Shifting frameworks for understanding otherness


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The Cape Khoi in pre-1652 European Travelogues,
an Early Modern Latin Letter,

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*Caveat emptor.*

Amsterdam, April 2020
A Note on Nomenclature

In this thesis, I use terms that form part of the history of racial classification in South Africa without any implication that such terms have a scientific basis or that they can be employed unproblematically.

European settlers called the pastoral people of the western and northern Cape, nowadays referred to as ‘Khoikhoi’ ('people of people'), ‘Hottentots’, and referred to hunter-gatherers present throughout what is now South Africa, commonly called ‘San’ now, as ‘Bushmen’. These peoples are closely related and are known collectively as the ‘Khoi-San’ or ‘Khoisan’. Only small populations survive in South Africa today. In discussing historical sources, I use the source’s terminology in referring to native peoples, adding quotation marks to register their status as stigmatising or ‘othering’ colonial labels. The colonial historical sources use many different names for the same tribe or people. The Goringhaicona, a cattle-less people, are, for example, referred to as ‘Strandlopers’ by Van Riebeeck in the Daghrregister, but also called ‘Watermans’ or ‘Vismans’. Their leader (captain) is referred to as Herrij, Harry, and Herrie, or called by his indigenous name, Autshumao.

I use the term ‘Khoi’ to collectively refer to the native inhabitants of the Cape whom the Dutch in the 17th and 18th centuries typically called ‘Hottentotten’. The word ‘Khoe’ is first found in Van Riebeeck’s Daghrregister, in January 1653, as ‘Quena’, where –na is the plural suffix. In South African scholarship, a variety of spellings are used across academic disciplines. I use the modernised spelling ‘Khoi’.

More information about the tribes that inhabited the Cape peninsula and what they were called by the colonisers can be found in, among others, Richard Elphick’s Kraal and Castle. Khoikhoi and the Founding of White South Africa (1977) and Gabriel Nienaber’s Khoekhoense stamname (1989).
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# Table of Contents

Acknowledgements................................................................................................................................. i
A Note on Nomenclature ............................................................................................................................. iii
Table of Contents ........................................................................................................................................ v
List of Figures ............................................................................................................................................... vii

Introduction – Framing the (un)familiar ................................................................................................. 1

Chapter 1 – Before Van Riebeeck: Framing the Khoi ................................................................. 15
  Portuguese callers (1488-1580) .............................................................................................................. 16
  English and Dutch accounts (1580-1615) ............................................................................................ 27
  Classifying the Khoi (1600-1652) .......................................................................................................... 35
  Conclusion ............................................................................................................................................... 53

Chapter 2 – Grevenbroek and the Khoi: Towards a Revolution of Knowledge .................... 57
  Settlers versus Khoi ................................................................................................................................. 59
  The Letter’s sources and structure ......................................................................................................... 76
  Grevenbroek as a child of his time .......................................................................................................... 89
  Conclusion ............................................................................................................................................... 102

Chapter 3 – Grevenbroek and the Khoi: A Latin Framework, Revisited .......................... 105
  ‘Youthful prejudices’ ............................................................................................................................... 107
  Half-truths, revisited ................................................................................................................................. 119
  Classical sourcework ............................................................................................................................... 125
  A classical style Cape ............................................................................................................................... 130
  Exposing ‘Hottentot’ ................................................................................................................................. 144
  Conclusion ............................................................................................................................................... 151

Chapter 4 – Postcolonialism and the Historical Novel: Grevenbroek and the Early Cape in Eilande ................................................................. 153
  Voicing the archive ................................................................................................................................. 157
  Governor versus secretary ......................................................................................................................... 161
  The Khoi in Eilande ................................................................................................................................. 170
  ‘Andersmaak’ ....................................................................................................................................... 180
  Conclusion ............................................................................................................................................... 190
Conclusion...........................................................................................................................................193

Appendix 1 Descriptive Bibliography and History of the Grevenbroek Manuscript Including Brief Comments on its Text Editions.........................................................................................................................199
  Descriptive bibliography MSB203...........................................................................................................199
  History of MSB203 ....................................................................................................................................201
  Text editions..........................................................................................................................................206
Appendix 2 Comparative Ethnography ......................................................................................................209

References ..............................................................................................................................................211
  Archival materials .................................................................................................................................211
  Works cited ........................................................................................................................................212

Summary – Shifting Frameworks for Understanding Otherness..............................................................223
Samenvatting – Verschuivende denkkaders voor een begrip van andersheid ...................................229
List of Figures

Figure 0.1 Thomas Hobbes’ tile shortly after being placed.
Photo by me, TM.

Figure 0.2 Title Page MSB203.
Courtesy of the National Library of South Africa (NLSA), Cape Town Campus, Special Collections.

Figure 1.1 Earliest known map showing the full extent of Africa (1554), by Sebastian Münster.
Woodcut map, with added colour, 26 x 35 cm. Münster, S. (1554), Cosmographia uniuersalis, Basel, 10r.

Figure 1.2 T and O map (1472).

Figure 1.3 Liber chronicarum, ‘Secunda etas Mundi’ (1493).
Schedel, S. (1493), Liber chronicarum, Nuremberg, 12v.

Figure 1.4 ‘Aethiopia inferior, vel exterior’.
Copperplate map, with added colour, 37 x 48 cm. Blaeu, J. (1635), Theatrum orbis terrarium, sive atlas novus, Amsterdam, 15v.

Figure 1.5 Chain of being, visualised as a ladder.
Sebonde, R. de (1512), Liber de ascensu et descensu intellectus, [?]. Reproduced from Armaingaud (1932, II, 63-4)).

Figure 2.1 ‘Hottentots’.

Figure 2.2 ‘Diabolical Hottentots’.

Figure 3.1 For Grevenbroek, the ‘Promontorio Bonae Spei’ (Cape of Good Hope peninsula) presumably extended to the Boland mountain range.
Map adapted from Sparrman, S. (1779), Mappa Geographica, [?].

Figure App.1 Post Horn set in Crowned Shield.
Drawn from the Grevenbroek manuscript (NLSA MSB203) by me, TM.
Figure App.2 Countermark NLSA MSB203.
Drawn by me, TM.

Figure App.3 Post horn, D&C Blauw, 1793.
Voorn (1960).

Figure App.4 Inside front cover (NLSA FB5429).
Courtesy of the NLSA, Special Collections, Cape Town Campus.

Figure App.5 Post horn, 27 August 1657.
Drawn from Daghregister (Western Cape Archives Inventory 1/1/25) by me, TM.

Figure App.6 Post horn, 25 April 1672.
Drawn from request from the free-burghers (Western Cape Archives Inventory 1/2/80) by me, TM.

Figure App.7 A close match with MSB203.
SLD.138.1, courtesy of the Gravell Watermark Archive.