

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 to pay deference to a patriarch" (Schapera, 1930). One point that her ethnographers, specifically Schapera, stated that the person 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.



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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

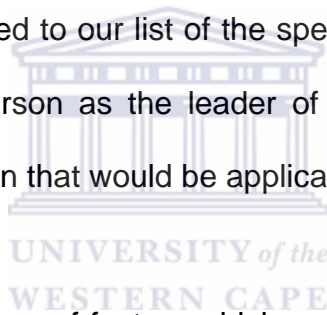
were the “owners” of the resources. *N!ore* ownership was usually derived from the fact that a particular family had been the longest living and utilizing resources in a specific area. According to Lee (1979), the *k"ausi* or *n!ore* owner was more like a host than a headman and was the one who was approached 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)⁸⁰. Yet although the position of leader could be inherited, this was not always the case⁸¹. 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.

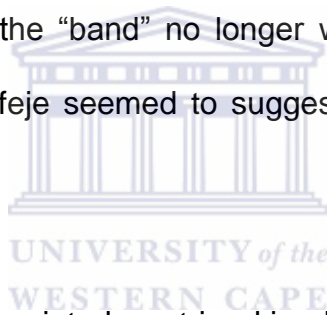
In examining transitions in forager societies, Lee (1979) suggested that the San sometimes produced or were “given a headman” in situations of contact⁸². Many students of San society have argued for links between the increased incidence of a sedentary lifestyle, which was apparent among contemporary 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 20th 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.



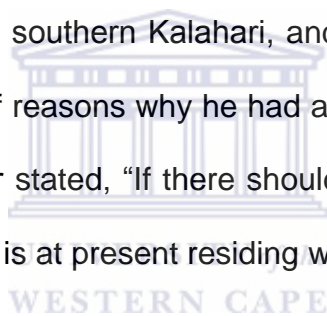
Mafeje’s key study of the intralacustrine kingdoms of East Africa, examining the so-called tribes and ethnic groups in this region, argued that “any tribal appellation that may attach to their various peoples must be treated as ideological ‘status categories’” (Mafeje, 1991:122). In a similar vein, Wilmsen, 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 supposedly⁸³ sent Dirk Vielander into the southern Kalahari to *negotiate*⁸⁴ 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*⁸⁵ 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*”⁸⁶. 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 19th 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 me⁸⁷.”



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 migratory⁸⁸ 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)⁸⁹. 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’s 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 list⁹⁰. 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”⁹¹. 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)⁹². He had a son called Malxas⁹³ or Malgas who died in the Park in the 1940s. Malgas, who was well known as a builder⁹⁴, 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 marriage⁹⁵. 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”⁹⁶.

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)⁹⁷. 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 Abraham⁹⁸.

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)⁹⁹ 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 Axerob¹⁰⁰ 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.

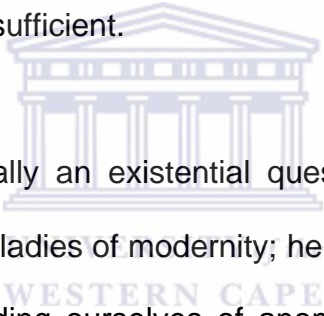
All these examples remind us that authenticity can be an ideological device, one which has been used in the past and continues to be used as a means of exclusion and as a tool in ethnic conflict. This is clearly reflected in the movement in Heidegger's early work from a focus on authenticity based the 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*¹⁰¹. 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 Cape Parliamentary Papers (hereinafter CPP) Annexures to the votes and proceedings of the house of Parliament G-53 Report on Rietfontein Area 1908

CA LND 1/833 L14803 Water prospectors

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

CA NA 166 letters received from Special Magistrate Northern Border, 1874-1879
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, Vielander
(Haliburton) to Hook, 6 July 1874

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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1.4 Photographs

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1.5 Unpublished documents

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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



¹ 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.

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

³ 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.

⁴ 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.

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

⁶ 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.

⁷ 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.

⁸² 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.

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

⁸⁴ 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 Vielanders) it states that Vielanders was sent to "subdue" the San people living there.

⁸⁵ 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 19th century.

⁸⁶ 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.

⁸⁷ 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 Vielanders'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.

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

⁸⁹ 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'

⁹⁰ Two of these lists stating the reasons why the Vielanders *Basters* felt they enjoyed the full rights of ownership exists, one attributed to Dirk Vielanders 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.....

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

⁹² Wits Archives AU8 Dar Dart Papers correspondence "Clark to Dart" 26 May 1936"

⁹³ This is in Dart's orthography.

⁹⁴ 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.

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

⁹⁶ Wits Archives AU8 Dar Dart Papers correspondence "Clark to Dart 26 May 1936"

⁹⁷ 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.

⁹⁸ Not that I equate language and ethnic identity.

⁹⁹ 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).

¹⁰⁰ Also spelled Agerop or Agerob.

