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met by the accommodation of some in the Kat River Settlement - later schemes which were modelled on it met with little success - and by the allocation of plots in the "locations" attached to villages such as Uitenhage and Graham's Town. Free movement was under almost constant threat from the colonists' agitation for a vagrant law. A draft bill drawn up by the Legislative Council in 1834 was disallowed, but the clamour in its favour by petition, at public meetings, and in the press was seen by Khoisan to be proof of a pervasive opposition to this aspect of their newly-won rights.⁵⁴

THE KAT RIVER REBELLION AND KHOIKHOI NATIONALISM:¹ THE FATE OF AN ETHNIC IDENTIFICATION

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In many circumstances, when people make a claim to an ethnic identity, or ascribe others to such an identity, this is a political act. The claim is made in order to acquire, or safeguard, some scarce good, or to exclude others from that good. This is not the whole story, for sure. The psychological basis of identity is more complex than this very instrumentalist view would suggest. Nevertheless, any theory of public identity would have to take account of such an argument. Ethnicities and nationalisms are therefore contingent, not absolute, as they are made in the course of competition for resources, whose rules, written or unwritten, may change. They can only gain wide acceptance when large numbers of people consider it to be opportune to adopt such identities.

There is a corollary to this argument. If circumstances change in such a way that the public expression of a particular ethnic, or other, identity is likely to work against the interests of those who had previously claimed it, then the likelihood is that such an identification will be suppressed. This is something which can be forgotten, and is indeed difficult to see in the historical record, in which absences and silences are always difficult to observe, and even harder to demonstrate, as has been shown, in spite of itself, by such post-modernist and other work inspired by literary criticism which is often concerned with the silences in texts. Ethnicities can grow, though probably not out of nothing; they can also disappear, though also probably not to nothing.

In this article, I will attempt to sketch the career of such an identity, both in its upsurge and its disappearance. In summary, the argument I will be making is as follows. Between 1828 and 1851², men of Khoikhoi descent in the Eastern Cape regularly expressed what has been described as "hottentot nationalism".³ Whether this is an apposite description is a moot point. The advantage of such terminology is that it reflects that used by then Khoikhoi themselves. The disadvantage is that a "nationalism" which does not attempt to seek state power or

1. Somewhat reluctantly, I have followed modern usage by using the terms Khoikhoi, or Khoi, except in quotations, instead of "hottentot", even though the term "hottentot nationalism" is becoming embedded in the literature. Aside from its total lack of basis in the Khoikhoi language, "hottentot" is generally shunned because it is a term of racial abuse. However, in this case, it was used by the people concerned themselves with a considerable degree of pride; hence my reluctance.
2. The gender roles were such that the public sphere, and thus access to the preservation of their opinions, was reserved for males. The only exception was a petition from the women of the Kat River against the introduction of convicts into the Cape Colony. I have not yet located a copy, and thus cannot be certain how "nationalist" it was. The letter from Sir Harry Smith acknowledging it in James Read Jnr., *The Kat River Settlement in 1851* (Cape Town, 1852), 5.
3. S. Trapido, 'The Emergence of Liberalism and the making of 'Hottentot Nationalism', 1815-1834', *Collected Seminar papers of the Institute of Commonwealth Studies, London: The Societies of Southern Africa in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries*, (hereafter SSA), 17, 1992. Elizabeth Elbourne, 'Freedom at issue: Vagrancy Legislation and the Meaning of Freedom in Britain and the Cape Colony, 1799-1842', *Slavery and Abolition*, 15, 2 (1994), 114-50. For a further discussion, see V.C. Malherbe, 'The Cape Khoisan in the Eastern Districts of the Colony before and after Ordinance 50 of 1828' (Ph.D. thesis, University of Cape Town, 1997), 414-420. Unfortunately I received this thesis too late to take full cognizance of it in this article.

54. The proposed vagrant act applied to all and made no reference to a particular "class", but the de facto situation meant it was likely to bear heavily on the Khoisan.

establish a nation-state is hardly worthy of the name. Logically, though not emotively, neutral is the fact that "nationalism" often has positive connotations, ethnicity negative ones. Philosophically, concern as to whether the phenomenon in question was "really" nationalism stems from an epistemological realism, or idealism, whose basis, I would have hoped, was removed by Duns Scotus and William of Ockham, but which nevertheless regularly reappears in South Africanist (and not doubt many other) historiographies. In this article, I will use "nationalism" and "ethnic consciousness" as synonyms, although I am of course aware that this can only apply to the specific case under discussion, and there may be many occasions in which it may be valuable to distinguish between the categories. But, with my severely nominalist bias, I believe that categorisation should be subsequent to description (and does not really matter very much anyway).

The men in question were converts to Christianity and were generally, although not exclusively, attached to London Missionary Society churches. In 1851-2, a minority of the mission Khoikhoi rose in rebellion against the colonial government, and more particularly against the English settlers of the Eastern Cape. In this they were joined by a large number of men who worked as farm labourers throughout the Eastern Cape and whose contacts with the mission were probably tenuous. Khoikhoi nationalism reached its apogee during the rebellion. In its aftermath, however, the expression of such opinions was highly inopportune. As a result, they disappeared from the public stage, although I think there are reasons to suppose that they were not entirely eliminated from the consciousness of the descendants of the mission Khoikhoi and other coloureds.

* * * * *

The circumstances in which this nationalism developed had their origin in the later eighteenth century. Throughout the century, European-descended settlers had been slowly conquering the lands of the Khoikhoi along the southern coast of Africa, moving east from the Hottentots Holland mountains in around 1700 until in the third quarter of the century they took over the great swathe of territory bounded, more or less, by the Sneeuwberg in the north and the Fish River in the East. In the course of this process, they took control of the grazing lands, impoverished the stock-owners and broke Khoikhoi political organisation. The Khoisan in this wide area became labourers on the white farms, or fled north of the Orange or to among the Xhosa. Khoi servants could no longer expect to acquire respect and honour through possessions, and indeed were unlikely to accumulate stock in any way. They and their families were subject to what they saw as arbitrary violence. This social disintegration produced widespread individual desolation. The values by which people had lived in society could no longer guarantee what they once had.⁴

4. See, in general, S. Newton-King, 'The Enemy Within: the struggle for ascendancy on the Cape Eastern Frontier, 1760-1799' (Ph.D. thesis, University of London, 1992); for analogous processes in the Northern Cape, see N. Penn, 'The Northern Cape Frontier Zone, 1700-c. 1815' (Ph.D. thesis, University of Cape Town, 1995).

Resistance to white conquest and domination was as it had been since the beginning of the eighteenth century. They took the form of escape, or of the guerrilla warfare from the mountains which the Europeans described as "Bushman raids". Temporarily, at least, these could be very successful. For a period in the 1770s European-descended farmers were driven out of a wide stretch of South Africa's great escarpment, to the west and north of modern Graaff-Reinet. However, in the last years of the eighteenth century a challenge of a different order was mounted in the so-called Servants' Revolt, in which Khoisan laid waste Boer farms over a wide stretch of countryside, from the Fish river west well into the Lang Kloof.⁵

Within both the Bushman wars against the colonists and the Servants' Revolt, there were expressions of aims which could, loosely, be described as nationalist. There was, for instance, the ringing declaration of the Bushman leader Koerikei, delivered from a rock out of gunshot range of the pursuing commando,

What are you doing in my territory? You occupy all the places where the eland and other game are. Why did you not remain where the sun sets, where you first were?

And further 'he did not want to leave the area of his birth, and that ... he would kill their herdsman and drive them all away.'⁶

In the Servants' Revolt, there was a famous declaration by the Khoikhoi leader Klaas Stuurman.

'Restore', he said, 'the country of which our fathers were despoiled by the Dutch, and we have nothing more to ask.' I [John Barrow, the English official and negotiator] endeavoured to convince him how little advantage they were likely to derive from the possession of a country without any other property, or the means of deriving a subsistence from it; but he had the better of the argument. 'We lived very contentedly', said he, 'before these Dutch plunderers molested us, and why should we not do so again if left to ourselves? Has not the Groot Baas given plenty of grass roots, and berries and grasshoppers for our use; and, till the Dutch destroyed them, abundance of wild animals to hunt? And will they not return and multiply when these destroyers are gone?''⁷

In two ways, the Servants' Revolt contained elements which were of great importance for later developments. First, it occurred during, and was intimately connected with, a war between the colonists and the Xhosa. The Khoikhoi were allied with those Xhosa who were attacking the colony, although there is no sense that there was any form of joint command, or even active cooperation. From then on, the Eastern Cape Khoi would be inextricably involved in the long-

5. On this, see Susan Newton-King & V.C. Malherbe, *The Khoikhoi Rebellion in the Eastern Cape (1799-1803)*, Communications No. 5, Centre for African Studies (University of Cape Town, 1981).
6. R. Gordon, *Cape Travels, 1777 to 1786*, 2 vols, trans. and ed. by P.E. Raper and M. Boucher (Houghton, 1988), I, 81.
7. J. Barrow, *Travels into the Interior of Southern Africa*, vol. 2 (London, 1806), 111, cited in Newton-King & Malherbe, *Khoikhoi Rebellion*, 17.

running conflict between the colony and the Xhosa, in complicated and not altogether consistent ways.

Secondly, the Revolt happened to coincide with the arrival of Protestant missionaries of the London Missionary Society in the Eastern Cape, led by the polymath millenarian Dutchman, Dr. Johannes van der Kemp. Van der Kemp had begun his missionary work among the Ngqika Xhosa, but after a while was forced to retreat into the colony. There he came to stay in Graaff-Reinet, where he collected about him a disparate group of Khoikhoi, many of whom had been rebels. In Graaff-Reinet, they were confronted by the Boers of the region, who had thrown off such meagre authority as had been imposed on them from Cape Town. Van der Kemp was increasingly disillusioned - if he had ever had any illusions - with the Christianity of the so-called European Christians. His message was quickly accepted by the Khoi under his aegis. Many of them had felt the rejection of their European masters, who had used the religious devotions on the farms to stress the divisions between themselves, who were Christians, and their Khoi and slave underlings, who were not. Within months of the coming of the missionaries to the Eastern Cape, Khoi converts and whites were confronting each other by singing psalms in challenge to each other across the village of Graaff-Reinet.⁸

Under the protection of the British army, Van der Kemp moved with his troop of followers to Algoa Bay, where, in what were to become the suburbs of Port Elizabeth, they founded the mission station of Bethelsdorp. The name was consciously chosen. In his last sermon in Graaff-Reinet, Van der Kemp had preached from Genesis XXXV, which tells the story of Jacob's migration to Bethel, unimpeded by his enemies. There God appeared to Jacob and said to him:

Thy name is Jacob: thy name shall not be called any more Jacob, but Israel shall be thy name; and he called his name Israel. And God said unto him, I am God Almighty: be fruitful and multiply; a nation and a company of nations shall be of thee, and kings shall come out of thy loins; and the land which I gave Abraham and Isaac, to thee will I give it, and to thy seed after thee will I give the land.⁹

The speedy conversion of many Khoikhoi to mission Christianity provided them certainties and a dignity which had been denied them as servants on Boer farms. Under Van der Kemp and his helper and successor James Read, the Khoikhoi of Bethelsdorp came to see themselves as the true Christians, and the Boers, and later the British in the Eastern Cape, as apostates.¹⁰

For a quarter of a century after its formulation, the nationalism and the

confidence expressed through the symbolism of Bethel and through Khoikhoi Christianity was undoubtedly present within the LMS mission communities of the Eastern Cape, but there was little opportunity to express it. Van der Kemp died in 1811. James Read, who married Elizabeth Valentyn of Bethelsdorp and was to labour for fifty years until he thought of himself as more "Hottentot" than European,¹¹ fell under a cloud, when his adultery with a convert's daughter was discovered. Demoted from missionary to artisan, he continued to live in Bethelsdorp, but was not in circumstances where his message could be heard outside that village. The Khoikhoi themselves had no public fora in a colony in which political meetings and a free press were not tolerated.

In the mid-1820s, matters changed. The authoritarian High Toryism of Governor Lord Charles Somerset gave way to a more open regime. Dr. John Philip, the newly arrived Superintendent of the LMS in South Africa, spearheaded a campaign for the abolition of discriminatory legislation and administrative abuses against the Khoikhoi within the colony. The Commissioners of Eastern Inquiry visited the colony, and began a far-reaching investigation into many aspects of the colonial system.¹² In these circumstances, the mission Khoi were able to express their views, at first guardedly and then with greater certainty. This began with requests from 'divers inhabitants of the district of Uitenhage, sprung principally from the Gona and other Hottentot tribes', who had 'long been members of Bethelsdorp', for more land.¹³ Then, in 1828 and 1829, their situation changed considerably, as first Ordinance 50 was enacted, removing all civil disabilities from free people of colour and, secondly, a substantial tract of land in the Kat River valley was given over to the Khoisan for the establishment of an agricultural settlement.

The celebrations among the Khoikhoi to mark Ordinance 50 were most prominent in Bethelsdorp, when in February 1830 John Philip visited the village in company of John Fairbairn, his future son-in-law and the editor of the *South African Commercial Advertiser* and two French Protestant missionaries. To celebrate the visit, a great dinner was organised for 120 people, with the Bethelsdorp Khoi preparing the food - very well and in considerable diversity, even by the exacting standards of the French. After the dinner a number of speeches were made, both by the missionaries and their party and by seven leaders of the Bethelsdorp community. The former rehearsed the steps by which the ending of civil disabilities had been achieved, and exhorted the mission residents to continue in the progress of civilisation and the way of the Lord, indivisible matters in their eyes. The latter, Wensel Heemra, Jan David, Gert Windvogel, Paul Keteldas, Jan Stuurman, Daniel Zeeband and Piet Manuel, concentrated on the blessings which they had received through the missionaries, both in terms of their spiritual advancement and materially, again closely linked. It was, Piet Manuel said, through the Gospel that 'he could sit at his own ease in his own

8. The psalms sung are quoted in R. Ross, *A Tragedy of Manners: status and respectability in the Cape Colony, 1750-1870* (Cambridge, forthcoming); see also I.H. Enklaar, *Life and Work of Dr.J. Th. van der Kemp, 1747-1811: Missionary pioneer and protagonist of racial equality in South Africa* (Cape Town & Rotterdam, 1988), 112; Newton-King and Malherbe, *Khoikhoi Rebellion*, 24.

9. Genesis, xxxv, 10-12; in the Dutch *Statenbijbel*, which Van der Kemp would have used, the term translated into English as "nation" is rendered as "volk" ("people"); see Newton-King & Malherbe, *Khoikhoi Rebellion*, 44.

10. E. Elbourne, 'To Colonize the Mind: Evangelical Missionaries in Britain and the Eastern Cape, 1790-1837' (D.Phil thesis, Oxford, 1991), 145-6.

11. Read to Kitchingman, 13.5.1844, in B.A. Le Cordeur & C. Saunders eds., *The Kitchingman Papers: Missionary Letters and Journals, 1817 to 1848* (Johannesburg, 1976), 248.

12. J. Peires, 'The British and the Cape, 1814-1834' in R. Elphick and H. Giliomee, eds., *The Shaping of South African Society, 1652-1840* (Cape Town, 1979).

13. These memorials are printed in S. Bannister, *Humane Policy, or Justice to the Aborigines of the New Settlements* (London, 1830), cclxxviii - cclxxxii.

house, and at his own table.' All the same, particularly in Wensel Heemra's speech, there are indications that he was beginning to see, or to express, the idea that the Khoikhoi were a nation equivalent to that of the English.¹⁴

It was within the Kat River settlement that these ideas were most clearly expressed. It is therefore necessary first to discuss the origins of the settlement and its inhabitants. It was created, largely on the initiative of Sir Andries Stockenström, in the fertile valley to the north of Fort Beaufort, on land from which the Xhosa leader Maqoma had just been expelled. However, the Gona among the Kat River Khoi settlers claimed that in the distant past, say in the eighteenth century, the valley had been their territory, and that the Xhosa were recent and forcible immigrants. Hendrik Joseph claimed in 1834 that when he was a young man - he was then already old - he had gone 'through this part of the country with some Boers, that went out to shoot Zeekooi, [hippopotami] and there were only Gona Hottentots here to be found'.¹⁵ It is difficult to know how accurate these statements were. They could however be used as a justification for that part of the Khoikhoi national heritage.

The settlers in the Kat River came from a variety of different backgrounds. Many had previously lived on or in association with the LMS mission stations of the region, Bethelsdorp and Theopolis, which were becoming increasingly impoverished. The missionaries there were to complain in the coming years that all the more dynamic of their flock had departed.¹⁶ Many of these men and women claimed Gona (or Gonaqua) ancestry, as did numbers of others, many of whom had been living among the Xhosa, or reasonably independently in the Eastern Cape, before they gravitated to the Kat River. On the other hand, there was a large contingent known as the "Bastards", who could lay claim to some European ancestry - or rather were prepared to acknowledge it and make play of it.¹⁷ Probably they were mainly the descendants of poorer boers who had been unable to find white wives and had established fairly permanent families with Khoi women, and who therefore passed such property as they had been able to accumulate on to their children. Certainly, in the Kat River the "bastards" were thought of as richer than the rest, and as those who came from the colonial farms.

As usual, supposed distinctions of ethnicity were intertwined with economic, political and, in this case, ecclesiastical dichotomies. In founding the settlement, the British had hoped to meet the spiritual needs of the people by appointing the Revd. William Ritchie Thomson as minister in the village of Balfour. Thomson, a former Glasgow society missionary, had been an official agent of the British among the Xhosa as well as a minister of religion, and in the Kat River was paid by the colonial government. His congregation was affiliated to the Dutch Reformed Church, and most of its members were those designated

as Bastards. In contrast, those who came from the mission stations called James Read to be their minister, and with the support of the LMS he established a church at Philipton, at the same time acquiring an *erf* in the settlement through his wife.¹⁸ It was out of his congregation that ideas of Khoikhoi nationalism were initially formulated.

In these circumstances, it is tempting to assume that Read, and behind him John Philip, were to a considerable degree responsible for the formulation of Khoi ethnic consciousness. His, and its, opponents at the time certainly believed this. Donald Moodie, a settler and official who was employed to find evidence defending colonial policies against the strictures of the colonial office in London, complained that those who were of partial slave or Xhosa descent had come to call themselves "Hottentots" at the instance of the LMS missionaries.¹⁹ Moreover, this would be in line with later developments of ethnicity, elsewhere in Africa, where missionaries have often been seen as among the prime individuals involved in the intellectual work of creating ethnicities.²⁰

In this particular instance, I do not believe this to have been the case, although admittedly it is impossible to know what was said in private conversations, and both he and his son James Read Junior did on at least one occasion publicly talk of the "Hottentot nation".²¹ All the same, Read himself was primarily concerned with exposing and counteracting the abuses within the colonial system, rather than expounding a form of nationalism. The ideas of *völkisch* nationalism and of the necessity of reading Holy Scripture in one's own language, on which later missionaries based their work, were not available to him. Indeed, there is no evidence that any missionary after Van der Kemp did any work in creating sacred texts in Cape Khoi. It is not clear whether Read himself had the linguistic competence to undertake such a task; he certainly did not have the scholarly background (though neither did Robert Moffat, who translated the Bible into Setswana.) However, his son and colleague in the mission, James Read Junior, certainly did, on both counts. Khoi was after all his mother's tongue, and he probably could speak it fluently. He was also educated enough to superintend the training of Khoi teachers in the Kat river, even though he probably did not have Greek or Hebrew. But the linguistic basis of nationalism was not part of their project. They were quite content to work in Dutch, or proto-Afrikaans, which by the first half of the nineteenth century was spoken by virtually all the Cape Khoi.²²

In any event, such speculations are demeaning to the Khoikhoi themselves. They were well able to articulate both their grievances and their political aspirations.

14. *South African Commercial Advertiser* (henceforth SACA), 13.3.1830; Samuel Rolland's Journal, published in *Journal des Missions Evangeliques*, V, 1830 - though his comments on the menu were cut from this publication and are only to be found in his original in the Paris Evangelical Missionary Society archives.

15. SACA, 3.9.1834.

16. Philip to LMS, 18.12.1830, LMS-SA incoming, 12/1/D.

17. In contrast, Esau Prins stated in 1834: 'I am a boer's child, although I had to sit behind the chairs and stools, as my mother was a Hottentot woman, and therefore I consider myself a Hottentot also.' SACA, 3.9.1834.

18. On Read, see C. Saunders, 'James Read: towards a reassessment', *SSA*, VII, 1976.

19. D. Moodie, 'The Social Position of the Colored Classes in this Portion of the Colony from the Year 1786', CA VC 888; R. Ross, 'Donald Moodie and the Origins of South African Historiography', in Ross, *Beyond the Pale: Essays in the history of Colonial South Africa* (Hanover & London, 1993).

20. L. Vail, 'Introduction: ethnicity in Southern African History', in Vail, ed., *The Creation of Tribalism in Southern Africa* (London, 1989), 11.

21. SACA, 3.9. & 10.9.34.

22. For this reason, although it is clear that when the Cape Khoi spoke of what has come down to us as "the Hottentot nation" they actually said "de Hottentotsche natie", what vocabulary, if any, they used in Khoikhoi has not come down to us.

This came out most clearly in the debates surrounding the Vagrancy Ordinance in 1834. This measure was introduced in anticipation of the emancipation of slaves, in order to maintain control over the labour force by placing restrictions on those without visible means of support or a fixed place of abode. Those who had property saw this as a means of protecting it, as it was believed that in this way stock theft would be minimised. There were indeed those in the Kat River who were unable to believe that the Government would pass a law which would impinge on the freedoms they had so recently acquired. Led by Christian Groepe, the most prominent of the "Bastards" in the settlement, *Veld Commandant* and *Scriba* of Thomson's church at Balfour, they presented a petition to the Government in which they urged it to 'suppress all lazy people and vagabonds'.²³

The alternative view was that taken by a majority of the Kat River settlers,²⁴ by the Khoi of other mission stations,²⁵ and by many missionaries.²⁶ They remembered what had gone on before the passing of Ordinance 50. As Antonius Peterwaard said:

Before the 50th Ordinance we were like the foxes; but the foxes have holes w[h]ere they are at rest, which we had not. I at one time went from Pacaltsdorp to Graham's Town, a Settler met me on the street, apprehended me, and put me in prison, and I had to pay Rds. 22 prison expenses, which was paid by the man who bought me out. I moreover lost my horse during my confinement in prison, which cost me Rds. 75, and two oxen, and therefore I fear when I hear of the Vagrant Law.²⁷

Eventually, the British Government rejected the Vagrancy Act, precisely because it seemed to go against Ordinance 50.

In the course of the campaign against the Vagrancy Bill, a meeting was held at Philipton in the Kat River, spread over the two days of August 5 and August 12, 1834. This meeting, which has been noticed by a number of historians,²⁸ provided the opportunity for what was the first major exposition of Khoikhoi nationalism, or ethnic consciousness. That consciousness, like most such, entailed the recognition and articulation of a shared past, and the construction of a programme for the future.

23. 'om te verdruken alle luyarts en wagabonden', Petition Kat River 20 Aug. 1834, CA LCA 6/62; D. Williams, *When Races Meet: the Life and Times of William Ritchie Thomson, Glasgow Society Missionary, Government Agent and Dutch Reformed Church Minister, 1794-1891* (Johannesburg, 1967), 128-9.

24. 401 of them signed the petition against the Vagrancy Ordinance, 82 that in favour of it. British Parliamentary Papers (hereafter BPP) 538 of 1836, 748, CA LCA 6/62.

25. LMS South African incoming letters, Anderson to LMS 17.7.1834, 14/1/D (Pacaltsdorp); Barker to LMS, 2.10.1834, 14/2/A & 6.10.1834 14/2/B (Theopolis).

26. See for instance the evidence of both John Philip and H.P. Hallbeck (head of the Moravian mission in the Cape) before the British Select Committee on Aborigines, in BPP 538 of 1836, 341-5, 646-7, 723-763.

27. SACA, 3.9.1834.
28. Notably S. Trapido, 'Emergence of Liberalism', and E. Bradlow, 'The Khoi and the Proposed Vagrancy Legislation of 1834', *Quarterly Bulletin of the South African Library* 39 (1985); normally, the discussions are cited from CA Acc 50; I am following the version (which I believe to be identical, no doubt barring some typographical errors) published in SACA, 3.9, 6.9. & 10.9.1834.

The shared past was succinctly described in the first resolution of the meeting, proposed by Hendrik Vincent, and carried unanimously (as apparently were all the others.) The meeting, they claimed

consists of a small part of the remnant of the Hottentot nation, who originally possessed the country stretching from the Cape of Good Hope to the Kay [Kei] River, and who were rich in sheep and cattle &c. but who were reduced to a state of want, servitude &c. and in some, respects worse than slavery.

More recently, the Khoikhoi had escaped out of the servitude in which they were held by the actions of the British Government, as prompted by the missionaries. Andries Stoffels, who was regarded as the finest orator expressed matters with great force. He had heard talk of the country from the Sout [Salt] river to the Kei, but

never had any many inquired ... whether the hottentots were born in such poverty or misery as we were long in. It was over the Zwartkops River that the Hottentots were first consulted about their grievances by his Majesty's Commissioners, then did we first taste freedom (write children²⁹) that other men eat so sweet. We rejoiced at the very words freedom and free labor even before it was mingled with water and ground; and now that it is mingled with water and ground it is 20 times sweeter than forced labor. It was after this 50th Ordinance that we began to buy more clothes for ourselves and our wives. There were a kind of Englishmen that came out to preach (the Missionaries) that brought the true freedom with them, (write on children.) When the settlers came out, they were without horse or cow or sheep or hen, but the Hottentots there lowered the prices of their horses, their cows to 12s. the oxen to 22s out of compassion for them, for they were very poor. The Government supports them. And they are against us now! It is they that are against us and not the Government, - there are people here in this Meeting³⁰ that carried some of the Settlers!

This then was the past - oppression, dispossession and redemption through the missionaries and Ordinance 50. The future, at least in the terms in which it was stated, was as a prosperous, Christian peasantry. This was of course in accord with what the missionaries hoped for them. It was however also how Stoffels described the future of his nation to an evangelical gathering while in England in 1836. He said:

My nation is poor and degraded, but the word of God is their stay and their hope. The word of God has brought my nation so far, that if a Hottentot young lady and an English young lady were walking with their faces from me, I would

29. In the account it is noted that three Khoi youths were recording the speeches.

30. Footnote in the original: 'The word the speaker used was "Aba", which in Hottentot signifies to carry or assist. We are sorry we cannot do justice to the oratory of this speech.' I believe that Stoffels was talking Dutch during this speech, and threw in a Khoi word because of its double meaning. My reasoning for this is that one other speech at the meeting - that given by Jan Uithaolder, the father of the future rebel leader - is described as having been translated from Khoikhoi by an interpreter.

take them both to be English ladies... We are coming on; we are improving; we will soon all be one. The Bible makes all nations one. The Bible brings wild man and civilized together. The Bible is our light. The Hottentot nation was almost exterminated, but the Bible has brought the nations together, and here I am before you.³¹

It might be argued that this was would be expected on such an occasion, and that the subsumption of the Khoikhoi nation in the fellowship of all Christians was not the most obvious expression of an ethnic consciousness. All the same, what Stoffels was describing was not wishful thinking, but at the very least the aspirations of a large proportion of the Khoikhoi in the second quarter of the nineteenth century. On the other hand, in part out of necessity and in part out of choice the Khoi were stressing their political and social, and thus ethnic, distinctiveness.

In part their distinctiveness was as against the Xhosa, Thembu and Mfengu. As is always the case with ethnic affiliations, matters were complicated. The Gona had long formed a bridge between the Xhosa and rest of the Khoikhoi. Stoffels himself commented that he had kin among the Xhosa³². There were many Mfengu working on the Khoi farms, or in other capacities, but by the Rebellion of 1850-1 relations between them and the Khoi could be fraught.³³ In the Blinkwater a set of people came together whose ethnic, and political, affiliation was anything but certain. They were led by Hermanus Matroos, alias Ngqukumeshu, the son of a runaway slave who was nonetheless a Xhosa councillor, but who for many years managed to live in the Khoi settlement. Indeed the destruction by order of the magistrate of the huts in the Upper Blinkwater, during the snows of July 1850, was probably the single most potent immediate cause for the outbreak of rebellion at the end of that year.

Outside the Kat River valley, many of the Khoi attempted to assert their superiority over the Thembu in their neighbourhood, in much the same way as the Griquas had engaged on an ultimately unsuccessful project of sub-imperialism among the southern Tswana.³⁴ This was particularly clear at Shiloh, the Moravian mission station across the mountains in the Klipplaats river valley. Most of the Khoi inhabitants there, about a third of the population in 1849, had come from further south, many from Enon. The two groups, Khoi and Thembu, maintained their distinction from each other. In the 1830s the Thembu were said to look on the Khoi as their protectors, but this entailed an asymmetry in the relationship, and later the Khoi were said to be 'claiming rights' over the Thembu, and willingly 'playing the *baas* over them.'³⁵

On the other hand, Khoikhoi nationalism was enunciated in opposition to English settler hostility towards Khoi advancement in general, and towards the Kat River settlement in particular. This was widespread, vehement and in the later 1840s backed by the Colonial Government. A succession of men were appointed as magistrates over the Kat River who were associated with the most vitriolic anti-Khoi party within the Colony. Discussions on the establishment of a Representative Assembly in the Cape led to rumours that the new rulers of the Colony would restore the discrimination and subservience which had existed before the passing of Ordinance 50. In consequence, when Mlanjeni's war broke out on the Frontier, and Hermanus Matroos in the Blinkwater took the side of the Xhosa insurgents, a minority of the Khoi from the Kat River,³⁶ most of the residents of Theopolis and a good proportion of those in Shiloh rebelled. They were joined in their actions by many of those Khoi (known as Boerlanders) who were labouring on the farms in the Eastern Cape.³⁷

In this revolt, there were a number of the most fervent expressions of Khoi nationalism. Speelman Kieviet, for instance, tried to rouse those of the Kat River Khoikhoi who had not joined the revolt as follows:

Our circumstances as the Hottentot nation (...) are now become very melancholy and on this account we have put our hands to a work from which we have no wish to retreat. We have done this without acquainting all of you who belong to our nation, and in this we have acted very improperly (...) but with this we take the liberty to acquaint you, as our nation, that we have commenced war with the settlers (meaning the English), and to call upon you as our nation to assist us. Break the bands of indecision or [sic] come at once with all speed to assist us in this great and important matter. Time is important. It is a national cause and can you as a nation remain inactive? Arise courageously and work for your motherland and freedom. (...) The world is against us and who will be for us?³⁸

Or again, Willem Uithaolder, the leader of the rebels in the Amatole mountains, wrote to the Griqua captain and secretary at Philippolis urging them in vain to give him their support:

Beloved, rise manfully and unanimously as a nation and children of one house to engage yourselves in this important work, a work which concerns your mother country, for not a single person of colour, wherever he may be, will escape this law. Trust, therefore, in the Lord (whose character is known to be unfriend-

31. *Missionary Chronicle*, June 1836, 422-4, cited in 'Early Khoisan Uses of Mission Christianity', H. Bredekamp & R. Ross, eds., *Missions and Christianity in South African History* (Johannesburg, 1995), 89.

32. SACA, 3.9.1834.

33. *The trial of Andries Botha* (Cape Town, 1852, reprinted Pretoria, The State Library, 1969), esp. 13 - 17.

34. M.C. Legassick, 'The Griqua, the Sotho-Tswana and the Missionaries, 1780-1840: The politics of a frontier zone' (Ph.D. thesis, University of California, Los Angeles, 1969), chs X - XII.

35. H.P. Hallbeck, 'Journal', 1837, *Periodical Accounts of the Missions of the United Brethren IV* (1838), 409; Bonatz to editor, 3.7.(1851), *Berichten uit de Heidenwereld* 18 (1852), 31; Cape of Good Hope, *Master and Servant: Addenda to the documents on the working of the Order of Council of the 21st July 1846, including Memorials &c and reports by the Resident Magistrates on the Missionary Institutions* (Cape Town, 1849), 161-7.

36. J. Read (junior) calculated that 22.13% of those Khoi within the Kat River Settlement who held *erven* joined the rebellion, and 45.1% of those who did not. *The Kat River Settlement in 1851* (Cape Town, 1852), Appendix, 3.

37. On this process, see T. Kirk, 'Progress and Decline in the Kat River settlement, 1829-1854', *Journal of African History*, 14.3, 1973, 424; *idem*, 'The Cape economy and the expropriation of the Kat River Settlement, 1846-1853', in S. Marks & A. Atmore, eds., *Economy and Society in Pre-Industrial South Africa* (London, 1980); C.C. Crais, *White Supremacy and Black Resistance in pre-industrial South Africa: The making of the colonial order in the Eastern Cape, 1770-1865* (Cambridge, 1992).

38. BPP, Correspondence respecting the Recent Outbreak on the Eastern Frontier, 1635 of 1853, 171, Speelman Kieviet to one of the Veldcornets in the Kat River Settlement, 10.1.1851.

ly to injustice), undertake your work, and he will give us prosperity - a work for your mother-land and freedom, for it is now the time, yea, the appointed time, and no other.³⁹

This letter shows the Christian fundament of Khoi nationalism. The rebels were heard singing hymns, they held regular services and many Bibles were found in their baggage.⁴⁰ The High Anglican Archdeacon Nathaniel Merriman, who disapproved of them as dissenters as well as hating them as rebels, wrote that 'the rebels, like Cromwell's soldiers, or worse, read their Bibles, pray, and even receive the Holy Communion to-day, when they are going to dedicate the morrow to rebellion and wayside murder.'⁴¹ Moreover, the old divisions within the Kat River were subsumed in the rebellion. The sons of the Bastard leader Christian Groepe were to be found among the rebels with the sons of Gona leader Andries Botha. The Basters were said to be 'as bad if not worse than [sic] the Hottentots'.⁴² Many of the corpses of rebels were said to be "half-caste Europeans".⁴³

* * * * *

The rebellion was crushed with some harshness. Theopolis was burnt to the ground, and never rebuilt. The Khoikhoi village in Grahamstown was razed. Those who joined the rebellion early and then repented were sent off to build the road over Bain's kloof in the Western Cape. Those who held out were likely to be shot or hanged summarily on capture. Andries Botha, the seventy-year old *veldcornet* who only five years earlier had been leading the Kat River auxiliaries in the War of the Axe, was harried out of his residence in the Upper Blinkwater by Xhosa police in British service. They called out to him, 'As you burnt us out of the Amatola so we now burn you out of the Blinkwater.'⁴⁴ Confused and uncertain, he was less than decisive in his actions against the rebels, with whom there were indeed numerous negotiations in the first months of 1851. His vacillation led to his arrest, trial and conviction for High Treason, and he was sentenced to death, although later reprieved and pardoned. It was South Africa's first major political trial, and had as little, perhaps less, legal basis as most since.

Those of the rebels who held out under Uithaalder were forced up into the Drakensberg. For a few years they survived there, apparently on land which Sarhili supplied near the White Kei River. According to one report, Uithaalder himself came down into King William's Town, listened to a church service from outside the street one Sunday, and then killed himself.⁴⁵ When in 1861 the Griquas came over the mountains from the Free State, to re-establish the

Philippolis captaincy in what was then Nomansland, those rebels still in the mountains came to join them. Most notable of these was Smith Pommer, 'at heart an anarchist', who achieved considerable prominence in Griqualand East before being killed leading the Griqua rebellion against annexation in 1878.⁴⁶

The long animosity of many colonists against the Kat River now gave way to vindictiveness. Even those who had remained unimpeachably loyal were in danger of loosing their land under the harsh conditions imposed at the end of the war. It would then be taken over by whites, as there was a concerted effort to break the community which had existed in the valley.⁴⁷ Even those Moravian missionaries whose instincts were to condemn all opposition to the established order began to understand how the racism of the colonists and officials had driven the Khoi into rebellion.⁴⁸

In these circumstances, the public reiteration of Khoikhoi nationalist discourse was just not on. In any case, with the establishment of a Representative Assembly in the Cape Colony, inaugurated in 1854, the old patterns of politics had changed. Appeals to Great Britain, and the public meetings of the heyday of LMS-sponsored politics, gave way to the public ballot and the petition to the Cape Parliament. The Khoikhoi of the Kat River and elsewhere already understood how these matters worked. In 1850, during the elections which preceded his disputed appointment to the Legislative Council, Robert Godlonton did not receive a single vote in the Kat River. He himself attributed this to the influence of the two James Reads, but it should rather be seen as an indication of the voters' political sophistication.⁴⁹ This would continue. In 1857, the Kat River people presented a petition to Parliament arguing against the division of the colony into two provinces, because it would have increased the power of their old Grahamstown settler enemies.⁵⁰ In 1864, W.R. Thompson was returned as one of the members for the Fort Beaufort constituency, with 189 of his 190 votes coming from "coloured" voters. In relation to this, the *Grahamstown Journal* wrote, to its white readers, as follows:

A word to all who are not registered but who are qualified to be registered voters. The Hottentots of the Kat River are an example to you to go by; they embrace the privileges that you so much neglect, and it is an everlasting reproach to you to see those poor wretched, lame, lazy, sick and blind giving their vote.⁵¹

But this was a more quiescent, less demonstrative, politics than had preceded the rebellion.

39. Uithaalder to Kok & Hendriks, 11.6.1851, BPP 1635 of 1853, 276. The Dutch original is in the Free State Archives, HC 1/1/3.

40. N. Mostert, *Frontiers: The epic of South Africa's Creation and the Tragedy of the Xhosa People* (London, 1992), 1120.

41. N.J. Merriman, *The Cape Journals of Archdeacon N.J. Merriman, 1844-1855* (Cape Town, 1957), 155.

42. BPP, 1428/1852, 167, Somerset to Smith, 31.1.1851.

43. Merriman, *Cape Journals*, 205.

44. Evidence of James Read Junior, *Trial of Andries Botha*, 144; Read had heard this from Botha's wife.

45. Mostert, *Frontiers*, 1158. Crais, *White Supremacy and Black Resistance*, claims he died in an accident. Neither gives their source.

46. W. Dower, *Early Annals of Kokstad and Griqualand East* (Port Elizabeth, 1902, reprinted Pietermaritzburg & Durban, 1978), 59-60; R. Ross, *Adam Kok's Griquas: a study in the development of stratification in South Africa* (Cambridge, 1976), 97, 130-1.

47. See e.g. Taylor to LMS, 13.2.1854, LMS incoming letters, South Africa, 29/1/C; A. Stockenström, *Light and Shade* (Cape Town, 1854), 28-9.

48. Hartmann to Breutel, 31.10.1855, *Berichten uit de Heidenwereld*, XXII, 1856, 84.

49. Speeches by Godlonton and Montagu, Legislative Council, 10.3.1852, BPP 1636 of 1852-3, 225-237.

50. Cited in Stanley Trapido, 'White Conflict and Non-White Participation in the Politics of the Cape of Good Hope, 1853-1910' (Ph.D. thesis, University of London, 1970), 406.

51. Trapido, 'White Conflict and Non-White Participation', 385, 406, citing *Grahamstown Journal*, 4.4.1864.

From the middle of the nineteenth onwards, the Kat River people declined from being at the centre of South African history to be, in Jeff Peires's words, 'a forgotten community in an obscure rural backwater'. As they slowly lost their lands, to the machinations of corrupt lawyers and later to the workings of the Group Areas Act and the cession of the valley to the Ciskei, their struggle for survival as a community took precedence over a heroic past. They knew that their forefathers had received the land from Andries Stockenström for their service in wars, and that 'hierdie grond was afgevee deur bloed'. But they do not seem to have claimed the strength of their Khoikhoi descent.⁵²

It is as well, though, to make clear the limitations of this argument. My expectations are based entirely on what is available in that portion of the public record which I have seen. The record is meagre anyway, and my research on it is far from complete. Moreover, I clearly can only guess at what was said in the privacy of people's houses where the ideas of Khoikhoi nationalism may very well have survived without their receiving public expression. There are certainly examples of identities surviving in this sphere for a very long time, far longer indeed than separates the end of the twentieth century from the Kat River Rebellion. One individual, the prophet Shepherd Stuurman, who claimed to have been brought up at the mission station of Hankey and in Port Elizabeth, whither many of the Eastern Cape mission Khoi relocated, was talking in very similar terms in the early twentieth century.⁵³ All the same, that which could not be, or was not, expressed cannot have formed the basis for a political identity. And, to move to the present, the indications are that the Kat River "coloureds" (as they still prefer to call themselves) have so far resisted the blandishments of those who would recruit them to a new Khoisan identity and ethnicity.⁵⁴

All the same, until the early twentieth century at least, the Kat River continued to figure in the social memory of "coloureds" way beyond even the Eastern Cape. Dr. Abdullah Abdurahman was the Muslim descendant of slaves, and lived in the Western Cape. He was thus as far as was possible from the Kat River within the artificial category of "coloured". All the same, he knew the history of the Kat River and used it as a symbol. In his "Straatpraatjes", published in the *APO* newspaper early this century, his narrator is Piet Uithalder, from the Kat River. The name cannot be chance. Again, there is the scene where Uithalder is introduced to W.P. Schreiner and 'Mr. Schreiner vertel mij van die Kat River

equal rights. Slavernij, excise, rebellion, Botha en so an.'⁵⁵ Now, Schreiner had family connections with the Kat River through his missionary father, who was buried in Balfour, and he might indeed have talked of these subjects. What matters, though, is the fact that Abdurahman described him as having done so. Half a century after the rebellion, there was still, at the very least, considerable pride in what had been achieved in the Kat River Settlement, even if there was no longer the vulnerable self-confidence of the 1830s and 1840s. Khoikhoi nationalism was contributing to the building of other forms of political consciousness.

52. J. Peires, 'Piet Draghoender's lament', *Social Dynamics* 14 (1988), 7, 11; *idem*, 'The Legend of Fenner-Solomon' in B. Bozzoli, ed., *Class, Community and Conflict: South African Perspectives* (Johannesburg, 1987).

53. T. Dederling, 'The Prophet's "War against Whites": Shepherd Stuurman/Hendrik Bekeer in Namibia and South Africa, 1904-1907'. Paper presented to Conference on Khoisan Identities and Cultural Heritage (Cape Town, July 1997).

54. Personal Communication from Ms. Yvette Ferguson.

55. M. Adhikari, ed., *Straatpraatjes: Language, politics and popular culture in Cape Town, 1909-1922* (Pretoria and Cape Town, 1996), 34; from the context, I would assume that the Botha in question was Andries, not Louis.