



Foundation Nation 2017 Convocation

Theme :

'Releasing the sound from the Tip of Southern Africa'

Origins & Spirituality of the Foundation Nation

Presented by Ron Martin

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Read Acts 17 (26-29)

Origins of KhoeSan in Southern Africa date back to the beginning of the Late Stone Age (LSA) period, which is commonly put at around 22000 years ago or BP. To place the timeline in an academic context, ESA or Palaeolithic Era could be as much as 3.4 million years ago as is evident of the first stone tools which were found in the Awash River Valley in Ethiopia and later also in Turkana in North-western Kenya. The MSA or Mesolithic period begins around 200 000 years ago up until the advent of the LSA around 22000 years ago.

The LSA still presents archaeologists and anthropologists with a conundrum, however, as Euro-based academics have always associated the advancement of human technology with their ultimate use of metallurgy from around 8500 (copper) to 2500 years ago. Bronze Age (3300 – 1300 BP) Iron (3200-1200 BP). This can be true of cultures in North Africa along the Mediterranean, the Middle East and even South America, but in the sub-Saharan context, this theory does not necessarily apply. It is true that evidence of iron, copper and bronze smelting is found in areas stretching from South Africa northwards through the Rift Valley, but not on a scale comparable with these other regions. Does this signify that sub-Saharan cultures are more backward than the European cultures?

It has been accepted, even among the most serious sceptics, that the Khoesan people are indeed one genetic group and not two, as was widely acclaimed until very, very recently. This separation is merely as a result of the colonial fixation with the rampant compartmentalisation of everything, including people, which ultimately underscored the whole ideology of apartheid thinking.

In reality, if one observes the findings of the late Hilary Deacon, Prof of Archaeology at US, in his excavations at Plankenberg in Stellenbosch, one would note that the KhoeSan were, in essence, still a stone-age culture at the time of colonisation, which does not necessarily put them as backward by comparison. His findings speak of a complex culture interwoven between religious belief systems, ritualistic practices and linguistic prowess (x2). The display in the Stellenbosch Village Museum highlights this.

The term “Khoisan” refers to the pre-colonial inhabitants of southern Africa whose languages formed part of the same wide linguistic family and who can be distinguished linguistically from Bantu speakers. (In fact linguists continue to debate whether the various groupings subsumed under the general heading of 'southern African Khoesan (or Khoisan) languages' actually constitute a single family. Two isolate click languages from east Africa, namely Hadza and Sandawe, were formerly lumped together with the southern languages as part of a notional 'macro-Khoisan', but there is little formal evidence of a linguistic kind to support this wider linkage. A third 'click language', Kwadi, was formerly spoken in southern Angola. Although a link has been proposed between this isolate and the Khoe languages, the connection remains doubtful, and there are even some grounds for surmising that Kwadi, with its highly mixed vocabulary, may have been an 'inner language' of some kind. The language predominantly used by its speakers was a straightforward Bantu language of the Wambo group.)

Scholars often separate the Khoisan people into Khoi pastoralists and San hunter-gatherers. This division is not clear-cut. Solomon (forthcoming 13) notes that the term 'San' more usefully "describes language, not phenotype or economic identity" (13). The Nharo of the central and western Kalahari region, for example, were mostly hunter-gatherers but spoke a Khoi or Khoe language. (It is for this reason that linguists do *not* use the term 'San' to define any language grouping. Rather, linguists refer to a distinct KHOE family, as well as a number of other separate groups, namely the JUU, TAA and !UI families. The names JU, TAA and !KWI (or !UI) were devised by Westphal (1971), who based them on generic terms used in each respective group for 'person'. Use of the revised spelling '!UI' appears to date from Güldemann and Vossen (2000). A case for the unity of the !UI-TAA (or 'Southern Bushman') languages has been made by Güldemann (2004), who proposes the group-name TUU. The placement of Eastern #Hoan in relation to the last three groups is still being debated, although a linkage with JU has recently (2010) been proposed by Heine and Honken.)

The hunter-gatherers of the region are commonly referred to as San or Bushmen. Both these terms have denigratory histories. Neither was invented by the people denominated by it. "San" is a Khoi-derived term that refers to people without cattle in an insulting fashion (Bennun 2005: 30) and "Bushman" (or its Afrikaans equivalent, "Boesman") is a term that was introduced by the settlers to the Cape to refer dismissively to the hunter-gatherers of the region. (In fact the term 'Bosjesmans' that occurs in the early Cape records reflects a non-standard plural, which suggests that it may have been introduced by speakers of a Cape Khoekhoe variety, conceivably as a loan translation from their own language.) Lucy Lloyd was told by /Han#kass'o that the /Xam and the Korana referred to each other as "Saa", a term which Bank notes "was a derivation of 'San', meaning 'thief' in the language of the Korana" (Bank 2006: 289). (Meinhof (1930: 89) merely records *saku* or *sana* as !Ora (or 'Korana') words meaning 'Buschmaenner', and makes no mention of any additional connotation.)

The word Khoi or Khoe-Khoe generally is used to describe the Khoi speaking pastoralists of the Cape and present day Namibia. They were predominantly herders of sheep and cattle but also hunted and collected plant foods from the veld. They did not cultivate the soil. Most of the pre-colonial food crops of Africa depended on summer rainfall. The Khoi lived in winter rainfall areas or in areas in which there was virtually no rain at all. In general they lived in larger groups than San people did and possessed a more hierarchically ordered political organisation.

Khoisan languages

Both Khoi and San people have never lived in isolation. They have traded, intermarried and mixed with other southern African people over a great length of time. The Khoisan genetic, cultural and linguistic component in people such as the Tswana, Sotho, Zulu, Xhosa and people of the Cape (Cape coloureds) is very strong. Several Khoisan languages ceased to be spoken in colonial times as a result of the destruction of linguistic communities by settler violence, illness and migration. The Khoisan people of the Cape became part of the Afrikaans speaking population and contributed enormously to the development and character of that language. Among the Khoisan languages that are no longer spoken are: !ora, Xiri and

/Xam from the Northern Cape (although fortunately a lot of /Xam oral literature has been preserved in the Bleek and Lloyd collection), N/uu of Gordonia, //ng of Griqualand West, //ku //e in the Free State, Seroa in Lesotho, !ga!ne in the Transkei and //Xegwi in present day Mpumalanga (Traill 2007: 130-147). Nevertheless, a few elderly speakers have been found in recent years who still remember the !UI language, N/uu - or #Khomani - while three or four speakers of the South African KHOE language, !Ora have also recently been discovered. Valiant efforts at documentation are currently underway. (It may not be appropriate to assume that the language of the Griqua (or !Xiri) referred to in some early records was necessarily a direct continuation of the Cape Khoekhoe variety spoken by such communities as the Great and Little Griqua encountered by Simon van der Stel in the vicinity of the Olifants River on the Cape west coast: the name 'Griqua' was chosen fairly arbitrarily in recent historical times to replace the term 'Basters', which various missionaries rightly considered a demeaning name for people of mixed Khoi-Dutch ancestry.) Several other Khoisan languages survive in Botswana, Namibia and Angola, though. Modern Namibian Khoekhoe is the most widely spoken KHOE language - and the only Khoisan language to enjoy official status - while Ju/'hoan is the JU language with possibly the most contemporary speakers.

Khoisan beliefs

SPIRITUAL/HISTORICAL CONTEXT:

Let's explore the historical context around the spirituality of our people for a bit: The Deities associated with San or Boesman is that of Cagn or Caggen

- "Cagn" is the supreme god of the San or Boesman. He is the first being and the creator of the world. He is a trickster god who can shape-shift, most often into the praying mantis but also takes the form of a bull eland, a louse, a snake, and a caterpillar. In some variants of the San creation story, Cagn receives so much opposition in the world that he moves his abode from the earth to the top of the sky. Cagn is said to have created the moon which holds special significance to the San people; the phase of the moon dictated when rainmaking rituals were to be performed.
- "Coti" is the wife of Cagn. She gave birth to the eland, and Cagn hid it near a secluded cliff to let it grow. One day Cagn's sons, Cogaz and Gewi, were out hunting. Not knowing their father's love for the eland, they killed it. Cagn was angry, and told Gewi to put the blood from the dead eland into a pot and churn it. Blood spattered from the pot onto the ground and turned into snakes. Cagn was displeased. Next, Gewi scattered the blood, and it turned into hartebeests. Again, Cagn was unhappy. He told Coti to clean the pot and add more blood from the eland, with fat from the heart. She churned it, and Cagn sprinkled the mixture on the ground. It turned into a large herd of eland. This was how Cagn gave meat to his people to hunt and eat. The San attribute the wildness of the eland to the fact that Cagn's sons killed it before it was ready to be hunted, spoiling it. The scholar David Lewis-Williams recounts a variation of the eland myth involving the meerkats. Cagn's daughter the porcupine married Kwammang-a, a meerkat. They had a son called Ichneumon, the mongoose. Ichneumon was close to his

grandfather Cagn. Cagn used to take honey to feed his favourite, the eland. The people were curious as to what Cagn was doing with the honey, so they sent Ichneumon to spy on him and find out. When Ichneumon saw Cagn giving honey to the eland, he reported his discovery to his brothers, the meerkats. While Cagn was out gathering honey, the meerkats persuaded Ichneumon to show them where the eland was. They called the eland out of its hiding place and killed it.

The deity of the Khoe-khoe is the deity of Tsui-Goab and Heitsi Eibib.

- "Heitsi-Eibib" is usually as a culture hero, but his role is fluid. He is sometimes called a trickster. In other contexts, he appears as a patron of hunters and in some stories he even had a part in creating the world, impressing specific characteristics into different species. For example, he cursed the lion to walk on ground instead of nesting on a tree. The multiple roles of Heitsi-eibib have been called a reflection of the fluidity of San religious resources and rituals, which are usually ambiguous and lack in standardization. Heitsi-eibib was also a life-death-rebirth figure, dying and resurrecting himself on numerous occasions. Resulting from this, his funeral cairns can be found in many locations in southern Africa, and it is customary to throw a stone onto them for good luck. In different accounts, Heitsi-eibib is born from either a girl or—more often—a cow, which got pregnant by eating a magical grass. Heitsi-eibib was a legendary hunter, sorcerer and warrior.
- "Tsui-Goab" is a sky deity associated with the phenomena of thunder and lightning. His name translates to "bloodied knee", and he is said to dwell in a red heaven located somewhere in the east, as opposed to Gaunab's black heaven.
- "Gaunab" is a god of sickness and death who is locked in constant battle with Tsui-Goab.
- "Utixo" or "Tiqua" is the name used by missionaries as a translation for the Abrahamic God.
- The "Ga-Gorib" is a beast who lived on the edge of a pit. It would trick people into throwing stones at it, but the stones would always bounce back from the creature's hide, and the thrower would fall into the pit. When the hero Heitsi-eibib met the beast, he refused to throw stones until Ga-gorib turned away from him, whereupon he cast a stone that knocked Ga-gorib into its own pit. In another version of the same story, Heitsi-eibib wrestled with the Ga-gorib and was thrown to the pit repeatedly, but could not be kept down. In the end, the Ga-gorib is again thrown to his own pit by Heitsi-eibib. Gorib is "the spotted one" (meaning leopard, cheetah, or leguaan) in Khoe languages, so the Ga-gorib probably has some connection with this formidable species. The element "ga-" remains to be explained. Possibly, it is a negative, "not-a-leopard", not only on comparative morphological grounds, but also because its adversary Heitsi-eibib is connected symbolically to the leopard.

The diversity of the southern African Khoesan languages is paralleled by a diversity in the Khoisan oral literature, both with respect to language group and period of history. Barnard (1992) attributes the common

elements in Khoisan narrative to an overarching Khoisan cosmology and culture. Even though economic practices varied, as with foraging San and herding Khoi, Barnard (1992) argues that it is still possible to speak of a single Khoisan cultural complex. He discerns common kinship structures, pertaining especially to the mechanisms for clarifying relations, which, he maintains, indicate common linguistic origins, social environments and historical connections between cultures (294). (It should be noted, however, that linguists take a more conservative approach and generally do not admit extrinsic evidence of this kind into debates concerning 'common linguistic origins'.)

Barnard also discovers common religious motifs. The idea of dual creation is shared, he contends, by all Khoisan belief systems. Khoisan stories, he asserts, describe the condition of things after the first creation, in which animals and humans had yet to be separated into distinguishable species (83). In the course of this second creation period the different species acquired their salient characteristics. All Khoisan people, he maintains, believe in a high God. Some groups maintain that this God has good and bad characteristics whereas others hold that there are two beings, one good and one bad (252). Barnard identifies /Kaggen, for instance, as the /Xam version of this God who has "the power to bring the dead back to life and to change himself and other animals into different forms" (84).

Accordingly, Guenther locates /Kaggen within a Bushman religion that, he argues, differs from most religions in that it does not legitimate a power structure. Many of the unusual qualities of /Kaggen and other Bushman tricksters can be attributed to their place in societies that are uniquely free of asymmetrical relations of power. One of the chief qualities of the Bushman trickster that makes him unique in world literature, he contends, is that he is simultaneously a trickster and a deity. "While tricksters in other parts of the world may hold religious or sacred significance ... nowhere does the figure's status as divinity appear to be defined as clearly as in Khoisan religion" (6). The Bushman trickster is both a protagonist "of whimsical or outrageous tales" and a god, a figure of "numinous power and portent" (6). He is especially a figure of "confounding plurality, plurivocity and ambiguity..." (6, quoting Hynes and Doty 1993).

Guenther identifies /Kaggen with other Khoisan trickster figures (95-125). "He is /Kaggen to the Cape /Xam, Pate and Pisamboro (or //Gawama) to the Nharo and G/wi of Botswana, Piisi.koagu to the //Gana of the Central Kalahari Game Reserve, Kaxa (or #Gao!na, !Gara, Hice, or Hoe) to the Zhu/'hoansi of Botswana and Namibia, Jackal and Haiseb ... to the Hai//om, Nama, and Damara" (97). In his opinion (253), the tricksters (the protagonist-divinity figures) of the Khoi and the Bushmen "are the same in form and substance." It should be noted that this contention could be debated. There are great differences between these figures as well as some similarities. Not all commentators agree that the /Xam, for example, possessed deities or that /Kaggen should be regarded as one.

The parallels that one can draw between the belief systems of the Foundation Nations and those of the visitor to our shores can probably account for the relative ease with which our people were converted by the early settlers, albeit briefly, and later the missionaries. I use the word "briefly" because, in the beginning of the colony, baptism to the Christian faith was seen as a possible way of civilising and, ultimately, controlling the heathen indigene. It started with Krotoa in 1662, just before Van Riebeeck left for his retirement in Malacca, and continued incrementally.

In 1665 the first Dutch Reformed Church (Rev J van Bragel) was built and, a year later, the first Calvinist Church. Also, it was then broadened to freed slaves, mixed children of female slaves and colonists but not other indigenes, compliant or otherwise, until Yobrand Goske became Governor in 1672 and proceeded to offer baptism as a gift to Oedesoa and Sousoa. This was the advent of an age-old mechanism of colonisers all over the world: baptise the chiefs, and the rest will follow.

By 1694, another mainstream religion was inadvertently brought to the Cape by the exile from Bantam to the Cape (via Ceylon) of **Abadin Tadia Tjoessoep**, more commonly known as Sheikh Yusuf of Makassar. He was housed on farm Zandvliet, far from the Castle so that his influence could be kept away from the VOC slaves, but in the five short years that he stayed at the Cape until his death on 23 May 1699, his home has attracted a huge following of Muslims, mostly freed or escaped slaves, but also converts from indigenous groups and one or two whiteys, to become the first Muslim settlement in South Africa. The area where he lived and was buried was renamed Macassar in honour of his birthplace.

Even outside of the slave population brought from Muslim countries, Islam was growing at the Cape. Mosques as formal places of worship were not allowed to be built in the colony, so devout followers had to worship out in the open, and when this practise was also banned within sight of a Christian colonist, they had to worship in secret, most often far outside the settled area or on the mountains. Then the whole “baptise to rule” ideology started backfiring on the colonist, particularly in areas where earmarked for colonial expansion. In 1682, freed slave Ansella van Bengal (or Mooi Ansella) used her status as a baptised free black, as the term was then, to take ownership of the farm Meererust in the Franschhoek Valley with her husband, Willem Basson. Her son, Jacob van As, took ownership of neighbouring farm Eenzaamheid in 1690, and later amalgamated his farm with that of his mother (after Basson’s death) to form the farm Meerlust.

I use this story as illustration of a problem which the Dutch were now facing: by baptising too many free slaves, they were creating too many Christians, and according to their own laws and decrees, Christians could own land, so they had to curb this suddenly rapid growth of Christianity in the colony! They just took the land through two successive wars with the Khoi-khoi, now they must give it back because they are Christianising them and the slaves. What were they to do?

They banned slaves and Free Blacks from going to Church. Where they were allowed into the Groote Kerk before this, even though they had to sit at the back, they were now completely banned. This was the first racial segregation laws! Slaves were ordered and Khoi-khoi were actively encouraged to follow Islam, and the Muslim clerics welcomed this phenomenon, for obvious reasons, as they were getting converts! The Dutch even saw that Islam also had a patriarchal dogma attached to its ancillary rule-book, so the decimation of the culture would still be achieved, whether by Christian teaching or Muslim teaching. In fact, Muslim clerics, as slaves themselves, were ordered to erase all aspects of Khoi culture from their indigenous converts, for fear of death.

So ironically, Sheikh Yusuf and his followers may have been seen as a nuisance factor by the colonial powers and his settlement having become an irritation, but the advent of Islam provided the colonist with a way out of his obligation to share his hard-fought land with his black Christian brothers.

Again, look how easy it was for the Khoe-khoe to embrace a mystery deity, even though it was other than their own. Due to their ingrained spiritual nature, they took to the mainstream religions like the proverbial duck to water, and this hastened their demise.

In conclusion, I quote:

“We must stop confusing religion and spirituality. Religion is a set of rules, regulations and rituals created by humans which were supposed to help people spiritually. Due to human imperfection religion has become corrupt, political, divisive, and a tool for power struggle. Spirituality is not theology or ideology. It is simply a way of life, pure and original as given by the Most High. Spirituality is a network linking us to the Most High, the universe, and each other.” Haile Selassie I.