the various reasons they came to the farms but also to show how each of them used the resources differently. Each was “driven” to the farms by a unique set of forces. Additionally, what they brought to the farms, or in one case did not bring, determined how they were able to use resources there to their individual advantage. The rest of this chapter tells the story of these three types of livestock farmers, who had followed a particular path to the farms but had each constructed and asserted their San identity differently.

*Tieties* came from Groot Mier, where the commons were overgrazed and overcrowded and farmers with occupancy rights were limited to fifty small livestock units. Accordingly, the mixed herd of just over a hundred animals that Oom Hans had purchased after his retirement was too large for the commons (Int-47 14/03/00). *Hendrik Vaalbooi* had been involved in a dispute with eleven other farmers over water rights at the Mier game camp, *Geisamap*. Vaalbooi was violently forced off the grazing land by the others occupants of the farm (Int-22 29/11/99; Int-23 28/11/99; Int-19 30/11/99). He was a member of the CPA and requested, as an emergency measure, to be temporarily accommodated on the farm Witdraai (Int-47 14/03/99). After *Tieties* and *Vaalbooi* moved onto the farms, they depended largely on the available grazing and did not make use of any other natural resources. These two farmers kept mixed herds of cattle, goats, sheep and horses, of these sheep being the most abundant.

Jan van der Westhuisen moved to the farm in 2000. He only had a few donkeys for transport, plus a few goats, and further subsisted from hunting with his dogs. He also earned a little from selling craft-work at the Sisêñ craft workshop. In addition, he

opened a traditional healthcare practice, where he sold both locally gathered herbs and commercially manufactured herbal remedies. His livelihood strategies had several aspects in common with those of the Kagga Kamma group and the Swartkops sisters. He was involved in craft production, tourist performances, acting, and the harvesting of natural resources. In common with members of the “traditional group”, he was poorer than most of the stock farmers. The other livestock farmers, like Oom Hans and Oom Hendrik, tried to get him off the land by claiming that he was not a “real” farmer and that he was there only to scavenge and steal (Int-10 11/03/01).

The group under *Oom Dawid Kruiper*, in turn, directed much of their dissatisfaction against two of the farmers. They claimed that it had been decided at an earlier meeting that the stock farmers should not be located at Witdraai. Instead, they should move with their animals to one of the other farms (Int-08 xx/xx/00; Int-65 21/03/00; Int-66 28-30/04/01; Int-78 05/03/00). The Kagga Kamma group, as well as NGOs (who informed many of the Kagga Kamma group’s views), saw the stock farmers as the antithesis of “San culture” (Int-74 13/03/00). The group also feared that they would be marginalized and pushed off Witdraai by the stock farmers. As a result, shortly after he had been moved out of his grazing at Mier, *Hendrik Vaalbooi* had to leave again.

The livestock farmers faced a very particular dilemma: they had to show that they were *regte Boesmans* and that they had as much claim to San-ness and the available resources as those #Khomani who could claim ethnographic authenticity. How did these two farmers, Tieties and Vaalbooi, do this? How did they show that they were *regte* (real) or *ware* (true) San? They could not claim that they had the

traditions of San people; after all, their workaday lives did not match up with those who were considered Bushmen. They could make reference to being San through an appeal to authenticity and existential veridicality. They could claim that they had in fact been 'marred by modernity'. They could and did claim that the 'modernizing' influence of colonialism and subsequently of apartheid had alienated, made anomic, and burgeoned their alterity.

For example, Oom Hans reported that they had "lost the names and the way of life and the land and its resources and for years lived on the bottom of the heap". For these San farmers, participation in the land claim was not an ordinary reclamation of some "auratic" identity (Mufti, 2000). They had never known such an identity and it was essentially "lost" to them. They were, however, seeking redress for the alienation, anomie and alterity of modernity. In other words, they were asking us to believe that they were San farmers, even though the notion of being both a farmer and a San person appeared to be antithetical. Moreover, since they had no recourse to cultural purity or tradition in order to define themselves as San, these two farmers made claims to their San-ness through appeals to common dispossession, domination and destruction of their traditional culture.

While the Swartkops sisters eventually became involved in stock farming, they were never labeled "westernized San". This was largely because their "legitimacy" as San was based on their linguistic and biographical authenticity. *Oom Jan van der Westhuisen* enjoyed legitimacy as a traditional San because his livelihood mirrored that of the other traditional San, although his biographical and linguistic markers were questionable. *Hendrik Vaalbooi* and *Hans Tieties* had no such markers and had

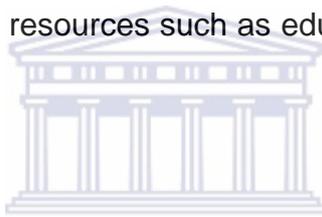
to legitimize their presence on farms by internalizing a “westernized San” identity, by saying in effect that they were “San farmers”.

Over the next two years, very little was done to promote socio-economic growth and the implementation of development plans on the farms. Instead, CPA members scrambled for houses, “traditionalists” questioned the presence of stock farmers, and those involved in resource harvesting were labeled *stropers* (poachers). Disputes arose about the right to manage natural resources. These conflicts were interpreted by many CPA members as competition between “western commercial pursuits” (such as stock farming, large-scale hunting, wood sales, and entrepreneurship in general) and “traditional livelihoods” (such as hunting for household consumption, tourism<sup>68</sup>, medicinal and food plant harvests for personal consumption). In essence, the disputes were seen as a competition between “traditional” San who wanted to lead a “genuine San way of life” and supported the revival of what they perceived to be San culture, and those who were interested in the economic gains to be had from land ownership in a “western” manner.

This interpretation of the conflict as a simple western and traditional split by some ≠Khomani, NGO observers and some academics (e.g. Robins, 2001) fell short of the mark and masked a range of other factors that led to dissatisfaction among many of the ≠Khomani San CPA members. Two aspects are important in my analysis of the dissatisfaction after the settlement of the claim: 1) the economic and power relations between the two “groupings” (traditional and western) and other dynamics, masked by the simplistic interpretation of the conflicts by the parties concerned, and 2) the expectations that members had of the restitution process.

## 6.5 ***The “traditional” and “western” split: cracks in the community cohesion and definition of authenticity***

Firstly, the distinction between “western” and “traditional” San is not purely one of “cultural loss”; there were class aspects to the division. The so-called “western San” were generally the wealthier group of the ≠Khomani San and had access to more material resources than the “traditional” San. Many of them had formal housing in the settlements of Mier or in Upington and had income from jobs or were self-employed. Additionally, they owned vehicles, significant numbers of livestock and had non-material resources such as education, political affiliations, and institutional experience.



An individual such as *Oom Jan v/d Westhuisen* did not fit into the so-called “western” group because of his relative poverty. The “traditional San” did not have similar access to these resources. The conflicts were in part a result of the process whereby the élites in the ≠Khomani San CPA (those who could be considered élite among the ≠Khomani San) were wresting control of the resources from the poorer, less powerful section of the community. This, however, did not take place without resistance, as the poorer “traditional San” often voiced their dissatisfaction.

The monopoly of resources held by the already better resourced (those who had vehicles, livestock, access to finance *inter alia*) was not unique and has been documented elsewhere. For example, Wilmsen (1989) similarly documented how some San families he studied were able to better exploit natural resources and also

how families could monopolize the tourist craft market because of their relative wealth. He explained, for example, (Wilmsen, 1989) how those families who owned horses were more successful at hunting and were better able to secure the resources used in craft production. It would seem that similar processes were at play in the #Khomani CPA, as certain sections could effectively gain access to and exploit natural resources such as grazing, simply because they had the means to do so.

Aside from the differences in wealth between the CPA members, the “traditional/western” split masked the common geographic origin and family membership of those labeled as such. Almost all those in the Kagga Kamma group were from the Park and had been at Kagga Kamma at the time of the lodging of the claim. They were all consanguine relations. The individuals in the so-called “western group” were from the settlements in Mier and had no previous association with the Park. Many were related to the *Vaalboois*, either as consanguine relatives or affines. The division corresponded with the first two groups of members who joined the applicant community (see Chapter five); *Oom Dawid* and the traditionalists were basically the first set of petitioners who initiated the land claim. The “westerners” were by and large extra-legal San claimants (individuals included in the community who had no legal rights to restitution) who joined the claimant group afterwards. The CPA executive was understood by many members to be representative of “western” interests. Common geographic origin came to the fore strongly with the membership drive that took place before the last CPA election. The executive committee that was elected at that time had campaigned heavily in the settlements where their relatives lived and therefore captured a greater number of votes.

In general, San society has been defined by its livelihoods more than by anything else. They are understood to be foragers and not cultivators, hunters not herders. Much empirical work has, however, shown the difficulty of trying to apply this seemingly obvious criterion to San groups (Jolly, 1996; Smith, *et al.* 2000; Boonzaier, *et al.* 1996; Schrire, 1980). In the process of defining any of the ≠Khomani San as “traditional”, one of the key markers has been the person’s livelihood strategy. But a warning note is sounded here: “The endorsing of primordialists’ notions of the San as hunter-gatherers [has] led to the devaluation and marginalization of alternate livelihood strategies” (Robins, 2001). This could be clearly observed in the distinction made between stock farmers, the group resident at Witdraai, and those who had a different set of livelihood strategies, such as natural resource harvesting, craft production, tourism and acting in films. For those who belonged to the traditional group, despite their livelihood strategies, there were markers that overrode this, the most important of these being knowledge of the N/u language (as in the case of the Swartkops sisters). Kinship also acted as an overriding factor. For instance, the members of the Kruiper family were almost automatically counted as representing the interests of the traditional San.

But was this distinction, made by various members the CPA and other residents of the region, between the “traditional” and “western” members of the ≠Khomani San CPA and the various factors it masked, such as livelihoods and wealth, solely responsible for the problems experienced by the ≠Khomani San? In fact, there was another underlying cause of the conflicts of which these were but symptoms. Restitution had created, through no fault of any one person or organization, various expectations among members.

## 6.6 ***“Return to the old ways”*: group expectations and the meaning of restitution**

In line with what other authors on restitution in South Africa have argued, the narratives surrounding restitution may be problematic (James, 2000; Du Toit, 2000). The ≠Khomani San claim is not the only one which includes a narrative of a “return to the old ways”. In many claims, the narratives have been about the loss of more than the land. They have been about a nostalgia for the almost mythical, idealized, romanticized “community that was lost” (Du Toit, 2000; Brown, *et al.* 1998; James, 2000; Walker, 2000). For the “traditional” southern Kalahari claimants, the return to the land meant also a return to a way of life and an “authentic” San identity of which they had been deprived. The claimants expected the restitution process to set in motion a range of other processes of revival, reconciliation, reconstruction and rediscovery. But the programme was only about restoring land and rights, and there was to be no “land-based TRC” for the victims (Meshtrie, 1998/99).

The members of the ≠Khomani San CPA continued to draw on narratives of dispossession linked to the land, even after the claim had been settled. I was especially struck by the expressed expectation that people would be able to hunt again. Many thought they would be able live as their forebears had by hunting and gathering. For others, the “return” meant that their children would learn the language of the ≠Khomani San people (Int-01 08/03/00; Int-04 27/11/00). The “indigenous” knowledge of the San would once again be passed from the elders to the young, including skills such as tracking, veld (herbal) medicine and other survival tactics

(Int-25 04/04/00; Int-51 13/06/01). Above all, life would be better for them. The initial euphoria of having some of the land back and the plans for the revival of the old ways soon dissipated. A realization dawned on many of the claimants that there would be no return to the past. The restitution of land did not mean the recreation of their former lifestyle.

As time passed, the nostalgia shifted. The “revival” plans now became vested in a different piece of land. Although it was part of the restitution package, the land in the Park was not yet open for access and people did not feel that it was in their possession. Access to this land and definition of rights in the Park had not taken place at this time. Possibly because they were not physically present on the land, many felt that the land and the rights in the Park would still come. Often one would hear people talking about “when we get the Park, things will happen”.

Thus, once the realization came of “no return to the old days”, people instead projected their nostalgia onto the Park. Through what they voiced, it seemed they felt that this “return to the old days” was only being delayed until they took possession of the Park. The farms became places that were corrupted by the influence of the “westerners”, who were blamed by many for the supposed ruinous state of the farmland (Int-01 07/03/01). The inability of a portion of the Witdraai residents to engage in livelihoods (specifically hunting) which they had foreseen as possible was also laid at the door of the western San and their activities on the farms. Unfortunately, the NGO personnel reinforced the romanticism felt by many of the ≠Khomani San people. Many of the early proposals for economic activities on the land were based on perceived notions of what San people were supposed to have

done in the past. To residents on the farms, it seemed that, since their dreams had not come true on the farms, the Park land would nullify the “losses” when they took possession of it.

The individual stories of loss cover more than the loss of land and livelihoods. Many of the tales of personal loss focus on a specific episode of loss or items that were lost, as well stories of culture loss and impoverishment (See Box 1). It followed that for many of the CPA members the restitution of land rights remained an inadequate conclusion to the story. Many other demands were being made for other forms of restitution and redress. But the restitution was not meant to heal all the scars or return all the goods lost; it was only about the return of land. The Park lands had become the focus of calls for restitution beyond the return of the land itself. The demands and dissatisfaction became greater once it became clear to many that their rights in the Park were limited. There would be no residential activities or unorganized hunting in the parklands. So the ≠Khomani San people could not stay there, and there would be no “revival” of a hunter-gatherer existence.

**Box 1**

*Oom Piet Nagoep (Na//khu; Naxup)* tells of how, in what he terms the “*Afrikaanse tyd*” (time of Afrikaans) as opposed to *die Boesman se tyd* and the present *Mandela se tyd*, his father worked on a farm in the Kuruman riverbed. This farmer was at first very accepting of the fact that his father grazed a few head of livestock on the farm. When the farmer died and his son took over, he asked *Oom Piet’s* father to get rid of the livestock. *Oom Piet* reflects on where he would have been if granted the opportunity to continue farming with livestock. His periodization of history includes a time-frame based on language, reflecting the loss of language by the southern Kalahari San (Int-25 04/04/00).

*Ouma //Unnas* animatedly retells tales of when “Bain” left them at Witdraai in the 1930s. She recounts how, after her father was beaten up by a policeman and died in Botswana, they had to move on foot and were forced to leave all the gifts they had received behind, the toys, dolls, the pots, the blankets. She never lost the language, she still speaks N/u, but the other things were lost, family, material goods, homes (Int- 01 14/03/00).

Others reflect on how, when they still lived in the park, their movements were limited and their activities curbed. Since they were not allowed to hunt, the warden questioned them every time they ate meat. And they had better be able to account for each morsel. *Oom Abraham* says he lost days slaving in the sun and among the dangerous animals of the veld for little pay. Basic freedoms and a livelihood were denied (Int-11 06/07/2001).

Going to N!ooi (Dawid Karizeb) one day with a Xhosa-speaking guest who needed to see an *Abathwa*<sup>69</sup> healer, we hear another story of loss. When undertaking the consultation, N!ooi allows me to sit in for a while before the actual ritual starts. He is to divine the “problem”, but he explains they don’t use “*dolosse*”<sup>70</sup> any more. When his grandfather, Regopstaan, died one of the family members stole the “*dolosse*” and sold them to a Muslim in Cape Town. The loss was both of a grandfather’s and the people’s “magic” (Int-12 15/07/2001)

Some of the claimants voice desire or demands for their own personal “restitution”. *Elsie Swarts*, in a drunken conversation, cries and demands that her father’s diamonds be returned to her. She says her father was a diamond smuggler and that someone whom she doesn’t name must returned her father’s things. Whether true or not, this story indicates that the land restitution process has not satisfied claimants. There are “things” people want before they will feel that there has been reparation for damages and losses they have suffered (Int-56 12/03/2001).

*Ouma Keis* also has some unfinished business. Her story starts in the 1930s, when she and her grandparents joined the group of San people traveling with Bain. During this trip, they were subject to “scientific scrutiny”. Many photographs were taken of them, mostly for anthropometrical purposes. Some of these were taken to explore the theory of the “hottentot apron” or the hypertrophy of the *labia*

*minora*. Like many of the other women in this group, she was also photographed. While she has seen many of the family portraits that were done, she maintains that we should return her photographs to her. What does she mean? Well, she wants her nude photographs. It is as if the return of these to her will remove the scar of the subjugation involved in the anthropometric photography. For her, restitution would take effect when she has the photographs and they are removed from any gaze.

## 6.7 **Conclusion**

It can be argued that the claim itself, its conceptualization, its implementation, its eventual conclusion and the activities of the claimants afterwards, were driven by the narratives of authenticity held by the actors involved. These narratives defined what some perceived to be a “San norm”, this norm being a prescriptive tool that set out appropriate San behaviour. The Kagga Kamma group tried to exclude those who did not conform to this “San norm”, but no one enforced the norm and their attempts at exclusion were not successful.

The ≠Khomani San land claim and the post-settlement activities of the claimants were driven by narratives of authenticity. The manner in which the land claim was conceptualized, suggesting that the claimants were and would continue to be involved in hunting and gathering, was generally accepted by laypersons and academics as definitive of the San. When Chennels undertook the agreement with Regopstaan and Dawid Kruiper that they would ensure the return of the southern Kalahari San to their ancestral lands, it was with the added proviso that they would be able to hunt again. The research work done by Steyn (1984) underwrote this perception; his work took as a measure (of the extent of the land that was claimed) the amount of land needed for hunting. It was also not coincidental that the land

claimed was the Mier game camps and the Park, both places where there are plenty of game. When CRLR looked for land, they specifically sought out game farms and also stocked some of the land with game.

The definition of San-ness was linked to a specific resource, game animals, and a specific livelihood, hunting. The use of the game had to be of a specific type to be considered genuine; it had to be for household subsistence, since large-scale utilization for profit was seen as less authentically San and westernized. Certain livelihood strategies of CPA members were viewed as antithetical, and the proponents of authentic San livelihoods attempted to exclude those who engaged in these other activities, hence the call for the livestock herders to be moved to the other farms.



Measures were put in place to ensure that those who came forward to join the claimant group were authentically San. Not only did those who wanted to join have to show that they had been dispossessed but they also had to show links to certain families. The authenticity of members could be checked against the genealogical data available to the administrators of the claim. Nonetheless, when the criterion of family was replaced with a more general ethnic title, many people joined whose authenticity would be questioned later. The traditionalists and their search for authenticity proved to be “ultimately sterile and essentialistic” (Tomaselli, 2002). The group under scrutiny was too heterogeneous and attempts at exclusion would seem to have been impossible, since those undertaking it would probably have had to reflect on their own false sense of security on the basis of authenticity.

The vying for resources which took place after the settlement of the claim was similarly driven by a contestation over authenticity. The various groups resident on the farms were assigned different degrees of authenticity by their fellow CPA members. The Kagga Kamma group, the most vocal architects of authenticity in the contestation, thought they would be able to exclude those whom they viewed as less authentic. They reasoned that people who were not practicing an authentic San way of life, in other words those who did not conform to a supposed “San norm”, had a lesser claim to resources, especially the game animals. But I would argue that their pursuit of authenticity and appeal to “San norms” led to their eventual exclusion from and loss of control over resource use. The authenticity strategy backfired. While they were trying to advance their cause by calling for a revival of an authentic way of life, others in the CPA were doing things the “western way”. These “western San” had access to social, political and physical capital which allowed them to better exploit the available resources on the farms. Hence, while the “traditional San” under the leadership of *Oom Dawid* were “practicing their culture” and trying to bring about the revival of the San lifestyle, the CPA executive was just “doing business”.

The Kagga Kamma group and others have continued to make demands for restitution beyond land. Their demands are often linked to revival of a hypothetical authentic San culture, as if the restitution process could mean a saving of their nearly extinct language, a reemergence of cultural practices, the freedom to hunt, and a general return of the old ways. But to whom were they complaining about this, beside themselves, and who heard their calls for cultural revival, except a few NGO workers, with no force to change things?

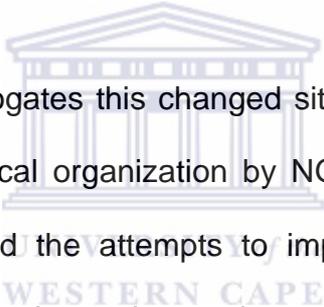
## Chapter 7

# 7 The #Khomani San traditional leadership: Considering narratives of authenticity regarding traditional leadership

### 7.1 *Introduction*

In this chapter, the key institution of governance, namely traditional leadership, is examined as it occurs among the #Khomani San. Twentieth-century ethnographies of the San sketch their political organization in “band societies”, but offer little insight into the present-day situation of San people in southern Africa as it relates to traditional leadership. In fact, much of the literature focuses on the supposed inability of the San to adjust to changing political and economic environments (Marshall, 1960; Lee, 1979; Silberbauer, 1981; Thomas, 1988). The current context of the San communities of southern Africa has required new styles of leadership and political organization, capable of speaking to national governments and powerful organizations like the United Nations, while still being able to tackle issues at the local level. Classic San ethnographies explicitly deny the existence of such an institution (Lee, 1976; Marshall, 1976). To find alternative views on traditional leadership, I will explore revisionists’ ethnographies (Wilmsen, 1989; Gordon, 2000) and current data on the San, and from this try to understand the very real and visible presence of ‘traditional’ leaders among the San in southern Africa.

The new environment has also given rise to organizations *of* San people and *for* San people, which have lobbied for resources and land rights for the San. Where the San have gained or have been granted these, they are held within common property institutions<sup>71</sup> (CPI). This chapter outlines these across the region and then focuses on the South African situation. The CPIs to which many San people in the region belong, while having differences, are fundamentally the same in their underlying structure. CPIs are officially recognized organizations which have a defined (not necessarily limited) membership. Each is governed by a constitution and has committees elected from its membership. It is in this context that the role of San traditional leaders is being defined and negotiated.



The chapter partly interrogates this changed situation against the background of interpretations of San political organization by NGOs, researchers, government and development workers and the attempts to implement an “appropriate” San governance based on assumptions about what constitutes an “authentic” San political organization. Sections of the #Khomani San group disagree with one another about the supposed nature of San governance. This has led to conflicts about who has the right to make resolutions, with resistance to the decisions made, and generally low levels of confidence in the governing institutions. The conflict revolves around the implementation of participative democracy versus attempts to ‘create’ a form of governance based on that thought to be prevalent in band societies, as they were described by ethnographies of the late 20<sup>th</sup> century (Marshall, 1976; Lee, 1976).

Traditional leadership is one of the most contested aspects of #Khomani San governance, and it will be the main focus of this chapter. The sections which follow trace the genealogy of San traditional leadership in southern Africa from early historical references to the present-day political organization, as well as examining the nature of such leadership. The focus is on historical references to San political organization, and the thoughts about it by twentieth-century ethnographers (mostly the post-1950 ethnographies).

The chapter then moves into a narrative dealing with the #Khomani San themselves. It follows a similar trajectory by first tracing historical references and then delving into twentieth-century ethnographies of the #Khomani San. Here I examine three movements in the history of the southern Kalahari. First, I look at the early settlement by the Vielanders 'Basters'<sup>72</sup>, where a passing reference to a Bushman chief hints at the possibility of an institution of traditional leadership. Secondly, I examine the scientific work done by academics from the University of the Witwatersrand during the 1930s and, more specifically, concerning the person held to be the leader of this group, *ou Abraham*. Lastly, the Kruiper lineage and their ascent to the leadership is mapped out in order to highlight further issues around leadership.

Several conclusions are drawn about the contested nature of the leadership of the San leadership and, indirectly, their political organization. Firstly, with the exception of age (which here denotes seniority), there appears to be little fixed, conventionally accepted and overtly applied cultural rules, when selecting the leadership. This is especially so with #Khomani San where, for example, specific

criteria such as hunting prowess, strength, and the ability to track, noted in early ethnographies, do not appear to be relevant to the selection process. Rather, the selection criteria would often be randomly shaped by a number of variables, such as the context in which the process occurred or the frequency with which individuals had contact with outsiders. Lastly, it seems that when strong or prominent leaders arise it is usually in the context of a 'struggle', whether for land, resource tenure, basic human rights or political representation.

## 7.2 **Background**

The case study areas, Mier and the Kalahari Gemsbok National Park (KGNP), are located on the south-western tip of the Kalahari Desert. This is the only section of this "Thirstland" to be located in South Africa (Acocks, 1988). The south-western section of the Kalahari is also the driest part of the region; rainfall here averages about 150mm per annum, increasing as one moves diagonally across the Kalahari to the northeast (Tyson & Crimps, 2000). The vast expanses of grass that bloom after the summer rains support a large population of antelope species and other herbivores, such as gemsbok, eland, and springbok.

During the 1860s, the animal population here was so abundant that the non-San settlers who moved into the region subsisted largely from hunting and kept only limited numbers of livestock (Farini, 1973). There is evidence that the Koranna (!OraKhoe) used the river valleys of the southern Kalahari as their hunting grounds before the "*Basters*" arrived in the region.<sup>73</sup> Since the early settlers depended on hunting, they jealously guarded access to their hunting grounds along the Nossob and the Auob rivers. For example, 'Captain' Dirk Vielander<sup>74</sup>, in order to safeguard this resource, allowed only a few white hunters or traders into the region. In his

appeals to the Northern border magistrate at Kenhardt, Vielander emphasized that, “We rely only on the product of the ‘chase’”<sup>75</sup>. Some of the earliest white settlers of the region came specifically to hunt. The Rautenbach brothers<sup>76</sup>, for instance, came for ostrich feathers and ivory<sup>77</sup>. This dependence on game still existed in the 1930s. The ‘*Basters*’ were eventually moved out of the park areas because they were viewed as a serious threat to the game (Kloppers, 1970; Doke, nd).

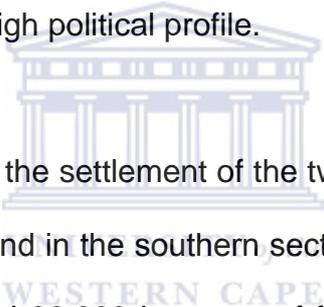
The KGNP was established in 1931 to replace the Gordonia Game Reserve and, most importantly, to prevent the imminent extinction of the gemsbok (Kloppers, 1970; Pringle, 1982). Several groups shared the area selected for the new park, including the San, who historically had used the land as their hunting grounds. At the time, a group of white farmers and *Basters* also lived within the bounds of the proposed park. Following the proclamation of the park, the former were relocated along the Kuruman riverbed (Kloppers, 1970; van de Merwe, 1941). The “*Basters*” were given land around Bokspits, on the present-day border of Botswana and RSA (Green, nd). The San, who were not seen as farmers, were slowly and forcibly removed between 1936 and 1974.

After the park had been established, a philanthropist named Donald Bain embarked on a campaign to ensure the survival of what was thought to be the last remaining “pure” San population in South Africa. He believed that “the Park” would be the ideal place for the San to live. Bain launched a protracted campaign (which left him bankrupt) for this purpose. As a result, many of the San were allowed to return to the southern Kalahari. However, the 77 San who toured with Bain throughout South Africa were refused access to the Park upon their return to the

southern Kalahari. Park officials had instead recruited “other” San people to work as labourers (Brody, 2003; Crawhall, 2002). The government eventually provided a place for some of “Bain’s San” inside the Park. The majority, however, dispersed throughout the southern Kalahari to work on farms or to settlements in the greater Northern Cape Province. Those who were allowed to stay in the park were the group to whom *Oom Dawid* Kruiper and his family belonged. This accommodation of the San within the park involved what Cleary (1989) calls “enforced primitivism”. They were allowed on the condition that they did not intermarry with other “races” and that they maintained only their “traditional” methods of hunting (Cleary, 1989).

Although they were held under custodianship for a long period (from approximately the early 1940s onward) this ended in the early 1970s. The reason for their final removal from the Park was linked to the conditions set out above. It was claimed by conservation organizations and white farmers on adjacent farms that they no longer upheld their “culture” and were not “pure” Bushmen. They spoke Afrikaans, intermarried with other population groups, and hunted with dogs. From time to time, the wardens proclaimed there were too many dogs and had the animals shot (Carruthers, 2003; Schrire, 1995). In the early 1970s, the San people were relocated to a coloured settlement, Welkom, about 8 kilometers south of the park entrance (Wildschut & Steyn, 1990). This move marked the final stage in the dispossession of the San of their rights in the park. Here they were discriminated against in the schools, had little access to natural resources such as firewood, and no services such as electricity or running water (Wildschut & Steyn, 1990).

In 1995, the San group resident at a private game farm, Kagga Kamma, in the Western Cape region, where they were employed to attract tourists with the promise of seeing 'real San' people, indicated to their labour lawyer that they longed to return to the Kalahari. Since the land reform programme was in place, the lawyer assisted them with lodging their claim for land within the park, as well as for some land in an area under the jurisdiction of the Mier TLC. The targeting of this Mier land led to conflict between the San and Mier TLC. Consequently, the Mier community lodged their own claim for land inside the Park. This resulted in an overlap with the claim of the #Khomani San. Due to the much-publicized discourses on aboriginality and international campaigns for the recognition of aboriginal rights, the San claim was highly publicized and given a high political profile.



In March 1999, as part of the settlement of the two claims, the two groups were allocated 50,000 hectares of land in the southern section of the Park. The #Khomani San also received an additional 36,000 hectares of farmland outside the Park. The Mier community were awarded four farms for redistribution purposes. Both groups also received cash compensation, to be used for the purchase of additional land for grazing. No limitations were placed on the use of the farmland, but the land inside the Park was limited to conservation only.

After the settlement of the land claim, Botswana and South Africa signed an agreement for the first official trans-frontier park, the Kgaligadi Transfrontier Park (KTFP). The San and the Mier community were now part owners of the Park. However, the management of the trans-frontier Park excluded both the San and Mier communities, since their portion of the park, it was argued, lay outside the

geographical area under the auspices of the cross-border resource management agreement (Tri-lat17-07-01).

The San and the Mier community had sharply contrasting, but also converging, views on what the land inside the park could offer them. The San felt that its main importance lay in what it could offer them in terms of heritage conservation and the preservation of their culture. The Mier community, on the other hand, was more concerned with the actual economic benefits their ownership of the land could bring them. The activities and land uses that the San proposed were linked to the transmission of their culture to the younger generation. The Mier group, however, wanted job creation and economic development for the Mier municipal area. They were interested in both non-consumptive (nature tourism and nature conservation) and consumptive (grazing and raising crops) uses for land inside the park. They built up a small clientele of regular hunters who visited their game camps every year. The #Khomani San, on the other hand, planned to establish a non-residential tourist cultural village in the park. They were hoping, with encouragement from various NGOs and government agencies, to use their identity and culture as a major draw-card for tourists to the region. However, in the two years which followed the success of their claim, they did not succeed in drawing large numbers of visitors.

While the restitution cases appeared resolved, many other issues remained unsettled. Boundaries (in terms of grazing and hunting) and resource rights remained unclear. The trans-frontier issue was an example of how fuzzy boundaries continued to raise questions about community involvement in decision-making, as well as the unequal power relations between Mier, the San and conservation bodies.

The most serious threat to stability following the resolution of the claims, however, appeared to be the non-negotiable constraints relating to land use within the park. There were already signs that many of the claimants were not satisfied with all the elements of the deal. This was evident in the comment of one community member: “*Ons kan maar net so wel die grond teruggee!*” (We might as well give the land back!).

Managing the land and resources which became available to the San after the claim was settled became the responsibility of the #Khomani San Communal Property Association (CPA)<sup>78</sup>, commonly referred to as the “*Vereeniging*”. A committee of fourteen CPA members, elected every two years, was responsible for most of the day-to-day running of the CPA. This committee met from time to time to make decisions about resources. The CPA had some serious teething problems. These ranged from institutional amorphousness, allegations of financial mismanagement and intra-community conflict, to threats against the security of tenure, votes of no confidence and conflicting views on the ability of leaders to govern. One important issue was that of traditional leadership, its legitimacy and its exact role. Some believed that the traditional leader (an elected position) should have executive and veto powers exceeding those held by any other committee member. Disagreements came to a head when a legal team, in cooperation with an NGO, omitted the elected traditional leader (*Oom Dawid Kruiper*) from a revised CPA constitution. This move was interpreted by some as being deliberate and was met with fierce opposition by community members. This opposition resulted in the legal team doing a hasty revision of the appropriate sections of the constitution to accommodate the role and responsibilities of the traditional leader.

This incident raised some interesting questions about traditional leadership and its place in San society. It appeared that key stakeholders such as the legal team and the NGO did not question whether the San had traditional leaders. Rather, they assumed it was absent at that time and decided that such an institution should be revived. This was in contrast to the essentialist image, informed by isolationists' studies of the San. This largely argued either for the lack of, or feebleness of such an institution [Meaning unclear] as advocated by many of the NGO staff, neighbouring groups or the San themselves. In brief, assumptions were made about the cultural, social and historical legitimacy of the institution in San society, even before such legitimacy could be established.

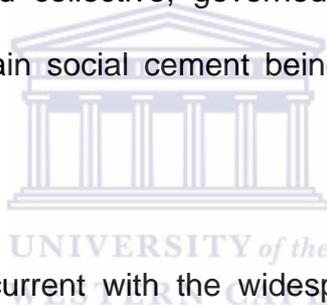


Thus several questions arose. For example, did San groupings in the past have “traditional leaders”? If there had been such leaders, what was the basis for their authority? Which “cultural rules” were applied in the maintenance of the traditional leadership? Certainly, current literature on San people indicates that many groupings in Botswana, Namibia, and South Africa had always had traditional leadership (Useb, 2000). However, whether or not it was a historically or ethnographically proven fact, assuming that no such institution existed in the past was a common feature of the San political organization at that time.

### 7.3 *A survey of traditional leadership issues among the San*

#### 7.3.1 Historical references to San leadership

During the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries, the key perception about San political organization was that it was virtually non-existent. The San were represented as living without laws, leaders or forms of government. In the view of some, they were akin to Rousseau's lone man wandering through nature, who governs only himself and is not bound by the social contract. In this category were those like Theal, who referred to the fierce independence of individuals in describing the San's "want of government" (Theal, 1910). The other view, suggested by Durkheim, was that of the "horde", the loosely organized collective, governed more by natural forces than social conditions, with the main social cement being relations of similarity (Helm, 1996).



Such views were concurrent with the widespread idea that the San were subhuman and closer to animals, and that their existence was therefore devoid of any rule. The dominant perception of this time was characterized by the 'outcast' image, which placed the San on the lowest rung of the evolutionary ladder (Humphreys, 1985), that is, biologically and socially at the lowest order. The San were assumed to have none of the institutions of more advanced societies, including leaders. These views were generated from a position of ignorance, and of perceptions which made any further investigation unnecessary.

The assignment of the San to the lowest order of social organization had a direct impact on how their political organization was seen. Since centralized leadership and a more highly stratified society was seen as characteristic of "more

advanced” social formations, it followed that those at the lower end of the spectrum were lacking in this respect. Where these early observers were ready to admit the existence of one or the other kind of leader, they usually found ways of lessening the status of such individuals. For example, though the traveller Gordon noted that there were leaders among the San, he gave the Khoi much more credit, attributing patrilineal descent of the chiefly position, coupled with the existence of a gerontocratic class. In contrast, he viewed leadership among the San as ephemeral and dictated by the moment, in which the “bravest and most dextrous would only take charge where skills are needed” (Gordon, quoted in Smith, 1996).

Three instances in which historians noted visible leadership in San societies are found in the literature discussed below. Firstly, contact leaders were produced through the colonists’ need to find individuals with whom they could negotiate and trade. Secondly, key individuals often organized resistance in various parts of the country in response to the threats to their tenure of the land, and, thirdly, the functions of certain San individuals as ritual specialists and rainmakers often gave them prominence in their societies. This special role could have allowed them to gain status in their own groups. It could also be argued that, with the associated material benefits, they might have been a step higher up in the hierarchy of their group.

### **7.3.2 Contact leaders**

Some historians have examined travellers’ accounts of San society and attempted to draw conclusions about San political institutions, including traditional leadership. Smith *et al* (2000) are of the opinion that the San did not have chiefs [*sic*] but that often such leaders were produced under special conditions. These conditions were usually situations of “contact”; they could be violent encounters with

other groups (Nguni or settlers) or passive encounters, such as trade or travel. Penn argued that in trade, as with the pacification of the indigenous population, the settlers needed strong men with whom to negotiate (Penn, 1996). When these were unavailable, the outsiders themselves would create or appoint a chief. Elsewhere it has been argued that the early colonists had a cultural bias towards hierarchy and that they preferred to deal with individuals rather than collectives, so the individuals they selected as 'authority figures' might not necessarily have reflected the manner in which Khoisan society would have been stratified (Abrahams, 1995). In addition, the process the settlers undertook of appointing captains made the issues first "one of struggle, then of contestation" (Abrahams, 1995:30).

### 7.3.3 Conflict leaders

The violent conditions of the colonial encounters sometimes gave rise to "war chiefs" or leaders of "Bushman gangs" (Gordon & Sholto-Douglas, 2000). These leaders of the Bushman gangs were usually at the head of organizing localized resistance to the incursions into their land. Among them were the Hans Gang of Namibia (Gordon & Sholto-douglas, 2000), Roman Brandrug of Namaqualand (Broodryk, 1992), and Madolo of the Eastern Cape frontier (Saunders 1977). At times, some San leaders managed to organize large-scale resistance to outside threats; this level of organization and leadership, however, was sometimes ephemeral and dissipated after the conflict (Smith *et al*, 2000). Other Bushman chiefs had a firmer base of power, and their "rule" lasted longer than the sporadic resistance put up by the "gangs" or the war chiefs. Examples of these types of leaders abound, and some were so powerful that treaties had to be signed with them (Gordon & Sholto-douglas, 2000; Suzman, 2001). Madolo, for example, not only led

a group of San, but also Khoi, Thembu and Mfingos, on occasion against and at other times alongside the colonial invaders (Saunders, 1977).

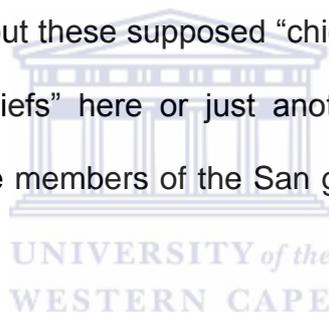
#### **7.3.4 Ritual specialists: chiefs or subordinates?**

In some cases, evidence has been found that San persons rose to positions of prestige through their perceived abilities as healers or rainmakers (Prins & Lewis, 1992; Prins, 1996; Saunders, 1977). In other instances, they gained status through assimilation into groups such as the Mpondomise by marriage (Prins & Lewis, 1992). Cases of Nguni chiefs taking San wives have been recorded elsewhere. Several of these San chiefs were documented as having lived in close proximity to their Nguni neighbours. Usually their leadership was associated with their 'ownership' of caves, which held a central importance in the rainmaking rituals and rock paintings (Woodhouse, 1997; Prins, 1990). Examples of these were Madolo, Korel and Baardman (*ibid.*). These specialists had, through their 'ownership' of these ritually significant sites, control over a potentially powerful relation to the Nguni and thereby access to resources unavailable directly to the other San cohabiting with them. Interestingly, Jolly (1996b) made a converse claim when he argued that the Nguni farmers were in need of the San magico-religious resources, rather than the reverse, in which the San would be desirous of the Nguni goods (Jolly, 1996b).

The "ownership" of these caves does not automatically imply that the 'owner' was a chief or traditional leader; the individual may only have been a ritual specialist with no further privileges. Indeed, the relationship may even have been a coercive one, in which these "rain chiefs" had little choice (Prins, 1990). Scientists, Stow for example, who met up with these "owners" simply assumed that they were 'chiefs',

and in most texts this categorization is not probed (Woodhouse, 1997). Ritual specialists and “owners of caves” who were known during the 1930s were never referred to as chiefs, but as clients of southern Nguni chiefs in whose districts they resided (for examples, see Prins, 1990)<sup>79</sup>. The perspective from which the assertion of the San chieftaincy was made was not grounded in indigenous San concepts, but rather based on a relationship that the individual would have had with more powerful groups. In other words, while it may be known what their Nguni patrons thought of them or what the European scientists assumed about their status, the voices of the San persons involved do not filter through in these accounts.

In the end, more is known about these supposed “chiefs” and almost nothing of their “constituents”. Were they “chiefs” here or just another member of the group? It remains uncertain whether the members of the San groups among whom they lived granted them any prestige.



### **7.3.5 A cursory note on land tenure**

In the case of the ‘war chiefs’, the rise of the leadership and involvement in conflict were usually linked to a land struggle. For example, while Madolo sided with the European settlers and more specifically the missionaries, he still encouraged the participation of the people under his command, partly because he thought this would provide him with a secure tenure on the land he saw as belonging to his people (Saunders, 1977; Woodhouse, 1997). It could be argued that traditional leadership evolves (not emerges) and is strengthened partly in response to threats against secure tenure, an embryonic institution which is birthed through the process of land dispossession.

### 7.3.6 The 'isolationists' and the critique of the modern

*The !Kung [San] are a people without a state; they have no overriding authority to settle disputes, maintain order and keep people in line. Whatever order there is has to come from the hearts and goodwill of the people themselves (Lee, 1984).*

The single most influential principle in the aforementioned literature is the idea that egalitarian principles lie at the foundation of all San societies. Some have argued that this manner of representing San society largely resulted from a critique of Western industrialized capitalist society in the post-WW II era (Wilmsen, 1995). The values found in San societies represented the way life should, or could, be and also what the western world had "lost" (Wilmsen, 1989).

With egalitarianism as their point of departure, these researchers made several deductions about the nature of San political organization. These students of San society focused on the "band", because they saw in it "the largest social unit within which sustained political and economic interaction occurs" (Silberbauer, 1981:138). They proceeded to construct a society that was non-hierarchical, made decisions through consensual processes, and had various socio-cultural practices which limited influence and power in the society. It therefore had a relatively limited scope for the development of authoritarian leaders, and was characterized by a high degree of individual autonomy. Above all, such egalitarianism was ascribed to, or rather explained through, the ecological constraints on the production of wealth. Such constraints were seen as severely limiting the production of status groups and thus of a leadership class.

### 7.3.7 Leadership in San society

*Differences in influences exist but only to the degree permitted by those who are influenced (Lenski & Lenski, 1982).*

Ideas about leadership and political organization changed drastically in San ethnographies after the 1950s. The general pattern of thought now was that San societies definitely had authority figures who could be seen as traditional leaders. These, however, were not “chiefs” who wielded power, but were more like “leader[s] rather than ruler[s]”, since they did “not exercise any organized control over [their] subjects” (Schapera, 1930). One of the main reasons given for this rather “flat” societal structure is that in forager culture there are very few opportunities for people to generate surplus and therefore to accumulate wealth. Consequently, it is highly unlikely that any class or power differences will develop (Harris, 1978; Lenski & Lenski 1982; Jordaan, 1975).

Silberbauer (1981) offered further insight into the reasons for the lack of strong centralized authority in the groups. He cited very specific cultural and ecological contexts. This also helps to illustrate the point that there was a variation between the San groups, depending on which group was being examined (*ibid.*). The ecological conditions in the central Kalahari necessitated seasonal dispersion and also led to seasonal nucleation. The fact that the groups annually separated and re-congregated made it difficult to develop a system with a “centralized, hierarchical structure with specialized personnel and roles” (*ibid.*). In other words, the lack of leadership among the G/wi, for instance, was influenced by the dispersion that took place in times of scarcity. This made the maintenance of autonomous households

vital. The relative lack of clear leadership among the G/wi is further made obvious by the context-dependent shifts in terms of whose influence was accepted (*ibid.*). So while one person might be consulted for hunting lore, he or she might not necessarily be called upon for healing purposes.

The manner in which the individual who was seen as the leader became or was chosen as such, varied. Every leader was chosen for a range of reasons, rather than as a consequence of one single overriding factor. Lee (1979) identified four factors that were important in the selection of the person whose influence was valued above that of others. Firstly, seniority in the group was a major factor which contributed to a person becoming the leader (Lee, 1979). This is in line with Bleek's assertion that San groups at the Cape had "no chiefs but rather pay deference to a patriarch" (Schapera, 1930). One point to note here is that other ethnographers, specifically Schapera, stated that the person who led the group could also be a woman; thus in some cases a "matriarch" might also be the person respected as the leader (*ibid.*). The elderly were valued because they had knowledge of areas and experiences which might be valuable to the group. The age of the individuals encountered was of specific interest to some of the scientists who studied the San. It was therefore important not only for the selection of leaders by San but also for the "creation" of leaders by outsiders.

Seniority and age were not the only factors which could lead to one becoming the leader of the group. A further factor identified by Lee was *n!ore* (Lee 1979; Lee, 1984) or ownership. The *n!ore* was the territory of one specific band that they claimed as the area where they could practice hunting and gathering, or where they

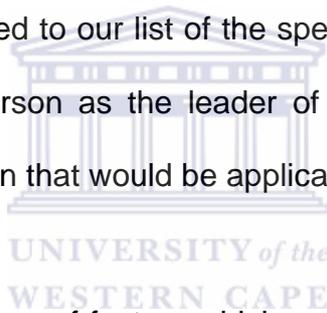
were the “owners” of the resources. *N!ore* ownership was usually derived from the fact that a particular family had been the longest living and utilizing resources in a specific area. According to Lee (1979), the *k"ausi* or *n!ore* owner was more like a host than a headman and was the one who was approached by outsiders when they wished to use any of the resources in an area. Like age, the *n!ore* ownership did not automatically qualify an individual for leadership.

A third way that one could gain prominence as a leader was through marriage into the family of the *n!ore* owners. Any person who married into the group of *n!ore* owners and showed special abilities could potentially become the leader of the group. It was noted that, if a *n!ore* owner died and had no male descendants, the man who married his eldest daughter could become the new *n!ore* owner (Marshall, 1960)<sup>80</sup>. Yet although the position of leader could be inherited, this was not always the case<sup>81</sup>. This lack of clear rules about descent will become important later when I examine the specifics of the ≠Khomani leadership.

Lastly, and probably most important, in order to be accepted as the person who was “followed”, one had to have certain personal qualities or special skills which made you a likely candidate (Marshall, 1960; Lee, 1979; Lee, 1984; Lenski & Lenski, 1982). A number of authors have focused on the aspects that made one a good candidate for the authority figure in the group. One of the prime characteristics was that of being an exceptional hunter. A good hunter, and the people who associated with him, would never go hungry, since he would be able to keep them supplied with meat. Secondly, the ability to speak or argue well could also make a person the prime choice for leader of the group. In some instances, the person might be a ritual

specialist, for example, a renowned healer or trance dancer, and be revered for this quality (Geunther, 1986). However Silberbauer (1981) declared that expertise in one matter might not mean expertise in another, so the opinions of different people might be sought, depending on the matter at hand.

From historical examples, we can also review some of the specialist skills. For instance, the colonists felt that the leader was often the one who was the “most noted depredator or the most cunning” (Smith *et al*, 2000). This was of course directly linked to the San who were involved in the resistance to the colonists intruding on their land, the so-called bandits and the renegades, the war chiefs. Military prowess could be added to our list of the special skills that could lead to the selection of one particular person as the leader of the group. Indeed, the above could be taken as a set criterion that would be applicable to any other group.



Although there was a range of factors which could result in an individual being respected or selected as the leader of the group, some researchers have reasoned that the nature of San societies was such that any display of overt power or unequal status was not tolerated (Marshall, 1976; Lee, 1979). Various cultural practices placed checks and balances on authority and prevented any one person from usurping authority in the group. In fact, the person who was considered the leader had very often to display certain behaviours that downplayed his or her status as a prominent person in the group. One such characteristic was the poverty of the leader; he or she should have no more and even possibly less than any of the others in the group (Marshall, 1960; Lee 1979; Shapera, 1930). The group would socially sanction

anyone who behaved in a manner suggesting that they were trying to gain authority or boast about their achievements.

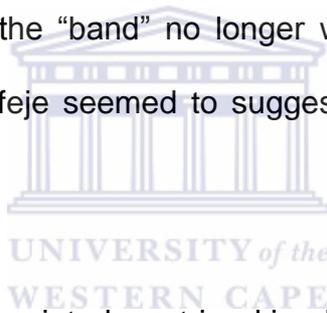
In examining transitions in forager societies, Lee (1979) suggested that the San sometimes produced or were “given a headman” in situations of contact<sup>82</sup>. Many students of San society have argued for links between the increased incidence of a sedentary lifestyle, which was apparent among contemporary San groups throughout the region, and the development of a centralized leadership (Kent, 1989a; Hitchcock & Holm, 1985). In this regard, studies of the San in Botswana have shown that leadership positions were often taken on by agents of the government or individuals who acted as liaison between the San and government institutions (Kent, 1989b). Kent (1989b) further linked the development of leadership with the processes of sedentarisation. Lee (1984) cited examples of this. For example, when Herero men met up with the San, they often chose a particular person with whom they wished to associate. Also, in meeting with state bureaucracies like the Land boards, the San often elected a person to be their spokesperson. These individuals were those whom the group felt would be the best candidates for the specific task at hand. But as Lee (1979) pointed out, while they may have been viewed as the most appropriate candidate by the San, they often fell short in terms of western cultural standards. The more the San found themselves integrated and involved in the political and economic situation of other groups, the greater the necessity became for them to have designated or elected spokespersons. Sometimes leaders were ascribed to the groups by outsiders. Lee (1979) furthermore distinguished between an inside and an outside leader, the first being the accepted leader in the group and the second being a person who was especially good at relating to outside groups (whites or other

blacks). He added, however, that values which were in some senses adverse to the culture of the San were needed if they were to protect their interests in the new “political arena of district councils, land boards, and nationalist politics” (Lee, 1979).

### **7.3.8 Revisionists and the political economy of the Kalahari**

Isolationist researchers engaged in a search for the “pure primitive”, the authentic forager, and in their work they ignored San groups who had sustained contact with agro-pastoralists or European farmers (Wilmsen, 1989; Suzman, 2000). These San people were viewed as living in the same way as their ancestors had for thousands of years by hunting and gathering alone. While none of the “Bushman studies” done in second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century explicitly denied the linkages between San economies and those of livestock keepers and other settlers, the interpretations of these linkages differed (Barnard, 1996). Two strains of interpretations emerged: those which analysed the San as part of what Barnard (1990) called a regional-historical perspective (revisionists) and an ethnographically-specific perspective (isolationists). The revisionists questioned not only the notion of contact but also the duration of and the reading of this contact. They saw contact as reaching back into antiquity, while the isolationists saw contact as a recent and potentially destructive phenomenon. Through a series of archive-based and archaeological studies, the revisionists were able to demonstrate what they believed to be sustained contact that reached back hundreds or even several thousand years (Wilmsen & Denbow, 1990; Gordon & Sholto-Douglas, 2000). This promotion of the antiquity of contact would lead to new questions and interpretations about San society.

Moreover, this antiquity of contact meant rethinking the interrelationship between the San and their Bantu-speaking neighbours, and also their eventual contact with western “civilisation”. If contact, broadly taken to include economic linkages as well as social and political interrelationships, was the historical norm, then the social, political and economic organization of San society needed to be examined anew. Primarily, it placed the San in a regional economy where they were active agents. Accordingly, the “Bushmen emerge as one of many indigenous people operating in a mobile landscape, forming political and economic alliances to take advantage of circumstances as they perceived them” (Gordon & Sholto-Douglas, 2000:11). By placing the San in history, the revisionists also situated them in a new political context. As a result, the “band” no longer was the basic unit of analysis. Following the revisionists, Mafeje seemed to suggest a similar rereading of ethnic histories.



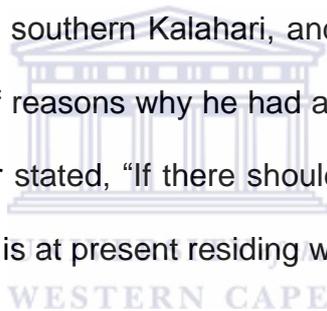
Mafeje’s key study of the intralacustrine kingdoms of East Africa, examining the so-called tribes and ethnic groups in this region, argued that “any tribal appellation that may attach to their various peoples must be treated as ideological ‘status categories’” (Mafeje, 1991:122). In a similar vein, Wilmsen, Gordon and others placed the San within the region’s political economy as ‘status categories’ and not simply as insular, independent, bounded *tribes* [sic] or ethnic groups. It was with this innovative analysis of the situation that, contrary to the previous studies, inequality entered the debate, not only between the San and “outsiders” but also within San society itself. The previous focus on the supposed egalitarian nature of San society and the critique of the modern fell away with this paradigm shift.

In the section that follows, I apply the same analytical “movements” to the #Khomani San as I have to the southern African San in general. The first movement scans older historical documents in an attempt to find a reference to a traditional leadership in the relatively distant past. The second movement probes the twentieth-century ethnographic material that refers to the #Khomani San. Lastly, and differently from the above, I also look at the current ethnographic materials to examine the issue of the San traditional leadership.

#### 7.4 ***Historical features of the leadership among the Southern Kalahari San***

“Kootjie” Afrikaner supposedly<sup>83</sup> sent Dirk Vielander into the southern Kalahari to *negotiate*<sup>84</sup> with the San there for living space for himself and his people (Tötemeyer, 1937; Keis, 1972; Broodryk, 1992; Wannenburg, nd.). Negotiation seems an unlikely strategy, considering the nature of the relationship between the “Basters”, the *trekboere*<sup>85</sup> and the San along the northern border frontier. Several commentators levelled allegations of slavery, physical violence and torture of the southern Kalahari San and Koranna at the “Baster” population (Anderson, 1974). In a letter to Vielander’s secretary, written in the hope of defending land transactions in which he was involved, a Kenhardt-based trader cautioned the magistrate about the enslavement of the San by the “Basters”<sup>86</sup>. In the light of this, it seems unlikely that the Vielander *Basters* would recognize the ownership of land or other resources or feel an urge to negotiate with the San of the region. However, while some of the European travelers and sojourners who traversed the region during the late 19<sup>th</sup> century described a relationship between the “Basters” and the San characterized by domination and violence, Vielander himself suggests a slightly different view.

The earliest reference to a San traditional leader in the southern Kalahari is found in a letter written on behalf of Dirk Vielander to the Northern Border Magistrate at Kenhardt. The context of the letter is important because it throws light on the subject of the recognition of San chiefs or leaders by outsiders, namely the Vielander “Basters”. A trader by the name of Ritmann had appealed to the special magistrate on the northern border, saying that the “Basters” under Vielander’s rule owed him money. Ritmann further complained to Hook, the magistrate, that he was not allowed to take occupation of land he had bought. Vielander claimed that the sale of the land to Ritmann was an illegal transaction between Ritmann and the neighbouring chief of the Bondelswarts, Willem Christians. In a series of letters, Ritmann challenged Vielander’s right to land in the southern Kalahari, and Vielander responded with his own letters, stating a variety of reasons why he had a claim to the land in the region. Among other points, Vielander stated, “If there should arise a claimant, it should be the Chief of the Bushman who is at present residing with me<sup>87</sup>.”



Why did Vielander, who viewed the land as his own territory, attempt to recognize a San chief? He did so, it appears, largely to defend his sovereignty, since he had been unsuccessfully campaigning the colonial government to give him sovereignty in the region for quite a few years. Before I discuss this aspect further, let us consider a few other points.

As has been suggested, the San very often only had or “produced” chiefs in contact situations (Penn, 1996), in this case their contact with the “Basters”. On this occasion, it may have been a person who acted as a spokesperson for the San or who was viewed by the “Basters” as the “chief”. This “chief” would also have had

regular economic relations with the “*Basters*”, as the *Basters* often used the San of the region as guides and hunters, as well as domestic labourers.

Evidence seems to suggest that the San were not really viewed as owners of the land, but were tolerated because they were migratory<sup>88</sup> and did not pose a great threat to the “*Baster*” tenure in the region. It is also unlikely that, had the San of the region had a system of land tenure similar to that known among other San groups of southern Africa, the “*Basters*” would have been unaware of it. Perhaps Vielanders negotiated with the San before he first settled in the region by asking the permission of the *n!ore* owner. It was common practice in San groups that anyone wishing to use resources in a particular group’s territory had to obtain the agreement of the *n!ore kxausi* (see section 7.3.7)<sup>89</sup>. Vielanders may have obtained such permission, possibly to limit potential hostilities between the Vielanders *Basters* and the San.

It was not by chance that the recognition of this “chief” of the Bushmen was mentioned. Vielanders’ tenure in the region was unsure, and he needed to defend his territory against the ever encroaching white “*trekboere*” and his neighbours (the Bondelswarts) with whom he had border disputes. His reasons for claiming the territory were varied. They ranged from conquest and taming the frontier, to digging water points; he may have seen the latter as his trump card, since he only mentioned the San chief last in his list<sup>90</sup>. The exact nature of the attachment of such a Bushman chief to the “*Basters*” nonetheless remains uncertain; he may well have been a servant or peon of the Vielanders.

This “chief” cannot be linked either to the #Khomani or any other San group that lived in the region. The earliest reference to anything resembling #Khomani comes from a report written in 1908. It does not mention #Khomani but refers to a group of San people known as the “Gommanes”<sup>91</sup>. So although reference is made to a San “chief” in the late 1800’s, it offers little information about the present traditional leadership of the #Khomani.

### **7.5 Abraham, the leader of “Bain’s Bushmen”: the 1930s ethnography of the “Wits expedition.”**

Sources from the 1930s which refer to the #Khomani, name Abraham Witboo (Gurice) as the leader of this group (Dart, 1937a)<sup>92</sup>. He had a son called Malxas<sup>93</sup> or Malgas who died in the Park in the 1940s. Malgas, who was well known as a builder<sup>94</sup>, was never recorded as being the leader of the group (Kloppers, 1970). It is unclear why he did not “succeed” his father.

The grandson of *ou* Abraham and the son of Malgas, Oom Abie (Abraham Malgas), still lives at Welkom, close to the National Park. If leadership were determined by virtue of descent, Oom Abie, who is still alive, should arguably be the leader. Although his grandfather was recognized as such, neither Abie nor his family make claims in this regard. However, the person who is the leader of the group today is related to the family of Abraham through marriage<sup>95</sup>. Some evidence seems to point towards Abraham having been chosen not only by the “people” but also by Bain, who gathered the #Khomani together in the 1930s. Abraham was the oldest male San

person encountered by Bain, who saw him as the leader, probably because of his advanced age.

Several San scholars have identified the age of individuals as significant in the selection of a leader. Seniority was often given as one of the criteria for selection (Schapera, 1930; Lee 1979), but this usually referred to the selection of leaders by the San themselves. The scientists studying the San also selected the older people but for a slightly different reason.

The scientists were concerned that the San faced extinction through hardship, an inability to adjust (Suzman, 2000), culture loss and miscegenation. The last mentioned was of great concern to the Bushman Preservation Committee, established in the late 1930s. Many of the scientists and preservationists thought that the older “specimens” (in the quasi-scientific parlance of this philanthropic organization) had been born in a time when “inter-breeding” was less likely. These older people were then selected as “prime specimens” for scientific enquiry. In a letter to the “Committee”, reflecting on his work among the San, an anthropologist who was also an anatomist said, “We naturally confined our study to the oldest and unquestionably pure-bred individuals” (Boydell, 1948:114). Other sources similarly distinguished in their descriptions between the older and younger generations of San from the southern Kalahari. Among the concerns about authenticity and how it was linked to the generation gap was that the “younger ones [had] grown up in a semi-civilized atmosphere and in several instances have even lost the use of the language”<sup>96</sup>.

In his anthropometric analysis of Abraham, Dart (1937a) identified him as a “Boskop type”. This “type” was believed to be the proto-Khoisan African population found on the subcontinent (Dart, 1937a; Dubow, 1996). The “Boskop type” was a racial typology developed by Dart, based on the measurements of a skull that was found on a farm of the same name in 1913. As a specimen, it was well studied, although its archeological context was not greatly explored by those who studied it. Dart considered the Boskop type as ancestral to Bantu populations, as well as to the Khoi-San peoples of southern Africa. His interpretation of the sequence of African prehistory had the Boskop race as the ancestral population of the region, followed by the Bush-Hottentot (Khoisan), and lastly the Negroid. One of the key proponents of this type likened the Boskop to the Cro-Magnon of France (Fagan, 1964). Singer (1958) argued that the type was not a novel African “race”; instead, what had been considered characteristic of a particular race was based on a single specimen, and was in fact to be found in both prehistoric and present-day Khoi-San populations. The Bush-Boskop racial type was still in use in the mid-sixties, but referred only to a biological characteristic of the population and not to any socio-cultural attributes (Jenkins & Tobias, 1977). It survived many criticisms, mainly because of the focus on the physiology of the native as the locus of racial difference. It remained important to social scientists because many of the Khoisan people they encountered were not as pure as they desired their subjects “should be” (Barnard, 1989). For example, if a person no longer spoke a San language or participated in economic activities which could be deemed Khoisan, an appeal could be made to physical type to indicate racial purity. Dart thus placed Abraham in a racial category that supposedly predated all Bantu settlement in South Africa and was thought to be one of the ancestral stocks that fed into the present Khoisan physical type (Tobias, 1956)<sup>97</sup>. Abraham was

thus granted not only physical but also a (pre)-historical authenticity by Dart's studies. It should also be noted that Dart concluded that several of the other individuals he examined were admixtures and less pure (Dart, 1937a).

Besides the "type", which was largely based on observations and measurements of the skull and facial area (Dart, 1937a), short stature was also a key marker of "bushman-ness" for scientists and laypeople alike. Abraham was a short man, only 144.1 cm tall (4ft 7"). His physical features thus made him a good specimen for study; he had many of the physical attributes that fitted the stereotyped image of a San person. It was these attributes which spurred scientists to show a keen interest in his relatives, whom they believed would share these qualities.

Abraham apparently was the key person involved in "collecting" all his relatives for the gathering at Koopan Noord (Maingard, 1937). Being the "key informant" for Bain placed him at the centre of the group. He was the main San author of the interaction, and it was he who by and large determined who would be involved.

Similarly, Petrus Vaalbooi gained prominence when he assisted SASI in tracking down various San people who spoke the N/u language, which was relevant to the land claim (he consequently gained a leadership position in the ≠Khomani San CPA). This primacy and intimacy of contact with the scientists who scripted the stereotypes about the San physical and cultural features, in this case the Wits expedition, and, in the case of Vaalbooi, the linguists who discovered the N/u speakers, led in these two cases to the San person being selected as the leader.

The scientists on the Wits expedition considered Abraham to be one of the “best speakers” or at least the most conversant of the ≠Khomani speakers (Trail, 1972). Other members of the expedition noted that they had “been greatly assisted by Miss Bleek having encountered Abraham and others” in 1911 (Dart, 1937b). Claims have also been made that scientists had known Abraham since the 1850s, although no substantiating evidence has been found for this (Green, 1938). In addition to his age, his physical and cultural traits and his proficiency in the ≠Khomani language, it seems he was also considered a good research subject because other scientists had encountered him before. None of the other San individuals encountered during the 1911 trip by Dorothea Bleek were part of the 1936 study. As far as can be ascertained, only Abraham was present on both occasions. Of the people whom Dorothea encountered in 1911, Petrus Vaalbooï’s mother, his grandmother and uncle were notably absent from the 1936 study. Abraham was a key informant of the Wits expedition. He assisted greatly with the recording of the N/u language, adding to the comparative material collected by Poch in the early 1900s and by Bleek in 1911.

In addition to these physical and cultural markers, Bain also endorsed Abraham’s position as the leader of the group. He was granted, as a sign of his “office”, a leopard skin loincloth (or what appears as one; see photographic series in Bantu studies). Bain made a trip to Ghanzi to purchase a set of costumes for the San people he had gathered on the farm Kooppan Noord (Rasool, 1998).

Work being done in the region by a socio-linguist has raised a question relating to Abraham's ethnic identity (N. Crawhall, email communication). Some of his informants have suggested that they viewed Abraham as a Koranna speaker, although they add that he was married to a succession of ≠Khomani women (pers comm. N. Crawhall). Other sources indicate that, among other languages, Abraham also spoke Setswanal (Meyer, nd.). Thus, taking into account the variety of languages he spoke, it becomes impossible to assign a definitive ethno-linguistic identity to Abraham<sup>98</sup>.

Lastly, Abraham's leadership was underwritten by the manner in which the results of the "scientific studies" of the thirties were presented. In his article examining the physical characteristics of the San, Dart placed the family tree of Abraham at the centre of his genealogical chart (Dart, 1937b). This reflected his belief that Abraham was the leader of the group and was placed at its centre. Two other aspects stand out in the presentation of the data, the numbering of the huts and the numbering of the photographic subjects. The "hut" occupied by Abraham and his family was given as "hut number one". This suggests the primacy of that particular "household", they were first among a set of "households". However, the readers of the time were not party to the range of behind-the-scenes orchestrations, and most would not have read the Wits expedition studies in this way.

Abraham himself casts a last word of doubt on the situation. He was quoted as saying, "*Ek wens nou hulle will my erken as die Kaptein van die Boesmans*" (I wish they would recognize me as the Captain of the Bushmen) (Meyer, nd.). The ambiguity of this statement raises some speculation. For example, did this mean that

Abraham was not, or did not regard himself as, the leader? Moreover, who was the “*hulle*” (them) to whom he referred? If the “them” were the European scientists, or the government officials who had to give him recognition, then it would echo the point about the ascription of the leadership to Abraham. It appears that Abraham was seeking recognition from the stakeholders whom the southern Kalahari San hoped would assist them in their land struggle. Attempts to start a Bushman reserve in the southern Kalahari could have been greatly facilitated with an officially recognized San leader.

Although the story of why Abraham’s son did not succeed him is largely untold, there are suggestions as to what may have happened. In a recent review of a film about the #Khomani San land claim, Robert Gordon mentions the daughter of Abraham, /Anako or Fietjie. He quotes her as making a request to prominent dignitaries about money Bain supposedly collected on behalf of the #Khomani San (Gordon, 2002). /Anako has been referred to as a / the “queen of the Bushman” (ibid), and in 1936 she apparently was part of a broadcast to congratulate the queen of England on her coronation (Skotnes, 1996:256). /Anako has been portrayed as a sharp and charismatic individual and a favourite of the press, who described her as fond of making fun of the professors for the entertainment of her fellows (Rasool, 1998; Gordon, 1999). She was not shy, communicated easily with those in power, and was central in defining the San in the 1930s. It seems likely that her role in the group was that of spokesperson, and, like Lee’s “outside leaders” (Lee, 1979), she negotiated and mediated on behalf of her people. She dealt with those in power, including Dart, with magistrates, with other scientists and the press. On the basis of this, she was an “outside” leader, which partly accounts for her brother’s absence

from the role as leader. /Anako eclipsed Malgas as the leader of the group, because of her skills and the amount of attention focused on her by researchers. However, the main reason for her brother's absence was a jail sentence for "poaching" (Kloppers, 1970). From this moment, we hear little about traditional leadership in the southern Kalahari, until we meet the Kruipers in the 1960s.

### **7.6 *The Kruiper lineage gains prominence: 1960-present***

In the 1960s, a Danish traveller and author, Bjerre, encountered the grandfather of the current leader. He referred to him as the patriarch of the group (Bjerre, 1960:217). How the shift took place cannot be ascertained, but at some point there was a break in the lineage and a new family emerged to stand as leaders. Yet in the sixties, Ou Makai and his son Regopstaan (!umguab)<sup>99</sup> were mentioned as patriarchs. After the latter's death, his son Dawid became the traditional leader. This does raise the question of legitimacy: who should be the actual traditional leader? Since the descendants of the leader from the 1930s are still alive, should one of them not have taken up the position? And how has the current family become the lineage from which the traditional leader is selected?

There seems to be a great deal of certainty regarding the selection of Regopstaan and his father Makai, as well as *Oom Dawid*, as leaders. Yet it is uncertain who acted as a leader (or leaders) for the southern Kalahari San groups from the 1940s to the 1960s. At the time, the groups were dispersed. A small group of San people remained in the Park (the group which, as mentioned in earlier

sections, was allowed to stay; see page 3) while others (mostly those who travelled with Bain) lived throughout the region on farms and in the settlements.

The selection of Regopstaan may have to do with the fact that the Kruipers were part of a family group that went to live with Lokkie Henning on his farm near Kuruman in the early 1980s. Not all the southern Kalahari San left with them, but the group that did go would in all probability have been assigned a leader by the white entrepreneur who was “pimping” them to the media and to other farmers. Regopstaan and Dawid apparently were the main spokespersons for the group at the time. As a result, both the San group and outsiders accepted them as the leaders. The recognition of Dawid as the leader is strongly linked to his association with entrepreneurs like Lokkie Henning and those at Kagga Kamma. In fact, Dawid’s father joined him only later at the farm in Kuruman. When his father returned to the Kalahari, Dawid remained as the spokesperson of the group. The position that Regopstaan held afterwards may partly have been the result of Dawid’s position as spokesperson.

In my view, the legitimate leadership of Regopstaan appears questionable, as nowhere in the work of the *volkekundiges* who worked with them in the sixties and early eighties, is Regopstaan mentioned as the leader, but simply as an “old patriarch” (Botha, & Steyn, 1995). Similarly, Botha (1995) continuously refers to both Makai and Axerob<sup>100</sup> as the “old patriarchs” of the San at Twee Rivieren in the 1960s; they were his main research informants. Moreover, Kloppers refers to Axerob in his texts as overseeing a small group of Bushmen labourers (Kloppers, 1970). He was a foreman working under Joep le Riche and was “in charge”, yet Axerob is

never mentioned as a traditional leader of the group. One could posit that the perception of them as leaders was derived from their primacy as informants. However, in contrast, Steyn was not concerned with Axerob as leader but more commonly as the husband of /Okosi Koper, formerly known as the last speaker of /Auni, and with his birth to real !Gabani parents (Steyn, 1984).

A point should be made about the “rule” of old men in these societies. The sphere of influence that these “old men” enjoyed was limited to their extended family. For example, when Bjerre found Makai in the sixties it was only in the company of Makai’s kin (Bjerre, 1960). If one examines *Oom Dawid* and the extent of his authority and influence, it is the same. His greatest authority was over aspects that governed the life of his kin. This influence did not extend to other members of the group, especially those who did not share the same residential locality. Members of the CPA did not all hold *Oom Dawid* as their chief or leader. The large majority *respected* him as the traditional leader, but did not think this endowed him any special privileges or authority.

Thus the influence of these “patriarchs” was confined to the people resident at Twee Rivieren. While these men were alive; many of those who today are part of the group known as the #Khomani San were living in other areas of Mier or the Northern Cape Province and not at Twee Rivieren in the KGNP. This would partly explain the reluctance of some CPA members to accept *Oom Dawid* as the traditional leader, thus limiting the sphere of influence he enjoyed. His ascendancy to the position after the settlement of the land claim was largely based on the acceptance of his

leadership by the #Khomani San who were residents in the Park, most of whom now reside at Witdraai.

It seems that outsiders who interacted with the southern Kalahari San since the sixties conflated patriarchal influence over their families and within the residential confines of Twee Rivieren with “authority” over all other San of the southern Kalahari. Outsiders, without a knowledge of previous research or the intricate dynamics in the group, made the same mistake. Past interactions with only sections of the southern Kalahari San group resulted in the selection of these individuals as the leaders of the San. In this way, outsiders propped up certain individuals as the leaders. Like the “contact leaders” and the “outside leaders” (Lee 1979), the present leaders are arguably partly the result of particular interactions with outsiders.

*Oom Dawid* took over the leadership position after his father Regopstaan passed away. *Oom Dawid* is not the oldest of Regopstaan’s surviving children, but then again neither was Regopstaan the oldest of Makai’s children (Steyn, 1995; Botha, 1995). This indicates that there are no hard-and-fast rules about the “inheritance” of the position by an eldest son. The group who lived at Welkom nonetheless accepted *Oom Dawid* as their leader. Some of the other San people who participated in the land claim were also part of the group who elected him as their traditional leader (Chennels, 2001) in the late 1990s. Similarly, many of the authors referred to earlier argued that leaders were chosen by communal consent (/Useb, 2000; Hitchcock & Holm, 1993; Schapera, 1930). It may, however, be that the people saw *Oom Dawid* as the natural successor to his father; although this may not have been the overriding principle applied here.

White noted that some of the San at Kagga Kamma claimed that *Oom Dawid* had been given the position by Makai (White, 1995). However, this did leave the gap of Regopstaan and his leadership of the San, and I heard there had also been at least one counterclaim related to Makai. Oom Petrus Vaalbooi said that the leadership was actually handed over to his grandfather, and not to *Oom Dawid's* father.

From the sketchy evidence, it seems that *Oom Dawid's* other brothers were not available or were not seen as being capable of taking up the leadership duties. His brother, Buks, for instance, did not command similar levels of respect in the community (Isaacson, 2001). When Buks was drunk, many of the women and younger people simply disregarded him. White noted that the relation between *Oom Dawid* and Buks was “strained at best” (White, 1995). The nature of this sibling relationship may also have had an impact on the selection of Dawid as the leader after the death of Regopstaan.

*Oom Dawid* had already selected his successor, namely his youngest son John (Pien). Toppies, the eldest son, still lived at Kagga Kamma in 2000 and 2001. It was only in late 2001 that he and his younger brother returned to the Kalahari. Toppies was a respected artist, but was not seen as the proper person to succeed *Oom Dawid* as leader. Other residents at Witdraai also aligned themselves with John (Pien). His opinions were sought on certain issues and on several occasions he accompanied his father to meetings and other CPA activities. This was done as if he were being groomed for the organizational task that lay ahead of him.

An additional reason *Oom Dawid* was selected was that he was one of the people who had initiated the land claim. Those who supported him saw his role as pivotal to the success of the claim. He became central through a specific set of circumstances and also through being at the right place at the right time. To illustrate this point, I will review how the claim arose and how it was framed by some of the members of the claimant group. In order to do so, I will return to the alleged prophecies made by *Oom Dawid's* father and grandfather.

References to *Oom Dawid's* father, Regopstaan, and his dying wish that the land be returned to “his people” are commonly encountered in writing about the land claim. Linked to this was a “prophecy” made earlier by Makai. He foretold that a time would come when strangers would arrive in the Kalahari. Regopstaan, in turn, added to this “prophecy”, saying that, when the strangers arrived, the “little people” would dance. The drought in the land would also come to an end (Gall, 2001; Isaacson, 2001; Staehlin, 2001).

Many interpreted these stories as referring to the (successful) land claim and the return of the land to the people. At the ceremony in 1999, the vice president of South Africa, Thabo Mbeki, handed over the land to the San people. They then performed a rain dance. Many “strangers” attended - researchers, NGOs, state officials, interested parties, and “new” San individuals. The rain that fell during that season was also higher than average, so much so that over the next two years reports were received of flows in the normally dry Nossob and Auob rivers. The veld

offered superb grazing in these two years as well. For many, all of these events “proved” the “prophecies”. At the same time, the prophecies were exploited in ways which underscored the primacy of one small family group, the Kruipers.

I recorded at least one challenge to the Kruiper primacy as leaders. This was made by Petrus Vaalbooi, *Oom Dawid's* rival for leadership of the #Khomani San. Vaalbooi was shown a picture of his Uncle Jan, who apparently also prophesied about a day when people would come from far away to help the San get their land back (Brody, 2002). It is ironic that the counterclaims to the Kruiper prophecy and the traditional leadership both came from the main rival for leadership, Petrus Vaalbooi. It suggests something of the usefulness of these stories, and I would argue that they helped to uphold the fiction of the Kruiper primacy in terms of the leadership of the southern Kalahari San. The telling of these stories, with the three men as their central protagonists, supported the placing of Makai, Regopstaan and finally *Oom Dawid* as legitimate leaders of a larger #Khomani San group.

## 8 Conclusion

### 8.1 *Prelude*

What are the ends of authenticity? Where does a discourse of authenticity lead? Benjamin and Adorno seemed to agree on the ends of authenticity (as they watched the world plunge into war), and viewed it as a pathology of power and capital. Benjamin saw in the talk of authenticity, the growth of fascism (as a political arm of capital) and eventually war (cited in Jay, 2006). Adorno (1987), more vocal and ready to call a spade a spade, saw the extermination of the inauthentic and migrants by those who perceived themselves and their kin as autochthonous. Authenticity says, 'All arrivals are to be excluded and if they do not move they will be made to do so'. Think of Nazi Germany, Apartheid, Israel/Palestine, Rwanda, Bosnia and Serbia, Mobutu's Zaïre, Idi Amin's Uganda, India and Pakistan after independence, and now Zimbabwe.

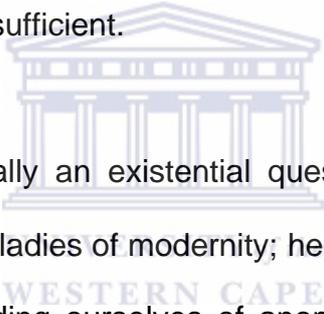
All these examples remind us that authenticity can be an ideological device, one which has been used in the past and continues to be used as a means of exclusion and as a tool in ethnic conflict. This is clearly reflected in the movement in Heidegger's early work from a focus on authenticity based the individual to a conception based on the group (Jay 2006). Thus the uses of authenticity have led down some critically treacherous paths. Feuser (1988) has called it a double-edged sword, which can do as much harm to the authenticated as to the authenticator.

### 8.2 *In conclusion*

Today, it would seem that as anthropologists we cannot find the authentic 'Other' anywhere. The concomitant searches for cultural purity, existential locate, verify and author (ize) these authenticities all fall short. I hold that

anthropology, and in some sense western philosophy in general, cannot and has never been able to locate the prelapsarian, the true authentic human, the person at the moment after the animal thought ceases. Anthropology and sometimes philosophy have looked in vain for the ethnological representative of Adam and Eve. The prelapsarian “Other” eludes us, and if we do not find the authentic then anthropology will come to seem ludicrous.

We need to move beyond the use of authenticity as a simple reference to cultural purity, a kind of traditional isomorphism or historical verisimilitude (Handler & Saxton, 1988, Bruner, 1994), or as an “ethnographic authenticity”. This may seem a simple and familiar criticism of essentialism and the bounded ‘cultures’, but as a critique of authenticity it is not sufficient.



Authenticity is additionally an existential question of the modern era. It is offered as a remedy for the maladies of modernity; helping us to overcome alienation by claiming back the self, ridding ourselves of anomie by finding our identity and belonging, transcending alterity by staking equal claim to the world and its resources. These are false hopes; ‘recovery’ is not a possibility, and those who cling to this type of authenticity risk being “paralyzed by the melancholy of their nostalgia for a lost past” (Ghosh, 1992). These hopes of recovery were especially evident in the attempts by the #Khomani to recreate the way of life of the real Bushmen. The challenges of authenticity led to the failures of the plans to use San-ness as a means of making a living .

Next we see authenticity operating as a question of value. Here it is viewed by those who ‘buy’ into it as part of an economy of cultural politics, in which signs, as measures of value, circulate for the production of cultural commodities. Authenticity

in this economy of cultural politics often draws on simulacra and cultural relics of dubious origin, representing some of the clearest examples of Spivakian *postcoloniality*<sup>101</sup>. This is a state of being in which the colonial past paralyzes the agents and keeps them living in a moment after the end of the anti-colonial struggle. The #Khomani, for instance, reminisce, and their recollections are ripe with nostalgic imagery. The simulacral bushman is offered to the outsider, to the world, as a commodity, but the world is suspicious. Tourists, journalists, farmers, neighbours all demand to know, Is this a “real” Bushman? Am I not buying a fake experience or artefact?

This leads us into the first of a series of methodological failures and *problematiques* which are highlighted by the concern for and scrutiny of authenticity. The first is what I term the simulacral failure. The point here, as regards authenticity and simulacra, is that a distinction needs to be made between two phenomena. On the one hand, the subjects of anthropology are for the most part real flesh and blood people, with real needs. In contrast, we have the simulacral subject (in this thesis always the small ‘b’ for bushman, after Rasool and Hayes (1998), the brand, the tourist image, the media image or the ever-familiar hyper-real bushmen. The simulacral subject is good for court cases, films, books, marketing, land claims, NGO reports, and policy, but does not always deliver for those who are thus parodied or simplified. One clear example of this simulacral failure is the episode narrated in section 4.3, where the San become the victims of the image they are promoting.

The breakdown of the genealogical method in the examination of the Other is highlighted by the chapter dealing with traditional leadership. When it concerns the Other, genealogy as a method can only make reference to what Benjamin (1937) called an aura of authenticity. As an engagement with Western thought, genealogy

seems sufficient. However, as an attempt at a revelation of the Other, it is often simply an 'auratic critique' (Mufti, 2000). The chapter on the traditional leadership should perhaps have been written in reverse chronological order to make its point adequately. Had it been written in this way, it would have shown that the particular characteristic (the traditional leadership) of the "culture" under investigation actually has a vanishing point and not a simple originating moment, as suggested by its textual form, that is, written from the distant past to the present.



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## 1.2 Newspaper and magazines, periodicals

### 1.3 Archival sources

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CA NA 166 letters received by Special Northern Border Magistrate at Kenhardt "Haupt to Haliburton" 12 Aug 1874

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Rittman to Hook 2 May 1874

CA NA 166 letters received Special Northern Border Magistrate, D.Vielander to D.B.  
Hook, 30 Oct. 1874

CA NA 166 letters received Special Northern Border Magistrate, Vielanders  
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CA NBM 6 letters dispatched 1868 –78 Hook to secretary of Native Affairs

CA SG 3/2/1/42 MDC 974 Discovery of silver in Gordonia

CA SG 3/2/1/45 MDC 913 Application received for permission to collect salt  
Cape Town Archives repository (hereinafter CA) A2599 no. 12 P.J. van de Merwe  
collection

Wits University Archives AU8 Dar Dart Papers correspondence “Clark to Dart” 26  
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Wits University Archives AU8 Dar Dart Papers N.D. Meyer “Die Boesmans op die  
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#### 1.4 Photographs

CA A2599 no.12 P.J. van der Merwe collection Kuruman Floods

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## 1.6 Meetings and workshops

Notes of Trilateral Negotiations (Park), 30/05/2001, held at, Molopo Lodge, Andriesvale, Northern Cape

Notes of Trilateral Negotiations (Park), 17/07/2001, held at, Molopo Lodge, Andriesvale, Northern Cape

Notes of Constitutional crisis meeting, 19-20/11/2001, held at farm Uitkoms, Andriesvale, Northern Cape

## 1.7 List of interviews referenced (for names of interviewees, see appendix 1)

- Interviewee-01a 08/03/2000
- Interviewee-01b 14/03/2000
- Interviewee-01c 16/03/2000
- Interviewee-01d 07/03/2001
- Interviewee-02a 16/03/2000
- Interviewee-02b 07/03/2001
- Interviewee-03 11/08/2000
- Interviewee-04 27/11/1999
- Interviewee-08 07/08/2001
- Interviewee-10 11/03/2001
- Interviewee-11 07/06/2001
- Interviewee-12 15/07/2001
- Interviewee-13 03/06/2001
- Interviewee-15a 08/03/2000
- Interviewee-15b 09/08/2000
- Interviewee-19 30/11/1999

- Interviewee-22 29/11/1999
- Interviewee-23 28/11/1999
- Interviewee-25 04/04/2000
- Interviewee-47 14/03/2000
- Interviewee-30 29/11/1999
- Interviewee-32 28/11/1999
- Interviewee-51 13/06/2001
- Interviewee-54 02/06/2001
- Interviewee-56 12/03/2001
- Interviewee-65 21/03/2000
- Interviewee-66 28-30/04/2001
- Interviewee-71 20/07/2001
- Interviewee-74a 20/08/2000
- Interviewee-74b 13/03/2001
- Interviewee-78a 09/08/2000
- Interviewee-78b 11/03/2000




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<sup>1</sup> The Bantu migration here refers to the massive movement of Bantu-speaking people from western Africa into the areas to the south of the Cameroon and into southern Africa.

<sup>2</sup> For an account of the nature of the integration of the San into Bantu-speaking society, see Chapter 7.

<sup>3</sup> For the sake of clarity I want to briefly differentiate between the use of the terms colonizer and settler in the thesis. A colonizer will refer to groups who are engaged in the establishment and maintenance of an extractive economy located in the territory of a group it either displaces, eradicates or dominates. Colonizer need not share geographic co-presence with the colonized. Settler, on the other hand, is a colonizer that is at home or established in the geographic space of the colony.

<sup>4</sup> The death of the Tasmanians was a true extinction; every individual who belonged to this group died, there was no assimilation of bodies, no transfer of culture, and they only lived on in memory.

<sup>5</sup> I speak briefly about this reemergence later on in this chapter; see “Locating the San...”

<sup>6</sup> The #Khomani San is spoken of and speak of themselves as a type of diasporic grouping. Following a range of factors laid out by Brubaker (2005), one can easily read the #Khomani as diasporic. Firstly, the classical attributes of a diaspora are present in at least the manner in which the San are spoken of. There is the dispersal: initially the San are removed from their “ancestral lands”; this in turn leads to the movement of the #Khomani San to towns and farms throughout the region. Over time, some of the #Khomani San moved farther afield to other parts of South Africa. The dispersal of some members of the #Khomani San group, firstly from the places where they were born to other parts of the Northern Cape and secondly to parts of South Africa other than the Northern Cape (e.g. Kagga Kamma or parts of Namibia), made the Kalahari a type of homeland. Since it is not a major aspect of the thesis, I will not explore it much further; suffice it to say that the #Khomani (and I emphasize #;Khomani and not all San groups) speak of themselves and are spoken of as diasporic. This is evidenced by talk of dispersal through removals and other factors, as well through the nostalgia for the homeland.

<sup>7</sup> Like limiting the types of materials used in the production of crafts and arts at the Sisen craft workshop to those considered natural or limiting to those thought to have been historically used. Artworks or crafts made with materials other than approved San materials were often censored.

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<sup>8</sup> The most iconic of these materials and ideas are the bow and arrow, the loincloth, and the diminutive stature, among other things. Please note that the use of the lower case b in ‘bushmen’

<sup>9</sup> Not that I see the search for politically correct terminology as necessarily producing results; neutrality in the choice of terms applied to society is an impossibility. This has not stopped attempts to produce words for processes and people that can “accurately” describe them.

<sup>10</sup> Nguni society will be taken to mean that politico-cultural complex that is found throughout South Africa and which historically engaged in mixed farming. The complex shares a range of other characteristics; they migrated into the region about 2000 years BP, and linguistically they seem to have adopted the click consonants from the Khoi-San.

<sup>11</sup> People’s Movement for the Liberation of Angola.

<sup>12</sup> My supervisor notes that the “fear”, as much as it was real, was also drummed into the heads of the soldiers in these battalions by the SADF.

<sup>13</sup> Here preservation is used as it was by the members of the “Preservation committee”, that is, to have measures in place to preserve the culture, ways and lifestyle of “a people”.

<sup>14</sup> The reclassification of Bushmen as coloureds and no longer as natives meant that they did not need to be catered for as with other “native” groups. Most importantly, the state need not cater for their land needs; in terms of the policies of separate development the native had ideally to be provided a homeland. From sources we see that the successive governments did not see a San-tustan as a possibility

<sup>15</sup> I am not suggesting that the mere assertion of San identity is enough to use its reemergence the identity is not simply voluntaristic rather that the “authenticity” is at once volunteered but that it needs other elements. These other elements are not solely the body (race elements), nor are they simply ethnic (culture elements).

<sup>17</sup> The term here will be taken to reflect those bastards and former slaves who fled the Cape Colony and came to settle here.

<sup>18</sup> See footnote (xv)

<sup>19</sup> Dirk Vielanders was of slave and European descent (Baster). He is renowned as the leader of the first non-Khoi-San settlers of the region, sometimes referred to as the Vielanders Bastards. See also Chapter 7 for a lengthy discussion of his settlement and activity in the region.

Viii In spite of a seeming paucity of mineral resources, some local residents still spoke of prospecting and finding diamonds or other riches, such as the hidden treasure local folklore insisted was left by the Germans early in the 1900s. A similar story common to Namaqualand and Namibia, is the myth of the water snake in its underground or mountainous lair. Participants reported that the snake has a silvery skin that shines like a rainbow and has a massive diamond on its head. The snake’s lair is reported to contain a large treasure of untold riches. In other regions the snake is associated with initiation rituals for pubescent girls, but no such link has been established in this region. Since the 1800s there has been talk of a “Lost City” located in the Kalahari, and many are reported to have gone in search of it. A. J. Clement of Wits University searched during the 60s using the explorer and showman A.G. Farini’s book to guide him. He concluded that what Farini described as a lost city was no more than a naturally-occurring rock formation. The rock formation to which he and therefore Farini referred lies to the south of the town Rietfontein on the farm Oxford. Oxford has as its southern boundary Koppieskraalpan and a doleritic dyke intersects this pan, as mentioned earlier. The dyke has weathered in a very specific way, and in places it can be said to resemble large carved stone building-blocks. According to Clement (1967)<sup>21</sup>, Farini mistook this natural weathering and erroneously described structures such as amphitheatres and turrets. The “Lost City” has the potential to draw tourists to the area, but the site is on private property and it is therefore unlikely that communities will be able to draw any benefit from it. However, organized tours to the site are undertaken from one of the local hotels.

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<sup>21</sup> The time that elapsed between the second and third recorded instances of flooding in the Hygap system was about 22 years. A further period of 14 years elapsed until the second spate of flooding in 1934. The third flood took place a full 29 years later in the early sixties and although this date may look like an outlier it does not really fall outside the range I am proposing. The floods of the seventies were fourteen years later. The most recent flooding took place in the year 2000, twenty-three years later (pers. comm. R Carter).

<sup>21</sup> I have heard reports by individuals in the Northern Cape that this particular wood produces high temperatures, with enough intensity that the *A. erioloba* was in the past used to stoke copper and zinc smelters.

<sup>21</sup> Braai is an Afrikaans term referring to a barbecue, but also mean to grill, as in an oven.

<sup>27</sup> As triumphant as this tale sounds, it is a great tragedy for Ouma // unnas because it is also the story of the death of her father.

<sup>30</sup> Rainfall 2000    Rainfall 2001

<sup>31</sup> Community is used here only in the geographic sense.

<sup>32</sup> A spaza shop is a local term for informal businesses that many people in the poorer communities of South Africa run from their homes. These usually have basic household goods like bread and some other goods like cigarettes. The shops usually serve as a supplement to household income and are not the main source of income.

<sup>33</sup> This work has only partly been used in Chapter seven, which deals with the traditional leadership.

<sup>34</sup> The “Park” is used here to refer to the former Kalahari Gemsbok National Park.

<sup>35</sup> Interviews are not considered a method, but rather as techniques that is applied within certain methods, like community profiles, oral histories, network mapping or focus groups.

<sup>36</sup> See appendix for a list of the names of respondents.

<sup>37</sup> The distinction between western and traditional San, although highly controversial, has been used for various purposes in the group; here it is used for analytical purposes only. It is critically dealt with in other sections of the thesis.

<sup>38</sup> For now, cultural purity will refer to a perception that cultural groups are distinct, insular, static and resistant to change from outside. Distinction and insularity are thought to be positive values, to be retained and somehow defended from corrupting and external forces.

<sup>39</sup> The bat-eared fox is one of several different creatures used in rainmaking; others include millipedes and nightjars. Foxes and millipedes simply need to be put into the fire, while a nightjar must be buried at the depth to which you want the ensuing rain to wet the soil (Int-10 09/03/01).

<sup>40</sup> The selection of Dawid Kruiper as traditional San leader happened before his father’s death. Kruiper was the eldest son and seen as his father’s natural heir.

<sup>41</sup> Domesticated dogs represent the antithesis of game animals. Conservation strategies viewed dogs with some animosity, as it was held that they not only actively hunted and killed game but also that they introduced disease into the game populations. For these reasons they were killed off, not only within nature conservation areas but also in areas and settlements that bordered on the conservation areas. Communities saw this policy as a direct attack on their ability to govern themselves and as a rather draconian measure. Loss of domestic animals such as dogs, poultry and other livestock are often part of the stories of loss told by the groups lodging restitution claims. In another way, the idea here is that the San did not domesticate animals, and dogs were not part of the forager arsenal.

<sup>42</sup> For examples of this, see Jolly’s Bushman package in chapter 1.

<sup>43</sup> In the naming of these societies, forager is seen as a gender-neutral term that does not give primacy to hunting. The renaming is a response to research data that indicates that gathering activities account for up to 80% of the food consumed in these societies. In fact, female gathering can provide significant sources of protein to the group in the form of small fauna, birds’ eggs and plant sources of protein. So instead of differentiating between these two, we chose a more general term that was inclusive of both male and female subsistence

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activities. A second motivation for using this term was to include a range of economic activities, besides hunting and gathering, that contributed to the survival of such groups.

<sup>44</sup> Early in its history, the South African San Institute was largely made up of white educated professionals; however, it would later radically transform its character. At present it employs a number of #Khomani San individuals.

<sup>45</sup> Something to note here is that when Steyn encounters the woman known in the seventies as the last speaker of the /Auni language she claims she doesn't remember any of it!

<sup>46</sup> During the early part of the 1990s, the portion of the Mier rural reserve adjacent to the KGNP was zoned as an area for the farming of game. These resources were to be used communally by the local authorities.

<sup>47</sup> Some references to the land problems of the Mier community are made later.

<sup>48</sup> The privatization of the land in the Coloured reserves took place roughly over three decades; since the 1960s, wealthier farmers had been allowed to purchase land in the Coloured reserves. In Mier, as well as other Coloured reserves, land users resisted the implementation of the so-called "economic units".

<sup>49</sup> The term 'clan' here is used loosely to refer to the members (affines and consanguine) of the extended Kruiper family.

<sup>50</sup> I have subsequently considered that the designation here could be the result of interviewer error. Informants may have misunderstood the question; when asked what they called their people, their response may have been simply *Sa*. We cannot therefore assume that this word was used as a self-referent or an ethnonym.

<sup>51</sup> The land claim and the process that follows were at various times driven by diverse parties. Some of this will be made clear throughout the thesis.

<sup>52</sup> "*Oorspronklike eisers*" (original claimants) is a term that would later be used in some of the constitutional crisis meetings to distinguish between different people in the CPA. It was contrasted with "*wetlike eisers*" (legal claimants) and other claimants. We will explore the relationship between these in the sections dealing with the CPA (Const-crisis 20-21/11/2001).

<sup>53</sup> Abraham was the traditional leader in the 1930s. Note that the Kruipers have ties to this second group through marriage and consanguinity, but are only vaguely related ethnically. While many of the claimants linking their claim to the 1930s removal belonged to the /Auni - #Khomani ethno-linguistic complex, the Kruipers belonged to the !Xo ethno-linguistic group. The only link they had to any of the /Auni - #Khomani group was through Regopstaan's second wife, Xoitamias (Dart, 1937; Botha & Steyn, 1995).

<sup>54</sup> She passed away in 2002.

<sup>55</sup> Some of the sites referred to in the Park and elsewhere in the region were graves, previous campsites, places where they had played, homes, stock posts, water holes, trees, sites of memorable events, fights, points, sightings, and places where people had been killed or had died.

<sup>56</sup> The rain bull is a creature in the mythology of the /Xam San of the Northern Cape. If the creature is not killed annually by a contingent of sorcerers, then the rains that it cause would lead to floods and disaster (Miller 19XX).

<sup>57</sup> What am I doing here? Am I not also 'authenticating' the #Khomani San story by writing it into a narrative of a San person, placing it in a San mythology of a different epoch and "culture"?

<sup>58</sup> The person in question has subsequently passed away in a freak accident. I will always fondly remember you; what is from god returns to god.

<sup>59</sup> The rain bull is a curious creature that brings much-needed rains but can also be dangerous. If not captured and killed, it can bring too much rain and cause flooding and other disasters. Sorcerers are required to go out and kill the bull before such disastrous effects can set in (Miller, 19XX).

<sup>60</sup> The actual comparative rainfall figures are given in Chapter 2: Background and setting.

<sup>61</sup> Swartkops is a settlement about 20 kilometers outside Upington, where the sisters and their extended family lived.

<sup>62</sup> Prior to the settlement of the land claim, those who were at the head of the CPA allegedly borrowed money from a local commercial farmer and put up one of the restituted farms as surety. The farm in question just happened to belong to the farmer who loaned the CPA executive the money. One of the rumours that circulated at the time was that the farmer intended to get his farm back from the San.

<sup>63</sup> In one of the many interviews with *Oom Dawid*, he outlined his (and thereby he meant also the plans of those to whom he had given rights to live on Witdraai) for the utilization of game on the farm. His plan was that they should implement a sustainable plan for harvesting springbok, or in his words, the springbok were going to be his sheep.

<sup>64</sup> I remember Jacob Malgas showing me an aborted gemsbok foetus in the veld. He said the animals sometimes dropped their calves because of drought.

<sup>65</sup> The CPA would eventually be placed under curatorship and then disbanded, the landholding entity would become a trust and the resources would be managed by the board. The escalation in conflict among the

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community members and the series of tragic and disturbing events would lead the ≠Khomani San to the South African Human Rights Commission.

<sup>66</sup> At the 2001 price, springbok, depending on use (trophy or biltong hunting), ranged between R250 for a 'biltong' animal to just over a R1000 for a prize trophy ram. Live animals were priced differently, according to bloodline as well as traits like melanism or leucism.

<sup>67</sup> In South African-speak, "location" usually refers to sub-economic housing areas.

<sup>68</sup> My supervisor points out that it is ironic that tourism should be considered a traditional activity. However, it was mostly those people who referred to themselves as traditional, who were involved in tourist ventures. In other words, it was not a traditional practice to be involved in tourism; rather it tended to be those who regarded themselves as "traditional San" who were involved with tourism.

<sup>69</sup> This word is in common use throughout many of the Bantu-speaking regions of Africa. It is used to refer to hunter-gatherer groups (Woodburn, 1997). For a further discussion of the variants and distribution of this term, see Woodburn (1997)

<sup>70</sup> A *dolos* (*dolosse* =pl.) is the Afrikaans word for the divining bones (*mathambo*) used by *isangoma* and other diviners. It derives from the Afrikaans for the "knuckle bones" or *astragalus* bones; *dolosse* are also sometimes referred to as '*knikkels*' a corruption of knuckles. The bones of certain animals (among them the baboon and the goat) are used to indicate the characters of the old man / woman as well as the young man / woman in the "drama of the divining bones". (**African therapeutic systems**) *Dolosse* do not have to be bones; they can be any "power object" that the diviner has collected during their *thwasa* or initiation into the mysteries of *isangoma*. They can be anything from marbles, seashells, dice, twigs to rocks, coins and seeds, but the set must include the various *astragals*.

<sup>71</sup> Examples of these in the neighbouring countries are: the CAMPFIRE programme of Zimbabwe, conservancies in Namibia, Community development trusts in Botswana and also Common Property Associations & Trusts in South Africa.

<sup>72</sup> The term "Baster" literally translates as a bastard, but when applied to animals it can denote a "cross breed", or when applied to dogs, a mutt. In the earlier uses of this word, it referred to people who were first-generation offspring of a white male and a slave or indigenous women. These persons occasionally enjoyed higher privileges than other slaves, but the laws of the colony became increasingly oppressive and many "Basters" left the colony and farmed beyond the frontier. Today the term is not widely used and seems to be confined to regions of the northern cape and the southern parts of Namibia. In the context of present day Mier, it has gained more currency as an economic status category than a racial one. Bredenkamp has suggested that the term Khoisan be applied even to those who are historically termed Basters or Bastards (Bredenkamp, 1991).

<sup>73</sup> CA NA 166 Letters received Northern Border Magistrate 'Declaration by Klaas Pufadder concerning his brother's death and his election as "chief", 23 February 1875

<sup>74</sup> Dirk Vielander was the leader of the first group of settlers in the Mier region. He and his followers arrived in the southern Kalahari in 1865. Many of his direct descendants still live in this region today; most have however changed the spelling of their name to Philander.

<sup>75</sup> CA NBM XXX: The word chase here is probably a direct translation of the old Afrikaans/Dutch word for hunt, which is "jagt" or "jag", or "jaag", and can be translated as chase as well. It therefore constitutes a literal translation of the words in the letters. The archival sources contain only the translations and copies, not the originals of the letters.

<sup>76</sup> The Rautenbach brothers were thought to be the first white men to settle in Mier. They had purchased farms from Vielander. The brothers were already well established as farmers, hunters and traders by the year 1874 (Farini, 1886; Clement, 1967 ; van de Merwe, 1941).

<sup>77</sup> CA CO 4224

<sup>78</sup> CPAs were enacted to give land reform beneficiaries, especially those in communal areas, the opportunity to hold land rights, that they could acquire through the various land reform programmes, as a group.

<sup>79</sup> An example is Lindiso, one of the last known people to have executed what are considered genuine rock paintings as late as the 1930s (Prins, 1990).

<sup>80</sup> One should note that Marshall in her earlier work used the term headman and not *n/ore* owner, and on the advice of Lee later rejected the term headman altogether (Lee, 1984:pg)

<sup>81</sup> For an example of how this happens, see Thomas' discussion of Toma and the group he married into.

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<sup>82</sup> Here it is sufficient to note the similarity with the historical production of San chiefs at contact, but be reminded we are speaking here of a much more recent time, when the Land Boards came into existence in Botswana.

<sup>83</sup> Some texts say that Vielander was on a hunting excursion from Amandelboom when they came upon the water at present day Rietfontein (See Töttemeyer, 1937). The relationship between Vielander and Afrikaner is unclear and this text states that Afrikaner only arrived after the Vielander *Basters* had settled in the region. Other texts have it that Vielander was one of Kootjie Afrikaner's subjects, his second in charge (Afr = *onderkaptein*; literally under-captain); see for instance Broodryk (1992).

<sup>84</sup> C.W. Keis in his PhD thesis suggests a somewhat different version of the event. In the memoirs of Willem Philander (a direct descendant of Dirk Vielander) it states that Vielander was sent to "subdue" the San people living there.

<sup>85</sup> The "*trekboere*" are different from the various groups of "colour" or those of slave descent who moved into the region. Here it should be read to refer specifically to the migrating white farmers. Both these groups practiced transhumance but the white trekboere displaced the other farmers due to a range of policies that favoured them above the "*Basters* and Khoi who were already involved in pastoralism on the Cape frontier in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century.

<sup>86</sup> Cape Town Archives repository (hereinafter CA) Native Affairs (hereinafter NA) 166 letters received by Northern Border Magistrate at Kenhardt "Haupt to Haliburton" 12 Aug 1874.

<sup>87</sup> NA 166 letters received Northern border magistrate D.Vielander to D.B. Hook 30 Oct. 1874. Note that although many of these letters were signed "Vielander", they were dictated to and written by Vielander's secretary, Haliburton. In places, one can see his authorial voice emerging from the text, especially in the episode relating to Ritmann who launched a direct attack on Haliburton in his replies.

<sup>88</sup> CA British Bechuanaland Concession Court (hereinafter BBCC) vol 2, Statement by Dawid Vielander (presiding head of his people) defending his sovereignty in the Land De Kalahari Woestijn – recorded by the Surveyor General, Major Laffon, 1893.

<sup>89</sup> Steyn, H.P., 1995, "Dilema van Boesmangronddrege" in South African Journal of Ethnology vol.18 no.2; Wilmsen, '*Land filled*'; R.B. Lee, '*The !Kung San*'; Silberbauer, '*Hunter and habitat*'; Marshall, L. 1960 '*!Kung Bushman bands*'

<sup>90</sup> Two of these lists stating the reasons why the Vielander *Basters* felt they enjoyed the full rights of ownership exists, one attributed to Dirk Vielander during the 1870s and another given as statement by his son in the 1890s before the British Bechuanaland Claims Court. Both lists overlap in their reasons but only the first mentions the San chief. Lists are found in CA NA 166... and CA BBCC vol2.....

<sup>91</sup> CA Cape Parliamentary Papers (hereinafter CPP) Annexures to the votes and proceedings of the house of Parliament G-53 Report on Rietfontein Area 1908

<sup>92</sup> Wits Archives AU8 Dar Dart Papers correspondence "Clark to Dart" 26 May 1936"

<sup>93</sup> This is in Dart's orthography. .

<sup>94</sup> This point is important in terms of the fiction of the pure hunter-gatherers. It shows that the San of this period had already been engaged in other types of employment and that foraging did not enjoy the primacy we ascribe to it.

<sup>95</sup> The great grandson of! Gurice is married to the half -sister of *Oom Dawid*.

<sup>96</sup> Wits Archives AU8 Dar Dart Papers correspondence "Clark to Dart 26 May 1936"

<sup>97</sup> Tobias made note of the present Khoisan population as an admixture of physical types, a widely held belief at the time and stemming largely from Dart's studies of the /Auni-≠Khomani complex in the southern Kalahari.

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<sup>98</sup> Not that I equate language and ethnic identity.

<sup>99</sup> The story of this name has been told and retold by several authors. !Umgaub means “left over dead. The two versions differ in the detail of the story, but the pattern is the same. During the German campaigns against the Nama’s under Hendrik Witbooi in 1904, a party of San people were caught by on or the other side. The San people were to be executed, but Makai managed to escape death. All his people thought him dead but he returned and on the day of his return his son Regopstaan was born and named “leftover dead.” Other versions say that the Nama’s under Simon Koper captured Makai after he and other San had tried to rob some of the graves; they were to be killed but one of the soldiers recognized him as a “good man” and his life was spared, (Kloppers ‘*Gee my*’). Another account differs slightly; it says Makai was captured by the Germans and before the execution was to take place it was realized that Makai spoke German. All the San in Makai’s party were killed. Makai managed to escape and fled with his son who was hiding in the bushes nearby. His son was then named “!Umgaub”, (see Gall, 2001).

<sup>100</sup> Also spelled Agerop or Agerob.

