

“Address by a Bushman at a
mission station

... "Why is it," said he, "that we are persecuted by the Christians? Is it because we live in desert lands, clothe ourselves with skins, and feed on locusts and wild honey? Is there any thing morally better in one kind of raiment, or in one kind of food, than another? Was John the Baptist a Bushman? Did he not dwell in a wilderness? Was he not clothed with a leathern girdle, such as we wear? And did he not feed on locusts and wild honey? Was he not a Bushman?"
... ”

FROM:
Rev. John Philip 1828
Researches in South Africa
London: James Duncan, Paternoster-Row

“... Khoisan resistance continued with the attacks on colonial farms in 1731. On 12 February of that year a group of Khoisan known as the "ten sons of Grebnan" (or "Greibenau"), who had earlier robbed the burgher Frederick van Eeden, drove away thirty-three cattle belonging to Hans Jurgen Potgieter. After six days a commando of twelve colonists succeeded in tracking the robbers to their kraal whereupon the Khoisan began to stab the cattle to death. A warning shot was fired and the sons of Grebnan responded by shooting arrows at the Dutch. Their fire was returned and six of them were killed whilst others were wounded. Ten cattle were recovered alive. A woman and three children were taken captive and later sent to colonists over the mountains ("over bergh") because, it was explained, the husband of the woman was still alive. This, it would seem, is the first recorded instance of what was to become a common occurrence: the capture of woman and children by commandos and their subsequent placement as labourers within the colony. On this occasion one of the Khoisan who had managed to survive the fight shouted to the commando from the safety of a kraal that though they might take away some cattle there were others that they would have to leave behind, dead, in the kraal. "We Bushmen have still more people and, will not leave the Dutch in peace," he added defiantly.”

FROM:

Nigel Penn, 1995.

The Northern Cape Frontier, 1700–c.1815

Doctoral thesis, University of Cape Town

“... These so called Bushmen or Chinese have a famous chief called Koerikei, or bullet-escaper. Veldwagtmeester Van der Merwe told me that, after an action which he had commanded, this Koerikei, standing on a cliff out of range, shouted out to him: "What are you doing on my land? You have taken all the places where the eland and other game live. Why do you not stay where the sun goes down, where you first came from?" Van der Merwe asked why he did not live in peace as before, and why he did not go hunting with them, (He had been living with the farmers) and whether he did not have enough country as it was? He replied that he did not want to lose the country of his birth and that he would kill their herdsmen, and that he would chase them all away. As he went off he further said that it would be seen who would win.”

FROM:
Nigel Penn, 1995.
The Northern Cape Frontier, 1700–c.1815
Doctoral thesis, University of Cape Town

“... The question, however, remains: what was it that provoked such suicidal resistance? On one level the intensity of resistance was probably a function of the desperate situation of the San. They must have realised that if they lost their country to the colonists their way of life was doomed. The more we learn about San culture the more evident it becomes that there was a profoundly spiritual connection between particular places and the systems of meaning that the San had constructed in order to explain their world. The stories, myths and legends which are contained in the Bleek-Lloyd archives bears testimony to the fact that the San's narrative representations of reality were, in some ways, evoked by the landscape itself. Thus, to lose the land was to lose, literally, everything. On a more mundane level the San were already fighting in territory where the environmental balance was critical and where retreat could result in an irreplaceable loss of resources. The prospect of trekking into increasingly arid areas, or entering the hostile territory of Tswana or Xhosa societies, was unappealing. The Xhosa, in particular, were unlikely to accommodate refugee San.

FROM:

Nigel Penn, 1995.

The Northern Cape Frontier, 1700-c.1815

Doctoral thesis, University of Cape Town

“... Such a commando of a hundred men, of which thirty-two were Christians, and the rest Hottentots in their service, had been sent out against some Namaquas Boshies men, and now met us on their return. In this expedition they had killed about a hundred, and made prisoner of twenty, chiefly small children, some of whom they at this present juncture had with them. It was said that in a similar expedition in 1765, 186 had been killed. None of the Christians that went on this expedition were either killed or wounded...

... If any of the colonists take a Hottentot orphan to bring up, it must serve, it is true, without wages, till it is twenty-five years old; but, on arriving at that age, it is at liberty to go where it pleases, or to continue in service at a stated salary.”

FROM:
Carl Peter Thunberg
Travels at the Cape of Good Hope 1772-1775. Ed: V. S. Forbes
Second series No. 17
Van Riebeeck Society
Cape Town 1986

“... Another gentleman, in the service of government, and possessed of accurate information, in a letter dated Graaff-Reinet, 1822, writes to me as follows:— "Should a Bushman, deprived of his game, and the means of subsistence, by the encroachment of the farmers, happen to steal a sheep to keep himself or his family from starving, if apprehended and taken alive, he is publicly flogged under the scaffold, branded with a hot iron, put in irons, and condemned to hard labour" ...”

FROM.
Rev. John Philip 1828
Researches in South Africa
London: James Duncan, Paternoster-Row

“... Louis Anthing [Magistrate of Namaqualand in the 1860s] believed that to protect the San [whose numbers he estimated at about 500 in the northern Cape in 1863] a magistracy should be established at Kenhardt and land should be set aside for the San. The first of these suggestions was approved by the government, but the expenses involved in implementing the proposals caused the plan to be shelved. With considerable emotion Anthing attempted to champion the cause of the doomed people, but his energies and sympathies were an annoyance to the authorities. As a result he was transferred to Cradock and, once his salary was stopped he was forced to resign. Nothing further was done to protect the San; no magistracy was established, no land was put aside for them, no food was given to them and none of the perpetrators of the crimes against them were arrested.

Literally starving, the San were forced to steal livestock in order to stay alive. If caught, they were either murdered by the local farmers or sent to Cape Town as convicts to work as labourers on the Breakwater. Upon their release few survived for long since their families had been destroyed and their land taken.”

FROM:
Nigel Penn, 1995.
The Northern Cape Frontier, 1700-c.1815
Doctoral thesis, University of Cape Town

“...In October 1916 Hans was killed. Early one morning, after donating five head of cattle to a werft, Hans and a small party of followers, including women and children, were walking along, playing a long, bowlike musical instrument called a chas. They had only one rifle, which August, a loyal follower was carrying. Hans had an infected foot and was hobbling along. Galloping toward them came Feuerstein, an ex-post office clerk who was interned at Sus for the duration of the war. The band scattered, except for the unarmed Hans who, because of his infirmity, stood still. Feuerstein charged up and emptied his pistol at him. He then cut off Hans's head, so that, as he later explained, he could claim the reward.”

FROM:
Robert J. Gordon, 1992.
The Bushman Myth—The Making of a Namibian Underclass,
Westview Press

“... The prevailing advice to whites at that time was that Bushmen were usually fine people unless they had been wronged in some way. Many whites and blacks were apparently killed for raping Bushman women. Retributive justice worked both ways. When hunter Hendrik van Zyl heard that a small child of one of the Thirstland Trekkers had wandered off and been killed by Bushmen, he let it be known that there was a limitless supply of tobacco and brandy available at his settlement. He invited Bushmen to participate in this largesse at a specially constructed kraal, and when they were suitably inebriated, ordered them tied up and taken to where the child had been killed. He then invited the Thirstland Trekkers to shoot them. The trekkers declined, so he gave some rifles to the Bushmen attached to the Boers, and after he had read the biblical passage concerning an eye for an eye, ordered them to shoot. Thirty-three Bushmen were murdered in this episode.”

FROM:

Robert J. Gordon, 1992.

The Bushman Myth—The Making of a Namibian Underclass,
Westview Press

“... Two spies were, about the same time, sent out with two Bushmen, who had promised to show where some of their countrymen were concealed. But these Bushmen, instead of conducting them right, only deceived them. A few days afterwards, therefore, seven other spies were sent out with them; and they were assured that, in case of a second failure, they should certainly suffer death; but if they pointed out their comrades, they would as certainly be spared. After proceeding about an hour, the Bushmen, resolved not to betray their countrymen, fell to the ground, and on being commanded to rise, behaved as if they were dead. When no answer could be obtained from them, blows were inflicted, but as their determination was inflexible, and the invaders could not remove them, they slew them on the spot. As the Bushmen were fully aware of the consequences of their resolution, their conduct was an instance of patriotism not surpassed by any thing in ancient or modern history.”

FROM:
Rev. John Philip 1828
Researches in South Africa
London: James Duncan, Paternoster-Row

"... At Leeu River (the present day Leeu Gamka) two butchers of the Van Reenen brothers and nine of their assistants were attacked whilst they were busy driving a large quantity of livestock, purchased in the East, towards the Cape Town market. Their assailants numbered about 300 and were described as being San, many of whom were armed with muskets. Of the 12 000 sheep and 368 cattle, 6000 and 253 were stolen respectively. It is probable that the thieves were the same group of well-armed Khoisan which had been terrorising the district for the last year. On this occasion their target was ill chosen and their success unfortunate because the government, prompted no doubt by the influential Van Reenens, took the most rigorous steps to crush the threat to the Company's meat supply. In July two exceptionally well-provisioned and powerful commandos were organised to clear the Nieuweveld robbers. These operations seem to have been orchestrated from the drostdy of Graaf-Reinet and to be commanded by proven leaders of that district, namely, N. Smit and Johannes van der Walt.

Smit's commando was the first to strike and annihilated the kraal of one of the principal resistors, a certain Vlamink. An estimated 300 Khoisan were killed and 15 captured in an action which can only be described as a massacre. 860 sheep and 30 cattle were recovered. Vlamink's partner, a man by the name of Courage, had had the good fortune to argue with his friend four days before the commando's attack. He had, therefore, timeously removed himself, his followers and his booty from the place of death. Unfortunately his reprieve was only temporary. Though the horses of Smit's commando were exhausted, those of Van der Walt's were fresh. Following instructions to proceed beyond the Koup to the Sak River he caught up with Courage's Kraal and destroyed it. A further three kraals were discovered and wiped out: 231 Khoisan were killed or captured whilst 325 sheep and 15 cattle were recovered.

With between 500 and 600 of the Nieuweveld marauders slaughtered it might be assumed that this section of the frontier was once again safe for Boer occupation but this was not, in fact, the case.

In Bushmanland their numbers dwindled towards extinction as they were hunted down by Boer or "Bastaard" commandos which were determined to turn the Cape thirstland into an area of San-free trekveld ... In December 1847 the entire north-western Cape, as far as the Orange River, was annexed as part of the colony. Bushmanland was declared a communal grazing area (or trekvelden) in which white, Khoikhoi and "Bastaard" farmers had equal rights. The rights of the San were not considered.

FROM:
Nigel Penn, 1995.
The Northern Cape Frontier, 1700-c.1815
Doctoral thesis, University of Cape Town

“... On 1 August 1775 seventy-seven men under the leadership on Adriaan van Jaarsveld set out to destroy the San of the Seekoei River. Feigning friendship and pretending that the commando was intent simply on hunting, Van Jaarsveld's party shot a number of hippopotomi and left the carcasses on the river bank. The commando then moved downstream and returned quietly that night where, as expected, a large number of San were feasting on the hippopotomi. At dawn, in a surprise attack, Van Jaarsveld's men massacred one hundred and twenty-two of the San and took twenty-one prisoners. Only five escaped. It was an act of treachery that would not be forgotten and ensured that peace negotiations would be soured by mistrust.”

FROM:
Nigel Penn, 1995.
The Northern Cape Frontier, 1700–c.1815
Doctoral thesis, University of Cape Town

“... The poor Namaquas, Corannas, and Bushman speak with petrified horror of the bloody massacres which were frequently taking place previous to the missionaries coming among them. It frequently happened that a whole kraal was taken by surprise, the cattle all captured, and the women and children carried off to be slaves to the murderers of their husbands and fathers; while scarcely an individual escaped to tell the neighbouring tribes of the destruction of his kraal. The missions were almost the only checks to these bloody proceedings; the commandants knew that they could not carry on those commandoes, take possession of the Bushman country, and reduce the people to slavery, while their conduct was open to the observation of the missionaries; and the first step necessary to enable them to revive the old system, in its full extent, and get possession of the Bushmen and their country, was, to get rid of missionary institutions...”

FROM:
Rev. John Philip 1828
Researches in South Africa
London: James Duncan, Paternoster-Row

“... Away from the press and the clubs in Grootfontin, the most common settler strategy was to shoot any Bushman suspected of theft...Shortly after the occupation of Namibia by South Africa, Farmer Becker of Hedwigslust rode out accompanied by his "boy," Bushman Max, searching for his thirty-two stolen cattle. He surprised a party of Bushmen eating one of his oxen and, without even dismounting, proceeding to shoot two males and four females (including two small children). The witness Max ran away:..The newly arrived South African military police investigating the case because Becker had bragged to them about the Bushmen he had shot.”

FROM:
Robert J. Gordon, 1992.
The Bushman Myth—The Making of a Namibian Underclass,
Westview Press

“... Such as have been taken very young and well treated, have turned out most excellent servants; they have shown great talent, great activity, and great fidelity. An opposite treatment has been productive of a contrary effect; and the brutal conduct of most of the dutch farmers towards those in their employ has already been noticed. The poor hottentot bears it with patience, or sinks under it; but on the temper and turn of mind of the Bosjesman it has a very different effect. He takes the first opportunity that offers of escaping to his countrymen, and contrives frequently to carry off with him a musquet, powder and ball. With tales of cruelty he excites them to revenge; he assists them with their plan of attack; tells them the strength of the whole, and of individuals; the number of their cattle, and the advantages and dangers that will occur in the attempt to carry them off; the manner in which expeditions are conducted against them; and, in short, every thing he knows respecting the colonists.”

FROM:

Nigel Penn, 1995.

The Northern Cape Frontier, 1700–c.1815

Doctoral thesis, University of Cape Town

“... Another famous hunter, the Boer Hendrik van Zyl of Ghanzi, visited the Gautscha area in 1874. Van Zyl quickly discovered that the area north of Gobabis to the Okavango River was a "true hunter's paradise". He employed well over 100 Bushmen, many of them "shootboys." Indeed, when van Zyl established the world record for killing 103 elephants in one day, most of them were accounted for by his Bushmen shots. These kills yielded over 8,000 pounds of ivory.”

... Given such a situation , it was not long before Ovamboland was denuded of game too. The last elephants were killed in the Etosha Pan area in 1881, and by 1886, elephants were declared "hunted out" in Ngami.”

FROM:

Robert J. Gordon, 1992.

The Bushman Myth—The Making of a Namibian Underclass,

Westview Press

“... Galton's visit to Ovamboland in the early 1850s was symptomatic of a new era in which white hunters and traders trekked north in large numbers in search of ivory. This era was a result not of Galton's opening up of the area so much as of changes in the industrialised countries, especially in the United States. As that country industrialised, the *nouveau riche* sought new status symbols, and the symbol par excellence was the upright piano ... It is estimated that to meet this demand, between 1860 and 1930, 25,000 to 100,000 elephants were killed per year. Between 1852 and 1860 the production of pianos in the United States increased from 9,000 to 22,000 per annum and eventually peaked at 350,000 pianos in 1910...”

FROM:
Robert J. Gordon, 1992.
The Bushman Myth—The Making of a Namibian Underclass,
Westview Press