

**“Tracks which cannot be covered”:
P.J. Schoeman and Public Intellectuals in Southern Africa**

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Bloemfontein is not on the major tourist or academic route for visitors to South Africa. If you should however happen to spend some time in that city, a visit to the National Museum and Research Centre for Afrikaans Literature (NALN), located in a spacious former hospital, is worthwhile. Here, some of the most prominent and famous Afrikaans authors have had their offices or writing places recreated, using the original furniture and ephemera donated by the writers or their heirs.

One of the more intriguing recreations is that of P.J. Schoeman, prominent nature and children's story-writer and one-time anthropologist. Judging by the number of his books being reprinted, Schoeman is currently undergoing something of a revival, largely due to his being praised as a prophet of conservation in Southern Africa. He was also heralded as an Afrikaner author. Professor P.J. Nienaber, the founding director of NALN, noted that Schoeman's books were widely read and that he had done much to record and make the folk culture and folklore of the various indigenous groups of Southern Africa accessible. Like few others, said Nienaber, Schoeman was accepted, respected, and allowed into the intimate community life of indigenous groups. Schoeman did not do research as much as live or experience fieldwork intensely¹. Despite such praise, Schoeman is largely ignored in the histories of South African anthropology². Yet on the wall above his desk are two framed letters of

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1. P.J. Nienaber, “Voorwoord”, in P.J. Schoeman, *Swerwersprokies* (Perskor, Johannesburg, 1984).

2. See, for example, R.D. Coertze, “Aanvang van Volkekunde aan Afrikaanstalige

recommendation, one from Bronislaw Malinowski, one of the most influential anthropologists of his day, and the other from Werner Eiselen, generally believed to be the theoretical architect of apartheid³.

Dated 22 February 1935, Malinowski's letter is addressed to the Appointments Officer, South African Ministry of Education, and reads as follows:

Dear Sir,

I understand from my friend and pupil, Mr. P.J. Schoeman that he is applying for the post of Government Ethnologist in the Union, shortly to be advertised as vacant.

Mr. Schoeman has worked with me for two terms only: In Summer 1934 and Michaelmas 1935 and during this short time has made very effective progress. I have formed a very high opinion of his scientific character and ability. He was able to assimilate some of the fundamental principles of modern anthropology very rapidly and with a great security of grasp and understanding. His knowledge of Bantu ethnology is good and extensive. His previous training under Professor Eiselen at the University of Stellenbosch has given him an excellent background. The additional tuition at the University of London has qualified him to apply some of the newer developments in methods and point of view. In my teaching, I lay stress specially on the practical application of anthropology and on the co-ordination of the knowledge of tribal custom with problems of adaptation and change. I think that Mr. Schoeman will be able to follow up the classes which he has attended in London with reading in economics, jurisprudence and social science, which will allow him to act competently as advisor in matters of native policy. The combination of real sympathy with the natives with a realistic outlook seems to me to qualify him for the post very well. I should like for all these reasons very warmly to recommend Mr. Schoeman *unico loco* for this position.

Should you require, sir, any further information, I should be very glad to supply it.

I remain,

Yours very truly

B. Malinowski

Professor of Anthropology at the University of London⁴

universiteite in Suid-Afrika", *South African Journal of Ethnology*, 14, 1, 1991, pp 25-34. Also his "Kommentaar op geïgnoreerde kritiek", *South African Journal of Ethnology*, 22, 3, 1999, pp 81-96. D. Hammond-Tooke, *Imperfect Interpreters South Africa's Anthropologists 1920-1990* (Witwatersrand University Press, Johannesburg, 1997).

3. C. Kros, "W.W.M. Eiselen: Architect of Apartheid Education", in P. Kallaway (ed), *The History of Education Under Apartheid 1948-1994* (Peter Lang, New York, 2002), pp 53-73.

4. The Government Ethnologist position occupied since 1930 by the Hamburg-

The application was unsuccessful and after a short spell as a journalist, Schoeman was appointed to a lectureship at his *alma mater*, the University of Stellenbosch in 1936, and then two years later at the age of 34, succeeded Eiselen to the Chair of Anthropology. One theory is that he was appointed because several influential academics thought highly of his contribution to Afrikaans literature. He resigned that position at the end of 1946 and in 1949 unsuccessfully sought election as African Representative in the South African Parliament. From 1951 to 1956, he served as Chief Game Warden in the erstwhile Mandated Territory of South-West Africa. During this time he also chaired the "Commission for the Preservation of the Bushmen" before retiring back to Stellenbosch where he devoted himself to being a full-time writer of Afrikaans tales of nature largely for youth. Retirement was possible, it was rumoured, because after his divorce he had married a medical doctor who was a rich heiress.

Schoeman does not occupy a major position in the various histories of South African anthropology. R.D. Coertze⁵, in his history of the origins of Afrikaner anthropology, is dismissive of Schoeman, despite Coertze's father, P.J. Coertze, being a fellow student (D.Phil Stellenbosch, 1935) and colleague of Schoeman at Stellenbosch. It appears that not only was Schoeman awarded the professorship there in preference to Coertze *père*, but there were clearly tensions and antagonisms between them. Similarly, Hammond-Tooke⁶, in his history of South African anthropology, also relegates Schoeman to a minor role. Yet Schoeman's career illustrates issues ignored in these histories, namely

trained Doctor N.J. van Warmelo, however, did not become vacant and Schoeman was forced into the fourth estate, apparently an easy adaptation as he had already established a reputation as an Afrikaans author of hunting and youth literature. Malinowski and Schoeman's friendship was however put to the test a few months later when Malinowski's acolyte, the young Hilda Kuper (then Beemer), started doing fieldwork in Swaziland and perused the only academic article Schoeman (1935) was ever to write in English. Enraged at what she took to be misstatements concerning Swazi Rain Ceremonies, she read it to the King and wrote an angry rejoinder complete with a statement by the King. Malinowski's position was to side with neither Beemer nor Schoeman, but to support King Sobhuza. In a letter to the King, he claimed to have instructed Schoeman to work under the King's instructions, were he to work in Swaziland, and since he did not do that "had put himself out of court completely". At no time during this *contemps* did Malinowski question the details of his students' accounts or their methodologies. P. Cocks, "The King and I: Bronislaw Malinowski, King Sobhuza II and the vision of culture change in Africa", *History of the Human Sciences*, 13, 4, 2000, pp 25-47.

5. Coertze, "Aanvang van Volkekunde", pp 25-34.

6. Hammond-Tooke, *Imperfect Interpreters*.

his engagement with politics and applied anthropology (a topic recently reviewed in South Africa by Coertze,⁷ who again ignores Schoeman). Indeed, Schoeman played a formative role in the elaboration of what later became known as apartheid, yet is ignored by the various scholars who have analysed the rise of this ideology and practice.⁸

This essay, in placing Schoeman within the history of South African anthropology, also suggests the possibility that Malinowski might well have played a role in the elaboration of the apartheid ideology. In addition, it argues that Schoeman's role as chairperson of the Commission for the Preservation of the Bushmen was also important. What happens when an apartheid theoretician is given the opportunity to try to implement his ideas? The San, or Bushmen, are probably the most intensely studied ethnic group in Southern Africa and anthropologists who have worked with them are proud of the activist and engaged role they have played in furthering the interests of these people⁹. These accounts are strikingly self-congratulatory and rather unreflective and non-critical of their own praxis. Inconvenient or embarrassing engagements to this anthropological self-image, like that by Schoeman, are deliberately ignored.

Revisiting this episode is germane to the South African anthropological and general intellectual debate about appropriate models for their discipline in the "new" South Africa. In the current climate, the notion of anthropologists' being "public intellectuals" or "citizen anthropologists"¹⁰ engaged in debates on national issues is attractive.

7. R.D. Coertze, "The evaluation of development projects: A South African anthropological perspective", *Anthropology Southern Africa*, 27, 3 and 4, 2004, pp 75-85.

8. See, for example, S. Dubow, *Racial Segregation and the Origins of Apartheid in South Africa* (Oxford University Press, London, 1989); S. Dubow, *Illicit Union Scientific Racism in modern South Africa* (Witwatersrand University Press, Johannesburg, 1995); D. Posel, *The Making of Apartheid* (Oxford University Press, London, 1991).

9. See, for example, J. Solway (ed), *The Politics of Egalitarianism* (Berghahn, New York, 2006); R.K. Hitchcock, "Human rights and Anthropological Activism among the San", in C. Nagengast and C. Velez-Ibanez (eds), *Human rights and the Scholar as Activist* (Society for Applied Anthropology, Oklahoma City, 2004); M. Bieseke, and R. Hitchcock, "The Ju/'hoansi San under Two States: Impacts of the South West African Administration and the Government of the Republic of Namibia", in P. Schweizer, M. Bieseke and R. Hitchcock (eds), *Hunters and Gatherers in the Modern World* (Berghahn Books, New York, 2000); T. Hohmann (ed), *San and the State* (Rudiger Koeppe, Koeln, 2004).

10. H. Becker, E. Boonzaier and J. Owen, "Fieldwork in shared spaces:

Schoeman's career was devoted to what is now fashionably called public or citizen anthropology. Certainly his activist or militant engaged stance¹¹ offers a cautionary tale for contemporary anthropologists seeking to carve a niche for their discipline.¹²

The Making of an Anthropologist

In examining P.J. Schoeman's reconstructed study, it is intriguing to note the objects on display. They include some items from his mother, like the glass vase that stood on his desk from 1922 to 1973, apparently always with a flower in it. More pertinent though, are the can-opener and brass candlestick that his mother used in the Merebank Concentration Camp where she and many of his siblings were interned during the Anglo-Boer War (1899-1902) along with more than 8 000 inmates. Merebank was renowned for its gruelling regimen in which women were humiliated daily. The can-opener symbolised the struggle for obtaining food for small children, since they were rationed cans of milk. The candlestick was equally important. As one mother put it: "What a mother could never forget, was to have her child die in the camp in the dark because there was not even a candle available".¹³

This concentration camp experience was deeply etched in the memory of many Afrikaners and fed directly into the issue that dominated Afrikaner intellectual life in the thirties and forties, namely that of the (largely Afrikaner) poor whites. A series of factors ranging from ecological catastrophes, the ravages of the Anglo-Boer War, and the Depression had served to push the number of poor whites up from 106 000 in 1921, to 300 000 in 1933.¹⁴ In 1936 it was calculated that the average *per capita* income of Afrikaans-speakers was approximately half that of other whites.¹⁵ Major research efforts like those funded by the Carnegie Foundation were focused on how to solve the "Poor White

positionality, power and ethics of citizen anthropologists in southern Africa", *Anthropology Southern Africa*, 28, 3 and 4, 2005, pp 123-132.

11. N. Scheper-Hughes, "The primacy of the Ethical", *Current Anthropology*, 36, 3, 1995, pp 409-430.
12. F. Ross, "Introduction to the Special Number on Ethics", *Anthropology Southern Africa*, 28, 3 and 4, 2005, pp 57-61; A. Spiegel, "From expose to care: Preliminary thoughts about shifting the ethical concerns of South African social anthropology", *Anthropology Southern Africa*, 28, 3 and 4, 2005, pp 133-141.
13. L. Lategan, "Uit NALN se Sarkofaag" at www.Litnet.u.za/NALN/NALN5.asp.
14. H. Adam and H. Giliomee, *Ethnic power mobilized Can South Africa change?* (Yale University Press, New Haven, 1979), p 150.
15. Adam & Giliomee, *Ethnic power mobilized*, p 154.

Problem” and various largely successful grass-roots initiatives were launched. These were concerns that also drove Schoeman’s praxis as an anthropologist.

Schoeman was born in 1904 and spent the first fourteen years of his life on a farm in rural Natal as a shy and lonely child. Apparently he did not get on well with his eight siblings. One advantage of his “lonely” childhood was that he was forced to become fluent in Zulu and Swazi. He then became the foster child of *dominee* Stoffberg who ensured that he matriculated from Helpmekaar High School in Johannesburg in 1925. Lacking finances for further education, he spent the next two years as a shepherd for one of his brothers. The turning point came when he was asked by a local *dominee*, Reverend G.B.A. Gerdener, to address the youth during the Dingaan’s Day festival, an important Afrikaner nationalist commemoration of the Afrikaner victory over the Zulu. So impressed was Gerdener by Schoeman, that he arranged funding for Schoeman to go to the University of Stellenbosch to qualify as a clergyman. While Gerdener and Schoeman were to meet again as colleagues at the University of Stellenbosch, where they would be involved in formulating alternative policies for Africans, Schoeman decided not to become a *dominee* because of the heresy trial of Professor Johannes du Plessis, a moderate missionary theologian at Stellenbosch.¹⁶ Schoeman graduated *cum laude* and, at Eiselen’s urging, did a Masters (obtained in 1931). Further study was made possible by a three year Ebdon Stipendium. He obtained his doctorate in two years and used the funds for the third year to travel to London to attend Malinowski’s famous seminar.¹⁷ His extra curricular activities during this time were also impressive. In 1932 Schoeman attempted to travel through Africa by donkey, accompanied by two black companions, but black-water fever in Tanganyika resulted in an early termination. Based on these adventures, he published his first and well-received Afrikaans book, *Die Swerwerjagter* [*The Roving Hunter*] in 1933.

Little is known about Schoeman’s sojourn in London in 1934, except that he visited Denmark to present a paper on Swazi kingship at the International Congress of Anthropological and Ethnological Sciences.¹⁸ He also met Paul Robeson, who so impressed Schoeman, that he quoted Robeson later in a radio talk. This was also the year during

16. Dubow, *Illicit Union*, pp 253-254.

17. F. Lategan, *P.J. Schoeman* (Perskor, Johannesburg, 1979).

18. P.J. Schoeman, “Kingship in Swaziland.” International Congress for the Anthropological and Ethnological Sciences, first session, 1934, Copenhagen, pp 209-210.

which Malinowski attended a conference in South Africa on Educational Adaptations in a Changing Society, at which he gave a series of lectures on topics such as “Sex in Modern Life”; “The Family: Past and Present” and “Education as a Re-Integrating Agency”.¹⁹ Schoeman was apparently, and perhaps not surprising given his lack of English and introspective personality, a quiet member of Malinowski's famous seminar. Nevertheless, in an interview with *Matieland*, the University of Stellenbosch's alumni magazine, Schoeman claimed that Malinowski was the “anthropologist who made the biggest impression on me”.²⁰

J.D. Holleman, later a prominent Dutch anthropologist, describes how, as a young undergraduate, he was mesmerised by Schoeman's lectures:

The change came with a new professor, a youngish man with a big head, shy blue eyes and a soft-spoken voice. He had a curious way of lecturing. When he spoke he looked away from his students and seemed to be reading from an invisible text somewhere under our feet. But his voice and words had a strange, fascinating quality that made you think of wide-open spaces. He had spent half his lifetime out in the bush-veld, among wild animals and African tribes. He was a big game hunter as well as an ethnologist, and he was a poet at heart. When he described life in an African village you had the odd sensation that you could hear drums beating and smell the thin smoke of dung-fires. He spoke Zulu and Swazi fluently and his sentences were unconsciously spiced with the rich flavour of the vernacular idiom. This gave his sober delivery a depth and intensity of meaning that stirred our imagination perhaps more than our intellect.²¹

Teaching was Schoeman's passion. “I lived for it. We were really a family. And [students] never withheld their tokens of appreciation”.²² The last ten minutes of each lecture was devoted to the “university of life”. In a recent memoir, the prominent Afrikaans politician, Japie Basson, recalled his student days:

For me the most enjoyable classes were those by the writer-philosopher Piet Schoeman. Here was a subject that was pure delight, much of which was due to the way the teacher interacted with the students. For a seminar on “the Native Question and the future” he gave me an A+ with glowing comments.²³

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19. E.G. Malherbe, *Educational Adaptations in a Changing Society* (Juta, Cape Town, 1937).
 20. Anoniem, “Die ‘universiteit van die lewe’”, *Matieland*, Oktober, 1984, pp 11-12.
 21. J. Holleman, *African Interlude* (Nasionale Boekhandel, Kaapstad, 1958), p 11.
 22. Anoniem, “Die universiteit van die lewe”, p 11.
 23. J.P. Basson, *Raam en Rigting in die Politiek en die Storie van Apartheid*

Yet clearly there were lines of cleavage in Stellenbosch. Schoeman's colleague, P.J. Coertze, who went on to become the leading figure in Afrikaans *Volkekunde* did not think highly of Schoeman's hero Malinowski. Already in 1936, in an overview in a popular Afrikaans religious journal, Coertze gave as his considered opinion that:

The newest direction in anthropology is the so-called "Functional School" which is inaugurated in London by the well-known Prof Malinowski. My view is that this direction is not really a new direction or school. Malinowski has just reminded anthropology of the realization that thorough ethnographic work is of the greatest importance. ... Malinowski has a sizeable number of admirers and followers today, some who understand him and also those who do not understand him.²⁴

Schoeman and Native Policy

Schoeman was very much an Afrikaner nationalist and the racial question was clearly something in which he was considered an expert. In 1938, in a series of eight Afrikaans radio talks for the South African Broadcasting Corporation's programmes aimed at secondary school children, he concluded by asking about the Afrikaner's duty towards "the Native". To summarise his talk – the core of the issue was "what social, economic and political rights can and may we give the natives without placing our future as a pure white nation in danger and at the same time not unnecessarily oppressing natives". To address these questions required knowledge of "the natives", thus the first great task was

... to study natives as people in a scientific and charitable Christian way ... It is incumbent upon us to see natives as human beings with human needs and ideals. Natives needed not only physical things but spiritual [*geestelike*] ones as well, like family and tribal pride ... One of the most important things whites should thus provide for, are conditions under which natives will retain their self respect and racial pride because then they will not think of intermarrying with us. We must block off areas where they can live in large numbers under our supervision in accordance with

(Polika, Kaapstad, 2004). This assessment is seconded by R.D. Coertze ("Aanvang van Volkekunde", p 30). Schoeman went out of his way to help students as well, thus he took Holleman to Zululand during the university vacations, where under Schoeman's guidance, Holleman "learnt the difficult art of questioning informants". Schoeman also helped Holleman to obtain a Government grant to continue his Zulu fieldwork which formed the basis of his masters degree.

24. P.J. Coertze, "Die Bestudering van Inboorlinge en hulle Kulturele Instelling", *Die Soeklig*, 15 Augustus 1936, p 232.

their own nature, aptitudes and let them provide for their own needs as far as possible ... In the native schools the chief emphasis should be on their own cultural goods ... their own history, their own judicial system, own religion ... We must not try to replace their culture with ours but where it is really necessary, as a result of new contemporary questions, to purify and supplement their spiritual goods with the best of our own.

Such decisions should not be unilateral, but undertaken in consultation with recognised leaders.²⁵

In 1940, Schoeman was appointed to a secret commission to study the “racial issue” by the Afrikaner Broederbond. This blue ribbon commission consisted of Afrikaner intellectuals like Geoff Cronjé, J.A. Engelbrecht, A.J.H. van der Walt and N. Diederichs, and was to be an important sounding board for elaborating apartheid ideology.²⁶ Like many of his Stellenbosch colleagues, Schoeman also joined the *Ossewabrandwag* [Ox-wagon Guard] and became a commandant of this right-wing, paramilitary, anti-Semitic organisation.²⁷ In this capacity, he was deemed important enough to be assigned a personal bodyguard.

The next year Schoeman published his major statement “Territorial Segregation: Only Effective Native Policy for South Africa” in *Wapenskou*, the journal of the Afrikaner National Student Union (ANS).²⁸ Its editor noted that the author had graciously agreed to respond to any queries or discussion of this “exceptionally interesting subject” in future issues of the journal. Unfortunately, no-one apparently took Schoeman up on his offer. Let me cite and paraphrase from it to provide a flavour of the argument and rhetoric:

In this country of our love and dreams of the future, which is criss-crossed with war graves, we are confronted with a bigger and steadily growing question mark that is a somber black silhouette on the horizon of our future.²⁹

Schoeman argued that territorial segregation was a means of solving the poor white problem and maintaining the racial purity of the

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25. P.J. Schoeman, Radio talk broadcasted on 30 March 1938 on SABC. Script available at the National Museum and Research Centre for Afrikaans Literature (NALN), Bloemfontein: MS 53/126, 1938.
 26. J.P. Brits, *Op die Vooraand van Apartheid* (UNISA Press, Pretoria, 1994), p 80.
 27. C. Marx, “The Ossewabrandwag as a Mass Movement, 1939-1941”, *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 20, 2, 1994, pp 195-219.
 28. P.J. Schoeman, “Territoriale segregasie: Enigste doeltreffende naturelle beleid vir Suid-Afrika”, *Wapenskou*, June 1941, pp 20-31, 34.
 29. Schoeman, “Territoriale segregasie”, p 20.

Afrikaners. Blacks, especially women and children, should be isolated as far as possible in reserves so that Western influences could be controlled. "Let us give the blacks the opportunity to regain their lost self-respect and identity in their own areas, because only then will they refuse to intermarry with us".³⁰

He held that the ideal form of governance was where a *volk* or people governed itself for itself in accordance with its nature, aptitude, philosophy of life and environment, and gradually develops. Even England, "that great protagonist of cultural imperialism", was now realising the importance of cultural self-determination. This right of self-determination of peoples was increasingly being realised and was the product of the inherent drive of people for freedom. This drive to freedom and the right to be oneself was so strong, that when it was denied by those in power, it led to the loss of identity or a bloody uprising against the oppressor. Humans, irrespective of race or culture, would bear a self-imposed burden much more readily than one imposed from outside. Cultural self-determination was the core concept.³¹

While blacks disregarded treaties signed with whites, European ignorance of blacks also contributed to the race problem. Internecine black warfare had forced whites to pacify blacks. Pacification meant that with the sudden curtailment of freedom, a lot of energy became pent-up and new channels had to be created to siphon that off or a spirit of unrest bordering on hatred would emerge. Blacks' lower level of civilization and life-style meant that whites could use them as a source for cheap labour and this was one of the major impediments to solving the poor white problem.

The Boere Nation is not so selfish and short-sighted by nature that it cannot give to the black race rights to autonomous development in his own separate areas. We are honest enough to acknowledge that as a result of overseas interference and many internal problems in our country, the interests of the black race have never had the necessary attention and sympathy. We acknowledge that practically all legislation in connection with the black race has thus far taken the form of emergency and even coercive measures. However, because we are aware that a native policy which is not based on Christian charity and scientifically healthy principles, but is based on power and supported by self-interest cannot be successful in the long term, we want to make a large scale attempt to do charity and justice to both races. Our future as a pure white nation is at stake.³²

30. Schoeman, "Territoriale segregasie", p 22.

31. Also see Brits, *Op die vooraand van Apartheid*, p 83.

32. Schoeman, "Territoriale segregasie", p 21.

A key concern though was the so-called “detrribalized native”, especially those who were educated and could read, because they had started to believe that their own culture and colour were a hindrance rather than an asset and were quick to adapt European culture. Invariably they became “agitators”. Conditions in the proposed reserves had to be made so attractive as to induce these “detrribalized” natives to return where, with the correct “tribal education”, they would be reintegrated with the tribe while educated Natives should consider it their highest and only calling to help develop their own people.³³

As a solution, Schoeman proposed ceding to blacks three large areas based on the former British Protectorates of Basotholand, Swaziland and Bechuanaland, where they could regain their lost self-respect and identity because only then would they refuse to intermarry with Europeans. Here they could build up their own healthy domestic life and tribal pride. Such large areas would isolate women and children from the influence of European culture and thus counteract “detrribalization”. Laws alone would not work. Only the correct education and spiritual development of both black and white could lead to harmonious coexistence.³⁴

Current native policy that did nothing to let indigenous culture, language, and consciousness develop, was also criticised by Schoeman. European-style education fostered massive relative deprivation. Education was handled by provincial administrations and needed to be centralised and co-ordinated. Native administration was done not by professionals, but by officials of the Department of Justice. There was a lack of a firm and deliberate policy because of fear of public opinion in London, he claimed. Schoeman concluded:

We, as Afrikaners, have no right before God to fight and promote our own people's rights as long as we refuse to give rights of autonomous development to those who stand under us.³⁵

Maria Elizabeth Rothmann, popularly known as MER, who was later to become a famous Afrikaans literary figure, described how she met Schoeman in the forties while on vacation at Stilbaai. He was anxiously desperate about South African race relations. Neither Afrikaans newspapers nor politicians were interested in addressing the issues, he felt. He believed that Africans should be made aware of their citizenship

33. Schoeman, “Territoriale segregasie”, pp 30-31.

34. Schoeman, “Territoriale segregasie”, p 27.

35. Schoeman, “Territoriale segregasie”, pp 31, 34.

and felt that a national service should be created for them. The only way to tackle the issue of race relations was to teach the Afrikaner to see Africans as people and he was doing this by writing youth books on this topic. When MER encouraged him in this enterprise, he complained that there was “so much prejudice, parents regarded him as a ‘kaffir-boetie’ [nigger-lover]”.³⁶

Schoeman’s ideas and passions are more than simply an elaborate fusion of his 1938 radio talks. They show the influence of Eiselen³⁷ and Malinowski,³⁸ enhanced by the militancy of the war years. Schoeman was an idealist who felt that engagement was part of his personal integrity, so he decided to contest the seat of Cape African Parliamentary Representative, one of the seats for which suitably enfranchised Africans resident in the former Cape Colony could cast a vote for a white member. The Nationalist Party had won the election of 1948 with a small majority of parliamentary seats and wanted to use the system of native representation to strengthen its position. Schoeman felt that neither E.G. Jansen, the Nationalist Party spokesperson on race (and the person who had invited him to stand), nor Malan, the Prime Minister, had much comprehension about the native problem.³⁹ Despite his fluency in Zulu, Cape Africans entitled to vote were not swayed and he went down to a heavy defeat by the incumbent, Margaret Ballinger, a leading South African liberal and anti-segregationist, as well as a formidable politician, polling a mere 222 votes to her 2 920 votes and thereby forfeiting his deposit.

After his trouncing in the parliamentary elections, Schoeman was invited by the foremost Afrikaans weekly, *Die Huisgenoot*, to reflect on his experiences. In an article entitled “South Africa’s Biggest Problem”, he concluded by calling for a commission of enquiry to do an in-depth study of the problem and suggested some ten points such a commission might take as points of departure. The very next year, his friend E.G. Jansen, Minister of Native Affairs, created the well-known Tomlinson Commission to undertake precisely this task. Some of the points he made are worth citing *in extenso* so that the not so hidden hand of Malinowski may at least be vaguely perceived and brought to the surface:

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36. Cited in J.C. Steyn, *Die 100 Jaar van MER* (Tafelberg, Kaapstad, 2004), p 394.
 37. Brits, *Op die vooraand van Apartheid*.
 38. B. Malnowski, *A Scientific Theory of Culture and other Essays* (University of North Carolina Press, Chapel Hill, 1944), pp 145-176.
 39. F.A. Mouton, “Die Apartheidsverkiesing van November 1948 in die Oos-Kaapse Naturelle-kiesing”, *Historia*, 32, 2, 1987, p 30.

1. That whites and natives must be considered as two separate races, each with its own past, own traditions, own lifestyle and culture.
2. That it will be to the advantage of both races if each is allowed to develop as a separate pure race.⁴⁰
3. That the culture of any people (or Bantu tribe) is not an artifact which can be mechanically put together by human hands. A culture is a way of life and thought which is unique to a delineated people. It is a product of hundreds of years of growth of the human spirit.
4. That no major or hasty changes can be made to the Bantu way of life and culture through legislation, education, or evangelization without a prior examination by experts of, *inter alia*, the following: How is the removal, replacement or undermining of a part of the Bantu culture – as for example their form of religion – going to influence the rest of their life and mentality? Might it lead to denationalization?
5. That it is the duty of the whites, as guardians of the lower developed Bantu of South Africa, to use all knowledge and means at their disposal to develop the Bantu in accordance to their racial nature and own traditions, and that this development does not take place in a revolutionary ... but occurs in an evolutionary manner.
6. That education is the most powerful tool for preparing the youth ... that native youths must be educated for the future that the state, with its native policy, plans for them.
7. That firm and decisive action with the native is the only precondition for the maintenance of the whites' prestige ...⁴¹

Within the next few years he would be able to try to put these ideas into practice.

The Commission for the Preservation of the Bushmen

By Schoeman's own account he resigned from Stellenbosch University to become a full-time writer, but financial needs forced him to accept an offer to become Chief Game Warden in South-West Africa in 1950. In accepting this position, he succeeded his friend and fellow nature-writer, Sangiro (A.A. Pienaar). It also fortuitously led to his becoming Chairman of the Commission for the Preservation of the Bushmen. "These joint positions provided me with five of the most fruitful years in my writing

40. The confluence and sometimes conflation of "race" and "culture" is a common issue in *Volkekunde*. For example, see P.J. Coertze (red.), *Inleiding tot die Algemene Volkekunde* (Voortrekkerpers, Johannesburg, 1959).

41. P.J. Schoeman, "Suid-Afrika se grootse probleem – Toenemende spanning in die verhouding tussen blankes en naturelle", *Die Huisgenoot*, 33, 1404, 18 Februarie 1949, p 17.

career”.⁴² We do not know why he left this position. This autobiographical account ignores his excursion into politics and that early in 1949, having lost the election, he was already begging his friend, E.G. Jansen, the first Nationalist Minister for Native Affairs, for a job.⁴³

According to the self-constructed genealogy of the Bushman Preservation Commission which displays a fatal ignorance of history, the Commission was instigated by a report of the Medical Officer of the Kavango Region who, in a long memorandum, suggested that the Bushmen were becoming extinct. Tuberculosis and venereal disease were rife among the Kavango Bushmen and this would lead to population decline and cause inbreeding since “as the pure Bushman population decreases ... the proportion of inbreeding must increase and this [will] eventually leave its mark on the virility of the race”. In addition, this would lead to Bushmen migrating to the Kavango River where they would find an easier life-style that would eventually “result in the disappearance of racial prejudice with familiarity” and an increase in cross-breeding. Natural extinction would occur within six generations. The only solution, Doctor Kuschke believed, was complete and rigid segregation of all the Bushmen in a reserve with adequate health, agricultural and educational services.⁴⁴ As Schoeman, who readily accepted this mode of explanation, stated: “It was not until the Bushmen became more accustomed to Europeans through official feeding schemes, etc., that it became apparent that disease was rife amongst them and that they were in danger of extermination.”⁴⁵ Such a version of history ignores not only the long and well-established history of Bushman exploitation by both black and white settlers, but also the various petitions by the influential farming lobby to have “vagrant” Bushmen placed on reserves where they could not cause trouble.⁴⁶

Other factors also served to facilitate the creation of the Commission. There was a long history of attempts to deal constructively with Bushmen, especially immediately prior to the Second World War when Donald Bain had led a campaign to improve the lot of

42. Lategan, *P.J. Schoeman*, p 26.

43. Institute for Contemporary History, Bloemfontein: Jansen Collection, PV 94, 1/1/1/14, letter dated 1 June 1949.

44. National Archives of Namibia, Windhoek: File A.50/67 (2), Regional Medical Officer to Native Commissioner, Runtu, 27 August 1949.

45. National Archives of Namibia, Windhoek: File A.50/67, South West Africa, Report of the Commission for the Preservation of Bushmen in South West Africa, 1950 (circa 1955), paragraph 28.

46. R.J. Gordon, *The Bushman Myth* (Westview, Boulder, 1992), p 161.

South African Bushmen. This had led to a regional committee headed by Professor I. Schapera of the University of Cape Town, investigating the status of Bushmen.⁴⁷ During the war years there also had been sporadic meetings between senior officials about how to deal with the “Bushman Problem”.

In October 1949, the Administrator's Advisory Committee recommended that a Bushman Commission be created consisting of Doctor Louis Fourie, a former Medical Officer who had pioneered Bushman studies in the Territory,⁴⁸ Major J. Naudé, the former Deputy Commissioner of Police who had a long-term interest in the welfare of Bushmen⁴⁹, and Schoeman. Two junior Native Affairs clerks, Claude McIntyre and Ralph Webbstock alternated as Secretary.

International changes had also helped to shape the Commission. South Africa had refused to recognise the United Nations (UN) as the legal successor to the League of Nations that would place the Territory under UN trusteeship. The last thing the South Africans wanted were events that could escalate into an international embarrassment. These complexities were epitomised by the Loeb Expedition from the University of California, Berkeley, that had been personally invited by the South African Premier, Smuts, while attending the founding of the UN in San Francisco. The Loeb Expedition worked in Ovamboland where the Native Commissioner expressed concern that the expedition members did not know “how to deal correctly with the natives”, and moreover, might embarrass South Africa internationally. The Loeb expedition was almost deported from Ovamboland because the Native Commissioner believed, based on hearsay evidence, that Mrs. Loeb was teaching an Ovambo youth how to type in her bedroom!⁵⁰ As it was, one member of this expedition, the then budding anthropologist, Tom Larson, was deported,⁵¹ but South Africa realised the scientific value of the indigenous people, especially those labelled

47. R.J. Gordon, “Saving the Last South African Bushmen”, *Critical Arts*, 9, 2, 1995, pp 28-48.

48. For example, see L. Fourie, “The Bushmen of South West Africa”, in C.H.L. Hahn, H. Vedder and L. Fourie, *The Native Tribes of South West Africa* (Cape Times, Cape Town, 1928).

49. For example, see National Archives of Namibia, Windhoek: File SW 51/47/47, Naudé’s 1947 circular to all police stations entitled “Wild Bushmen: Treatment of”.

50. National Archives of Namibia, Windhoek: File A.198/3, Confidential letter, Native Commissioner of Ovamboland to Secretary for South West Africa, 8 December 1947.

51. Tom Larson, personal comment, November 2001.

Bushmen. This was largely because overseas academics like Professor Gusinde and the Marshall family from Boston had expressed an interest in studying them. Bushmen, however, because of their “primitiveness”, were deemed unlikely to “embarrass” the Administration.

Another consideration was the attempt to professionalise Native Administration. In line with colonial policy elsewhere in Africa, the Administration had appointed official ethnologists to advise them. A major stimulus for this was the London-based International Africa Institute that solicited government support for a “Survey of African People” and the Administration agreed to put up the sum of 350 pounds per annum for three years. Rudolf Lehmann, a German ethnologist who was stranded in Tanganyika at the outbreak of the Second World War, was appointed as first Government Ethnologist for the Territory. In making an argument to convert this position into a permanent one, the South African Government Ethnologist argued that the survey was important “because it helps to refute the criticisms from UNO that not enough is being done for the natives”.⁵²

Before the Commission commenced its activities, Schoeman was appointed Chairman because the original Chairman, Doctor Fourie, died. The Commission issued two reports, a preliminary one in September 1951, and a final undated report in *circa* 1955. Both reports were drafted by Schoeman. The Commission undertook a thirty day journey of 2 000 miles during the dry winter months travelling up the Omuramba Eiseb and on to the Kavango River, before making a separate trip to the Etosha Game Reserve. What is noteworthy, is that Schoeman appeared to avoid contact with other people interested in Bushmen. Thus the archival record suggests no contact with the Government Ethnologist. Even contact with the Marshalls, who at this time were undertaking research expeditions to the Bushmen of the Nyae Nyae area, was minimal and then rather dismissive.⁵³ Moreover, during this period, the veteran Austrian ethnologist, Martin Gusinde, was undertaking Bushman research along the Kavango. Again Schoeman ignored him, leaving it to the local Native Commissioner to obtain Gusinde’s views on how the Bushmen might be preserved.⁵⁴

52. National Archives of Namibia, Windhoek: File A50/217, SWAA Files, “Survey of African People”, letter dated 30 August 1948.

53. Lorna and John Marshall, personal comments.

54. Martin Gusinde, OMI, a protégé of Pater Wilhelm Schmidt, was a well-established German-speaking priest and anthropologist who had made his reputation with studies on the Yahgan in Tierra del Fuego and Central African

Lack of transport meant that no activities were undertaken in 1951, although Schoeman did manage to write and publish his popular book on Bushmen entitled *Jagters van die Woestynland [Hunters of the Desert Land]* in 1951. Then, in 1952, there was a flurry of activity. In March and April 1952, Schoeman was responsible for organising, collecting and managing “the Bushman Exhibition”. It was one of the most successful exhibits at the Van Riebeeck Festival which was held in Cape Town to commemorate three hundred years of European settlement in South Africa.⁵⁵ Building on the success of this venture, Schoeman invited Professor Brock of the University of Cape Town’s Medical School up to examine Bushmen *in situ*. In July 1952, he and Brock travelled north to Etosha and the Kavango, while Major Naudé visited the Nyae Nyae area. Schoeman and Naudé then travelled together before returning to Windhoek in early August. Their *modus operandi* was to send ahead to relevant officials to request them to gather local Bushmen in an encampment where they were promised generous portions of tobacco, salt and maize-meal and would be interviewed and measured.⁵⁶ Schoeman did not speak any of the local languages and used two interpreters, Xameb (estimated to be about 60 years old) for Heikum, and Trados (approximately 30) who translated !Kung. These two were also the narrators for the twenty-six fables that he published in his last book.⁵⁷

Schoeman apparently took his duties seriously and issued an undated memorandum on “the right attitude” the Commission was to take:

pygmies. A professor at the Catholic University in Washington DC, his 1951 research was funded by the Wenner-Gren Foundation. Questioned by the Kavango Native Commissioner, he opined: “Their lives are so specialized that they cannot be changed ... [but] it is impossible ... to preserve them from contact with civilization. ... It is my conviction that it is essential to prevent close dependency of the Bushmen on the Bantu. The natives are very clever and the Bushmen very childish and the Bushman has not enough courage to act against superiority of the native. He is too childish to go to the commissioner for help (A similar situation to Tierra del Fuego and in the Belgium Congo). To bring the natives and Bushmen into a common reserve cannot give good results. Experience in America has proved this ...” National Archives of Namibia, Windhoek: File A 50/67, Memorandum by Mr Morris, 13 January 1951. Compared to Gusinde’s diffusionist racism, Schoeman appears positively progressive!

55. L. Witz, *Apartheid’s Festival* (Indiana University Press, Bloomington, 2002).
56. For an account of how they went about their activities, see W.A. de Klerk’s description of a visit to one of the Ovambo encampments: W.A. de Klerk, *Drie Swerwers oor die Eindlers* (Nasionale Boekhandel, Kaapstad, 1953), pp 159-166.
57. Schoeman, *Swerwersprokies*.

We as members of a more highly developed Western civilization, are, consciously and unconsciously, for ever comparing and criticizing ... the result is a ... strong tendency to despise them and lose patience with them. Such an attitude creates a barrier ... and we remain forever not only strangers but hostile to each other ... Not to mend and change, but *to understand* must be our first and guiding principle.

The policy would have to be one of *festina lente* “or else social and moral disintegration would result (We already have this sad state of affairs in the rural and urban areas of South Africa).” In vintage Malinowskian terms, Schoeman proclaimed that Bushmen were driven by two forces, hunger and sex, and from these emerged economic and social organisation.

Schoeman also addressed the “all-important question”: “Can the Bushmen be civilized?” While, according to Schoeman, historically they appeared to be incapable of such a move, their will to survive was very strong, but tragically no government had ever given them a square deal, treating them either as a liability or ignoring them. Information was needed to determine whether Bushmen could settle down like the Bantu. As a long-term policy, Schoeman proposed considering integrating the Bushmen with the Ovambo, because while “as a race” they were unable to settle down, they did submit to the authority of Bantu tribes. Schoeman concluded his memorandum:

It might be worthwhile to lead the Bushmen via the Native to a stage of development where they will no longer slaughter cattle and sheep, but keep them. If we give them livestock straight away, I fear the worst!

As an idealist I would like to see the Bushmen living their own lives in one or more reserves of their own – with a Chinese wall around them. But unless the Administration is prepared to supply them with food, they will, I fear, be a continual nuisance to both the Natives and the European farmers, then they will gradually exterminate all the big game.⁵⁸

In the Interim Report, the Commission reported being very favourably impressed by the richness and beauty of the mythology of the Heikum Bushmen of Etosha and the “wonderful” way they had remembered and maintained their centuries old tribal laws and customs, and indeed suggested that Schoeman be asked to write a treatise on their

58. Copy provided by Beryl McIntyre, daughter of Claude McIntyre, on file with the author.

customs and usages. Such a treatise would not only be scientifically valuable, but also necessary for long-term planning.⁵⁹ The Report claimed that the Heikum were one of the oldest living Bushman races as proven by their myths and folklore. Their tale, as narrated by Schoeman, saw them as the original inhabitants who were attacked by the pastoralist Herero who had forced them to join the “Hottentots” with whom they intermarried. The report also “acknowledged that the Ovambos took Bushman wives, but that it was prohibited for Heikom men to take Ovambo wives”.⁶⁰ The Heikum were on a higher civilizational level than the Kung because they lived in the Etosha Game Reserve near European settlement and were constantly in contact with whites. “Approximately 70% of [the Heikum] wore European clothing and regularly begged tea, coffee and sugar. This recently learnt need will gradually persuade them to seek work on neighboring White farms”.⁶¹ They were reportedly good workers, indeed considered superior to Ovambo by some European farmers. The Commission recommended that a reserve be created for them adjacent to the Etosha Game Reserve in the north, while the Kung would be given a reserve near Karakuwisa. Part of the attraction of having a Bushman reserve here would be that it would serve as a livestock-free zone and thus provide a bulwark against the spread of stock disease from the north to the white-owned herds within the Police Zone.⁶² In this reserve gradual development would take place with as little as possible outside interference. Contact with other ethnic groups would be limited to the so-called “Bushman Guards” – Bantu overseers hired by the Native Commissioner – and the position of these guards would be terminated, once Bushmen headmen were available.

The Commission was acutely aware that white farmers claimed that there was a labour shortage, but felt that Bushmen were so attached to their desert life and so suspicious of civilization that they would not resettle in white farm areas. Indeed the Commission reiterated this stance in even stronger terms in the Final Report: “The Commission definitely rejects the idea that whole families should be sent out to farms because it is feared that any such move may result in the deaths of whole families through acute homesickness.”⁶³

59. National Archives of Namibia, Windhoek: File A 50/67, South West Africa, *Voorlopige Verslag van die Kommissie vir die Behoud van die Boesmanbevolking in Suidwes-Afrika, 1950* (September 1951), paragraaf 12.

60. South West Africa, *Voorlopige Verslag*, paragraaf 11.

61. South West Africa, *Voorlopige Verslag*, paragraaf 24.

62. The Police Zone was an internal border beyond which Europeans could not enter without special permits and from which livestock could not be imported.

63. South West Africa, *Report* (circa 1955), paragraph 57.

Mindful of the rhetoric of salvaging the last vestiges of this “dying race”, a discourse popularised in the thirties by Donald Bain⁶⁴ and internationalised with the founding of the United Nations, the Commission tried to answer the self-formulated question, “Are the Bushmen dying out?”, which in turn the Commission broke down into three inter-related questions: “Is there still something like a pure race Bushman?”; “Are the Bushmen dying out as a race?” and “To what degree have they already inter-married with Hottentot and Bantu tribes?” Proclaiming only tentative impressions, Schoeman noted the low fertility rates and the preponderance of males over females, and observed that the Commission did not find a single San woman married to another ethnic group. San women were simply concubines.

The Commission acknowledged that Bushmen were “dying out” and that Bushman reservations were necessary to stem the tide. The prime causes for the decline in Bushman numbers were syphilis and other contagious diseases. In typical functionalist vein, the Commission ignored history⁶⁵ except for indirect references, such as when it suggested that policemen should not wear uniforms when on patrol in Bushman areas. With no traditional chiefs, ordinary tribal government was impossible and the Commissioner would have to exercise control personally.

The key framing question used by the Commission was classic Malinowski: “To what extent do the Bushmen provide their own means of livelihood? Can these Bushmen, who, in so far as it is known to anthropological science, have always been wanderers, hunters and *veldkos* gatherers, be induced to lead settled life practicing agriculture and stock-breeding?”⁶⁶

64. See Gordon, “Saving the Last South African Bushmen”.

65. Such a version ignores not only the long and well-established history of Bushman exploitation by others, but also recent events like on-going efforts by the farming lobby to have “vagrant” Bushmen placed on reserves, as well as other official attempts to deal with the “Bushman Problem” dating back to the turn of the century (Gordon 1992). Dismissing or ignoring genocide is a rather common trait among Sanophiles. Even Bob Hitchcock who has done much on Bushman history, claims a genocidal situation for the Bushmen only emerged in the eighties. S. Totten, W. Parsons and R. Hitchcock, “Confronting Genocide and Ethnocide of Indigenous Peoples”, in A. Hinton (ed), *Annihilating Difference* (University of California Press, Berkeley, 2002), p 67. Schoeman acknowledges that Bushmen originally occupied the whole of southern Africa, but then as a result of stock-theft were driven into the waterless wastes of the Kalahari. See Schoeman, *Swerwersprokies*, p 2.

66. South West Africa, *Report*, paragraph 32.

The Final Report of the Commission admitted that there was no historical data with which to compare their observations, and thus it was unable to say how pure Bushmen were “racially”, although the Commission believed the Kung to be the more racially pure, while the Heikum were mixed with blacks. Contagious disease, rather than colonial exploitation, was again confirmed as the primary cause for depopulation although in the Kavango region numbers had declined because of “uncontrolled drift to unsuitable areas [where] due to the extermination of game, uncontrolled bush-burnings and inevitable droughts, Bushmen have been subjected to an insufficient and unbalanced diet to such an extent that the birth rate has dropped to an alarmingly low level ...”⁶⁷

Indeed, now in contrast to the Interim Report, the Final Report stated: “Nowhere did your Commission receive the impression that it would be worthwhile to preserve either the Heikum or the Barrakwengo as Bushmen. In both cases the process of assimilation has proceeded too far and these Bushmen are already abandoning their nomadic habits and are settling down amongst the neighboring tribes to agriculture and stock breeding”.⁶⁸

Contradictions and inconsistencies were brushed aside. “In actual fact”, the Commission found, “the Bushmen leading a free hunting life today is in the minority. Apart from those living in Bantu tribal areas, numbers also work for European farmers and other employers and this has been the case for years”.⁶⁹ Between thirty and forty per cent of Bushmen in Ovamboland practiced agriculture and ten to fifteen per cent owned livestock. Generally these Heikum were healthy and well-fed.

The Commission gushed:

It is amazing how far the Bushmen have advanced long the paths of civilization in the last two decades ... thanks largely to the sympathetic treatment accorded them by the officials of the Administration ... Some of the so-called “wild” Bushmen in the Noma Omuramba, near Nyae Nyae expressed concern at the fact that their relatives living on the outskirts of civilization were damaging the reputation of the tribe by killing European owned cattle, but they explained that this was largely due to lack of official guidance. The people who perpetrated these misdeeds had left their home areas with the intention of entering civilization and employment but on the very doorstep their hearts failed them and there was no one to help them to take the final plunge into an entirely foreign and, to them, hostile world ... This uncontrolled

67. South West Africa, *Report*, paragraph 51.

68. South West Africa, *Report*, paragraph 20.

69. South West Africa, *Report*, paragraph 43.

migration into civilisation, which was gathering pace, worried the elders who saw in it the doom of the tribe. They wanted the Government to control it.⁷⁰

The Commission found that all Bushmen were unanimous in their desire for a piece of land with permanent water. However it cautioned, "Rapid results are not to be expected. The Bushmen are still too primitive to adopt completely a settled life in one generation and many falterings and failures are to be expected ... A forced pace would result in irreparable damage". There should be no undue haste about this development the Commission argued; it would have to keep pace with the "taming" of the Bushmen in a step-by-step manner.

First, those in the immediate neighborhood of the pans should be persuaded to settle down to farming. When they have done so, their vacated hunting grounds would attract the next lying bands. When these have moved in, they, in turn, should be similarly persuaded and so the process will continue with ever increasing momentum until all the Bushmen are settled.⁷¹

Undoubtedly the major difference between the Interim and Final Reports of the Bushman Preservation Commission was that the proposed reserve for the Heikom had been dropped. No reasons were given for this change and it is difficult to explain this *volte face* except to note that Schoeman was Chief Warden of the Etosha Game Park and that this might have played a role. Two possible factors seem to have been important. In the first place, there was the old idea that people in parks would spoil the "natural ambience" and, secondly, the pressing labour needs of local farmers also was a crucial factor.⁷²

The situation concerning this about face is indeed complex. In 1951 Schoeman published his acclaimed book *Jagters van die Woestynland*, translated as *Hunters of the Desert Land* (1957). The first edition is dedicated to the Administrator and Secretary for South-West Africa "who made it possible to collect this material". The book purports to record dialogues between Schoeman and Xameb, his Heikum interpreter, who is certainly not shy to speak his mind. In Xameb's version, the Heikum story was one of "great suffering ... the story of our slow death ... the starvation of the little, yellow children of the desert

70. South West Africa, *Report*, paragraph 42.

71. South West Africa, *Report*, paragraph 56.

72. U. Diekmann, *Hai//om between the "Bushmen Problem" and San Activism. Colonial Imaginations and postcolonial appropriations of ethnicity in Namibia*. Doctoral Dissertation, University of Cologne, 2005, pp 206-207.

land ... [Impoverishment was the consequence of] you white people, and the black people [who] chased us away from the land of flowing waters.” Schoeman responds by asking if the dislocation was not the consequence of killing the cattle owned by whites and blacks. Xameb's reply is poignant: “Alas ... White Father, must you, who have seen so much of our hunger and thirst and death here in the desert land, still echo such a lie?” Schoeman rejoins, “What is written in books, Xameb, does not suffer from a bad memory” to which Xameb ripostes: “Is it also written in those books of yours with their long memories who first started slaughtering the other man's cattle?”⁷³ Xameb continues describing how “our pregnant mothers gave birth to their children while they were fleeing from you ... we had to leave our aged behind to fall prey.” Bushmen were now reduced to begging for old clothes and tobacco next to the main roads.⁷⁴ Xameb described how the Germans shot “many of us ... just as people shoot wild dogs and wolves.” Schoeman replied: “Only those of your people who murdered and stole cattle, Xameb. We must not cover the truth with sand.”⁷⁵

The concluding chapter is particularly touching, if not wrenching. Xameb describes how when they were “on the road,” blacks would take (rape) Bushman women. Schoeman then asks what message he should take to the great chiefs in Windhoek. Xameb replies, “... ask them to listen to the weeping of a race which is tired of running away. Give us a piece of land, too. Give us a piece of land where our women will not be taken from us ... If your law protects our women there, we will never leave our land ... Bushman-land”.⁷⁶ Finally, as Schoeman is about to leave, Xameb “squirmed uneasily”, “the woman of the bulbs ... wants to tell the White Father something through my mouth ... She says, ‘Eliob will send the White Father a lovely young duiker-doe ... to put wood on the White Father’s fire every night’”⁷⁷. So touched was Schoeman that he was speechless and could not even look up. He got into his truck and the book concludes:

And I do not believe the old truck will ever really know why I suddenly pushed the accelerator right down. It would never be able to understand why I was driven to hurry to Windhoek where I was to deliver the beseeching prayer of the “Hunters of the Desert Land” ... “Please give us a land of our own ... Bushman-land”.⁷⁸

73. P.J. Schoeman, *Hunters of the Desert Land* (Howard Timmins, Cape Town, 1982), p 11.

74. Schoeman, *Hunters*, pp 12-13.

75. Schoeman, *Hunters*, pp 206-208.

76. Schoeman, *Hunters*, p 212.

77. Schoeman *Hunters*, p 213.

78. Schoeman, *Hunters*, p 215.

The book is important. It went into numerous editions, was translated into a number of languages and enjoyed captive sales by being prescribed as a school text in all South African provinces. It is seen as an important contribution to Afrikaans literature for its humanistic portrayal of indigenous people. It is also important for the history of South African anthropology for its portrayal of the anthropologist as an activist who is using his literary skills to engage policy makers on behalf of “his people”,⁷⁹ yet within two years Schoeman was to write the final report of the Commission for the Preservation of the Bushmen that betrayed Xameb and his fellow Heikom with not even the courtesy of an explanation. Indeed, Schoeman asked that the Native Commissioner inform the Heikom of the decision to force them out of the Game Park, “because he [Schoeman] considers that their removal from the Game Reserve is bound to [lead to] antagonism amongst these Bushmen, Dr Schoeman feels that he should not present the matter personally, as such antagonism may hamper his work in the Game Reserve.” Instead the task was left to Native Commissioner Eedes, who told the Heikom resident in the Etosha Game Reserve in no uncertain terms that there was “no appeal against this order”.⁸⁰ Ute Dieckmann in her recently completed dissertation on the Hai//om of the Etosha area reports that:

... whereas the police sergeants are often described in a positive way, Schoeman in particular does not appear to have been very popular with many of the Hai//om. He is thought to be responsible for the expulsion plan. It would appear that his attempts to avoid antagonism amongst the Bushmen by not informing them of the removal himself failed.⁸¹

In his writing, Schoeman was to return to the Bushmen in a number of books and articles. What is fascinating about this corpus, though, is that he never mentions the fact that he was Chairman of the Commission for the Preservation of the Bushmen. In a popular article entitled “Die Weeskinders van Afrika” (“The Orphans of Africa”) published twenty years later, he directly addressed the issue of Bushman population decline.

79. Jordaan has analysed Schoeman’s works and especially *Jagters* within a post-colonialist literary-anthropological framework based on Clifford and Crapanzano to make the rather obvious point that while the “apparatus of repression is present in various forms in the novel (the wealth and technological might of the narrator; his control of the speaking voice), ... the novel cannot be seen to underwrite this hegemony. Although no critique is made explicit, the novel contains elements incommensurate with the Afrikaner Nationalist ideology expressed by the narrator ...” Extracted from the Abstract of N.J. Jordaan, “P.J. Schoeman as etnograaf en romanskrywer”, *Tydskrif vir Nederlands en Afrikaans*, 14, 1, 1997, pp 28-61.

80. Cited in Dieckmann, *Hai//om*, p 208.

81. Dieckmann, *Hai//om*, p 210.

They had become extinct in South Africa, he claimed, because of a “tragic reciprocal misunderstanding”. In South-West Africa, their numbers were diminishing because of – wait for it – their lust for tobacco. Unable to restrain their craving, they would trek up to the Kavango River where they sold their wives to black migrant workers returning from the mines for this tobacco. Schoeman believed that the migrant workers would eventually infect all Bushmen females with venereal disease with fatal consequences. This was aggravated by the fact that Bushmen would flee rather than see a white administration doctor!⁸²

Conclusion

A number of points arise from this brief description of Schoeman's career. It provides a rare and important case where an anthropologist was provided with the opportunity to profoundly affect the life chances of a significant number of people and shows how it was handled.

There are other issues as well. In retrospect, the idea of a coterie of Afrikaner academics planning a cohesive model of apartheid in Stellenbosch seems far-fetched, even if they did appear to respect Eiselen and Gerdener.⁸³ There was an exceptionally high turnover among these *Bantoekundiges*. In a four-man Department of *Bantoekunde*, they managed to divide it into three Departments of *Volkekunde*, Native Administration and Bantu Languages.⁸⁴ When Schoeman's colleagues, Coertze, Language and Van Eeden, reprinted their essays on apartheid that had also originally appeared in *Wapenskou*, in a pamphlet entitled *Die Oplossing van die Naturellevraagstuk in Suid Afrika: Wenke ooreenkomstig die Afrikanerstandpunt van Apartheid* [The Solution of the Native question: guidelines in accordance with the Afrikaner viewpoint of apartheid] in 1943,⁸⁵ they made no mention of Schoeman's pioneering effort on the same topic in the same journal. Language left Stellenbosch in 1943 for a more lucrative position as Native Affairs Manager of Brakpan, but eventually wound up as Professor of Anthropology at the University of the Free State in Bloemfontein. In a handwritten note scrawled over the envelope of his Bushman field-notes that Schoeman donated to the Literature Museum, he explicitly stated that under no

82. P.J. Schoeman, “Weeskinders van Afrika”, *Landbouweekblad*, 12 October 1971, pp 10-15; Schoeman, *Swerwersprokies*, p 13.

83. H. Giliomee, “The Making of the Apartheid Plan, 1929-1948”, *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 29, 2003, pp 373-392.

84. Coertze, “Aanvang van Volkekunde”.

85. P.J. Coertze, F.J. Language en B.I.C. van Eeden, *Die Oplossing van die Naturellevraagstuk in Suid-Afrika. Wenke ooreenkomstig die Afrikanerstandpunt van Apartheid* (Publicite, Johannesburg, 1943).

circumstances was Professor Language to have access to them. Similarly, Schoeman's relationship with his colleague, P.J. Coertze, who left Stellenbosh in 1946, is also puzzling. Like Schoeman, Coertze was an avid lover of the outdoors and propounded the same ideological message concerning the future of Afrikanerdom, yet P.J. Coertze and his son, R.D. Coertze, barely acknowledged the presence of Schoeman in their copious writings on South African anthropology. A pointer to these tensions is provided in a handwritten letter to the Minister of Native Affairs, Jansen, asking for employment, in which Schoeman observed "I am no proponent of hatred and pettiness. This was indeed one of the reasons why I resigned from Stellenbosch. Few people of my age have paid so heavily in this country for their principles and beliefs."⁸⁶

The role and place of dissonance: moral, academic and intellectual, and even absurdity in the intellectual history of apartheid, which Schoeman's career illustrates so well, has not been given much attention. Many years ago, the sociologist-anthropologist Everett C. Hughes wrote an essay entitled "Good People and Dirty Work", in which he described revisiting a German village he had studied after the Second World War and how, though his villagers could *see* the smoke stacks of the extermination camps, they could not *comprehend* what was going on. Schoeman dealt with the contradictions by severely compartmentalising his intellectual activities. How does one deal with Schoeman's awareness of his chief informant Xameb's description of suffering in *Hunters of the Desert Land*, yet find no mention of these atrocities in his official reports? Again Schoeman was not unique in this. Another prominent Afrikaans anthropologist, J.P. van S. Bruwer (incidentally also written out of the history of South African anthropology by R.D. Coertze), faced similar dilemmas.⁸⁷ Such examples can be multiplied. This leads one to suggest that rather than knowledge leading to power, the ethnographic endeavours and expertise of colonial anthropologists did not directly lead to consolidation of power, but were more important for providing ritual or symbolic imprimaturs on government policy in the form of shadow knowledge which successfully "fettered the colonial imagination".⁸⁸

86. Instituut vir Eietydse Geskiedenis, Bloemfontein: Jansen-versameling, PV 94, 1/38/1/4, Handwritten letter by Schoeman to Jansen, 28 January 1949.

87. R.J. Gordon, "The Making of Modern Namibia: A case of anthropological ineptitude", *Kleio*, 37, 2005, pp 26-49.

88. R.J. Gordon, "Vagrancy, Law and 'Shadow Knowledge'. Internal Pacification 1915-1939", in P. Hayes, J. Silvester, M. Wallace and W. Hartmann (eds), *Namibia Under South African Rule: Mobility and Containment* (Out of Africa, Windhoek, 1998), pp 51-77.

It is not only “citizen anthropologists” who suffer from this truncated self-image, but experienced foreign ones as well. Bob Hitchcock concludes a recent paper on “Human rights and anthropological activism among the San” by approvingly citing an elderly Ju/’hoan man: “We value the help of anthropologists because they understand our needs and our goals. Without anthropologists, we would still be living difficult lives on the margins of the villages in the desert. Anthropologists have helped make it possible for us to help ourselves.”⁸⁹

There is, however, one factor that overrides this compartmentalisation and that is derived from the Malinowskian notion of the primary drives of food and sex, especially the latter. One sees this throughout Schoeman's writings. It hovers just below the surface and occasionally emerges like a rock in a sweeping ocean. Recall Schoeman's 1941 argument on the necessity of strict physical segregation, with especially women well removed from white contact, and the need to develop black pride as only then blacks would be dissuaded from wanting to intermarry with Afrikaners. Also recall how Schoeman's explanations of Bushman population decline concerned miscegenation and, horror of horrors, how as he was about to take his leave of Xameb, the spirit Eliob wanted to send him a beautiful female duiker to throw wood on his fire every night! This curious obsession with sex and especially miscegenation is reminiscent of other apartheid theoreticians like Geoff Cronjé. As J.M. Coetzee has pointed out, such ideologues justified apartheid in terms of the long-term interests of whites but “what animated these worthies may have been, not the altruism they claimed, but on the contrary the crassest absorption in their own passions and appetites, and that their justificatory utterances may have been no more than a cover for the deepest indifference to the fate of their descendants.”⁹⁰ Certainly, from either a Freudian or a Lacanian perspective, such sexual obsessions need to be analysed in order to comprehend why and how apartheid emerged.

The activism of public anthropologists like Schoeman served to deepen the wedge between English- and Afrikaans-speaking anthropologists. Consider the 1944 Presidential Address to Section H of the South African Association for the Advancement of Science by Schoeman's nemesis, Hilda Kuper. She noted that no sharp distinction can be drawn between sociology and social anthropology since sociology

89. R. Hitchcock, “Human rights”, p 187.

90. J.M. Coetzee, “Apartheid Thinking”, in J. Coetzee, *Giving Offense Essays on Censorship* (University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1996), p 164.

is concerned with human social behavior in all places and all times, not merely with its manifestation in “Western society”.

Emphasis on distinction between Social anthropology and Sociology obscures the fundamental unity of mankind ... The distinction is not only arbitrary, but (for political and other motives) may (also) be misinterpreted. The South African scene exemplifies this danger ... *politicians and others have misused anthropological monographs to stress and perpetuate the difference between non-European and European. Descriptions of their analogous customs and beliefs, and analyses of increasing institutional interdependence are rare and relatively recent. The emphasis on a common humanity is frequently ignored.*⁹¹

Perhaps most striking is how Schoeman's plans and hopes continually failed. Malinowski was his big inspiration and continued to be so, yet after a vituperative article by Kuper, Malinowski's acolyte (with less than four months fieldwork), Schoeman stopped writing anthropological articles in English. An idealistic and fervent believer in apartheid, Schoeman tried to convince Africans of its merits, yet lost his deposit in an election. Deeply touched by the Bushmen and their tales of suffering, he failed them as a Commissioner and activist.

For anthropologists imagining their potential roles in society, there is a moral to Schoeman's story about the dangers of exceeding the limits of one's naiveté. When the chips are down, to paraphrase Alexander Leighton, policy-makers, politicians, and San, will use anthropology as a drunk uses a lamppost – for support rather than illumination.

Abstract

P.J. Schoeman is largely ignored in the history of South African anthropology and apartheid, yet as this article shows, he played a significant role as a public intellectual. He felt so strongly about the importance of segregation that he unsuccessfully ran for Parliament as Cape African Representative and then was able to try to put his theory to practice as Chairman of the Commission for the Preservation of the Bushmen in South-West Africa. The theoretical paradigm he operated in was heavily tinged with Malinowskian functionalism. Schoeman's experiences provide important insights for contemporary South African academics as they ponder their role as “public” or “citizen” intellectuals in the new South Africa.

91. H. Kuper, “Social Anthropology as a Study of Culture Contacts”, *South African Journal of Science*, 41, 1945, p 89 [my emphasis].

Opsomming

“Tracks which cannot be covered”:

P.J. Schoeman en Openbare Intellektuele in Suider-Afrika

In die geskiedenis van Suid-Afrikaanse antropologie en apartheid, word P.J. Schoeman grotendeels geïgnoreer, maar soos hierdie artikel bewys, het hy tog 'n noemenswaardige rol as openbare intellektueel vertolk. Hy het só sterk oor segregasie gevoel dat hy (weliswaar onsuksesvol) vir die parlementêre setel van Kaapse naturelvertegenwoordiger in die parlement gestaan het en daarna sy teorieë in die praktyk as voorsitter van die Kommissie vir die Behoud van die Boesmanbevolking in Suidwes-Afrika beoefen het. Die teoretiese paradigma waarbinne hy opgetree het, is sterk deur Malinowski se funksionalisme beïnvloed. Schoeman se ondervinding is van waarde vir kontemporêre Suid-Afrikaanse akademici wanneer hulle hulle rol as “openbare” of “burgerlike” intellektuele in die nuwe Suid-Afrika oordink.

Key words

Commission for the Preservation of the Bushmen; English-Afrikaans academic relations; Etosha Game Reserve; functionalism; Hai//om; Malinowski; nature literature; origins of apartheid; segregation; social anthropology; University of Stellenbosch; *volkekunde*.

Sluitelwoorde

Engels-Afrikaanse akademiese verhoudings; Etosha-Wildreservaat; funksionalisme; Hai//om; Kommissie vir die Behoud van die Boesmanbevolking; Malinowski; natuurliteratuur; oorsprong van apartheid; segregasie; sosiale antropologie; Universiteit van Stellenbosch; volkekunde.