

The 'Lost' South African tribe – Rebirth of the Koranna¹ in the Free State

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Abstract:

The Khoisan is the original inhabitants of southern Africa. The Koranna were one of the tribes that already lived in the vicinity of Cape Town before the arrival of the first white settlers (1652). They had an own culture, language, identity and racial basis. However, by 1932 the Koranna no longer existed. Colonisation had threatened their nomadic existence of cattle-farming and hunting, while two destructive wars (1868-69 and 1878-79) against colonial oppressors had left them leaderless. Intermarriage, evangelisation, capitalisation (the discovery of diamonds in 1869-71 created a need for cheap labour at the diggings) and apartheid destroyed the tribal structures, cohesion and identity of the Koranna.

According to the Population Registration Act of 1950, all South Africans who were not Whites or Blacks were regarded as “Coloureds” - the umbrella concept for the “residue” - those who did not fit in anywhere else. The Khoisan were stigmatised as “Coloureds” and were politically, socially and economically constrained to renounce their origins. The Department of Coloured Education, for example, prohibited the use of Khoisan languages amongst schoolchildren, while the Khoisan origins and culture were portrayed as “backward”.

Constitutional accommodation and recognition are accorded to the Khoisan by the current government. A revival of traditional leadership and identity is evident everywhere. National and regional organisations are campaigning for political recognition and for linguistic and cultural regeneration. The Koranna, who were regarded as extinct, have also put in an appearance. After almost a century, there are virtually no more structures, knowledge, customs, or oral histories in existence, while political opportunism, nepotism and division are seriously hampering revival. In this contribution, the focus is on the Koranna in the Free State; on the regeneration of their structures and identity; as well as on the factors that are having a negative effect in this regard.

¹ *The Koranna* peoples' spelling of their name is used in this contribution, i.e. 'Koranna' as opposed to the more generally used form 'Korana'.

Introduction

There is uncertainty surrounding the origins in place and time, as well as the migration (reasons for this and routes that were taken) of the Khoikhoin/Khoekhoen. For various reasons different tribes/clans were formed with the passing of time; one of which were the Koranna (Gorachouqua). As with the Khoekhoen, the origins of the Koranna are also uncertain, making it impossible to come to any solid deductions on the matter.

In comparing the Koranna with other Khoekhoen groups, one starts to doubt whether a unique Koranna culture, as postulated by authors, ever existed.² Tobias, however, refers to what he terms a 'racial basis of the modern Korana'.³ An own Koranna dialect (!Ora/Goragowap), distinct from other Khoekhoen dialects such as Xirigowap/Gri (Griqua) and Khoekhoegoawab (Nama), have existed.⁴ It is alleged, however, that !Ora disappeared over time.⁵

Various (sub)groups with their own identities are found amongst the Koranna. According to Tobias, there were already 17 different subgroups in existence by approximately 1850.⁶ Buys⁷ and Engelbrecht⁸ refer to the following groups of the Koranna, during the period 1820-30, as the most important of these: Cloetses, Linkse, Regshande, Katse, Springbokke, Skerpioene, Pampiere, Karosdraers, Afrikander, Towenaars, Slaparms, Bitterboschse, Taaiboschse, etc.

By 1932, Maingard maintains that none of the Koranna or any of the above-mentioned subgroups were still extant.⁹ A range of factors contributed to what Marks has called 'the ultimate disappearance of the Khoi-San as an ethnic entity'. In all probability, colonialisation is the greatest reason for the

2 JA Engelbrecht, *The Koranna. An account of their customs and their history with texts* (Cape Town, Maskew Miller, 1936), pp. 83-194; K Schoeman, *Die huis van die armes: die Berlynse Sendinggenootskap in die O.V.S., 1834-1869: 'n bloemlesing/geredigeer en vertaal deur Karel Schoeman* (Kaapstad, Maskew Miller, 1985), pp. 25-26.

3 PV Tobias, "Taaibosch Korannas of Ottosdal", *South African Journal of Science*, 51(9), 1955, p. 263.

4 JA Engelbrecht, *The Koranna*, pp. 197-231. LF Maingard, "Koranna names of animals and plants", *Bantu Studies*, 6(4), 1932, pp. 309-322; T. Strauss, *War along the Orange. The Koranna and the Northern border wars of 1868-9 and 1878-9* (Cape Town, 1979), p. ii; A. Trail, *South African Khoisan Languages* (Johannesburg, sa), p. 23.

5 According to Trail (*Khoisan Languages*, p. 25), Ben Kraalshoek was one of South Africa's last Ora speakers. In an interview with Mr. HC Taaibosch (19 February 2004), he has claimed that there are still a number of people living in Heidedal (Bloemfontein) and Boshof who speak the language fluently. Mrs. Susan van Wyk from Heidedal confirmed this in an interview (1 July 2004), stating that she still speaks the language.

6 PV Tobias, "Taaibosch Korannas of Ottosdal", *The South African Journal of Science*, 51(9), 1955, p. 263.

7 JJ Buys, *Die oorsprong en migrasiebewegings van die Koranna en hul rol in die Transgariëp tot 1870* (Universiteit van die Vrystaat, Bloemfontein, 1989), p. 33.

8 JA Engelbrecht, *The Koranna*, p. 55.

9 LF Maingard, "Studies in Koranna history, customs and language", *Bantu Studies*, 6(2), 1932, p. 103.

disintegration and 'disappearance' of the Koranna. Initial Dutch occupation of the Cape (1652) drove the Koranna from their original place of habitation to the north, thus rendering them the first 'frontier' community in South Africa. When the British extended the northernmost colonial boundary from the Buffels to the Orange Rivers (1847), the Koranna were once again placed under the colonial yoke. As nomadic cattle herders and hunters, the Koranna were no longer able to practice their traditional mode of existence, and two destructive wars (1868-69 and 1878-79) with the colonial authorities left the Koranna beside the Orange River without a leader. Under the false pretence that the colonial spokesmen wanted to enter into peace negotiations, the Koranna leadership agreed to a meeting. Virtually all of the Koranna were captured by the colonial authorities and were banished to Robben Island.

Marks states that another reason for Koranna extinction was their tendency towards acculturation. She claims that the Koranna 'literally acculturated themselves out of existence', ascribing this to the fact that the social organisation of the Koranna had not formed a close and integrated unit.¹⁰ Various publications make noteworthy references to the mutual interactions between the Koranna, the Griqua, the Tswana, the Sotho and whites in the Transgariep.¹¹ These were mostly interactions of trade, war or intermarriage. As a matter of fact, intermingling with other groups seems to have been such a common occurrence, that Beach states it impossible 'to find a pure representation' of the Koranna.¹² Schapera¹³ and Kies¹⁴ are of the same opinion.

Schoeman illustrates the role that missionaries and westernisation have played in the destruction of the Koranna's tribal cohesion and identity.¹⁵ He refers to the incomprehension, impatience, disapproval and flagrant antagonism of the missionaries towards the Koranna, as well as the way in which their haughtiness, insensitivity and intolerance detracted from their

10 S Marks, "Khoisan resistance to the Dutch in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries", *Journal of African History*, 13(1), 1972, p. 77.

11 MC Legassick, *The Griqua, the Sotho-Tswana, and the missionaries, 1780 – 1840: The politics of a frontier zone* (University of California, Los Angeles, 1970); WF Lye, *The Sotho wars in the interior of South Africa, 1822 – 1837* (University of California, Los Angeles, 1970), WF Lye, WF & C Murray, *Transformations on the highveld: The Tswana and the Southern Sotho* (Cape Town, David Philip, 1980).

12 Beach (1937), as quoted by JJ Buys, *Die oorsprong en migrasiebewegings...*, p.55.

13 I Schapera, *The Khoisan Peoples of South Africa* (London, 1965), p. 47.

14 CW Kies, *Die Kleurlinge van Noord-Kaapland, noord van die Oranjerivier* (Universiteit van Pretoria, Pretoria, 1972), pp. 34-36.

15 K Schoeman, *The Griqua captaincy of Philippolis, 1826-1861* (Pretoria, 2002), p. 100.

good intentions.¹⁶ The discovery of diamonds (1869-71) was an important catalyst in the process of westernisation. Apart from the labour that the Koranna supplied in the diamond diggings, they themselves came to a quick realisation of the economic value of diamonds and involved themselves in the diamond trade.¹⁷ According to Shillington, the Koranna, Griqua and Tlhaping found the largest share of diamonds next to the Orange River in the early years.¹⁸

In spite of the general view that the Koranna had become extinct, two factions identifying themselves as the Taaibosch Koranna made appointments with the researcher on the same day (without being aware that the other group had done the same). They both requested that research be conducted on the history and genealogy of the Taaibosch family of the Free State.

According to Marks¹⁹ and Strauss²⁰, the history of the Koranna has mostly been written by whites. On this subject, Strauss feels that 'their ethnocentric and "anti-Hottentot" bias is evident. They looked upon the Korana as an uncivilized, morally degenerate and lazy people with an innate desire to steal cattle'. Coertze²¹ endorses this view, while contributions by different other authors confirm the negative characterisation of the Koranna.²²

Given the negative historical characterisation of the Koranna, a decision was made, on accepting the request of the Taaibosch Koranna, to adopt an inclusive approach to the study in question. An agreement was made with the involved persons that they would share partnership in the research and writing process, and would accept mutual responsibility for the final product. The structure and objectives of the research report were negotiated and a decision was made to focus the research on the involvement of the Koranna in the early history of the Free State, as well as recent developments, identity issues and the genealogy of the Koranna. The researcher has undertaken to remain unbiased, and to avoid verifying or falsifying individual suppositions

16 K Schoeman, *Die huis van die armes*, pp. 77 & p. 88.

17 JJ Buys, *Die oorsprong en migrasiebewegings...*, pp. 101-102; W van der Merwe, "Bethanie in die Oranje-Vrystaat – 'n terugblik na 150 jaar", *Lantern*, Julie 1984, p.57.

18 K Shillington, *The colonization of the Southern Tswana 1870-1900* (Pretoria, 1985), pp. 35-44.

19 S Marks, "Khoisan resistance", *Journal of African History*, 13(1), 1972, p.55.

20 T Strauss, *War along the Orange...*, p.v

21 PJ Coertze & RD Coertze, *Die Afrikanervolk en die Kleurlinge* (Pretoria, Coertze & Coertze, 1983) p. 111.

22 JJ Buys, *Die oorsprong en migrasiebewegings...*, p. 65; PJ Coertze & RD Coertze, *Verklarende vakwoordeboek vir Antropologie en Argeologie*, p. 157; CW Kies, *Die Kleurlinge*, 1968, p. 32; JS Marais, *The Cape Coloured people 1652-1937* (Johannesburg, 1968), p.94; R de V Pretorius, *Die geskiedenis van die "Vrystaatse" Griekwa 1825-1862* (Universiteit van die Vrystaat, Bloemfontein, 1963), p. 36.

or conflicting interpretations and deductions. It was at any rate not possible to verify the 'truth' in all cases.

Involvement in events in the Free State

During the 16th to 17th centuries the Koranna were established in a region more or less west of the present-day Stellenbosch. Kora (Gora/Chora) was the chief (Khoeseb) of the Koranna at the time of Jan van Riebeeck (1652). He was succeeded by his son Eikomo, who, together with his followers, left the Cape area for good between approximately 1661-86.²³ Their exit route from the Cape extended in a northerly direction and out of Namaqualand. They had reached the southern banks of the Orange River by approximately 1750. They moved along the Orange River in an easterly direction until they reached Prieska, where the Taaibosch and Links families (these were two half brothers) established themselves. Under Klaas Lukas, the Kats Koranna were diverted to the regions of Upington and Keimoes.²⁴

The Koranna were at the forefront of the northerly migration, with white 'trekboere' and 'Basters' following at a later stage. The available resources came under pressure, resulting in clashes and conflict. The Koranna were systematically forced to move even further north and east. In the Taungs region, the Koranna made contact with the Tlhaping. The two groups intermarried freely and extensive trade relations were established. When the Rolong created conflict by invading the Tlhaping region under the command of Tau, the Koranna hastened to the side of the Tlhaping, driving out the Rolong.²⁵ At the end of the 18th century conflicting trade interests, however, destroyed the peaceful relations between the Tlhaping and the Koranna. The Koranna drove the Tlhaping out to Kuruman.²⁶ Between 1813 and 1820 the Koranna relocated to the Mamusa region (Schweizer Reinecke).²⁷ It was here that the Links and Taaibosch families went their separate ways. The leader of the Taaibosch family, Hanto Taaibosch, moved to Platberg, south

23 LF Maingard, *Studies in Koranna*, pp.108-112; S Marks, *Khoisan resistance*, pp. 64-65; Schapera, *The Khoisan*, p. 47.

24 JS Marais, *The Cape Coloured*, pp. 92-93; JA Engelbrecht, *The Koranna*, p. 31; WF Lye, *The Sotho wars*, p. 113; Kies, *Die Kleurlinge*, p. 31.

25 WF Lye & Murray, *Transformations on the highveld...*, pp.41-42. Lye, *The Sotho wars*, p.114, 141.

26 WF Lye & Murray, *Transformations on the highveld...*, p. 42.

27 LF Maingard, *Studies in Koranna*, p. 121.

of Ladybrand via Boshof during 1833. From here he moved to Umpukani²⁸, between Clocolan and Marquard in the following year (1834).²⁹ Hanto was killed by a lion in 1839 and the son who was to be his successor was a minor at the time, and was being schooled at Farmerfield, Albany. As a result of this, Gert Taaibosch, Hanto's brother, assumed chieftainship of the Taaibosch family.³⁰ He later became a well-known figure in the Transgariep and much of this contribution is focussed on Gert and his descendants.

Maingard describes the Taaibosch family as the 'largest and most important' of the various Koranna families and they are thus known as the Kei (Big) Koranna, or the 'Bolanders'.³¹ Jan Taaibosch (I) was the ancestor of the Taaibosch family and the oldest son of Kora and his first wife (Ktanghy). He had four sons, namely Jan Taaibosch (II) (also known as Hanto or Jan Kaptein), Gert Taaibosch, Johannes and Jacob. It was during their stay at Prieska that Jan Taaibosch (I) was murdered by the San and succeeded by his son Hanto.³²

According to Kriel³³ and Lye & Murray³⁴, the Koranna in the Thaba 'Nchu and Thaba Bosiu regions had launched a number of marauding expeditions against Moshweshwe and his followers by 1836. This obligated Moshweshwe to react violently against the marauders, driving them out into different regions. The Koranna fled, attacking the Tlokwa of Sekonyela in the process. According to what has been reported, Sekonyela was very impressed with the military capabilities of the Koranna (they possessed horses and rifles), and immediately saw the possibility of using their skills to outdo Moshweshwe. As a result of this, Sekonyela invited the Koranna to teach his people to horseride

28 This mission station was established for Hanto and his descendants by Thomas Jenkins during 1833. According to Dreyer, missionaries made attempts to relocate *The Koranna* from Umpukani to Merumetsu (between Marquard and Winburg) during 1836 and 1837. Both of the aforementioned mission stations were attacked by Moletsane during 1850, after which the stations were abandoned. J. Dreyer, "Thomas Arbousset and Francois Daumas in the Free State: tracing the exploratory tour of 1836", *South African Humanities*, 13 (2001), p.96.

29 JA Engelbrecht, *The Koranna*, p. 35; JD Kriel, "Die lotgevalle van die Batlokwa ba okotleng vanaf die aanvang van die Difaqane tot 1853", *Suid-Afrikaanse Tydskrif vir Etnologie*, 5(2) 1982, p. 27; JJ Buys, *Die oorsprong en migrasiebewegings...*, p. 17.

30 RC Germond, *Chronicles of Basutoland*, p.165; Backhouse, 1844, p. 393. JJ Buys, *Die oorsprong en migrasiebewegings...*, p. 51.

31 LF Maingard, *Studies in Koranna*, p. 120. According to JJ Buys, *Die oorsprong en migrasiebewegings...*, p. 23, *The Koranna* referred to the main group as the 'Big' Koranna, and to those that later broke away from them as the 'Small' Koranna. This term is used to refer to those who first reached the Orange River, while the 'Ondervelders' were those who arrived later (WF Lye, *The Sotho wars*, p. 113. WF Lye & Murray, *Transformations on the highveld...*, p. 40).

32 LF Maingard, *Studies in Koranna*, p.120.

33 JD Kriel, "Die lotgevalle van die Batlokwa", *Suid-Afrikaanse Tydskrif vir Etnologie*, 5(2), 1982, p. 27.

34 WF Lye & Murray, *Transformations on the highveld...*, p. 48.

and shoot; an invitation gladly accepted by them. Quarrels broke out between Sekonyela and the Koranna, who relocated to the Korannaberg (at Excelsior and Marquard) in the meantime. The Koranna succeeded in driving Sekonyela across the Caledon River and virtually all of his cattle were carried off. A year later there was another clash between the two groups and the Koranna drove Sekonyela deep into the Maluti mountains, once again stealing his cattle away from him.

According to the treaty signed between Sir George Napier and Moshweshwe on 13 December 1843, the region between the Caledon and the Orange Rivers was to reside under the authority of Moshweshwe. According to Barnard, Moshweshwe was greatly advantaged by this treaty.³⁵ However, Gert Taaibosch and the Griqua chief, Pieter Davids, laid claim to areas in the same region, and the treaty could not be implemented.³⁶ With the Maitland treaty three years later (1846), Gert Taaibosch's land claims were officially acknowledged.³⁷ In all likelihood, a variety of reasons contributed towards this. According to Germond³⁸ and Buys³⁹, there was a good mutual understanding between Gert Taaibosch and Major Warden. In fact, Gert Taaibosch assisted Warden against Moshweshwe, the BaTaung of Moletsane, and the Koranna chief Gert Links during the Battle of 'Viervoet' (30 June 1851). Gert Taaibosch also had good relations with the white farmers. He assisted the 'voortrekker' leaders Potgieter and Maritz against the Ndebele of Mzilikazi during December 1838, and never attacked any whites on their farms.⁴⁰

Gert Taaibosch and Sekonyela were reconciled during May 1849⁴¹, and Taaibosch became actively involved in the struggle between Moshweshwe and Sekonyela.⁴² Gert Taaibosch and Sekonyela launched various attacks on Moshweshwe and Moletsane. Moletsane, who was also an ally and friend

35 BJ Barnard, "n Lewensbeskrywing van majoor Henry Douglas Warden", *Argiefjaarboek vir Suid-Afrikaanse geskiedenis*, 11(1), 1965, p. 369.

36 RC Germond, *Chronicles of Basutoland* (Morija, Morija Sesotho Book Depot, 1967), pp. 167-170; GD Kriel, "Die lotgevalle van die Batlokwa...", p. 29.

37 JJ Buys, *Die oorsprong en migrasiebewegings...*, p. 64.

38 RC Germond, *Chronicles of Basutoland*, pp.187-192.

39 JJ Buys, *Die oorsprong en migrasiebewegings...*, p. 83.

40 JJ Buys, *Die oorsprong en migrasiebewegings...*, p. 64

41 BJ Barnard, "n Lewensbeskrywing van majoor Henry Douglas Warden", *Argiefjaarboek vir Suid-Afrikaanse geskiedenis*, 11(1), 1965, p. 414.

42 According to Attree, Gert Taaibosch was deeply offended by Moshweshwe's invasion of his territory by 1847, and by the number of cattle posts he had established there. In all likelihood, the aforementioned chain of events influenced Gert Taaibosch's decision to join forces with Sekonyela. See EM Attree, "The closer union movements between the Orange Free State, South African Republic and Cape Colony (1838-1863)", *Archives Year Book for South African History*, 12(2), 1949, p. 41.

of Gert Links, had some of Gert's cattle in his possession and these were unknowingly plundered by Gert Taaibosch. The Links group took their revenge by raiding the cattle of Gert Taaibosch.

After the attack on the Basotho living near the Phuthiatsana River during July 1849, Warden intervened and tried to bring about a peaceful agreement. A meeting was arranged in Bloemfontein for 27 August 1849. The most prominent roleplayers, namely Moshweshwe, Sekonyela and Gert Taaibosch did not turn up for the meeting, while Sekonyela and Taaibosch launched an attack on the Basotho on the same day. On 1 September 1850, Warden received permission to take military action against Sekonyela so as to put an end to his ongoing attacks on the Basotho and the BaTaung. However, Gert Taaibosch and chief Moroka of Thaba 'Nchu mediated discussions between Warden and Sekonyela. Sekonyela voiced his remorse over the attacks and agreed to pay a fine of 300 cattle. Sekonyela and Taaibosch, who in the meantime came to learn that Warden was planning military action against Moletsane, also offered to assist Warden; an offer gladly accepted by the latter.⁴³

After the battle of Berea (20 December 1852), Gert Taaibosch and Sekonyela attacked the BaTaung of Tulu (in the Winburg region) and the Kgolokwe under Wetsi in the Harrysmith region. Moshweshwe saw this as an opportunity to unite the conflicting chiefs of the Orange River Sovereignty under his authority, and decided to take action against them. In the ensuing struggle during November 1853, Gert Taaibosch was killed at Dawidsberg.⁴⁴ He was succeeded by his son Jacob Taaibosch, who moved nearer to Thaba 'Nchu.⁴⁵

The Republic of the Orange Free State was established in 1854, at the time of the Bloemfontein convention. The second article of the Bloemfontein convention determined the government's internal policy with respect to the regulation of the relations between the various population groups. One of the matters for which the Volksraad took responsibility was the discontinuation, as they saw it, of the migration of indigenous population groups. By means

43 BJ Barnard, "n Lewensbeskrywing van majoor Henry Douglas Warden", *Argiefjaarboek vir Suid-Afrikaanse geskiedenis*, 11(1), 1965, p. 425; Attree, "The closer union movements between the Orange Free State, South African Republic and Cape Colony (1838-1863)", *Archives Year Book for South African History*, 12(2), 1949, p. 230.

44 RC Germond, *Chronicles of Basutoland*, pp. 217-221; JJ Buys, *Die oorsprong en migrasiebewegings...*, p.82. Dawidsberg (also known as Yoalaboholo) was the home of Sekonyela's mother, Mantatise. It is situated at Marabeng, Sekonyela's hill fortress near Ficksburg. Dreyer, Thomas Arbousset, p. 89.

45 JJ Buys, *Die oorsprong en migrasiebewegings...*, p. 100.

of this the freedom of movement necessary for the indigenous Khoi-San to practice their economies of existence was finally destroyed, causing the issue of land ownership to grow in importance. At a time when their downfall was inevitable, the Koranna no longer had a place in the rapidly changing landscape of the Transgariep.

Further information on the history of the Taaibosch family could not be found in documents. Interviews with informants also did not provide much information, and thus it seems that for a period of more than 100 years there is virtually no information on these people.

Recent developments: leadership and identity

The identity of the Khoi-San was undervalued under the apartheid regime, thus furthering the disintegration of the Koranna. According to the *Population Registration Act* (No. 30 of 1950), all people not typified as whites or blacks, were classified as 'coloureds'. The term 'coloured' was an umbrella concept for the 'rabble' of society – those who did not belong anywhere else. As the number of population groups grew, subgroups such as the Cape Coloureds, Malays, Griqua, the Chinese, and the Indians were later identified. No mention, however, is made of the Koranna; a clear indication that their existence remained unacknowledged by the apartheid government.

Khoi-San identity was contaminated. Informants tell of the ways in which they were forced – politically, socially and economically – to renounce their descent. For instance, the Department of Coloured Education prohibited the use of Khoi-San languages by the children on the school grounds (a practice of the early mission schools), and the Khoi-San descent and culture were ridiculed (the 'Jolly Hotnot' image of comical rowdiness). In many cases parents felt ashamed to speak their mother tongue in front of their children for fear of being thought 'backward'.

The present government grants constitutional accommodation and recognition to traditional communities and their leadership, including the Khoi-San (see *Traditional Leadership and Governance Framework Amendment Act*, 2003 [No. 41 of 2003]). Together with the government's land reform policy, these developments have been a powerful stimulus in the revival of traditional Khoi-San leadership and identity. National and regional organisations geared towards gaining political recognition and linguistic or

cultural revival have come into being all over the country. This is also true for the Koranna, who were thought to be extinct.

During 1998-99, Jaftha Davids, a self-confessed successful building contractor at the time, developed an awareness of the Koranna case and joined the Free State Koranna Community Committee (FSKCC), led by Mr. Raymond Beddy. Although they convened on a regular basis, Davids felt that nothing constructive came out of these meetings. Together with a colleague, Willem de Wee, Davids started to register Koranna people as members, although this was not met by a great deal of enthusiasm by members of management. In fact, a committee member felt it necessary to warn Davids that he was being overly hasty in promoting awareness of the Khoi-San identity, in that it would take the government a long time to address the issue.

According to Davids, the leaders of various Khoi-San groups in the Free State did not see eye to eye. The poor understanding, for example, between Mr. Johannes Kraalshoek of the Free State Griqua Council and Beddy of the FSKCC disadvantaged the unity of the Khoi-San. For this reason, he has decided to take up an invitation from Prof. Jattie Bredenkamp (University of the Western Cape) to represent the Free State Koranna at a Khoi-San conference in Oudtshoorn. Together with delegates from the Free State Griqua Council, Davids, Mathews and de Wee attended the conference from 29 March to 1 April 2001. The National Khoi-San Consultative Conference of South Africa (NKOC) was established during the conference.

Back in Bloemfontein, Davids, Mathews and de Wee got to work, and family members recognised Jaftha Taaibos-Davids as chief of the Koranna in the Free State on the basis of his supposed genealogical seniority.⁴⁶ This position was recognised by the chairman of the Khoi-San Council (Khoeseb Joseph Little) and the Koranna House, North Cape (Khoeseb Josiah Katz) on 29 October 2001. Subsequently, 46 family members gave their written support of this move on 17 December 2001.

Taaibos-Davids bases his claim to leadership on matrilineal descent. He is the eighth child of Marie (Toebaai) and Jacob Davids and has the support of his older, living brother and two sisters. Marie, in turn, was the oldest child

⁴⁶ At this stage, Davids decided to change his surname to Taaibos-Davids, and applied for a new identity document. He was convinced that the family surname was to be written as 'Taaibos' and not 'Taaibosch', basing this view on the fact that his mother's (Mary Magdalena) surname is indicated as Taaibos (not Taaibosch) on her birth certificate and identity document (Identity No. 1409280060015).

of Isaac and Ellen Taaibosch. Taaibos-Davids makes use of a reference from Engelbrecht's publication to justify his allegation that Marie is Isaac Taaibosch's rightful heir. The relevant reference reads: 'Male children had preference over female in the sense that if the family consisted of several daughters and but one son the latter, even if he was the youngest child, would still succeed his father as head and also be his chief heir'.⁴⁷ Taaibos-Davids argues that there was not only one, but two sons in the case of his mother, and thus Marie is the rightful heir.

Taaibos-Davids registered the Free State Koranna Culture & Heritage Council Trust (IT 803/02) on 14 May 2002. According to this the Free State Koranna Culture and Heritage Council (FSKCHC) has the highest authority, and provision is made for a Traditional Council. On request, the FSKCHC attended the meetings of the National House of Traditional Leaders, taking part in discussions on the accommodation of traditional leaders. As a result of these discussions, consultations with communities in the Free State were initiated, and the FSKCHC decided to found the Taaibos-Davids Koranna House (TDKH). On 2 August 2003, the TDKH was established in Bloemfontein with the acceptance of a constitution. The TDKH's constitution makes provision for an elected council (Council of the Elderly) with an executive committee comprising a chairman, vice-chairman, secretary, treasurer, and two additional members. Furthermore, there is a 'Women's Association', 'Youth League', and a 'Language and Cultural Association'.

Taaibos-Davids called the Taaibosch family members together to ask them to work together to promote the interests, culture and identity of the Koranna. However, his leadership was not undisputed and led to much discord and disunity. Despite a number of attempts to resolve the ongoing family dispute, the dispute persists to the present day (2005).

Verification of findings

Firstly, research has made evident that the section which Taaibos-Davids quotes from Engelbrecht to confirm his claim of leadership, deals with the inheritance of property and the estate of a deceased, and not with the succession of chieftainship. Regarding the succession of chieftainship, Schapera declares

⁴⁷ JA Engelbrecht, *The Koranna*, pp. 191-192.

that it was never transferred to a daughter⁴⁸, while Engelbrecht states that in the event of a chief passing away without a son, the chieftainship is transferred to his brother and the brother's son.⁴⁹ This information was presented to the relevant parties and Taaibos-Davids admitted to being misguided, thus abandoning the claim he had wrongly based on Engelbrecht.

Secondly, according to the genealogical data compiled in consultation with the two relevant parties, not one of Gert Taaibosch's sons remained in the Free State, and thus he could not be succeeded. The leadership was thus transferred to the lineage of Gert's younger brother, Johannes (married to Griet). Taaibos-Davids succeeded in obtaining a democratic mandate from the genealogically most senior Taaibosch descendant in the lineage of Johannes to assume the position of leader.

In the third place, the section of the Taaibosch family that rejected the leadership of Taaibos-Davids, also rejected his view of the manner in which they are to be described in writing. The researcher took a closer look at this matter and discussed it with Taaibos-Davids. He was informed that no substantial proof was found to support his insistence that the typical Afrikaans spelling of 'Taaibos' must be recognised. All of the historical sources that were consulted make use of the original Dutch form, i.e. 'Taaibosch'. It is unlikely that the Dutch authorities in the Cape at that time would have written the surname in Afrikaans as the language did not yet exist at the time. For the aforementioned reasons it was decided to continue using the original Dutch form (for purposes of this report), and Taaibos-Davids decided to change his surname again, this time to Taaibosch-Davids.

Fourthly, it became evident from the research that Taaibosch-Davids was related to the Griqua Chief Pieter Davids on his father's side.⁵⁰ Pieter Davids was married to the Griqua Chief, Barend Barendse's daughter, and they lived together at Danielskuil.⁵¹ After Barendse was murdered, Pieter Davids assumed chieftainship⁵² and, together with his followers, moved out into

48 I Schapera, *The Khoisan*, p. 328.

49 JA Engelbrecht, *The Koranna*, pp. 90.

50 According to BJ Barnard, "n Lewensbeskrywing van majoor Henry Douglas Warden", *Argiefjaarboek vir Suid-Afrikaanse geskiedenis*, 11(1), 1965, p. 338; Campbell has wrongly typified Barend Barendse and Pieter Davids as Griqua. In fact they are of Koranna descent.

51 BJ Barnard, "n Lewensbeskrywing van majoor Henry Douglas Warden", *Argiefjaarboek vir Suid-Afrikaanse geskiedenis*, 11(1), 1965, p. 338.

52 RC Germond, *Chronicles of Basutoland*, pp. 165-187.

Lishuane⁵³ – a Wesleyan mission station near Ladybrand.⁵⁴ He was the son of Hendrik Davids (married to Sanna Jacobs), who, in turn, was the son of Samuel Davids (married to Rina Maarman). Samuel Davids's second son was Daniël Davids (married to Mita Peterson), the father of Jacob Davids, the father of Jaftha Taaibosch-Davids. Taaibosch-Davids's claim to genealogical seniority can thus be based on both his paternal and maternal descent.

Discussion

In this contribution the focus has firstly been on the history of the Taaibosch Koranna in the Free State. Apart from the negative characterisation of the Koranna, the scarcity of information is worth noting and causes one to question whether the Taaibosch Koranna were sufficiently important to justify the accurate keeping of records. Not surprisingly then, references which indicate that the 'disappearance' of the Koranna constitutes a cultural, ethnic and linguistic loss to South Africa cannot be found. Figuratively speaking, no single tear has been shed for the loss of the Koranna.

Secondly, this contribution has dealt with the revival of Koranna identity and leadership. Although various authors have alleged that the post-apartheid disposition is generally disinclined towards the identity issue⁵⁵, the current government's constitutional accommodation and recognition of traditional communities and leadership, as well as the land reform policy have stimulated the revival of Koranna issues pertaining to identity and leadership. Apart from the aforementioned (national) factors leading up to the revival of these issues of Koranna identity, various authors also hold that the contemporary international climate is favourable for the recognition of and debate about indigenous linguistic, cultural and identity rights.⁵⁶ Thirdly, a closer look has been taken at the role of specific individuals. Accusations of own gain, enrichment and power hunger have passed between the opposing factions. Whatever the reasons for the involvement of certain individuals in the case of the Koranna, their involvement has been instrumental in the revival of Koranna

53 BJ Barnard, "n Lewensbeskrywing van majoor Henry Douglas Warden", *Argiefjaarboek vir Suid-Afrikaanse geskiedenis*, 11(1), 1965, p. 338.

54 J Dreyer, Thomas Arbousset, p. 85.

55 S Bekker, *Ethnicity in focus. The South African case* (Pietermaritzburg, 1993), pp.24-28; FC de Beer, "Ethnicity in nation-states with reference to South Africa", *Suid-Afrikaanse Tydskrif vir Etnologie*, 21(1), 1998, p. 38.

56 R Darnell, Comments on ER Wolf. "Perilous ideas; race, culture, people", *Current Anthropology*, 35(1), 1994, p. 7; A Kuper, "Culture, identity and the project of a cosmopolitan anthropology", *Man, The Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute*, 29(3), 1994 p. 537.

identity. Regarding the value of the individual in the construction of cultural patterns, groups and identities, it is important to note the following: Although social pressure can be overwhelming, it is the voluntary relationships which determine the singularity of the person, his/her relationships with others, and with groups. When the initial pattern of relationships between individuals changes for some or other reason, the individual's connectedness with a specific group is bound to change. As a result of this, group membership and the extent to which the individual conforms to group culture is adaptable.⁵⁷ Different authors have reported that ethnic identity is in a constant state of flux due to the fact that individuals fulfil complementary roles determined to a large extent by the essence of what the group does for survival.⁵⁸ Seen in this light, the definition of ethnic boundaries varies according to the context, and individuals make conscious or subconscious choices between alternative sources of identity in order to manipulate social and economic situations.

The individual is confronted with innumerable situations where a decision has to be made on whether he/she identifies with a certain group or not. Logically speaking it is the individual who conceptualises the meaning that is attached to the notion of 'identity'. Regardless of the implications of the individual's decision (choosing to accept or reject groups; preparedness for active or passive participation in symbolic systems, etc.), authors feel that identification is a personal affair representing the result of an exercised choice.⁵⁹ Furthermore, multiple identities exist not only because the individual may alter his identification during the course of his life, but because he is able to relate different identities and reconcile contradictions between identities.

In keeping with the above, ethnic groups and boundaries are similarly not permanent fixtures. In this regard, authors focus our attention on the fact that the origin, creation, maintenance and disbanding of ethnic groups is similar to the origin, creation, maintenance and disbanding of any other type of group, and thus may be explained in the same terms.⁶⁰ Thus, the Koranna

57 M Banton, "Modelling ethnic and national relations", *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 17(1), 1994, p. 2; S Bekker, *Ethnicity in focus...*, pp.12-13.

58 D Bates & A Rassam, *Peoples and cultures of the Middle East* (Englewood Cliffs, Prentice Hall, 1983), p. 86; J Sharp, "Ethnic group and nation: The apartheid vision in South Africa", *South African Keywords. The uses and abuses of political concepts* (Cape Town, David Philip, 1988), p. 80.

59 D Bates & A Rassam, *Peoples and cultures...*, pp.85-86; S Bekker, *Ethnicity in focus...*, p.12; DC Martin, "The choices of identity", *Social Identities*, 1(1), 1995, p. 14.

60 F Barth, *Ethnic groups and boundaries: The social organization of cultural difference* (London, 1969). Bates & Rassam, *Peoples and cultures*, pp. 87-88; M Banton, "Modelling ethnic and national relations", *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 17(1), 1994, p. 2; DC Martin, The choices of identity, p. 5; J Peoples & G. Bailey, *Humanity. An introduction to Cultural Anthropology* (New York, West Publishing Company, 2000), pp. 307-309; J Sharp,

have 'disappeared' (disbanded) because the connectedness of individuals has weakened. Stated differently, the Koranna are experiencing a revival because individuals are prepared to make the effort to promote their case.

In revival scenarios, and this is the fourth point of this discussion, Martin states that different identity narratives are generated and offered to the individual exercising his/her choice.⁶¹ Certain values are proclaimed within these narratives, and attempts are made to convince the individual to identify with these values. In this regard, undisputed truths, promises, feelings, emotions, fears and anxieties are combined. The research requested by the various Taaibosch factions may be seen as an attempt to create an identity narrative; 'something' which may be upheld as proof of the 'truth', or as a justification of the allegations, but which may also provide the basis for identifying with the case of the Free State Koranna.

"Ethnic group and nation: The apartheid vision in South Africa", *South African Keywords. The uses and abuses of political concepts* (Cape Town, David Philip, 1988), p. 80.

61 DC Martin, "The choices of identity", *Social Identities*, 1(1), 1995, p. 15.