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Travels to Otherness:

Whose Identity Do We Want to See?

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INTRODUCTION: A RAINBOW NATION AND THE POLITICS OF IDENTITY

The concept of a Rainbow Nation was seen by many South Africans to be a uniting factor for the newly democratic South Africa. It was used as an image of reconciliation and togetherness. In his May 1994 Presidential Inaugural speech, Nelson Mandela said:

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We enter into a covenant that we shall build a society in which all South Africans, both black and white, will be able to walk tall, without any fear in their hearts, assured of their inalienable right to human dignity—a Rainbow Nation at peace with itself and with the world."

This notion of a Rainbow Nation characterised by Mandela's own actions, was a popular vision of nation and national identity linking people, their country and their cultural roots. Bolstered by politicians and media alike, the symbol's broad appeal rapidly became a watchword to support political and social transformation as a wounded South African nation emerged from the violent separateness of Apartheid. As the so-called new South Africa claimed its place in the international arena it became increasingly apparent that, freed from the constraining racist framework of the previous regime, ethnicity and seemingly exotic cultures would now legitimately serve as great tourist attractions. Not surprising, the concept of the Rainbow Nation was played out in post-apartheid tourist publicity.

International and regional tourism often draw upon conventions of ethnic 'authenticity' and cultural heritage which offer the tourist the opportunity to experience a cross-cultural encounter. South African glossy travel advertisements and publicity material stress the country's African-ness and emphasise ethnicity, 'tribal' identity and authentic customs. This paper argues that many formal and informal participants in the South African tourist industry uncritically accept such generalisations and use them to market a fictional idea of the 'real' Africa.

In particular, this paper focuses on tourism's images of the Khoisan peoples. Popular perceptions place hunter-gatherers as an integral part of nature or as survivors in a cruel and hostile environment. KhoiSan²¹ are usually visually depicted in a landscape which serves to support unstated claims made for a particular Bushman identity. This identity could be said to be a generalised 'other', in which they are shown in such stereotypical ways as either romantic depictions of a 'First People' or as one of Africa's marginal under-developed

groups.³ Southern African and, to a significant extent European, societies' practices and institutions have for centuries defined the image and representation of KhoiSan people. As arguments and established myths about Bushman-ness have evolved from perspectives of Europeans and other non-KhoiSan people, ideas about KhoiSan people need to be understood as the social constructs of others. Contemporary society, in viewing groups they consider to be homogenous, does not adequately acknowledge group diversity, nor recognise that members of that group were subject to different recent histories and are now living in different conditions. Rather, common preconceptions locating Bushmen as exemplars of primitive society, surviving as unique relics of 'Stone Age Man', are entrenched in systems of thought which have become part of the dominant social structure. These concepts have formed a symbiotic relationship each informing the other which has resulted in the creation of a stereotyped image of Bushmen. The images which form the substance of this paper are those produced by and for a particular segment of mass culture: the tourist industry.

Representations about Bushman-ness are made by non-KhoiSan people; there are few KhoiSan self-representations.⁴ These images reflect and reveal relations of power and domination, prejudice and bigotry. In exploring the way in which non-KhoiSan people produce and use representations of 'Bushman-ness', this paper presents an art-historian's view of the ways in which visual images entrench ideas about stereotyped hunter-gatherer identity. I use these touristic representations, primarily images produced by an-'other', to explore the ways in which power as part of a productive network runs through the whole social body, traversing and producing things and forms of knowledge. I conclude with a short discussion about the prospects of self-representation by KhoiSan/Bushmen whose role in South Africa's tourist industry is beginning to undergo significant change.

TOURISTS IN SEARCH OF ADVENTURE IN THE 'REAL' AFRICA

Globally, tourism addresses peoples' desire to experience the mythical, timeless, authentic 'native' way of life in a contained and accessible manner. The tourists' undertaking is a quest in search of adventure and the excitement of discovering the exciting and unusual. The journey is often in pursuit of dreams which include long-held fantasies, stimulated by all manner of stories, influenced by *National Geographic*-like images, and the inescapable power of movies and television. Such private visions are frequently fuelled by socially constructed attitudes which underpin myths and ideas about "imagined communities". Tourism suggests the possibility of cultural contact which is often understood to be a chance to experience, view or attain knowledge of ethnicities and/or multiculturalism 'somewhere else' without one's own culture being threatened. It is a statement about an interest in difference, and a chance to see 'the other'. Tourists cannot be regarded as an homogenous group. The range includes those who are simply holiday makers seeking recreation and entertainment, some seeking to 'experience' other cultures, others desiring complete change from their urban, modern life-styles to the more adventurous who will embark on journeys off the beaten track in an attempt to explore and experience difference.⁵ Many of the latter may be tourists seeking different levels of knowledge who can be classified as observers of culture and social behaviour.



Fig. 1 *Wits Craft Shop selection, University of the Witwatersrand, 1998*

POPULAR CULTURE: SOUVENIRS AND MEMENTOS

The selection of curios, commercially produced for tourists, in the image of the *Wits Craft Shop selection, 1998* (Fig. 1) are representative of the predominant forms, which circulate in the network of South African and global popular culture. They are typical of those seen by most tourists who buy them as mementos of their experience (real and imagined) of another society, often portrayed more like another world. Sold in tourist, craft, museum and other stores, these are objects adapted to current tastes, trends and fashion which are produced by one group for whom subject matter becomes a series of generic signifiers of a romanticised other culture. The commodities appeal to tourists who in their quest for authenticity will take unusually decorated objects back home at the end of the journey. Because of the desire to have evidence to show they have “been there”, consumers will look for a trace of “the real thing”. Whether decorating homes, offices or the human body, they act as status markers of an authentic visit to an exotic far-off land.

Across the economic divide, the shopping or the collecting phase is an essential part of tourist activity. As tourism leads to commodification, ironically, it also leads to a loss of the very authenticity the tourist was so keen to experience. The tourists’ visit suggests a valorisation of the KhoiSan, insofar as the tourists are coming to appreciate and even perhaps to pay homage to hunting and gathering people. Such a relationship would suggest a certain power being recognised and invested in the KhoiSan. In fact, however, the KhoiSan are not honoured. Rather, they and their culture have been distorted and commodified by others and represented in these ‘new’ forms for consumer consumption.

Visual production cannot be viewed in isolation. Irrespective of racial, national, class and gender lines the users and makers of the images share many common positions. As representations communicate ideas to a spectator there is, in turn, a mediation between the

viewer's perspective or way of seeing and the image itself. Thus both fine and popular art forms act as part of social and cultural practice; involving relations of power, dialectics, interactions, ideological practices, political and economic factors, all of which construct the values and belief systems of the producer and her or his society. Confronted with stereotyped images, viewers consider the image or sign in terms of a value as well; consequently, these signs become encoded within the social order, thus locating the status of the image as informer and re-interpreter of ideas and values.

Ideas, visions and dreams arise out of generic signifiers of western popular culture. The notion of a popular culture proposes a collective knowledge with its own language and world view which both utilises, and periodically changes, the thought systems and rhetoric of society generally. The culture develops, creates, and then fixes its own representations, conceptualising them as part of its own world view as if most visual, verbal and written images were politically and historically 'true'. Constant repetition in a variety of forms and locales lends credence to programmes involved in social and political formations which increasingly become part of the ideology of everyday life.

TOURIST 'INFORMATION', POST CARDS AND ADVERTISEMENTS

One important aspect of international and regional tourism which caters for the tourist's cultural imaginings is the commodification of ethnic authenticity and cultural heritage which offers the tourist the opportunity to experience a cross-cultural encounter. Frequently layers of fabrication will combine with more factual elements in making a cultural event, object or scene which eventually becomes entrenched as part of the public gaze. Similarly, advertising

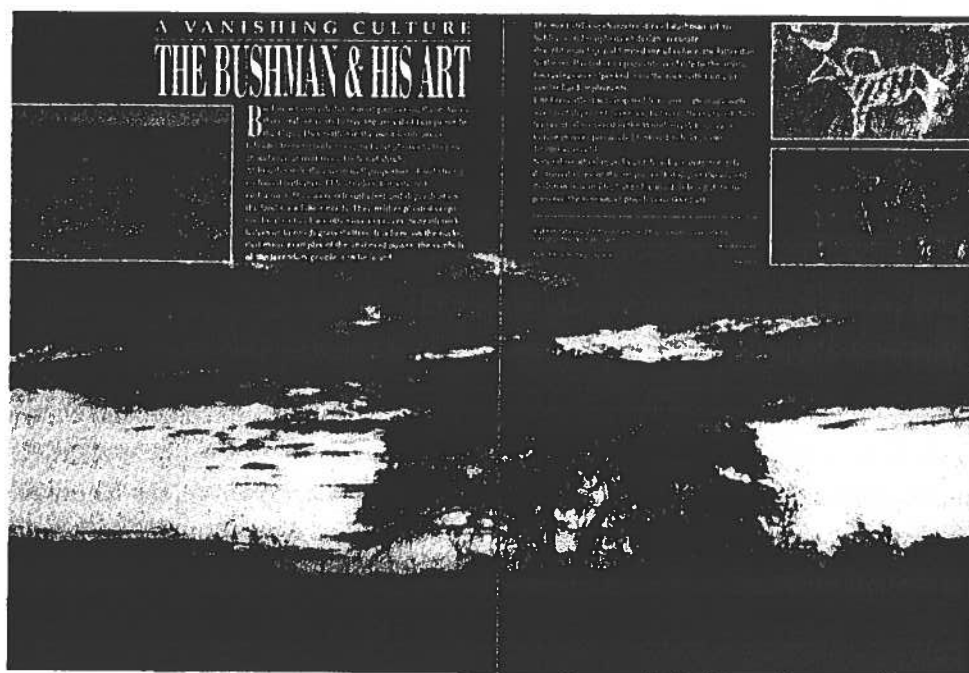


Fig. 2 *A Vanishing Culture: The Bushman and His Art*, no date

like tourism itself, depends upon these fantasies which are the formation of desires based on imagination. The desire to 'experience' or come into contact with distinctive identity which is understood as novel and different, often includes the fantasy of undertaking an adventurous journey to an only dreamt of place. Specifically, there are almost no easily accessible places where the average tourist can see what people such as Laurens van der Post called 'pure' and 'genuine' Bushman people.⁶ However, this two page spread, *A Vanishing Culture: The Bushman and His Art* (Fig. 2) in a South African Tourism Board's information booklet on the Northern Cape suggests that there is such a place.

This is problematic on several levels. There is a disjuncture between image and text. The bland, neutral title *A Vanishing Culture: the Bushman and His Art* strikingly omits to acknowledge the causal role colonial and subsequent governments played in the so-called disappearing act. Both it and the text indemnify successive states from blame by dehistoricising the situation in alluding instead to a mythical past. The implicit suggestion is that the tourist will have the opportunity to witness the triumph of the survival of a pristine group of Late Stone Age people which is, of course, meaningless. There is no reference to the decimation wrought upon the "legendary people" of the text, nor to the destruction of the environment on which they totally depended. Whilst conflating images of rock engravings, the stereotypical hunter figure and a background landscape, it conveys the suggestion that age old technology, ancient culture and the indomitable will of Bushmen to survive for centuries in a hostile environment is available for the tourist to enjoy. The advertisers have employed visual clichés which act interdependently. They are 'rock art', the generic Greco-Roman pose of the archetypal hunter set incongruously into an African landscape and the silhouette of trees which stand out against a spectacular African sunset. The back view of the model which simultaneously functions as the black other and portrayal of a traditional 'Bushman' hunting stance and the rock images would have little or no impact if they were not located within and against the natural setting. The desert usually depicted as arid, is blooming, subtly re-enforcing ideas of a fertile black other. Placed in this way images and text become what Nancy Anderson describes as "fabricated elements" which "in their constructed artifice carry [a] cultural message" [ANDERSON 1991: 239].

Whilst the depiction of landscape itself is considered as a symbolic field it also serves simultaneously as the context for another symbol or its representative, who in this case is the hunter figure, who can be said to be the special inhabitant of the landscape. Presented this way the figure is dependent upon its setting so that, as W.J.T. Mitchell asserts:

Landscape [too], is a marketable commodity to be presented and re-presented in "packaged tours", an object to be purchased, consumed and even brought home in the form of souvenirs such as postcards and photo albums. In its double role as commodity and potent cultural symbol, landscape is the object of fetishistic practices involving the limitless repetition of identical photographs taken on identical spots by tourists with interchangeable emotions [MITCHELL 1994: 15].

Such ideological systems of signification serve to naturalise the interests of a specific group and also to mystify 'reality'. To some extent misrepresentation is a function of

ideology allowing for authoritative practices and discourses which as part of prevailing historical relations and processes, constantly act to reinforce myths. In touristic terms, as Dean MacCannell suggests:

These views become the established "standards" against which all future visual records of these landscape spectacles would be measured. It was these "mechanical reproductions" of the chosen shrines that lured tourists into the journey to find the "Real Thing" [MACCANNELL 1976: 45].

A postcard is a fundamental artefact of any tourist industry. Postcards serve as status markers to both sender and recipient as they hold an implicit suggestion that the tourist has the opportunity to witness the event or scene. Tom Selwyn citing Elizabeth Edwards suggests that sending or

... 'owning a photograph (postcard) authenticates and represents the experience of the possessor...[but] such experience cannot ultimately be more than vicarious...since... [tourists] cannot share in the moral fabric of the visited.' Moreover postcard-induced knowledge of culture suffers from the fact that culture itself is always exoticised by being moored in the past [SELWYN 1996: 25].

When representation on postcards concerns so-called ethnographic subjects common understandings with regard to the unquestioned 'truth' are uncritically believed to reside in the photograph. In discussing photographs and postcards Edwards suggests that they present

...imagery which responds at a more subtle and more insidious level, the presentation and appropriation into touristic discourses of ethnographic reality which at a purely denotative level might indeed be described in objective terms as 'true' or 'real', that is it makes claims to represent accurately and to communicate experience of behaviour [EDWARDS 1996: 198].

Viewer understandings and expectations about ethnicity and identity are heightened by the assumed veracity of supposedly documentary-style photographs. The montage on the postcard, *Bushmen of Southern Africa* (Fig. 3) presents idyllic images of Bushmen set against vignettes of landscape and the inevitable suggestion of rock painting at the top centre. The spatial ordering of the undisturbed landscape assumes the function of a social space in which a specific culture operates. It serves to locate its inhabitants who are perceived of as being able to create their own form of order and survival within the 'primitive' environment. Stereotypes of Bushmen act as cultural markers, acting as an indigenous presence to support claims made for authenticity of both touristic sight and site. The activities of the individuals are combined with an attention to what are considered to be exotic materials of their everyday life such as the beads, unusual head-dress (right and centre below), grass huts and zebra skin (below left). Above that the familiar figure of a male hunter poised in the act of shooting his arrow is shown as if he is a still-life. Next, the suggestive atmosphere of the

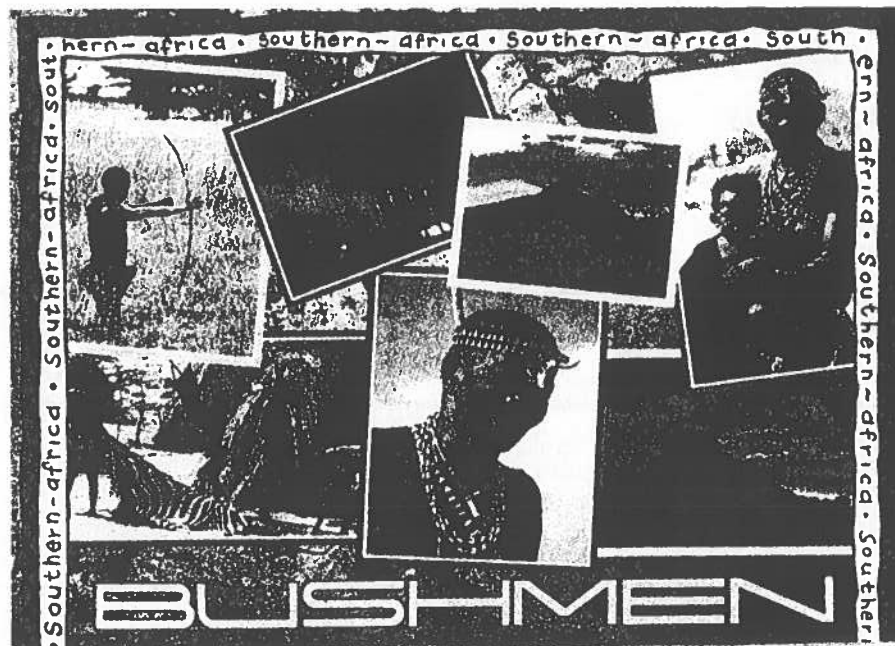


Fig. 3 *Bushmen of Southern Africa*, no date

silhouetted figures against the firelight has Romantic visual echoes in the dramatic cliché of an African sunset; lower right.” Domestic elements are alluded to by the people busily employed around their simple grass huts complimented by the universal qualities associated with parent and child in the top left. As it is fairly unusual to see father, rather than mother, and child it is possible that this image suggests the egalitarian nature of San life-style.

Just as tourism fosters desires which revolve around fantasies of a world people would like to see and experience, idealised images fuel an interest in a nostalgia for a timeless, imagined place. Two greeting cards seen earlier in the craft shop selection (see Fig. 1), captioned *Bushman: Central/South West Africa* (Fig. 4), feature an illustrated *Ethnic Map of Southern Africa* and a short text on the obverse side which notes that they were made by “fine artist Charlotte Fairbank-King”. In *Bushman: Central/South West Africa* (Fig. 5) she uses traditional artistic conventions such as watercolour, a framing device and a realistic style to convey a bucolic scene. Besides offering the standard ideas of mother and child, the scene depicting three generations of happy KhoiSan women, conforms to comfortable myths of pristine isolates in an Edenic setting. Contrived images and representational modes of paradise come in a variety of forms. A comparison between the handpainted greeting card depicting a family of three, *Bushman: Central/South West Africa*⁸⁰ (Fig. 5) and the postcard *Tribal Life: Bushman shooting with bow and arrow* (Fig. 6) shows that although the two media occupy separate discursive spaces, popular notions associated with high art are equally potent. A fascination with the culture of the ‘other’ and with authentic alterity can also be related to values about prestige, status and a particular identity associated with admiration for the forms of fine art. These forms are often believed to have a special appeal to viewers with levels of appreciation and knowledge different from a mass public. There are values commonly associated with high art as “...a work of art also suggests a cultural authority, a



Fig. 4 Charlotte Fairbank-King, *Bushman: Central/South West Africa*, 1994, reproduction from water colour, 15 × 25cm



Fig. 5 Charlotte Fairbank-King, *Bushman: Central/South West Africa*, 1991, reproduction from water colour, 20.5 × 14.5cm

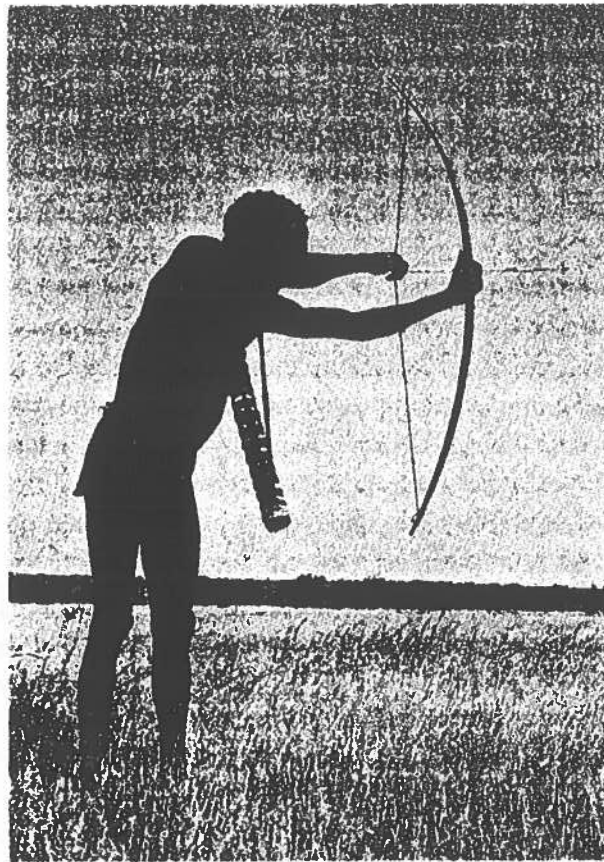


Fig. 6 *Tribal Life: Brushman shooting with bow and arrow, no date*

form of dignity, even of wisdom, which is superior to any vulgar material interest: ... [a] painting belongs to a cultural heritage; it is a reminder of what it means to be a cultivated European" [BERGER 1985: 135] (my emphasis).

Sometimes advertisers and other commercial enterprises will employ photographic practices which simultaneously continue and advance the forms and ideas established by high art. Different values reside in photography—one of the most significant being that the photograph is uncritically held to be a faithful representation of reality. There is a vitality in bright coloured photographs of stereotypical First People where subject matter supports those selfsame generalised claims made in the painted images. This type of photography still enjoys a privileged relationship with reality which, as Gisele Freund suggests, is accepted by the average person as "the exact reproduction of reality, (photography) cannot lie" [FREUND 1996: 141]. These representations show that, although as touristic mementos the postcard and greeting card have similar functions, even as reproductions, hand-painted images carry an authority somewhat different from photographs. To cite John Berger again: "...reproductions are still used to bolster the illusion that nothing has changed, that art, with its unique undiminished authority, justifies most other forms of authority, [and] that art makes inequality seem noble and hierarchies seem thrilling" [BERGER 1985: 29]. Examples such as these show that, based on essentialist cultural positions, the subject matter in post -

and greeting cards suggests cultural authenticity in which a fundamental activity has been fixed in people's minds and eyes to become iconized as authentically indigenous.

In a desire to attain some essence perceived to exist in a so-called authentic state, certain tourists will attempt to establish an empathy towards the other. Tom Selwyn suggests that one of the processes in the articulation of centre/periphery relations is "...the construction of an internal world of the tourist imagination of ideas, images, myths and fantasies about the Other [who is] (the imagined resident of those geographical and economically peripheral regions which are also tourist destinations)..." [SELWYN 1996: 10]. The image of the hunter in the desert landscape (see Fig. 2) shows how touristic settings constitute the themes of myths. Those tourists who want briefly to embrace a different lifestyle might undertake a journey to a destination where they will inhabit the space occupied by the subjects of their dreams and their visions of an exotic other. Consequently, in the search for some sort of African authenticity the tourist also becomes a myth-maker, imagining that an actual experience into the place and space of the original hunter-gatherer will add reality to the vision.

A product which seems to rely on these notions is a specifically South African manufactured liqueur. The advertisement for *Kalahari Thirstland Liqueur* (Fig. 7) and the product itself play a visible role in South Africa's upmarket tourist industry. The ad appears

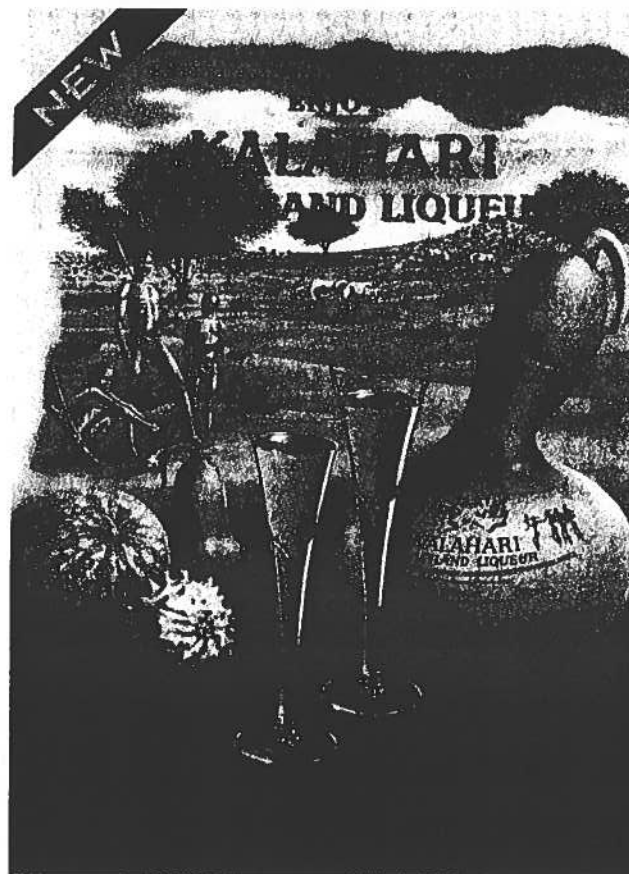


Fig. 7 *Kalahari Thirstland Liqueur* advertisement, 1997

regularly in South African Airways' in-flight magazine and in a selection of upmarket publications, just as the liqueur is readily available in venues catering to tourists. This so-called "unique African Liqueur" described as "exotic" and "indigenous" directly aimed at "local and international markets" entered the market in September 1997. A lavish launch was held in the magnificent setting in the glass Conservatory in the National Botanical Institute at Kirstenbosch, Cape Town.⁹ The guest list read like a 'Who's Who' of political figures, representatives of the travel, leisure and entertainment industry. Insight into the product launch and marketing strategy of the liqueur reveals some of the then current tensions that existed in the vexed issue of representations by others of KhoiSan, San and Bushman identity. Despite the prominence of the three male hunter figures in the advertisement, every effort was made to play down the so-called indigenous human element. Cognisant of the prevailing political sensitivities the producers were advised by their public relations firm not to "emphasise KhoiSan and San people". Instead, by locating the event in the section devoted to desert plants, the manufacturers stressed the relationship with the Kalahari (as place) and played up ideas that proclaimed the product as "indigenous" and "unique" with "natural qualities attained from the extracts of fruits, herbs and berries". For the occasion of the product launch, it seems as though every effort was made to ignore the people of the Kalahari.

In direct contradiction to this stance, the advertisement *Kalahari Thirstland Liqueur* brings together many now familiar marginalising elements about Bushman-ness. The spatial ordering and representational style of the painting serve as a symbolic field which allows two concepts to operate simultaneously. The first shows the familiar symbols associated with Bushman-ness: a desert-like setting with Kalahari-red sand supporting gemsbok, a group of stereotyped bushman hunter figures, tsama melons and a calabash. This serves as context which represents the myth signifying the claim for "a unique traditional African culture". The second idea is represented by two elegant glasses and the "unique vessel which resembles the calabash" which dominate the picture plane. They aim to locate the product as part of a sophisticated First World. In many ways the multiple images of this advertisement have the characteristics of a palimpsest as the dominant commodity, a liqueur, attempts to overwrite the contesting geographic and cultural space. By layering and conflating historical with ancient pre-literate culture and juxtaposing the 'primitive' with the sophisticated the advertisement reinforces the contested nature of Bushman-ness. Even more problematic is the calabash-shaped bottle with the stylised copies of San imagery and the emotive words which speak of a utopian Bushman past. It is this material object that will enter the personal space of consumers; not only South Africans but also foreign tourists who might buy the product as memento to take back home. A final irony in this synthesis is that KhoiSan of the Kalahari had no tradition of rock painting!

CONFLATING PEOPLE AND PAINTINGS

Many representations signifying Bushman-ness rely on copies or stylised versions of rock painting. Common too, is a simplistic connection between the popular conception of hunter-gatherers and ancient rock paintings as images of original cultural production.



Fig. 8 *Discover our Rich Heritage*, 1995

Examples abound. *Discover our Rich Heritage* (Fig. 8), which features in a South African Tourism Board's¹⁰ travel booklet which invites readers to "Explore South Africa". The average undiscerning viewer, disregarding all available evidence, conflates extant and extinct people, their art and material culture, seeing all as one and indivisible. Relying on notions of the primitive other, the exoticising framework is consistent with an established western framework. Consumers of popular culture who hold uncritical views of ostensibly static cultures accept rock painted images (originally part of a complex belief system), simply as icons and emblems of a timeless and invisible people. Such attempts to retain the 'aura' of the original object seem to embody commonplace desires for authenticity which are associated with the well known body of South African rock paintings. The context and juxtaposition of man and rock painting suggest Bushman-ness rather than being an accurate reflection of complex cultural practices. As a result, mass culture conflates centuries-old paintings with their peculiar contemporary constructions of KhoiSan people. Copies of Southern San paintings become confused with idealisations of Bushman-ness as viewers conflate the object (rock painting and/or its copy) with the subject (the KhoiSan people).

Perceptions, visions and imaginings based upon representations of Southern San rock painting and engraving are so firmly entrenched within global as well as Southern African mass media (and in some academic forms) that many KhoiSan believe they must retain what invariably amount to mythical elements so as to satisfy the tourists who seek them out. It could be said that acknowledgement of KhoiSan uniqueness is related to accepting concepts of Bushman-ness.¹¹ Similarly it has been demonstrated that despite paltry financial rewards and often gross exploitation, long-term KhoiSan involvement and participation in the tourist industry has not necessarily only involved coercion, but rather there has been some degree of co-operation and collusion.¹² Therefore, at this historical time, it is important to note that some KhoiSan want to retain this connection, as well as the name and understanding that



Fig. 9 *Kombi in the Kalahari, Witdraai, 2000*

accompanies Bushman-ness which for them has become a political statement and an assertion of self identity. Fame and local and international recognition relies upon such activities as dressing in skins, posing for photographs and entertaining tourists. Consequently similar connections are implicitly part of claims made for reclaiming cultural authenticity.

A simple contemporary *≠Khomani* image, a hand-painted van, serves as example of this process. The inclusion of the monochrome row of figures painted on the door, *Kombi in the Kalahari* (Fig. 9), demonstrates KhoiSan realisation of the way in which San rock images have become codified within a specific discourse and signifying practice. Without the ten black figures, the van is just another naively decorated vehicle. But inclusion of the stylised forms, which have become a prototype or equivalent for Bushman-ness, clearly delivers an unequivocal message about the special identity of driver and passengers. The motifs act as identity markers which are instantly recognisable, effective and possibly functional in new circumstances. Whilst many KhoiSan are in the process of claiming and re-claiming their ancient cultural forms, the images' communication simultaneously functions seemingly without interpretation, becoming a political act and in this case, an act of self-empowerment.

POSSIBILITIES AND OPTIONS FOR SELF-REPRESENTATION

In some ways the KhoiSan of South Africa are in a better position than other Southern African KhoiSan, most notably because of the drastic changes in the political terrain post 1990 culminating in the 1996 democratic Constitution and the granting of fundamental rights to all South Africans. The latter include *inter alia* land reform, the restitution of land and security of tenure, freedom of movement, environmental rights, language and cultural rights. One direct outcome is that the three major South African groups, the Khwe and !Xu of Schmidtsdrift and *≠Khomani* largely of the Kalahari area, have been granted land of their

own. With land as a first step and an eye on opportunities to develop growth strategies for themselves, they will ultimately be able to control and profit from existing resources or those to be developed therein.

In addition all three groups have the benefit of varying levels of support from people genuinely concerned with their empowerment and upliftment. Most of those involved agree that for at least the near future, KhoiSan development lies within environmental and rural spheres.¹³ The challenge is to find sustainable projects that will provide a viable economic base for Khwe, !Xu and ≠Khomani communities. Tourism, and allied to that in one way or another the commoditisation of culture, are possibilities to which many have been exposed and in which almost by default they have received some possible income generating experience. It is inevitable that in one way or another they intend to develop these trends.

Supporting this assertion the ≠Khomani represented here have begun, albeit very minimally, to begin to function in the Kalahari on land returned to them in the vicinity of the Gemsbok National Park, now known as The Kgalagadi Transfrontier Park. Wanting to retain elements of a hunter-gather way of life, they hope to utilise their unique tracking skills, offer recreations of healing dances and produce artefacts such as ostrich eggshell beads, bows and arrows for visitors.¹⁴ Inevitably, many aspects of traditional San culture have become part of ≠Khomani involvement in the tourist industry. In the name of authenticity and in service of commoditisation, it is possible and initially most likely, that they will maintain the generic so-called authentic, ethnic vision of themselves and of a particular touristic form of artefact and material culture.

Simultaneously however, they are attempting to reclaim and reconstitute their culture and traditions. It is possible too that eventually new forms will emerge that reflect their own notions of ethnicity and heritage. For all those involved, one of the challenges is to encourage internal social order and agency which will allow the voices of the people themselves to be heard; to encourage and empower people to access and acknowledge the complexities of their own past, their traditions and identity as hunter-gatherers and to enable people to work with both continuities and change. Erik Cohen suggests that in this way "...the emergence of a tourist market frequently facilitates the preservation of a cultural tradition which would otherwise perish. It enables its bearers to maintain a meaningful local or ethnic identity which they otherwise might have lost" [COHEN 1988: 382].¹⁵

Just as it is important not to be glib in asserting the possibilities of simply reclaiming culture, representations should reflect that there is not simply 'one culture' nor 'one identity'. Reporting on the preferences of the people of Schmidtsdrift, John Sharp cautions that it is problematic even to discuss "Bushman culture". Basing his comments on sustained and intensive interaction with the !Xu and the Khwe he stresses that there not one authentic Bushman culture, their culture like all cultures has been subject to ongoing change, that some want to move into a more mainstream South African way of life and that they should decide for themselves to what degree they should assert their "Bushman" identity [MCKENZIE 1996: 33]. With Emile Boonzaier, Sharp states: "...identities are political statements of who people are, and these statements are shaped by past experience and contemporary social realities. Moreover, identities can be imposed on people or denied by people themselves" [SHARP and BOONZAIER 1994: 6] (cited by McKenzie [1996: 33]).



Fig. 10 Jacob Malgas repairing the kombi, Witdraai, 1995

The social, economic and political challenges facing Southern African KhoiSan are many and various. In addition to the former, they face a major challenge which demands internal group and individual resistance to attempts (internal and external) which continue to perpetuate destructive stereotyping. However, to avoid being placed in situations wherein they uncritically accept a single identity or feel pressed into having to provide a 'whole story', are both challenging and often extremely difficult. However, just as there are multiple questions, multiple possibilities, so too are there possibilities for multiple identities. The following two images demonstrate that constructing alternatives to stereotypes and generalisations are possible. The sharp juxtapositions of the almost nude, yet shod man, Jakob Malgas, affixing the panel to the interior of the vehicle in *Jakob Malgas Repairing the Kombi, Witdraai*. (Fig. 10) shows how the people in the Kalahari adapt to their unique life style. Independent choice of dress codes bears no relationship to the needs posed by contemporary, conventional modes of transport. So, although survival in harsh, under-developed rural conditions is extremely difficult, by acknowledging and accepting 'process',



Fig. 11 *Vet Piet and his mentor Louis Liebenberg consult a map of the Kalahari Gemsbok Park to decide on a tracking strategy, 1996*

as a transitional society the ≠Khomani demonstrate a vigorous flexibility in playing out their singular identity.

The photograph showing Karel Kleinman (known as Vet Piet) left, with Louis Liebenberg in the foreground is another example (Fig. 11). This image exemplifies the way in which a combination of traditional knowledge and contemporary technology presents other ways of representing Bushman-ness. Liebenberg holds his invention, a handheld computer which enables trackers in the field to record their observations of animal behaviour and movements. Called a CyberTracker, the device is linked to satellite navigation Global Positioning Systems (GPS). Although illiterate, Vet Piet holds the metal pen with which he will enter observations he has made into the computer. Using a system of icons the operator of the computer can record information about over forty species of animals, more than fifty plants and special animal activities such as feeding, drinking, fighting, mating and sleeping. Details of time and place of input are picked up immediately by the GPS and when the tracker returns to base, the findings are transferred to the database. By utilising ancient San tracking skills, which Liebenberg considers to be a natural science, people such as Vet Piet

are able to participate in game conservation and wildlife management.

CONCLUSION

Inspired by the shibboleth of reconciliation, the concept of Rainbow nation favoured by Archbishop Desmond Tutu and associated with Nelson Mandela's Presidency seemed to come to an end in June 1999. Thabo Mbeki characterised the start of his term of office by proclaiming his adherence to notions of African-ness and African Renaissance. The concept of African-ness is a contested one and begs questions as to what place groups such as the Khwe, !Xu and =Khomani hold in this fraught notion. What is uncontested, however, is that within this framework opportunities exist for redressing centuries of historical, racial and economic injustices. New and possibly alternative popular visual images created by KhoiSan themselves would be an assertion of their own power. Moreover, it's also probably true that some of these tourists are sensitive to and concerned with some of the issues about injustices and harm done to indigenous and 'First Peoples' in general.

Constructions of Bushman-ness are not peculiar to the tourist industry but are part of society's network of signs and value systems. Generalised representations become fixed within a culture and conceptualised as if 'true' because constant repetition in a variety of forms and locales validate the oft repeated image and lend credibility to mythologised forms. Tourists, in search of authenticity in an experience which is different from their everyday activity, will often travel to places that they consider to be different and exotic. Some tourists who seek out authenticity will uncritically believe what they see in photographs and other visual images. Others might be more discriminating and consider specific places and localities as less significant than ideas of culture and other ethnicities. The idea of an essential Africa, represented by its "First Peoples" becomes for the tourist either a quest to undergo or an object to possess. Seeing the real people becomes incidental as long as the myth and associations with an imagined memory for a lost past are visible. In this way concepts of Bushman-ness are not unique but conform to an imagined universality associated with the special qualities of 'primitives' and isolates.

The lines are blurred between what is seen to be authenticity and what has over many years inevitably been the result of the "invention of tradition". In an attempt to support the development of the production of images of 'self', it might be necessary to move away from romantic notions and to demystify the mystified. The process of a transitionary period should allow for new imaginings to evolve and new forms to be appropriated or invented. On one hand, the tourist market will continue to demand what it understands as indigenous and authentic and visitors might not readily accept new forms unless they hold the fascination of the exotic and the unusual. On the other hand, as the KhoiSan themselves undergo political and socio-economic change and are instrumental in shaping new cultural forms, they are creating a different authenticity. Asserting a unique identity and presenting a new image of 'self' is perhaps the greatest challenge facing KhoiSan people as they enter the Twenty-first century.

NOTES

- 1) From: "Nelson Mandela's Presidential Inauguration": *The Star*, May 11 1994:1
- 2) Terminology which remains vexed and subject to constant regional changes and political influences, is important. The popular name for the indigenous Southern African hunter-gatherers and original producers of the rock images is Bushman and therein lies a fundamental problem. The people to whom it historically and currently refers, belong to the African Khoisan group who have also variously been named 'Bushman' and 'San'. As the former term originates from the pejorative Dutch word Boeschjesmans, it is a Western construct used to categorise people, is highly contested and is generally considered to be a indicator of unequal power relations. However, several individuals and groups choose to refer themselves as "Bushman", and some academics such as Robert Gordon, deliberately use the term "to make social banditry respectable again" [GORDON 1992: 6]. For some, San too has derogatory connotations of 'landless' or 'homeless people', nevertheless it has wide currency and acceptance.
 Today, where possible, most groups prefer to be referred to linguistically, for example the Ju/'hoansi of the Nyae Nyae area or socio-culturally in the case of the ≠Khomani or Southern Kalahari San, or the !Xu and Khwe who came to the military camp at Schmidtsdrift in 1990. In this paper I use San to indicate the ancient hunter-gatherers whose engraved and painted images survive today throughout Southern Africa, KhoiSan (with the names of each group capitalised to signify equality) as a general term and Bushmen when the context indicates its use.
- 3) For an analysis photographic representations of contemporary disadvantaged KhoiSan see R. Bester, B. Buntman, "Bushman(ia) and Photographic Intervention" *African Arts*, Winter, 1999, pp. 50-59,93-94.
- 4) One cannot talk of 'other' without an acknowledgement of 'self' which in this case includes an awareness of myself as a white South African academic, teacher and human rights activist. In addition this paper addresses a second 'self' and that is Khoisan self-identity. I do not claim to speak on behalf of others.
- 5) Elizabeth Edwards, who deals primarily "with cultural or ethnic tourism and its close relation, 'chic' or avant-garde tourism" [EDWARDS 1996: 199] reminds the reader that concurrent pleasure and recreational factors are not mutually exclusive to the more serious tourist undertaking. She continues: "The motivations of cultural and ethnic tourism are in themselves an area of complex subjectivity, motivated by culturally determined, often self-referential, Western notions of the exotic combined in many cases with a genuine desire to 'know'" [EDWARDS 1996: 201].
- 6) See B. Buntman, "Bushman Images in South African Tourist Advertising: The case of Kagga Kamma" in Skotnes, P. Ed, 1996, *Miscast: Negotiating the Presence of the Bushmen*, Cape Town: University of Cape Town Press. An interesting new development is noted in an article and photograph in *The Star*, 1 July 1999, p3. The owner of Kagga Kamma has "employed local coloured people as live exhibits" since the Kruiper family ≠Khomani, having been granted land rights near the Kalahari National Park, have left the tourist resort.
- 7) The notion of the Romantic and Romanticism in art historical terms is an all-embracing concept which does not refer to a specific style but rather to an attitude of mind. General visual or pictorial understandings of the notion might demonstrate a point of view or position which could include a nostalgic or sentimental quality. Characteristically Romantic representations might reflect pastoral

dreams, depict an escape idyll or express ideals often associated with photographic naturalism.

- 8) The popular greeting card has an additional negative reference point. As a contemporary painted image, compare it with William Burchell's *The Gorah Player*, 1823. *The Gorah Player* is an example of the aquatints and engravings of the nineteenth century traveller and botanist William John Burchell whose 1822 and 1824 book's *Travels in the Interior of South Africa* showed scenes purporting to be accurate descriptions of Southern African life. A contemporary representation, the greeting card harkens back to romanticised nineteenth century imaginings of Africa and generalised typologies of the other and is, in addition, a strong indicator of a nostalgia for a doubly mythical past, of the explorer as noble gentleman, and of the musician as noble savage.
- 9) I am grateful to Mr F. Odendaal of Afrikon for the information on Kalahari Thirstland Liqueur and its product launch.
- 10) The South African Tourism Board (SATOUR) is the official state tourism organisation.
- 11) Personal comments affirming this include my research and discussion with the /Khomani at Kagga Kamma 1995, Blinkwater and Witdraai 2000; Roger Chennels 1998, Ciraj Rasool 1999, David Grossman 1999. For another view see Stuart Douglas, 1995, "The Human Isthmus: dangerous Dilutes Sewerage Poison...recuperating 'bushman' in the 'New South Africa'" in *Critical Arts*, Special Edition - Recuperating the San, 9 (2): 65-75.
- 12) Refer to footnote 3.
- 13) The attainment of land is but a 'first step'. South African rural communities, which are grossly underdeveloped and under resourced have, in addition, to contend with socio-political issues such as gender inequality and the strongly contested terrain of traditional leadership which were not part of Southern San culture. A number of State Agencies, NGOs, CBOs, human rights agencies and individuals and others working in environmental and other areas are committed to KhoiSan development. The KhoiSan are plagued by and burdened with a myriad of problems associated with the problem of being a marginalised underclass, which includes little or no exposure and experience in a market economy. Communities have to deal with the difficult issues such internal politics that relate to their special situation, the problems of alcohol abuse, adequate schooling for their children and so on. This terse comment is not to under rate the enormity of the problems the people face but an in depth analysis of socio-economic factors is beyond the scope of this paper.
- 14) Nelson Graburn has written extensively on "...the positive role of commercial arts in economically transitional contexts, suggesting that they provide a livelihood, are not subject to wage labor discipline, and bring prestige and pride to minority peoples rather than the low status attached to the forms of manual labour usually available to them" [GRABURN 1999: 338].
- 15) For comment on 'The !Xu and the Khwe Cultural Project' at Schmidtsdrift see: Rankin, Elizabeth, 1997 *The art of the !Xhu and Khwe at Schmidtsdrift* in the Catalogue of Contemporary Art, !Xhu and Khwe Kimberley, South Africa and Germany, Rapp-Druck Gmb H. and Yvonne Kramer, 1999, *Issues of identity, Myth and Power in the !Xu and Khwe Cultural project at Schmidtsdrift and Platfontein*, Unpublished BA Honours Dissertation, University of Cape Town. Note too Taplin, Jessica, *History, Memory and Identity: Contemporary Art by San Artists in Southern Africa*, forthcoming PhD Thesis, Emory University.

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