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THE !KORA WARS ON THE ORANGE RIVER, 1830-1880

BY ROBERT ROSS

OVER the past few years, there has been a considerable re-evaluation of the reactions of the Khoisan of southern Africa to white colonization. Whereas earlier historians portrayed the rapid disintegration of their societies in the face of what was implicitly considered to be a superior civilization¹, recent work has begun to stress the positive role of the once despised 'Bushmen' and 'Hottentots' in the creation of South African society. Thus the Kat River rebellion has received renewed scholarly attention,² while a monograph describes in detail the wars between the San of the Drakensberg and farmers, black and white, of Natal.³ Most important, perhaps, has been Shula Marks's re-assessment of the resistance of the so-called 'Bushmen' to the Dutch in the eighteenth century, in which she shows that this warfare was not nearly as one-sided as had often been thought. Significantly, she also argues that the distinction between pastoralists and hunter-gatherers was not nearly as absolute as it had been described, but that, in the conditions of the eighteenth century, dispossessed herders were often likely to join the hunting and raiding bands which were always categorized as Bushmen—or at least as 'Bosjemans-Hottentots'—and which proved such an obstacle to Dutch penetration of the interior. Thus she advocates the use of the term Khoisan for these people, joining the words that are now in general use in place of the rather insulting pair, Bushman and Hottentot, so that what was once merely physical-anthropological and linguistic usage has now gained a more concrete historical reality.⁴

This paper attempts to follow this new interpretation by examining the history of the Khoisan bands of the middle Orange River. These groups have generally been known as Korana (or Corrana), but should, more correctly, be described as !Kora. This term has been taken to refer to a hereditary group of Khoikhoi, whose ancestry may be traced back a century and a half to those tribes van Riebeck met near Cape Town, and whose subsections (often called tribes) were discrete, permanent entities.⁵

¹ A classic example of this process may be seen in W. M. Macmillan, *The Cape Coloured Question* (London, 1927), 27.

² Tony Kirk, 'Progress and Decline in the Kat River Settlement', *J. Afr. Hist.*, xiv (1973) iii, 411-28.

³ John B. Wright, *Bushman Raiders of the Drakensberg* (Pietermaritzburg, 1971).

⁴ Shula Marks, 'Khoisan Resistance to the Dutch in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries', *J. Afr. Hist.* xiii (1972), i, 55-80.

⁵ L. F. Maingard, 'The lost tribes of the Cape', *South African Journal of Science*, xxviii (1931).

There have even been attempts to show that the 'Korana' is an identifiable, separable, human type.⁶ In historical terms, no such distinction can inspire confidence. Although there were various clans who called themselves !Kora, in the fluid situation of the interior of South Africa in the nineteenth century, anyone who chose a roving, raiding mode of existence, as opposed, for instance, to the more settled, mission-influenced life of the Griquas or the Bastards, was likely to be called a 'Korana', regardless of his ancestry. Those whose tribal name was !Kora were but a small section of these.⁷ It is no coincidence that none of the four most prominent !Kora leaders in the Orange Free State had a hereditary claim to pre-eminence.⁸

The particular features of this mode of existence need to be elaborated.⁹ Its adherents were primarily pastoralists who tended to be nomadic and to abjure the sedentary life associated with agriculture. Their political organization was loose, and leadership was generally achieved through force of personality, rather than, for instance, through hereditary status. They had little use for the ways of the Cape Colony, and avoided its agents, whether government officials or missionaries. Nevertheless, they made good use of two of the major introductions of the colony into South Africa, namely horses and guns, with the consequence that they were highly efficient raiders, adept at lifting stock from their more settled neighbours. In fact, they generally cross the threshold of historical visibility only when engaging in such raids, or when reacting to measures taken to prevent them from indulging in such activities, or when they are being punished for having done so. Because they did not accept the basic premises of the sedentary communities who provide almost all the information on them, they have generally been considered lawless brigands.

Major colonial expeditions were sent against the !Kora of the middle Orange three times during the nineteenth century in order to suppress their widespread and dangerous raids against colonial life and property. Until they were finally crushed in 1879, the !Kora formed the most significant non-'Bantu' adversaries of white expansion. They were able to be so because they occupied one of the strongest natural fortresses in southern Africa. In the region between modern Upington and the Aughrabies falls, the Orange River spreads out to form a multitude of small islands, of varying length and breadth. In the nineteenth century, these were covered with thick bush. During one of the expeditions against

⁶ R. Broom, 'Bushmen, Korannas and Hottentots', *Annals of the Transvaal Museum*, xx (1948).

⁷ Those who believe in a genetic relationship of all the tribes known as 'Korana' have had such difficulty in fitting particular examples into their schema and, moreover, have been forced to predicate a rate of fission consonant only with rapid and, in view of the evidence, impossible population growth that it seems preferable to ignore even such relationships as there may have been. Cf. J. A. Engelbrecht, *The Korana* (Cape Town, 1936), 25-87.

⁸ Robert Ross, 'The Griquas of Philippolis and Kokstad, 1826-1879', Cambridge University Ph.D. thesis (1974), 41.

⁹ The theoretical backing for this statement may be found in *ibid.*, 10-12.

them, Sir Walter Currie, a man of wide military experience in southern Africa, commented that he 'used to think the Fish River bush a stronghold, but it stands nowhere in comparison with this water jungle'.¹⁰ The vegetation was so thick that the channels between the islands were generally hidden beneath it, providing a superb cover for sharpshooters who were generally never seen by their blundering adversaries. To a force which knew the area and was skilled in moving about it, such defences were most valuable.

The impenetrability of the Orange River bush was complemented by the difficulty in reaching it. To the south of the river, the flats of Bushmanland stretch for nearly 250 kilometers, to the Hantam mountains north of Calvinia. Although after good summer rains these areas can produce a good flush of grass, they are frequently drought-stricken. Moreover, except within 60 kilometers of the river, there is very little surface water. Thus, during the nineteenth century, the flats were used by trekboers from Namaqualand, the Hantam and the Bokkeveld, but generally only during two or three months of summer, when they moved down to such wells as were open and to the vleis and pans which hold water for a while after good rains.¹¹ Permanent white settlement was rare until the 1880s, although Bastards¹² congregated at the northerly wells.

There was only one sure path across the flats, which was taken by raiders moving in both directions. This lay up the valley of the Zak and Hartebeeste rivers, which flow—occasionally—from the Hantam and the Karreeberg to the Orange river near Kakamas. Generally they are dry, but their sand beds hold water which can be reached by digging, and their banks are thickly wooded, so that a force is to some extent concealed. Thus, when a raiding party could achieve surprise, it could travel at great pace deep into its adversaries' territory without difficulty. In contrast, when an attack was known to be imminent, this route could be watched, so that the defenders would be forewarned. Similar, though less forceful, considerations apply with respect to the other major directions from which the middle Orange could be approached, namely from Namaqualand in the west or from Griqualand West in the east, along the line of the river. In both cases, the difficulties of the routes made it almost impossible to achieve any degree of surprise on its fortress islands.

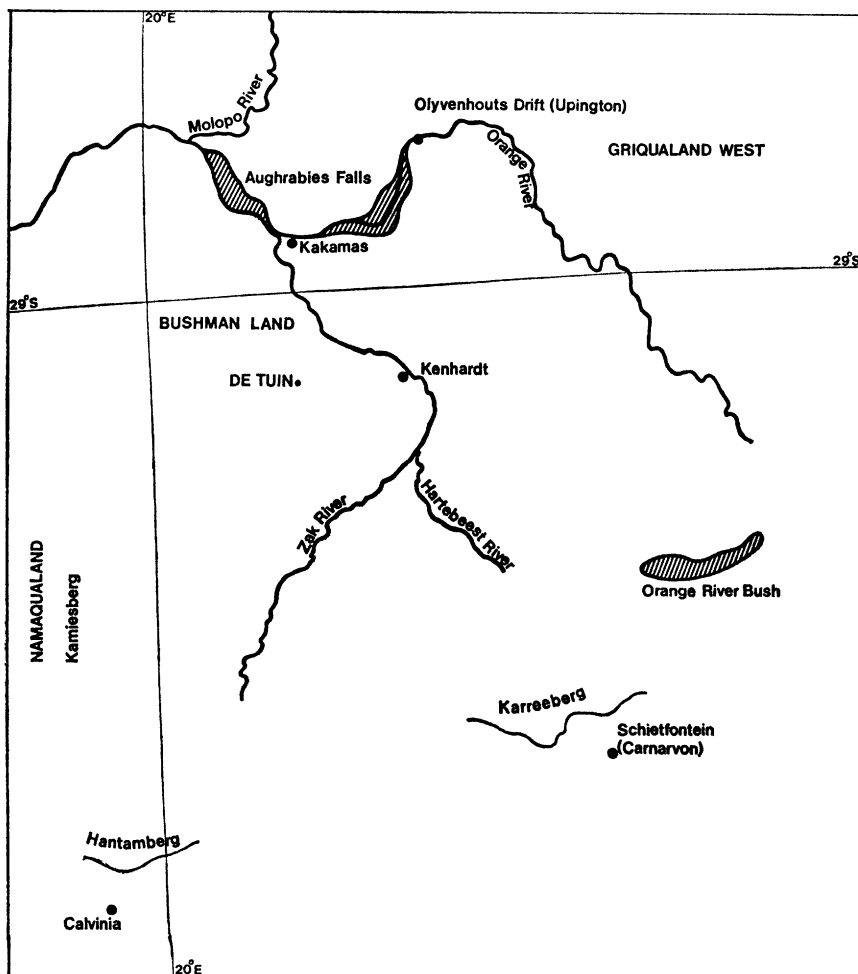
The first description of the population of the middle Orange comes from the 1770s, when Hendrick Wikar, a deserter from the service of the Dutch East India Company, spent several years in the area, and wrote a report of the trip, as the price of his pardon. He described a set of tribes known as the 'Eyniqua', the River people, who lived above the Aughrabies falls, on

¹⁰ Currie to Southey, 4 July 1869, C[ape] A[rchives], H. A. 80 '104.

¹¹ P. J. van der Merwe, *Trek; Studies oor die Mobiliteit van die Pioniersbevolking aan die Kaap* (Cape Town, 1945), 183-200.

¹² The Bastards were those who were not accepted into the Boer community because of their colour, but who considered themselves under the authority of the Cape Colony, and accepted its *mores*. They called themselves Basters, or Bastards.

the banks and islands of the Orange River. From their kraals they ran considerable numbers of sheep and cattle, collected plants and hunted game. They are also said to have cultivated dagga (Indian hemp), though



The Middle Orange River and northern Cape colony.

no strictly food plant.¹³ They were in close contact with the Nama to the west,¹⁴ and, to the east, with various other Khoisan tribes as well as with

¹³ H. J. Wikar, J. Coetsé and W. van Reenen, *The Journals of Hendrik Jacob Wikar (1779) and of Jacobus Coetsé Jansz (1760) and Willem van Reenen (1791)*, translated by A. W. van der Horst and E. E. Mossop, edited by E. E. Mossop (Cape Town, 1935), 123-7.

¹⁴ *Ibid.* 165.

the 'Gyziquoas', a hybrid group of Khoi and Tswana who were the middle-men in a well-established trade between their two parent peoples.¹⁵ They also maintained a system of patronage over various groups described as 'Bushmen' or San, who were generally without stock, except when they stole it, and who lived a primarily hunting and gathering existence away from the river.

The way of life that Wikar described was not peaceful. There were occasional tribal wars which were mainly concerned with the capture of stock, though any prisoners captured were likely to be killed in a particularly bloodthirsty way.¹⁶ Nevertheless, the original inhabitants could not cope with the lawlessness that the spread of the influence of the Cape Colony brought to the Orange River in the last quarter of the eighteenth century. Already by the time of Wikar's journey, the region north-east of Pella had been ravaged by raiders partly under the leadership of a Bastard called Cupido Roggeveld, who was probably based in Namaqualand.¹⁷ But the real destruction came later, when colonial frontiersmen began systematic raids on the middle Orange. Most notable of these was in 1768 when, intervening in a struggle between two Khoisan leaders, a party under the burghers Adriaan van Zyl, Pieter Pienaar and Jan Bloem attacked the Eyniqua.¹⁸ Thereafter raids became frequent, and when Jager Afrikaner established himself near the Aughrabies falls this developed into a major campaigning zone, as Boer farmers wished both to avenge the murder of one of their number, Pienaar, by Afrikaner who had been his client and to capture the stock Afrikaner had gathered.¹⁹ In due course, Jager Afrikaner's following split; a section remained in southern Namibia, and became increasingly settled and Christian, a section moved north to the richer raiding grounds of the Herero. By this time, however, the old riverine communities had been dispersed, so that the tribal entities that Wikar described among the Eyniqua were almost forgotten.²⁰

In the confusion that marked the first quarter of the nineteenth century, the area of the middle Orange lay midway between the main *foci* of power on the northern border of the Cape Colony, in Griqualand and in Namaqualand, so that no stable government could arise to replace the order finally destroyed by Jager Afrikaner and his followers. Those people

¹⁵ Ibid. 149. Wikar's comment that the Klein !Kora were 'a completely different nation' from those lower down is instructive. See also Gerrit Harrinck 'Interaction between Xhosa and Khoi: emphasis on the period 1620-1750' in Leonard Thompson (ed.), *African Societies in Southern Africa* (London, 1969), 146-70.

¹⁶ Wikar, *op. cit.* 65.

¹⁷ Ibid. 47.

¹⁸ Engelbrecht, *op. cit.* 20; Andrew Smith, *The Diary of Dr. Andrew Smith*, ed. P. R. Kirby, 2 vols (Cape Town, 1939-40), I, 203-4. Bloem became a well-known raider throughout Transorangia and his son was *Kaptyn* of the Springbok !Kora.

¹⁹ M. C. Legassick, 'The Griqua, the Sotho-Tswana and the Missionaries: the Politics of a Frontier Zone, 1780-1840', Ph.D. thesis, University of California, Los Angeles, 1970, 143-7.

²⁰ Engelbrecht, *op. cit.* 20-3; H. Vedder, *South West Africa in Early Times*, trans C. G. Hall (London, 1938), 181.

who wished for a settled life gravitated towards the mission stations to the east, leaving Bushmanland and the river in anarchy. As Dr Andrew Smith reported perceptively after a visit to the area in 1826:

There are other [groups] of natives in that direction that would with difficulty be attached to colonial interests, namely the Bushmen and the Corannas. They are widely scattered over the extensive flat which lies between the colony and the Orange River and from the circumstance of their trusting principally to the production of the soil and to hunting for support they have nothing like fixed abodes. They associate in small groups—each carries on its operations independently and no-one recognises the right of any other to interfere with it. No regular chiefs are acknowledged except on particular occasions, hence generally speaking each individual follows his own propensities and every party makes war or makes peace just as meets its individual purpose. Hence no security can exist where interests are so divided, and the colony can never reckon on being on friendly relations with the Bushmen and Corannas until they have treated with them individually or brought them to form tribes and elect chiefs to manage their more important concerns.

Independent of the obstacles which so disjointed a state of society would present, there are other circumstances which would powerfully oppose the immediate success of any endeavour to establish peace and order on the Bushman flat. Both the Corannas and the Bushmen have for many years past been regarded as the determined enemies of every peaceable community around them and they in turn regard all such as equally hostile to them.²¹

On the other hand, in the few years around 1830, the San raids were generally recognized as being the consequence of particularly severe dearth, and were thus regarded with more tolerance, although they hit the farmers at times which were severe for them as well.²²

By the 1830s, the old raiding existence was no longer possible in much of the Orange Free State and Griqualand West. As may be exemplified by the defeat of Bergenaar rebels against Andries Waterboer in 1828, the settled communities, whether Boer or Griqua, had become stronger, so that increasing numbers of people who did not consider the new way of life suitable for them began to move down river to the island fortresses. Only rarely is it possible to describe their movements or their motives in any detail. Nevertheless, some instances can be given. Already by 1813, there was a community of Bastards who had left Griquatown in order to escape the constraints of monogamy imposed under mission influence.²³ Later, in 1833, a group of about forty 'Bushman' who had been living near Campbell went to the middle Orange, taking with them a large number of the sheep and cattle of Cornelis Kok, *Kaptyn* of Campbell.²⁴ By then, they were joining a party of raiders led by a man called Stuurman, who had

²¹ Andrew Smith, memorandum, n.d. [1826], CA, G.H. 19/4.

²² Civil Commissioner, Worcester to Governor, 7 Feb. 1834, *ib. loc.*

²³ J. Campbell, *Travels in South Africa, 1813* (London, 1915), 390.

²⁴ Kolbe to Philip, 16 Dec. 1833, CA, G.H. 19/4.

himself come from Griqualand, where he had been some sort of adherent of the Kok family, living both at Campbell and Philippolis.²⁵

It is difficult to discover just what Stuurman's ancestry was. It would be tempting to see in the coincidence of names some connexion between him and the leaders of the revolts on the Eastern Frontier of the Cape Colony in 1799. Unfortunately, there does not seem to have been any, or, if there was, no evidence survives as to such a connexion being utilized to gain adherents. Any genealogical link there may have been was therefore no longer socially important, while the name, which was used for the man who directed oxen, must have been a common one among a group whose major participation in the colonial economy was as wagon drivers.

The group that Stuurman led first gained notice in 1832 when they attacked and killed three Boer families living about 60 kilometers south of the Orange at Baggerspoort. They are reported to have escaped with 5 wagons, 3,000 sheep, 70 horses and 200 head of cattle.²⁶ From then on, for two years, the colonial administration attempted to reduce the marauders. Nevertheless, Stuurman and his party raided all three northern border districts, Clanwilliam, Beaufort [West] and Graaf Reinet,²⁷ which were always vulnerable because both the Boers and the Kamiesberg Bastards of Namaqualand were thinly settled.²⁸ Stuurman also seems to have considered it necessary to protect himself from the north, and launched a series of raids which contrived to drive the Tswana out of the southern parts of Griqualand and to remove most of their stock.²⁹

The expeditions against Stuurman all found it difficult to penetrate the dense bush of the Orange, and to find any adversaries to destroy. The first commando, launched from Graaf Reinet in the wake of the Baggerspoort murders, with the assistance of Waterboer, had to be abandoned because the burghers began to run low on ammunition.³⁰ Waterboer followed this

²⁵ Van Ryneveld to Chief Sec. to Government, 21 Oct. 1832, CA, G.R. 16/52. It should be mentioned that the Griqua were a substantial 'coloured' group which was settled over a wide area north of the Orange river, from the edge of the desert to the borders of Lesotho. By the 1830s, the two main foci of power were at Griquatown in the west, under *Kaptyn* Andries Waterboer, and at Philippolis in the southern Orange Free State, under Adam Kok II, although there were others, as at Campbell, near Griquatown, under Cornelis Kok II. During the 1820s, these Captaincies were challenged by the rebellion of the Bergenaars, who, at least in part, had very much the same aims as the !Kora, and were often undistinguishable from them, as in the attack on Kuruman in 1828. See R. Moffat, *Missionary Scenes and Labours* (London, 1842), 485-93, and Legassick, op. cit., *passim*.

²⁶ *Ibid.*; see also *Grahamstown Journal*, 14 Sept. 1832.

²⁷ Wade to Stanley, 10 Dec. 1833, in Great Britain, House of Commons, Parliamentary Papers, 252 of 1835, XXXIX, *Papers regarding the condition and treatment of the Native Inhabitants of Southern Africa within the Colony of the Cape of Good Hope or beyond the Frontier of the Colony*, Part II, 66.

²⁸ Civil Commissioner, Worcester to Assistant Sec. to Govt., 7 Feb. 1834, CA, G.H. 19/4.

²⁹ Andrew Smith, Unpublished Manuscripts in the South African Museum, Cape Town, Ethnography, Vol. II; Waterboer to van Ryneveld, 22 Aug. 1833, CA, G.R. 10/35.

³⁰ Van Ryneveld to Chief Sec. to Govt., 4 Dec. 1832, CA, G.R. 16/52.

with a further attack on Stuurman on his own during the next winter, which had no tangible result, although it may have impoverished the community through increased pressure.³¹ At least, from then, Stuurman seems to have concentrated more on the eastern Boers, so that the next commando against him, organized late in 1833 by the Veld Commandant of Worcester, included Boers and Bastards mainly from such areas as the Hantam, the Karreeberg and Namaqualand. It, too, achieved little concrete success.³² Three months later, the Civil Commissioner of Worcester was still very worried about security on the border.³³ As it happened, he need not have been. There were never any more raids from that particular party. An unsubstantiated, but highly plausible, report claims that they were destroyed by a commando under Willem Kok, brother of the *Kaptyn* of Philippolis.³⁴ Apparently he caught them on their return from a raid well to the south, towards the mountains at the southern fringe of Bushmanland. Those who survived must have found it fairly easy to assimilate into other Khoisan communities, particularly in Namibia or in Namaqualand.

After the defeat of Stuurman, there was no other major incursion into the colony for thirty years, although there were occasional scares of San raids.³⁵ There are two main reasons for this. Firstly, the colonial farmers did not penetrate far north of the mountains into Bushmanland, and thus their herds were not so great a temptation. The Bastards who did settle at various permanent springs in the north always tended to live in sufficiently large numbers to make raids on them a more serious business. More importantly, from the 1830s onwards, a more profitable raiding field had opened up. For a period of about twenty years, the various Oorlam groups³⁶ of southern and central Namibia were able to prey on the herds of the Herero and even of the Ovambo to the north, trading the captured stock down to Walvisch Bay for guns, ammunition and liquor. In particular, Jonker Afrikaner, the most successful of these raiders, who was able to transform himself into the overlord of central Namibia, was always short of men.³⁷ In these conditions, the potential raiders of the Orange River generally moved north, leaving the northern border of the colony unmolested.

By the 1860s, however, both these safeguards had been eroded. Pressure

³¹ Waterboer to van Ryneveld, 22 Aug. 1833, CA, G.R. 10/35; Waterboer to Oberholster, n.d., enclosed in van Ryneveld to Chief. Sec. to Govt., 12 Oct. 1833, CA, G.R. 16/52.

³² Report of J. N. Redelinghuys, [Nov. 1833], CA, G.H. 19/4.

³³ Civil Commissioner Worcester to Assistant Sec. to Govt., 7 Feb. 1834, loc. cit.

³⁴ *Grahamstown Journal*, 20 Feb. 1834.

³⁵ E.g. Rawstone to Assistant Sec. to the Lt.-Governor, 27 July 1848 and 26 Aug. 1848, CA, L.G. 198.

³⁶ These were the primarily Khoikhoi groups, of mainly, though not exclusively Nama descent, who controlled most of southern and central Namibia during the middle of the nineteenth century.

³⁷ Vedder, op. cit. 201-3.

on grazing land, especially in the summer, was forcing more and more Boers north on to the flats, although the San still made life very dangerous for the solitary Boer. In 1854, for instance, Robert Moffat Jnr was told that the passage of his small party across the centre of Bushmanland was too dangerous to contemplate.³⁸ Just after this, however, a major commando was launched against the San which renewed 'a wholesale system of extermination of the Bushmen'.

'Corannas from the Orange River, Kafirs from Schietfontein, coloured and European farmers from Namaqualand, Bokkeveld Hantam, Roggeveld, the districts of Fraserburg and Victoria [West] and doubtless Hope Town too, all shared in the destruction of these people.'³⁹ Not only were the San shot out, but the game and *veldkos* on which they had subsisted were also greatly reduced, forcing numbers into service under very harsh conditions. Others again joined the growing marauding bands of the Orange, if only as clients and scouts. By the mid-1860s, an independent existence for the San was no longer possible, so that Boer and Bastard communities were by then well ensconced throughout Bushmanland and were pressing increasingly on the communities of the Orange.

Secondly, from the early 1860s, the Herero and Ovambo herds were no longer available for plunder, as a major alteration in the balance of power in Namibia had established Herero independence from their Oorlam overlords. With the death of Jonker Afrikaner and the defeat of his son by Maherero, that theatre of operations was no longer open.⁴⁰ More and more raiders moved south to the Orange River. From the mid 1860s, then, the Boer and Bastard communities from Calvinia to the Orange River were under increasing pressure.

By this time, four major groupings had developed among the !Kora of the middle Orange. At the extreme west, Cupido Pofadder led a group of about two hundred men, who were generally peacefully inclined towards the colony and at loggerheads with the other peoples of the river.⁴¹ These two facets of their behaviour were closely connected. Nevertheless, although the Pofadders may have resented the arrival of interlopers into their terrain, and the various groups of !Kora were in a state of continual enmity, the relations that the chiefs had with the Boers and the Bastards were the most important aspects of their political activities. Thus the alliances that they contracted amongst themselves were to some extent governed by their attitudes towards the colony.

Upstream of Pofadder, based on the heart of the fortress islands, there

³⁸ Robert Moffat Jr., 'Journey from Colesberg to Steinkopf, 1854-5', *Journal of the Royal Geographical Society*, xxviii (1858), 158.

³⁹ Cape of Good Hope, Parliamentary Papers, *Message from His Excellency the Governor with enclosures, relative to the affairs in the North-Western Districts of the Colony*, A39 '63, Report of Louis Anthing, 3.

⁴⁰ Vedder, *op. cit.* 333-64.

⁴¹ Anthing to [Col. Sec.], 11 Aug. 1868, and de Smidt to Col. Sec., 20 Oct. 1868, CA, H.A. 80 '104.

was a loose amalgam of about five chiefs, whose followings provided the core of the raiding parties. The groups were neither discrete, nor particularly long-lived. In 1867, one of the chiefs, Klein Pofadder, who may have seceded from the group to the west, was killed in a battle, apparently with Cupido Pofadder. Those who had been his followers, perhaps between fifty and seventy-five men, seem to have joined what was by then the ascendant !Kora group, led by Piet Rooi and Jan Kivido.⁴² Rooi, who was the only leader whose background is at all known, was described as an 'outlaw from Adam Kok's government'.⁴³ In the middle Orange, he teamed up with Jan Kivido and they quickly gained a substantial following. This was both because of the success of their raiding and, probably, because they had established links with the smuggling networks throughout central South Africa, which supplied them with arms. At any rate, because they were the most prominent raiders, Rooi and Kivido quickly became the leading chieftains of the middle Orange, or at least the best known.⁴⁴

At the eastern end of the islands, around the major crossing of the Orange at Olyvenhout's drift (modern Upington), lived the Springbok !Kora under Klaas Lucas.⁴⁵ It is not known what their relationship was with the group known as the Springboks, under Jan Bloem in the Orange Free State, but they had probably moved down to the river after the decimation of Bloem's following during his attacks on the Ndebele in the 1830s and 40s. Although there was said to have been a certain amount of trouble between Lucas and the colonists, it was generally agreed in the Colony that he was the most co-operative of chiefs. Certainly his behaviour in 1869 does not belie that impression. Lucas led what was numerically the largest of the groups, having about five hundred men under his authority, of whom two hundred and fifty had guns, but seems to have felt that his power was being eroded by Rooi and Kivido, for there was desultory warfare between them throughout the 1860s.

Lastly, in the area between the Orange River and Griquatown, was a small group known as the Bovenstanders (literally 'those standing above') under three chieftains, Jan, Willem and Jacob. As their name suggests, this tribe had once been the senior of the !Kora *proprement dits*, but by the 1860s they had been reduced by war and smallpox to a position of irrelevance.⁴⁶

The first major incidents between the !Kora communities and the colonists seem to have occurred late in 1866 when a Griqua named Cobus

⁴² Anthing to [Col. Sec.], 11 Aug. 1868, loc. cit.

⁴³ de Smidt to Col. Sec. 20 Oct. 1868, loc. cit.

⁴⁴ Anthing to [Col. Sec.], 11 Aug. 1868, loc. cit.; F. E. Balston to Col. Sec., 21 Oct. 1868, loc. cit.

⁴⁵ This was the name by which he was almost invariably known. His !Kora name was Kouriep. He may also have been the chief known as Klaas Springbok, but the situation is highly confused, as Anthing, the only apparently knowledgeable witness, contradicted himself in two letters written a fortnight apart. Anthing to Col. Sec., 26 July 1868, and 10 Aug. 1868, CA, H.A. 80 '104.

⁴⁶ Anthing to [Col. Sec.], 11 Aug. 1868, loc. cit.; Engelbrecht, op. cit. 48.

Adam and a Scots trader, Hugh MacPherson, were robbed on the southern bank of the Orange.⁴⁷ From then on tension slowly began to increase, so that during 1867 San bands were reported to be roaming and robbing on the borders of Namaqualand with impunity.⁴⁸ In May of that year, a commando of burghers and Bastards from Fraserburg and Victoria West were sent against the !Kora of the Hartebeest River who were considered to be the most active raiders. It was successful in that it captured Piet Rooi, along with three other !Kora, and repulsed the attack which his comrades made in an attempt to release him. However, the !Kora could not be crushed then, as the burghers were forbidden to follow them when they moved out of the colony, which then had the Orange as its northern border.⁴⁹ Rooi was therefore held a prisoner in Fraserburg, where it was surprisingly found that no definite charge could be laid against him, so that he had to be released without trial.⁵⁰ From then on the !Kora raids became increasingly frequent, as the maltreatment which Rooi had suffered stung them into action. Throughout the last quarter of 1867 and the first half of 1868, burghers throughout the area north of the mountains complained of losing their cattle and sheep to !Kora incursions.⁵¹ The Bastard community that centred round the mission station at De Tuin was particularly badly hit, and it was these raids, coming on top of long-standing pressure from Boer farmers who coveted their permanent water supply and their extensive grazing, which caused them to trek away deep into Namibia to settle at Rehoboth.⁵² At the same time, marauders, who, being in much smaller groups and without horses, were known as Bushmen, kept up a series of raids into Little Namaqualand, effectively tying up any help that might have come to the farmers in Bushmanland from that direction.⁵³ But it was the !Kora under Rooi and Kivido who were the most wide-ranging and effective raiders. By the end of the winter, the resident magistrate at Calvinia reported that 'the country between Calvinia and the Orange River is almost totally deserted by the farmers, and it is very easy for a band of Korana marauders to approach within an easy distance of the village without discovery'. In fact there were claims that one hundred !Kora were within nine hours of Calvinia, and that three

⁴⁷ Balston to Col. Sec., 14 Nov. 1866, and deposition of MacPherson, 28 Sept. 1868, enclosed therein, CA, C.O. 3101.

⁴⁸ de Smidt to Col. Sec., 8 Oct. 1867, CA, C.O. 3107.

⁴⁹ J. P. Naylor to Resident Magistrate, Fraserburg, 3 June 1867, CA, C.O. 3116.

⁵⁰ Anthing to Col. Sec., 10 Aug. 1868, loc. cit.

⁵¹ J. J. Mostert to Balston, 14 Sept. 1867, J. B. Roode to Balston, 21 Oct. 1867, H. Blaauw to Balston, 11 Oct. 1867 and W. B. Kringer to Balston, 1 Nov. 1867, all in CA, C.O. 3116. See also Herdman to Acting Resident Magistrate, Calvinia, 19 June 1868, in Cape of Good Hope, Parliamentary Papers, *Reports received from various public officers in the divisions of Victoria West, Fraserburg, Calvinia and Namaqualand, relative to the unsettled state of a tract of country lying south of the Orange River*, A25 '68, 16.

⁵² See Herdman to Civil Commissioner, Calvinia, 23 May 1868, in *ibid.* 19-20; de Smidt to Col. Sec., 7 May 1867, CA, C.O. 3107; *Cape Argus* 28 July 1868; and L. von Rohden, *Geschichte der Rheinischen Missionsgesellschaft* (Barmen, 1888), quoted in J. S. Marais, *The Cape Coloured People, 1652-1937* (Oxford, 1938), 88.

⁵³ E. A. Judge to Col. Sec., 17 Aug. 1868, 15 Aug. 1868, Cape Archives, H.A. 80 '104.

hundred were within two days, and were carrying off large numbers of sheep, cattle, horses, guns and wagons.⁵⁴

The colonial government was wary of sending a commando against the San and the !Kora because experience had shown the danger that the Boers and Bastards would commit atrocities on their adversaries.⁵⁵ A Special Magistracy over the northern border was therefore set up at Kenhardt, in order to maintain the peace and protect the lives and property of colonial subjects in the north.⁵⁶ The Special Magistrate had at his disposal a force of Frontier Armed and Mounted Police, so that he did not have to rely on the dangerous and uncertain help of the burghers. This force, however, could not assemble quickly enough to cope with the immediate threat. A commando was therefore organized from Calvinia district. About three hundred men moved north to the River and attempted to storm the island fortress of Rooi and Kivido.⁵⁷ They were unsuccessful, although they killed thirteen men, including Jan Kivido, and signed a treaty with Cupido Pofadder, both to strengthen him against his !Kora rivals and to help him protect the frontier of the colony.⁵⁸

Neither the commando nor the treaty deterred the !Kora. Secure in the knowledge that no further assault could be launched for many months, at least until the waters of the Orange had subsided enough to allow their opponents to cross to the islands,⁵⁹ they sallied forth almost immediately, descending on those farmers who had dared to move into the summer trekveld of Bushmanland. They boasted that they were strong enough to attack even the *dorps* of Calvinia and Fraserburg,⁶⁰ and certainly raided far up both the Zak and the Hartebeest rivers, lifting, so the farmers claimed, well over ten thousand sheep.⁶¹ Initially the establishment of the border magistracy did little to contain the situation, as the magistrate had a force of only fifty men, many of whose horses were quickly put out of action.⁶² The presence of a permanent force to counter them does, however, seem to have had the effect, at least, of making the !Kora more cautious and less prepared to leave their bases and their lines of communication open to attack. The first concrete defeat for the raiders occurred when Willem Ruiters, who had succeeded Klein Pofadder (alias Gert Ruiters) as chief of the 'Novango' section, was captured by Cupido Pofadder, and handed over to the Special Magistrate, Jackson.⁶³ Nevertheless, throughout the first half of 1869, there were frequent skirmishes between the !Kora

⁵⁴ de Smidt to Col. Sec., 17 Aug. 1868, and 1 Sept. 1868, loc. cit.

⁵⁵ de Smidt Report, 17 Mar. 1868, Cape Parliamentary Paper, A25 '68, 17.

⁵⁶ G. McC. Theal, *History of South Africa since 1795*, 5 vols. (London, 1908), v, 97.

⁵⁷ *Cape Argus*, 24 Oct. 1868; J. Calder to de Smidt, 19 Oct. 1868, and J. H. Louw to [Civil Commissioner, Calvinia], 20 Oct. 1868, CA, H.A. 80 '104.

⁵⁸ Treaty between J. H. Louw and Cupido Pofadder, 5 Oct. 1868, loc. cit.

⁵⁹ Anthing to Col. Sec., 10 Aug. 1868, loc. cit.

⁶⁰ de Smidt to Col. Sec., 24 Nov. 1868, loc. cit.

⁶¹ de Smidt to Col. Sec., 18 Nov. 1868, and deposition of W. P. Burgers *et al.*, loc. cit.; *Cape Argus*, 24 Nov. 1868.

⁶² M. J. Jackson to Colonial Secretary, 18 Dec. 1868, H.A. 80 '104.

⁶³ *Ibid.* 19 Mar. 1869, loc. cit.

and the F.A.M.P., and at least one sizeable battle, when a very large group of !Kora were attacked at De Tuin. Fortified behind the stone walls of the missionary institution, they were able to hold off the Police and retire to the Orange with their loot.

By this time it was clear that no force could effectively patrol a 150 kilometer frontier across which !Kora raids could be launched at almost any point.⁶⁴ A major operation was required to evict Piet Rooi and his colleagues from the islands, for there was no other way in which the security of the northern border could be maintained. If the frontier could not be secured, then a large tract of country from Namaqualand to Fraserburg, which was necessary for the prosperity of the population, both Boer and Bastard, would have to be abandoned. Thus during the course of 1869 a major expedition was led by Sir Walter Currie against the islands. He had a force of over three hundred men, of whom 168 were members of the border police. Nevertheless, the attempts to storm the islands were unsuccessful. The troops found that they could take any island to which they could walk, despite the defensive barricades which the !Kora had erected. However, this was costly, as one or two lives were generally lost, while there was no tangible result, as the !Kora could never be seen in the deep bush.⁶⁵ Currie himself, a veteran of long experience on the Eastern Frontier, 'a born fighter—as hard and tough as possible [who] could ride with or without saddle, go with or without boots, but . . . could not move along without adjectives',⁶⁶ died in consequence of a fever he caught on the river. It became obvious that the !Kora could only be defeated by starvation, and thus the force held off in order to maintain a state of siege on the islands. In the event, during the last quarter of the year, the colonial authorities were able to 'bribe Klaas Lucas and Cupido Pofadder to act against the other clans engaged'.⁶⁷ After Lucas had been persuaded to cut off supplies to Rooi and his colleagues, he managed to trap them and capture Rooi and most of his leading henchmen. They were handed over to the Special Magistrate, and were sent to Robben Island. Those who escaped moved north into Namibia, or towards the Vaal River. A total of 148 !Kora and San were apprehended in dubious circumstances, while a further 271 'natives', who had been reduced to destitution by the campaign, were sent out to service. As Jackson commented, 'the marauding tribes have been completely rooted out'.⁶⁸

In the aftermath of the war, the colonial government concluded treaties with Cupido Pofadder and Lucas. According to their terms, the chiefs

⁶⁴ The Special Magistrate, Jackson, realized this as early as January 1869; Jackson to Col. Sec., 11 Jan. 1869, loc. cit.

⁶⁵ Currie to Southey, 4 July 1869, loc. cit.

⁶⁶ C. D. Hook, *With Sword and Statute on the Cape of Good Hope Frontier* (London, n.d. [1908]), 201-2.

⁶⁷ J. H. Scott, 'Historical Account of the Northern Border', in Cape Parliamentary Paper, *Blue Book on Native Affairs, 1881*, G 20 '81, 81.

⁶⁸ Jackson to Col. Sec., 3 Nov. 1869, CA, C.O. 3179; Deposition of Sennacherib, 19 Aug. 1869, enclosed therein; Jackson to Col. Sec., 20 Apr. 1870, C.O. 3193.

were to maintain the security of the border, sending back to the colony any cattle coming over the river. They were not to settle on any of the islands, but only north of the northernmost stream of the Orange. In return they were to receive subsidies of powder and lead.⁶⁹ They were thus confirmed in their hegemony over the !Kora of the northern border. However, the destruction of the major raiding parties based on the islands and the elimination of the San of Bushmanland allowed farmers to move north to the Orange, and thus destroyed the basis of their old way of life. A combination of pressures began to be exerted on the !Kora. Some were merely symbolic, as when the Dutch Reformed Church established missions at Lucas's kraal at Upington and at Kakamas, on the edge of Pofadder's territory.⁷⁰ Others were more real. As travel in the area became safe, traders began to move in, selling alcohol, for which they could find a ready market, as among all demoralized and broken peoples. Following on the 'Cape Smoke' came indebtedness, in the cycle that had already destroyed so many Khoikhoi tribes. The chiefs were aware of the danger, but they could do nothing about it. Powerlessly, they watched the resources of their people disappearing.

To make matters worse, during a period of drought around 1873, a large number of colonial Bastards began moving north of the river.⁷¹ As they took their flocks north, they occupied and quickly exhausted the best pastures, although they do seem to have paid a certain amount of rent to the !Kora chiefs.⁷² At any rate, the !Kora seem to have believed, probably rightly, that they were 'going to the wall' because of competition from the Bastards. Nor could they move off; to their north was only the Kalahari desert, and even there the best living sites were now occupied by Bastards, under Dirk Vilander. The experiences and the attitudes which formed the heritage of the !Kora did not fit them for competition with the Bastards, because anyone both willing and capable to act successfully within the colonial economy would probably already have 'become' a Bastard. Moreover, the stereotypes that the traders had of the !Kora were such that they behaved in a way which helped to confirm their own opinions of the !Kora. For a while, then, those who had not been forced to become farm labourers, either because they were destitute, or because they had been captured in the war, held on to what remained of their way of life, but it could not last.⁷³

⁶⁹ Treaty, Jackson with Cupido Pofadder and Klaas Lucas, 26 Jan. 1870, in Cape Parliamentary Papers, *Reports and Papers connected with Affairs on the Northern Border of the Colony of the Cape of Good Hope*, G61 '79, xxi-xxii.

⁷⁰ Agreements, 27 Sept. 1875 and 17 Jan. 1876, Cape Parliamentary Paper, *Papers connected with Affairs on the Northern Border of the Colony of the Cape of Good Hope*, A30 '80, 13.

⁷¹ Hook to Sec. for Native Affairs, 29 Sept. 1873, CA, N.A. 166.

⁷² Ibid. to Col. Sec., 12 Sept. 1873, Cape Archives, C.O. 3219 and Cape Parliamentary Paper, G61 '79, xxi.

⁷³ For instance, attempts to recruit !Kora labour for 'public works' in the colony failed completely. Hook to Sec. for Native Affairs, 27 May 1875, CA, N.A. 166.

Despite the pressures on them, the !Kora chieftains⁷⁴ did not take up arms again against the colony for several years. Nor did they do so on their own initiative. In 1878, the war on the Eastern Frontier was exacerbated by a revolt in Griqualand West and among the Ngqika Xhosa whose two generations in Schietfontein (modern Carnarvon) and Prieska had not robbed them of the memory of their tribal affiliations, and who had been badly hit by the division among the Boers of the common land on which they had lived.⁷⁵ Seeing the garrison of F.A.M.P. march away, receiving promptings from Griqua leaders and responding to a panic among the Bastards, who trekked back south of the river, the !Kora re-occupied the islands, stealing as many of the Bastards' cattle as they could.⁷⁶ Apparently they believed that they would be able to defend the islands as there were now no other !Kora to betray them as they had betrayed Piet Rooi a decade earlier.⁷⁷ In this view they were mistaken. Once they were able to gather for the task, the colonial forces were slowly able to expel them. As one of the leaders of the force reported:

The work on the islands was of a most trying character. 'The islands' is really a tract of forest jungle some fifty miles long and from two to six miles wide, intersected by innumerable streams, almost all unfordable, and many of them swift as mill races. Not a man in the force knew anything accurately about these streams, nor how any particular island had to be reached. The enemy had to be groped for, streams waded or swum, and that in face of intrenchments held by the enemy, and our force was unprovided with light boats, lines, or other appliances for such work.⁷⁸

The operation was necessarily expensive, costing the Cape government over £100,000, as much as was needed to reduce the stronghold of the Sotho chief Morosi.⁷⁹ Nevertheless, the last fortress was finally captured and the !Kora were forced to flee into the desert. The lands along the river were given out to settlers, Bastard, Dutch and English.⁸⁰

With the final clearing of the islands, the !Kora more or less disappeared as a group. By the middle of this century, a physical anthropologist could only find about three hundred people who considered themselves to be descendants of the !Kora, for being a '!Kora' no longer had any meaning.⁸¹ It was perhaps inevitable that the Cape Colony would find it necessary to eliminate a group whose ethos was in no way compatible with its own, but

⁷⁴ In 1875, Cupido Pofadder died and was succeeded by his brother Klaas.

⁷⁵ J. H. Scott, Report of 8 Jan. 1880, in Cape Parliamentary Paper, *Blue Book on Native Affairs, 1880*, G13 '80, 169.

⁷⁶ C. Schröder to Jackson, 27 Feb. 1879, Cape Parliamentary Paper, G61 '79, 71-2.

⁷⁷ J. H. Scott, in Cape Parliamentary Paper, G20 '81, 85.

⁷⁸ Scott to Sec. for Native Affairs, 13 May 1880, in Cape Parliamentary Paper, A30 '80, 33.

⁷⁹ Cape Parliamentary Paper, *Total amount to charge on War Account in Consequence of the Disturbances on the Northern Border and the Morosi Campaign*, A27 '79.

⁸⁰ Scott to Ayliff, 6 Oct. 1879, Cape Parliamentary Paper, A30 '80, 10-12.

⁸¹ C. S. Grobbelaar, 'The Physical characteristics of the Korana', *South African Journal of Science*, LIII (1956).

it was also inevitable that the !Kora were unable to accommodate to the Colony and find a niche within its society. Although it is impossible to be certain, it would appear that very many of those who were !Kora, and who fought in what were known as the 'Korana Wars', had taken the decision to become so at some stage in their lives, rather than being born to it. At the very least, they had the option of ceasing to 'be' !Kora, by giving up the life-style that that entailed. By the 1880s, a roving raiding way of life was an anachronism, as was shown by the defeat at the battle of Schweizer-Reinecke of those !Kora who had remained on the south-west border of Transvaal. The very bases of !Kora social organization had brought them into a conflict with white South Africa which, in the long run, they could not hope to win.

SUMMARY

This article argues that the !Kora, an essentially Khoisan group in central South Africa, consisted not of hereditary tribes, but of people who had chosen a predatory, raiding way of life. It then traces the history of those !Kora who were based on the jungle-covered islands of the middle Orange river, concentrating particularly on the three wars that occurred between them and the Cape Colony: in 1832-4, when the !Kora were led by Stuurman, 1868-9, when they were under Piet Rooi and Jan Kivido, and the final episodes during 1879-80. Pointing out the difficulty that the colonial forces had in reducing the islands, it shows how the !Kora were able to raid up to 250 kilometers across the Bushmanland Flats, and thus make colonial subsistence over a wide area of the northern Cape Colony non-viable. Nevertheless, it argues that the way of life that the !Kora had chosen could not be sustained in face of the consolidation of colonial society, and describes the processes whereby they were destroyed.