

This was not to be. While some Griquas had formed good relationships with San, others, as has been mentioned, were at least as rapacious as the Boers in their dealings with them - claiming somewhat disingenuously, in some cases, that they knew little better, having been instructed in these ways by the Boers. Campbell, who visited Griquatown in 1820, had already noted the treacherous and cruel manner in which the Griquas treated San who had been driven by hunger to raid their cattle:

“One party shot one of the Bushmen while he was in conversation with one of their number. Another party chased some of the Bushmen with their wives and children into a cave, which they were afraid to enter or was difficult of access. They sent down a tame Bushman who was with them to invite his countrymen in the cave to come out, for they wanted to make peace with them. On this the credulous Bushmen left their strong-hold and they all sat down together to eat, after which they butchered the men, women and one child, in a savage manner.” (They were killed by having their heads beaten to pieces on stones and the surviving children were distributed as servants among the commando members.)

In this case, the actions taken against the San were strongly disapproved of by the Griqua Council, and some of the perpetrators of the massacre were expelled from the church at Griquatown. And in one case at least, the Griquas appear to have received “divine punishment” for their cruelty towards the San. Campbell reported:

“Some Griquas hunted in the morning a lion, which they killed after its having bitten Jantje Kok (mortally). It is remarkable that the lion when attacking Jantje passed two men, just as if he sought him (in particular) ... About three years ago the same man met a Bushman in the fields who drove a cow which he had stolen. Jantje having retaken the cow without meeting any resistance from the Bushman, shot him.”

Jantje, it seems, was unaware that some San shamans transformed into lions while in trance.

Stockenstrom also reported on Griqua massacres of San groups, comparing their behaviour unfavourably with that of the Boers. (While he was instrumental in having legislation for the protection of San servants drawn up by the Colonial government, Stockenstrom, at times, acted as an apologist for the Boers, and attempted to justify their occupation of San territories in Transgariiep, as well as the taking of San women and children into service on their farms and the subsequent harsh treatment of these people). In 1830 Stockenstrom travelled in the Transgariiep collecting evidence on the reported massacre of two kraals of San people by Griquas, who said they had been aided and abetted in this by the Boers and Korana. He found clear evidence of the massacre, and of the Korana's involvement, but little or no evidence that the Boers had been involved on this occasion.

However, it is also clear, as we have seen, that many of the Boers were on very poor terms with the San. They resented the fact that maltreated San servants, including San who had been forced off their land by the farmers, took refuge at the missions, sometimes raiding their cattle in revenge for the appropriation of their land and the manner in which they had been treated. As has been mentioned, they harassed the San at the missions, and, like the Griquas, often treated them exceptionally cruelly. Despite assurances from Stockenstrom that steps would be taken to prevent the San from raiding their cattle, therefore, the Boers were not prepared to provide gifts of livestock to the San at, or near, the missions.

Faced with intense competition by other groups for their land, some San now went to work on farms in the Transgariiep as well as in the Colony. Others attached themselves in small groups to the Griquas,

Basters, Bergenaars or Boers as their servants/clients, or as fellow brigands. Some looked after their herds, receiving “milking rights” or a share of the offspring in return for this service. When Campbell visited the Griqua community at Danielskuil in 1820, he was welcomed there by both San and Griquas. And the Griquas who accompanied Eugène Casalis, a member of the Paris Evangelical Missionary Society, when he travelled in the Caledon River valley in 1833 were reported by Casalis to be accompanied by “quite a small army of half-naked Bushmen, who were to look after the draught oxen, saddle the horses, and follow their masters in hunting, carrying the heavy guns.”



A Khoer hunter with his San “handlanger”/servant. By Thomas Baines.

Source: Iziko Museums.

Many San, too, had continued to live in the general area of the mission at Klaarwater/Griquatown after it was taken from them by the Griquas and the missionaries. Some occasionally attended services there, and when Campbell visited in 1820 he reported that the missionary there customarily addressed the San who lived at the mission at the evening services. In the same year, the Kok family at the settlement of Campbell had 165 San followers - a large number when one considers that only about 350 of the Koks' following were identified as Griquas at that time. It is of interest, moreover, that Andries Waterboer, who became "captain" of the Griquas at Griquatown in 1820, was of direct San descent and at times acted against groups who persecuted the San - although this did not prevent his conducting a ferocious campaign against those San groups who were bold, or desperate, enough to raid his own people's livestock. According to Andrew Smith, San thieves, or at least those who survived capture alive, were put in irons by Waterboer and forced to work in the village.

Some of the San at Campbell received agricultural produce from the Griquas, probably in return for the men's herding their livestock and the women's guarding the fields. Campbell, for example, mentioned that one of the Griquas, who had many San living near him, supported these families with daily rations of "corn". Other San began to acquire and breed cattle, and some even planted crops. With time, quite a number of San was incorporated into the Griquas and intermarried with them.



Griqua leaders in 1860.

Source: Halford, S.J. (1949?). *The Griquas of Griqualand*. Cape Town: Juta.

Other San groups, deprived of their traditional means of subsistence, joined up with Sotho-Tswana groups and conducted raids on the livestock of the Boers in the Colony, or attached themselves to multi-ethnic immigrant groups other than the Griquas. Unlike the European farmers, and like the Griquas, these mixed frontier groups were open to recruiting new members from a wide range of ethnic backgrounds. A number of San, therefore, were incorporated into the Bergenaars, Basters, and, in particular, the Korana.



"Bastard".

Source (original): Arbousset, T. and Dumas, F. (1842). *Relation d'un Voyage d'Exploration au Nord-Est de la Colonie du Bonne-Espérance*. Paris: Bertrand.

The Korana had come into contact with the San many years before encountering them in the eastern Transgariiep. In some areas the two groups were so intermingled that they were referred to as "Korana Bushmen". One section of the Katse Korana, for example, had merged with the San at an early date, learning their language and intermarrying with them. Travelling in the Transgariiep in 1810 and 1811, Burchell noticed the close association between the Korana and the San - as well as other groups. "On one side the Kora stations are intermingled with those of the Bushmen", he remarked, "on another with the Bamuchars, in the middle with the settlements of Mixed or Klaarwater Hottentots, and everywhere with the kraals of the Bushmen".



Korana preparing to move camp. By Samuel Daniell.

Source: Library of Parliament.

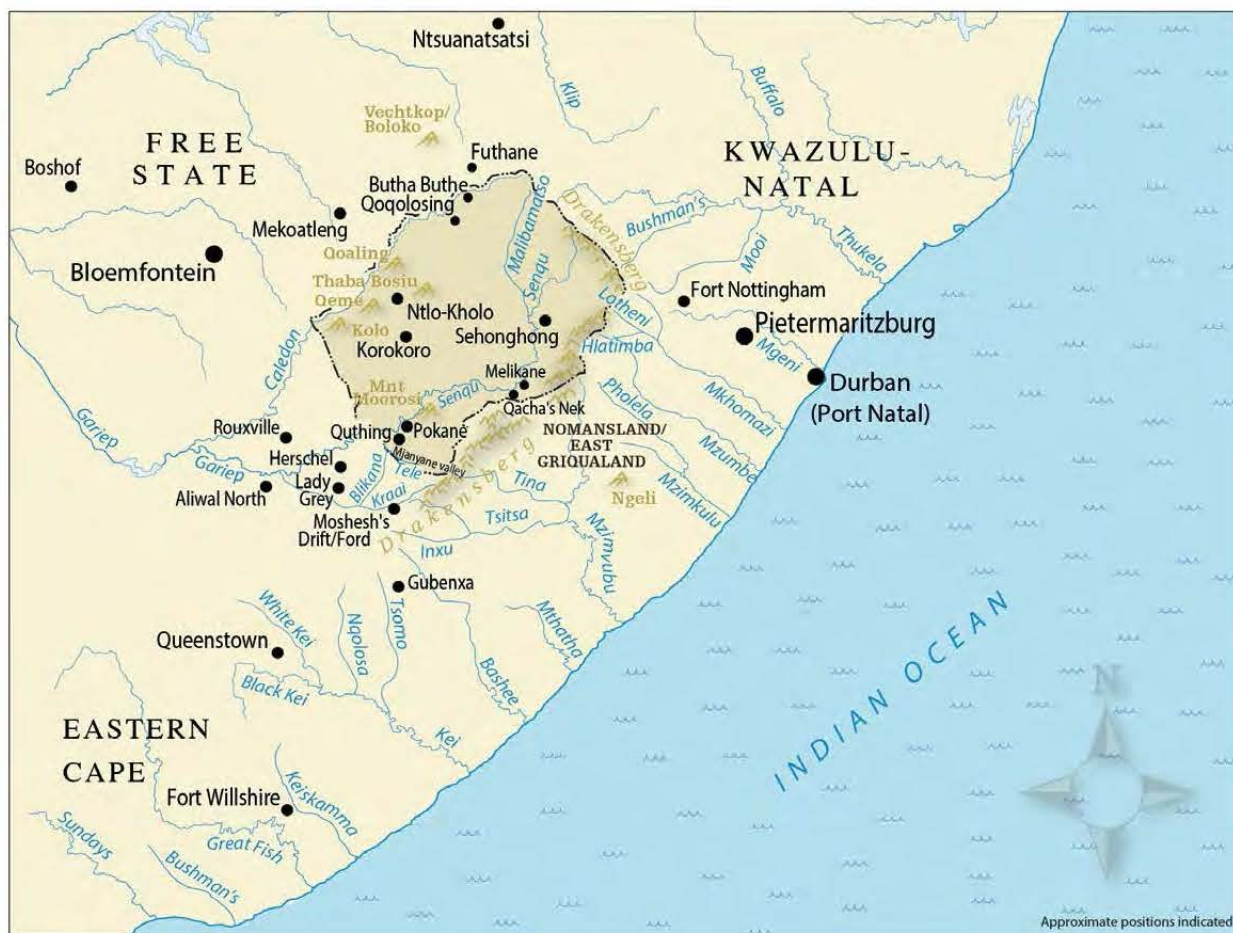


A Korana kraal in Transgariep, on the banks of the Modder River. By Charles Davidson Bell.

Source: Museum Africa.

By 1830 Stockenstrom and the Colonial government had given up all hope of being able to establish a “reserve” occupied only by the San, as well as any hope of being able to exert control over the actions of the immigrant groups in Transgariep towards the San. Gradually the issue of exclusive San territories and San rights in Transgariep was forgotten as other political developments in the area engaged Stockenstrom and the Colonial government’s attention. So much so that in 1836 Stockenstrom felt compelled to declare to the British Parliament’s Select Committee on Aborigines that “with (regard to) those people (the San) I should not object to (their amalgamating with other groups), for they must gradually disappear, and die out, as it were; in their present state they cannot remain”.

### The Maloti-Drakensberg and adjacent areas



South-eastern South Africa and Lesotho.

The first Europeans to settle in KwaZulu-Natal were English traders, who established themselves in 1824 at Port Natal, present-day Durban. Guns, cloth and other items were traded with local chiefdoms for a variety of goods, and ivory in particular. Indirect contact with San hunter-gatherers was established with San via elephant hunters such as Dumisa, an Nhangwini chief and hunter who lived in close association with the San, but for the next 13 years the small number of traders, hunters, and missionaries in KwaZulu-Natal appears to have had little or no direct contact with San hunter-gatherers. With the arrival of the Voortrekkers in 1837, however, the impact of relatively large-scale European settlement began to be felt by the San. By 1840 the trekkers had begun to establish permanent farms, largely around Pietermaritzburg and Port Natal. Their reputation amongst the San of the Cape Colony appears to have preceded them, and they were immediately subjected to raids by San occupying the Maloti-Drakensberg and surrounding areas.

## **The pattern of the raids**

The pattern of San raids in KwaZulu-Natal remained virtually unchanged for 30 years and was similar in a number of respects to those conducted on the Boers in the Cape. Small groups struck at farms over a wide area. Autumn was a favourite season for the raids as the cattle of the farmers were in good condition at that time. This was advantageous to the San, not only because the animals were better eating, but also because they could be driven more quickly than if they were in a poor condition. Raids often occurred on moonlit nights, when it was easier to drive stolen animals, but were sometimes conducted during daylight if it was very misty.

Once they had been stolen, cattle and horses were driven at great speed into inaccessible areas of the Maloti-Drakensberg by the San, who were often mounted. The raiders were expert at driving cattle over rugged ground and some were said to smear fresh dung on the path ahead of the leading animal at the worst places to deceive it into thinking that it had been preceded by other cattle. Those animals that could not keep up and that the San were forced to abandon were generally hamstringed or stabbed to death, so that the pursuing farmers were often confronted with the distressing sight of their dead or dying livestock lying alongside the paths taken by the raiders. If there was time, the raiders carried away slabs of meat on their horses from animals slaughtered in this manner. Sometimes the San rolled stones down on their pursuers, but they practically never attempted to engage them directly, preferring the hit-and-run tactics of guerilla warfare. Only in the last years of the raids, when they were reinforced by armed Sotho, did they take on the parties mounted by the Europeans against them.

The KwaZulu-Natal raiders were divided primarily into two groups: those raiding farmers on the northern tributaries of the Thukela, who retreated over the escarpment into northern Lesotho and the Free State; and those who struck at farms on the southern Thukela, the Mngeni and the Mkhomazi, who moved off to the upper reaches of the Mkhomazi, Mzimkhulu and Mzimvubu, as well as to the eastern and southern regions of Lesotho. Most San bands raiding in KwaZulu-Natal came from Nomansland (East Griqualand) and south-eastern Lesotho.

Between 1840 and 1870 there were more than 70 recorded raids, the highest number being seven in 1845. In the late 1840s, farms near Bushman's River in the Estcourt area, and, occasionally, farms in the region of the upper Thukela were raided. Between 1855 and 1860 the San raided largely in the upper Mngeni area. In the final period of the raids, between 1856 and 1872, the San struck most frequently in the immediate vicinity of the Maloti-Drakensberg, from the Thukela to the Mzimkhulu.

Although the conflict between European farmers and San in this newly-occupied region was similar in some respects to that which had occurred in the Cape, there were also several differences. Probably the most significant of these was that the raiders operating from the Maloti-Drakensberg were far more elusive than those in the mountains further south. Between 1840 and 1872, the main period of San raids on the farms of Europeans, there were only five recorded instances of San being surprised and killed, wounded or captured by punitive expeditions, although it is likely that some successful expeditions went unreported.

There were several reasons for the success of the San in eluding the commandos organised by the European farmers in response to their raids. One factor which increased the difficulty of capturing the raiders was that the thefts of cattle appear to have been conducted by a relatively small number of San bands who were expert, even “professional”, raiders. It has been suggested that there were not more than a few hundred San living in the Maloti-Drakensberg during the 30 or so years in which the raids were conducted. Many of the European authorities and farmers persisted in the mistaken belief, moreover, that somewhere in the mountains lay the “headquarters” of the raiders, a large settlement that, once located and destroyed, would end the raids. In fact, the San were constantly on the move and no such base appears to have existed.

Other reasons for the San raiders’ successes were that they always had the advantage of surprise, with the result that they had a head-start on their pursuers, and that the terrain into which they had to be followed was extremely rugged. Unlike the European farmers, the San were familiar with this terrain and the deep twisting valleys of the Little Berg, or “Bushman’s Terrace”, which runs parallel to, but some distance from, the main mountain chain, slowed up those pursuing the San and their stolen livestock. Once the foothills of the Drakensberg had been negotiated, pursuing parties were confronted with the massive barrier of the mountains themselves, which rose almost vertically to more than 10,000 feet in places. Beyond this lay the Maloti, the rugged mountains of present-day Lesotho, cut with countless deep valleys and extremely difficult to negotiate at any speed if one was not familiar with the area. These mountains were easily large enough for San raiders acquainted with the area to hide themselves and their stolen cattle away from all but the most determined pursuers.

After reaching the mountains, the San generally moved well away from the area in which they had raided, taking their stolen animals with them. Often they went to areas south-west of KwaZulu-Natal where they were sheltered by Nguni and Sotho farmers, who kraaled their stolen cattle for them. Stolen cattle and horses were exchanged for other goods with these farmers, but sometimes they served as payment in return for shelter within their territories.

The first major San depredations occurred in the Weenen and Mkhomazi districts in 1840. These raids resulted in a large commando being mustered by the Boers, who attacked the Bhaca under Ngcaphayi. They had received information from the Mpondo chief, Faku, that Ngcaphayi was in league with San cattle thieves who lived in caves near his kraals at the sources of the Mzimvubu River. One hundred and fifty Bhaca were killed by the commando and 3,000 cattle confiscated, but no San were found. Later, the Nhlanguwini chief, Fodo, was tied to a wagon wheel and flogged by the Boers, who reasoned that the San must have passed through his territory and that he had had a hand in the raids.

Similar raids continued to be mounted by the San during the following years. By the mid-1840s they had penetrated almost as far as Pietermaritzburg and their raids had intensified to the point where farms on the Mooi, Bushman’s and Thukela Rivers had to be abandoned. Faced with this onslaught, the Boers demanded aid from the British, who had taken over authority in KwaZulu-Natal in December 1845 when the Boer Republic of Natalia submitted to their rule. Their leaders, Andries Pretorius in particular, complained bitterly of San depredations. Pretorius was angered that the San chief, Mdwebo, who roamed an area of the Maloti-Drakensberg and its foothills, had been invited to visit Martin West, the Lieutenant-Governor of Natal, and that two members of Mdwebo’s band who had been sent to Pietermaritzburg to meet West were given presents by the Colonial authorities. Despite these appeals by the farmers for help, however, the British government was unwilling to commit troops or funds to aid them in their struggle against the San, and Pretorius left Natal in disgust the following year, accompanied by some of his followers.



## **Strategies adopted by the British government to combat the raiders**

Over the course of the period that San raided in KwaZulu-Natal, a number of strategies were adopted by the Colonial authorities to try and put a stop to the raids. These included the building of military posts in areas most frequently subjected to San depredations, the formation of a Native Police Force and the settlement of Nguni and Sotho chiefs and their followers in barrier locations sited on routes favoured by the San when raiding into KwaZulu-Natal.

The first systematic attempts to combat the San raiding from the Maloti-Drakensberg involved the establishment of a series of military posts in areas that were subjected to frequent San raids. Van Vuuren's Post was established south-west of Pietermaritzburg in 1846; another post was placed on the Bushman's River in 1848; and Fort Nottingham, the last of the posts to be put in place, was established north-west of Pietermaritzburg at Spion Kop in 1856. Although the garrison at Van Vuuren's Post was reasonably successful in deterring the San from raiding in this area, the focus of their attacks simply shifted to the Bushman's River. The presence of the later posts, one in this newly-targeted area and the one at Spion Kop, proved to be of little help in discouraging San depredations.

In 1848 the Natal Native Police Force, trained along British lines and commanded by European officers, was formed specifically to combat the San. They were used as a mobile force that could be stationed in trouble areas and were available at short notice to pursue the San and their stolen stock, either independently or in concert with commandos mounted by the European farmers. The force showed themselves to be an effective one which operated well under very difficult conditions, but the costs of maintaining the unit were high and the authorities were reluctant to commit themselves to funding an operation that might prove a drain on the limited funds available for administering the Colony. In an attempt to recoup these costs, they levied a hut tax on the resident population in 1849, but continued problems of funding, combined with fears amongst the European population that the members of the unit might desert to enemy, led to the unit's being disbanded in 1851.

The establishment of barrier locations also proved to be an effective means of deterring San raiders. This scheme was first mooted in 1846, and when the chiefs Langalibalele and Phuthini fled from Mpande into the Klip River district in 1848 with many of their followers, the Governor of Natal, Theophilus Shepstone, instructed them to move to areas at the base of the Maloti-Drakensberg. The chiefs refused to obey this directive, but the following year the governor visited the Klip River area and, with the help of the Natal Native Police and a loyal chief, pressured the resident chiefs into settling in the areas allocated to them. They immediately began to move with their people and cattle to locations at the sources of the Bushman's, Mooi and Mkhomazi rivers, and some of Langalibalele's people were paid to build their kraals in key positions near the principal passes and drifts across rivers used by San.

Together with that of chief Zikhali, who had his kraal near the sources of the Thukela, these locations, stretching from the Thukela in the north to the Bushman's River in the south, formed a "barrier of tribes" to San raiders using the passes leading into the Maloti-Drakensberg to attack farms in Natal. In April 1859 another location was established when a section of Lugaju's people were moved from near Swartkop in the Pietermaritzburg district to a site now known as Mpendle Location on the banks of the Mkhomazi River. Even the Nhlanguwini chief and elephant hunter, Dumisa, who had once had close relations with some San groups, later moved to an area near present-day Underberg with his followers to act against San in this area. With time, and as the San raids continued, kraals were established by these chiefs further and further up the Lotheni, Hlatimba and Mkhomazi Valleys towards the base of the Maloti-Drakensberg. The human barricade against the San entering KwaZulu-

Natal was finally completed in 1865 when chief Thukelela settled between the Ngwangwana and Mzimkhulu rivers.

One of the main advantages that the barrier locations offered to the European Colonists was that a force of Nguni or Sotho farmers could be mustered almost immediately in the area where raids had occurred, and were able to pursue the San into the mountains without the delay involved in organising a commando of farmers from a number of different areas. As a result, there was a sharp decline in San raids in the areas where these locations were sited. The disadvantages for the people settled in these locations who formed this human shield against the San were, nevertheless, considerable. They were subjected to raids almost immediately after the locations had been established, and on at least one occasion the raiders made it clear to them that they were an obstacle to their raids and that they would continue to suffer attacks until they moved. Moreover, although the locations acted to deter a number of the bands who raided into KwaZulu-Natal, when raids did occur near the locations, or when raiders were spotted moving through the areas where the locations were sited, the inhabitants were seldom able to catch up with and engage the San.

Their lack of success in this respect was sometimes attributable to unorthodox methods used by the San to frighten off their pursuers. On one occasion, for example, Lugaju's warriors set off in hot pursuit of the San after 150 cattle had been stolen from their kraals on the Mngeni. Closing in on the raiders, they were brought to an abrupt halt when their path was blocked by a baboon head impaled on a stick! This had the intended effect, demoralising Lugaju's men to such an extent that it was decided that further pursuit would be useless under the circumstances.

### **The Speirs expedition**

There were few San raids in KwaZulu-Natal during the early and mid-1850s, although farmers in the upper Mngeni area suffered losses to the San during 1856. By 1858 it was almost exclusively a small number of European and Nguni farmers living in this area who were targeted by the cattle thieves, and after 1859 these raids became very sporadic. It was following one of the later raids that Robert Speirs, a farmer and member of a party mustered to track down San who had raided the farm of his uncle, James Speirs, lost his way in the fastnesses of the Maloti-Drakensberg. The dramatic events associated with this expedition, including the capture and eventual fate of a young San raider, are worth relating in some detail as they provide an idea of the difficulties experienced by the members of expeditions attempting to track down San raiders in the heart of the mountains.

San raiders had struck at James Speirs' farm on the Mngeni in early 1862 making off into the mountains and driving the stolen cattle and horses before them in the usual fashion. A party of more than 40 people, including Robert Speirs, was mustered and followed the thieves over a pass at the head of the Lotheni River and into the wilds of the Lesotho highlands. After a long chase in the Maloti-Drakensberg lasting more than a week, Robert Speirs and the rest of the party tracking the raiders spotted a San boy on horseback and immediately set off in hot pursuit. While chasing the young San horseman through a bog, Speirs succeeded in wounding the youth and, after a struggle, managed to take him captive. One of the Natal Carbineers, Thomas Hodgson, was accidentally shot by a member of the party during the chase and his thigh bone shattered. The group was not equipped to extract the bullet and all that could be done for him until they returned home was to make him as comfortable as possible.

That evening, the party's scouts located the hide-out of the band to which their prisoner belonged in a deep ravine at the base of the mountains. The rest of the party was alerted, but it proved impossible to locate the path leading down to this shelter in the dark. The young San prisoner was fetched and,

at first light, wounded and with a leather thong tied around his neck, he was forced to guide the party down the mountain. All their efforts were in vain, however, as the occupants of the shelter, two children and four women, including the young San prisoner's mother, saw them coming and made their escape into the rocks on the far side of the ravine.

Four of the party, including Speirs, were now detailed to remain with Hodgson while the others left for home. Speirs accompanied them for part of the journey as he wanted to shoot something for Hodgson and the others to eat that night, but he was seized with cramp in one of his legs and had to spend the night in a cave sheltering from a thunderstorm. Early the next morning he set off for the camp on the escarpment and arrived in driving rain - only to find the place deserted. He discovered Hodgson's body under a heap of stones, but there was no trace of his three companions, his horse or any of his equipment.

Dismayed, Speirs left at once to try and catch up with the remainder of his party, but he lost his bearings. Forced to save his limited powder supply, and unable to make a fire in the damp, he had to eat a bird that he had shot raw. When his powder eventually ran out he was forced to live off ants, wild blossoms and grasshoppers – a diet he declared in his famished state to be “surprisingly good”. It was twelve days before he stumbled exhausted into a kraal of Dumisa's people.

While he was undergoing this ordeal his party had returned and the San youth was taken to Grey's Hospital. Although Speirs later wanted to retain possession of the San boy, he was placed in the charge of one of the members of the expedition, William Proudfoot, Captain of the Karkloof Carbineers. Proudfoot was made his guardian for three years on condition that the boy was released after this period and that every effort possible was made to “civilise” him. The boy was given the job of cook's assistant but was said to be completely untrainable and not equal to this task. His skills as tracker were well-developed, however, and he was taken into the Maloti-Drakensberg on at least one occasion to help locate San raiders.

The young San captive died not many years later of consumption, having taken to drink and “other evil ways” towards the end of his life. In a strange sequel to his death, his bones were secretly disinterred one night, with the permission of William Proudfoot on whose farm he was buried. They were sent to the Edinburgh Medical School in 1881, where they remain today labelled “Skeleton of a Bushman from Umzimkulu”.

### **The last San raids on the farms of Europeans in KwaZulu-Natal**

The last recorded raid on the farm of a European in KwaZulu-Natal occurred in the Fort Nottingham area in July 1869. Two parties were organised to follow the raiders and it is a measure of the success of the San raids that this was the first officially organised force from KwaZulu-Natal to surprise, shoot and capture San raiders in their mountain strongholds. One of the parties, that which was under Captain Albert Allison, was led on an exhausting chase through the mountains, but eventually caught up with the raiders. Scouts reported seeing horses grazing beyond a deep ravine and heard voices and singing in the narrow gorge below. The gorge was sealed off and they attacked the San at dawn. Some of the San possessed firearms and the women fought with bows and arrows alongside the men. Sixteen San were killed and six children and two women taken prisoner during a skirmish which lasted for about half an hour.

By the late 1860s almost all the parties raiding farms and kraals in KwaZulu-Natal consisted of mixed groups of San and Sotho, but after 1870 there were very few reports of San raids into KwaZulu-Natal. In August 1872 Sakhayedwa's people on the upper Pholela River were attacked by San raiders.

Seventeen horses were taken during a snow storm and the inhabitants of the area followed the trail deep into the mountains to the upper Gariep. Here they surprised a band of San, killing a number of them. This was the last recorded San raid in KwaZulu-Natal, and after this date neither European nor Nguni and Sotho farmers in this region were again subjected to depredations by the San and their allies based in the Maloti-Drakensberg.

## TIMELINE

c. 1800

Groups of hunters from the Cape, mounted and armed with guns, make occasional expeditions into Transgariep

1805

Griquas settle at the newly-established LMS mission at Klarwater (Griquatown)

1824

The first traders establish themselves at Port Natal

1825-6

Stockenstrom gives permission for Boers to trek across the Gariep into San territories, on a temporary basis

1826

Griquas under Adam Kok move to Philippolis

1826-7

Stockenstrom attempts to reserve areas within Transgariep for the San

1836

Stockenstrom abandons all hope of protecting the San in Transgariep

Great Trek

1840

First major depredateions on European farms in Natal

1845

British annexe Natal from the Boers – Republic of Natalia submits to their rule

1846

First military post established, at Van Vuuren's Post, to combat San raiders

1848

Natal Native Police Force formed to combat San raiders

First of a series of barrier locations established at the base of the Drakensberg – under Langalibalele and Phuthini

1869

Last recorded San raid on a European farm in Natal

1872

Last recorded San raid in Natal