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# The ethnonyms ‘Bushman’ and ‘San’

First submission: 26 February 2009

Acceptance: 31 July 2009

The first part of the term “Bushman” has been variously explained as referring to bush-covered country, or to bushes as refuge from enemies, as cover from which to attack man or beast, or as dwelling places. The word *boes* is neither Afrikaans nor Dutch, and is probably a phonological adaptation. Several San ethnonyms mean “bush men” or “bush people”. The term *San*, a contraction of *Sanqua*, earlier *Sonqua*, has been explained as “gatherers”, “outcasts, pariahs”, “servants, subjects”, “aborigines or settlers”, and “those who sit and rest”. Van Riebeeck’s addition of the explanations *Vismans* (“fish men”), *struyckroovers* (“bandits”, literally “bush-robbers”) and *Berghvolck* (“mountain people”) to various mentions of *Souqua*, *Soaqua* and similar words, prompts the possibility of translations.

## Die volksname ‘Boesman’ en ‘San’

Verklarings van die naam “Boesman” lui onder andere dat die eerste deel op die omgewing dui wat met bossies oortrek is; dat dit na bossie verwys waarin mense geskuil het om vyande te ontvlug, of waaruit diere of mense aangeval is, of wat gedien het as woning. Die woord *boes* kom nóg in Hollands nóg in Afrikaans voor en is waarskynlik ’n fonologiese aanpassing. Die name van verskeie San-stamme beteken “bos-mans” of “bos-mense”. *San*, ’n sametrekking van *Sankwa*, vroeër *Sonkwa*, is onder meer verklaar as “versamelaars”, “verwerpeling, pariahs”, “knegte, onderdane”, “inheemses, setlaars”, en “dié wat sit en rus”. Van Riebeeck se byvoeging van die verklarings “Vismans”, “struyckroovers” en “Berghvolck” by verskeie vermeldinge van *Souqua*, *Soaqua* en soortgelyke woorde dui op die moontlikheid van vertalings.

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*Acta Academica*  
2010 42(1): 168-186  
ISSN 0587-2405  
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<[http://www.ufs.ac.za/journals\\_ActaAcademica](http://www.ufs.ac.za/journals_ActaAcademica)>

SUN MODIA  
BLOEMFONTEIN

The Late Stone Age hunter-gatherers who inhabited the sub-continent of Africa for fifty thousand years or more (Skotnes 2007: 62) have been referred to *inter alia* as “Bushmen”, and as “San”. It is generally accepted that the English term *Bushman* and the Afrikaans term *Boesman* are translations of the Dutch name *Bos(ch)jesman*, derived from the Dutch word *bos(ch)* “bush, forest”, of which the diminutive form is *boschje* or *bosje* (Nienaber 1989: 207). Boshoff & Nienaber (1976: 173) point out that the ethnonym was “tot ± 1750 gew[oonlik] gedok[umenteer] as *bos(ch)jesman/bossie(s)man*, sedert 1752 *boessiemans/boes(s)emans* en sedert 1783 *boesmans*”.<sup>1</sup>

The earliest users of the name *Bushman*, considering that they knew more or less what the name meant, apparently did not find it necessary to provide explanations for its meaning (Nienaber 1989: 190). However, various reasons for the name are encountered, *inter alia* that these people were so called “from dwelling in woody or mountainous places” (Sparrman 1785 I: 197); “because, lurking in the cover of the shrubbery, they are said to shoot their poisoned arrows” (Barrow 1801 I: 56); “from their country [...] being almost destitute of trees, but much of it being covered with bushes; [and] from their method of assault, as they never attack man or beast openly, but from behind bushes” (Campbell 1815: 314). Wangemann (1872: 60-1) states:

Woher der Name Buschmann entstanden ist, ob von dem Gebüsch, in welchem er seine Räuberhöhle sucht, oder von dem aus zusammengebogenen Strauchwerk geflochtenen Hüttlein, in dem er übernachtet, das weiss man nicht”.<sup>2</sup>

According to Vedder (1938: 78):

The Bushmen [...] were [...] persecuted by all other natives, and so the only dwelling-places left for them were inaccessible hiding-places in the mountains and [...] refuges in the trackless thorn bush of the plains. [...] The Bushmen [...] had the contrary habit of concealing themselves in the bush at night.

- 1 “usually documented as *bos(ch)jesman* or *bossie(s)man* until about 1750; from 1752 it appeared as *boessiemans* or *boes(s)emans*, and since 1783 as *boesmans*”.
- 2 “Whence the name Bushman originated, whether from the bushes, in which they make their robber dens, or from their little huts plaited from shrubbery bent together, in which they overnight, is unknown.”

The name *Bushman* is sometimes attributed to Jan van Riebeeck, the Dutch commander at the Cape of Good Hope, who in his Diary on 24 April 1654 referred to a “*bosmanneken*”.<sup>3</sup> However, Van Riebeeck was writing not about a person, but about a baboon:

Heden wierd doot gevonden aen 't geberghte een bosmanneken,  
op Batavia orang-outangh genaamt ... die ons volcq van honger  
opaten (Bosman & Thom 1952 I: 220).<sup>4</sup>

The first person to refer to the hunter-gatherers of Southern Africa as *Bossiemans* was Simon van der Stel, first governor of the Cape of Good Hope (Rosenthal 1961: 558), who in his diary on 31 October 1685 referred to “de sonquaas, in de wandeling Bossiemans [*sic*] genaamt” (Nienaber 1989: 192).<sup>5</sup> Nienaber specifically draws attention to Van der Stel’s spelling of *Bossiemans*, stating: “Let op die spelling, dit is *bossie*, nie *bosjes*- of *bossies-man* nie”.<sup>6</sup>

The fact that Van der Stel used the spelling *Bossiemans*, with the component *bossie*, as early as 1685, is remarkable. At that time the Dutch language, imported when the Dutch established a refreshment station at the Cape of Good Hope in 1652, was the official language of the settlement, and remained such until 1822 (Scholtz 1970: 63). The usual Dutch word for ‘bush’ is *heester* or *strui(j)k*, or *bos(ch)je* (Bosman & Thom 1955 II: 340 n1). *Bossie* is the diminutive of the word *bos*, ‘bush’ in Afrikaans, “a form of Dutch which since 1652 had developed marked differences in pronunciation and accidence, and to a lesser extent also in syntax and vocabulary” (Scholtz 1970: 63). Long before the end of the eighteenth century, Afrikaans had become “the home language of the burghers and the normal language of intercourse” (Scholtz 1970: 63). If the component *Bossie* of the ethnonym *Bossiemans* ‘little bush men’, recorded in the seventeenth century, is a Dutch-Afrikaans word, it must be one of the earliest of these words recorded.

3 “little bush man”.

4 “Today at the mountain a *bosmanneken*, called orang-outang in Batavia, was found dead, which our people ate out of hunger”.

5 “the Sonquaas, commonly called Bossiemans [*sic*]”.

6 “Note the spelling, it is *bossie*-, not *bosjes*- or *bossies-man*”.

The word *bossie* seems to have also been adopted as a loan word in San dialects, for example as  $\Theta'osi$  'tree, bush' in /Auni, with the synonym  $\Theta bo$ , and in /Xam as  $\Theta'osi$  as a synonym for the word  $\Theta bo$  "tree, bush, wood, stick, plant" (Bleek 1956: 682). The symbol  $\Theta$  denotes the lip click, also called the labial click or bilabial click, usually represented in writing as a circle with a dot in the middle, and pronounced "by pressing the lips together and releasing them as in a kiss" (Bleek 1929: 13). The ' in the word  $\Theta'osi$  represents the glottal stop.

Several San peoples or clans have names that mean 'Bushman' or 'Bush people'. The name of the Hietšware people, also written *Hiechware* and *Hietsware*, is said by Bleek (1956: 61) to be derived from the Hie words *hie* 'veld' and *tšware* 'people'. However, she gives the Hie word *hie* 'the open country, the veld' as a synonym for *hi* 'plant', and links the Naron word *hi* 'plant, wood' (and its synonym *hii*) to the Nama word *beis* 'Busch', 'bush' (Rust 1960: 13). The ending *-s* of the word *beis* denotes the third person feminine singular ending. Bleek (1956: 61) further explains that the San feminine form of *hi*, namely *hifja*, indicates a round bush or plant. The meaning of the Hie word *hii* and its synonyms *hi* and *hie* are defined as 'tree, medicine', again linked to Nama *beib*, *beis*, and *hi /kwa* as 'bush, shrub', */kwa* and its synonym */gwa* meaning 'young' (Bleek 1956: 328, 773). The Hadza word *hifepe* 'leaves' is given as a synonym of *hi* 'plant' (Bleek 1956: 61); *Hiseša*, *Hife* and *Hifeša* are the Hie names of "a supernatural being, probably a spirit of the bush, *s. hi*, plant" (Bleek 1956: 61). Other San words cognate with *hi*, *hii*, *hie*, and so on are Mohissa *ii*, synonyms *hi* and *ji* 'wood, tree' (Bleek 1956: 69); Sehura and Naron *ji*, synonyms *jii* and *hi* 'tree' (Bleek 1956: 72), and Hie *jii*, synonyms *ji* and *hi* 'tree' (Bleek 1956: 72).

The word *hie* and its synonyms in the various languages thus occur far more frequently in the sense of 'bush, tree, wood' than in the sense of 'open country, the veld', and the chances of the ethnonym *Hietšware* meaning 'bush people' are accordingly greater than 'veld people'. This probability is increased by the occurrence of other ethnonyms with the same or related meaning. *Hei-//um*, also written *Hai-//um*, given by Bleek (1956: 59) as the Naron name for a tribe living near the Etosha Pan in Namibia, is said to mean 'bush-

sleepers', from 'Nama *beib*, bush, //om, to sleep, bush-sleepers' (Bleek 1956: 59). The component *Hei-* is thus cognate with the San words for 'bush' as above, the component //um is the Naron word 'to sleep, become sleepy' (Bleek 1956: 628), cognate with the Nama word //om 'to sleep' (Rust 1960: 53).

!O !kuŋ is given by Bleek (1956: [iii]) as the name of a tribe living in the eastern half of central Angola. Bleek (1929: 26) gives the name as !'o !kuŋ. The !O !kuŋ word !'o means 'bush' (Bleek 1929: 25), !kuŋ is the !O !kuŋ word for 'people' (Bleek 1929: 65), the ethnonym !O !kuŋ, !'o !kuŋ, thus meaning 'bush people', 'Forest Bushmen' (Bleek 1956: 489).

It is worthy of note that the words that comprise the ethnonyms are words from the languages spoken by these peoples, suggesting that these were the names given to the people by themselves, since people speaking other languages would presumably not know the words concerned but rather use words in their own language. The words *hie* 'bush' and *ifware* 'men' are words in the Hie language; thus *Hietfware* is the name of these people for themselves. Similarly !o is the !O !kuŋ word for 'bush', !kuŋ is the !O !kuŋ word for 'people', and !O !kuŋ thus the name of these people for themselves.

The form of the name 'Boesman', with the diphthong *oe*, was first recorded in 1752 as *Boessiesmans*, and subsequently in 1776 as *boesemans*, in 1780 as *boessemans* and *boesiemans*, in 1785 as *boessimans*, and in 1787, 1788 and subsequently as *Boesmans* (Nienaber 1989: 201-2). There is no such word as *boes* in Afrikaans, and various attempts at explaining the origin of the name *Boesman(s)* are encountered, linking the word to the Dutch word *boesman* or *boezeman* 'gnome, elf, imp', or 'hobgoblin, ogre, chimera' (Nienaber 1989: 198-201). Nienaber (1989: 204-5) himself refutes these explanations, pointing out that the role played by bushes in the lives of the hunter-gatherers, and the fact that practically all early writers linked the names *Bosjesman*, *Bushman*, *Buschmann*, *Hommes des buissons* and the like to "bushes", points to the obvious etymology. He concludes that *boes* is a substandard or 'plat' pronunciation of the word *bos*, the pronunciation of *oe* for *o* a variation encountered from the second half of the eighteenth century in such

words as *Stellenboes* for *Stellenbosch*, *landdroes* for *landdroes* (magistrate), and the like (Nienaber 1989: 188, 208).

An alternative explanation for the pronunciation of *Boesman* involves San influence. In Afrikaans the diphthong *oe* is pronounced like the vowel *u* in the word *Bushman*. Nienaber (1989: 189) emphasises that “Die naam *boesman* het [...] nie uit *bosman* gekom nie, dit is nie uit die eenlettergrepige vorm *bos* nie, maar uit die tweelettergrepige vorm wat op *bossies* teruggaan”.<sup>7</sup> The San lip click, or bilabial click,  $\Theta$ , is comparable to the bilabial consonant *b*, the former being ingressive, the latter egressive. In the ≠Khomani San dialect the back close vowel phoneme *u* is variously heard as back close *u* or as back half-close *o* (Bleek 1956: 246). This variation in pronunciation permits the word  $\Theta$ 'osi 'tree, bush' to be pronounced and heard also as  $\Theta$ 'usi, or, in Afrikaans, *boesie*, a word readily recognisable as the first component of *Boesiemans*, *Boessimans*, *Boesmans* and the like. The ethnonym *Bossiemans* was heightened to *Boessi(e)mans* under the influence of San, and abbreviated to *Boesmans* by elision of the unstressed particle *i(e)*.

The ethnonym *San* is often regarded as being derived from a Khoekhoe verb *sā* plus the third person common plural ending *-n* 'people'. Thus, for example, Vedder (1939: 78), noting that the chief article of these people's diet is the food that grows wild in the veld, interprets the name as 'the gatherers', derived from the Nama verb *sā* 'to gather, pick up (from the ground)', 'auflesen, aufraffen (vom Boden)' (Kroenlein 1889: 293). The symbol  $\bar{a}$  indicates that the vowel is a long one, for which reason the ethnonym is also encountered as *Saan*. The final *-n* of the name *San* is the third person plural common ending, 'people'. This meaning of 'gatherers' is also accepted *inter alia* by Westphal (1971: 369) and Louw (1974: 46). However, Budack (1969: 211) points out that on the basis of tone the meaning of the name *San* as 'gatherers' is not viable:

Die tonologischen Unterschiede zwischen Verbum und Substantive rufen jedoch Zweifel an der Richtigkeit dieser Deutung hervor, weil dem Nama die Möglichkeit einer Ableitung durch Tonveränderung fremd ist (nach einer mündlichen Mitteilung von

7 “The name *boesman* did [...] not come from *bosman*, it is not derived from the monosyllabic form *bos*, but from the disyllabic form that goes back to *bossies*”.

Prof. Dr. Köhler). Meine Gewährsleute artikulierten das Wort *sāb* ohne Ausnahme mit einem Tiefton von gleichbleibendem Niveau. Das Verbum *sa* hörte ich dagegen in einer Tonstufe, die etwas tiefer zu liegen scheint, als der Mittelton zwischen *sāb* und dem Verbum *sā* in der Bedeutung 'verfehlen'.<sup>8</sup>

Nienaber (1989: 834-5) notes Budack's linguistic argument against the meaning of San as 'gatherers'. He rejects other explanations of the name such as 'pariahs, servants, subjugated ones; aborigines or settlers proper; the original inhabitants; those who sit and enjoy their leisure', and the like (Nienaber 1989: 831), concluding:

Die eindresultaat is dat geen enkele van hierdie 'taalassosiatiewe' verklarings wetenskaplik oortuigend verantwoord is nie. Dit is die huidige stand van sake (Nienaber 1989: 835).<sup>9</sup>

*San* is an adaptation of an older form of the name. Gordon (1779, Map 3) notes that "de Bosjesmans [...] hieten sig Saana of Saanaqua (in vorige tijden Sonquas genaamt)".<sup>10</sup> *Sonquas*, and the Afrikaans form *Sonkwās*, are considered to be variants or developments of *Soakwas*, *Soäquas*, *Söaquas*, *Souquas*, *Sounquas*, *Soanquas* and the like, as encountered *inter alia* in the Diary of Jan van Riebeeck (Nienaber 1989: 845, Bosman & Thom 1955 II: 54 n 4).

Nienaber (1989: 846) points out that during the first 15 years of official record-keeping by the Dutch, the name *Sonqua* was recorded only twice. By contrast, the form *Soaqua* occurred 36 times in the same period, *Soäqua* 12 times, and *Souqua* five times. He poses the question whether there is a connection between *Soaqua* without nasalisation and *Soanqua* and variants with nasalisation; in other words:

8 "The tonal distinctions between verb and noun, however, cast doubt on the correctness of this meaning, because the possibility of a derivation on the basis of tonal changes is foreign to Nama (according to oral information from Prof. Dr. Köhler). My informants without exception articulated the word *sāb* with a deep tone of constant pitch. The verb *sa* on the other hand I have heard in a tone, that seems to lie somewhat deeper than the middle tone between *sāb* and the verb *sa* in the meaning of 'missing'."

9 "The end result is that not a single one of these 'language-associative' explanations has been convincingly validated scientifically. That is the present state of affairs".

10 "the Bosjesmans [...] call themselves Saana or Saanaqua (Sonquas in former times)".

... is hulle twee verskillende name vir verskillende stamme of verskillende name vir dieselfde stam? Anders gestel: is *Soakwa* net 'n wisselspelling van *Soankwa/Soukwa/Sonkwa* of nie? Daarmee hang dit met die vraag saam of die grondwoord *so* of *son* is. Indien *so*, het ons geen wenk nie, indien *son*, het ons wel 'n wenk (Nienaber 1989: 849).<sup>11</sup>

The San are known to have been adept at hunting with a bow and arrow, using the scant undergrowth of the environment as cover, sometimes carrying a bush with them as camouflage, and having the ability to blend in with the surroundings by remaining motionless, suddenly disappearing among the bushes and shrubs, as it were. (Nienaber 1989: 837, 858) accordingly interprets the component *Son-* of the name *Sonqua* as perhaps being the same word as Khoekhoe *son* "verschwinden (plötzlich; von etwas, das man soeben noch deutlich sah)" (Kroenlein 1889: 301).<sup>12</sup>

This explanation has merit from a logical point of view, but it is based on a more recent spelling and on a presumed Khoekhoe origin. The suffix *-qua* in these ethnonyms, written *kwa* in Afrikaans, has been interpreted as the Khoekhoe masculine plural meaning 'men, people'. It was similarly assumed that the root of the name was also of Khoekhoe origin, and all attempts at explaining the meaning of the name have been based on that assumption.

As stated earlier, Gordon (1779, Map 3) remarks that the Bushmen called themselves *Saana* or *Saanaqua*. Between the years 1779 and 1802 Somerville (1979: 74) stated that "They call themselves *Saan* [...] sometimes *Càanna*". Wangemann (1872 I: 160) says "Er selbst nennt sich *Saab* (Mehrzahl *Saan*)".<sup>13</sup> Merensky (1875: 65) speaks of "die Buschleute oder *Saan*, wie sie sich selber nennen".<sup>14</sup> If *Sa(a)n(a)qua* is indeed the San name for themselves, and if it was given by themselves, then the components of the name are presumably not from Khoekhoe, but from San.

11 "are they two different names for different tribes or different names for the same tribe? Phrased differently: is *Soakwa* merely a variant spelling of *Soankwa/Soukwa/Sonkwa* or not? In this regard it is linked to the question whether the root is *so* or *son*. If it is *so*, we have no suggestion, if *son*, we do have a suggestion"

12 "vanish (suddenly; of something that was still clearly visible a moment ago".

13 "He calls himself *Saab* (plural *Saan*)".

14 "the Bushmen or *Saan*, as they call themselves".



The variants *Soaqua*, *Souqua*, *Soäqua*, *Sonqua*, *Soanqua*, *Sounqua* and the like all have the suffix *qua*, Afrikaans *kwa*, in common, thought to be the Khoekhoe masculine plural ending (Nienaber 1989: 485). Several San languages have words similar to *qua* or *kwa* that mean ‘people’, namely //ŋ !ke !*kwa* (Bleek 1956: 420), Auen \_!*kwā* ‘men’ (Bleek 1929: 56), Kung ≠*kwa*-i ‘people’ (Bleek 1956: 666). The component *qua/kwa* of the ethnonym under discussion is cognate with these words, “cognate” (of words) being understood as “related in a manner that involves borrowing rather than descent from or as well as descent from an ancestral language” (Gove 1961: 440).

The question then arises: what does the first part of the name *Soaqua* and its variants mean, and, as Nienaber noted, whether these are all variants of the same ethnonym, or different names for different groups. An analysis of the occurrences of these forms indicates that three different meanings are involved.

The first of these is *Visman(s)* ‘fish men’. In the diary of Jan van Riebeeck, references are made on 9 January 1653 to “Visman (by haer Soaqua genaemt)”,<sup>15</sup> on 6 March 1654 to “de Vismans (Soaqua onder haer genaemt)”,<sup>16</sup> on 3 April 1655 to “Souquaas, Visman genaempt”,<sup>17</sup> and on 4 April 1655 to “Soaquaa [hier die Vismans]”<sup>18</sup> (Bosman & Thom 1952 I: 115, 204, 300, 301).

Up to this point the *Soaqua(a)s* or *Souqua(a)s* have been identified as the *Vismans* (‘fish men’) every time they are mentioned. Nienaber (1989: 846) states that the *Vismans*, in addition to living off the sea, also took to raiding cattle from (other) Khoekhoe and driving them into the mountains, so that the name *Souquas* took on the additional connotations of ‘robbers, thieves’, and ‘mountain people’. This development is reflected in the form of the name and in its identification. Thus on 14 July 1656 an entry reads “Soanqua [...] offte struyckroovers”;<sup>19</sup> on 16 July 1657 we read “de struyckroovers, Soanqua genaempt”, “the bandits [bush-robbers], called Soanqua”,

15 “Visman (called Soaqua by them)”.

16 “the Vismans (called Soaqua among them)”.

17 “Souquaas, called Visman”.

18 “Soaquaa [here the Vismans]”.

19 “Soanqua [...] or bandits (literally ‘bush-robbers’)”.

and on 31 October 1657 “Soanqua sijn struyckrovers”<sup>20</sup> (Bosman & Thom 1952 II: 54, 56, 188).

A third spelling of the name is *Söaquas*, equated with *bergvolcq* ‘mountain people’. Thus on 18 December 1660 an entry in Van Riebeeck’s Diary reads “de Söaquas, sijnde bergvolcq”;<sup>21</sup> on 20 December 1660 “de Söaquas, het bergvolcq”;<sup>22</sup> on 20 January 1661 “de Söaquas, synde bergvolcq”;<sup>23</sup> on 11 March 1661 “de Soaquas, offte de Bergh-Hottentoots”;<sup>24</sup> on 23 April 1661 “de Soaquas, offte ’t Berghvolck”,<sup>25</sup> and on 27 November 1661 “de Soaquas, het berghvolcq”<sup>26</sup> (Bosman & Thom 1957 II: 312, 314, 318, 342, 360, 420). The mountains where these *Berghvolcq* lived have been identified as the Hawequa Mountains in the Worcester district, and the mountains at Meerhofskaasteel (Nienaber 1989: 847). The *Soakwas* or *Berghottentoots* [“Die Soakwas is hier wel San of Boesmans”<sup>27</sup>] were encountered in the vicinity of the Hantamsberg and Nardousberg (Nienaber 1989: 183).

It is evident from the above that there are three groups of names, each with a given meaning: *Soaquas*, *Souquaa*s, *Soaquaa* ‘Vismans’ (fish men); *Soanqua* ‘struyckrovers’ (bush robbers); *Söaquas* ‘Bergvolck’ (mountain people.)

Applying onomastic methods that have been utilised elsewhere (Nienaber 1989) indicates a strong tendency for European ethonyms to translate indigenous ones. For example, *Rooivolk* ‘red people’ has the same meaning as *Aba-eis*; *Regsbande* ‘right-hands’ has the same meaning as *Amkakua*; *Bontes* ‘dappled ones’ as *Karabers*; *Bondelswarts* ‘bundle-blacks’ as *Gaminun*; *Spinnekoppe* ‘spiders’ as *Hunsingais*; *Snyers* ‘cutters’ as *Kaukau*, and *Towenaars* ‘sorcerers’ as *Keichaeis* (Nienaber 1989: 93, 120, 213, 575, 342, 507, 588, 594). The Dutch names of *Vismans* ‘fish

20 “Soanqua are bandits [bush-robbers]”.

21 “the Söaquas, being mountain people”.

22 “the Söaquas, the mountain people”.

23 “the Söaquas, being mountain people”.

24 “the Soaquas, or the mountain Hottentots”.

25 “the Soaquas, or the mountain people”.

26 “the Soaquas, the mountain people”.

27 “The Soakwas are indeed the San or Bushmen”.

men', *Struyckroovers* 'bush robbers' and *Berghvolcq* 'mountain people' similarly translate the indigenous ethnonyms.

In the case of *Souqua*, as shown above, the component *qua* means 'people'. The component *Sou-* means 'fish', cognate with the Kung words //ou and //au, the !O !kuŋ word //au (Bleek 1956: 518, 626), and the !Xuhn word //au (Weich 2004: 163). In each case the unvoiced fricative consonant *ʃ* in the ethnonym is comparable with the unvoiced retroflex fricative click //̤. In the variant form *Soaqua(a)*, the component *Soa-* is perhaps comparable with the component ≠choa and /xoa 'fish' in the !Ora words ≠choasina and /xoa-sen-s 'Fischbaken', 'fish hook' (Nienaber 1963: 502). In these cases the unvoiced alveolar fricative consonant *ʃ* substitutes the unvoiced alveolar plosive and alveolar fricative clicks ≠ and /, respectively (Bleek 1929: 13).

The variability of the vowel clusters *au* and *ou* are evidenced in Cape Khoi words for 'fish', namely *b ou*, recorded in 1655; *k'auw*, recorded in 1691; *tkaum*, recorded in 1705 and 1708; and in Eastern Cape dialectal *t'gaum* recorded in 1775-76, and *Δko oup*, recorded in 1805 (Nienaber 1963: 501). The initial consonants *b*, *k'*, *tk*, *t'g* and *Δk* in these words are attempts at writing the click sounds; the old Khoe-San words are characterised by velar releases or effluxes (*k*, *g*) that no longer occur in the "modern" words (Nienaber 1963: 502). The final bilabial consonants *-m* and *-p* are the voiced and unvoiced variants of the Khoe-San masculine singular marker, the stem of the words for 'fish' in each case being *au(w)* or its variant *ou*.

The variants *Soanqua* and *Sounqua*, used to refer to *struyckroovers*, are consistently recorded with a nasal, *n*. The word *struyckroovers*, as noted earlier, literally means 'bush robbers.' There are two possible explanations of this name, depending on who bestowed it. If the name was given by the Khoekhoe or Hottentots, the component *Soa(n)* or *Sou(n)* is cognate with Nama //khou-na 'rauben', 'to rob' (Kroenlein 1889: 216), the unvoiced alveolar fricative *ʃ* reflecting the unvoiced retroflex fricative click //̤, the component *qua* the third person masculine plural ending, meaning 'men' or 'people'.

If, on the other hand, the name is of San origin, and the name was bestowed by themselves, *struyckroovers* or 'bush robbers' would be a

partial translation. The San would not have called themselves 'robbers', but 'people', as reflected in the suffix *qua* 'people', cognate with the San words *!kwa*, *!kwā*, *!kwā̃*, and the like. The component *Soan* 'bush' is comparable with the Nogau word *!goa* 'wood, forest' (Bleek 1956: 384). The vowel cluster *oa* in the component *Soan* corresponds to the vowel cluster *oa* in the word *!goa*, the alveolar fricative *ʃ* of the ethnonym, with nasalisation expressed as *n* in the component *oun*, approximating the palato-alveolar click *!* with nasal efflux, the click and nasal pronounced together, "although for convenience sake the click is placed first in writing" (Bleek 1956: 368).

The variant *Soun* is comparable to a San word similar to the *!O* *!kuŋ* word *!gāu* 'bush' (Bleek 1929: 25), the symbol *ˉ* denoting a high tone, the nasal *n* of *Soun* reflected by the tilde, the diphthongs *au* of *!gāu* and *ou* of *Soun* being variable.

In the name *Sōaquas*, translated as *Bergbvolcq* 'mountain people', the component *qua(s)*, and the component *kwa* of the Afrikaans equivalent *Sōakwas*, means 'people, folk', comparable to the *//ŋ* *!ke* word *!kwa* (Bleek 1956: 420). The component *Sōa* should then mean 'mountain'. Consideration has been given to the Naron word *≠gnoa* 'mountain, stone, rock' (Bleek 1956: 647), and to the Hie word *!goa* 'mountain' (Bleek 1929: 59). In the former case the alveolar click with voiced and nasal efflux *≠gn* approximates the alveolar fricative *ʃ*, the diaeresis in the component *Sōa* of the ethnonym probably indicating vocalised nasalisation in the digraph *ōa* as surmised by Nienaber (1989: 850). In the latter case, *!goa*, the palato-alveolar click with voiced efflux *!g* approximates the alveolar fricative with vocalised nasalisation in the component *Sōa*. Similarly, the Naron words *//nōa* 'hill', *//noa* 'kopje' (Bleek 1956: 620), and the */Auni* word *//wa* 'hill' (Bleek 1956: 629) could be permissible cognates for *Sōa* 'mountain', the unvoiced alveolar fricative *ʃ* corresponding to the unvoiced retroflex fricative click *//*.

Bleek & Lloyd (1911: 144) give *!kaoken-ss'o-!e* as the */Xam* name for the Berg Bushmen, and Traill (2007: 147) states that *Swey ei*, the name given by the colonists to the Sneeu-berg San, is probably derived from *ss'o-!e*. In these cases the component *!e* means 'people' (Bleek 1956: 419), the same meaning as that of the suffix *qua(s)* of the name *Sōaquas*.

The three ethnonyms *Söaquas*, *!kaoken-ss'o-!e* and *ss'o-!e*, referring to 'mountain people', namely *Bergbvolq*, Berg Bushmen and Sneeu-berg San, all contain the element *s(s')o*. One might have thought the component *ss'o* to be cognate with the /Xam word *s'o* and its synonyms *so* and *fo* 'to be at, remain at, live there' (Bleek 1956: 181), but then a name such as *ss'o-!e* 'people who are there' or 'people who live there' would be contrary to the intention of a name, namely to identify the bearers and distinguish them from others. Meanings which are indeed distinctive are *Söaquas* 'mountain people', *ss'o-!e* 'snow mountain people' and *!kaoken-ss'o-!e* 'mountain people'. The occurrence of the element *So(a)*, *So(n)* and *s(s')o*, common to each of these names, points to the component *So* or *ss'o* meaning 'mountain'.

Nienaber (1989: 845) points out that editors and annotators usually assume that *Soaquas*, *Soäquas*, *Söaquas* and *Sonquas* are merely spelling variants of *Sonquas*. Dapper (Nienaber 1989: 854) indicates that "De *Sonquas* is een volk, dat zijn woonplaets in heel machtigh hoogh gebergte heeft".<sup>28</sup> The name *Sonquas* could indicate the place of abode of these people. In discussing the name *Sonqua*, or *Sonkwa*, Nienaber (1989: 849) posed the question whether the root is *So* or *Son*. On the basis of the translation of *Bergvolq* it appears that the root is indeed *So*, cognate with *ss'o* 'mountain', or an adaptation thereof, as indicated above. The component *nqua* or *nkwa* is then cognate with the Auen word *!kwã* 'men' (Bleek 1929: 56), the nasalisation of the word *!kwã*, indicated by the tilde, represented by the nasal *n* in the component *nqua*, *nkwa* 'men', *Sonkwa* therefore meaning 'mountain men.'

## 1. A derogatory term

From an early date the term 'Bushman' was used at the Cape "toeg[epas] op 'drosters en (struik)rowers' [...] en ook op Sonkwas (Boesmans)"<sup>29</sup> (Boshoff & Nienaber 1976: 173). Kolbe (1727 I: 453-4) states that "in 't gemeen worden de genen, die zich met stelen generen, Boschjes-

28 "The *Sonquas* are a people who have their place of abode in very mighty high mountains".

29 "applied to deserters and bandits [...] and also to Sonkwas (Bushmen)".

mannen [...] genaamt";<sup>30</sup> and (Kolbe 1727 I: 479) "dat onder alle deze Natien [...] godloze deugnieten gevonden worden [...] Alle dezen noemt men Boschjes-Mannen, of anders Struikrovers en dieven".<sup>31</sup>

The term *Bushman* was thus regarded as derogatory (Omer-Cooper 1987: 3), and "to be called a 'Boesman' was to be hurled an insult second to none" (Skotnes 2007: 70). Consequently a less hurtful term was sought, and for a long time the prevailing opinion was that the term 'San' should be used. However, the terms 'Bushman' and 'San' are not necessarily synonymous. Vedder (1938: 78-9) distinguishes between two branches of the "Bushman race", namely the San and the Bushmen. He recorded that at the time of writing the San were to be found in the west and middle of South West Africa (now Namibia), in the Namib Desert and the environs of the Orange River, with large numbers occurring in the districts of Outjo and Grootfontein. By contrast, the Bushmen inhabited the areas further to the east. Levinson (1961: 45-6) regards the Bushmen as the original inhabitants of the subcontinent, stating that:

In ancient times the Bushmen were displaced by the encroaching Saan; [...] the Heikom [are] generally incorrectly classed as Bushmen, but [...] are in fact the last remnants of the Saan tribe.

#### In due course

... the term 'San' gained greater currency, perceived as a more respectful term than 'Bushman', and the San were identified as the authors of the [rock] art [...] Ironically, instead of elevating the Bushmen from their status as underclass, new insights into the production and meaning of rock art served rather to establish the 'San' as a separate category of people, distinct in many ways from 'Bushman' in the popular imagination (Skotnes 2007: 71).

Perceptions and sentiments differ from person to person and from time to time. As Skotnes (2007: 45) points out:

Authors must choose to use the terms Bushman or bushman, San or hunter-gatherers, Khoisan or Khoesan, !kun or !kung, and so on. Each choice is accompanied by a disclaimer, each represents a

30 "in general those who live by stealing are called Bushmen".

31 "that ungodly good-for-nothings are found among all of these nations [...] All of these are called Bushmen, or otherwise Bandits [literally 'bush-robbers'] and thieves".

struggle to settle on a given label. With each label, a history of use is inferred and a particular identity, shaped by popular conception or by scholarship, is conferred. These inferences have not been stable and have shifted with time and the politics of naming and identity.

A multidisciplinary symposium held in June 1971 recommended that the term *San* be used for biological purposes (race, physical type, and so on) when referring to the hunter-gatherers of Southern Africa, and the term *Bushman* for matters relating to the languages spoken by these people (Jenkins & Tobias 1977: 51). The matter was again debated at a symposium held at the University of Cape Town in 1996, and in November 2008 an anonymous reviewer of an article that was submitted to a South African names journal stated that “Bushman is again acceptable, I believe. The term *San* is a derogatory Khoi name for the Bushmen.”

A perusal of the Internet on 14 February 2009 indicated that there are still divergent views on the matter, as can be discerned from such statements as the following:

The name ‘Bushmen’ is an insulting name given to them by others;<sup>32</sup> Although some consider the name Bushmen derogatory as well, it is less so than the term San;<sup>33</sup> The names *San* and *Basarwa* are sometimes used, but the people themselves dislike these names and prefer the name ‘Bushmen’;<sup>34</sup> the name ‘Bushmen’ has only recently become acceptable to some speakers of Hei //om, Ju’hoan, !X/uu, Kxoe, Nharo and other groups;<sup>35</sup> The different tribes and clans started using the name Bushmen. But political correctness proclaimed this an insult and declared they should be referred to as San. Where Bushmen merely means they are people of the bush (or close to nature), San was a Khoi word meaning vagrants, people who have nothing. And because of this misguided correctness we now use the more derogatory name for our first inhabitants.<sup>36</sup>

It appears that sentiments are changing, and that the term *San*, once preferred to *Bushman*, is increasingly regarded as derogatory, while the term *Bushman*, perceived as a more neutral term, is once

32 <[www.urcic.org.uk/cfl.php](http://www.urcic.org.uk/cfl.php)>

33 <[www.diversitysouthafrica.co.za/khoi.html](http://www.diversitysouthafrica.co.za/khoi.html)>

34 Kids.Net.Au-Encyclopedia> Kalahari Desert.

35 ≤[www.jstor.org/sici](http://www.jstor.org/sici)≥

36 <[www.southafrica.com/forums/open-board/5901-whats-name.html](http://www.southafrica.com/forums/open-board/5901-whats-name.html)>

again acceptable. However, in view of the adverse publicity given to *Bushman* over a long period of time, it will be some time before it is universally accepted and used.

## 2. Conclusion

The spelling of names of ethnic groups by Europeans and the meanings attached to them are more reliable than hitherto realised. Dutch ethnonyms have frequently proven to be translations of Khoisan ones. This pattern has given new clarity to the names of the *Souquas* or *Vismans*, *Sounquas* or *Struickroovers*, *Söaquas* or *Berghvolcq*, and so on. The uncertainty as to which term to employ, *Bushman* or *San*, may be reduced or eliminated by considering the true etymology of these names. *San* is not a Khoekhoe name, but derived from names by which the Bushmen (or San) called themselves, derived from older forms of which the meanings have been preserved through translation, and which could be retrieved by the application of onomastic techniques.

A study of ethnonyms of San origin provides an increase in the number of cognate words forming components of these names, laying the foundation for insights into the relationship between San languages. Similarly, an enlarged corpus of San words will shed light on sound shifts. "The discovery of some cognate words [...] holds the promise of exciting new directions for an issue that has remained unsolved for the past century" (Traill 1978: 146).



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