TEN

Situational chiefs

Notes on traditional leadership amidst calls for KhoiSan[1] recognition after 1994

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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, 1979). Differences in influences exist, but only to the degree permitted by those who are influenced (Lenski & Lenski, 1982).

Introduction

This chapter is about how contemporary KhoiSan communities have mobilised 'traditional leadership' in order to gain recognition and make claims on the post-apartheid state. Although the historical record reflects a dynamic, varied and largely ad-hoc form of leadership among the KhoiSan, in a contemporary context, some KhoiSan communities have participated in recreating 'authentic' leadership in order to reclaim their humanity in democratic South

Africa. Ironically, this has sometimes entailed drawing on apartheid and colonial constructions of 'authenticity'.

The question of KhoiSan genetics and the debate about autochthony are part of a discourse that seeks to establish an authenticity among KhoiSan activists, who readily draw on scientific studies of KhoiSan groups to help bolster their claims to identity and land.

The archaeology and physical anthropology of the KhoiSan were key episodes in the history of racial studies in South Africa, and held the interest of such famous scientists as Raymond Dart, Robert Broom and later Phillip Tobias (Dubow, 1996). Tobias, professor of physical anthropology, would spend a career testing and disproving racialised theories about the KhoiSan. These debates about the linkages of race, culture, language and biology continued to plague KhoiSan research until Jenkins and Tobias (1977) suggested a clarification of the terrain, namely that KhoiSan be subject to a threefold distinction of biology, linguistics and socio-cultural constructs in distinctive ecologies. Although a thorough critique of this paradigm has yet to be delivered, the threefold distinction remains the basis for many conceptions of KhoiSan identity into the present. The critique of this paradigm is for another paper, but let us at least comment briefly on the three aspects mentioned above.

First is the belief that KhoiSan is a physical type that is, or at least has been in the past, distinct from other African forms. The early work in this regard was done almost exclusively through the study of skeletal remains, serological studies, photography and the production of plaster and fibreglass moulds. With the discovery of DNA, many of the early studies were disputed by Tobias[2] himself and new possibilities opened up. Tobias was widely regarded as an expert in physical anthropology and studied KhoiSan and hominid fossils from South Africa. His pronouncements on racial studies of KhoiSan people thus held a certain weight. Two sets of findings stand out: the discovery of so-called KhoiSan genes and the discovery of the mitochondrial Eve. There are at least some genes that are specifically KhoiSan and these are deployed by activists to prove their KhoiSan heritage. The mitochondrial Eve is claimed to be a woman who lived along the southern tip of Africa about 100,000 years ago. Some

scholars of KhoiSan society claim that the theory of the mitochondrial Eve suggests that KhoiSan people belong to the oldest genetically distinct human population. They are thus representatives of the earliest anatomically modern human population (Schuster et al., 2010). In concert, these two scientific findings are used by KhoiSan activists to claim land in southern Africa and also to stake their claim as autochthonous peoples (i.e. original inhabitants).

The status of the KhoiSan as autochthonous is only rarely disputed, but there are some who attach less importance to claims to autochthony: many in Africa refuse to designate any one group as worthy of special recognition and thereby deny them potential advantages over other populations (Kuper et al., 2003; Pelican, 2009). Arguments are usually for the general democratic rights of all peoples in a country and the distinction between autochthony and allochthony (that which was not originally part of a habitat) is given no credence (see Wilmsen, 2002). In South Africa, the arguments for autochthony sit even more uncomfortably because they are seen as having their origins in ideologies that helped create the racial character of apartheid. Arguments about autochthony were used to divide the country into two halves: the west belonging historically to the KhoiSan and coloured and the east to the Bantu-speaking peoples. This so-called Eiselen[3] line would underwrite policies such as the infamous Coloured Labour Preference Area Policy in the old Cape Province. Many thinkers are against the argument for autochthony, suggesting that we are all Africans and that the attempt to distinguish between these two remnants of racist ideologies developed under apartheid is counter-productive (Pelican, 2009; Geschiere, 2009).

Nonetheless, the view still exists that the KhoiSan were, in the past, a separate cultural, political and economic entity that existed prior to the arrival of other groups like the Bantu-speaking iron-age farmers and the European merchant capitalists of the 17th century. This KhoiSan entity is further understood to be the 'people' that have had the longest history of habitation in southern Africa. Roughly 2,000 years ago, some San groups were assimilated first into the agricultural economy of the Bantu-speaking colonisers, and later into the European agricultural settler economy (Smith et al., 2000). It is

not difficult to see how this academic view of the history and peopling of southern Africa sparks a nostalgia for a return to KhoiSan culture, and how it is very easily mobilised towards specific political ends, such as a coloured or 'Brown' nationalism. I return to this issue later in the chapter, especially as some, but not all, KhoiSan activists have mobilised around the issue of coloured nationalism.

The second distinctive aspect to mention is the linguistic diversity of the KhoiSan. In total, there are at least 20 different linguistic groups and dialects found throughout southern Africa that are grouped as 'KhoiSan languages'. Linguists who specialise in South African Khoi (SAK) languages categorise them into three main groups: Khoe, Ju and Tuu (Du Plessis, 2009). The 30 or so specialists on SAK disagree on matters of exact classification of these languages (Du Plessis, from comm 4 August 2018). In this chapter I will choose to speak about a linguistic community as a group of people that speak the same language or one or other dialect. The largest of these linguistic communities is the Nama with about 20,000 speakers, the vast majority of whom live in southern Namibia, and about 6,000 in South Africa, concentrated in small geographic locales in the Northern Cape, such as Riemvasmaak and the Richtersveld. The smallest of these language communities, and the most threatened, are the N/u speakers of the southern Kalahari with less than 10 known speakers and very little institutional transmission of the language. Historically, these languages have been under threat and some like Xam have completely died out, existing only as doculects, i.e. they are preserved in written archives and thus still exist as language, even though no active speakers are alive. The attempts to re-teach Nama and other KhoiSan languages to those who claim the identity in the present is a major part of the attempts to revive KhoiSan culture. Furthermore, the language revival grants an authenticity that is today employed in a variety of other contexts, such as film, as evidenced in the film *Krotoa* (2017).

The KhoiSan were the first of the indigenous people of southern Africa to encounter the colonial settlers. They were the first to be dispossessed, and they were the first to resist, with battles recorded as early as the 1510s. In support of the above claim, activists often refer

to the Battle of Maitland. This battle was fought in 1510 between the Khoi and Portuguese sailors from the ship, the *D'Almeida*. The Khoi trading party defeated the sailors in a skirmish that saw the Portuguese flee. The KhoiSan were later to be reduced to mere servants, labourers, debt peons, indentured labourers and farm workers (Bredenkamp, 1982; Elphick, 1977; Van der Ross, 1979; Penn, 2005). Their consignment to these labour categories was largely the result of the complete and utter dispossession of their land and the subsequent destruction of their ability to subsist independently of the colonial economy, a process that was complete by the mid-19th century (Ross, 1983).

This sounds no different from what other African colonial subjects endured, except that the KhoiSan suffered a further process of 'dysselection'. McKittrick (2016) suggests that 'dysselection' (in contrast to natural 'selection') is a complete negation of your humanity – a radical alterity or otherness. In the process of dysselection, all familiar signs of human-ness defined by the self are removed: the mother tongue, the name and any institution that defines one as human. Dysselection came to a head in the 1950s in South Africa, when all who still thought of themselves as 'KhoiSan' were re-classified as coloureds. Dysselection is complete when you are granted a name and type not your own, and your absorption into the labour economy of settler capital marks you out for particular labour, like farm work.

It is this dysselection that gives rise to the process of indigenisation in the present. The present-day revival of KhoiSan identity attempts to recreate the authentic lifestyles of the past. It wants to revive all those things that were buried and interred in the previous centuries: the personal name, the language, the dress and institutions whether marriage, religion or leadership. With this perspective, becoming indigenous is not simply an ontological status; rather, it is a process that is entirely contingent on a confluence of forces in the present.

One event that marks the advent of this process more than others is the first National KhoiSan Consultative Conference of 1996 held in Cape Town. This conference brought together large numbers of academics, activists, non-govermental organisations (NGOs), government representatives and, most importantly, members of the

KhoiSan communities across southern Africa. I attended the opening sessions of the conference and, during these sessions, many community activists issued their calls for recognition. Among the calls was an appeal to the then Department of Constitutional Development for an inquiry into the recognition of key institutions and specifically KhoiSan 'traditional leadership'. It is important that, with the exception of the Griqua, KhoiSan communities had neither officially recognised traditional structures nor any leadership structures whatsoever.

Over the next two decades (1996 onwards), this initial call for traditional leaders to be recognised would mature into the Traditional and Khoi-San Leadership Bill (hereinafter TKSLB). During these two decades, the Department of Constitutional Development remained actively engaged with KhoiSan communities in order to develop the particulars of the bill. This bill would propose, among other things, the recognition of legitimated leaders with verifiable traditional communities tied to assigned territories. In other words, the KhoiSan would be brought under the rule of customary governance models, similar to those at play in the former homelands. Yet, as my colleague, Rafael Verbuyst, researcher of the KhoiSan revival, points out in his response to, among others, Claassens (2016): it would be too simplistic, and somewhat disingenuous, to class all KhoiSan claims to land and recognition as a form of KhoiSan apartheid (personal communication, 11 April 2018). He further asks why these claims would be acceptable in the case of, say, chiefs in the former homelands but not from those active in – and advocating for – KhoiSan revival?

This is not to say that systems of tenure and land distribution developed during colonial and apartheid regimes should be allowed to hold force in the present. Many activists and researchers argue that the bill will reproduce problematic laws developed under colonialism and apartheid; that such laws will subject rural residents to undemocratic principles of governance. This is especially so because the bill allows traditional authorities power over land. There are fears that land can be used to further bolster the power of chiefs and to unfairly exclude rural residents from livelihoods (Claassens, 2016). This brings to the fore the point that this legislation, however regressive, has been mobilised by the KhoiSan revival, in a democratic context, for what

this community deem to be the ends of justice. In their petitions for recognition and redress in post-1994 South Africa, re-imagining 'traditional' leaders among the KhoiSan has been instrumental.

Questions of 'authenticity'

I will not be suggesting an 'authentic' or 'traditional' form for Khoi or San traditional leadership. The line of enquiry that posits authentic culture is not, in my view, productive. Furthermore, cultural authenticity leads down some dark roads (for more on this see Ellis, 2014). The question of authentic forms, in this case forms and institutions of governance, traps those who might lay claim to such institutions and forms within what has been called a 'cunning of recognition' (Povinelli, 2002). The cunning of recognition reworks and cautions us about the apparent democracy of political recognition by showing how a people seeking rights as citizens can become victims of their claims to culture. Povinelli (2002) shows that the people of the Belyuen community in Australia find that they are suddenly excluded from land claims processes by cultural rules that they themselves had put forward as 'authentic'.

In the case of the Belyuen community, individuals and groups are expected to provide evidence for their cultural authenticity based on a set of rules distilled from some combination of ethnography, customary law, political studies and even archival sources (Povinelli, 2002). Of course, at the moment, something very similar is being asked of the KhoiSan in the TKSLB. Some may end up being disqualified from processes of recognition if they are unable to engage with either ethnographic criterion or principles, or if their own version of their 'culture' contradicts archival evidence. Those who volunteer the identities in question, and who lay claim to the ethnic monikers, fall prey to those official, administrative and bureaucratic disciplines that require lexicon and formality. In other words, to commit culture to rules, types, forms and standard practice is to confine it to history and, especially in South Africa's case, to colonial history. The *capture* (the violence of this word is purposely implied) of traditional leadership

on paper, and in law, serves to fossilise what is potentially a very dynamic and creative form.

In various calls for recognition, KhoiSan activists and revivalists have called for a creative institution of leadership and the historical data seems to corroborate this kind of call. The idea of creative leadership is key to the arguments being made in this paper and will be elaborated further on, after I have considered the nature and character of KhoiSan leadership through the lens of some historical and ethnographic data.

The lament of 'weak leadership'

In this chapter, I follow Pierre Clastres (2010) in opening up the question of leadership. For Clastres the heart of the matter is in the question: why should any person subject themselves to the will of another? Or, why do we choose to be led by others? Similarly, in this chapter, I am less interested in distinguishing the Khoi and San politically or as some form of 'tradition'. Rather, I treat the question as one of leadership and governance more broadly.

Clastres (2010) attempted to understand the nature of leadership outside the purview of those forms of headship found in state societies. He remarks that Europeans were often baffled by how little real authority leaders in what he called 'primitive' societies wielded. Clastres's studies of traditional societies in the Amazon – traditional because they were small scale, relatively 'uncontacted' and thus untainted by Western influences – reveal what he believes holds the key to understanding leadership in many non-Western societies, namely the granting of prestige versus the wielding of power. He argued that an individual may be granted prestige in society, but this prestige does not give the holder any special place or rank in society other than being a spokesperson.

Societies would have granted these individuals this particular office, possibly because the holder of the position had some particular qualities, skills or abilities. Yet, as easily as this prestige was granted, so easily could it be taken away. In fact, Clastres (2010) claims that a very

simple criterion could lead to the disqualification of the leaders, and that is a failure on the part of the leader to adequately and accurately give voice to the ideas and beliefs of the people they served. Failure to adequately represent could quickly lead to loss of prestige. Overall, Clastres's theory and ethnography of leadership suggests a loosely granted position of prestige that could be momentary, fleeting and easily lost. The leader in one situation or of one moment may, without much ceremony, find that someone else is speaking for the group.

Those who think only in a particularistic fashion may argue that the work of Clastres was done among the Yanomami, a group living in the Amazonian rainforest. These farmers and hunters are, among other things, known most famously for their alleged warlike nature – a role created by Changon's (1968) ethnography, entitled *The Fierce People*. How does one draw on theory from so far away, and how might it be relevant if it emerges in such a specific ethnographic context?

My response is twofold: The first has to do with the nature of theory and ethnography. Da Col and Graeber (2011) remind us that the source of theory is explanation, and that ethnographic exploration, thinking and writing is the raw data of theorisation. It is theory at its most basic. Clastres (2010) does not only want to understand leadership among the Yanomami, nor is he simply trying to understand 'chieftaincy' (his term, not mine). His aim is more global. The aim of the ethnographic enquiry into leadership is to open a broader question of leadership, both in state and stateless societies, in large and small-scale systems, in devolved and centralised political institutions. One last question then remains: can we find the elements of this somewhat plebeian democracy among the KhoiSan in southern Africa? A few pertinent elements must be highlighted from Clastres's work. The aspects of leadership in these non-Western forms that he thinks are pervasive are: their situational nature, the basing of leadership on skill set, the role of the leader as spokesperson and the granting of prestige versus the holding and wielding of power. Application of these characteristics to the KhoiSan will take a historical and ethnographic view.

As with Clastres's European observers in South America, the colonists of southern Africa were equally puzzled at the lack of real influence and power exercised by Khoi leaders. In fact, Abrahams

(1995) reports that in the early 18th century, some European observers were lamenting the disappearance of Khoi chiefs and 'captains'. Some would argue that this is due to the structurally weak nature of the institution (see Elphick, 1977). Perhaps observers wanted to see a strong centralised management of power, as in the systems they were accustomed to in Europe. Abrahams (1995), however, argues that the problem was not that the Khoi had weak leadership. Rather, during contact with the KhoiSan, the settlers wanted to impose their conception of leadership onto KhoiSan society. The European conception of leadership would not only clash with KhoiSan ideas, but would also contribute to the demise of 'traditional' leadership among the Khoi. Furthermore, it is not possible, today, to recover the 'authentic' or 'original' form that leadership took among the KhoiSan prior to colonial encounters with Europeans (Ellis, 2012).

With regard to KhoiSan archaeology, historiography and ethnography there are three instances in the literature in which historians noted visible leadership in KhoiSan societies. Firstly, contact leaders were produced through the colonists' need to find individuals with whom they could negotiate and trade. Secondly, key individuals often organised resistance in various parts of the country in response to the threats to their tenure of the land. And, thirdly, the functions of certain KhoiSan individuals as ritual specialists and rainmakers often gave them prominence in their societies (Prins, 1996; Prins & Lewis, 1992; Ellis, 2012). 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.

Some historians have examined travellers' accounts of KhoiSan 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 (1996) argued that in trade, as with the pacification of the indigenous population, the settlers needed

'strong men' with whom to negotiate. Schapera (1930) shared those sentiments about a weak leadership among the KhoiSan. He states 'that these [leaders]', however, were not 'chiefs' who wielded power, but were more like 'leader[s] rather than ruler[s]', since they did 'not exercise any organised control over [their] subjects'. Hence when these 'strong men' were unavailable, Europeans selected individuals they thought exhibited characteristics of a 'chief', and obviously this meant applying European standards of leadership and, if needs be, imposing leadership. Elsewhere Smith (1990) argues 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). Selection of leaders is thus a matter of a jostling for political power, struggle and then a game of making and asserting interpretations of the exact character of the leadership institutions – hence contestation.

One such contest of meaning has to do with the application of social Darwinist logic to KhoiSan society, specifically a reading of societal evolution that places KhoiSan people on the bottom of evolutionary architecture. The consignment of San to the lowest rung on the social evolutionary scale had a definite impact on European thinking about the nature of political institutions among the San. Societies that were viewed as more advanced had, according to this perspective, a more stratified social formation and therefore had to have a centralised leadership (Humphreys, 1985). Even so, the presence of these leadership positions, whatever their authentic nature may have been, were usually qualified or diminished by colonists. Famed European traveller and naturalist Robert Gordon argued from his observations of KhoiSan society that the San had weak leadership, but that the Khoi had a clearly established institution of 'chiefs'. For the Khoi, he claims, the chiefly office was characterised by patrilineal descent, supported by a class of elders (Gordon, R. as cited in Smith, 1990). Even as he offers up these two very clearly articulated principles,

namely age and patrilineality, it seems Gordon shares the scepticisms of his contemporaries about KhoiSan leadership. Gordon thus only mentions some vaguely described form of leadership. This leadership would be treated as somewhat spurious or decided on in the moment. Furthermore, the moment of leadership could be determined as one in which the 'bravest and most dextrous would only take charge where skills are needed' (Gordon R. as cited in Smith, 1996).

While, in principle, the ideas of Gordon (cited above) seem to square with some of this chapter's arguments, there is one aspect that differs fundamentally with other thinkers. Gordon's observations support the view that leadership was situational and that it was influenced by the skill set of the individual. Patrilineality is, however, a disputed aspect of KhoiSan culture. Some sources suggest that the Khoi had a matrilineal descent system – descent traced through the female line (Boonzaier, 1997). Khoi attitudes to aspects such as divorce were rather relaxed, suggesting to some a society that was characterised by some measure of gender parity. Matrilineality, however, is not to suggest an absence of patriarchy, it is just that the Khoi groups that the colonialists encountered were sometimes led by female chiefs. One example is the famous leader of the Hessequa people of the southern Cape, 'Lang Elsie', literally translating as 'tall Elizabeth' (De Jongh, 2016). In the early 20th century, Dorothea Bleek argued that the San had 'no chiefs but rather pay deference to a patriarch' (Bleek D. as cited in Schapera, 1930). Schapera responds to the above quote by qualifying that the person to whom deference is given could also be a woman. In the recreation of this institution in the present, it would serve to recognise that, in the past, Khoi leaders could be female and not simply recreate an institution based on male descent.

Leadership figures among the KhoiSan of the past have often emerged in the terrains of the struggle against colonialism, and the movement of the KhoiSan (San, Khoi, Griqua, Basters) beyond the border of the Cape Colony in search of self-reliance during the late 19th century. In this movement of people, many leaders were produced and I will not rehearse the whole litany of names. A short account may suffice to suggest some of the forms this leadership took. Some of the leaders that were produced were individuals like

Adam Kok III (1811–1875) and Dirk Vilander (ca. 1820–1896), who sought territory outside the Cape Colony, where they often petitioned the British crown to grant them sovereignty. Alas, the desired sovereignty never materialised and much Khoi Baster land would be lost to swindles, dispossession, grazing licences and the like. So, the Griqua and the Vilander Khoi would see how Boer republics (like Stellaland, Goshen and Rooigrond) all around them grew and were given official recognition by the British crown. All the while, those of Khoi descent were never given this kind of recognition of their sovereign or land rights. Beyond this, groups like the Vilander Khoi of the southern Kalahari and the Griqua had to defend their lands against the depredations of European invaders and other Khoi who lived by the commando system. The commando Khoi were those like Kootjie Afrikaner (ca. 1820–1889) who lived by raiding other Khoi and European farms. The commando system was learned from the Dutch colonists who used it effectively against the San. It consisted essentially of groups of armed men on horseback roving and raiding settlements (Penn, 1996). There were also those commando Khoi who fought directly against the colonists, like the many unnamed San leaders who rose to defend their watering holes and hunting territory against European farmers and Khoi Basters (see Saunders, 1977; Broodryk, 1992; Gordon and Sholto-Douglas, 2000).

It is clear, therefore, that many a Khoi leader rose on the colonial frontiers of the late 19th century. The question can be asked of whether or not the leadership positions that were created in response to colonial pressures morphed into more permanent leadership or traditional leadership positions. The answer is twofold: The first set of leaders like Dirk Vilander didn't leave behind a hereditary traditional leadership. Their land tenure and territories were never secured and they simply became colonial subjects (Broodryk, 1992; Ellis, 2012). The Griqua, however, did leave behind a clear hereditary traditional leadership, partly because they were able to secure political recognition (Ross, 1974; Waldman, 2007).

A third category of leader emerged and may be thought of as a version of a contact leader, and that is the ritual specialist. Ritual specialism is a range of activities that hold significance for groups as

mechanisms that help to ensure the production and reproduction of a particular social and cosmic order (see Turner, 1967; Van Gennep et al., 2004). The exact nature of the activities and the significance varies greatly from group to group. More so, these activities range from storytelling to healing to religious activities, and may include specialised knowledge like painting and the production of talismans, plus the manufacturing of goods. On occasion, the monopolies individuals had over these ritual activities granted them prestige and material benefits. For instance, we have historical and ethnographic accounts that suggest that the Nguni prized the services of San people as rainmakers (Saunders, 1977; Prins, 1990; 1996; 2009; Prins & Lewis, 1992) and this allowed them to insert themselves into patronage networks with material benefits. Control of patronage networks grant individuals some power vis-à-vis their compatriots. Equally, the historical evidence suggests that particular rock art sites had owners who managed these sites and controlled the material benefits and prestige of them (Woodhouse, 1997).

Individuals involved in traditional medicine and specialists in magic constituted a further set of roles that were often revered, and could translate the practice and knowledge of these arts into prestige. Suffice to say that ritual specialism, if controlled by individuals and families, is easily translated into power prestige and material benefit. Wilmsen (1989) argues that although San society was often understood to be egalitarian, his own fieldwork seemed to contradict this perspective. He documents exactly the process described above and shows how those individuals and families who controlled patronage from outsiders, who controlled the craft trade, who had ritual and religious capital or who controlled hunting rights and key products were able to use this to their own advantage in terms of the management of power and prestige in these groups.

Present-day KhoiSan leadership

At least two of the above factors persist into the present: the contact leaders and the ritual specialists. My own research into the land claim

community tracks the historical production of traditional leadership through 'contact' (Ellis, 2012). This is not contact through colonialism and state as such, but sustained contact with ethno-entrepreneurs, researchers and leadership in institutions such as the conservation authority. For instance, the Kruiper family, through a series of interactions with conservation authorities, filmmakers, researchers, lawyers and journalists gain prominence in the land claim community. Dawid Kruiper, who had always been a spokesperson during the land claims process of the 1990s, was eventually elected as the traditional leader. Kruiper was even selected to make a speech at the United Nations Working Group on Indigenous Populations in 1994.

This, however, was not 'traditional' leadership in the generally accepted sense of the term. Rather it is an official title of office in the Khomani San Common Property Association. In this sense, anyone could stand for office after this person's term of office was over. Dawid Kruiper, although generally accepted as a traditional leader, held this as an elected position and not as an inherited position. Moreover, there was no regional Khomani traditional leader for the San in this region. Notwithstanding, the aforementioned ethnographic and archival evidence is not intended to destroy the legitimacy of, or completely occlude the possibility for, the creation of a traditional leadership institution among the San in the southern Kalahari (I return to this point later).

Leadership in the present continues to be influenced by ritual specialism. Again, the Kruiper family serves as a clear example of this (Ellis, 2012; 2014; 2015). Over the last three decades, the Kruiper family have built quite a reputation as healers and diviners adept at producing talismans and apotropaic charms, and producing counter-magic. In the late 1990s, I spoke to some of their clients who had come as far afoot as the Eastern Cape, a distance of about 1,000 kilometres, to seek out the Kruipers' services. This craft was a practice that Dawid Kruiper and several other family members learned from Kruiper's father, Regopstaan, and his grandfather, Makai. The role the Kruipers played as ritual specialists was aided by their close relationship with conservation authorities in the national parks. This connection gave them access to resources that were revered as magical

in various communities, such as lion body parts (including hair, fat, nails and hide) and products from a range of other animals, some of which are endangered, like the pangolin. The family's networks were vital in their eventual reverence as ritual specialists and subsequently leaders. So, although there is no real inherited, historical traditional leadership that can be traced in the Kruiper lineage, their family access to this 'ritual capital' contributes to the eventual selection of members of this family as leaders.

The category of ritual specialist can be brought into the present and expanded to include a range of activities that are vital to the leadership question within the KhoiSan revival. A number of prominent figures in the KhoiSan movement have taken it upon themselves to become ritual specialists, or are officially in roles that are akin to ritual specialists. Ritual specialists refer to those who have a key role in the reproduction of the cosmological world of their groups; they are often also religious specialists. The first of these ritual specialists are a number of ordained ministers who have been elevated to, have been appointed to or have assumed key leadership positions. One could think of such key figures as Ds Willa Boesak and his brother Reggie Boesak, and Mario Mahongo of the Platfontein community in the Northern Cape. A second set of figures are those that attempt to reproduce the cosmological world of the Khoi and San by deploying readily available symbols and artefacts associated with KhoiSan identity, and recombining them in a creative process in order to recall or recreate a world that was lost in the colonial encounter. This creative deployment serves as an auratic critique, the critique that recalls the romantic past and continues to mourn it. This process also draws on various naturalistic symbols that recall land dispossession. These ritual specialists don springbok skins, animal skins or clothes with animal prints, and they burn *Helichrysum*,[4] and so recall all the natural resources that the land can bring forth. These are as much rituals of mourning as they are of rebirth. The individuals who lead these rituals are called upon to lead because they are seen as having the knowledge to rediscover the lost world of the KhoiSan by successfully deploying the available symbols. Very little has been written about these ritual specialists in the present-day KhoiSan

revival, and the above has been based on a few personal observations in various parts of South Africa.

Authenticity, as a feature of cultural strategies in general, can be used as an auratic recall of an apparently real African past. It is important to note that authenticity is not an actual recoverable state. The past has been so distorted by historical debate, the tainted practice of archiving and romanticisation, that a sentimentalised project of recovery and salvage is not desirable. Such projects of recovery characterise culturalised political strategies in the present, a relevant example being traditional leadership itself (Verbuyst, 2016). We are reminded also that authenticity is largely a modern concern that develops at particular moments in the maturation of industrial capitalism (see Ellis, 2014). With this understanding, the various strategies of deploying authenticity serve not as recovery of genuine or actual historical institutions, but as particularly modern social, cultural and political strategies. As Rassool (2006) has argued elsewhere, those who have studied San people often sought authority by appeals to 'authenticity', for example by calling upon 'voices of authenticity'. These voices of authenticity are often the San themselves and researchers deploy this to authenticate paradigms that are of dubious value and of colonial origin (Tomaselli, 2006; Ellis, 2012; Koot, 2016).

Rassool (2006) raises another problematic aspect of the deployment of authenticity, namely its paternalism, and here I turn to the ethnography again. First, the link between the two concepts, paternalism and authenticity, is made apparent in the 'expectations' that the other be 'present as authentic' (Enwezor, 1997). This call to be present as authentic is a call by the 'powerful Westerners' that 'the other', and that which these Westerners see as 'real culture', be presented to them (Enwezor, 1997). Ironically any 'modernised,' altered or constructed form is taken as fake, ersatz or somehow not real enough to be anything but a reproduction (Enwezor, 1997). These often European audiences demand that the African self be presented as 'authentic'. Then the European serves him or herself up as the curator, advocate and arbiter of this self-same authenticity (Enwezor, 1997).

In fieldwork done from 1999 to 2004 with San communities in the

southern Kalahari, I often noted that the San people who were not considered authentic were not treated with the same regard as those who acted out a script that suggested a particular type of 'bushman'. For instance, those San individuals who wanted to farm with livestock were not thought of as 'genuine' San and their livelihood strategies did not enjoy the same importance in NGO agendas. Elsewhere, these tensions of 'authentic' versus 'inauthentic' are well documented as tensions between so-called traditional versus westernised San (Robins, 2001; Ellis, 2012; 2014; 2015). The westernised San often found their own proposals and ideas sidelined in favour of those proposals considered to be more 'authentically' San. Activities considered more authentic were those which promoted cultural tourism, hunting, conservation and language survival, and excluded were livestock farming and associated activities. Paternalism is largely a component in the support for, and promotion of, particular agendas over others.

Earlier on, I mention the Kruipers' ability to control ritual resources because of their networks. The Kruipers are able to display and realise authenticity because they are also successfully able to fit the script of bushman-ness. For instance, the prominence of this family is not a matter of simple hereditary leadership. This leadership is locked into an intergenerational storehouse of family stories, networks of patronage, access to ritual and natural resources, as well as alliances of paternalism that help them to underwrite the script of authenticity. In fact, we must be conscious that these displays of authenticity are exhibiting forms that echo 'colonial fantasies' (Enwezor, 1997).

In closing this leadership sketch, with regard to the Khoi and San, the question of what constitutes an authentic form is pertinent. What is often considered to be the authentic form of leadership, which is a largely hereditary, patrilineal chieftaincy seated within a hierarchical system of governance with a tendency towards centralised management of power, does not in my view come close to reflecting the reality among the KhoiSan, neither in the past nor in the present. Above I have noted, *inter alia*, an apparently weak chieftaincy in historic KhoiSan groupings, where power was somewhat divorced from the office. We are presented with what was a range of 'contact' spokespersons who could just as easily have been selected by

outsiders as by insiders. These spokespersons, when selected by the group of which they were members, were not granted any power but rather momentary prestige to speak on behalf of the group. This role could be fulfilled as long as the person expressed the point of view of the society in question. Clastres (2010) suggests that leaders must be those who merely repeat or articulate societies' discourses about themselves. Spokespersons remain key in the politics of the KhoiSan revival and it is from one of these that I want to draw my statement about KhoiSan leadership. Simple selection of a spokesperson as leader is not a means of creating authentic leadership. In his challenge to the TKLB, leader and KhoiSan activist Johnathan Muller instead suggests a form similar to the above. He holds that the first point of accountability and representation is not the 'traditional leader' but rather a structure. In articulating this view, Muller is contesting the clause in the TKSLB that proposes that KhoiSan traditional leaders should receive salaries. His point is simple:

> … it is said our leaders will be co-opted onto structures and then they are going to receive remuneration. Please I ask you not to be that divisive because we have customary structures. Monies don't go to leaders, money come to structures, structures pay the leaders (Muller, 2015).

Muller's point is simply that we need to consider that in some ways it was fortunate that KhoiSan systems were not drawn into colonial forms of governance, and subsequently into the system of apartheid. Instead, at this moment, we have the opportunity to create a system of governance for those KhoiSan who should want it, that reflects more accurately, and I shudder to say authentically, a system of traditional leadership. The system suggested by Muller is one where the leadership, that is those granted the prestige to lead, are held responsible for those they speak on behalf of. The suggestion is that the present structures proposed for traditional leadership are open to abuse. In this system, where traditional authorities get salaries directly from government structures, structures have no direct mechanism to allow communities to hold leadership accountable. Leaders are only

spokespersons who articulate the views and standpoints of the people or structures they represent. If communities so desire, the above system gives them opportunity to withdraw power from the person. Where leadership is inherited, there are very few direct mechanisms that are as powerful and decisive as the act of withholding remuneration.

The final point here is about the exact nature of institutions like traditional leadership, although the relevance of the point is not confined to traditional leadership only. My suggestion above is that we maintain an open approach to these and do not attempt to fossilise these institutions. The validity of this approach is supported by two factors already discussed. The first is the gender inclusiveness of the institution. It is suggested that the KhoiSan were not clearly either matrilineal or patrilineal. Thus, rules about either matrilineal or patrilineal lineage can limit the potential participation of certain groups, such as women, making these institutions rigid and exclusionary. The second factor, the recreation of cosmological and social worlds by ritual specialists, suggests further that there is no fixed authentic culture, but rather that culture has a dynamism that needs to be constantly accommodated. It has often proved elusive to create policy that considers the dynamic nature of culture. This brings us to the second part of the paper that deals more directly with the 'creative' versus the 'authentic' in KhoiSan governance.

Tensions of the authentic versus creative

The argument that there is a tension between the 'authentic' and the 'creative' is best illustrated with reference to two characters in the Khomani San land claim that was lodged in 1995 and resolved in 1999. Much of what follows is based on observations I collected during fieldwork conducted from 1999 until 2003 in the southern Kalahari. In this claim, a group of about 600–800 San descendants, including 25 of the last known speakers of the N/u language, claimed land in what is now the Kgalagadi Transfrontier Park (KTP). In their settlement, the community was given 36,000 hectares of farm land, game animals and a concession in the transfrontier conservation area, along with other

cultural rights. The Khomani case was hailed as a great success and a triumph for indigenous or first peoples of southern Africa (Ellis, 2012). However, within a year of the claim being settled, several problems began emerging. One of the problems was the competition for leadership of the group, mainly between the elected traditional leader and the chairman of the Common Property Association or CPA (the actual juristic body through which the land was owned and managed). I have characterised this elsewhere as a clash between democratic governance and tradition. This is a loose application of the critique of traditional leadership offered by Lungisile Ntsebeza (2006).

The elected traditional leader of the Khomani San was the now-deceased Dawid Kruiper (1936–2012), who insisted that his position as elected traditional leader, as well as the leadership role he played in the land claim, afforded him a position of rank. During the first years after the land claim was resolved, he continuously made calls for a separation of land for 'traditional' activities such as hunting, tourism, tourist rituals and the like, from land that was to be used for westernised purposes. Western activities included farming, specifically livestock farming, and residential use. Tourism was considered a traditional activity, largely because tourism encounters were managed to portray performances of what are thought to be 'authentic' Bushmen activities and lifestyles. Kruiper additionally called for the exclusion of those he considered 'westernised' from the farms and the land inside the national park (KTP). His rival took charge of very different aspects of the lives of the claimant community. Petrus Vaalbooi committed his time to the continuous attempts to house many of the San who had moved onto the farmland. At the same time, he promised assistance with healthcare, welfare and pension, as well as transport. Vaalbooi busied himself with the provision of grazing land to those San descendants who were also livestock owners, ensuring that they could occupy land, that they had access to water and that the infrastructure on the farms was in good repair (Ellis, 2012). For Vaalbooi, the agenda was mainly a developmental one.

The two leaders also formed very different alliances with outsiders. Kruiper mostly formed networks with NGOs who supported his cultural agenda. Vaalbooi, however, was a *bricoleur* and could adjust

his agenda to suit any audience. His networks ranged from journalists, government officials and international scholars, to NGOs and fellow KhoiSan activists. His style of leadership was much more inclusive and, in fact, creative. At certain points, Kruiper found it difficult to engage with situations of power that required navigation. At these moments, he often withdrew from participation or relied on powerful or influential outsiders to help him assert his agenda. The world of committees and collective decision-making within the CPA was strange terrain for Kruiper. While Vaalbooi navigated this terrain with ease, Kruiper struggled because the group would often reject his call for an exclusive traditional space, reserved for him and his extended family. Sometimes they would stage a 'walk out', leaving community meetings *en masse* to attempt to make their point. Kruiper's position as traditional leader did not grant him any real power, nor did it facilitate the realisation of his vision of a 'traditional' territory where San descendants could revive their language and culture. Vaalbooi, on the other hand, could easily bring about his programmes of development, mostly because he was familiar with political activity, having been involved in regional politics for many years (Ellis, 2012).

In the case of the Khomani San, we can see a traditional leader attempting to push a particular agenda but encountering resistance from his political rivals. In the end, the way things played out suggests that those leaders who were not only more politically savvy but also creative in their engagement with all players, were able to assert political power. Thus, in the short term, the creative triumphed over the authentic.

As an endnote, I may add that at present (mid-2018) the San farms are under administration – a situation that came into effect in 2008.[5] No traditional or other forms of governance could resolve the deep-seated issues in the San community.

KhoiSan dysselection and indigenisation as rebellion

In this final note on the issue of KhoiSan leadership, I want to regard the KhoiSan from yet another far corner of the world. McKittirck

(2016), reading Sylvia Wynter's vast manuscript 'Black Metamorphosis' (unpublished), offers us a fresh view of the idea of 'indigenous'. The first point he makes is that it must be read as a verb not a noun, a 'becoming', not resting place or essence. The reading of indigenous begins by postulating that the black population of the Caribbean is not indigenous, but has become indigenous to that region of the world. All autochthonous peoples have virtually disappeared. African-American slave descendants have stepped in to fill this gap and have in effect become the indigenous people of the region. Wynter asks that without, as she says, 'rehearsing the litany of dehumanising activities', we arrive at the site of, and a process that responds to, this dehumanising (Wynter as cited in McKittirck, 2003). Wynter has named the dehumanising process as dysselection. Dysselection is that which constantly reminds us of our less than human-ness. The people subject to this process of dehumanising can only respond with rebellion and, in the rebellion, create new humans that affirm their place and history, not as autochthonous but as an allochthonous indigenous people. Wynter therefore argues that what we see in the present as an assertion of 'indigenous' identity, in forms such as music, funerals, fictions and art, are in fact all rebellious forms (Wynter as cited in McKittirck, 2003).

I want to argue here that the KhoiSan, as with many other people the world over, have suffered a process of great dysselection, a literal and continual refusal of their humanity that for some continues into the present. The KhoiSan were, from the first encounters with others, denied their humanity in multiple ways. The insertion of their people into an economic system of unequal value exchange (cattle for trinkets) is well known (Coetzee, 2000). The dysselection continued with the introduction of alcohol, disease and rape, and the subsequent labelling of the KhoiSan as drunkards, indolent and sexually depraved – and all this just in the 17th century. I can continue with other examples: the hunting of San people as vermin, the extermination of the men and the enslavement of women and children. By the mid-1800s, the San found themselves refused in all ways: jailed for hunting, starved, dying of thirst, dispossessed of their land and converted into virtual slaves on white-owned farms. The complete and total dysselection of the KhoiSan in these periods creates inhumane labour practices

that many are still not able to escape today. In addition, there was the final negation and stripping of identity – and here McKittrick's (2016) words ring true – in that the KhoiSan cultural practices were threats and that they were 'bereft of their humanity'. An incident that comes to mind is of the loss of KhoiSan languages. Dawid Kruiper notes how he was pinched and his ears twisted by teachers and non-San adults when he spoke Nama as a young boy. Violent practices continued to dysselect for culture after even after land had been lost.

The dysselection of the KhoiSan continues in the present. Many KhoiSan activists argue[6] that there has been little recognition for KhoiSan people in the present and that even in South Africa's new democratic dispensation they continue to be treated as 'coloureds' and thus considered a people without a culture. The apparent lack of culture masks the true loss here: the loss of the land.

McKittrick (2016) suggests the solution to dysselection is to be found in the recreation of humanity. Likewise, if this recreation is in a constant rebellion against dysselection, then the KhoiSan revival must be read as a rebellion too. Thus, the various aspects of the revival are more than just a peaceful recreation of a lost culture. No, the indigenisation, as mapped by Wynter (cited in McKittirck, 2016) and applied to the KhoiSan, is a process of active upheaval, engaged debates and a feverish recreation of not just a culture but a humanity. The activities of some of the KhoiSan activists seem to support this assertion.

In a video made by a colleague, Rafeal Verbuyst, we see several activists gathered outside the Castle of Good Hope in Cape Town in 2014 – a fitting site that many activists hail as the origin of the oppression of KhoiSan people. People who are protesting are not simply standing about peacefully. One of the participants walks on the white lines in the middle of the street. He shouts incoherently but you can tell he is outraged. They chant a litany that includes Nama words, reclaiming those phrases that were denied them at one point in history. They end the protest with a joint act of defiance. The men, about 10 or 12, all urinate against the wall of the castle. The revival is not just a plea for peace, a request for inclusion or a plea for the return of land and culture. The revival is a fervent, openly vulgar rebellion against the Castle.

One of the critiques of those 'traditional' communities advocating for the TKLB is that they are willingly subjecting themselves to a system of rule that has been implicated in the oppression of people under both colonialism and apartheid (Claassens, 2016). Fears that the TKLB will bring new oppression and subjection may be well founded. In some quarters, the regressive ramifications of the TKLB are now generally accepted wisdom. Yet, people who potentially fall under the Khoi-San Bill seem undeterred by this commentary. Why should the people be so resolute in their calls for a system that is viewed as compromised? One has to read it, in part, as a call for political recognition. In other ways, it is a political strategy that this community hopes will deliver the rights of citizenry and the benefits of the post-apartheid era.

In the calls for the creation and recognition of traditional KhoiSan leaders, there are two core issues. The first of these are volunteer kings and chiefs – self-professed traditional leaders, with or without followers, with or without mandates. The second issue is what I am calling 'brown nationalism' – attempts by some to use the category 'KhoiSan' as a national category, in opposition to all other categories in South Africa.

The first issue is one that asks about the authenticity of the leaders that are to be recognised. The bill has a provision that not only requires these leaders to prove that they are not spuriously claiming traditional leadership positions, but also that groups validate their existence by showing that they actually exist as a 'tribe'. The final say on these matters is vested in an expert appointed by the president (Claassens, 2016). It would seem that traditional leadership remains a position that is ultimately created and validated in law, and not in custom or history. In the final analysis, the authenticity of the claims to traditional authority aside, one needs to ask what a spurious king or chief would hope to achieve. The simple dismissal of such persons as culturally dubious displaces an issue that constituents want addressed within the frame of KhoiSan politics of revival. One must be reminded that indigenisation is a process of rebellion. If so, a chief emerges to challenge some aspect of the past but also to engage with the issues of the present. If even spurious claims to chieftaincy are

legitimate acts of rebellion, what might the issues be? The unresolved issues of the post-apartheid period, taken here to refer to a state of mind and culture of being rather than being simply temporal, are numerous. Suffice to say that the KhoiSan activists continue to voice an experience akin to the dysselection mentioned earlier. Not that I support the critique voiced by 'brown nationalists', in fact I dispute it vehemently, but some KhoiSan activists claim that at present they are neglected as a political category and that other groups are granted both cultural and land rights that are denied to them. According to this argument, it follows that from the rights to land there are certain knock-on effects. Thus, the recognition of leaders, spurious or not, will help these communities deal with social welfare issues and power issues that still plague their 'people'.

Although not always articulated as such, there is a dangerous subscript of coloured nationalism in some of the KhoiSan revival politics. The political questions raised, and the framing of the debates, are dangerously close to ideas that held sway under apartheid. One of the key debates is about a reading of the history of the peopling of southern Africa. In these terms, the call for political leaders like those that were created under apartheid, with all the accompanying power bases, is a central call issued by certain proponents of the revival. Some are literally suggesting separate territories. Most of these calls fall short of naming the 'swart gevaar'. This approach represents a solidification of the structures and political institutions of apartheid through the mobilisation of key cultural institutions, and the linking of these to physical resources such as land as power base. This of course is true of any group, KhoiSan or not, that continues to live as subjects of chiefs and kings.

On 'brown nationalism', the politics of KhoiSan indigenisation includes a call for the recognition of the KhoiSan as an autochthonous population and the *de facto* first peoples. All other people are considered recent arrivals. Although the term indigenous is used for most of the non-white population, the KhoiSan activists would like to see it applied only to themselves and not to allochthonous settlers. Activists believe that the recognition of 'traditional leaders' should bring with it all the desired effects concerning land.

Conclusions

Lalu (2008) asks us to consider whether we are in fact in the 'post'-apartheid period, and what this post-apartheid might mean. He concludes, among other things, that post-apartheid, as in postcolonial, has never really happened, and is thus a mindset, not a temporal appellation. If anything, post-apartheid, like postcolonial, has meant a solidification of the structures of apartheid. Among some KhoiSan activists, this has led to intense calls for the recognition of what are essentially apartheid ideologies or institutions. Hence, we see the calls for readings of apartheid history to be officially recognised, calls for the granting of customary authority as under apartheid and, lastly, re-inscription of apartheid categories such as 'coloured' but by a different name (KhoiSan). The rulings on all these exceptions have repercussions in the fields of land, minerals and political territory. And across South Africa, the call for the official recognition and legitimacy of traditional authorities is, in part at least, a call for the concretisation of the structures of apartheid, as an exception!

The KhoiSan revival is not monolithic in its response to the ravages of apartheid. I have suggested that the KhoiSan are following various paths in the post-apartheid period, and many of these strategies are creative and active in their reconstruction of a KhoiSan identity. The responses to dysselection have been dignifying to many who assume and claim the KhoiSan moniker, and it would be premature to simply dismiss the entire movement as re-establishing, and attempting to make permanent, the institutions of apartheid. We must accept that some of the traditional and customary positions created by the KhoiSan activists are founded on a philosophy of care for people and kin.

In the final analysis, I have argued that traditional leadership can and does play a role in the lives of people who choose to associate with these institutions of culture. In fact, many of those who have emerged in the KhoiSan revival seem to reflect styles of leadership that are at once situational, and also dynamic and creative. However, I advise caution in the application of these notions and we must always be wary that the professed logic and philosophy of care does not continue to be, or evolve into, a practice of domination.

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Endnotes

1 As a thought and theory experiment I want to withhold pronouncements of certain identity such as KhoiSan, Khoi or San. Rather I want to treat these forms as cooperative, working together in the defining and reassertion of an identity formation that has its origin in First Nations descent and autochthony. Usually thought of as two distinct groups and sometimes treated as economically, linguistically and politically separate, for our arguments here I will assume the Khoi and San as being the same construct united by a common origin, history of habitation and genetics. Where terms such as San, Khoi, Hottentot, Bushmen are used it should be taken to be the terms used in the texts being referenced. Further, when the term Khoi is used it will be understood as referring to those KhoiSan people who were formerly or presently herders/pastoralists. In the same way, when San is used it will be taken to refer to former hunter gatherers.

2 Philip Tobias Took steered the Wits Kalahari Research Committee from the 1950s to the 1990s and also headed the Wits anatomy department – a position he held until 1990 as well. He participated in various expeditions

to study Bushmen. He was widely regarded as one of the premier physical anthropologists in South Africa if not the world (Houlton & Billings, 2017)

3 Werner Willi Max Eiselen was a professor of *volkekunde* at Stellenbosch University during the 1930s, where he founded, among other things, the Department of Bantu Studies or, as it was known in Afrikaans, Bantoelogie. He was renowned as a linguist and *volkekundige* and served as Government Ethnologist under apartheid. During his term as Government Ethnologist he developed the Eiselen scheme that would call for the removal of all 'so-called' natives from the western parts of South Africa. This scheme would be the foundation of the Coloured Labour Preference Area Policy, an apartheid policy that was first hinted at in the 1950s and implemented slowly over time during the 1960s and 1970s (see Hammond-Tooke, 1997).

4 *Helichryum petiolarum* is one of a number of plant species that are burned at ritual occasions. It is known by a less flattering name, 'Hotnotskooigoed', literally Hottentot bedding in Afrikaans. In Zulu and Xhosa it is known as *imphepho*.

5 The land that had been returned to the Khomani in 1999 had been so badly managed and the community was so rife with conflict that the Department of Land Affairs decided to take over the management of the land and the associated resources.

6 Much of what is recounted here is from first-hand observations during fieldwork.