Entangled Networks: Ethnicity, Mobility, and Exchange in the Lower !Garib / Orange River Region in the Late 18th Century

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Introduction

This chapter examines a newly available 18th-century source in order to reconstruct dynamic group networks in the predominantly Khoi-speaking and mobile pastoralist communities of the arid Lower !Garib / Orange River region beyond the Cape Colony's northern border.[1] The digitised, complete journal manuscripts of the Dutch expedition leader Robert Jacob Gordon, who travelled along the Lower !Garib / Orange River in July-December 1779 for scientific reconnaissance, go far beyond the earlier published versions of a portion of Gordon's papers in their details and complexity. This digital humanities resource offers new clues about the entangled genealogical and exchange networks of Africans and newcomers in this region.[2] These insights trouble a range of assumptions in historical literature on 'Khoisan' societies in 18th-century colonial southern Africa.

1 I am grateful to many colleagues at the University of Namibia, Northwestern University, and the University of Basel for engaging with drafts of this paper and helping me refine its ideas. I am also indebted to the Mellon Foundation, the Council on Library and Information Resources, the Fulbright Commission, and the Swiss Federal Commission for Scholarships for Foreign Students (FCS) for support during my dissertation research and writing. Any errors are my own.

2 The complete digitised journals and drawings of Robert Jacob Gordon have been provided through a digital humanities partnership between the Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam, and The Brenthurst Library, Johannesburg. This material is available at https://www.robertjacobgordon.nl/ The majority of these journal entries also contain Dutch transcriptions and English translations through the website of this digital humanities project. Transcription and translations for this digital project include the work of: the late Patrick Cullinan, Duncan Bull, Geoffrey Badenhorst, Peter Raper, and Maurice Boucher.

Previous translations of Gordon's journals have been available to scholars but only from a portion of his papers and without the manuscript digitisation. See principally: Patrick Cullinan, *Robert Jacob Gordon, 1743–1795: The Man and His Travels at the Cape* (Cape Town: 1992). For a larger bibliography of past commentary and analyses of Gordon's travels as well as related research, see the 'bibliography' section at: https://www.robertjacobgordon.nl/about (last accessed: June 05, 2022).

Most South African historical literature has conveyed an impression of Khoi-speakers' arrangements of kinship as static. While some research has gone further by discerning from colonial source material dynamic flexibilities in mobile pastoral exchanges with hunters and foragers, these practices have been narrated as markers of economic and political weakness that destined these groups for decline following the entry of colonial capital in Southern Africa.

In the Lower !Garib / Orange River region, I argue that developing a view of the region's 'entangled networks' can address outstanding historical questions about varieties of African ethnicity and groupwork practiced by Khoi-speakers in the 18th century, while also challenging lingering stereotypes about these groups in a southern African historiography built on narrative conventions of colonial determinism and teleology. With the subject of 'groupwork,' I draw upon the recent work of David Schoenbrun, who demonstrates the usefulness of this analytical category in studying how Africans in the Great Lakes region thought about and built communities that both included and also transcended 'ethnic' or descent-based memberships in recent and much earlier pasts.[3] 'Entanglement' as a category embraces multi-directional flows of people, movement, and intellectual influences, which I set against a literature on colonial Southern Africa that has yet to dislodge 'acculturation' from the vocabulary of colonial-era intergroup exchange analysis. With 'networks', I attempt to unfasten assumptions about static kinship practices from scholarly descriptions of African groups around the Lower !Garib, while also signalling a sensitivity to the spatial dimensions of group-making among mobile pastoralists, mixed subsistence specialists, and newcomers in this region in the late 18th century. My chapter uses Gordon's notebooks as an entry point into reconsidering groupwork along the Lower !Garib in 1779. Groups of this region included layered and dynamic genealogical networks, as well as forms of belonging that transcended kinship and looked outward, far beyond the immediate context of the river.

This approach harmonises with trends in the archaeology and anthropology of neighbouring regions in the last decades, which has considered the 'the situational fluidity of social identity' among hunters, herders, and agro-pastoralists in the past, while also calling for deeper-time African histories that contextualise varied African responses to European arrival within a longer-term view toward African accommodation, resistance, stability, and change.[4] I argue that carefully revisiting 18th-century eyewitness sources can enhance the findings of innovative archaeology conducted in central and southern Namibia specifically, which has documented a dynamism in pastoral migration and alliance patterns. Furthermore, Gordon's notations call attention to

3 Schoenbrun 2021: p. 3 states that framing groupwork in 'broad terms relaxes ethnicity's grip on thinking about groups'. His study foregrounds the importance over the *longue durée* of groups in the Inland Sea region beyond both genealogical descent groups and royal state formations, focusing – in particular – on the groupwork glossed as 'clan' formation, among other examples of non-ethnic groupwork. Thus, his project 'resists ethnicity's power to dominate our attention by exploring other kinds of imagination, forms of assembly, and methods of division to understand African groupwork.' (p. 6).

4 See Denbow 1999: pp. 110–123; 110. These questions have been taken up extensively by historians, archaeologists, and anthropologists in the neighbouring region of the Kalahari. See, e.g.: Wilmsen 1989.

how material culture evidence deposited in the ground cannot account for all concepts, incentives, and imaginations that animated African groupwork values and decisions in the late 18th-century Lower !Garib / Orange River area. This chapter also demonstrates that taking 18th-century fragments of Khoi language concepts seriously through a critical engagement with ethnographic material can aid in the historical analysis of complex Lower !Garib region social formations and their spatial arrangements – particularly beyond the level of the mobile pastoral household that the archaeology of the region has already brought into view.

'Khoikhoi' ethnicity and groupwork in the colonial period: a deferred research agenda

Questioning the colonial and apartheid-era vocabulary of supposedly distinct 'Khoi' and 'San' ethnic entities became a project in southern African historiography in the 1970s. In a landmark 1972 article, Shula Marks revisited 17th- and early 18th-century Dutch East India Company (VOC) sources to question whether the 'Bushmen' (San) and 'Hottentot' (Khoi) categories described in colonial archives were in fact unstable distinctions and weak colonial approximations of much more complex African intergroup relations. A colonial report would typically describe 'Bushmen' ('*Bosjesmans*' in 17th/18th-century Dutch) when observing indigenous Cape people without livestock. The term 'Hottentot' was usually reserved for cattle-keepers. However, as Marks showed, subsistence and pastoral accumulation strategies could shift for African individuals and groups over the course of years.[5]

Although not addressed in the essay itself, Marks' work raises further questions about the meaning and uses of the ethnonyms employed by 17th- and 18th-century indigenous Cape people and by their associates further into the interior, in regions like the Lower !Garib. VOC scribes, as well as senior Company figures like Jan Van Riebeeck himself, made notes based on conversation with Khoi-speaking translators such as Eva/Krotoa and Autshumao to indicate the African socio-political entities of the region in the late 17th century. 'Chainouqua' – 'Ubiqua' – 'Goringhaikona' – 'Cochoqua' – 'Gonaqua': these are among the group names recorded in VOC journals, many of which contained the suffix 'khoi' (rendered as '-qua'), meaning 'people'. Colonial writers of the 17th and 18th centuries mapped these entities onto specific locations around the Cape Peninsula, while simultaneously recording extensive evidence of the dynamism of movement and exchange practiced by these groups in their notations. Thus, even while Europeans used narrative and cartographical conventions that presumed the discovery of stable ethno-territorial units in Africa, their observations attested to the flaws of those assumptions. Yet, scholarship had tended to reproduce these maps and lists when naming the political entities of the early colonial Cape, without engaging the challenging questions of what these cat-

5 See Marks 1972, particularly pp. 55–80.

egories of belonging meant in practice or the nature of permeability in and between these groups.[6]

Marks' essay also helped demonstrate that VOC sources rarely provided clear indication of differences or uniformity in languages spoken by the Africans they described. It is likely that many of the 'Bushmen' dispossessed of cattle who are visible in the colonial Cape records were also Khoi-speakers sharing the same language as their cattle-keeping neighbours and kin. Linguists today distinguish between disparate San languages in Southern Africa that share no discernible etymological relationship with Khoi-family languages, while historians accept 'Khoisan' as a useful term for encompassing people speaking all these non-Bantu click languages and who primarily subsisted through mobile herding, hunting, and foraging. All of these non-Bantu southern African languages only collectively share phonological similarities in their multiple click sounds and tones. The VOC source writers of Marks' study were generally not interested in understanding or recording this level of ethnographic detail when describing their conflicts with 'Bushmen' stock raiders and or their trading with 'Hottentot' cattle keepers. In 1779, the VOC official Robert Jacob Gordon also used 'Bushman' as a shorthand for people without stock in the Lower !Garib region, even while his notations indicate that these were often people speaking a Khoi dialect along with pastoralist kin and other exchange partners. In some cases, he learned that people he initially assumed to be 'Bushmen' held cattle out of his view.

In the half-century since Marks' 1972 intervention, research addressing complexities in Khoi and San economies and social formations has been dominated by two agendas. In the 1980s and 90s, Marks' essay inspired the 'Kalahari Debate.' Here, historically-oriented anthropologists debated the time depth of the impoverishment and social marginalisation of 'Bushmen' or San hunting and foraging communities visible in the 20th century in the broader Kalahari region, encompassing parts of Namibia, Botswana and South Africa – an area adjacent to and overlapping with some parts of the Namaqualand region.[7]

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6 See, e.g., Marks 1972: p. 65. In a 1989 volume, the linguistics researcher G.S. Nienaber made the highly valuable contribution of compiling most known archival references to different Khoi 'tribes' of southern Africa – primarily of the Cape Colony, the Lower !Garib region, and South West Africa (Namibia) – by mining a wide variety of traveller and missionary reports. However, the study is predicated on the idea of tribal separateness, and thus engages little with how these groups may have been entangled spatially, genealogically, and economically. Only the word 'khoe' meaning 'people' (rendered as the suffix '-qua'), is discernible for translation in the ethnonym transcription examples above. Recently, Wilfrid Haacke's compelling article on the '[e]thnonym of the "Griekwa" or "Griqua"' investigates the Khoi-language contours of one ethnonym as it appears in 17th-century Cape colonial sources. Haacke locates the 'Charigurina' of van Riebeeck's records as the ǂ*Kharix-urina* (or 'little Xuri'), i.e., a group in a junior position to the more senior 'Xuri' group, who later migrated to the Orange River area and became known as the 'Xri' or 'Griqua' by the early 19th century. See: Haacke and Snyman 2019: pp. 267–328 and Haacke 2008: pp. 163–77.

7 The main proponents of the two sides of the debate were Richard Lee for the primordialists and Ed Wilmsen for the revisionists. See e.g.: Wilmsen 1989; Lee and DeVore 1976. In a 1992 essay titled *The Kalahari Debate: A Bibliographical Essay*, Alan Barnard provides a useful overview of the anthropological and historical texts related to the debate.

Secondly, regarding mobile pastoralists, the 'Khoikhoi' colonial-era history of the past decades has focused on forms of settler violence within the Cape Colony in its frontiers. This literature has tended to reproduce an older colonial narrative of the supposedly inevitable 'decline' and disappearance of Khoi-speaking mobile pastoralist groups throughout South Africa in the colonial period.[8] Importantly, this scholarship has documented colonial brutality as well as the increasingly genocidal dynamics of settler assaults on Cape indigenous pastoralists and hunters. Thus, it has enhanced historical understanding of the relationship between Khoi servitude, Cape slavery, the growth of settler land control, and emergent forms of anti-Black law and racial thought in South Africa before the 19th century.[9] However, these research projects typically centre colonial actors and intellectual frameworks as well as European language sources, leaving little room for indigenous visibility except for narrating the African suffering captured in court and administrative records. Beyond ill-fated attempts at 'resistance', the only other visible African cultural response in this literature is colonial assimilation. There has been a curious staying power in this southern African historical literature that tends to reproduce the logic of the colonial 'encounter' for Khoisan histories by reading an overwhelming asymmetry of European cultural and technological power in any interaction between Africans and colonial newcomers.[10]

Thus, we still have a limited understanding of the internal dynamics of indigenous mobile pastoral societies within and beyond the Cape Colony outside the flawed analytical categories of acculturation, as well as 'tribe.'[11] How exactly did Khoi-speaking mobile pastoralists interact with outsiders and with *each other* on the ground in the 18th century. On which terms did they conceive of group belonging and exclusion, however situationally, in the context of their complex regional economies of trade? These are questions that still lack precise answers.

I would contend that these lacunae have been a result of the types of historical questions asked and skillsets applied, rather than the qualities and varieties of available evidence. One revealing dynamic of knowledge production about 'Khoisan' history within the South African academy, for example, is that command of Khoekhoegowab (KKG) as a research language has never been an expectation for scholars working on colonial history topics involving Khoi-speakers, despite the possibility of language training or expert collaboration with KKG-speakers in Namibia and the availability of significant KKG

8 See, e.g., the central premise of Elphick's 1985 monograph: *Khoikhoi and The Founding of White South Africa*.

9 See, e.g., Newton-King 1999; Penn 2005 and Adhikari 2010.

10 For examples of critiques of the 'colonial encounter' paradigm in African history, see: Hunt 1999: pp. 7–11; Bernault 2019: pp. 8–11.

11 The most nuanced studies on cultural and political transformations among Khoi and San-speakers in the northwestern Cape through the 19th century tend, nonetheless, to emphasise only the qualities of colonial cultural assimilation that Africans engaged while building and rebuilding their communities: Legassick 1969; Legassick 1989: pp. 358–420. For a classic analysis of the Cape Peninsula and adjacent 'frontier' regions, albeit one that maintains the category of 'tribe', see e.g.: Elphick and Malherbe 1989: pp. 3–65.

language archives for the period before the 20th century.[12] The answers to our questions above will be grounded, in part, in studying Khoi-language intellectual categories and terms.

In the past decades, adjacent fields of archaeology and anthropology have provided methodologically sophisticated and empirically convincing counterpoints to historians' assumptions about colonial teleology and determinism in the decline of hunter, forager, and mobile pastoral economies in southern Africa, based on new studies of material culture and exchange in regions such as the broader Kalahari. Archaeology from southern Namibia and the Lower !Garib region, specifically, has also undermined a pervasive idea in the historical literature on Khoisan 'extinction'. That conventional logic has attributed to decentralised, mobile pastoralist societies, the trajectory of cultural and political deterioration following the advent of colonial capital interests due to the inherent 'weakness' of their social structure.[13] By contrast, recent archaeologies of the Lower !Garib region help clarify that flexible social structures in smaller mobile groups was an important feature in the high productivity of dryland pastoralism. Additionally, they show that pastoralists maintained control over their economy to the turn of the 19th century, even as Euro-American whalers at the Namibian coastline and settlers from the south vied for increasing access to cattle. The next section summarises these findings about mobile pastoral social structures from that archaeological material, before engaging with Robert Jacob Gordon's eyewitness clues and language inferences that can add complexity in recovering kinship imaginations, exchange relations, and other varieties of African groupwork in the entangled networks of the Lower !Garib region.

Interpreting the Materiality of Social Structure in the Namib Desert and Lower !Garib regions

Archaeological excavations at sites within the Namib desert region in today's Namibia provide the foundation for John Kinahan's analysis of the mobile pastoral economy of a broader southwestern African region before the 19th century. In Kinahan's reconstruction of mobile pastoralist practices, based on his team's stratigraphic excavations of a variety

12 Historians taking Khoekhoegowab and related dialects seriously in academic research has begun recently. This crucial change has been led by heritage speakers. See e.g., Biwa 2012. In the field of linguistics, Menán du Plessis has carried out interpretive work with !Kora sources that will be of great use to historians of the region. See e.g.: du Plessis 2017: pp. 123–137; du Plessis 2018. The scholarship on ǂXam informant oral histories and language archives, which mostly centres the source base of the late 19th-century Bleek and Lloyd projects, tends to approach ǂXam-speakers as well as Bleek and Lloyd's !Kora-speaking informants as relics of the past, to be placed within a colonial teleology of extinction. See e.g., Bank 2006; Penn 1991.

13 In a sentence from Marks' (1990: p. 77) essay that has not aged so well, Marks summarised that idea: 'In accounting for the ultimate disappearance of the Khoisan as an ethnic entity, their propensity for acculturation has thus to be taken into account, a propensity which must be closely linked to their loosely knit social organisation. They literally acculturated themselves out of existence.' For the 'weakness' argument made explicit, see: Elphick 1985*a*.

southern and central Namibian sites, Kinahan interprets that several overarching principles of indigenous social and economic organisation applied to the Lower !Garib river area and more southern regions of today's Western Cape in and before the 19th century.[14] These findings upend popular and scholarly narrations of precolonial and early colonial-era ethnicity and group-making practices in the region, which emerged from traditions of apartheid-era colonial ethnography and archaeology. Previous studies imparted an impression of static African group identities, in which clearly distinct genealogical and ethnic units or 'tribes' of Khoi-speakers could also be located at particular points in space. Instead, Kinahan found that 'the nomadic pastoral economy…does not admit of ethnic or geographical limits as rigid as those suggested by colonial historians and administrators.'[15] His rebuke of previous Namibian archaeology goes further to describe an unscientific practice that sought to validate assumptions about ethnicity through searching for supposed ethnic 'signatures' in the ground, rather than objectively testing and rejecting hypotheses about groupwork based on the empirical results of the archaeology.[16]

Kinahan states that 'while Namib pastoralism was highly productive, it lacked stable localized communities. This is consistent with nomadic herding under arid environmental conditions, which required a highly mobile herding pattern based on self-sufficient family groups.'[17] This concept of self-sufficient or 'autonomous' household groups is central to Kinahan's analysis. Furthermore, he extrapolates from trench work that while individual households certainly pursued alliance and association with others, '[a]lliances among these people were probably quite ephemeral, with a strong tendency to break up and recombine whenever circumstances affected the management of the herds.' Excavations at sites within the Hungorob and Zerissene areas document 'a long series of unique, temporary associations between autonomous pastoral families.'[18]

Households included dependents and could vary in size. Sites such as !Nâu-aib suggest that pasturage conditions determined the aggregation opportunities for multiple households, while we can also glean that 'aggregations were an opportunity for social intercourse, and the loose clustering of, particularly, simple huts reflects the complexity of the relations between autonomous households.' Simple huts, Kinahan finds, likely

14 Kinahan 2001. This analysis centres on sites from the Hungorob ravine as well as the !Khuiseb delta region. Kinahan's cross-referencing of these findings with Lower !Garib River area eyewitness descriptions of encampment practices from the early 19th century lends credence to the usefulness of Namib pastoralism archaeology for the Lower !Garib area.

15 Kinahan 2001: p. 126. Here Kinahan cites as examples Heinrich Vedder's 1938 writings on precolonial African ethnicity in South West Africa, as well as South African government archaeological reports on South West Africa from 1964. Map projections of distinct and tiled ethnicities dotting the Orange River area in the 18th century are reproduced in more recent scholarship such as Penn 2005: 157–169.

16 Ibid.: p. 126. Kinahan states: 'An uncritical acceptance of the colonial ethnography is indeed the unifying premise of earlier archaeological research in this area…[in which] the archaeological evidence could only reflect rather than evaluate the ethnography. In effect, archaeological research has often extended a spurious historical legitimacy to the notion that precolonial economies in the Namib were static and that cultural diversity could therefore only result from the immigration of people from elsewhere.'

17 Ibid.

18 Ibid.: p. 82.

reflected accommodation for 'men who lacked property and households of their own', and the occupants of smaller huts were probably connected to larger household relations nearby in a temporary encampment. Thus, considering differences of wealth in cattle and in people across different households and even within households, Kinahan found that '[t]he encampment sites therefore contain a simultaneous expression of outward tension in the community of autonomous families, and of the cohesion that is vital to their unity in aggregation.'[19]

Kinahan produces a highly dynamic view of mobile pastoral communities of the Namib region. He postulates that this picture of mobile pastoral families and their impermanent aggregations in the Namib also applies generally to the Lower !Garib area pastoral economy up to the 18th century. This view complements Gordon's 1779 eyewitness descriptions of small groups constantly on the move, in an arid environment where only certain locations along the river's high banks were suitable for temporary encampment. Furthermore, as Gordon's accounts corroborate, pastoralism was not the only strategy for daily subsistence, with other foraging, hunting, and food preservation strategies at play in 'a rather complex set of subsistence arrangements.'[20] Kinahan's findings suggest that pastoral households might recombine to form temporary larger household assemblages in patterns that were unpredictable and informed by contextual economic logic and dryland environmental factors. In this project, he does not formulate questions of whether other social conventions or kinship imaginations practiced by Khoi-speakers of the region could have incentivised or structured group aggregation and disaggregation.[21]

Thus, this illuminating archaeology of the mobile pastoral economy might yet overstate the ability of the material culture evidence to produce a conclusive account of the multiple groupwork strategies pursued by mobile communities of the region in the 18th century. Kinahan emphasised that 'the household unit was the basic economic entity of the pastoral community, and a key to interpreting the archaeological remains.'[22] We can accept this finding, while also looking out for evidence of economic and social incentives toward groupwork and concepts of collective self-identification that transcended

19 Ibid.: p. 77.

20 Ibid.: p. 114. Describing evidence from a site near Walvis Bay, Kinahan notes that: 'Evidence from the pottery and domestic animal remains show that the technology of pastoralism was one dimension of a rather complex set of subsistence arrangements.' On October 17–18th 1779 Gordon saw, for example, wicker traps for catching fish, traps for hunting larger animals such as rhinoceros, elephants, and hippopotamus, as well as hemp and dagga gardens. He was also presented provisions of 'finely pounded dried fish' by pastoralists of the Lower !Garib not far from Augrabies Falls. Robert Jacob Gordon Journals, Oct 17 1779, available at: https://www.robertjacobgordon.nl/travel-journals/fourth-journey/17th-October-1779. Robert Jacob Gordon Journals, Oct 18 1779, available at: https://www.robertjacobgordon.nl/travel-journals/fourth-journey/18th-october-1779.

21 Kinahan's recent work on shamanic practice in the Namib in earlier periods explores how archaeology can serve an entry point into questions about imagination, whether social or religious. See e.g.: Kinahan 2018: 40–62. On what the archaeological remains lack, he states: '…the shaman was a figure who belonged more to the imagination than to the material world – and by implication – the archaeological record', (p. 41). See also: Kinahan 2017: pp. 553–569.

22 Kinahan 2001: p. 126

the pastoral 'household unit' – evidence which might not have survived in the archaeological record or ever have been deposited in the ground. The following sections engage that agenda through a close reading of Gordon's journals and intriguing textual details about groupwork from the 18th- and relevant 19th-century documentary record.

Households in Motion: Family Assemblages and Larger Kinship Associations in Robert Jacob Gordon's Eyewitness Accounts

During the months of July to December 1779, the Dutch military official Robert Jacob Gordon took on the role of a colonial scientific explorer and kept a daily journal throughout his journey in ox-wagon, travelling several hundred kilometres north from Cape Town, past the official colony boundary of the Oliphants River. For all of Gordon's subjectivity and limitations as a European observer in this foreign African setting, his manuscripts nonetheless stand apart as the richest and most extensive ethnographic source from the region in the 17th and 18th centuries, surpassing the insights and details of the exploratory journeys of previous VOC officials and scientific travellers.[23] Below I attend closely to the ethnographic details that Gordon noted in his journal in 1779. I also discuss the problems caused by some of the blind spots of his colonial outsider positionality in using this particular source to probe kinship and exchange networks in the Lower !Garib area and interconnected regions.

An overarching theme in Gordon's journals from June to December 1779 is his observation of pastoral households constantly on the move. Furthermore, individuals and families engaged in pastoral mobility practices also claimed membership in a variety of networks, including ones that transcended ideas of descent. The observation of such dynamic pastoral assemblages aligns with archaeological findings on mobile pastoral household alliances in the larger Namib desert and Lower !Garib region. Gordon's transcriptions of Khoi language vocabulary about groups provide opportunities for historians to further examine the arrangement of Lower !Garib region communities. While Gordon's vocabulary reflects contemporary colonial assumptions about Africans' organisations into discrete, cultural nomad groups, Gordon recorded evidence day by day to the contrary when he observed group fluidities and network dynamism.

The first region Gordon visited after departing from Cape Town in late June 1779 was the area of the Kamiesberg mountains, north of the Oliphants River, which at the time served as the official boundary of the Cape Colony. Between the Kamiesberg and the mouth of the !Garib / Orange River at the Atlantic Ocean, Gordon encountered an arid country, with small encampments of cattle- and sheep-herders mostly camped on or near

23 Robert Jacob Gordon's Fourth Journey journals, hereafter 'RJG journals'. All digitised journal entries exist at the website: https://www.robertjacobgordon.nl/travel-journals/fourth-journey/fourth-journey/ . Other 17th- and 18th-century sources from Northern Cape frontier scientific expeditions include the accounts of: Van der Stel (1685); Hop and Brink (1761); Wikar (1779–80); Le Vaillant (early 1780s); and Paterson who travelled alongside Gordon (1779–80). Many of these journeys are addressed in: Huigen 2009. Paterson's independent account from his shared journey with Gordon lends validation to Gordon's own accounts. See Paterson 1789.

dry river beds, as long as sufficient grass lasted. The encampment locations were also selected for their potential for producing wells of groundwater – usually brackish – to be dug up for animals and people to drink. A scant few Dutch farmers rotated their stock throughout multiple sites in the region. They did this work with the assistance of Khoi-speaking herders, who went back and forth between herding for European associates and for relations at their own independent encampments.

The African encampment formations that Gordon observed in this area were frequently in the process of being packed up for relocation due to pasture giving out. On average, the encampments Gordon observed as he travelled through this area in June and July 1779 were composed of around 10 mat houses (called 'huts' by Gordon, or *oms* in singular in Khoekhoegowab), with a family of relatives and dependents occupying each mat house. An encampment headed by one chief called 'Noebee' – who also went by the alias 'Captain Wildschut' when among the Dutch farmers – was illustrative of these numbers. On the day Gordon first encountered the pastoral encampment led by Noebee/Wildschut, he saw nine discrete huts and about fifty people, with a maximum of four children in the group's larger nuclear families.

At Wildschut's encampment, a pattern emerged that Gordon would continue to encounter over the following five months in the region. Encampments often included some people with origins in areas much further away than the site of Gordon's inquiries. Thus, although the encampment members here counted themselves among the 'Klein Namaquas,' Gordon nonetheless encountered members who had been 'born in the Great Namaqualand,' to the north beyond the !Garib River.[24] Some time in their earlier lives, these individuals had survived a pestilence that left scars all over their bodies. They described the disease as having originated in areas yet further to the north.[25]

As outlined above, Kinahan's archaeology of the region indicates that pastoral households stayed and moved together as family units in this arid region. Gordon provides contemporary eyewitness evidence further supporting this interpretation of the archaeological record. After departing from the mouth of the !Garib / Orange River, Gordon met a group of self-identified 'Einiquas', who also appeared to be members of one family on the move. Gordon remarked upon their naming conventions:

> The Hottentots that I saw, Einiquas, all called themselves Naugaap: this is their family- or maternal name. But they also had another name; and thus one was called Naugaap Toenemap, Naugaap having been his mother's name; and daughters are called after their father.[26]

19th-century missionary reports and Nama oral traditions also record this naming convention, which is no longer practiced in the region today (where Christian names have become the norm). Within a family or household of Khoi-speakers in the broader !Garib

24 RJG journals, July 27th 1779. https://www.robertjacobgordon.nl/travel-journals/fourth-journey/27th-july-1779.

25 RJG journals, July 26th 1779. https://www.robertjacobgordon.nl/travel-journals/fourth-journey/26th-july-1779.

26 RJG journals, October 3rd 1779. https://www.robertjacobgordon.nl/travel-journals/fourth-journey/3rd-october-1779.

region, all sons were named after the mother, while all daughters were named for the father. If there were multiple sons or daughters in family, a secondary name such as 'Toenemap' above could distinguish an individual child. This additional name often indicated either their birth order among the siblings or an element of their individual personality.

After this meeting, Naugaap Toenemap became one of the guides for Gordon's onward expedition for several weeks. He travelled with Gordon's party further upriver a few hundred kilometres into to the more lush and environmentally hospitable area of Augrabies Falls, in the stretch of the river between present-day Kakamas and Upington in South Africa. Along the vegetation of the river in the otherwise expansive arid landscape, patterns Gordon began to see in the Kamiesberg intensified. At each of the numerous pastoral encampments he visited, everywhere Gordon viewed encampments in the process of physical relocation according to changing river water levels.[27]

Toenemap's insights and introductions as a guide revealed further complexities and interconnections of social groups in this area of the Lower !Garib. On October 15th Gordon reported: 'We saw a fire half a day's ride ahead of us. This, Toenema said, was either Anoe eijs or Helderkraal (Bright kraal) these being Bushmen without livestock, or Nemneiqua (or Karoskraal) who do have stock.'[28] When they approached the fire, the group was identified as the 'Anoe eijs'. However, the fact that either of these two groups was a reasonable guess from a distance for a local expert such as Toenemap further indicates that these groups moved frequently within this region, rather than residing at permanent location and in a stable sequence in relation to one another.

In the following days Gordon learned that the 'Anoe eijs' – a group without livestock at the time of Gordon's visit – counted themselves among the 'Einiquas.' It was apparently in the context of this larger 'Einiqua' network that Toenemap maintained a close friendship with members of this group. Gordon encountered this first 'Anoe eijs' pastoral encampment nearly two weeks' journey upriver from the location where Gordon had first met Toenemap and his brothers, who counted themselves as Einiqua. Later, a man from the 'Anoe eijs' whom Gordon recorded as 'Doëga' gave Gordon a tour of the waterfall area on October 17th, and indicated that his group frequently moved their encampment between the right and left banks of the river according to quickly-changing water conditions.[29] When Gordon travelled further up the river in the next days, he met members

27 RJG journals. See, e.g., the description from November 3rd 1779, when visiting an encampment of the 'Goeringneis': 'Here was a small, stony island with some thorn trees in the defile. Before we entered it a group from the second Goeringneis kraal approached us. A middle-aged man of medium stature called Tatabe Caboe was the Kaw waup or Kawkaup. After saying "tabé" I gave him a pipe of tobacco and they turned back with us. The defile was an hour from the first kraal of these Goeringneis, and after a quarter of an hour in it we reached an open place where the kraal was busy moving house. They will travel some distance down-river tomorrow. Their huts were therefore not completely put away. They too had 20 huts and a fair number of sheep, cattle and goats, although the first kraal had hidden many of its animals, as our Hottentots told us.' https://www.robertjacobgordon.nl/travel-journals/fourth-journey/3rd-november-1779 .

28 RJG journals, Oct 15th 1779. https://www.robertjacobgordon.nl/travel-journals/fourth-journey/15th-October-1779.

29 RJG journals, Oct 17th 1779. https://www.robertjacobgordon.nl/travel-journals/fourth-journey/17th-october-1779. See also the October 16th journal entry regarding movements across the banks.

of the Nemneiqua/ Karoskraal, wealthy in cattle, and learned that one of their two most senior leaders was in fact a brother of Doëga from the 'Anoe eijs' from the same mother (and thus, following Khoi naming conventions, this man was also called Doëga).[30]

Thus, groups and individuals of this region claimed membership in different scales of genealogical association – from larger groups such as 'Einiqua,' to smaller household assemblages such as the 'Anoe eijs' and 'Nemneiqua,' which often had strong links of kinship and friendship between them, even while their control of livestock varied.

Another pervasive type of group relationship that Gordon recorded evidence of all along the Orange River, was the aspect of *seniority* within subdivisions of a larger network. In his broader analysis of the African political traditions of outsider incorporation throughout the neighbouring Highveld region, Paul Landau identified the Geissiqua in Gordon's journals and other early 19th-century sources as 'twin court' people, describing such senior/junior and right river bank/left river bank pairings as '*moieties*', or two parts of whole.[31] Adding further nuance to this picture, Gordon's entries from October in the most densely populated part of the river indicated that 'moieties', or pairings of two groups, were not necessarily the most common quantity for group relations that implied seniority and junior status. More often, Gordon recorded three or more group subdivisions, as he marked the '*eerste*' (first), '*tweede*' (second), or '*derde kraal*' (third) of a larger group network on his map. Some of these notations might have merely indicated the order in which he encountered encampments of people who named affiliation to one larger group association. However, we know that the location of these groups shifted frequently. The ethnographic record of Khoi-speakers in Namaqualand in the 19th century implies that these subdivisions were organised around discourses of seniority rather than an ordered positioning of groups in space.[32] The origin of the distinction between so-called 'Great' Namaquas and 'Little' Namaquas, who were usually found north and south sides of the river, respectively, may also relate to this language of seniority and junior status. These groups could also practice multi-lingualism or incorporate speakers of different languages. For example, as Gordon followed the river further to the east, the 'Geissiqua' mobile pastoral encampments of Gordon's observation contained Tswana-speakers as well as Khoi-speakers.[33]

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30 RJG journals, Oct 18th 1779. https://www.robertjacobgordon.nl/travel-journals/fourth-journey/18th-october-1779 .

31 Landau 2010: p. 6

32 Theophilus Hahn was born on a Namaqualand mission station to a missionary father and was a rare European proficient in Khoekhoegowab. He became a 19th-century researcher of Khoi language and regional customs as well as a trader in Namaqualand. In one publication, he described tribute relationships ordered by seniority that linked groups of the Orange River to central Namibian groups into the 1860s: '…Certain it is that the Gei‖khous once ruled from the borders of Ovamboland to the mouth of Olifants river, and that all the tribes of Great and Little Namaqualand sent annually a tribute to the paramount chief, generally consisting of a heifer, buchu, spears, and copper or iron beads, and milk-tubs. The last tribute of that kind was paid in 1863; and in 1856 even from Koranaland the chief Poffadder came to do homage to ‖Oasib on ǂHatsamas, acknowledging that his tribe, the "Springbucks," were a branch of the Gei‖Khous'. See Hahn 1881: p. 97.

33 See Barnard 2008: pp. 61–75. Barnard uses !Kora ethnographic research from the early 20th century to interpret that the terms 'great' and 'little' could describe political alliances across the re-

'Ais', 'ǁAes', or '!Khais'?

The Khoi language evidence recorded by Gordon in his 1779–1780 journal presents challenges of interpretation. Gordon deserves further evaluation as a language witness if we are to make sense of inconsistencies and puzzles in his transcription attempts. Generally speaking, Khoi and San vocabulary proved very difficult for foreigners to accurately describe throughout southern African colonial traveller archives, in comparison to the vocabulary of Bantu languages which had fewer (or no) clicks, fewer tonal elements, and contained longer words which created more redundancies for the novice ear to latch onto and make sense of.

Gordon self-reflectively addressed these issues in a journal from a previous journey in 1777–78 in the Eastern Cape frontier, in a region where he encountered Khoi-speakers living alongside Bantu-language speakers of the Nguni family language that came to be called isiXhosa by the mid-19th century. Describing isiXhosa, Gordon observed that the language was 'very clearly pronounced' noting a full-throated, loud, 'vehement' manner of speaking that typically emphasised the penultimate syllable. By contrast, he described Khoi as extremely difficult for foreigners to speak and understand, although he did point to the existence of colonials he had met at the far eastern reaches of the colony who were practically fluent in Khoi ('*die seer coulant het hottentots spreken*'). This language competence in Khoi implied these distant settlers' close associations with Khoi-speaking herders, potentially from birth. Gordon indicated, correctly, the necessity of knowing exactly which click was used to understand the meaning of the word. In one puzzling notation, Gordon stated that he would only compile a list of Khoi words without clicks, suggesting that later readers of his work could then be sure of the words in question and their approximate pronunciation. His isiXhosa list in the same journal entry did not include this stipulation, despite it also being a language with clicks. Thus, his isiXhosa list was much longer and more detailed.[34] Gordon's omission of the vast majority of essential Khoi vocabulary in his personal journal was most likely a reflection of his uneasy grasp on the sounds of the language compared to isiXhosa, in which he was far more confident.

On the !Garib River region journey in 1779, Gordon did attempt to transcribe the words he heard repeatedly when asking new people to introduce themselves. These fragments are worthy of further analysis, while keeping Gordon's shortcomings, biases, and outsider position in mind. His notations suggest confusion over when and whether he was being given the word 'ais' (place, side), 'ǁaes' (one of several Khoi terms for a genealogical grouping, often translated today as 'clan'), or even '!khais' (point, place, spot, locality), whenever he indicated the term 'eis' or 'ëis' or 'eijs' to describe a people, as in the 'Anoe eijs', the 'Noekoekeis kraal', the 'Hoekingeis', 'Goeringeis', and the 'Nouw Eis Bushmen.'

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gion's mobile groups: '*establishing relations of "great" and "little", as the Khoekhoe say, not in terms of descent, but in terms of alliance.*' (p. 70). Following Engelbrecht's 1936 study of !Kora informants, Barnard summarised that the senior-junior juxtaposition could also describe family relations across different households (p. 73).

34 See: https://www.robertjacobgordon.nl/manuscripts/appendix-to-ms-107-1-2#page2; undated manuscript (MS 107/1/2) appendix to Gordon's Second Journey, from 6 October 1777 to 8 March 1778 in the Eastern Cape frontier.

To fluent speakers, the differences in sound and meaning between these three terms, 'ais', 'ǁaes', and '!khais', would be unmistakable. But to foreign ears, these three words could sound very similar except for the click consonant – and discerning between the clicks of 'ǁaes' and '!khais' could be a challenge to a new student. Because Gordon was inconsistent about notation with Khoi click sounds, as evidenced in his commentary above on reservations in compiling lists of Khoi vocabulary with clicks, it is hard to know whether his frequent notation 'eis' or 'eijs' implied a word without a click (which would likely be 'ais', place/side), or if Gordon was transcribing the word 'ǁaes' or '!khais'.

The question of whether indigenous interlocutors described the Scorpion 'people' or the Scorpion 'point' to Gordon and several other 18th-century travellers is indicative of this puzzle. Untangling this issue has consequences for how historians might interpret the relationship between groupness ideas and territorial identity at this point in the late 18th century in the !Garib region. On November 4th, 1779, Gordon described:

> [W]e marched along…. for a total of four and a quarter hours from our sleeping place until we came to the Hoekingeis which is the Scorpioenkraal of twenty huts, all the same as the ones already seen. They are also a very sturdy, well-made people. They were more accommodating than the previous kraals and we traded some beads and tobacco for a pack-ox.[35]

In 1981, the archaeologist A.B. Smith published a commentary on Gordon's 1779 route in which he noted that in the direct vicinity of the area on the Orange River where Gordon mapped the 'Scorpion kraal,' there was a contemporary place name called 'Skerpioen-punt', in Afrikaans.[36] Afrikaans place names in this region are often direct translations of earlier Khoi-language place names. By this time in the 20th century, no guides in the region had direct knowledge of the terms of membership for small, mobile, !Kora-identifying groups who had dissolved politically by the later 19th century. However, local use of this 'Scorpion' place name remained. Thus, it is possible that the 'scorpion kraal' Gordon encountered was in fact a mobile pastoral assemblage that had encamped at the 'scorpion point' on that day in November 1779. If we extrapolate from this inference, then Gordon's attestations of 'eis' names for 'kraals' in his journals might refer to locations of encampment that a variety of mobile groups could occupy depending on the date of the visit.

In another possible interpretation, some mobile groups may have developed a group name for themselves through association with a place, even while they migrated throughout the region. This relationship features in the common translation of the group name for the ǂAonin (Topnaar) of the Walvis Bay area, or 'people of the point.' The 'point' in this context may refer to the coast as a boundary or area of furthest margin before the sea, rather than a particular location in the natural harbour area. Khoi-speaking pastoralists of the Walvis Bay region come into archival view beginning with

35 RJG journals, Nov. 4th, 1779, https://www.robertjacobgordon.nl/travel-journals/fourth-journey/4th-November-1779 '*…marcheerden langs deselve op wy in het geheel vier en drie quartier uur van onse slaapplaats toen wy by de hoeking, eis synde Scorpioen kraal van 20 hutten alles als de voorsten quamen, (ook seer fris groot volk, sy waren williger als de vorige kralen en wy ruilden een draagos voor wat kralen en tabak.*'

36 Smith 1989: pp. 58–61 (Quoted in Nienaber 1989: 501).

late 18th-century whaler records as cattle bartering partners, while the archaeology of the !Khuiseb Delta indicates that these pastoral families migrated widely throughout the region for pasturage and were not permanently sedentary by the sand dunes at the coast.[37]

Gordon's journals contain some notable omissions of Khoekhoegowab genealogy categories. For one, he never indicated conversations about the concept of '!haos,' a significant genealogy term attested in the 19th-century ethnography of the region, which appears to have described related households that Europeans translated roughly as 'clans'. This omission hints at the likelihood that other relevant vocabulary about kinship and group-making did not come up in Gordon's interviews, or that he never discerned these additional nuances through translation.[38]

Groups beyond kin: 'Swimmers' or !Garib River Crossing Specialists

Reading within and around Gordon's manuscripts reveals a variety of other groupwork practices that transcended bounded geographies and networks of immediate family relation. On October 11th 1779, Robert Jacob Gordon made a note about a strategy for crossing the Lower !Garib river. This was a strategy that Europeans travellers in the region continued to remark upon throughout the early 19th century. Gordon and others described the bands of 'swimmers' who assisted visitors and inhabitants in fording the !Garib / Orange River. Gordon described their use of flotation aids made from trees of the !Garib islands:

37 See, e.g.: Kinahan 2014: pp. 96–102; Kinahan 2000 ; Kinahan 1990: pp. 23–61.

38 On the historical distinction between '‖aes' and '!haos': '*‖Aes was formerly all inclusive while !haos was within the ‖aes but it has lost that distinction*', Dr. Levi Namaseb, personal correspondence, 12 August 2020. 20th-century anthropological literature on Khoi-speakers' culture and politics is largely based on Agnes Winifried Hoernlé's two stays with Khoi-speakers in Namibia in 1912–13 and 1925, primarily in Walvis Bay and the Richtersveld area. This literature discusses the idea of '!haos' as a clan within a larger tribal association. The reports are structured by assumptions about the distinct nature of 'clans' and of tribes. See e.g., Hoernlé 1925: pp. 1–24; Schapera 1930: pp. 225–228. Using contemporary social anthropology terms of the early 20th century, Hoernlé further described clans or !*haoti* (singular '*!haos*') as 'sibs' within the '‖aes', which would break into further sibs/clans over the march of time and new household establishment. She also noted that Dutch-origin terminologies for family were prominent among her informants in the 1910s and 1920s. Barnard 2008 uses early 20th-century Nama and !Kora ethnographic material from Hoernlé and Engelbrecht (respectively) to discusses kinship terminologies about immediate and extended family. See Barnard 2008: p. 69. In a recent article, Sian Sullivan and Welhemina Suro Ganuses have revealed a tight relationship for Khoi-speaking, Damara-identifying people today between the concept of clan (!haos) and specific land areas (!hūs) in northwestern Namibia. See Sullivan and Ganuses 2020: pp. 283–324. By contrast, the !Garib / Orange River material provokes questions of the changing relationship between territory and ethnicity ideas in southern Namibia since the 18th century among Khoi-speakers in the expansive region often termed 'Namaqualand'. Interdisciplinary material from this region suggests that African views about discrete territorial identities emerged as part of community driven 19th-century processes, rather than as reflections of ancient expressions of autochthony or fixed territoriality in this dryland environment of highly mobile pastoralism and dynamic intergroup relations. I explore these questions further in: Rosengarten 2022.

'Saw the Bushmen swimming across the river; this they do with a piece of dead willow-wood between their legs, going from one stone to the next.' He also observed the Dutch stock farmer Pienaar contracting these figures to assist him in moving his items across to the far bank.[39]

The Albrecht missionary brothers mentioned teams of 'swimmers' as their only hope in fording the !Garib / Orange River in their crossings of 1805–1807. The missionary Robert Moffat offered an extensive description of the river crossing procedure and swimmers' expertise from his time in the region in 1819.[40] The missionary Abraham Albrecht's experience in December 1806 implies that some kind of exchange or tribute to the swimmers was typical for their services:

> Some of the swimmers said, that they had always received a young cow as their remuneration, when they had conveyed other persons with their goods across the river, but as we were their teachers [i.e., missionaries], they would leave it to our discretion what we chose to give them.[41]

The missionary Wimmer described in 1820 the necessity of recruiting swimmers upon attempting to cross the high-banked river with its quick currents. On March 22nd 1820, he wrote in his journal: 'We sent John Engelbreg's people to seek swimmers. They promised to return in four days'. Two days later, on the 24th, Wimmer followed instructions from unnamed indigenous guides on how to prepare for the swimmers' work: 'This morning we cut down a quantity of dry willow wood to make a float & brought it with our waggon to the place where we intended to cross some time in the night. John Engelbrecht, his son, & two swimmers arrived.' The next day on the 25th he recorded: 'the people begin early to tie the wood together,' and they proceeded '[about] nine A.M., all being in readiness & having about ten swimmers'.[42]

These multiple descriptions over the 1779–1820 period suggest a relationship of coordinated labour and a part-time occupational speciality among these river crossing guides, rather than a haphazard labour assembly for colonial visitors. While their primary economic activities in daily life away from the river were likely directed toward herding or hunting and foraging endeavours, reliable 'swimmer' men with a reputation for expertise in river crossings needed to be gathered from the surrounding region for a fording activity. The role of the 'swimmers' also underlines the regularity of traffic and trade taking place across both sides of the river, despite its fast currents and high banks.

These fascinating references to the swimmer institution provide another example of a groupwork arrangement previously missed by historical scholarship of the region. Furthermore, if the swimmers did leave behind material culture remnants, these traces have thus far gone undetected in the published archaeology. In fact, material evidence of these

39 RJG Journals, October 11th 1779. https://www.robertjacobgordon.nl/travel-journals/fourth-journey/11th-October-1779.

40 Moffat 1842: pp. 101–102

41 Abraham Albrecht journal, December 22nd 1806, CWM-LMS South Africa journals, Box 1 item 15–1, SOAS Special Collections, University of London.

42 Br. Wimmer, 'Steinkopf to Great Namaqualand' Journal, 1820, CWM- LMS South Africa journals Box 3 Item 73, SOAS Special Collections, University of London.

river crossing specialists may have never survived in the ground for the longer term, considering the potential decay of the willow wood materials that the swimmers used as rafting implements. Furthermore, fording materials discarded and buried (intentionally or not) in the high riverbanks in and before the 18th century may have also have become degraded or lost due to the erosion dynamics of the !Garib / Orange River itself. Geomorphologists have shown that the course and location of the !Garib / Orange River all the way to the river mouth location at the Atlantic has itself has changed quickly in the march of geological time, which may render the !Garib / Orange River banks unideal sites for digging trenches that can reveal a longer time depth of material culture in human riverside occupation and use.[43]

'Mâ-gu' partnerships and pathways

Anthropologist Polly Wiessner has illuminated the partnered gift-giving institution of '*hxaro*' as one of many important 'risk reduction' strategies historically used by hunter-foragers in the dryland region of north-western Botswana. Historical insights about *hxaro* among the !Kung San may provide useful clues for understanding 19th-century missionary documents describing similar partnerships used by Khoi-speakers in the Lower !Garib river area. As Alan Barnard has discussed through comparison of southern African herder and forager practices of trade networking and exchange, 'comparative ethnography shows us that specific exchange practices like hxaro are not as unambiguously 'hunter-gatherer' as we might think.'[44]

Wiessner's oral historical work through ethnographic interviews in 1975–77 implied that *hxaro* networks in past centuries likely extended far to the south, and probably into areas today called central and southern Namibia and the Orange River / !Garib region. A careful combing of earlier missionary records implies that similar and perhaps even overlapping arrangements existed throughout southern and central Namibia in the 19th century and earlier, while Khoekhoegowab speakers may have used different vocabulary from !Kung San informants to describe these gift-giving and exchange networks.

In 1856, the Wesleyan missionary Henry Tindall delivered 'Two Lectures on Great Namaqualand and its Inhabitants' in Cape Town based on his experiences at the Warmbad mission station in the 1840s (then called 'Nisbett Bath' during its brief occupation by Wesleyan missionaries). The station was located at the |Aixa aibes spring, which Robert Jacob Gordon visited and described in his 1779–1780 journey to the Lower !Garib / Orange River, about 25 years prior to the establishment of the mission station there. Of the gift-giving and exchange relationships observed among the !Gami- ǂnun/ Bondelswarts people at Warmbad (or the 'Caminoekwas' of Gordon's 1779 observations), Tindall wrote in 1856:

43 This concern about pace of erosion remains my own speculation, based on my understanding of scientific presentations at the Space in Time Conference in January 2020 in Oranjemund, Namibia, at the NamDeb mining offices. I look forward to follow-up discussions with regional archaeological and scientific experts about this question.

44 Barnard 2008: p. 61

> It is usual among them to carry on a kind of 'maatschappy' or partnership. Two men, living perhaps three or four hundred miles apart, 'make mates', the understanding is that…each may take from the other whatever he pleases. They profess to believe this is a very profitable kind of engagement, and it is difficult to persuade them to the contrary. The following instance will illustrate the extent to which this 'magu' or 'give-each-other' system proceeds.

Tindall's Khoekhoegowab vocabulary manuscripts from later in the 1860s suggest that he had sufficient language interest and exposure in Khoekhoegowab to attempt reliable transcriptions.[45] Here, '-gu' is a reflexive verb form in Khoekhoegowab implying two or more actors involved, and 'mâ' is the verb to give. If we accept that Tindall understood the name of this institution correctly from his informants, then participating in *mâgu* implies a chain of two and possibly more partners at the great distances he indicated. Tindall proceeded with his description of the exchange relationship below. Tindall's colonial chauvinism illustrates a broader European missionary preoccupation with the superiority of commercial exchange and denigration of indigenous economic practices:

> A poor man as Nisbet Bath had, by diligence, obtained a horse and gun, he had a good hat, a very decent suit of clothes, a warm over-coat, and his wife had a tolerably respectably wardrobe. One fine morning a mate, with whom he had in an evil hour entered into partnership, turned up from the borders of Damaraland, and claimed as his right, horse, gun, hat, clothes, coat, and all his wife's apparel, except her undress, and with these he departed with true native sang froid, leaving the other his tattered garments and riddled hat, which had been so repeatedly patched, that it was almost impossible to discern the original stuff.
>
> The probable sequel of this affair would be that the man would return his mate's visit, who would either manage to avoid him or get all his valuable cattle out of the way; and yet not the least suspicion would be awakened that there was any villainy or dishonesty in the matter.[46]

Wiessner's research on *hxaro* suggests that these networks were in operation in the 19th century, if not also in earlier centuries in some form. If we accept that a groupwork practice like *mâ-gu* had older origins before the 19th century, then Tindall's recollections of this practice from the 1840s implies longevity and usefulness in this type of relationship for African participants – even decades after Africans took up using European-origin clothing and materials like gunpowder. Tindall's assertion that Warmbad area residents believed 'this was a very profitable kind of engagement' suggests that while individuals might adjust their decisions about participating in the trade based on their relative accumulation of wealth at the moment a '*mâgu*' exchange partner arrived, they also had longstanding faith in the utility of this kind of exchange relationship as they distributed the environmental risks of mobile pastoralism across an array of social relationships with people both near and much further away. In 1903, the Rhenish missionary Wandrer who

45 See e.g., "Tindall's Nama Vocabulary", dated 5 September 1862 and interlineated by Rev. G. Krönlein, in the Sir George Grey Collection, National Library of South Africa, Cape Town, Shelf Mark: g-10-c-14-8.

46 Tindall 1856: 40–41

was also stationed at Warmbad wrote of the '*mâgu*' practices among his Bondelswarts congregants observed during his period of residence there in the 1890s, thereby confirming the longevity of this practice within southern Namibian exchange networks until at least the turn of the 20th century.[47]

Speaking of *hxaro* networks, Wiessner found that these exchanges involved 'explicit, semi-formalized and long-term partnerships of gift exchange' as well as 'pathways of exchange that extend far beyond the knowledge of individual participants', which were maintained through 'efforts to preserve these pathways over generations.' Furthermore, 'when explored within a broader historical and geographical context, *hxaro* pathways appear to have originated as a means to tap into the larger trade networks of the past in southern Africa.'[48] Tindall's recollection provides a rare written indication about the possible southwestern expanses of these types of trading partnerships and networks, which reached the Lower !Garib area.

Conclusions: 'Another Child of Man'

Before he embarked on his Lower !Garib/ Orange River journey, Robert Jacob Gordon was primed with a colonial literary knowledge of several larger categories of supposedly distinct 'nations' in this region. These were: the 'Namaqua', 'Einiqua', and 'Koranna' groupings. Gordon did encounter numerous people, households, and pastoral encampments self-identifying according to these group names. However, a closer reading of Gordon's journals makes clear that these ethnonyms served as only one type of network layered upon many as he travelled along and around the Lower !Garib for several hundred kilometres in 1779. He encountered a wide variety of other self-identifying ethnonyms, and he observed the prevalence of smaller-scale encampment communities made up of household groups constantly on the move. People of this region had many ways of speaking about groups and participating in them, and all these groups defied the colonial ethnographic convention of mapping a particular community onto a fixed land area.

Reading Gordon's journal alongside archaeological evidence from the region and relevant ethnographic records from the 19th and early 20th century bolsters the following interpretation: claiming membership in such large networks of kinship as 'Nama(qua)' probably helped small, itinerant communities and household units distribute the risks inherent to pastoralism in a challenging arid environment. These larger genealogical associations served as just one type of alliance that pastoral households cultivated for their success and that they could draw upon for crisis management.

In the context of these broad and entangled networks, how did people of the region receive Gordon? One final vignette from Gordon's journals invites us to consider the incorporative and outward-looking orientations of mobile herders and traders in the region. On November 5th, 1779 Gordon wrote:

47 Wandrer 1903: pp. 313–25, pp. 315–317

48 Wiessner 1994: pp. 101–124, p. 101

> [We] departed at dawn, south again and still alongside the river, and arrived after an hour at the Noekoekeis kraal. These people had never seen anyone from our colony and were very afraid. However we had an old man from Hoekingeis with us…and he said to them: 'This is another child of man; look at his hair! He comes from far. Be not afraid. He is good. Bring cattle for barter!' He screamed himself hoarse. He jabbered so many good things about us that they became tamer and more than a hundred men, women and children came to us. [49]

On the one hand, moments like this from Gordon's text reveal clearly to the contemporary reader his entrenched colonial vision. In the longer journal entry, Gordon noted the nickname he had given to the old man from the Hoekingeis who travelled with him as a guide while they met the Noekoekeis pastoral assemblage: Gordon mused that he dubbed the man 'Hansworst.' This was a reference to a satirical comic figure, both a fool and a cunning rascal, in the travelling theatre and puppet shows of early modern German-speaking lands. With the perspective of hindsight and knowledge of systemic colonial violence to subsume this region within the following two centuries, Gordon's casual racial chauvinism is deeply unsettling.

On the other hand, there is little reason to doubt the occurrence of this interaction or the broad discursive contours of the energetic man's comments. Gordon understood himself as someone who came to the region to learn and to record. He was meticulous throughout his travels in 1779–80 about providing direct transcriptions of conversations with Africans as he understood them. His translators on this trip apparently moved well between conversing in Khoi and providing useable Dutch explanations for Gordon. Thus, to friends and kin from another pastoral assemblage who were unsure of this newcomer's intentions, this elder man extolled the virtues of Gordon's friendliness as he had experience it over the past days. This man of social standing emphasised the usefulness of this opportunity to make a new trade connection with a wealthy foreigner of clearly broad networks of his own. Gordon described similar interactions throughout his months along the !Garib with a variety of people who were surprised and intrigued, at first, by his skin and hair and who then turned eagerly to commencing exchange invitations after determining that he was passing through with apparent good will.

Near and beyond the Lower !Garib, there is more to know about 18th-century African approaches to network-making, belonging, and exchange beyond the familiar narrative of Cape colonial power and racial thinking entering 'frontier' regions. In this essay, Gordon's material has allowed us to revisit these questions. The material invites us to reconsider the projection of anachronisms of colonial domination onto this space in time by recentring regional African attitudes toward the benefits of incorporation. In the late 18th century, the broad cultural orientation of the region's mobile and entangled pastoralist networks included the expectation of encountering peoples of diverse and even unfamiliar origins and incorporating them carefully as clients and contacts with goals of wealth, trade, and subsistence security in mind.

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49 RJG Journals, November 5th 1779. https://www.robertjacobgordon.nl/travel-journals/fourth-journey/5th-november-1779.

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