

Indigenous settlers: the Griquas of nineteenth-century South Africa

By
Yvonne du Plessis

A Graduating Essay Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements, in the
Honours Programme.
For the Degree of
Bachelor of Arts
in the
Department
of
History

The University of Victoria
April 3, 2012

The Griqua story is one that spans time, space, and ethnicity, a product of the larger historical forces that swept over southern Africa during the last four centuries. The descendants of indigenous Khoisan and Africans, imported slaves, and Dutch settlers, the Griqua did not belong to a single culture or ethnicity. They are hard to define and do not easily fit into any categories – a problem for the white supremacists of the twentieth-century who tried to divide South African society into stark racial groupings. The Griquas were really a composite of indigenous and settler race and culture, and their unique identity was profoundly shaped by their history of trekking and settling in independent polities. But despite having some shared characteristics with the white settlers, including religion, their part indigenous history and culture really differentiated them and excluded them from full inclusion in white settler society. While their mixed heritage led to discrimination from white settlers, it also gave them the ability to be important actors on the colonial frontier. For a time, the Griqua lived in relatively prosperous independent polities, but by the end of the century they had disintegrated into fragmented communities, with little political power or wealth. It was a complex mix of prejudice, geography, internal social dynamics and chance that created the conditions for the Griqua decline. The encroachment of white settlement and colonial power fatally undermined their political independence and territorial integrity.

In 1812, the Scottish church minister John Campbell travelled to Southern Africa. He had been chosen by the directors of the London Missionary Society (LMS) to inspect the organization's mission settlements and to establish regulations that would further the attainment of mission goals – namely, Christianizing the “heathens” of Southern Africa.

It was in 1813 that he visited their mission at Klaarwater, outside the borders of the Cape Colony. Klaarwater was home to a community of relatively prosperous “Bastards,”¹ who were of mixed European, indigenous Khoisan and slave ancestry. They were given the name “Bastard” in the eighteenth-century by the Dutch settlers, as they were often the offspring of unrecognized unions between European men and Khoisan or slave women.² To some extent, they had adopted this name for themselves, despite its negative meaning. The community at Klaarwater numbered around 1,266 people,³ but in the vicinity there were many San, Tswana and Kora who lived under their protection and were linked to their community in varying ways. Campbell observed that some of these “Bastards” “dressed much like the common people in England.”⁴ They also attended Church and their children went to school – Campbell observed some 210 children at the local school. They were mostly a pastoral people, with large herds of livestock, in particular cattle, but some also cultivated their land.⁵ Others joined nomadic groups of hunters and bandits. From what Campbell heard, these “Bastards” were the object of some prejudice from the white settlers of the Cape Colony. He heard one of their leaders, Adam Kok II, tell how he and some of his people had been “exceedingly maltreated by boors and others near Tulbach,” in the Colony.⁶ Campbell helped them establish basic laws and encouraged them to change their name, given the bad connotations carried by the word Bastard in

¹ Although the name “Bastard” is somewhat problematic, due to its rather negative connotations and uncertainty whether they self-identified with that name or not, I use it throughout the paper because the name did refer to a particular group of people apart from others in the contemporary sources.

² John Mackenzie, *Ten Years North of the Orange River: A Story of Everyday Life and Work Among the South African Tribes, from 1859-1869* (London: Frank Cass and Company Limited, 1971), 56.

³ J.S. Marais, *The Cape Coloured People, 1652-1937* (Johannesburg: Witwatersrand University Press, 1957), 36.

⁴ John Campbell, *Travels in South Africa* (Cape Town: C. Struik, 1974), 164.

⁵ Campbell, *Travels*, 257.

⁶ Campbell, *Travels*, 209.

both English and Dutch. After some consultation among themselves, the “Bastards” of Klaarwater settled on the name Griqua.⁷ The name is derived that of an ancestral chieftain of the Charigurigua Khoikhoi tribe, Griqua, from whom many of them claimed descent.⁸ From that time on, Klaarwater was known as Griquatown. The change in name helped solidify their trajectory as a distinct group in South Africa – they no longer belonged to the category of “Bastard” that signified mixed-race people in general.

Before European settlement, Southern Africa was inhabited by a myriad of groups, including the pastoral Khoikhoi, concentrated in what is today the Western Cape, the hunter-gather San, found throughout the region, and more populous agriculturalist/pastoralist black African nations, like the Nguni, Sotho, and Tswana, found along the eastern coast and in the interior. There was some mixture between these groups, as they interacted. The Geziqua, a mixture of Khoikhoi and Tswana, existed in the interior, and they probably acted as middlemen in the trade between the KhoiKhoi and Tswana.⁹ This history of mixture along cultural frontiers would continue with the arrival of a new group of people in Southern Africa, the European settlers, who would dramatically impact the history of the region.

In 1652, the Dutch established a replenishment station at the Cape of Good Hope for ships sailing between the Netherlands and the Dutch East India Company’s ports in the East Indies. At the Cape, the Dutch settlers came into contact with the indigenous Khoikhoi who lived in the area. Initially, the Dutch traded European goods for the livestock of the pastoral Khoi, because they wanted a supply of meat for the passing ships

⁷ Campbell, *Travels*, 252.

⁸ Mostert, *Frontiers: the Epic of South Africa’s Creation and the Tragedy of the Xhosa People* (New York: Knopf, 1992), 421.

⁹ Emile Boonzaier et al., *The Cape Herders: A History of the Khoikhoi of Southern Africa*, (Athens: Ohio University Press, 1996), 69.

as well as for the company employees at Cape Town. But after company employees started farming, the Khoi gradually lost their importance as trading partners. The Khoi were now valued only for their labour and land, which the Dutch coveted – as a result, relations between the settlers and Khoi deteriorated as the settlers started appropriating both. Farmers on the frontier mainly relied on the Khoi for labour, in part because they were available, having been dispossessed, and in part because they were already experienced in working with livestock.¹⁰ This spelled an end to the independent Khoi societies of the Western Cape.¹¹ At the same time, the Company decided that they would import slave labour rather than white European labour to produce food for the passing ships, because they did not want to promote extensive white settlement of the region, which would be costly for the Company in terms of administration.¹² Soon after the establishment of Cape Town, slaves were being imported from Indo-Malaysia, Mozambique, Madagascar, and West Africa to work on the Dutch farms or as artisans in the more urban areas.¹³ The colony developed a racially stratified society, with white settlers at the top and non-white labourers – some who were slaves, others who were free – at the bottom. Non-whites had difficulty breaking down “the correlation between status and colour,”¹⁴ although racial lines were not yet as fixed as they would become during the nineteenth-century.

There existed some fluidity between the races in the earlier years of white settlement, especially in the frontier regions. Because the early Dutch settlement had a

¹⁰ Hermann Giliomee, *The Afrikaners: Biography of a People*, (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2009), 60.

¹¹ Robert Ross, *Adam Kok's Griquas* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1976), 12.

¹² Giliomee, *The Afrikaners*, 13.

¹³ Giliomee, *The Afrikaners*, 12.

¹⁴ Giliomee, *The Afrikaners*, 40.

great gender imbalance among the European population, with many more European men than European women, some settlers looked elsewhere for partners.¹⁵ Relationships between Europeans, imported slaves, and Khoi produced a diverse mixed-race population. The trekboers on the frontiers of white settlement tended to take Khoi women, because imported slaves were rare in the more rural areas further in the interior.¹⁶ While the Griquas were predominantly of these Khoi and white liaisons, they had significant additions from other ethnic groups present in the region.¹⁷ In general, marriage was not common between the European fathers and Khoi mothers of mixed-race children – thus these children were called “Bastards” by the Dutch. Christianization of these Khoi and mixed-race children was limited.¹⁸ But it did occur. The more Europeanized “Bastards” probably emerged from longer-lasting relationships between European men and Khoi women, as these mixed-race children were raised with Dutch names, speaking the Dutch language, and even sometimes practising the Christian religion.¹⁹ Still, very few Khoi/European unions were registered by the church or the state.²⁰ As the proportion of European women in the colony increased, mixed-race couples became fewer and much less accepted by society, although such relationships had never really been encouraged. Accordingly, a Boer who took a Khoi woman as his wife “lost caste among his own people” and his children could not “hope to join Boer society.”²¹ In 1813, John Campbell encountered a white man who had left the colony for Griqualand West because his

¹⁵ Timothy Keegan, *Colonial South Africa and the Origins of the Racial Order*. (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1996), 26.

¹⁶ Keegan, *Colonial South Africa*, 26.

¹⁷ Alan G. Morris, “The Griqua and the Khoikhoi: Biology, Ethnicity and the Construction of Identity,” *Kronos* no. 24 (November 1997): 113, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/41056392>.

¹⁸ Keegan, *Colonial South Africa*, 21.

¹⁹ Keegan, *Colonial South Africa*, 31.

²⁰ Marais, *Cape Coloured People*, 10.

²¹ Marais, *Cape Coloured People*, 11.

community did not accept his love for a black woman. He was now living among the Griquas at the kraal of one of the Koks.²² His children, especially if they were darker of skin, would have an easier time passing into mixed-race communities than European settler communities.

The children of European men and Khoisan women tended to coalesce in communities of "Bastards," as they were rarely fully accepted into white society.²³ But their position in settler society was markedly ambiguous, and they were able to access some of the privileges of burgher status. "Bastards," usually those who were baptised, tended to have easy access to land, "so long as this did not cause serious inconvenience to the white farmers."²⁴ Thus, in the more remote parts of the colony, "Bastards" were able to register farms.²⁵ They could be found living near, or even among, frontier farmers.²⁶ But, according to J.M. Orpen, an Irishman who worked as an official for both the colonial and Orange Free State governments at different points in his career, they were "disliked as neighbours" by Europeans.²⁷ As the eighteenth-century progressed, the mixed-race people, especially those of European and Khoisan heritage, were gradually becoming a separate group of people, tending to marry among themselves.²⁸ Mixed-race children, often born out of wedlock, found themselves unable to compete with settlers of supposedly fully white heritage. When necessary, white children, with their better claims to legitimacy, could rely on this privilege to the loss of their mixed-race neighbours. For

²² Campbell, *Travels*, 285.

²³ Gavin Lewis, *Between the Wire and the Wall: A History of South African 'Coloured' Politics* (Cape Town: David Philip, 1987), 8.

²⁴ Boonzaier et al., *The Cape Herders*, 86.

²⁵ Boonzaier et al., *The Cape Herders*, 86.

²⁶ Giliomee, *The Afrikaners*, 40.

²⁷ J.M. Orpen, *Reminiscences of life in South Africa from 1846 to the present day* (Cape Town: C. Struik, 1964), 107.

²⁸ Marais, *Cape Coloured People*, 11.

example, in land claim disputes, white settlers usually had stronger cases, with better access and relations with the officials in charge of resolving such disputes.²⁹ The supply of land in the colony was dwindling, and the "Bastards" saw their own access to land decreasing, as white settlement encroached upon them. As the population of mixed-race people grew, through miscegenation and increased intermarriage among themselves, "they were driven back into the interior, where they formed numerous and independent communities with chiefs of their own."³⁰ No doubt, the "Bastards" were motivated to leave the colony by the increasing prejudice they experienced in a white-dominated society.

During the latter half of the eighteenth-century, the "Bastards" were seeing their access to burgher rights deteriorating across the board, as they were increasingly seen as a separate and inferior group by the whites – they were "Bastards," not burghers.³¹ By the 1770s, wars between the Dutch and Khoisan had increased due to the expanding European frontier continuing to encroach upon their land. Loyal Khoi and mixed-race people suffered from increasing prejudice as the violent clashes with Khoisan increased.³² They were "singled out as a specific category of subjects liable for military service" in the wars with the San.³³ People of Khoisan descent, including the "Bastards," found that in the new white-dominated Dutch society, they were reduced to inferiors, dependent labourers without much access to land and with limited freedom. Although the "Bastards" were somewhat privileged in comparison to people of fully Khoisan descent, they were not given the same rights as white burghers and suffered from increasing discrimination.

²⁹ Giliomee, *The Afrikaners*, 40.

³⁰ Eugene Casalis, *My Life in Basutoland* (Cape Town: C. Struik, 1971), 135.

³¹ Keegan, *Colonial South Africa*, 31.

³² Keegan, *Colonial South Africa*, 32.

³³ Keegan, *Colonial South Africa*, 31.

Some stayed within the colony, and remained as an underclass in the white-dominated society. For the wealthier “Bastards,” this must have been untenable, so they left, unhappy that they could not independently access land or capital.³⁴ Across the frontier, greater opportunities, and independence, beckoned.

Throughout the eighteenth-century, there were migrations by the original inhabitants of the Cape Colony from the centres of white power. Bands of Khoi were leaving the colony by the middle of the century, going north or further into the interior.³⁵ Fugitive slaves, European deserters and outlaws were also moving into the interior at this time, seeking freedom from the constraints of colonial society.³⁶ Around that time, some “Bastards” moved north and east into the remoter parts of the colony. But the white settlers were soon expanding into those areas, so eventually, the “Bastards” moved clean out of the colony.³⁷ Many of those leaving, including the “Bastards” who would become the Griquas, took with them European clothing, guns and horses. Some took advantage of the relatively lawless frontier regions and joined multi-ethnic commandos that made a living through violent raiding of more vulnerable groups.³⁸ But there were those mixed-race people, like most of the Griquas, “who, escaping from the increasingly exclusive colonial society, wanted to recreate a stable economic and social situation with them in the centre of the political and socio-economic system.”³⁹ Although they left, the “Bastards” remained inextricably linked to the colony.

³⁴ Lewis, *Between the Wire and the Wall*, 8.

³⁵ Orpen, *Reminiscences*, 107.

³⁶ Michal Lesniewski, “Guns and Horses, c 1750 to c 1850: Korana – People or Raiding Hordes?” *Werkwinkel* 5, no.2 (2010): 13, http://ifa.amu.edu.pl/werkwinkel/W_5-2/3_lesniewski.pdf.

³⁷ Robert Ross, *Adam Kok's Griquas*, 13.

³⁸ Lesniewski, “Guns and Horses,” 13.

³⁹ Lesniewski, “Guns and Horses,” 14.

The Griquas themselves can be traced back to a group of "Bastards" from the Khamiesberg area, on the Northwest coast of what is today South Africa.⁴⁰ Adam Kok I, the first in a line of prominent Griqua leaders, was probably leader of this group. Kok is said to be a freed slave, with at least one European ancestor.⁴¹ He was granted some burgher rights, including the right to graze his considerable flocks of livestock on a farm in the colony in the 1750s. At some point he moved to Khamiesberg, where a number of "Bastards" and Khoi joined his party, no doubt due to his wealth in livestock. Some of the Khoi who joined him were from the Chariguriqua group, from which the name Griqua was apparently derived.⁴² From there, he moved with his followers to the Orange River around 1780.⁴³ Kok "received a staff of office from the Government of the Dutch East India Company which conferred him the Captaincy over his dependents." This recognized his authority over his dependents and apparently acknowledged him as an indigenous ally of the company.⁴⁴ This designation probably gave him the burgher rights he had, which were probably not the same as those of white burghers. In 1795, when Adam was old and no longer able, he transferred the office to Cornelis, his son.⁴⁵ Subsequent Griqua leaders were always called by the title of Captain. Griqua leaders also emerged from other families. Barend Barends, another prominent and wealthy "Bastard" who lived along the Orange River at that time with his family and dependents, became a Captain in Griqualand West.⁴⁶ These wealthy "Bastard" families were able to attract many dependents, giving them the ability to monopolize political power. By the turn of

⁴⁰ Keegan, *Colonial South Africa*, 170.

⁴¹ Boonzaier, *The Cape Herders*, 85.

⁴² Marais, *Cape Coloured People*, 32.

⁴³ Boonzaier, *The Cape Herders*, 85-86.

⁴⁴ Boonzaier, *The Cape Herders*, 85.

⁴⁵ Marais, *Cape Coloured People*, 32.

⁴⁶ Marais, *Cape Coloured People*, 33.

the century, the Kok family and their followers were already nearing the area that would become Griqualand West.⁴⁷ By the early nineteenth-century, a community of mixed-race people, Khoisan, Africans, and even Europeans, engaged in hunting, trading, and herding, had established itself at Klaarwater, which became known as Griquatown in 1813.⁴⁸

Arising beyond the borders of the colony were “independent political communities of Khoi-Bastaard origin,”⁴⁹ the seeds of the Griqua Captaincies. The rise of the Griqua polities may be seen as part of the rise of indigenous and settler states throughout the region during the nineteenth-century. Although they had left the colony, the Griquas were still connected to it through trade. Through trade they acquired the European goods that were important to their lifestyle, such as horses, guns, and gunpowder.⁵⁰ Their access to weapons was crucial to their survival: they needed guns for the hunt, which provided them with food and trade goods, and they needed weapons to protect their communities and assert their authority in the region, which was plagued by lawless bandit commandos. It was sometimes hard for the Griquas to access the necessary supplies, as the colonial government controlled the sale of guns and powder, and limited sales to non-whites. But it was hard for the government to impose its authority in the frontier regions, far away from the colonial centres of power, and an illegal arms trade arose. The Griquas often bought their weapons with the help of white trading partners who lived in the colony.⁵¹ Their access to and use of horses and guns enabled the Griquas to establish their authority and keep their communities secure in the rough-and-tumble frontier region.

⁴⁷ Robert Ross, *Adam Kok's Griquas*, 14.

⁴⁸ Lewis, *Between the Wire and the Wall*, 9.

⁴⁹ Keegan, *Colonial South Africa*, 32.

⁵⁰ Keegan, *Colonial South Africa*, 170.

⁵¹ Keegan, *Colonial South Africa*, 171.

As the Griquas moved further from the loci of colonial and settler power, they took advantage of the opportunities that came their way. The areas these emigrants trekked to were already inhabited by others, such as independent Khoi bands and settled Africans like the Tswana. From the 1780s and onwards, the Griquas often acted as middlemen between these groups and the colony, connecting the economies of the Tswana and the colony. They traded cattle and products of the hunt, like ivory and karosses,⁵² much of which they procured from the Tswana, with the Colony. The Griquas themselves participated in hunting activities. Well into the mid-nineteenth-century, the Griquas travelled north, deep into the interior, on ivory-hunting expeditions. Much of the wealth of the powerful Griqua families was generated through these trading activities.⁵³ Because of their trading relationship, the Griquas were involved in the internal affairs of the Tswana chiefdoms. But as the Griquas became more settled in the fixed communities, they became less involved as their trading activities became less important and as they started relying more on other commercial pursuits for their livelihoods.⁵⁴

There was, and still is, much variability racially among the Griquas, who cannot be called as an ethnically homogenous group. Traditionally, the Griquas have been seen as being of mostly European and Khoi ancestry. But in actuality, the genetic mix was more wide-ranging. While there were many Griquas had European ancestry and were as light-skinned as the Boers,⁵⁵ others may have had no European ancestry. Andries Waterboer, Captain of the Griquatown Griquas from 1820 to 1854, for example, was said

⁵² Robert Ross, *Adam Kok's Griquas*, 70.

⁵³ Keegan, *Colonial South Africa*, 171.

⁵⁴ Robert Ross, *Adam Kok's Griquas*, 71.

⁵⁵ Mostert, *Frontiers*, 809.

by some of his contemporaries to be of "pure Bushman heritage."⁵⁶ He was able to reach an important position in the community, suggesting that racial and social lines within the Griqua community were fluid to some extent – although he sometimes struggled to impose his authority and was rejected by some Griquas, though this may have been due to political reasons. Indeed, the best way for outsiders like him to be absorbed fully into the community was by joining the school – before becoming Captain, Waterboer had been a schoolmaster.⁵⁷ The Griquas have been proven to be no different than the wider "coloured" population of South Africa, with less European contributions to the gene pool than previously thought.⁵⁸ Along the northern frontier of the colony, there existed many fluid groups that are likewise hard to categorize along ethnic lines. Their identities were really shaped by their common history, suggesting the importance of shared experiences in the creation of different group identities in southern Africa.

The Griquas were defined very much by their political affiliation. Like many other indigenous communities, Griqua settlements were not fixed in their population dynamics and their size and composition depended on the political strength of their leaders.⁵⁹ Their lack of a fixed group definition allowed Griqua communities to absorb, to differing degrees, people from a variety of backgrounds. In the first half of the nineteenth-century, their numbers grew as they were joined by escaped slaves and "coloured" deserters, who did not have permission to leave the colony.⁶⁰ After the emancipation of the slaves in 1838, some ex-slaves left the colony to join the Griqua

⁵⁶ Orpen, *Reminiscences*, 11.

⁵⁷ Morris, "The Griqua and the Khoikhoi," 115.

⁵⁸ Morris, "The Griqua and the Khoikhoi," 112.

⁵⁹ Morris, "The Griqua and the Khoikhoi," 109.

⁶⁰ Orpen, *Reminiscences*, 108.

communities.⁶¹ Even though the Griquas included people from a wide range of backgrounds, their polities were still dominated by the old, wealthy Khoi/"Bastard" families.

In the first few decades of the nineteenth-century, many of the Griquas settled down in communities, although there were those who chose to join bands of marauders that made a living through hunting and robbing. Like many places in the dry interior of Southern Africa, the limited supply of water in Griqualand West limited opportunities for large, closely settled towns. As a result, most Griquas lived outside of their town on farms.⁶² They congregated in the towns during important occasions, like church services, elections, or during outbreaks of hostility. Because church services always drew a large gathering, the Raad, or government council, met on the next day, taking advantage of the presence of everyone in town. A similar pattern was found in small Dutch farming towns throughout the region, where Boers also gathered in town for major community events.⁶³ Like their Khoi ancestors and their present-day Boer neighbours, the Griquas' lifestyle centred upon raising livestock, most importantly cattle. They also bred horses and worked as transport-drivers.⁶⁴ Later, in the 1840s and 1850s, the Griquas started farming with merino sheep, as wool became a profitable commodity at that time for farmers in southern Africa. The Griquas of Philippolis experienced a period of prosperity between 1855 and 1860, largely due to their ability to prosper from wool sales.⁶⁵ Some Griquas even grew wheat, though their cultivation of wheat was limited by their dry environment,

⁶¹ Keegan, *Colonial South Africa*, 123.

⁶² Robert Ross, *Adam Kok's Griquas*, 44.

⁶³ Robert Ross, *Adam Kok's Griquas*, 41.

⁶⁴ Robert Ross, *Adam Kok's Griquas*, 73.

⁶⁵ Robert Ross, *Adam Kok's Griquas*, 76.

which was more suited to raising livestock.⁶⁶ This peak period of prosperity enabled the Griquas of Philippolis to build houses, a new church and school, and buy more European products than ever before from colonial merchants.

While some Griquas certainly sought to emulate the lifestyles of colonial farmers, indigenous influences permeated Griqua culture. They lived a curious mix of European and indigenous cultures, reflecting their mixed-race heritage. When he was visiting Griquatown in 1813, John Campbell observed that the Griquas attended Church, spoke Dutch and, if they had the means, sent their children to school, dressed in European clothing, and lived in European houses with small gardens.⁶⁷ Like the Boers, they enjoyed European goods, like sugar, tea and coffee, and traded livestock and other animal products with the Colony to obtain these.⁶⁸ While there were Griquas who wore mostly European clothes, well into the nineteenth-century, many of the Griquas wore animal-skin clothing. Some Griqua women and men wore strings of beads round their necks,⁶⁹ most probably influenced by indigenous styles of dress and ornamentation.

The degree to which the Griquas adopted European culture often correlated with their socioeconomic status, as those with wealth had more power to acquire the materials of European culture. In addition to the wealthy Griquas, who lived like relatively prosperous Europeans, there was also an underclass of Griqua, who were poor, destitute and did not own any land.⁷⁰ These Griquas probably relied on the patronage of wealthier Griquas and could not afford the trappings of European culture. While wealthier Griquas were building clay on timber homes, the poorer Griquas were living in traditional

⁶⁶ Robert Ross, *Adam Kok's Griquas*, 43.

⁶⁷ Campbell, *Travels*, 163.

⁶⁸ Robert Ross, *Adam Kok's Griquas*, 70.

⁶⁹ Robert Ross, *Adam Kok's Griquas*, 43.

⁷⁰ Robert Ross, *Adam Kok's Griquas*, 79.

Khoisan "bee-hive" huts.⁷¹ It was probably these Griquas who were still wearing animal-skin clothing well into the nineteenth-century, as such clothing was more affordable, given the abundance of game in the frontier regions. Again it was probably mostly the wealthier Griquas who wore European clothing. Some of the Griqua who were poorer and lived more like the Khoi may well have been the descendants of those Khoi who joined Adam Kok I's party as dependents. It is fair to assume that they were poorer than the wealthy "Bastards" whom they joined, and, because they would have been less able to afford it, they probably adopted European ways to a lesser extent. Interestingly, there were poor Boers on the frontier who lived like the Khoi, living in huts made from reed mats,⁷² and wearing animal-skin clothing.⁷³ The materials needed for this lifestyle was more accessible and suited to their lifestyles than European alternatives.⁷⁴ But many Griquas sought to emulate the colonial Boers, as "the colony provided the reference group on which they based their aspirations."⁷⁵ Within the settled communities, living in the style of well off colonial Boers was linked with high status. No doubt because they were far from the markets and artisans of the colony, it was expensive to live in the colonial style, so the wealthiest Griquas were probably the ones who could most afford the trappings of European material culture. As colonial settlement, and the colonial market, extended further into the interior during the nineteenth-century, it probably became easier for the Griquas, and frontier Boers, to acquire European goods.

Christianity was from the beginning an important aspect of Griqua identity and society. It remains so to this very day. Missionaries were present at the "Bastard"

⁷¹ Robert Ross, *Adam Kok's Griquas*, 42.

⁷² Mackenzie, *Ten Years*, 14.

⁷³ Mackenzie, *Ten Years*, 502.

⁷⁴ Boonzaier et al., *The Cape Herders*, 37.

⁷⁵ Robert Ross, *Adam Kok's Griquas*, 36.

settlement in Klaarwater, from the moment they chose to settle there in 1805. The Griqua Captain Barend Barends invited missionaries from LMS to join him when he was living with his family and followers along the Orange River. In 1801, the missionaries William Anderson and Cornelius Kramer began work among his followers, as well as those of the Koks. Thus, the first mission beyond the Orange River was established.⁷⁶ Some Griquas may already have been Christians before the coming of the missionaries, given the description of baptized, landowning "Bastards" living near the Orange River – a group from which at least part of the Griquas were drawn.⁷⁷ It is difficult, however, to gauge to what extent they had been Christianized before the missionaries. The conversion of the Griquas was probably facilitated by the presence of prominent early Khoi converts from the Colony, who went to assist the mission effort in the newly settled Klaarwater in 1806.⁷⁸ Undoubtedly, their part-European background and incorporation of some aspects of European culture must have made it easier for the Griquas to accept the Christian faith. Also, the dissolution of Khoi society must have made Khoi, and "Bastards," more susceptible to conversion. Indeed, the missionaries found the Khoi, who had been in early contact with the Europeans and were subsumed into their society, easier to deal with than the San.⁷⁹

By all accounts, the Griquas became avid church-goers. When John Campbell visited Klaarwater in 1813, he estimated that between two and three hundred Griqua and their dependents attended the morning service at the church.⁸⁰ He also witnessed Griquas

⁷⁶ Marais, *Cape Coloured People*, 33.

⁷⁷ Boonzaier et al., *The Cape Herders*, 86.

⁷⁸ Sales, *Mission Stations and the Coloured Communities of the Eastern Cape, 1800-1852* (Cape Town: Balkema, 1975), 13.

⁷⁹ Sales, *Mission Stations*, 13.

⁸⁰ Campbell, *Travels*, 162.

from Klaarwater reading the scripture to a nearby village of “Hottentots, Bushmen and Bootchuanas.”⁸¹ Indeed, some Griquas were so devout, that the missionaries had no problem in sending them to preach in outlying communities. Interestingly, Adam Kok III and many of his Raad councillors were not yet members of the Church by 1838, yet they encouraged Christian practices like monogamy and recognized the importance of the Church.⁸² It is unclear whether or not they were Christian. Their community of Philippolis was especially devout. By 1855, the Philippolis church congregation had built a new Church and become independent of LMS, funded by the Griquas themselves. Their self-funded congregation was a great point of pride in their community.⁸³ Even after their decline, the Griquas were respected as being especially religious,⁸⁴ and Christianity, as shaped by the Griquas themselves, remained a central core of Griqua identity in the twentieth-century.

The role of the missionaries was not just limited to spreading religion. The missionaries also functioned as go-betweens, avenues of communication between the colonial government and the Griquas.⁸⁵ They acted as white representatives for the Griquas in racially stratified colonial society – by having a white representative, it gave them a stronger voice in the white world of the settlers and colonial government. At the same time, the missionaries also functioned as representatives of the colonial government to the Griquas, creating some strong tensions over time. In addition, the missionaries brought European-style education to the Griquas. Their instruction helped create a new literate class of Griqua who were not as dependent on connections to the wealthy families

⁸¹ Campbell, *Travels*, 244.

⁸² Robert Ross, *Adam Kok's Griquas*, 41.

⁸³ Robert Ross, *Adam Kok's Griquas*, 76.

⁸⁴ Marais, *Cape Coloured People*, 73.

⁸⁵ Robert Ross, *Adam Kok's Griquas*, 45.

for status, like Andries Waterboer.⁸⁶ The educated Griquas proved useful for governments of the Griqua,⁸⁷ giving them access to insiders with the literacy skills previously held by missionary outsiders.

The work of missionaries in southern Africa was tied up with the dual mission of bringing European civilization to the indigenous "heathens." Indeed, the goal of the missionaries was to have the Griquas become a settled, agricultural people, who live according to Christian and European principles.⁸⁸ The missionaries encouraged the Griquas to build more permanent homes to discourage them from living mobile lives, like the bands of Khoi, "Bastards" and others who roamed the frontier, living off hunting and raiding. The missionaries saw this lifestyle as less conducive to creating the kind of civilized Christians they wanted the Griquas to become.⁸⁹ Also, they encouraged the Griqua to practice monogamous marriage and abstain from liquor. No doubt, their influence had some effect, because the Griqua governments banned the sale of liquor in their territory and even encouraged their Griqua subjects to practise monogamy.⁹⁰ The missionary sources tend to overemphasize the "civilizing" influence of their work. This is understandable, because if their efforts to spread the Gospel and European civilization were shown to be successful, it could only help their fundraising efforts in Britain. For example, John Philip, missionary and later superintendent of LMS stations in South Africa, portrayed the Griquas before missionary contact as unclean savages with bad clothing.⁹¹ But accounts from other travelers describe communities of "Bastards" who

⁸⁶ Keegan, *Colonial South Africa*, 174.

⁸⁷ Robert Ross, *Adam Kok's Griquas*, 17.

⁸⁸ Robert Ross, *Adam Kok's Griquas*, 45.

⁸⁹ Campbell, *Travels*, 263.

⁹⁰ Robert Ross, *Adam Kok's Griquas*, 41.

⁹¹ Marais, *Cape Coloured People*, 33.

were already quite “civilized,” in European terms. In the late 1770s, a European colonel found a community of “Bastards” living on the banks of the Orange River who wore European clothing and were Christian.⁹² Those who migrated from the Colony to the frontier regions during the eighteenth-century, including the “Bastards,” usually brought some aspects of European material culture with them – especially clothing, guns and horses.⁹³ As noted earlier, there were many other social and economic factors at play when considering the adoption of European material culture and lifestyles by the “Bastard,” and later the Griquas. Many Griquas simply sought to emulate colonial society. The adoption of European housing, clothing, agriculture and religion over time may have been part of the efforts of Griquas to seek respectability and “perhaps incorporation into the white ruling group.”⁹⁴

The relationship between the Griquas and their missionaries was not without its problems – especially as the missionaries became involved in the politics of the Griqua. At Philippolis, seven different missionaries came and went between 1825 and 1850, demonstrating the instability of the mission’s relationship with the Griquas.⁹⁵ Furthermore, some Griquas did not like the strong influence the missionaries and colonial government had over some of their leaders, like Captain Andries Waterboer. When he assumed power in Griquatown in 1820, a number of Griquas left, including Adam Kok II and Barend Barends – although J.M. Orpen suggests they left in search of better pasture

⁹² Marais, *Cape Coloured People*, 34.

⁹³ Lesniewski, “Guns and Horses,” 13.

⁹⁴ Robert Ross, *Adam Kok’s Griquas*, 1.

⁹⁵ Robert Ross, *Adam Kok’s Griquas*, 45.

for their stock, as they possessed substantial herds.⁹⁶ Kok and Barends went with their followers to settle at Campbell and Daniel's Kuil, respectively.

In the frontier regions, where the law of the colonial government was rather weak, some people opted for the lawless life of bandits and cattle-raiders to get by. While many Griqua did, more or less, live the type of settled, Christian lifestyle the missionaries promoted, many others chose to partake in illegal raiding activities, polygamy and heavy drinking.⁹⁷ Some Griquas joined the predatory groups of outlaws that terrorized the frontier region. These groups, many of which had multi-ethnic compositions, attacked the settled Griquas, the missionary station at Kuruman and communities of San, Tswanas and Basothos, helping fuel the instability of the area.⁹⁸ In the 1820s, a group of Griquas, the Bergenaars, revolted against the Captaincy of Andries Waterboer in Griquatown, and formed raiding parties, preying on communities like the other outlaw groups.⁹⁹ Even though he was a supporter of the Griquas, John Philip believed they were all just a step away from becoming a lawless rabble. Likewise, John Mackenzie believed the settled Griquas were only prevented by their Christianity from becoming bandits like the Bergenaars.¹⁰⁰ Because of this fear of nomadic Griqua bandits threatening the colony, Philip encouraged the security of settled Griqua communities from white settlement.¹⁰¹ Settling bandits in communities was seen as a way to reduce this danger – in part, this is why Philip allowed Kok, whom some of the Bergenaars acknowledged as their Captain, to settle at Philippolis in 1826.¹⁰² But some of his followers were quick to return to

⁹⁶ Orpen, *Reminiscences*, 116.

⁹⁷ Robert Ross, *Adam Kok's Griquas*, 19.

⁹⁸ Lesniewski, "Guns and Horses," 22.

⁹⁹ Lesniewski, "Guns and Horses," 22.

¹⁰⁰ Mackenzie, *Ten Years*, 57.

¹⁰¹ Keegan, *Colonial South Africa*, 248.

¹⁰² Orpen, *Reminiscences*, 120.

banditry after settling down. Indeed, as the Griquas of Philippolis saw their land being lost to Boer expansion, some took to "Bergenaar-style raiding." Kok either couldn't prevent them from returning to their illegal activities or tacitly supported these activities, as some continued their marauding.¹⁰³

The Bergenaars may have been more than just bandits, however. They may point to a larger division that existed among the Griquas – those aligned with the missionaries and colonial government to some extent, the "mission faction," and those who sought more independence from them. Robert Ross saw Griqua society as divided between those who wanted to live settled, Christian lives and those who wanted to live more nomadic, independent lives.¹⁰⁴ Already, before the Bergenaars, some Griquas had rebelled against Adam Kok II and Barend Barends, partly because they co-operated with Campbell and the missionaries to establish laws for their community in 1813.¹⁰⁵ Waterboer, who came in regular conflict with the Bergenaars and others in his attempts to impose law and order over his territory, was more trusted and better liked by the missionaries and colonial government. The Bergenaars, as well as Barend Barends and Adam Kok, were not comfortable with the infringement of their independence by the colonial government. Barend Barends and Adam Kok co-operated with the Bergenaars for some time, as they were not pleased with the position achieved by Waterboer, whom they saw as a "colonial upstart."¹⁰⁶ It is not surprising that some Griquas, like the Bergenaars, were opposed to colonial, white, missionary influence given the prejudice they and their ancestors faced in the society of the Cape Colony. Visiting Philippolis in the 1830s, the Basotho missionary

¹⁰³ Orpen, *Reminiscences*, 122.

¹⁰⁴ Robert Ross, *Adam Kok's Griquas*, 19.

¹⁰⁵ Mostert, *Frontiers*, 422.

¹⁰⁶ Keegan, *Colonial South Africa*, 174-175.

Eugene Casalis noted that the Griquas possessed a "cordial hate" for the whites, given white prejudice towards them despite their part-white heritage.¹⁰⁷

Griqua political organization also exhibited a mix of indigenous and European influences. In the early years, the Griquas were divided into "large followings of associated families, retainers and clients in loose alliances without territorial definition."¹⁰⁸ In a Khoi village, the highest authority was the hereditary headman, often the wealthiest stockowner – similarly, the wealthiest Griqua stockowners, like the Koks, usually wielded political power. Like Khoi villages and clans, the Griqua communities were organized around kinship, while also absorbing and including some people from other clans, dependants and servants. Kinship has always been an important factor in Griqua politics. In Griqualand West, family and close friends of the Captains were delegated authority.¹⁰⁹ The Captaincies were also basically hereditary, like Khoi chieftaincies. For example, Andries Waterboer's title passed to his son, Nicholas, and likewise, Adam Kok's title was passed down through multiple generations of his family. The Griqua Captain occupied "a position intermediated between that of a Bantu chief and the President of a democratic republic."¹¹⁰ He was like an elected, limited monarch – he held executive and judicial power, but was answerable to the other powerful community leaders, who made up the Raad, or council. The Captain needed their approval to rule and to carry out important decisions. Indeed, the Raad actually made the majority of decisions.¹¹¹ Interestingly, the chief of a Khoikhoi tribe also wielded considerable authority, but he too was dependent on his tribal council, which consisted of clan

¹⁰⁷ Casalis, *My Life in Basutoland*, 136.

¹⁰⁸ Keegan, *Colonial South Africa*, 171.

¹⁰⁹ Keegan, *Colonial South Africa*, 172.

¹¹⁰ Marais, *Cape Coloured People*, 71.

¹¹¹ Robert Ross, *Adam Kok's Griquas*, 35.

headmen – the wealthy and influential Khoi.¹¹² While most of their leaders seemed to have gained their position through their wealth and status, at least one time, in the case of Andries Waterboer, a poor but educated man was chosen to be Captain by the important men of the community.¹¹³ It is clear that their political organization was heavily influenced by their Khoi heritage.

As they settled in Griqualand West, Griqua political organization evolved to include laws and more formal structures, influenced by more European principles of governance and encouraged by the missionaries. When he visited the Griquas in 1813, John Campbell helped draw up a set of laws for Griquatown. The Captain and the Raad, or council, were officially established as the highest executive and judicial authority.¹¹⁴ Over the years, the Griquas would continue to create laws and constitutions to govern their polities. Griqua government institutions were influenced by those of the colonial government and emigrant Boers. The Raad was similar to the colonial Board of Heemraden and the Volksraad councils of the emigrant Boers.

Administratively, Griqua governments were run along European lines. The government funded itself through taxation, court fees, fines, and trading licences.¹¹⁵ Similar to local governance in the colonial districts, Griqua government authority was supported by a number of elected local officials like the veldkornets and magistrates.¹¹⁶ The Griquas had an election system, but it was weak, and the Captain, who had executive power, still dominated the politics of the state.¹¹⁷ When it came to land ownership, the

¹¹² Boonzaier et al., *The Cape Herders*, 40.

¹¹³ Robert Moffat to Mr. J. Melville, January 1821, in I. Schapera, ed., *Apprenticeship at Kuruman, being the journals and letters of Robert and Mary Moffat, 1820-1828* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1951), 11-12.

¹¹⁴ Marais, *Cape Coloured People*, 62.

¹¹⁵ Marais, *Cape Coloured People*, 68.

¹¹⁶ Robert Ross, *Adam Kok's Griquas*, 113-117.

¹¹⁷ Robert Ross, *Adam Kok's Griquas*, 113-117.

Griquas of Griquatown followed a pattern similar to those of African chieftaincies, in which the chief held the land in common and any produce belonged to those who worked the land. However, the Philippolis Griquas utilized more European-style individual land tenure.¹¹⁸ Like their culture and lifestyle, Griqua governance was a hybrid of indigenous and European characteristics.

Because of their part-European heritage and European influenced culture, Griquas perceived themselves, and were perceived by many whites, as being superior to those perceived as indigenous, in culture and heritage. On a visit to Philippolis in the 1830s, the missionary Eugene Casalis noted with some sadness that the Griqua "made too much of the white blood in their veins and showed themselves haughty and tyrannical towards blacks." John Mackenzie, when he visited the Griquas in Philippolis in 1859, wrote that he was "surprised at the intelligence and apparent respectability of many of the people."¹¹⁹ John Philip was a great supporter of the Griquas, seeing them as an example of how Christianity and European civilization could uplift African peoples.¹²⁰ Despite this, the Griquas were rarely seen as equals by their white settler neighbours. As John Mackenzie put it during that visit to Philippolis in 1859, "they might be good, intelligent and wealthy; but they were only bastards and Hottentots after all."¹²¹

Throughout the nineteenth-century, the Griquas ruled over various different other indigenous people, including KhoiKhoi, San hunter-gatherers and black Africans. In Griqualand West, Griqua preachers sent to outlying communities by the missionaries did

¹¹⁸ Marais, *Cape Coloured People*, 43.

¹¹⁹ Mackenzie, *Ten Years*, 59.

¹²⁰ Andrew Ross, *John Philip (1775-1851): Missions, Race and Politics in South Africa* (Aberdeen: Aberdeen University Press, 1986), 27.

¹²¹ Mackenzie, *Ten Years*, 64.

much to bring local Khoisan and Tswana under the sway of the Captains.¹²² These groups had various different patron-client relationships with the Griqua – they lived alongside the Griquas as dependents, clients, tenants, and subjects. For example, in 1813, John Campbell came across a San kraal near Klaarwater, where the inhabitants looked after the cattle of a Griqua Captain, in return for milk.¹²³ There also lived many Khoikhoi, who were dependents of the Griquas, as well as a considerable number of Tswana, over whom the Griqua had “a sort of protectorate.”¹²⁴ In their treatment of San hunter-gatherers, the Griqua were not much better than the Dutch settlers – meaning they did not put much value on the life of a San person. Pastoralists, including the Khoikhoi, Boers and Griquas, often had trouble with the local San, who, being hunter-gatherers with increasingly less land to subsist from, targeted the easily available herds of pastoral, settled people. At Griquatown and Philippolis, San lived under the authority of the Griquas. Visiting Griqualand West in the 1810s, Andries Stockenstrom, a colonial official from a military background who later became an important figure on the colonial frontier, found among the Griqua, and some of their African neighbours, “a horrible animosity towards the Bosjesmen.”¹²⁵ John Philip hoped Adam Kok would protect the San of Philippolis, which had first been established as a mission station for them, but they were either turned into labourers or expelled soon after the Griquas moved there.¹²⁶ Stockenstrom heard reports from farmers living in the Phillipolis area that Griquas were attacking local San, including some under missionary protection, although the farmers, some coveting Griqua land, may have had

¹²² Robert Ross, *Adam Kok's Griquas*, 15.

¹²³ Campbell, *Travels*, 162.

¹²⁴ Marais, *Cape Coloured People*, 42.

¹²⁵ Andries Stockenstrom, *The Autobiography of the Late Sir Andries Stockenstrom* (Cape Town: C. Struik, 1964), 189.

¹²⁶ Robert Ross, *Adam Kok's Griquas*, 24.

ulterior motives in reporting these instances, as violence against San was endemic in white colonial society. The Waterboer Captains, along with the missionaries, may have created a better polity when it came to the treatment of the San, by removing some of the social barriers.¹²⁷ Perhaps this was due to Adries Waterboer's own San heritage. San living under Andries Waterboer apparently spoke highly of him.¹²⁸ But, by the time Griqualand West was annexed, there were virtually no San left there. Despite their efforts, whether at Griquatown or Philippolis, the missionaries were largely unable to protect the San.¹²⁹

The Griqua had varying relations with Africans, who ranged from being their trading partners to being their subjects. Due to their trade relations with the tribes in the region, and their apparent involvement in the politics of those tribes, it is no surprise the Koks were familiar with, and even welcomed guests in the communities of, Tswana chiefs.¹³⁰ For the Tswana, the Griquas were probably important as links to European goods from the colony. Many other Africans lived under the rule of Griqua Captains. During the period of regional disturbance that occurred during the first few decades of the nineteenth-century, described as the "mfecane" by some, numerous communities were dislocated and searching for secure places to settle. The Griquas were a relatively powerful group to settle among, as they possessed guns, horses and strong leaders with some political capital. According to Philip, the Griquas of Griquatown played a key role in the protection of the southern Tswana during those turbulent times.¹³¹ Some of these

¹²⁷ Jan Anthonie Engelbrecht, *The Korana; an account of their customs and their history, with texts* (Cape Town: M. Miller, 1936), 75.

¹²⁸ Orpen, *Reminiscences*, 131.

¹²⁹ Marais, *Cape Coloured People*, 35.

¹³⁰ Campbell, *Travels*, 206.

¹³¹ Andrew Ross, *John Philip*, 168.

African refugees also settled under the Griquas at Philippolis.¹³² It seems that they were accepted by the Griquas, but as an underclass, not as equal members of Griqua society. In Philippolis, for example, African subjects were never fully incorporated as Griqua burghers, and lived there as squatters or labourers.¹³³ Intermarriage between the two groups was rare, partly because of their different cultural backgrounds.¹³⁴ Later, in the 1860s and 1870s when Adam Kok III and his Griquas had moved to Griqualand East, they ruled more Africans chiefdoms than ever before. African subjects of the Griquas lived under their own chiefs and were tried according to their own law and custom in less serious cases.¹³⁵ While Griquas sometimes expressed prejudice towards black Africans, the Griqualand East justice system generally treated all subjects, whether Griqua or African, fairly.¹³⁶ The Africans there paid a hut tax, which made up around 40% of the Griqua government's revenue by 1874.¹³⁷ The Griquas had scuffles with some of their African neighbours, including the Basotho. Sometimes Griqua conflicts with African communities were a result of power struggles, as the Griquas were often trying to assert their dominance over neighbouring indigenous people. Like the other settler and indigenous powers of southern Africa, the Griquas ruled over a variety of subjects and sought to assert their authority over large territories.

The relation between the Griquas and the colonial government of the Cape Colony was not clear-cut and created a lot of tension over time. Initially, it seems that the

¹³² Casalis, *My life in Basutoland*, 136.

¹³³ Robert Ross, *Adam Kok's Griquas*, 27.

¹³⁴ Robert Ross, *Adam Kok's Griquas*, 27.

¹³⁵ Marais, *Cape Coloured People*, 66.

¹³⁶ Robert Ross, *Adam Kok's Griquas*, 120.

¹³⁷ William Beinart, "Settler Accumulation in East Griqualand from the Demise of the Griqua to the Natives Land Act," in *Putting a Plough to the Ground: Accumulation and Dispossession in Rural South Africa, 1850-1930*, ed. William Beinart, Peter Delius, and Stanley Trapido (Johannesburg: Ravan Press, 1986), 259.

government gave the Griquas permission to settle outside the colony under the care of a missionary.¹³⁸ Indeed, colonial subjects did need government permission to leave the colony. Some colonial officials, like J.M. Orpen, insisted that the Griquas always remained emigrant British subjects, like the Boers who later trekked from the colony.¹³⁹ In reality, however, like in the case of the Boers, the relationship was much more complex, and it was not always clear if the Griquas were colonial subjects. It is unknown how the Griquas reacted to the British take-over of the Cape Colony in 1806. Whatever their reaction, the Griquas' ties to the Colony's government, politics, and economy remained strong.¹⁴⁰ While the government continued to see the Griquas as their subjects, the Griquas defied their orders and became increasingly independent, following their own leaders. Because the Griquas lived so far away from the centres of colonial power, they had more ability to do so. Increasingly, the Griquas were seen by colonial officials and white settlers as "beyond the colony and out of control."¹⁴¹

Griqualand attracted escaped slaves, deserters, Khoi labourers and criminals from the Cape Colony.¹⁴² The government tried to enforce its authority by ordering the Griquas to return such fugitives to the colony. But the Griquas were reluctant to do so. It was not infrequent that the deserters were their relatives.¹⁴³ In addition, the government demanded Griqua youths for service in the Cape Regiment, something the Griquas resented and were also unwilling to do. The colonial government encouraged the missionaries of the Griquas to act as colonial agents and to impose the authority of the government on their

¹³⁸ Stockenstrom, *Autobiography*, 185.

¹³⁹ Orpen, *Reminiscences*, 34.

¹⁴⁰ Orpen, *Reminiscences*, 10.7

¹⁴¹ Sales, *Mission Stations*, 63.

¹⁴² Keegan, *Colonial South Africa*, 86.

¹⁴³ Orpen, *Reminiscences*, 108.

communities.¹⁴⁴ But this only worked to alienate the missionaries from the people they were serving among, making the missionaries reluctant to carry out their orders.¹⁴⁵

Dissatisfied with the defiant response of the Griqua to their orders, the government took away the trading privileges of the Griquas after 1814.¹⁴⁶ Some in the colonial government thought it would be best to seize the Griquas by force and relocate them within the colony, as they perceived them as colonial subjects and as potential trouble-makers. The plan was abandoned after they realized such actions would just create more chaos and conflict.¹⁴⁷ Instead, the colonial government eventually placed an agent at Griquatown and supported a captain who was more willing to co-operate with them to some extent – Andries Waterboer. But the government agent never had enough power, or backing, to fulfil his obligations. Also, their support of Waterboer dissatisfied influential Griquas, namely Adam Kok and Barend Barends, and they left the vicinity of Griquatown with their followers to Campbell and Daniel's Kuil, respectively.

Kok and his followers eventually settled at Philippolis in 1826, right in the path of incoming farmers from the colony. As the realities on the ground changed, the colonial government pursued other strategies in dealing with the Griquas. The colonial government tried to encourage white settlers to stay within the bounds of the colony because they did not want the colony to expand and become more costly, but the settlers still tended to move further into the continent, searching for open land and better pasture for their herds.¹⁴⁸ Productive, fertile, well-connected land that also has access to sufficient water supplies was, and still is, a limiting factor for agriculture and raising livestock in

¹⁴⁴ Keegan, *Colonial South Africa*, 87.

¹⁴⁵ Keegan, *Colonial South Africa*, 86-7.

¹⁴⁶ Keegan, *Colonial South Africa*, 174.

¹⁴⁷ Stockenström, *Autobiograph*, 176 -177.

¹⁴⁸ Keegan, *Colonial South Africa*, 57.

South Africa.¹⁴⁹ White settlers were not allowed to leave the colony without permission, and were obliged to return, although the Great Trek did much to change this.¹⁵⁰ The government tried to prevent farmers from settling across the Orange River, forbidding them from erecting permanent structures or cultivating crops.¹⁵¹ Despite his efforts, Stockenstrom writes that "in very dry seasons it became impossible to prevent their making temporary migrations" across the Orange River.¹⁵² At first the farmers obeyed Stockenstrom's orders, and returned to the colony after temporary stays across the Orange River.¹⁵³ Some of these farmers, whose farms in the colony were hit by droughts, felt bitterness towards the Griquas, who were allowed to possess the better pastures in less arid lands.¹⁵⁴ To add to this bitterness, the better-fed livestock of the Griquas were fetching higher prices in colonial markets than those of the Boers living to their south.¹⁵⁵ The migration became more permanent as the Boers stayed for increasingly longer stretches of time across the Orange River, spelling problems for the Griquas onto whose land they were moving.

To deal with the influx of white farmers into their territory, the Griquas started leasing land to the emigrant Boers. The Griquas leased out their land because they were rich in land but poor in terms of capital.¹⁵⁶ This abundance in land gave them the ability to generate much needed revenue. But the Griqua government saw the danger of selling and leasing land to Boers. In 1838, it passed a law that forbade the sale of land to Europeans. Unfortunately, not all Griquas heeded this law, and some continued leasing

¹⁴⁹ Robert Ross, *Adam Kok's Griquas*, 7.

¹⁵⁰ Orpen, *Reminiscences*, 102.

¹⁵¹ Orpen, *Reminiscences*, 121.

¹⁵² Stockenstrom, *Autobiography*, 213.

¹⁵³ Stockenstrom, *Autobiography*, 372.

¹⁵⁴ Stockenstrom, *Autobiography*, 213.

¹⁵⁵ Robert Ross, *Adam Kok's Griquas*, 31.

¹⁵⁶ Robert Ross, *Adam Kok's Griquas*, 31.

land to Boers for terms of up to 40 years. These long-term leases were almost like a sale, as it was hard to get rid of the lessee at the end of such a long period.¹⁵⁷ And unfortunately, the Griquas tended to spend the money they generated through land sales rather quickly – merchants from the colony set up shops in their communities to take advantage of this.¹⁵⁸ This tendency have contributed to the the rapid impoverishment of Griqua communities after the large-scale sales of their land, as occurred in later years. Perhaps it was a habit inherited from their Khoi ancestors, who would share their food until their supplies were depleted, rather than saving it for later.¹⁵⁹ This social custom makes sense in the context of a nomadic people like the Khoi, but for settled people operating in a cash capitalist economy, it could only be disastrous.

As the Boers settled among the Griquas, the two groups came into conflict with one another. As early as 1830, the Griquas complained that Boers were trespassing on their lands, supplying local bandits, stealing from them, and even beating their people.¹⁶⁰ After an initial period of conflict, the white farmers and Griquas co-existed in relative stability. After all, they were not too different – they dressed in similar clothes, lived in similar houses, spoke the same language, raised livestock, and had the same religion. Indeed, there were even Boers who attended the Philippolis church from time to time.¹⁶¹ By 1840, a treaty between the Griqua and Boer communities was established. Under this agreement, the Boers lived under their own law, but acknowledged Griqua authority over their land.¹⁶² But the peace established in 1840 would last for less than two

¹⁵⁷ Marais, *Cape Coloured People*, 53.

¹⁵⁸ Robert Ross, *Adam Kok's Griquas*, 43.

¹⁵⁹ Marais, *Cape Coloured People*, 46.

¹⁶⁰ Stockenström, *Autobiography*, 274.

¹⁶¹ Robert Ross, *Adam Kok's Griquas*, 31.

¹⁶² Robert Ross, *Adam Kok's Griquas*, 32.

years. There were always land disputes between the Boers and Griquas, yet they had no arbitrator, recognized by both sides, to settle these cases.¹⁶³ As competition for land and resources ensued with the increased migration of Boers across the Orange River, the conflict, which would last for many years, created sharp definition and division of the groups involved.¹⁶⁴ As time went on, and the presence of Boers across the Orange River increased, it became clear that the Boers were generally not very willing to submit to Griqua authority – even if they lived within Griqua territory.

At this time, the colonial government increasingly saw the Griquas as allies to help stabilize the northern frontier. The government was very much influenced by John Philip, who encouraged the government to support Waterboer, Kok and Moshoeshoe, the Basotho king, as it “was a far more economical way of preserving peace on the northern frontier of the colony than allowing Voortrekker expansion,” which may lead to costly border conflicts.¹⁶⁵ Considerations of economy and order always outweighed others, for the colonial office.¹⁶⁶ They were also interested in protecting the land where the Griquas settled from incursion from others, fearing that the Griquas may revert to marauder lifestyles of raiding and spreading chaos if they were dispossessed.¹⁶⁷ The colony concluded a treaty with Waterboer in 1834, but did not choose to do so with Adam Kok II, because he “was not considered sufficiently trustworthy,”¹⁶⁸ no doubt because of his alleged links to the Bergenaars. In 1843 Adam Kok III entered into a treaty with the colonial government. In return for keeping law and order in their territories, Waterboer

¹⁶³ Robert Ross, *Adam Kok's Griquas*, 31.

¹⁶⁴ Robert Ross, *Adam Kok's Griquas*, 84.

¹⁶⁵ Andrew Ross, *John Philip*, 170.

¹⁶⁶ Keegan, *Colonial South Africa*, 44.

¹⁶⁷ Stockenstrom, *Autobiography*, 379.

¹⁶⁸ Orpen, *Reminiscences*, 133.

and Kok were given money and gunpowder. At the same time, the colonial government warned the white emigrant Boers that they were prohibited from attacking or stealing from indigenous polities, including those of the Griquas.¹⁶⁹

The polities of Waterboer, Kok and Moshoeshoe were seen as stabilizing influences, and, at first, the colonial government supported the integrity of those polities as a counterbalance to the threat of the Voortrekkers. But as the white presence and power increased beyond the frontier, the Griquas became less important as allies, and the government started re-evaluating its strategies and undermining its treaties with non-white polities, despite the loyalty of their Griqua allies. The colonial government saw the Voortrekkers as posing the greater threat to the interior than the Griquas, so it had few scruples in sacrificing the integrity of the Griqua polities to appease the Voortrekkers. Although they did not always get along with the Boers, they consistently “supported the colonists in their disputes with Africans and coloured people for land.”¹⁷⁰ The situation was worsened by the Griquas who were selling their land, as this gave the Boers more of a presence and a stake in their territory. So at once, two processes were occurring that undermined the territorial integrity of the Philippolis Griquas. The Griquas were losing land and the area was filling up with Dutch Boers did not submit to the authority of the Griqua polities and were not very willing to treat Griquas on equal terms. And the actions of the British tended to support the expansion of white hegemony,¹⁷¹ at the expense of non-white groups like the Griquas.

¹⁶⁹ Robert Ross, *Adam Kok's Griquas*, 50.

¹⁷⁰ Robert Ross, *Adam Kok's Griquas*, 48.

¹⁷¹ Robert Ross, *Adam Kok's Griquas*, 48.

Kok tried to exercise his authority over these Boers living in his territory, leading some Voortrekker Boers to rise up against him.¹⁷² The Griquas and their missionaries were somewhat alarmed when numerous Natal Voortrekkers settled in the area.¹⁷³ Kok believed his 1843 treaty with the colonial government recognized his judicial authority over all who lived in his territory, including white farmers living on leased land. But many of these farmers did not recognize his authority. As a result, tensions were continuously high between the Griquas and the Boers.¹⁷⁴ In 1845 Kok arrested a Voortrekker and the tensions spilled over.¹⁷⁵ In retaliation, a Voortrekker commando entered Kok's territory. This time, the colonial government supported Kok's authority, as a colonial ally, and sent troops to disperse the commando.¹⁷⁶ It was clear that the area, especially with the incursion of more radical Voortrekker Boers, was anything but stable, so Sir Peregrine Maitland, Governor of the Cape Colony at the time, negotiated new treaties in 1846. The new treaty with the Griquas divided their land between alienable and inalienable land – land they could and could not sell to whites, respectively. In addition, the Boers in Griqua territory were now to be under the authority of a British Resident,¹⁷⁷ undermining the power of Kok in his own territory. The treaty was again re-evaluated when the Governor of the Cape Colony, Sir Harry Smith, declared the Orange Free State Sovereignty in 1848. Under the new agreement, in which they were given little leeway to negotiate, the Griquas permanently lost the land which had been classified as alienable – even though those farms had been leased, not sold.¹⁷⁸ Between 1848 and 1854, some

¹⁷² Keegan, *Colonial South Africa*, 251.

¹⁷³ Marais, *Cape Coloured People*, 53.

¹⁷⁴ Mostert, *Frontiers*, 849.

¹⁷⁵ Andrew Ross, *John Philip*, 180.

¹⁷⁶ Andrew Ross, *John Philip*, 172 – 174.

¹⁷⁷ Marais, *Cape Coloured People*, 54.

¹⁷⁸ Marais, *Cape Coloured People*, 55.

Griquas were also selling land within the inalienable territory. Kok didn't recognize these sales, but he was unable to stop them.¹⁷⁹ Griqua land, and Kok's authority in the area, was dwindling.

New negotiations happened when the colonial government sought to withdraw from the Sovereignty and hand power over to the white settlers in the area. The Sovereignty became the Orange Free State in 1854, ruled by whites, mostly Dutch Boers. Sir George Clerk, dispatched as a special commissioner to negotiate the independence, offered the Griquas monetary compensation for the lands they lost in the negotiations with Smith, but only if they would allow completely free sales of the land which had previously been classified as inalienable. Kok, knowing that his territory would rapidly disintegrate from land sales fuelled by speculation, refused to agree to these terms. Though the Griquas were later willing to compromise on this issue, Governor Clerk withdrew his offer of compensation. Clerk further undermined Kok's Captaincy when he came to an agreement with the Boer delegates that Griqua land sold to Europeans would no longer be under Kok's jurisdiction, but under that of the new Orange Free State.¹⁸⁰

With the establishment of the Orange Free State in 1854, Griqua land sales circumvented Kok and the Raad, and were registered by the new republic's officials. Despite the relative prosperity Philippolis experienced in the 1850s, the Griquas saw their territory rapidly diminishing. Individual land sales eroded the community as a whole – handing Griqua land over to the Orange Free State and white rule. Unsurprisingly, many of the Griquas did not anticipate a good future for them in the Philippolis area. Writing in 1859, John Mackenzie observed that the Boers held “strong caste feeling, or prejudice, on

¹⁷⁹ Marais, *Cape Coloured People*, 56.

¹⁸⁰ Marais, *Cape Coloured People*, 56.

account of their colour" towards the Griqua.¹⁸¹ Arrayed against them was a state of whites who did not quite accept them as equals, and a regional colonial power that tended to favour the white settlers over the Griquas, despite their treaties. In 1861, Adam Kok III ceded sovereignty of his land to the Orange Free State, and trekked with about 2,000 of his subjects from Philippolis and Campbell across the Drakensberg Mountains to Nomansland, with the permission of the Cape's governor.¹⁸² Eventually, they built a new town there - Kokstad.¹⁸³ Again, they were fleeing the expansion of "white" settlers, searching for a place where they could exist independently.

The Griquas of Griqualand West fell victim to other historical processes. Unlike the Philippolis Griquas, their land did not immediately sit in the way of white settler expansion. By the middle of the nineteenth-century, the towns of Griquatown and Campbell were in a bad state, with many houses deserted and in ruin, a result of the drying up of their fountains. The rainfall there was not reliable and "the country was subject to recurring droughts."¹⁸⁴ In addition, the game of the region was disappearing and their domestic flocks were depleted by disease. With increasing white settlement, there was little opportunity for trekking to better pastures. However, there were some Griqua homesteads further out from these settlements that were doing well.¹⁸⁵ Griqualand West really faced challenging environmental conditions and people there were more impoverished than the Philippolis Griquas, who were blessed with much better land. The positive effect of this was that their land was less sought by white settlers.

¹⁸¹ Mackenzie, *Ten years*, 59.

¹⁸² Robert Ross, *Adam Kok's Griquas*, 94.

¹⁸³ Marais, *Cape Coloured People*, 60.

¹⁸⁴ Marais, *Cape Coloured People*, 47.

¹⁸⁵ Mackenzie, *Ten Years*, 59.

The Griqualand West Griquas also suffered from the consequences of the colonial government abandoning its indigenous allies in favour of white settler ones. In 1852, the Sand River Convention was signed, recognizing the independence of the Boer Transvaal Republic. Some saw it as a betrayal of the colony's responsibilities towards Waterboer, because the "whole of the country north of the Vaal, which was recognized to Waterboer by treaty was made a present of to the Transvaal."¹⁸⁶ In essence, it was a placation of the Boers at the cost of Waterboer's Griquas, who were of diminishing importance to the colonial government. After the death of Andries Waterboer on December 13, 1852, the colonial government further withdrew its support of Griqua politics and ended the treaty it had with the Captaincy of Griqualand West, on the grounds that the treaty had been made with Andries Waterboer alone.¹⁸⁷ The colonial government was in the process of replacing its Griqua allies with white allies, a process facilitated by the smaller population numbers of the Griquas, making it easier for the government to sweep them aside.¹⁸⁸ Griqualand West continued to decline, and in 1871 was annexed by the British. In the process, many Griquas lost their land. White settlement and diamond mining swept over the region and some Griquas remained there, with little wealth or influence, and frequently, landless.

The Griquas of Philippolis experienced a brief grace period in Griqualand East, despite losing much of their wealth during the trek there. They reorganized their government, established hegemony over the local African tribes, and built a new town, Kokstad. But by the end of the 1870s, the colonial government annexed both Griqualand East and West. In Griqualand East, Kok had again tried to prevent land sales by his

¹⁸⁶ Orpen, *Reminiscences*, 151.

¹⁸⁷ Orpen, *Reminiscences*, 152.

¹⁸⁸ Keegan, *Colonial South Africa*, 286.

people to Europeans. After his death in 1875 and the annexation of the territory by the colonial government, restrictions on land sales were removed. White land speculators quickly moved in, and the territorial base of the polity was eroded. By the turn of the century, just a handful of Griquas remained landowners, and the prosperity once experienced by the community was long gone.¹⁸⁹ The Griqua community of Kokstad faded, and the polity disintegrated. The central core of the Griqua polities was landownership, coupled with political independence. Once this was lost, the Griqua polities disintegrated. By 1925, many Griqua were poverty-stricken and living in towns.¹⁹⁰ Their identity and shared history has endured to this day, and Griquas remain proud of their prosperous and powerful ancestors, who succeeded in holding on to their independence, at least for some time, in a region hit by the racially stratifying forces of white settler colonialism.

The Griquas are a unique group in Southern African history. They were a product of the historical forces that swept Southern Africa – children of mostly illegitimate relationships between Dutch settlers, Khoisan, slaves, and African women. Culturally, they were as mixed as their heritage, living a lifestyle that incorporated European as well as indigenous elements. Seizing their opportunities, they left the restrictive confines of white colonial society and built strong polities outside the colonies, with the support of Christian missionaries. They were an important presence in the frontier regions – so much that the colonial government recruited them as allies in the 1830s and 1840s. Despite carrying many of the marks of European settler society, they were never fully accepted as equals by their white neighbours – perhaps they were just too indigenous for

¹⁸⁹ Marais, *Cape Coloured People*, 73.

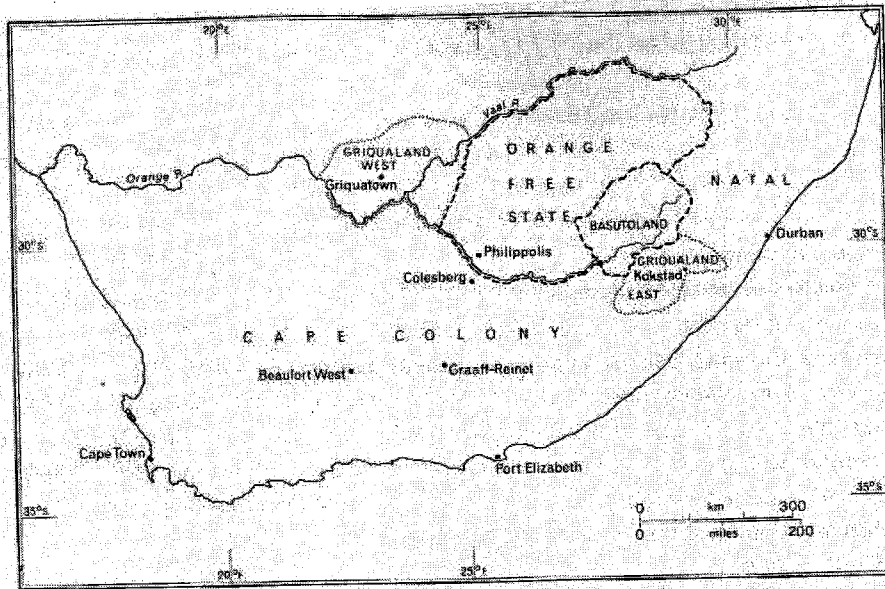
¹⁹⁰ Marais, *Cape Coloured People*, 73.

an increasingly white dominated order. Ultimately, they were in the way of white settlers who had a history of appropriating land from people with browner skin. Unable to resist the pressures of the expansion of white settlement and white power, the Griquas lost their land and their independence, without which they had little power or status in the new white-dominated society, and entered the underclass that already included "coloured" people who had remained behind in the colony.

Bibliography

- Beinart, William. "Settler Accumulation in East Griqualand from the Demise of the Griqua to the Natives Land Act." In *Putting a Plough to the Ground: Accumulation and Dispossession in Rural South Africa, 1850-1930*, edited by William Beinart, Peter Delius, and Stanley Trapido, 259-310. Johannesburg: Ravan Press, 1986.
- Boonzaier, Emile, Candy Malherbe, Andy Smith, and Penny Berens. *The Cape Herders: A History of the Khoikhoi of Southern Africa*. Athens: Ohio University Press, 1996.
- Campbell, John. *Travels in South Africa*. Cape Town: C. Struik, 1974.
- Casalis, Eugene. *My life in Basutoland*. Cape Town: C. Struik, 1971.
- Engelbrecht, Jan Anthonie. *The Korana; an account of their customs and their history, with texts*. Cape Town: M. Miller, 1936.
- Giliomee, Hermann. *The Afrikaners: Biography of a People*. Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2009.
- Keegan, Timothy. *Colonial South Africa and the origins of the racial order*. Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1996.
- Lewis, Gavin. *Between the Wire and the Wall: A History of South African 'Coloured' Politics*. Cape Town: David Philip, 1987.
- Lesniewski, Michal. "Guns and Horses, c 1750 to c 1850: Korana – People or Raiding Hordes?" *Werkwinkel* 5, no.2 (2010): 11-26, http://ifa.amu.edu.pl/werkwinkel/W_5-2/3_lesniewski.pdf.
- Mackenzie, John. *Ten Years North of the Orange River: A Story of Everyday Life and Work Among the South African Tribes, from 1859-1869*. London: Frank Cass and Company Limited, 1971.
- Marais, J.S. *The Cape Coloured People, 1652-1937*. Johannesburg: Witwatersrand University Press, 1957.
- Morris, Alan G. "The Griqua and the Khoikhoi: Biology, Ethnicity and the Construction of Identity." *Kronos* no.24 (November 1997): 106-118, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/41056392>.
- Mostert, Noel. *Frontiers: the Epic of South Africa's Creation and the Tragedy of the Xhosa People*. New York: Knopf, 1992.
- Orpen, J.M. *Reminiscences of life in South Africa from 1846 to the present day*. Cape Town: C. Struik, 1964.
- Ross, Andrew. *John Philip (1775-1851): Missions, Race and Politics in South Africa*. Aberdeen: Aberdeen University Press, 1986.
- Ross, Robert. *Adam Kok's Griquas*. London: Cambridge University Press, 1976.
- Sales, Jane. *Mission Stations and the Coloured Communities of the Eastern Cape, 1800-1852*. Cape Town: Balkema, 1975.
- Schapera, I. ed., *Apprenticeship at Kuruman, being the journals and letters of Robert and Mary Moffat, 1820-1828*. London: Chatto & Windus, 1951.
- Stockenström, Andries. *The Autobiography of the Late Sir Andries Stockenström*. Cape Town: C. Struik, 1964.
- Waldman, Linda. *The Griqua Conundrum: Political and Socio-Cultural Identity in the Northern Cape, South Africa*. Bern: Peter Lang Ltd., 2007.

Appendix 1 – Map



1 Southern Africa c 1850

Taken from Ross, Robert, *Adam Kok's Griquas* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1976), xiv.